

Poster Session I

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Social Norms Regarding Sexual Behavior among College Students: The Role of Rape Myth Acceptance

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Purpose: Approximately 18% of female college students have experienced forced intercourse, with 79% of rape/sexual assaults having been committed by a person the victim knew. Alcohol and drugs were implicated in approximately 55-74% of sexual assaults on campuses.

Theoretical Framework: In the 1970s the concept of rape myths was introduced as supporting male sexual violence against women. Rape myth attitudes (RMA) are widely held attitudes that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women. It is believed that these attitudes are related to eventual completed rapes; therefore a decrease in these attitudes is a desirable objective of a sexual assault prevention program.

Methods: This is a descriptive cross-sectional study of students at a Northeastern university. Two hundred and thirty-seven students randomly selected from a list of emails consented to participate in an on-line survey examining knowledge, attitudes, and social norms regarding sexual behavior and their future time perspective (FTP).

Results: The sample consisted of 69.3% female, with a mean age of 18.9 (SD.74). Fifty-three percent were freshman and 8.8% involved in Greek life. Ninety-one percent correctly identified condoms as the best way to prevent STIs. Forty-four stated that friends don't believe in waiting until marriage for sex with 14.7% believing they are wasting their youth if they don't have sex. There was no significant difference by gender on future time perspectives. Forty-one percent believed a woman who was raped while drunk was responsible. Forced sex was viewed as a turn on for 23% of the sample. Nine percent believed that rape accusations are used to get back at men. Males had higher RMA as compared to females; however, females with lower FTP had more positive about RMA attitudes.

Conclusions and Implications: This pilot study provides direction regarding intervention development focusing RMA to sexual assault prevention.