

## Attitudinal Antecedents of Rape Myth Acceptance: A Theoretical and Empirical Reexamination

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M. R. Burt (1980) concluded that acceptance of rape myths was strongly related to adversarial sexual beliefs, tolerance of interpersonal violence, and gender role stereotyping. However, the scales designed to assess these variables appear to share an emphasis on hostile attitudes toward women. Using alternative measures and 3 samples of undergraduates ( $N = 429$ ; 199 men and 230 women), the authors demonstrated that hostility toward women can partially account for the relation of the various Burt constructs with rape myth acceptance. In addition, a direct measure of hostility toward women exhibits considerably more predictive power among men than women, suggesting that rape myths may function differently for men and women and that there is significant utility in exploring a more broadly defined construct of misogyny for understanding the acceptance of sexual violence toward women.

It has become commonplace to suggest that American society is a “rape culture,” in which sexual violence is supported by specific cultural characteristics (Brownmiller, 1975; Koss et al., 1993; Koss, Leonard, Beezley, & Oros, 1985). One of the most fruitful lines of research in this area has been the examination of a core of cultural beliefs and attitudes about rape, first termed *rape myths* in Burt’s (1980) classic article. Burt defined such myths as “prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists” (Burt, 1980, p. 217).

Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) recently reviewed the body of research arising from this formulation and proposed a modified characterization. They define rape myths as “attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women” (p. 134). Synthesizing a variety of disciplinary perspectives (i.e., psychology, sociology, philosophy, and anthropology), they note that the essential characteristic of a myth is not necessarily the degree to which it represents an empirical fact (many myths contain some “grain of truth”) but rather the particular cultural function that is served by the belief or attitude. Consistent with other functional analyses of myth, they argued that rape mythology serves to justify particular cultural practices—in this case the widespread sexual victimization of women—and that this cultural function is the definitive element, rather than its veracity in any particular situation.

Consistent with such theorizing, empirical work has suggested that rape-supportive attitudes are among the very few variables that discriminate sexually aggressive college men from other men (Koss et al., 1985; Malamuth, 1986). However, such attitudes do not differentiate female victims of sexual violence

from other women (Koss, 1985; Koss & Dinero, 1989). Among women who have been victimized, however, the acceptance of such victim-blaming rape attitudes does significantly interfere with the recovery process, and such women report worse outcomes than those who reject these attitudes (Katz & Burt, 1988). Examples of rape myths and further discussion of their functions are provided both in Burt (1991) and Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994).

The first empirical examination of rape myths was reported by Burt (1980), who presented a causal model of rape myth acceptance that included background, personality, experiential, and attitudinal variables. Her analysis indicated that a cluster of attitudinal variables (traditional gender role attitudes, adversarial sexual beliefs, and acceptance of interpersonal violence) was a strong predictor of rape myth acceptance. In Burt’s data, the strongest single predictor was acceptance of interpersonal violence, that is “the notion that force and coercion are legitimate ways to gain compliance, and specifically that they are legitimate in intimate relationships” (Burt, 1980, p. 218); background and personality variables predicted rape myth acceptance only when mediated by this attitudinal cluster. Burt suggested that the strong predictive power of these variables provided support for feminist theories that implicate cultural forces in the continuation of sexual aggression.

In the years since Burt (1980) first defined and investigated rape myths, her original 19-item Rape Myth Acceptance Scale has remained the most widely used instrument in the field. In addition, her measures of the critical predictors (gender role stereotyping, adversarial sexual beliefs, and acceptance of interpersonal violence) are also extensively used. Research has consistently replicated her original findings that the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale is closely related to the Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale and Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale (Burt & Albin, 1981; Check & Malamuth, 1985; Fonow, Richardson, & Wemmerus, 1992; Murphy, Coleman, & Haynes, 1986; Mynatt & Allgeier, 1990; Quackenbush, 1989; Reilly, Lott, Caldwell, & DeLuca, 1992; Senn & Radtke, 1990; Ward, 1988).

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Although these instruments are widely accepted, they have a variety of theoretical and psychometric shortcomings, which suggests that conclusions drawn from the research may be to some degree artifactual or, at least, oversimplified. An extended critique of the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale's content validity, item wording, and criterion-related validity has been presented elsewhere (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994), and similar problems can be found in related measures (e.g., the Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale and Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale). Neither scale demonstrates a firm base of content validity, which can only be established by sampling from the entire theoretically specified domain of potential statements.

For example, although the verbal definition of adversarial sexual beliefs is gender neutral, its operational definition on the Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale is almost exclusively concerned with the notion that women are deceitful and manipulative. Examination of this scale reveals that most of its items assess negative beliefs about women, rather than adversarial sexual beliefs *per se*; specifically, only two items appear to assess hostility toward men, whereas the remaining six reflect negative beliefs about women. We suggest that the theoretically critical relation could actually be between rape myth acceptance and hostility toward women, which has different theoretical implications than that between rape myth acceptance and adversarial sexual beliefs. Research on the convergent and discriminant validity of these two concepts is important for clarifying these issues.

Similarly, the construct validity of the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale is not well established, as most items assess acceptance of violence specifically targeted against women. Indeed, several authors refer to the scale as a measure of acceptance of violence against women (Malamuth, 1988; Russell, Horn, & Huddle, 1988). If this scale assesses violence against women as opposed to attitudes toward violence more generally, the accepted theoretical relation is thrown into question. The nature of this particular association is especially critical because current theories of rape motivation rest heavily on the assumption that rape is an expression of aggression rather than sexuality (e.g., Brownmiller, 1975; Hegeman & Meikle, 1980; Lisak & Roth, 1988; Sanday, 1981; Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1974).

In a related vein, we note that many items on the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale appear to tap aggression that is specifically sexual in nature; indeed, it is difficult to distinguish them theoretically from items tapping rape myths themselves. For example, one item states, "Being roughed up is sexually stimulating to many women." Thus, rather than predicting rape myth acceptance, we submit that the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale may be confounded with rape myth acceptance. A more appropriate operationalization of this construct would reflect statements about violence less dependent on sexual context, with a concomitant emphasis on tolerance of interpersonal violence in a variety of contexts and levels of intensity (e.g., corporal punishment, capital punishment, the use of force between nations, as well as settling disputes between individuals).

In summary, we suggest that the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale and the Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale, in addition to being partially confounded with the criterion they attempt to predict (rape myth acceptance), are mainly assessing

a basic hostility toward women. Such a distinction has important theoretical implications for a reexamination of the original conceptualization of rape myth acceptance and the nomological net of its correlates. This theoretical distinction combines with the psychometric considerations discussed in Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) to suggest a reexamination of Burt's (1980) classic measurement instruments and conclusions.

### Reconceptualization of Burt's Model

This article examines evidence for our contention that the operational definitions of the critical variables in rape myth research are theoretically problematic. To begin, we propose specifically to separate hostility toward women from other theoretical constructs (such as adversarial sexual beliefs and acceptance of interpersonal violence) by revising the relevant measures (the Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale and Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale) so that they parallel more closely their respective constructs, as originally defined by Burt (1980). A separate scale assessing hostility toward women is also examined. Finally, we use an alternative measure of rape myth acceptance, one derived from a thorough specification of the rape myth domain and whose items are clear, concise, and easily interpretable. These procedures allow a direct test of our hypothesis that Burt's original findings can be mainly accounted for by the relation of rape myth acceptance to hostility toward women. Specifically, we hypothesize the following:

A specific measure of hostility toward women will add little if any power to the ability of the original Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale and the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale to predict rape myth acceptance; but it will significantly improve the ability of alternative, "gender-neutral" measures of these constructs to predict rape myth acceptance.

Simply stated, we believe that the critical construct in understanding rape myth acceptance is a general hostility toward women; the predictive power of other variables should pale in comparison.

## Method

### Overview

The present study was conducted in three phases. The first involved a pilot sample of participants whose responses were used for preliminary scale development; a second group participated in the scale development phase, to examine the reliability and validity of the revised instruments. A final group of participants constituted the core sample generating the correlation and regression data we used to test our hypotheses. These subsamples are described more fully below.

### Participants

A total of 429 undergraduates (199 men and 230 women) participated in the three phases of this study. The participation of 51 students for preliminary pilot analysis was obtained by offering money on a sign-up sheet posted in the psychology building; 36 of these students were women, and 15 were men. Responses from 200 students (100 women and 100 men) were used in the scale development phase. Participation of these students was obtained through either introductory psychology or educational psychology courses; they received course credit for their participation. Average age of these students was 18.6 years. Finally, the

core sample consisted of 176 students (84 men and 92 women). Their participation was also obtained through psychology or educational psychology, in exchange for course credit. Mean age in the core sample was 18.1 years.

### *Instruments*

**Burt Scales.** To test our hypotheses, participants in the core sample were asked to complete two of the scales presented in Burt (1980). Participants responded to the 6-item Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale and the 9-item Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale; coefficient alphas, as reported in Burt (1980), were .59 and .80, respectively. Analysis of the core sample in the present study yielded similar alpha coefficients for each of the scales: .62 for the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence and .79 for the Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale.

**Attitudes Toward Violence Scale.** Participants also responded to a measure of attitudes toward violence consisting of 20 items derived in part from the 47-item Attitudes Toward Violence Scale presented in Velicer, Huckel, and Hansen (1989). This measure was presented as an alternative measure of acceptance of interpersonal violence, defined as "the notion that force and coercion are legitimate ways to gain compliance and specifically that they are legitimate in intimate relationships" (Burt, 1980, p. 218). We presented participants in the pilot and development samples with 20 items chosen to cover the theoretical domains described in Velicer et al. (1989): war, capital punishment, corporal punishment, interpersonal disputes, and so on. Of these 20 items, 10 statements measure attitudes toward violence in interpersonal relationships, and 10 assess attitudes toward violence in other domains.

Item wording was modified to reflect lower levels of violence in hopes of reducing possible effects of social desirability; in addition, items were selected that did not overemphasize sexual violence or violence against women. Typical items are "The death penalty should be part of every penal code," or "It is all right for a partner to hit the other if they are unfaithful." Items are written only in a positive direction, that is, higher scores reflect more accepting attitudes toward violence. A total score of attitudes toward violence was computed by summing across the items, all of which were scaled in standard 7-point Likert format. Data from the development sample yielded an alpha of .87, and item-to-total correlations ranging from .32 to .65. Items were presented to participants in eight different randomized orders; they are provided in Table 1.

**Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs Scale.** A 15-item scale was developed as an alternative measure of adversarial sexual beliefs, defined as "the expectation that sexual relationships are fundamentally exploitative, that each party to them is manipulative, sly, cheating, opaque to the other's understanding, and not to be trusted" (Burt, 1980, p. 218). Care was taken to ensure that the items focused on the nature of the relationship between the sexes, rather than on stereotypical characteristics of either sex. In addition to items assessing beliefs about heterosexual relationships, we included statements concerning the adversarial nature of male-female working relationships, platonic friendships, and the relationship between the sexes in the greater society. Cronbach's alpha for the resulting scale was .78 in the development sample; item-to-total correlations ranged from .37 to .67. A typical item reads "It's impossible for men and women to truly understand each other," or "In all societies it is inevitable that one sex is dominant." Twelve of the items reflect an adversarial relationship between the sexes, whereas 3 reflect a nonadversarial relationship and are reversed for scoring. Items for the Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs Scale are also provided in Table 1.

**Hostility Toward Women Scale.** Nineteen items were developed to directly assess the construct of hostility toward women. The statements were derived from Check, Malamuth, Elias, and Barton's (1985) 30-item Hostility Toward Women and Hostility Toward Men Scales. The items were sampled with the criteria of simplicity of ideas, clarity of wording, and nonredundance with other items. Wording of several

items was modified for simplicity, clarity, and equal applicability for participants of either sex (slightly different wording was provided for the male and female participants). The 19 statements were presented to participants in the pilot sample, and preliminary analysis resulted in the elimination of nine items to strengthen the internal consistency. The wording of several remaining items was also modified to reduce the number requiring reverse scoring. The resultant 10 items were then presented to the development sample; this analysis yielded a coefficient alpha of .83 for the final scale. Typical items include, "I am easily angered by (other) women," or "Sometimes (other) women bother me just by being around." Item-to-total correlations (on the basis of data from the development sample) for this scale ranged from .33 to .77; items are provided in Table 1.

**Rape Myth Scale.** To replace Burt's (1980) Rape Myth Acceptance Scale as a criterion, we developed an alternative Rape Myth Scale from analysis of an item pool containing 95 statements reflecting the definition described earlier, that is, attitudes and generally false beliefs about rape that are widely and persistently held, and that function to deny and justify male sexual aggression. Care was taken to cover the seven aspects of the rape myth construct identified by Payne (1993): victim precipitation, definition of rape, male intention, victim desire-enjoyment, false charges, trivialization of the crime, and deviance of the act. Analysis of psychometric information from the development sample and examination of item content and wording resulted in the selection of 19 statements for the final scale. Final items were selected on the basis of three criteria: clarity of wording and reference to sexual assault; least overlap of content with items in other domains; and psychometric considerations, such as mean level of endorsement and item variance. Coefficient alpha for the final 19-item Rape Myth Scale was .89 in the development sample; item-to-total correlations ranged from .38 to .73. All items are positively worded, so that higher scores indicate greater acceptance of rape myths. Scale items are provided in Table 1.<sup>1</sup>

### *Procedure*

All three phases of the present study were conducted using the same procedure. Participation occurred in sessions with eight or fewer individuals and an experimenter. Within each session, all participants and experimenter were of the same sex. Both verbal and written instructions were provided, and students provided informed consent. All items were presented through a computer monitor, and participants responded using numeric keys. The items within the questionnaires were randomized by a computerized program and presented in eight different orders to the students. The ordering of questionnaires, however, was identical for all participants.

Responses and response latency were recorded by the computer. Participants with response times under 1.5 s were informed by the sound of a low-frequency tone that they had responded too quickly and were reminded to consider each item carefully. Participants were provided with the option of responding to an alternative set of items (from the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory) if the experimental materials were problematic or offensive in any way. (The four participants who exercised this option were dropped from further analyses.) On completion, participants were debriefed, thanked, and provided resources to acquire additional information about the experiment or the issues involved (e.g., phone numbers of the experimenters, local rape crisis center, student counseling center, etc.).

<sup>1</sup> Extensive further analysis of the 95 rape myth items resulted in the creation of a 40-item long form and 17-item short form of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. Items and information pertaining to the reliability and validity of these scales are available in Payne (1993).

Table 1  
Scale Items

<p>Attitudes Toward Violence Scale (derived from Velicer, Huckel, &amp; Hansen, 1989)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Violent crimes should be punished violently.</li> <li>2. The death penalty should be part of every penal code.</li> <li>3. Any prisoner deserves to be mistreated by other prisoners in jail.</li> <li>4. Any nation should be ready with a strong military at all times.</li> <li>5. The manufacture of weapons is necessary.</li> <li>6. War is often necessary.</li> <li>7. The government should send armed soldiers to control violent university riots.</li> <li>8. Our country should be aggressive with its military internationally.</li> <li>9. Killing of civilians should be accepted as an unavoidable part of war.</li> <li>10. Our country has the right to protect its borders forcefully.</li> <li>11. A child's habitual disobedience should be punished physically.</li> <li>12. Giving mischievous children a quick slap is the best way to quickly end trouble.</li> <li>13. Children should be spanked for temper tantrums.</li> <li>14. Punishing children physically when they deserve it will make them responsible and mature adults.</li> <li>15. Young children who refuse to obey should be whipped.</li> <li>16. It is all right for a partner to hit the other if they are unfaithful.</li> <li>17. It is all right for a partner to slap the other if insulted or ridiculed.</li> <li>18. It is all right for a partner to slap the other's face if challenged.</li> <li>19. An adult should whip a child for breaking the law.</li> <li>20. It is all right for a partner to hit the other if they flirt with others.</li> </ol>	<p>Hostility Toward Women Scale (from Check, Malamuth, Elias, &amp; Barton, 1985)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I feel that many times women flirt with men just to tease them or hurt them.</li> <li>2. I believe that most women tell the truth.</li> <li>3. I usually find myself agreeing with (other) women.</li> <li>4. I think that most women would lie just to get ahead.</li> <li>5. (M) Generally, it is safer not to trust women. (F) It is generally safer not to trust women too much.</li> <li>6. When it really comes down to it, a lot of women are deceitful.</li> <li>7. I am easily angered by (other) women.</li> <li>8. I am sure I get a raw deal from the (other) women in my life.</li> <li>9. Sometimes (other) women bother me by just being around.</li> <li>10. (Other) Women are responsible for most of my troubles.</li> </ol>
<p>Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs Scale</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In dating relationships people are mostly out to take advantage of each other.</li> <li>2. If you don't show who's boss in the beginning of a relationship you will be taken advantage of later.</li> <li>3. Most people are pretty devious and manipulative when they are trying to attract someone of the opposite sex.</li> <li>4. Men and women are generally out to use each other.</li> <li>5. It's impossible for men and women to truly understand each other.</li> <li>6. In the work force any gain by one sex necessitates a loss for the other.</li> <li>7. When women enter the work force they are taking jobs away from men.</li> <li>8. Men and women cannot really be friends.</li> <li>9. Sex is like a game where one person "wins" and the other "loses."</li> <li>10. In all societies it is inevitable that one sex is dominant.</li> <li>11. It is natural for one spouse to be in control of the other.</li> <li>12. When it comes to sex, most people are just trying to use the other person.</li> <li>13. It is possible for the sexes to be equal in society.</li> <li>14. Men and women share more similarities than differences.</li> <li>15. It is possible for a man and a woman to be "just friends."</li> </ol>	<p>Rape Myth Scale</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. When women talk and act sexy, they are inviting rape.</li> <li>2. When a woman is raped, she usually did something careless to put herself in that situation.</li> <li>3. Any woman who teases a man sexually and doesn't finish what she started realistically deserves anything she gets.</li> <li>4. Many rapes happen because women lead men on.</li> <li>5. Men don't usually intend to force sex on a woman, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away.</li> <li>6. In some rape cases, the woman actually wanted it to happen.</li> <li>7. Even though the woman may call it rape, she probably enjoyed it.</li> <li>8. If a woman doesn't physically fight back, you can't really say that it was a rape.</li> <li>9. A rape probably didn't happen if the woman has no bruises or marks.</li> <li>10. When a woman allows petting to get to a certain point, she is implicitly agreeing to have sex.</li> <li>11. If a woman is raped, often it's because she didn't say "no" clearly enough.</li> <li>12. Women tend to exaggerate how much rape affects them.</li> <li>13. When men rape, it is because of their strong desire for sex.</li> <li>14. It is just part of human nature for men to take sex from women who let their guard down.</li> <li>15. A rapist is more likely to be Black or Hispanic than White.</li> <li>16. In any rape case one would have to question whether the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation.</li> <li>17. Rape mainly occurs on the "bad" side of town.</li> <li>18. Many so-called rape victims are actually women who had sex and "changed their minds" afterwards.</li> <li>19. If a husband pays all the bills, he has the right to sex with his wife whenever he wants.</li> </ol>

Results

The primary purpose of this study was to test the hypothesis that the Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale and Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale are saturated with a generalized hostility toward women, rather than assessing the more general constructs for which they were defined. Furthermore, it is speculated that this generalized hostility accounts for these scales' relation with rape myth acceptance. Our results are presented first for the entire sample and then for each sex separately.

First, we examined the sample correlation matrices; we reasoned that if our hypothesis is correct, the original Burt scales

should exhibit a stronger relation with the Hostility Toward Women Scale than our gender-neutral alternatives. Examination of the pattern of correlations displayed in Tables 2 and 3 reveals them to be generally consistent with our assumptions, the one exception being the relatively greater correlation of the Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs Scale (as opposed to the Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale) with hostility toward women in the female subsample. Given the consistently high, positive values of these correlations, however, a sample size of nearly 3,000 would be necessary to assert that differences in the relative magnitude of correlations are statistically significant. We thus examined our hypothesis more formally through a series of multiple regressions.

Table 2  
Pearson Correlation Matrix of Scale Scores ( $N = 176$ )

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. AIVS	—					
2. ASBS	0.613	—				
3. ATVS	0.476	0.511	—			
4. AHBS	0.543	0.698	0.453	—		
5. HTWS	0.407	0.520	0.337	0.494	—	
6. RMS	0.663	0.704	0.470	0.589	0.452	—

Note. AIVS = Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale; ASBS = Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale; ATVS = Attitudes Toward Violence Scale; AHBS = Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs Scale; HTWS = Hostility Toward Women Scale; RMS = Rape Myth Scale. Core sample includes 92 women and 84 men. All correlations are significant at  $p < .005$ , one-tailed.

Table 4 contains the relevant equations to assess the hypothesis in the overall sample. As can be seen, our prediction was supported; the addition of Hostility Toward Women Scale scores to a regression containing Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence and Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale scores contributes nothing unique to the prediction of rape myth acceptance as measured by the new Rape Myth Scale. However, when our more general measures of these constructs were examined (the Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs Scale and Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence), hostility toward women accounted for a small amount of unique variance in rape myth acceptance (2%).

This pattern becomes more striking when the sample is separated by sex and analyzed separately. As Table 5 reveals, the pattern for women paralleled those for the overall group, with Hostility Toward Women Scale scores failing to enter the regression containing the original Burt scales but accounting for an additional 6% of unique variance in the alternative equation.

Results for the men are different and even more striking; not only does the Hostility Toward Women Scale account for a sizable increment in Rape Myth Scale variance (12%) over and above the gender-neutral variables, but—and contrary to the pattern for women—it also accounted for additional variance (5%) even with the original variables. Underscoring the importance of hostility toward women in this sample of men is the large gender difference in the amount of variance accounted for when it is entered as a sole predictor; as Table 5 reveals, the Hostility Toward Women Scale scores alone accounts for 21% of the variance in women's rape myth acceptance scores, but 40% of the variance (i.e., virtually double) among the men. Clearly, this variable is a very powerful concept in men's cognitive understanding of rape.

### Discussion

We began this study with the speculation that two of Burt's (1980) original predictors of rape myth acceptance were theoretically confounded with hostility toward women, which we proposed was the critical antecedent to rape myth acceptance. Examination of the correlations among the relevant measures revealed a pattern generally consistent with this idea. Our pri-

mary data analytic strategy, however, involved a regression approach. Results of the various regressions provided clear support for our measurement contentions, as well as for the importance of hostility toward women as a theoretical antecedent of rape myth acceptance, especially for men. Overall, men's beliefs about rape were better predicted by the variables studied here; hostility toward women demonstrated the strongest difference, accounting for nearly twice as much variance in the male subsample. We discuss the measurement and theoretical implications of these findings in detail below.

### Measurement Issues

With respect to Burt's (1980) original measures, the issue raised is one of construct validity. Clearly, the scales are important empirical antecedents of rape myth acceptance (i.e., they demonstrate criterion-related validity); however, the actual nature of the construct they assess is less clear. We have argued on the basis of content analysis that the Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale taps beliefs that women are sly, manipulative, and self-centered creatures, whereas the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale assesses the belief that violence against women, particularly sexual violence, is acceptable in interpersonal relationships. We concluded that these measures, in addition to their specific, unique foci, share a common component that we identify as hostility toward women. Our finding that the Hostility Toward Women Scale added nothing to the ability of the Burt scales to predict scores on the new Rape Myth Scale (but did add to the predictive power of the alternative measures) raises questions regarding the construct validity of these scales as originally conceptualized. In addition, we suggest that Burt's original results are likely also partially attributable to the items on the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale that are con-

Table 3  
Pearson Correlation Matrix of Scale Scores by Sex

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6
Women ( $n = 92$ )						
1. AIVS	—					
2. ASBS	0.544	—				
3. ATVS	0.419	0.366	—			
4. AHBS	0.421	0.523	0.301	—		
5. HTWS	0.510	0.534	0.339	0.561	—	
6. RMS	0.625	0.567	0.330	0.399	0.459	—
Men ( $n = 84$ )						
1. AIVS	—					
2. ASBS	0.562	—				
3. ATVS	0.452	0.552	—			
4. AHBS	0.507	0.739	0.487	—		
5. HTWS	0.410	0.624	0.376	0.549	—	
6. RMS	0.584	0.698	0.489	0.563	0.632	—

Note. AIVS = Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale; ASBS = Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale; ATVS = Attitudes Toward Violence Scale; AHBS = Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs Scale; HTWS = Hostility Toward Women Scale; RMS = Rape Myth Scale. All correlations are significant at  $p < .005$ , one-tailed.

Table 4  
Regression Analysis of Core Sample ( $N = 176$ )

Variable	Standard coefficient	$p$	$R^2$
1. Constant	6.468	0.012	
2. AIVS	1.049	0.000	
3. ASBS	0.893	0.000	.581
1. Constant	3.967	0.220	
2. AIVS	1.019	0.000	
3. ASBS	0.833	0.000	
4. HTWS	0.136	0.206	.585
1. Constant	-4.003	0.382	
2. ATVS	0.220	0.000	
3. AHBS	0.761	0.000	.399
1. Constant	-7.838	0.099	
2. ATVS	0.198	0.001	
3. AHBS	0.639	0.000	
4. HTWS	0.328	0.009	.423
1. Constant	16.595	0.000	
2. HTWS	0.833	0.000	.204

Note. AIVS = Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale; ASBS = Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale; HTWS = Hostility Toward Women Scale; ATVS = Attitudes Toward Violence Scale; AHBS = Adversarial Heterosexual Belief Scale. Core sample included 92 women and 84 men. All  $p$ s are two-tailed.

cerned with sexual violence and thus can be considered rape myths themselves.

What exactly, then, is measured by the Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale and the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale? Such a question is difficult to answer without a construct validity project—including, in particular, multitrait, multimethod studies with sufficient statistical power to be definitive. However, it seems reasonable to propose that these scales may be tapping a multidimensional misogyny, a construct that is at once broader than those Burt proposes and also more specifically antiwoman than the gender-neutral descriptions and titles of her scales would suggest. Although hostility toward women constitutes the core of any such construct, it also includes acceptance of violence toward women; beliefs in traditional and restrictive roles for women; beliefs that women are sly, dishonest, and manipulative; and other elements not yet articulated.

### Theoretical Implications

Our most important finding was that the relation between hostility toward women and rape myth acceptance is considerably more powerful for men than for women. For example, as a single predictor, scores on the Hostility Toward Women Scale predicted a sizable 21% of the variance in rape myth acceptance for women but an even greater 40% for men. Such a finding is significant because of its bearing on the question of sex-related differences in the nature and function of rape myth acceptance. Consistent with theorizing in the literature (Brownmiller, 1975; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994), we believe that rape myth acceptance functions differently for men and women; that its critical

function for men is to justify male sexual violence, whereas for women it is to deny personal vulnerability. Our finding that the nomological net surrounding rape myth acceptance differs by sex provides some of the first evidence in support of such an idea, particularly because it suggests that hostility toward women is more critical in relation to rape myth acceptance for men than for women. Obviously, hostility toward women is a more effective way to justify male violence (for men) than to deny it (for women).

### Limitations and Future Directions

Our study is subject to the usual limitations inherent in research on college student populations, which may be a less pressing concern in the present case given the relevance of the subject matter for this group. Given that college students are targets of specific educational interventions on these issues, it is possible that these results might differ in more general populations. However, it is worth noting that under 10% of students at the sampled campus participate in rape education workshops provided by the university,<sup>2</sup> so that the direct impact of such interventions on the present results is likely to be minimal. However, the indirect impact in creating a more general level of campus awareness for the issues may have impacted the present results in ways that are not presently understood. Any such speculation awaits confirmation by future work.

A potentially more serious issue has to do with the problems posed by context effects, that is, the tendency (generally nonconscious) for individuals to present themselves consistently across a variety of related measures that are presented together (Council, 1993). The uniform pattern of high positive correlations could suggest such effects, as participants completed all measures during a single session. However, as the pattern of correlations differs substantially by sex—especially with respect to hostility toward women—we believe our conclusions are meaningful despite any such effects.

The use of newly developed or modified measures for the present study also necessitates caution in interpreting its outcome. The development of these alternative measures was necessitated by the general lack of such alternatives; in turn, this lack of alternative measures is probably due to the almost exclusive reliance on the Burt scales in this area of research. Clearly, the alternative measures used in this study have not enjoyed the rigorous psychometric investigation that most certainly lies ahead. The alternative scales require much further systematic examination, especially with respect to construct validation. Specifically, it should be determined whether the alternative scales are good predictors of critical variables such as actual sexual aggression among men. Furthermore, we note that the new Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs Scale correlates with the Hostility Toward Women Scale to the same degree as the established Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale and Ad-

<sup>2</sup> Approximately 3,000 (out of 35,000) students at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) participated in workshops provided through the Campus Acquaintance Rape Education program. This estimate was provided in the 1993-1994 annual report prepared by the Office of Women's Programs, Office of the Dean of Students, and Student Affairs at UIUC.

Table 5  
Regression Analyses of Core Sample, by Sex

Variable	Women (n = 92)			Men (n = 84)		
	Standard coefficient	p	R <sup>2</sup>	Standard coefficient	p	R <sup>2</sup>
1. Constant	11.853	0.000		10.591	0.018	
2. AIVS	1.112	0.000		0.768	0.003	
3. ASBS	0.505	0.001	.464	1.007	0.000	.541
1. Constant	10.123	0.006		2.339	0.633	
2. AIVS	1.043	0.000		0.697	0.004	
3. ASBS	0.454	0.004		0.690	0.000	
4. HTWS	0.112	0.361	.469	0.574	0.002	.594
1. Constant	8.077	0.182		4.192	0.558	
2. ATVS	0.167	0.022		0.222	0.006	
3. AHBS	0.452	0.001	.208	0.679	0.000	.378
1. Constant	6.584	0.262		-3.433	0.606	
2. ATVS	0.127	0.079		0.174	0.018	
3. AHBS	0.245	0.112		0.352	0.032	
4. HTWS	0.378	0.010	.266	0.827	0.000	.502
1. Constant	17.403	0.000		12.273	0.029	
2. HTWS	0.579	0.000	.211	1.223	0.000	.399

Note. AIVS = Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale; ASBS = Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale; HTWS = Hostility Toward Women Scale; ATVS = Attitudes Toward Violence Scale; AHBS = Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs Scale. All *ps* are two-tailed.

versarial Sexual Beliefs Scale. However, the Attitudes Toward Violence Scale does not show this pattern, and it is thus reasonable to suggest that it may be an effective gender-neutral alternative.

Among the newly developed or modified measures, special concern is warranted in interpreting scores on the Hostility Toward Women Scale. We hypothesized that the construct of hostility toward women would contribute unique variance in predicting scores on the Rape Myth Scale, suggesting that hostility toward women is an important construct to include in the nomological net surrounding rape myth acceptance. This idea was supported by the present evidence. However, it was additionally suggested that the construct of hostility toward women would constitute the very core of this rape-supportive structure of beliefs and attitudes. Although scores on the Hostility Toward Women Scale demonstrated considerable power in predicting rape myth acceptance, it is possible that an alternative measure of this construct would even further heighten its predictive ability. Examination of the items on the Hostility Toward Women Scale suggest that the scale might assess a milder construct than actual hostility. For example, items on the scale include statements such as "I believe that most women tell the truth," or "I usually find myself agreeing with women." Such items could potentially tap into dislike or mistrust of women, but are not likely to assess the true essence of hostility. Future study must examine this theoretical and psychometric issue, and re-explore the role of hostility toward women in this context.

Finally, our conclusions are limited by the use of a rape myth scale other than that in Burt's (1980) original study. Given the theoretical and psychometric considerations raised above, an alternative measure of rape myth acceptance was used in the pres-

ent investigation. Although we believe the development of this measure successfully addressed many of the concerns with the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, there is an inherent loss of comparability. Future research might examine our ideas using both the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale and our alternative measure of rape myth acceptance. Special attention in this work should focus on the construct validation of the new measure, to determine whether the scales tap into the same theoretical construct.

With respect to future work, we believe it is important to focus more directly on the function of these myths, especially in light of the finding that such functioning may differ by sex. In particular, it might well prove fruitful to examine the different subdomains of the rape myth construct. Researchers have generally examined the relative levels of rape myth acceptance, only in absolute terms (i.e., total scores on some global measures of rape myth acceptance). To date, no study has examined the acceptance of specific subsets of these myths; for example, men may well be more accepting of myths that function to justify male perpetuation of sexual violence, whereas women could be more accepting of those that deny their personal vulnerability. Such finer grained analyses are necessary not only to the scientific body of knowledge surrounding these issues but also for efforts aimed at reducing those characteristics that make ours a "rape culture."

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