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Jennifer Langhinrichsen-Rohling, John D. Foubert, Hope M. Brasfield, Brent Hill and Shannon Shelley-Tremblay

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# The Men's Program: Does It Impact College Men's Self-Reported Bystander Efficacy and Willingness to Intervene?

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## Abstract

This study considered whether a rape prevention program could reduce men's rape myth acceptance, enhance the perceived effectiveness of college men's bystander behavior, and increase men's willingness to intervene as bystanders in potentially dangerous situations. As predicted, college men who experienced The Men's Program significantly increased their self-reported willingness to help as a bystander and their perceived bystander efficacy in comparison to college men who experienced the comparison condition. Men's Program participants also significantly decreased their self-reported rape myth acceptance in comparison with comparison condition participants. The college policy and rape prevention program planning implications of these findings are discussed.

## Keywords

bystander, college students, intervention studies, rape prevention

Despite the increased emphasis on rape prevention and risk-reduction programming on college campuses (Anderson & Whiston, 2005; Banyard, Plante, & Moynihan, 2004; Lonsway, 2009), one in four college women report surviving rape or attempted rape across their lifetime according to self-report studies conducted on multiple campuses and sampling

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**Table 1.** Mean Differences in Self-Reports of Bystander Efficacy, Willingness to Intervene, and Rape Myth Acceptance across time for The Men's Program Participants Versus Participants in the Comparison Condition

Scales	Occasion	Men's Program participants			Comparison group participants		
		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Rape Myth Acceptance	Pre	69	2.99	1.14	90	2.91	1.15
	Post		2.47	1.23		2.91	1.27
Bystander Efficacy	Pre	85	76.34	15.31	92	72.78	15.70
	Post		86.43	14.58		74.03	18.78
Bystander Willingness to Help	Pre	85	3.70	0.58	92	3.53	0.68
	Post		4.35	0.53		3.77	0.74

Note: All interactions between group and occasion of measurement depicted in this table are significant at  $p < .05$ .

thousands of college students (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006). Meanwhile, approximately 5% of college women experience rape every year (Fisher et al., 2000; Kilpatrick, Resnick, Ruggiero, Conoscenti, & McCauley, 2007; Mohler-Kuo, Dowdall, Koss, & Wechsler, 2004). Increasing the accessibility and the effectiveness of rape-prevention programming for college students remains an important task. The present study consists of a preliminary test of a rape-prevention program, The Men's Program (Foubert, 2010), on college men's perceptions of their bystander efficacy and willingness to intervene. The Men's Program is typically presented by groups of peer educators affiliated with the national nonprofit organization, One in Four ([www.oneinfourusa.org](http://www.oneinfourusa.org)); this was the case in the present study.

Rape is the least reported of all violent crimes (Rand, 2009). It has been shown to be more likely to occur in cultures in which men receive support from one another to sexually assault women as well as in cultures in which men's coercive sexual behavior is routinely ignored by peers (Katz, 2006; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 2008). By maintaining power structures and practices that have the effect of blaming victims, rather than holding perpetrators accountable, such cultures tacitly support perpetrators and their crimes (Ahrens, 2006). Along with indirect encouragement, perpetrators sometimes receive very clear messages of support for their sexually assaultive behavior. For example, research has shown that the strongest predictor for the college men's reported perpetration of sexual violence is having male peers who explicitly tell them to abuse women (Schwartz, DeKeseredy, Tait, & Alvi, 2001).

Schoolwide prevention efforts have typically approached male participants as potential rapists (e.g., Safe Dates—see Foshee et al., 2005; or the Multisite Violence Prevention Project, see the Multisite Violence Prevention Project corporate author, 2008). It can be problematic, however, for primary prevention programs to broadly target men as potential perpetrators because only a small fraction of college men admit to behavior that would

meet the legal definition of rape (Abbey & McAuslan, 2004; Lisak & Miller, 2002). Treating male participants in rape-prevention programs as potential perpetrators is also likely to increase men's defensiveness and reduce the likelihood of college men wanting to attend and heed such programming (Scheel, Johnson, Schneider, & Smith, 2001). The Men's Program was specifically designed to be applicable to college men and it uses an approach that was designed to reduce men's defensiveness while still targeting men's rape-supportive behaviors and beliefs. The major ways The Men's Program focuses on ending rape is through a powerful male-on-male victim empathy component and by including bystander intervention training delivered by male peer educators to an all-male audience.

Several researchers and programmers have successfully applied the bystander model to rape prevention including the Mentors in Violence Prevention Program (MVP; Katz, 1995), the Bringing in the Bystander Program (Banyard et al., 2004; Banyard, Moynihan, & Crossman, 2009), and the Green Dot Program (Edwards, 2010). Taking a bystander approach creates a broader community context for rape prevention as it reinforces the belief that everyone can contribute to prevention efforts. With a bystander approach, prevention activities are not limited to potential victims or perpetrators but can engage all individuals as they are likely to be friends, parents, grandparents, coaches, teachers, brothers, sisters, and community members of rape victims. Such an approach makes it very difficult for people to respond with an attitude suggesting that program material is not personally relevant. Consequently, this approach is thought to reduce personal defensiveness on the part of program participants.

Existing rape-prevention programs that have employed a combination of victim empathy building (Schewe, 2007) and bystander intervention training have received empirical support (Banyard, Moynihan, & Plante, 2007; Cissner, 2009; Foubert, Newberry, & Tatum, 2007). For example, the MVP program is centered on processing a series of hypothetical scenarios involving sexism, domestic violence, and sexual assault. Peer educators lead participants through potential responses, discuss reasons they might intervene or not intervene, and consider what factors might reinforce participants for getting involved. Though limited evaluation data on the MVP program are available, results are promising from a study that found fraternity men and sorority women who participated in the program to report lower levels of sexism and an increased belief that they could prevent men's violence against women (Cissner, 2009). Similarly, researchers have begun to evaluate the effectiveness of Banyard and colleagues' (Banyard, Moynihan, et al., 2007) Bringing in the Bystander Program. This program comes in either a 90-min or a 0.5-day version and focuses on an exploration of who bystanders are, when they have helped, and how to intervene as a bystander in risky situations. Participants are asked to think about how it would feel if safe places on campus were no longer so, and the program concludes with participants taking a pledge to intervene when encountering risky situations in the future. Several studies show evidence of favorable outcomes related to this program, including increased bystander efficacy, increased willingness to intervene as a bystander, and decreased rape myth acceptance (Banyard et al., 2004, Banyard, Moynihan et al., 2007).

Thus, these elements were also used when creating The Men's Program (Foubert, 2010). In addition, The Men's Program was designed to be theoretically consistent with

belief system theory. The core concept of belief system theory is that to produce lasting attitude and behavior change, programmatic interventions must be designed with an understanding of people's existing self-conceptions (Grube, Mayton, & Ball-Rokeach, 1994). Research has shown that men, regardless of whether they have already committed sexual assault, typically do not perceive themselves to be potential rapists (Scheel et al., 2001). Therefore, presenters of The Men's Program attempt to influence men's rape-related attitudes and behavior by appealing to beliefs they already hold about being potential helpers. Specifically, the program was designed to appeal to men who believe they can help survivors recover from rape and whose self-concept indicates that they already are and/or will be the type of bystanders who will successfully intervene in difficult situations (Banyard, Moynihan, et al., 2007; Scheel et al., 2001). Participants are specifically encouraged to learn to respond more effectively to women who might seek their assistance after surviving rape. Appealing to men's helping persona has been shown to be successful in earlier evaluation studies (Foubert & Cowell, 2004; Foubert et al., 2007). Educating and empowering men as helpers also makes sense, given that the most common person a female survivor tells about what happened to her is a friend (Ahrens, Campbell, Ternier-Thames, Wasco, & Seftl, 2007); and such confidantes can, of course, be men.

A key component of helping is empathy for victims. Both the MVP program and the Bringing in the Bystander Program use brief victim empathy exercises as part of their interventions. In the case of the MVP program, participants are asked to visualize the rape of a female friend. In the Bringing in the Bystander Program, participants are asked to ponder what it would be like if places they felt safe no longer felt this way to them. The Men's Program differs from both of these programs by placing a more substantial focus on building survivor empathy and does so with the processing of an emotionally charged recounting of a male-on-male rape situation. Based on research demonstrating the effectiveness of all-male (Brecklin & Forde, 2001) peer education programs (Stein, 2007) that include a discussion of a male-on-male rape experience (Schewe, 2007), presenters of The Men's Program show a video depicting a male-on-male rape experience that is designed to teach men how rape feels from a survivor's perspective. Next, the male peer presenters make connections between the male-on-male rape that was viewed and a male-on-female rape experience to enhance audience members' empathy toward rape survivors, rather than increase male defensiveness about perpetration. Next, men are taught how to take their empathy further to support a rape survivor. Afterward, presenters define sexual consent in basic terms and then role model bystander intervention behaviors while facilitating a discussion of strategies for confronting peers when they overhear someone telling jokes about rape, acting in ways that demean women, or bragging about abusing women (Foubert, 2010).

A new section was added to The Men's Program in 2005 based on feedback from a series of qualitative studies. Participants indicated that the program might benefit from the inclusion of more specific material related to intervening with friends in risky alcohol-related situations (Foubert & Cowell, 2004; Foubert & Perry, 2007) and in conjunction with research demonstrating the utility of bystander intervention approaches (Banyard et al., 2004; Banyard, Moynihan, et al., 2007; Katz, 2006). The new section focuses primarily on identifying the

responsibility of observers to alcohol-related sexual assault situations, getting men to agree that they are responsible to act under these conditions, and brainstorming with them about common alcohol-related scenarios in which they can apply bystander intervention techniques.

A decision to focus this new bystander training material on alcohol-related situations was made, given that in 72% to 81% of cases in which a male rapes a female college student, the female is intoxicated (Lisak & Miller, 2002; Mohler-Kuo et al., 2004). In addition, frequent, heavy episodic drinking increases college women's chances of experiencing rape eightfold (Mohler-Kuo et al., 2004). Moreover, among male offenders who rape women, 64% were using alcohol and/or drugs prior to the attack (Brecklin & Ullman, 2002). Moreover, men who are more sexually coercive have been shown to drink higher amounts of alcohol than noncoercive men, particularly during sexual encounters (Abbey, Clinton-Sherrod, McAuslan, Zawacki, & Buck, 2003; Abbey, McAuslan, Zawacki, Clinton, & Buck, 2001; Carr & VanDeusen, 2004).

Prior quantitative research on The Men's Program has shown that this enhanced intervention, which combines a victim empathy approach (a male-on-male rape is processed by the group to promote empathy with rape survivors) with bystander intervention training in an all-male format, has led to fewer and less severe incidents of sexual assault committed by men attending the program (Foubert et al., 2007). A 2-year longitudinal qualitative study asked men who saw the program whether they had behaved any differently as a result of program participation. This study, reaching 55% (186) of the original sample of program participants, showed evidence of the efficacy of the bystander intervention component of the program through men's anecdotes (Foubert, Godin, & Tatum, 2010). However, given the limitations of qualitative inquiry, it is not known whether such results were experienced throughout the sample. The present study sought to take this line of research a step further by assessing bystander variables quantitatively. Thus, the primary research question we sought to address in the current study was whether the combination of a male-on-male victim empathy intervention with bystander training in an all-male presentation format would be successful in leading to increases in men's self-reports of their bystander efficacy to enhancing their perceived willingness to intervene. A secondary research question considered in the current study focused on whether men's rape myth acceptance would decline as expected with this enhanced version of The Men's Program.

*Hypothesis 1:* Self-reported bystander efficacy will increase more from pre- to post-program among male college student participants who experienced the revised version of The Men's Program than among male college student participants who experienced the nonrape-related comparison condition.

*Hypothesis 2:* College men who participated in The Men's Program will report greater increases in their willingness to help as a bystander than will college men who experienced a nonrape-related comparison condition.

*Hypothesis 3:* Significant decreases in self-reported rape myth acceptance will occur for male participants in The Men's Program from pre- to postassessment as compared with male participants in the comparison condition.

## Method

### Participants

When these data were collected, there were 1,617 new freshmen entering this urban university located in the southeastern part of the United States. Total university enrollment at the time consisted of 10,398 full-time and 3,666 part-time students. All study participants were currently enrolled in one of many freshmen seminar courses that were eligible for The Men's Program participation ( $n = 422$  male students enrolled in a section of this course during the semester in which these data were collected). Within this population, 77% of the men were White, 14% were African American, 2% were Asian American, 1% were Native American, 1% were Hispanic, 1% identified as two or more ethnicities, and the remaining 4% were of unknown ethnicity. A total of 213 of these freshman seminar men participated in the study in one of the two conditions (50.5% of eligible male students). However, usable data from both assessment points were available from only 85 men who participated in the prevention program group condition and 94 men who participated in the comparison group condition of this study. Thus, the overall participation rate for this study was 42%.

### Procedure

*Comparison group condition.* The comparison group was obtained across the 2 weeks prior to The Men's Program arriving on campus. To obtain a comparison group, 17 freshman seminar instructors were randomly selected from a list of 49 eligible freshman seminar instructors. These 17 instructors taught a total of 22 seminar sections. Useable contact information was obtained for 16 of the 17 randomly selected instructors (94.1%). Each was sent an email requesting permission to attend their class, to provide instruction on another required freshman seminar topic unrelated to sexual assault, and to recruit student participants to the comparison condition. Instructors were informed that once in the classroom, all consenting students in the comparison condition would be asked to provide responses to the same voluntary and anonymous survey packets (pre and post) that investigators planned to later administer to The Men's Program participants. According to procedure, after obtaining informed consent, surveys were administered twice, once before and then again immediately after comparison students' exposure to the material in the comparison condition. Of the 16 contacted instructors, nine (56%) agreed to let their students be recruited for the comparison condition. These nine instructors were responsible for a total of 10 freshman seminar classes. The remaining instructors all indicated that their class time was already fully scheduled.

Data were then collected from these 10 classes, with 9 of the classes electing to receive a stress management comparison condition and one class electing to receive a managing attention difficulties comparison condition. Among comparison group classes, 94 men participated. No male participants who attended class on the day of the surveys refused to participate in the comparison condition; however, it is unknown how many men were absent from class that day. During the debriefing process for the comparison participants,

all participants were told not to complete the survey a second time if they attended The Men's Program. To ensure that these same men did not inadvertently participate in the study twice, a check-in procedure was used at The Men's Program such that each student was asked, on entrance to The Men's Program, the name of their freshman seminar instructor and the day and time that their class was scheduled to meet. Individuals who were enrolled in a class that had already been randomly assigned to the control condition were not allowed to receive a survey packet when they entered the room; however, they did get program participation credit from their instructors as warranted at the end of the program.

The procedure in each comparison classroom was as follows: After obtaining informed consent, researchers distributed the surveys. Presurveys were distributed for immediate completion; at the same time, students were given a sealed envelope containing the post-survey for later completion. Pre- and postsurveys were identified via matching subject numbers; no names or other identifiers were used to match responses. Researchers collected the presurveys immediately after they were filled out. The content of the comparison session then consisted of a video and discussion on either stress management or attention difficulties. After the comparison presentation, participants were instructed to open their sealed envelopes and complete the postsurveys. After the postsurveys were answered and collected from all participants, the researchers debriefed all comparison participants.

*The Men's Program condition.* In the week immediately following the completion of the collection of the comparison condition data, four highly trained, male, recent college graduates from the organization One in Four visited the campus and presented The Men's Program. In a parallel process, a pretest was administered to all consenting and eligible students (they were eligible if they had not participated in the comparison condition) prior to the start of the program ( $n = 85$  of 145, or 59% possible participants agreed to participate and provided usable data). As with the comparison condition, participating students were given the presurvey along with a sealed envelope containing the postsurvey for later completion. Pre- and postsurveys were identified via matching subject numbers; no names or other identifiers were used to match responses. Presurveys were collected immediately before the start of The Men's Program. At the conclusion of the program, men were instructed to open their sealed envelopes and complete their postsurveys. Postsurveys were collected as the male students exited the program.

### *Participant Descriptives*

As expected, given that students were recruited from freshmen seminar courses, the majority of study participants identified themselves as freshmen ( $n = 203$  of 213, with five students failing to answer the question and five students indicating that they were sophomores). The mean age of participants was 18.88 years ( $SD = 2.14$ , range = 17 to 32 years). No differences in age were found between men participating in the prevention program (mean age = 19.08,  $SD = 2.61$ ) versus men participating in the comparison condition (mean age = 18.62,  $SD = 1.28$ ),  $t(207) = 1.76$ ,  $p = .11$ .

## Measures

**Bystander Efficacy Scale (BES).** Confidence in one's ability to perform as a bystander was measured by the BES developed by Banyard, Plante, and Moynihan (2005). The BES asks participants to indicate whether they believe that they could do each of 18 bystander behaviors and, if so, to indicate their level of confidence in performing the bystander behavior in question. Items in which participants express confidence in their ability to perform bystander behavior include "Express my discomfort if someone says that rape victims are to blame for being raped" and "Get help and resources for a friend who tells me they have been raped." Higher scores on the BES indicate greater perceived bystander efficacy. Criterion validity of the BES was previously established through a significant correlation between bystander efficacy and actual bystander behavior ( $r = .30$ ; Banyard, 2008). Construct validity was established with a significant correlation between bystander efficacy and rape myth acceptance (Banyard, 2008). The BES scale yielded an alpha reliability of .91 at pretest and .95 at posttest in the current sample of college men.

**Bystander Willingness to Help Scale (BWHS).** The BWHS (Banyard et al., 2005) measures participants' degree of willingness to help and their perceived likelihood to engage in 12 bystandering behaviors on a 7-point scale. Items on this scale came from the research literature and from discussions with advocates and professionals working in the field of sexual violence. Items on the BWHS ask participants to rate the likelihood that they would do such things as "if an acquaintance has had too much to drink, I ask them if they need to be walked home from the party" and "Refuse to remain silent about instances of sexual violence I may know about." Higher scores on the BWHS correspond to greater willingness to help as a potential bystander. Criterion validity of the BWHS was established through a significant correlation between bystander willingness to help and actual bystander behavior ( $r = .37$ ). Construct validity was established with a significant correlation between likelihood of intervening as a bystander and rape myth acceptance (Banyard, 2008). The alpha reliability for the BWHS was .84 at pretest and .90 at posttest in the current sample.

**Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale—Short Form (IRMA-SF).** Belief in rape myths was assessed by the IRMA-SF (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999). The IRMA-SF includes 19 items scored on a scale of 1 = *not at all agree* to 7 = *very much agree*. Scores at the higher end of the scale indicate stronger endorsement of rape myths. Sample items include "If a woman is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of control" and "Although most women wouldn't admit it, they generally find being physically forced into sex a real turn on." The construct validity of the IRMA was shown by correlating it with seven similar rape-attitude measures ( $r$ 's = between .50 and .74,  $p$ 's < .001). Furthermore, a study of groups already known to differ in rape myth acceptance were found to score differently as predicted on the IRMA ( $p < .001$ ), and a validity study showed that IRMA scores were correlated as predicted with content analyses of open-ended scenarios written by participants that were analyzed for rape myth content ( $r = .32$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The coefficient alphas for the IRMA-SF in the current sample were .91 at pretest and .94 at posttest.

## Results

### *Bystander Efficacy and Willingness to Intervene*

To test Hypotheses 1 and 2, which posited that there would be a greater increase in bystander efficacy and bystander willingness to help in The Men's Program participants from pre- to postprogram than in comparison participants, a  $2 \times 2$  mixed multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was performed with the BES and the BWHS as the dependent variables.

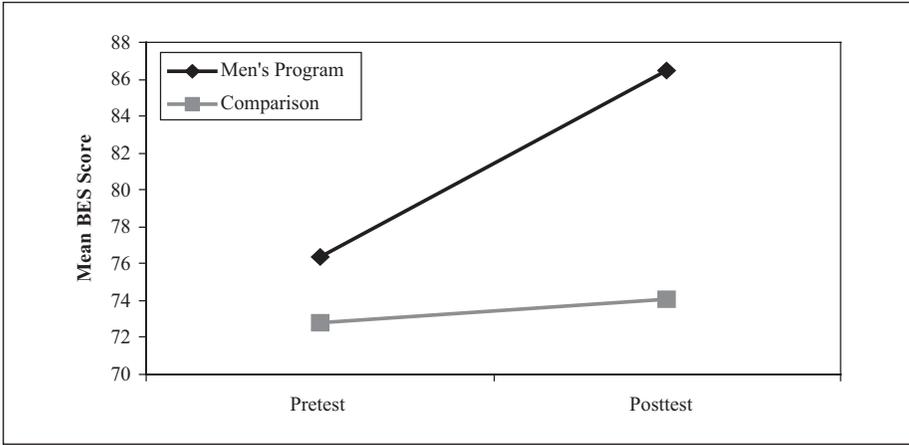
As hypothesized, a group by time interaction was obtained,  $\Lambda = .79$ ,  $F(2, 174) = 22.97$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .21$ . There was also a significant main effect for group,  $\Lambda = .90$ ,  $F(2, 174) = 9.21$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .10$ ; and for occasion of measurement,  $\Lambda = .55$ ,  $F(2, 174) = 72.19$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .45$ . Follow-up univariate analyses (ANOVAs) were conducted to determine which scales contributed to the overall significant interaction effect. These analyses indicated that there was a significant interaction effect for both the BES,  $F(1, 175) = 32.03$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .16$ , and for the BWHS,  $F(1, 175) = 26.82$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .13$ .

*Hypothesis 1: Bystander Efficacy.* Follow-up simple effects analyses were conducted to demonstrate which aspects of the interaction were significant for the BES. As shown in Figure 1, The Men's Program versus comparison contrast within the posttest occasion of measurement was significant for the BES,  $F(1, 175) = 23.79$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .12$ , whereas the same comparison at the pretest administration showed that there were no significant differences between groups prior to the intervention,  $F(1, 175) = 2.33$ ,  $p = .13$ . In addition, the pretest to posttest contrast within The Men's Program group showed significant change over time,  $F(1, 84) = 60.44$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .42$ , whereas the pretest to posttest comparison for the comparison group did not,  $F(1, 91) = 1.94$ ,  $p = .17$ .

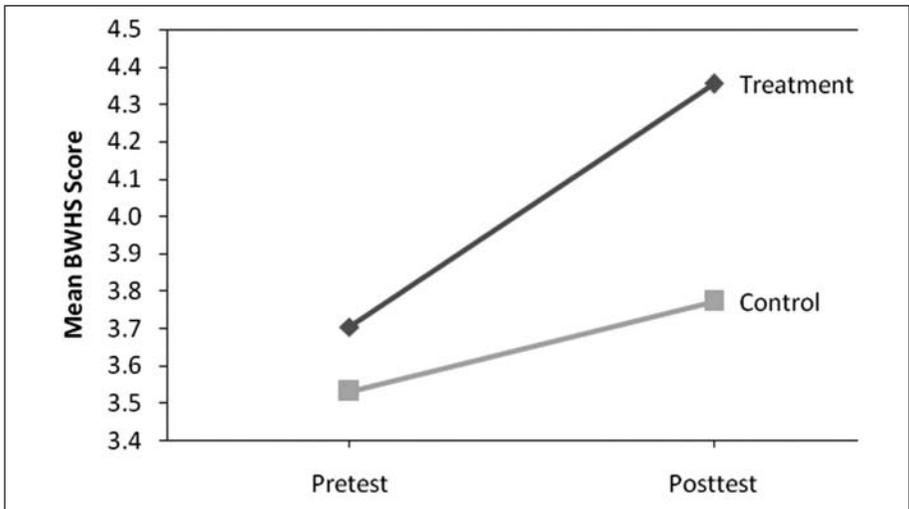
*Hypothesis 2: Bystander Willingness to Help.* Follow-up simple effects analyses were also conducted to determine which aspects of the interaction were significant for the BWHS. As shown in Figure 2 and contrary to expectation, the pretest to posttest contrasts were significant for both The Men's Program group,  $F(1, 84) = 97.59$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .54$ , and the comparison group,  $F(1, 91) = 27.48$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .23$ . However, The Men's Program versus comparison group comparison was significant at posttest,  $F(1, 175) = 35.47$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .17$ , whereas no significant effects were obtained for The Men's Program versus comparison contrast for the pretest condition,  $F(1, 175) = 3.26$ ,  $p = .07$ .

### *Rape Myth Acceptance*

Hypothesis 3 was tested with a  $2 \times 2$  ANOVA using the total score of the IRMA-SF as the dependent variable (Payne et al., 1999). In this analysis, the between-subjects factor was the group assignment with two levels: experiencing The Men's Program versus experienc-



**Figure 1.** Mean Bystander Efficacy Scale (BES) scores by occasion of measurement (pretest, posttest) and group assignment (Men's Program participants versus comparison participants)



**Figure 2.** Mean Bystander Willingness to Help Scale (BWHS) scores by occasion of measurement (pretest, posttest) and group assignment (The Men's Program participants versus comparison participants).

ing the comparison condition. The within-subjects factor was the occasion of measurement with pretest versus posttest as the two levels.

Results indicate that, as predicted, mean rape myth acceptance scores fell significantly from pretest to posttest among program participants in The Men's Program,  $F(1, 157) = 47.98$ ,  $p < .001$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .23$ , whereas there was no significant difference in rape myth acceptance from pretest to posttest for the control group ( $p > .05$ ). Pretest scores for the two groups were

statistically equivalent. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, at the posttest occasion, there was a significant difference between the two groups,  $F(1, 157) = 4.84, p = .029$ , partial  $\eta^2 = .03$ . Specifically, at posttest, college men who experienced The Men's Program self-reported significantly lower rape myth acceptance than did men who experienced the comparison condition.

## Discussion

This study represents a preliminary test of the effectiveness of a rape-prevention program, The Men's Program, in changing college men's perceived efficacy to engage in bystander behavior, their self-reported willingness to help potential victims of sexual assault, and their endorsement of rape myth beliefs from pre- to post-program.

College men who attended The Men's Program self-reported significantly greater changes in their perceptions of their bystander efficacy and their willingness to intervene from pretest to posttest than did college men who attended the comparison programming; this interaction effect accounted for 21% of the variance in scores over time. This finding lends further credence to the work of Banyard, Moynihan et al., 2007 showing that training men about bystander intervention can increase their perceived intervention efficacy and their self-reported willingness to intervene in ways that may enhance rape-prevention efforts. Ongoing research will be needed to replicate this finding, to establish that these attitudinal changes can and will be maintained over time and that these perceived changes in beliefs will correspond to changes in actual bystander behavior.

Consistent with expectations and prior research (Foubert, 2000; Foubert & Newberry, 2006), significant reductions in rape myth acceptance were also found for college men who attended The Men's Program compared with college men who attended the unrelated college programming that constituted the comparison condition. This finding highlights that college men still hold rape myths that are amenable to change and that significant self-reported changes can occur in response to relatively short programs (each man attended The Men's Program for approximately 1 hr). Given that rape and sexual assault are ongoing concerns at many college campuses and that the consequences of rape are often severe for victims, these data should encourage the efforts of college program planners and policy makers to address the topic of sexual assault among students. This recommendation would grow stronger if these findings moved beyond a simple paper and pencil pre/post assessment and were replicated with a true experimental design in which individual participants were randomly assigned to condition (rather than by enrollment in seminar classes) and if it can be demonstrated that these findings endure long after the program is completed.

## Limitations

Several limitations are worth noting regarding the present study. The degree to which this sample of participants can be generalized to freshman college men as a whole is unknown because not all instructors required their male students to attend this program and not all students who were encouraged and/or required to attend complied with their instructors'

wishes. As such, selection factors may offer an alternative explanation for these findings. Specifically, it is likely that the most motivated men chose to participate in the program. Attending participants may have possessed characteristics that might account for positive changes in attitudes apart from program effects. Consequently, the obtained findings should be considered preliminary in nature. Replication of these findings with a more rigorous experimental design will be essential. Second, although extensive efforts were made to prevent men who participated in the comparison condition from participating again in the experimental condition, the anonymity of the participants' responses prevented complete certainty about the independence of these data. Third, it is not yet known whether certain types of men are more or less likely to benefit from participation in The Men's Program. Future research that considers the degree to which preexisting characteristics of participants affect their experience of The Men's Program will be essential. Future research would also benefit from using a true experimental design that allows random assignment of each participant to a group while simultaneously providing ample time for survey completion prior to the initiation and at the completion of the program. This type of design will allow the field to make causal interpretations of the data and will reduce problems due to missing data. Advancements to the field will also be more likely when the various rape-prevention programs that are predicated on different models are directly tested against one another and when the mechanisms for change within each program are better specified. Understanding the specific factors that predict behavior change will also be essential as, for example, previous research has demonstrated that preexisting levels of cognitive dissonance successfully predicted behavior change at Time 2 in response to a dating violence-prevention program (Schumacher & Slep, 2004). Future investigations will also be needed to determine the generalizability of the present findings to other geographic locations and types of participants.

The present study is also limited in that the only program outcomes assessed were those that were immediate and attitudinal. Past research shows that program effects frequently decline over time (Anderson & Whiston, 2005) and, therefore, administering posttests immediately at the conclusion of a program likely overinflates program effects. The attitude change that was demonstrated in the current study may not correspond to actual behavior change (Schewe, 2007); behavioral change indices constitute the essential program outcome data. Future research should use a long-term follow-up design with the bystander variables to determine whether the effects from these types of short-term programs can endure over time. It would also be of much greater value to assess actual behavior change using a design that does not rely solely on self-report measures. For example, future researchers could randomly divide control and experimental participants into groups, train experimental participants in bystander interventions using this program, expose both groups to either contrived or otherwise observed bystander scenarios, and record whether trained participants actually behave differently from other participants. The more future research is able to include data from studies that obtained observations of actual behavior, the more it will inform this area of study. It is hoped that the current study will function as a platform for these additional and advanced research efforts.

## Conclusion

Taken as a whole, however, the findings of the present study provide initial support for the notion that a very brief, one-session intervention, implemented by male peer educators in a group format, can reduce immediate endorsement of rape myths and can increase college men's self-reported efficacy and willingness to intervene as bystanders in potentially dangerous rape-related situations. Given the frequent occurrence of sexual assault and rape-related behaviors on many college campuses, the results of the present study should be considered as college program planners work to garner administrative, faculty, parent, and student support for the inclusion of this type of prevention programming as a routine part of campus life.

## Authors' Note

Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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