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FALSE ALLEGATIONS, RAPE MYTHS, & CONTACT THEORY

BELIEFS ABOUT FALSE ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE: INTERGROUP
CONTACT THEORY AND RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE AT A ROCKY MOUNTAIN

UNIVERSITY

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Dissertation

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for the degree of

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in Clinical Psychology

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ABSTRACT

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Clinical Psychology

Beliefs about False Allegations of Sexual Violence: Intergroup Contact Theory and Rape Myth

Acceptance at a Rocky Mountain University

Chairperson: Christine Fiore, Ph.D.

False allegations of sexual assault represent approximately 2% to 10% of all sexual assault allegations reported to law enforcement (Lisak et al., 2010). Despite this low prevalence rate, people tend to overestimate the occurrence of false allegations, and give false allegations excessive weight in arguments about rape myths and policy-making decisions. This excessive weight is given despite a lack of research evidence that false reports of sexual violence occur more frequently than those of any other crime (Ask, 2010; McMillan, 2018; Stabile et al., 2019). This overestimation is likely influenced by the overrepresentation and sensationalization of false allegations in the media, public discourse, and online social networking platforms (Banet-Weiser, 2021; Jones et al., 2021; Stabile et al., 2019). The current study seeks to examine this false allegation myth through quantitative study of young adults in a university setting, for whom sexual violence perpetration and victimization tend to be more prevalent than in the general population (Black et al., 2011; Sinozich & Langton, 2014; Rickert et al., 2004). Quantitative analysis of 1,060 participant responses to a university-wide student survey demonstrated that male gender, conservative political beliefs, false accuser acquaintance, lack of survivor acquaintance, lack of primary victimization experiences, and gaps in definitional knowledge of sexual violence and false allegations were associated with false allegation myth acceptance. This study highlights the importance of educational efforts in dispelling rape myths and evidences support for Intergroup Contact Theory as a model for educational intervention efforts.

Keywords: False allegations, sexual violence, rape myth acceptance, Intergroup Contact Theory

Table of Contents

Introduction..... 1

Literature Review 5

An Exploration of Rape Myths and Rape Myth Acceptance..... 5

She Lied 9

The Origins of She Lied..... 11

False Allegations of Sexual Violence 12

Defining False Allegations of Sexual Violence 12

The Spread & Function of the False Allegation Myth..... 16

Individual Factors Associated with False Report Myth Endorsement 18

 A note on race..... 19

The Fear of Being Falsely Accused 21

The Falsely Accused 25

Intergroup Contact Theory as an Explanation for Believing Survivors & Perpetrators 27

The Current Study..... 32

Materials and Methods..... 37

Participants..... 37

Materials 40

Safe Campus Survey (SCS) 40

Demographic Questions..... 40

Updated Illinois rape myth acceptance scale (uIRMA; McMahon & Farmer, 2011)
 41

Measure Reliability	42
<i>Knowledge</i>	42
<i>Proximity and Fear</i>	43
<i>Victimization Experiences</i>	44
Procedure	45
Results.....	46
Data Handling and Preliminary Analyses	46
Analysis by Hypothesis	46
Discussion.....	54
Knowledge	55
Attitudes toward Sexual Violence	58
<i>Fear and Gender</i>	64
<i>Individual Factors</i>	66
<i>Primary Victimization</i>	68
Limitations	70
References	77
Appendix A: Safe Campus Survey (SCS) Items.....	104
Appendix B: Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance (uIRMA)	110
Appendix C: Demographics.....	112
Appendix D: <i>uIRMA</i> Comparisons	117

Appendix E: Demographics by Gender Identity.....	118
Appendix F: Bivariate Tables	123
Appendix G: Regression Tables	125
Appendix H: Correlation Tables.....	128

BELIEFS ABOUT FALSE ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE: INTERGROUP CONTACT THEORY AND RAPE MYTH ACCEPTANCE AT A ROCKY MOUNTAIN UNIVERSITY

By

Sexual violence continues to be a global public health crisis (World Health Organization [WHO], 2021), as each year, thousands of individuals are victims of crimes of sexual violence including rape and sexual assault. Prevalence data collected from 298 countries from 2000 to 2018 by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on Violence Against Women (Smith et al., 2018) estimated that an average of 30% of women experience physical or sexual violence victimization at least once in their lifetime. Heterosexual men experience lifetime sexual violence victimization at a rate of 25% (Smith et al., 2018). Reported rates of sexual violence are equivalent or higher for gender and sexual minorities, as transgender individuals experience a lifetime sexual abuse prevalence between 25% and 47% (Brown & Herman, 2015) and bisexual women are 2.6 times more likely than heterosexual women to experience sexual violence perpetrated by an intimate partner (Brown & Herman, 2015).

Victimization rates are high and clearly problematic, but victims receive mixed messages from society about whether to seek help, whether to report the incident to authorities, and how to heal from their traumatic experiences. Prevention and intervention resources such as survivor support centers and sexual violence prevention programs direct victims to their doors and toward medical, legal, and mental health support. However, prior to accessing services, victims already carry the internalized skepticism toward sexual assault victims that is broadcasted in the media and in their social circles. These negative messages further isolate, shame, and invalidate

victims' experiences, ultimately preventing recovery from trauma and prolonging and increasing the prevalence of PTSD (Jacques-Tiura et al., 2010; Starzynski et al., 2005). For many victims, the weight of this shame and fear of being blamed or disbelieved is so strong that it prevents them from coming forward to seek help and report to authorities (Sable et al., 2006). This isolation forces survivors to suffer alone in their trauma, cut off from supportive resources. Research has demonstrated that this internalized fear of being blamed impacts at least one in four victims, with between 27.3% (Thompson et al., 2007; Walsh et al., 2010) and 58.7% (Wolitsky-Taylor et al., 2011) of victims identifying fear of blame/disbelief as a key barrier preventing them from coming forward.

Reinforcing this fear of being blamed or disbelieved is a common myth that victims (especially women) frequently and intentionally “cry rape” to exact revenge, gain attention, benefit financially, or account for infidelity or a regretted mistake (Burt, 1980; Kanin, 1994; Orchowski et al., 2020; Stabile et al., 2019; Venema, 2014). Many cling to this false allegation myth and give it excessive weight in arguments against believing sexual violence victims, despite a lack of any high-quality or recent empirical evidence to bolster this claim. Current evidence-based estimates of rates of false allegations of sexual violence demonstrate that between 2% and 10% (Lisak et al., 2010; Ferguson & Malouff, 2016; Spohn et al., 2014) of alleged reports are false. In other words, the overwhelming majority (at least 90%) of sexual assault allegations are founded and genuine. And yet, this myth unduly persists, infecting the criminal justice system (Garza & Franklin, 2021; Hildebrand & Najdowski, 2014; Larson, 2021; Pickel & Gentry, 2017; Rich, 2019; Venema, 2014), media (Bauer-Wolf, 2018; de Roos & Jones, 2020a and 2020b; Stabile et al., 2019), and public opinion (Flood, 2019; Franiuk et al., 2008; Klement et al., 2018). For example, in 2019, an estimated 37.4% of Montana adults believed that

women making false claims about sexual assault and harassment was a major problem (Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services [DPHHS], 2019).

Although the false allegation myth dates to the early 1980s (Burt, 1980; Payne et al., 1999), published research regarding sexual violence awareness, public perceptions and fears of false allegations, and the tendency toward false allegation myth endorsement is lacking. And, until recently, the literature has reflected marked definitional inconsistencies in categorizing false accusations (Ferguson & Malouff, 2016; Hail-Jares et al., 2020; Koss et al., 1987; Lisak et al., 2010; O'Donohue et al., 2018; O'Donohue, 2019). Despite general acknowledgement of this confusion, no published studies have examined its effect on public knowledge and public perception of the frequency of false allegations. Additionally, while some studies have examined the factors that lead someone to endorse rape myths in general, very few studies have examined factors contributing specifically to false allegation rape myth endorsement. Even fewer empirical studies have gathered information on the falsely accused or fears of being falsely accused. For example, could close relationships with a survivor, perpetrator, and/or false accuser, as in Gordon Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory (Allport, 1954), influence one's tendency toward false allegation myth endorsement? More research is needed in this emerging area to better understand the factors contributing to the persistence of this rape myth in order to correct it. Rape myths are harmful narratives reflecting stereotypes about "real" rape which promote disbelief of survivors whose experiences do not adhere to such rape stereotypes (Burt, 1980). Debunking the false allegation myth and other rape myths is essential to improving the reporting environment, public perception and media coverage of sexual violence victims, accessibility of victim services, and sexual violence prevention programming.

This study aims to examine knowledge of sexual assault and the prevalence of the myth that survivors “cry rape” in a university setting and identify individual attributes associated with false allegation myth endorsement. This involves investigating possible connections between false allegation myth endorsement and primary victimization, acquaintance with a survivor or false accuser, and the fear of being falsely accused. Accordingly, this study utilizes a survey-based quantitative approach to address the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes toward sexual violence and false allegations of sexual violence, and how knowledgeable are college students about the legal definition of sexual assault and false allegations of sexual violence?
 - a. How might definitional knowledge of sexual violence and false allegations of sexual violence be related to rejecting the false allegation myth?
2. How does fear of being falsely accused impact men’s endorsement of the false allegation myth?
3. What factors (e.g., Rape Myth Acceptance, demographics) contribute to someone’s endorsement of the false allegation myth?
4. Can Intergroup Contact theory explain the tendency to believe survivors and/or false accusers of sexual violence? In other words, might being acquainted with a false accuser and/or survivor influence one’s beliefs about false allegations of sexual violence?
5. How do one’s own experiences with victimization influence false report myth endorsement?
6. How do those who have been falsely accused and those acquainted with false accusers define sexual assault and false allegations?

In pursuit of these aims, rape myths and their function will be examined. False allegations will be discussed, and Intergroup Contact Theory will be explored as a partial explanation for proclivity toward the false allegation myth and other rape stereotypes.

Literature Review

An Exploration of Rape Myths and Rape Myth Acceptance

We are in a state of constant cultural inculcation. That is, we constantly receive messages from society that instill values and beliefs and shape our attitudes toward important societal issues. The origins of these cultural acceptance and inculcation messages include, for example, our social networks, upbringing, significant relationships, news and social media, workplaces, and education (Miller-Perrin et al., 2018). Mainstream and dominant cultural beliefs are even encapsulated in our laws and policies, which reinforce the dominant zeitgeist for important societal issues and stagnate change. For example, women were historically considered property and had to fight for rights to own land (1848), vote, hold citizenship (1920), and to receive equal treatment to men (Rierson, 1994). These views were reflected in the laws and policies of the time. Even after federally mandated laws and amendments passed, other obstacles, such as literacy tests and poll taxes, were used as means to prevent women, and especially those with other intersecting minority identities, from exercising their rights (Chen & Knapp, 2021). Legislation generally follows slowly behind cultural movements. However, this inevitable policy delay aside, the protracted extent to which laws perpetuating women and minorities' devaluation linger suggests that these beliefs are still widely held.

Rape mythology is an outdated and discriminatory set of beliefs about women that is still encapsulated in current laws and policy, and which excuses and promotes violence against women (Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004). Rape myths involve a subset of beliefs about rape

which communicate that victims (typically women and people with less power than the perpetrator) are of lesser value than their perpetrators and are responsible for sexual violence committed against them. While women and gender minorities do perpetrate sexual violence, and men can be victims of sexual violence, rape myths are inherently based on gender inequality and men's socio-cultural dominance of women and gender minorities, who are subordinate (i.e., Gender-Specific System Justification; Jost & Banaji, 1994; Jost & Kay, 2005; Martini & De Piccoli, 2020). Rape myths also convey that rape can be avoided if victims adhere to certain subjective standards and follow safety precautions (Larsen & Long, 1988). Rape myths accomplish this by sending messages about how "real rape" and sexual assault are "supposed to" occur, offering survivors a template or standard with which to contrast their own assault. According to such messages, a "real" perpetrator of sexual assault is a strange man who attacks an unsuspecting victim as they walk home alone at night. A "real" victim is a sober, cisgender, heterosexual woman, dressed conservatively, who fights back or attempts to flee, who is physically injured, and who contacts emergency services immediately after the crime. People often fail to classify sexual violence that deviates from this rigid template as "real" rape (Peterson & Muelenhard, 2004). The tendency toward failing to identify all sexual violence as "real" sexual violence is attributable to rape myth acceptance (Burt, 1980; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995; Orchowski et al., 2020).

Several measures are used in determining the nature and pervasiveness of modern rape myths and their acceptance, including the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA; Payne et al., 1999), the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMA; Burt, 1980), and the General Attitudes Toward Rape Scale (GATR; Larson & Long, 1988). Items from these measures address, for example, victim and perpetrator intentions and behaviors. The IRMA contains several items

addressing myths about victims bringing rape upon themselves due to manner of dress or behavior. Other common myth items include victims lying about rape, perpetrators “accidentally” committing sexual violence, and confusion about what qualifies as sexual assault. Rape myth scales are utilized in sexual violence prevention and safety research and address the most common myths about perpetrators and victims of sexual violence.

Over time and with increased recognition, policies and laws communicating *overt* messages of sex and gender-based discrimination (i.e., rape myths) have gradually been struck down through feminist efforts. For example, one such overt myth was overturned in 1993, when marital rape, or intercourse without consent within a marriage, was recognized as a crime in all 50 states (Miller-Perrin et al., 2018) via the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA, 1993). This recognition by the federal government finally changed the narrative that women are the property of their husbands, have fewer rights than married men, and exist to sexually satisfy their husbands.

However, less obvious *covert* rape myths are still embedded in policy and cultural narratives, promoting victim-blaming and devaluation (Edwards et al., 2011; Milesi et al., 2020) and perpetuating violence. For example, the judicial landscape has recently been dominated by “She asked for it” and “It wasn’t really rape” myths (Martini & De Piccoli, 2020), particularly in disputes about abortion rights and mental incapacitation standards. The overturning of *Roe v. Wade* and newly passed abortion laws criminalize rape victims seeking abortion in Texas and Alabama past six weeks into unwanted pregnancy (Hall, 2021). This law was passed despite scarce research evidence to support the notion that all women learn they are pregnant by six weeks after conception. Such laws are inherently discriminatory against people with uteruses, especially those with intersectional identities, individuals who do not or cannot actively manage

their periods, those who cannot afford or do not have access to medical care, and/or who do not display symptoms of pregnancy in the first six weeks after conception (Blumenthal & Zephyrin, 2021). Furthermore, these laws signal to victims that they are responsible for the consequences of being raped. Just as they had no choice or defense during their assault, choice will continue to be taken away from them in the aftermath. To illustrate, only 30 states presently allow for the termination of parental rights of convicted rapists, meaning that in 20 states, perpetrators of sexual violence can prevent their victims from terminating their unwanted pregnancy (Megison, 2019). Further, perpetrators in these states can legally pursue custody of their child, continuing abuse and tying victims to their perpetrators long after the assault (Megison, 2019; National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020). Disappointingly, in the 30 states that allow for termination of parental rights, a criminal conviction of sexual assault is required to do so. And, based on low reporting and conviction rates (Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network [RAINN], 2021), most victims are unable to pursue termination of the perpetrator's parental rights. Such laws reward rapists, prolong the cycle of ongoing abuse, and actively send the message that rape victims deserve negative life-changing legal, medical, and psychological consequences of their sexual assault. Seemingly, the only solution for victims is to somehow avoid being raped in the first place, thus upholding covert rape myths in the legal system. Such a system reinforces the idea that victims are responsible for preventing rape and keeping themselves safe, instead of society working to protect victims by preventing perpetrators from committing sexual assault. While women can and do perpetrate sexual violence, and men are also victims of sexual violence, we know rape is disproportionately perpetrated by men against women (RAINN, 2021), and as this system is inherently discriminatory on the basis of gender.

Another recent example of covert rape myths in policy is provided by a 2021 ruling in the state of Minnesota, which determined that a perpetrator could not be convicted on felony charges of third-degree sexual misconduct when the victim *chose* to become drunk (State of Minnesota, Respondent, vs. Francois Momolu Khalil). In this case, the court determined that as the victim did not forcibly become incapacitated against her will (Lati, 2021), she did not meet the Minnesota legal standard of “mental incapacitation,” which does not include situations in which the individual “chooses” to drink or is not inherently incapacitated (Hackett, 2021). This piece of legislation conveys that victims of sexual assault are asking to be raped when they voluntarily consume any mind-altering substances (Edwards et al., 2011; McMahon & Farmer, 2011; Payne et al, 1999) and are at least somewhat responsible, in the eyes of the law, for violence committed against them. This is a common “She asked for it” myth, encompassed in the IRMA scale as, “if a girl is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for what happened” (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). Currently, just 29 states include specific language in their legislation which states that victims may be incapacitated through voluntary or involuntary intoxication, limiting prosecution of perpetrators in the remaining 21 states (Teravskis et al., 2022).

She Lied. The current study focuses on the particular subset of rape myths surrounding victim credibility and motivations for reporting sexual violence. These myths receive continual attention at the legislative and judicial level. Such myths are referred to as “She Lied” myths because they are clustered on the “She Lied” subscale of the updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance scale (uIRMA; McMahon & Farmer, 2011). These myths include five stereotypes about the underlying reasons why victims report rape. These stereotypes include reporting rape because the victim: 1) regrets consensual sex, 2) is seeking revenge, 3) regrets leading the

perpetrator on, 4) wants to account for infidelity, or 5) has “emotional problems” (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). While false accusations *do* occur and these five myths are genuine motivations behind some allegations (Orchowski et al., 2020), these are infrequent motivators. These motivations are too often generalized and employed by people who learn about the assault second-hand to dismiss victim claims before an investigation has taken place. Research (De Zutter et al., 2018; Kanin, 1994; O’Donohue et al., 2018; Orchowski et al., 2020) examining motivations behind allegations in confirmed cases of false allegations identifies such pathways as psychopathology, material gain, alibi, revenge, sympathy, attention, relabeling, and regret (de Roos & Jones, 2020a, 2020b; Ferguson & Malouff, 2016; Lisak et al., 2010; O’Donohue et al., 2018; Spohn et al., 2014). However, these cases represent a small subset of accusations, and more rigorous research studies overwhelmingly suggest that most reports of sexual assault and childhood sexual abuse are founded and genuine.

Furthermore, it is well established that few victims report their sexual victimization experience to the police in the first place, with only 20% of female identified college-aged students and 32% of female identified college-aged non-students reporting their assault to law enforcement (Sinozich & Langton, 2014). Similarly, Wolitsky-Taylor et al. (2011) determined that only 15.8% of a national sample of 3,001 women reported their assault to the police. This low rate of reporting is problematic because it represents a barrier to accessing resources and services and accurately capturing the rates of sexual violence. While those adhering to rape myths assume that victims are motivated to report by material gain, revenge, and attention, research shows that the primary motivators are wanting to protect others from future victimization and to prevent recurrence or escalation (Planty & Langton, 2013; RAINN, 2021).

The Origins of She Lied. Though experts have struggled to identify the exact origins of “She Lied” beliefs, some mark its first appearance in medical literature surrounding “Hysteria” (Tasca et al., 2012). Hysteria is an antiquated diagnosis dating back 4000 years and which evolved to include a wide array of symptoms, including a wandering uterus, demonological possession, witchcraft, melancholy, dissociation, unfulfilled sexual desire, and fainting fits (Tasca et al., 2012). Medical journals attributed hysterical and delusional symptoms to women, and particularly women who claimed to have been raped or physically assaulted in the absence of bruising or other physical evidence, or objection by the man or men in question (Hysterical Accusations and Hypnotism, 1897). Until the 1900s when Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud noted that men may also suffer from this disorder, hysteria was believed to be an exclusively feminine disorder (Tasca et al., 2012). A more specific term, “pseudologia phantastica,” emerged in legal literature in the 1950s and 1960s. This term described a delusional state associated with pathological lying which afflicted women and caused them to claim that they had been raped (Juliver, 1960, as cited in Kanin, 1994).

Books and articles are still published referencing “Rape Hysteria,” claiming that rape prevalence statistics are intentionally exaggerated, and that the rate of false accusations is high (nearly 60%, according to one author; Davis, 2014). These claims are made despite the lack of evidentiary support that false reports of sexual violence occur at a higher rate than false reports of any other crime (Ask, 2010; McMillan, 2018; Stabile et al., 2019). This suggests that our progress in dismantling this particular rape myth has been less than successful. Indeed, this myth is presently one of the most commonly endorsed rape myths (Franiuk et al., 2008; CDC, 2019). Moreover, one woman coming forward has historically been insufficient for the legal system to take the claim seriously. One feminist scholar hypothesized that women who have been assaulted

count as one-fourth of a person (MacKinnon, 2018; Stabile et al., 2019), as multiple women must come forward for their word to be considered over that of their male-identified perpetrator.

False Allegations of Sexual Violence

Defining False Allegations of Sexual Violence

What is a false allegation of sexual violence? One of the reasons why so many people believe that false allegations are common might be because they misunderstand what constitutes a false allegation. This is likely attributable to vastly inconsistent definitions of false allegations of sexual assault circulated within the criminal justice system and research literature. Inconsistencies at this level complicate the identification and measurement of actual false allegations of sexual assault, aptly resulting in similar confusion among the general public (Lisak et al., 2010). Within the criminal justice system, each law enforcement jurisdiction may uniquely categorize and handle false allegations of sexual assault, creating inaccurate rates of false reporting across jurisdictions (Koss et al., 1987; O'Donohue et al., 2018; O'Donohue, 2019).

Similarly reflected in the research literature, a ten-year analysis conducted by Lisak et al. (2010) found wildly inconsistent definitions of false allegations across studies. False allegations were defined differently from study to study, sometimes including cases in which allegations have been classified as unfounded (i.e., baseless accusations; Jordan, 2004), cases in which the victim did not cooperate with the investigation, cases in which there is insufficient evidence to move forward with an investigation, cases in which victims make inconsistent statements, and cases in which victims delay reporting to authorities (Lisak et al., 2010). This variability in case classification and inconsistencies in the definition of false allegations impede accurate estimations of the rate at which false allegations of sexual assault actually occur. As such, we have years of research on slightly different versions of “false allegations,” whose authors

purported studying the same construct (Lisak et al., 2010). More troublingly, we must consider the cases that have been mishandled or dismissed due to inconsistent jurisdictional interpretations of law and implementation of sexual assault crime investigation procedures. Such mistakes have undoubtedly resulted in wrongful acquittals or false negatives: cases in which the defendant is wrongfully found not guilty. Such cases are much more common than false accusations and wrongful convictions (Lyon et al., 2017).

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) seized upon the dire need for consistent classification procedures in 2015 and proposed a comprehensive and clarifying definition of “False Allegations of Sexual Assault.” The definition is as follows: a determination that a report is false “can be made only if the evidence establishes that no crime was committed or attempted, and this determination can only be made after a thorough investigation has been completed” (IACP, 2015a). The IACP further clarifies that determinations of false allegations should not be made after the initial interview and should not be based upon officers’ perceptions of victim reactions and presentation. The IACP differentiates false allegations from unsubstantiated allegations, in which there is insufficient evidence and the investigation fails to prove that the crime occurred. Importantly, this places the procedural responsibility and burden of evidence-gathering on the officer rather than on the victim to prove that the assault occurred. As such, law enforcement may be responsible for eliciting false allegations (Rich, 2019). The IACP also explains that cases in which victims recant or decide not to proceed with an investigation are not false allegations. Many factors may lead a victim to recant, including feeling overwhelmed by the process, fear of retaliation, and desire to protect their perpetrator from legal consequences (IACP, 2015a). Ultimately, the IACP clearly states that *only* contradictory evidence gathered through in-depth investigation is sufficient to conclude that a

false allegation has been made. In practice, this definition will ideally create consistent classification practices and procedures across law enforcement jurisdictions and the legal system, and will allow research to proceed more consistently, increasing the likelihood that we are studying the same construct.

A universal definition is a step in the right direction, yet its consistent adaptation by legal jurisdictions and researchers within the United States has likely been a slow and non-linear process. The definition was provided as a recommendation for best practice and is therefore not required per se to be adopted by law enforcement, the criminal justice system, or researchers. While an 83-page IACP sexual assault response training manual was released in the same year, no studies have been published examining the extent to which these guidelines have been adopted by law enforcement agencies. Within the legal system, attorneys continue to use rape myths in defense of their clients accused of perpetration. Within the research, several recent studies have begun to cite the IACP definition and call for further research operating from this definition (Ferguson & Malouff, 2016; Hail-Jares et al., 2020; O'Donohue, 2019; Orchowski et al., 2020). Some training manuals (ICAP, 2015a, 2015b) and studies, such as a review conducted by Orchowski et al. (2020) and an overview of trauma-informed care by Rich (2019) have gone so far as to make recommendations to law enforcement regarding how best to interact with survivors to avoid making them vulnerable to claims of false reporting. Unskilled forensic interviewing has previously artificially inflated false reporting rates (Orchowski et al., 2020). Such research places the onus on law enforcement to be more trauma-informed and to update their interviewing practices, rather than punishing the victims for displaying trauma symptoms (e.g., gaps in memory; Rich, 2019).

Having established that research conducted under conflicting definitions of false allegations is problematic at best, we are left at a turning point in this area of research. Feminist scholars claim that the actual rate of false allegation reporting is between 2% and 10% (Jones et al., 2021; Lisak et al., 2010), while those in opposition claim that the real rate falls somewhere between 1.5% and 90% (Kanin, 1994; O'Donohue et al., 2018; Rumney, 2006). The difference lies in the quality of the studies cited. While feminist scholars cite studies that clearly outline their definition of false accusations and have demonstrated replicated results, studies claiming wider margins of estimation fail to describe their definition of a false allegation, have small sample sizes (e.g., $n = 10$; Stewart, 1981), utilize rape-myth based definitions of false allegations (such as those suggesting that a claim could be false if the victim does not appear distressed at the time of report; Kanin, 1994; Orchowski et al., 2020), or were conducted under outdated definitions of rape (such as those erroneously classifying unwanted ejaculation as consensual sex; Kanin, 1994). Rationally, comparing studies which define false allegations in such different ways and with obvious methodological flaws is poor research practice. Thankfully, this issue is easily solved by systemic review processes and literature critiques establishing foundational criteria for quality studies, such as criteria developed by Lisak et al. (2010).

Since the development of the universal definition in 2015, some researchers have included all previous studies (regardless of how false allegations are defined) in their prevalence estimates along with a disclaimer about definitional inconsistencies, urging the reader to proceed with caution when discussing the rates that have been gathered from these studies (O'Donohue et al., 2018). This is a dangerous practice that can spread misinformation, especially in the current climate of media illiteracy (Dell, 2020). Reporting prevalence statistics on an inconsistently defined construct generates false narratives about the rates at which actual false allegations of

sexual assault occur. This is harmful for several reasons. First, false rates of false allegation misinform policymakers who create and pass policies and legislation to safeguard against inflated false allegation rates. These rates are then sensationalized in the news and media, and the public forms biased beliefs about false allegations, feeding into rape myths and increasing their acceptance (Franiuk et al., 2008). The public, let alone policymakers, lawyers, law enforcement, and judges, is less likely to believe survivors when they see “research-backed” inflated rates of false reporting. This cycle of misinformation harms survivors and ensures that fewer perpetrators will be held accountable. Moreover, acceptance of such rape myths stunts progress toward preventing sexual violence. In keeping with responsible research practices, the current study seeks to draw information only from studies which operationally define false allegations consistently within the IACP (2015a, 2015b) guidelines, and which define sexual violence in keeping with current definitions (e.g., unwanted marital intercourse is rape).

The Spread & Function of the False Allegation Myth

Beyond the formal sources discussed (policy, court, and legal proceedings), rape myths are also spread informally through social networks, especially via social media platforms, which currently hold their users to low or nonexistent standards of accountability for posting factual information (Trossen et al., 2010). Social media provides a much-needed platform for survivors to share their stories and seek support from fellow survivors. However, individuals with anti-survivor and unsupportive attitudes also post on social media and leave harmful comments on survivors’ posts. These comments spread rhetoric reinforcing rape myths and encourage their acceptance. In 2019, Stabile et al. conducted an analysis over a four-month period of the prevalence of Twitter content consistent with the “She Lied” subscale of the IRMA. The study determined that content suggesting women lie about rape was three times as prevalent as content

validating victims of sexual assault. Furthermore, of the 5 million tweets collected, 100,000 referenced assumptions that women lie about rape. As the authors point out, posts on Twitter and other social media platforms are certainly not based on scientific research or data and offer an important glimpse into the dominant cultural narratives and belief systems that inform policymaking and harm survivors (Stabile et al., 2019).

The She Lied subscale and related rape myths become particularly salient in media coverage and social media discourse whenever highly publicized allegations of sexual assault surface: when journalists, defense attorneys, and those who side with the defendant strengthen rape myths by questioning a victim's morality and motivation for coming forward. A study conducted by Franiuk et al. (2008) examined this phenomenon and found that 10% of media headlines surrounding Kobe Bryant's assault case endorsed one or more rape myths. Results also demonstrated that male participants exposed to the rape-myth endorsing headlines were less likely to think Kobe Bryant was guilty and were more likely to hold rape myth-supportive beliefs and attitudes than women participants and than men who were not exposed to the rape myth endorsing headlines (Franiuk et al., 2008).

Similarly, a study by de Roos and Jones (2020b) found that men were more likely than women to be skeptical toward disclosures of childhood sexual abuse than women after reading an article about a false accusation, and to view the abuse as less harmful. Such skepticism was most recently publicly observable with allegations made against former President Donald Trump, actor Bill Cosby, and producer Harvey Weinstein. In all of these cases, the character and histories of the alleged victims were called into question as an indirect source of information supposed to provide evidence on the credibility of their claims. This effectively upheld the "emotional problems" and "regret" She Lied myths, while the perpetrators' prestige, power, and

athletic performance were referenced as evidence attesting to their good character and incapability of committing such crimes. Such justifications are likely digested by the public and echoed in their own conversations about sexual violence and motivations for coming forward.

Rather than achieving wealth and fame as rape myths about survivor's motivations suggest, survivors who come forward about high profile celebrities and public figures receive negative attention (May, 2018). Such negative attention might include name-calling, victim-blaming, and disbelief, and may be severe enough to include threats of bodily harm, rape, and death (May, 2018). Moreover, survivors do not achieve financial gain through criminal proceedings. Attorney fees are astronomical, and any financial consequences collected from perpetrators, such as fines and bail payments, go to the government rather than toward victim restitution. Crime victim compensation is paid out by the state only after a lengthy application and set of conditions are met (Montana DOJ, 2020), and a separate civil suit must be pursued to obtain restitution. Such restitution is unlikely to be a significant amount in the absence of severe physical injury (Goguen, 2021; WA Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, 2004). There are few benefits to reporting sexual violence, other than potentially protecting others from similar victimization at the perpetrator's hand. Lived experiences and firsthand accounts about the experiences of survivors in the legal system dispel many of the arguments in support of the false allegation myth, but such stories are apparently not headline-worthy and circulate comparatively less popularly through social and news media.

Individual Factors Associated with False Report Myth Endorsement

We have discussed how cultural myths form and are passed down through policy, news broadcasts, and social networks. We have not yet explored the literature on the individual-level factors and characteristics that might contribute to rape myth and false report myth endorsement.

A generous number of studies have examined such individual factors in the context of overall rape myth acceptance. For example, psychopathy (Mouilso & Calhoun, 2013), narcissism (Willis et al., 2017) male gender (Kahlor & Easton, 2011), conservative political beliefs (Hockett et al., 2009; Walker et al., 1993), Protestant and Catholic religious affiliation (Barnett et al., 2018), purity culture (Owens et al., 2020), religiosity (Freymeyer, 1997; Prina & Schatz-Stevens, 2020), just world beliefs (Hammond et al., 2011; Hayes et al., 2013; Vonderhaar & Carmody, 2015), sexual aggression and perpetration (Koss & et al., 1987; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2013; Trottier et al., 2021; Walker et al., 1993), negative attitudes toward women (Beck et al., 2012; Check, 1985; Dill, 2009), conservative gender role ideologies (Grubb & Turner, 2012; Johnson et al., 1997), hostile sexism (Chapleau et al., 2007; Fox & Potocki, 2016), video game consumption (Dill, 2009; Fox & Potocki, 2016), certain television programs (Kahlor & Eastin, 2011), and racism, homophobia, ageism, classism, and religious intolerance (Aosved & Long, 2006) have all demonstrated marked association with overall rape myth acceptance. However, for all of the studies related to the individual factors consistent among overall rape myths endorsers, very few studies have examined such factors that are associated specifically with false report myth endorsement.

A note on race. In a discussion of power and intersectionality in the context of sexual violence, Armstrong et al. (2018) highlight the myth of Black men raping White women as justification for hate crimes (e.g., lynching) against Black Americans, documented in writing as far back as 1892, when Ida B. Wells-Barnett referenced such mythical allegations against Black men. Scapegoating Black men as rapists served to justify violence and oppression of Black men during years of enslavement and into the Civil Rights era. Given this history, false allegations of rape leveled against Black men have fundamental differences from other allegations due to their

use as a tool of oppression. Indeed, the sexual stratification hypothesis posits that sexual violence perpetrated by Black men against White women will be punished more severely and will result in more charges being filed than among other racial dyads (LaFree, 1989). Especially given these deeply rooted historical origins, examining race and ethnicity in the context of beliefs about false allegations of sexual violence is important, and could be its own stand-alone study on its own. An extensive dive into this area is beyond the scope of this study; this research only scratches the surface of this issue. This study concerns examining the beliefs and attitudes that individuals of various identities and characteristics, racial and ethnic backgrounds included, hold toward sexual violence and false allegations of sexual violence. Overrepresentation of Black men in the criminal justice system, regardless of offense type, may contribute to fear and skepticism of sexual assault allegations. Given that Black men have historically been painted as criminals and dangerous, it stands to reason that Black men may experience higher levels of fear of being falsely accused of sexual violence than White men, and view sexually assault allegations skeptically. For example, Suarez and Gadalla's (2010) metaanalysis showed that, across six studies examining race/ethnicity and rape myth acceptance, being White (vs. non-White) was associated with lower rape myth acceptance. A study by Canan et al. (2018) similarly demonstrated that White identity was associated with lower rape myth acceptance, but authors across all studies deferred drawing conclusions from these data because the proportion of racial and ethnic minority participants was small, necessitating a dichotomous representation of race (e.g., White vs. non-White) in their respective datasets (Canan et al., 2018). Further research with data representative of US population and racial/ethnic composition are essential to understanding the experiences of Black men specifically in the context of sexual violence allegations.

Other studies have examined victim characteristics facilitating participant false allegation endorsement (e.g., victim alcohol consumption; Gunby et al., 2012), but only four studies have examined participant characteristics associated with false allegation myth endorsement (de Roos & Jones, 2020a, 2020b; Franiuk et al., 2008; Jones et al., 2021). In all three such studies examining gender as a predictor variable, male gender was predictive of false report myth endorsement. In one study, proximity to a perpetrator (de Roos & Jones, 2020a) was associated with false report myth endorsement. Societal factors contributing to overestimations of false reports among the public and law enforcement were reviewed in a recent book chapter by Orchowski et al. (2020). Such societal factors included media coverage of false allegations, cognitive biases (e.g., just world beliefs, confirmation bias, the ostrich effect, and cognitive conservatism), variation in false allegation prevalence rates, and stereotypes about sexual violence. While useful in setting the stage for further research, these factors do not lend themselves to actionable identification of the individual factors associated with higher risk for false report myth endorsement. Therefore, these societal factors have less utility for practical application to sexual violence prevention efforts in identifying and tailoring education efforts. No other individual factors were established as relevant in these or any other studies, demonstrating a clear need for further research into personal characteristics associated with false report myth endorsement.

The Fear of Being Falsely Accused

As previously mentioned, rape myths are based in socio-cultural gender inequality, and therefore men are traditionally thought of as perpetrators and women as victims. The fear of being falsely accused may play a role in men's endorsement of the false report myth (de Roos & Jones, 2020b). Even before the #MeToo era, men, and especially men in power, expressed fears

of being falsely accused of sexual violence (Banet-Weiser, 2021; Hail-Jares et al., 2020; Phipps, 2020). While this fear is not new, visible changes since the #MeToo movement can be seen in two areas. First, there has been a shift in the threshold number of women required to come forward with their accounts of sexual victimization to trigger protocols of accountability (Banet-Weiser, 2021). Second, an expectation has emerged for perpetrators to defend themselves publicly (commonly by denying allegations) against being held legally accountable for their actions (Banet-Weiser, 2021). Though bullet-proof accounts from multiple victims still facilitate speedier initiation of accountability processes than accounts from fewer victims, perpetrators are now more likely than ever to be held accountable for sexual violence crimes, with 25 out of 100 perpetrators from 2015 to 2019 being incarcerated for their rape perpetration, an increase from 6 out of 100 perpetrators in 2012 to 2015 (Morgan & Kena, 2016; Morgan & Truman, 2020; RAINN, 2021). With such an increase in legal accountability, and with growing visibility and attention on sexual violence, men's fears of being accused have escalated (Jones et al., 2021; Parr & Gosse, 2011; Metz et al., 2021).

Given the new expectation for the accused to defend themselves, a pattern of protective behavior has emerged for such public statements. The alleged perpetrator usually proclaims the false report myth, in order to regain power and control of the narrative, accusing the victim of enacting some form of character defamation, revenge, or destruction to the accused's life (Banet-Weiser, 2021). In doing so, perpetrators attempt to manipulate the roles to their advantage, evoking sympathy by identifying themselves as the victims of individuals (e.g., women) who level accusations for personal gain. This serves to draw attention away from the harm inflicted on the victim, and toward the potential for harm inflicted upon the perpetrator (Banet-Weiser, 2021). All of this is of course operating under the veiled assertion that the real crime is not the

perpetration of sexual violence, but of bringing the sexual violence to light. This underhanded process is clearly visible in notable defenses that privileged perpetrators have employed against allegations of sexual assault, including the “ruining his life” plight, markedly used during the Brock Turner case. In his defense, Brock Turner’s father pleaded with the judge to spare his son’s bright future from being “ruined” by his “20 minutes of action” with an unconscious woman (Banet-Weiser, 2021; Svrluga, 2016). Similar public statements by people in power reinforce this notion to the public, as former President Donald Trump, who himself has been accused of sexual violence by no less than 19 women (Mindock, 2020), eloquently said, “it’s a very scary time for young men in America when you can be guilty of something that you may not be guilty of” (Diamond, 2018; Banet-Weiser, 2021).

One recently published study (Jones et al., 2021) has examined this fear and its relation to false report myth endorsement. However, this and other studies (Anderson & Levine, 1999; Parr & Gosse, 2011) have examined childhood sexual abuse allegations only, *not* sexual violence concerning adult victims. Jones et al. (2021) specifically looked at fear of child sexual abuse (CSA) accusations in a mock juror scenario, and found that participants with higher levels of fear of false CSA accusations were less likely to believe the CSA allegation presented in the mock juror scenario. This fear of being falsely accused of CSA was higher for men than for women. Mediation analyses showed that gender differences in fear partially explained men’s greater disbelief of the allegation than women. In other words, fear contributed to men’s skepticism of CSA allegations. This finding is consistent with other studies examining childhood sexual abuse allegations among educators, whose results demonstrated that more male-identified than female identified teachers report fears of false allegations (Anderson & Levine, 1999; Parr & Gosse, 2011). Sexual violence prevention efforts demand that we examine this fear and its role in the

false report myth to focus intervention efforts correcting this fear, and by extension, the false report myth.

If an individual truly has done nothing wrong, from where does the fear of being falsely accused stem? One explanation for this fear may be media sensationalization of false accusations, as media coverage may fail to highlight key details of a case (Lyon et al., 2017; Jones et al., 2021), emphasizes attention-grabbing headlines, spreads misinformation, and reinforces false report rape myths. For example, former Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, in an interview on 60 Minutes, stated that she did not know the answer when asked whether the number of false accusations were as high as the number of actual instances of sexual violence (Bauer-Wolf, 2018). Collective fear of being falsely accused is undoubtedly exacerbated by such memorable examples spotlighted in the media, and by statements by persons in power who benefit from reinforcing the false report myth and casting themselves as victims. Individuals who fear being accused have likely been impacted by these headlines and bought into the false report myth, disbelieving victims in favor of alleged perpetrators.

Under the legal presumption of innocence, accusations are customarily publicly pronounced false by the perpetrator, who then flips the accusation of perpetration onto the victim (Banet-Weiser, 2021). And, although a conviction is possibly accompanied by jail time and sex offender registration, the perpetrator is not motivated to admit fault or guilt. Our justice system does not allow for a restorative responsibility-taking and amends-making process, under which perpetrators publicly or privately admit their wrongdoing, accept responsibility for their actions, or take steps to make amends for the harm done. Under such a restorative process where perpetrators accept responsibility, actual perpetration rates would surely more closely match reported victimization rates. Victimization rates at 1 in 3 women or 1.27 billion women (United

Nations, 2021) means that there are nearly equally as many perpetrators (while allowing for perpetrators with multiple victims). However, we do not often see perpetrators admitting to their crimes as it is in the accused's best interest to deny all guilt and responsibility under the presumed innocent standard.

The Falsely Accused

Another factor which may partially explain the fear of false allegations is the lack of information about those who have genuinely been falsely accused and wrongfully convicted of sexual violence against adults. Unfortunately, we have relatively little evidence-based information about those falsely accused of sexual assault beyond individual experiences described through case study (e.g., Naik et al., 2010), legal publications (Ginn, 2000), and the work of the Innocence Project network. The empirical research base on false allegations of childhood sexual abuse is far more developed, likely fueled by cases of childhood sexual abuse allegations in the 1980s against teachers and other caregivers receiving extensive media attention (Anderson & Levine, 1999; Faller, 2017).

Only one empirical study of those falsely accused of sexual assault against adults was found in this author's literature search. This study involved a relatively large sample (207 individuals) of those wrongfully convicted and incarcerated for sexual assault. Approximately 98.5% of the alleged sexual assault defendants were male, but of those who were falsely accused, 90.6% were male, suggesting that females are also falsely accused of sexual assault. This recent study of Innocence Project data by Hail-Jares et al. (2020) examined wrongful convictions occurring between 1980 and 2012. From these data, the authors determined that, while false rape allegations do occur and are harmful, only four percent of the sample of 207 wrongful convictions over the 32-year period resulted from false rape allegations. In their sample,

individuals wrongfully convicted of any crime were much more likely to be so convicted for other reasons, such as forensic errors, use of invalidated forensic techniques, false confessions, or police misconduct. This low percentage of false accusations leading to wrongful imprisonment over three decades suggests that the criminal justice system is capable of identifying false rape allegations, and that false rape allegations are not a leading factor in wrongful conviction (Hail-Jares et al., 2020).

There is a clear and dire need for targeted research efforts to understand the experiences of the 2% to 10% who are falsely accused. Specifically, more information is needed regarding their experiences within the criminal justice system, the pathways leading to their being falsely accused, and the aftermath of the accusation. Given the Hail-Jares et al. (2020) sample of 9.4% falsely accused female defendants, research should further investigate the pattern of gender among victims and perpetrators who are falsely accused. Furthermore, as Banet-Weiser (2021) demonstrated, a separate population of individuals *claiming* to have been falsely accused exists and can be found in online anti-feminist men's rights organization forums (e.g., *A Voice for Men*), and it will be important to understand those who *claim* to have been falsely accused separately from those who have *genuinely* been falsely accused. Though beyond the scope of this study, separate examination of those who claim to have been falsely accused and those who have genuinely been falsely accused would increase our understanding of these two groups and their appropriate intervention approaches. We could use this understanding to improve the criminal justice system, rape prevention, rape myth rejection, and hopefully alleviate fears of being falsely accused.

Intergroup Contact Theory as an Explanation for Believing Survivors & Perpetrators

We have explored how exposure to headlines, memorable examples of alleged false accusations, fear, and individual factors likely play a role in false report myth endorsement. Another factor that may hold weight in deciding whether to adhere to or to reject the false report myth is one's own direct and indirect experiences with perpetrators and victims of sexual violence. For example, should an individual identify as a survivor of sexual assault, a perpetrator of sexual assault, or a person falsely accused of sexual assault, they may rely on their own direct experiences when deciding whether to believe another survivor's or perpetrator's story (Hoeken & Hustinx, 2009). Similarly, if an individual knows and believes their friends who are survivors and/or perpetrators, these indirect experiences might also be reflected in their attitudes toward rape, rape myths, and other survivors and perpetrators.

Cognitive biases offer some explanation for these belief formations. The most relevant examples include availability bias, or the tendency to rely on information that easily comes to mind (Kahnemann, et al., 1982; Mamede et al., 2010); anecdotal evidence fallacy, or relying on personal experiences rather than statistical information (Hoeken & Hustinx, 2009); and group attribution error, or the tendency to attribute a group's decision to the majority attitudes of its individual members (Allison & Messick, 1985; Corneille et al., 2001). Correspondence bias, or the tendency to rely on dispositional causes of behavior, similarly may apply here, in that we may focus on individual victim and perpetrator dispositions and minimize systemic causes of rape, such as male dominance of women (Cowan & Quinton, 1997). These biases can be helpful in forming generalized beliefs when our experiences are representative of the actual experiences of others. However, when we cling to our experiences as fact when they contradict the experiences of many others, as is the case with rape myths, problems arise. Drawing attention to

potential mechanisms underlying how and why we form certain attitudes about rape is important, although a total review of the cognitive biases and heuristics we use to simplify and organize our world beliefs goes beyond the scope of this paper.

One potential theoretical explanation for the mechanisms underlying how and why we form certain attitudes about rape is Intergroup Contact Theory (Allport, 1954). Intergroup Contact Theory suggests that affective and cognitive processes underlie belief formation and prejudice reduction during interpersonal interactions. This theory, dating back to the early 1900s, may offer a framework and explanation for the relationship between those who are in close contact with survivors, false accusers, and/or perpetrators of sexual violence and their corresponding beliefs about rape and rape myths. Intergroup Contact Theory, which American psychologist Gordon Allport is credited with formalizing in 1954, is seen as a way to reduce tension, prejudice, and conflict among two or more individuals belonging to outgroups. At the time referred to as the Intergroup Contact Hypothesis, Allport (1954) predicted that prejudice and tension between two or more groups could be reduced through interacting under four conditions. These four optimal conditions include: shared common goals between the two (or more) groups, intergroup cooperation toward these goals, institutional support for the interaction (e.g., societal norms, law), and equal status of the two groups within the given situation (Allport, 1954). While research has confirmed that these four conditions facilitate prejudice reduction, they are not necessary for prejudice reduction to occur (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

Later studies have reliably demonstrated that decreasing intergroup anxiety and threat during an interaction is an essential facilitating step for positive group interactions to begin (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005). Additionally, increases in positive affective experiences, such as increased perspective-taking (empathy), friendship, and common humanity are associated with

prejudice reduction. Less impactful but still influential are cognitive processes, such as acquiring knowledge about the outgroup and engaging in and listening to self-disclosures, which serve to increase familiarity and shared experiences (Kenworthy et al., 2005). That being said, one could argue that personal self-disclosure is an inherently affective experience for all parties, and that familiarity is in fact more of an emotion more than a cognition, again emphasizing affect as a key process underlying prejudice reduction. This supports the idea that having close friends who are survivors and/or perpetrators could reasonably result in prejudice reduction and increased empathy and perspective-taking toward the plight of survivors and perpetrators. At least for those who are not already prejudiced against either survivors or perpetrators, positive experiences, personal disclosure, and knowledge acquisition could facilitate bonding and perspective-taking regarding rape myths as they apply in these relationships.

While affective and cognitive processes allow for the reduction of prejudice, in isolation they are insufficient for long-lasting intervention and generalization (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2005). Additional circumstances must be met in order for reduction of prejudice and increased positive attitudes toward outgroups to generalize in the long-term and to other outgroup members. These circumstances are best explained through examination of Pettigrew's Three Stage Model, which describes the steps for achieving outgroup generalization, and through the Mutual Intergroup Differentiation Model, which demonstrates the importance of categorization and of the perception of individuals as members representative of their respective groups (Christ & Kauff, 2019; Hewstone & Greenland, 2000). For attitudes and beliefs about rape myths to change and generalize to unknown survivors and perpetrators, one must perceive and categorize the survivor or perpetrator in the interaction as representative of survivors or perpetrators, respectively.

To date, Intergroup Contact Theory has been applied to interactions in which individuals differ on race, ethnicity, sexuality, HIV status, physical and cognitive ability status, mental health status, age, immigration status, religion, and gender identity (Christ & Kauff, 2019; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew et al., 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). This list is ever-growing, as is research into the reasons that intergroup contact is more effective for decreasing prejudice (and other positive effects, e.g., increasing outgroup friendship, empathy, tolerance, liking, and trust; Mutz, 2002; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011; Pettigrew et al., 2011; Rhodes, Halberstadt, & Brajkovich, 2001) within certain groups more than others. For example, the prejudice reduction effect sizes for sexual orientation-based prejudice reduction have been highest, followed by those for physical disability, race/ethnicity, cognitive disability, mental illness, and the elderly, respectively (Pettigrew et al., 2011). Researchers continue to seek to understand why intergroup contact is more effective among certain target groups than others, and preliminary conclusions have generally been indicative of an underlying “mere exposure” effect (Pettigrew et al., 2011). In other words, interacting with and becoming more familiar with an outgroup leads to increased liking of said outgroup.

To this author’s knowledge, no studies have examined Intergroup Contact Theory in the context of Rape Myth Acceptance and beliefs about false allegations of sexual assault, excepting two recent studies. One study by Taschler and West (2017) examined men’s interactions with counter-stereotypical women, and demonstrated that men who had meaningful positive contact with women in power reported lower intention to rape, lower rape myth acceptance, and lower hostile sexism. The second study (de Roos & Jones, 2020b) examined proximity to childhood sexual abuse perpetrators, victims, and false accusers, and concluded that proximity to a perpetrator was associated with more skepticism and victim-blaming of a victim in a fake news

story. However, this study did not explicitly utilize Intergroup Contact Theory or Rape Myth Acceptance theory, and was based on a fabricated news story of childhood rather than adult abuse allegations. Intergroup Contact Theory may be relevant to perceptions of sexual assault reporting, in that knowing someone or having a close connection to someone who has been sexually assaulted may increase the person's awareness of sexual assault and render them less likely to disbelieve victims of sexual assault. They may also become more knowledgeable about sexual assault in general and about the rigorous and invasive process involved in reporting crimes of sexual violence.

Importantly, gender differences may exist between men and women regarding proximity to sexual violence survivors, as women are more likely than men to be victims of sexual violence, and men and women are more likely to maintain within-gender rather than across-gender friendships (Pearce et al., 2020). A recent study by de Roos and Jones (2020a) found that women were more likely than men to know a victim, and men were more likely than women to know a perpetrator. Interestingly, they found that knowing a victim of sexual violence was not impactful on participant skepticism to a disclosure of sexual violence; however, knowing a perpetrator was associated with a more negative response to disclosure. As a result of this study, the authors concluded that, within the #MeToo movement, disclosures of sexual violence victimization may trigger a defensive response in men which cause them to be more skeptical of victims. Moreover, Miller and Cromer (2015) found that women were more likely than men to have been disclosed to, and that personal experiences with interpersonal trauma, regardless of gender, were associated with believing disclosures. However, experiences with interpersonal trauma are more common among women (DePrince & Freyd, 2002; Finkelhor et al., 2013;

Miller & Cromer, 2015). Thus, further exploration of gender differences in proximity to adult sexual violence and false allegations will be important, particularly from a prevention standpoint.

The Current Study

The current approach utilizes quantitative study of a private archival Campus Climate Survey dataset collected in 2018 at the University of Montana (UM) by the UM Intimate Partner & Dating Violence Research Lab. An online survey format was used in order to efficiently reach a large number of university students, to assess the “climate” of campus safety, and to easily facilitate direct examination of categorical data on sexual violence experiences, beliefs, and knowledge. The population of interest was college-aged (18-25 years old) young adults, as research shows that adolescents and young adults are at the highest risk of any age group for sexual and intimate partner violence (Black et al., 2011; Sinozich & Langton, 2014; Rickert et al., 2004). Therefore, a larger number of victims, perpetrators, and accusers were expected to be reached within a university setting than among other populations. Additionally, the underlying goal of the larger survey was to decrease sexual violence at the university, a feat best facilitated through examination of the experiences of university students.

Numerous empirical studies and reviews have referenced attitudinal differences and general inconsistencies among researchers regarding the definition and categorization of false allegations of sexual violence (Ferguson & Malouff, 2016; Hail-Jares et al., 2020; IACP, 2015a; O’Donohue et al., 2018; Orchowski et al., 2020), but none have examined false allegation definitional knowledge among laypersons or those experiencing sexual violence victimization, instead focusing primarily on beliefs in forensic settings (i.e., law enforcement) and among researchers. This study aims to fill these gaps by exploring the general attitudes and assessing the climate surrounding participants’ knowledge of sexual assault and false allegations of sexual

assault on a college campus. Although some research exists in support of the link between knowledge of the legal definition of sexual assault and overall rape myth acceptance (Crall & Goodfriend, 2016; LeMaire, et al., 2016) there is an absence of research examining the link between the false allegation myth and definitional knowledge of sexual assault and false allegations. This study aims to address these gaps in knowledge by examining the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1a: Insufficient knowledge of the definition of false allegations of sexual assault (measured by misidentification of a false allegation of sexual assault in Montana) and insufficient knowledge of the definition of sexual assault (measured by misidentification of sexual assault in Montana) will predict higher rates of endorsement of the false report myth (measured by uIRMA She Lied subscale score).

As a result of the #MeToo movement and of affluent perpetrators publicly dismissing accusations as fabricated, men and especially men in power have increasingly reported fear of being falsely accused of sexual violence (Jones et al., 2021; Tam et al., 2020). As de Roos and Jones (2020a) indicated, research has not examined the relationship between fear of being falsely accused of sexual assault and perceptions of the rate of false accusations, although Jones et al. (2021) demonstrated that participants who feared being falsely accused of childhood sexual abuse were more likely to disbelieve a specific allegation of childhood sexual abuse in a mock juror-scenario. Consistent with this finding, this study aims to contribute empirical evidence and close this specific gap regarding adult sexual violence victimization by testing the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 2: Male gender will be associated with higher rates of false report myth endorsement (measured by uIRMA She Lied subscale score) and moderated by degree of fear of being falsely accused (measured by the fear of false accusation question).

A further aim of this study is to identify possible factors contributing to someone believing the myth that false allegations of sexual assault are common. Research evidence supports male gender (Garza & Franklin, 2020; Jones et al., 2021), conservative political beliefs (Hockett et al., 2009; Walker et al., 1993), and conservative religious beliefs and religiosity (Aosved & Long, 2006; Barnett et al., 2018; Edwards et al., 2011; Ensz & Jankowski, 2020) as variables likely contributing to overall rape myth acceptance. One study (Jones et al., 2021) demonstrated that male gender predicted false report myth endorsement among mock jurors in a specific scenario of childhood sexual abuse, but political and religious beliefs have not been similarly examined. Other research support exists for rape myth acceptance as a predictor of past and future sexual aggression (Koss et al., 1987; Walker et al., 1993), and for proximity to a perpetrator in predicting CSA false report myth endorsement (de Roos & Jones, 2020a). However, acquaintance with a perpetrator was excluded as a predictor variable due to the tendency for perpetrators to conceal and/or fail to self-identify as perpetrators. Therefore, male gender, conservative political beliefs, conservative religious beliefs, and absence of acquaintance with a survivor are all expected to contribute to false report myth endorsement.

Hypothesis 3: Male gender, conservative political beliefs, conservative religious beliefs, and absence of acquaintance with a survivor are predicted to be associated with higher rates of false report myth endorsement (measured by uIRMA She Lied subscale score).

Intergroup Contact Theory research findings show that positive interactions (including close friendships between two or more outgroups) can reduce outgroup prejudice and

stereotypes, and increase liking, intergroup trust, empathy, and perspective taking (Pettigrew et al., 2011). Prejudice reduction has been successfully demonstrated for groups differing in race, ethnicity, sexuality, HIV status, physical and cognitive ability status, mental health status, age, immigration status, religion, rape myth acceptance, and gender identity (Christ & Kauff, 2019; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew et al., 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011; Taschler & West, 2017). However, no studies have tested Intergroup Contact Theory applications with groups of primary and secondary survivors, perpetrators, false accusers, non-survivors, and non-perpetrators of sexual assault, and their false report myth acceptance. Only one study by Taschler and West (2017) demonstrated that men who had meaningful positive contact with women in power reported lower intention to rape, lower rape myth acceptance, and lower hostile sexism. Findings by de Roos and Jones (2020a, 2020b) showed that individuals in close acquaintance with a perpetrator or someone who had been falsely accused were more likely to engage in victim-blaming. However, contrary to their hypothesis, close relational proximity to survivors did not predict more positive response to survivor disclosure. In contrast, Crall and Goodfriend (2016) found the expected support for lower rape myth acceptance among female-identified college-aged participants who knew a victim compared to their male-identified counterparts and those who did not know a victim. This study similarly aims to test acquaintanceship and attitudes toward victims by applying Intergroup Contact Theory to rape myth acceptance and false report myth endorsement. This hypothesis will examine the association between acquaintanceship with victims, false accusers, and false report myth endorsement.

Hypothesis 4a: Being closely acquainted with a false accuser of sexual violence (measured by false accuser acquaintance question), will positively predict higher rates of false report myth endorsement (measured by uIRMA She Lied subscale score).

Hypothesis 4b: Close acquaintance with a victim (measured by victim acquaintance question) will predict lower rates of false report myth endorsement.

Based on the identified limitation within the recent de Roos and Jones (2020b) of failing to examine the relationship between primary victimization experiences and rape myth acceptance, the current study will examine possible connections between primary victimization and the false report myth. Several studies have demonstrated that primary victims are more likely to believe others' stories and allegations of sexual violence (Cromer & Freyd, 2007; de Roos & Jones, 2020b, Miller & Cromer, 2015; Nuttall & Jackson, 1994), but none have specifically explored the false report myth. One study explicitly examined rape myth acceptance, finding that victims who did not report their assault to the police endorsed higher rape myth acceptance than those who reported the crime to law enforcement (Egan & Wilson, 2012), suggesting that reporting to law enforcement may differentiate victims who believe or disbelieve other victims. Therefore, only the following victimization experience hypothesis is proposed.

Hypothesis 5: Primary sexual violence victimization (as measured by positive endorsement of sexual violence victimization questions), is anticipated to predict lower rates of false report myth endorsement (measured by uIRMA She Lied subscale score).

While case studies and scholarly articles published on those who have been falsely accused (Ginn, 2000; Naik et al., 2010) advocate for the rights of the falsely accused (e.g., Gross, 2009), no studies have examined the attitudes and beliefs of those who have been falsely accused of sexual violence. An additional exploratory aim of this study is to learn more about those who allege that they have been falsely accused or who know a false accuser. Of particular interest are their attitudes toward the false report myth and their definitional knowledge of sexual assault and false allegations. Given the relatively recent confusion and inconsistencies among

researchers regarding definition and categorization of false allegations of sexual violence (Ferguson & Malouff, 2016; Hail-Jares et al., 2020; IACP, 2015a; O'Donohue et al., 2018; Orchowski et al., 2020) and some research suggesting that rape myth acceptance is linked to knowledge of sexual assault (Crall & Goodfriend, 2016; LeMaire, et al., 2016) understanding the knowledge and beliefs of those who know a false accuser will be important to better dispel this rape myth. As such, the following exploratory hypothesis will be examined.

Hypothesis 6a: Those who know a false accuser are anticipated to misidentify false reports of sexual violence (as measured by incorrect identification of a false allegation of rape) compared to those unacquainted with a false accuser.

Hypothesis 6b: Those who know a false accuser are anticipated to incorrectly define sexual assault (measured by incorrect identification of the legal definition of sexual assault in Montana) compared to those unacquainted with a false accuser.

Materials and Methods

Participants

This study examines an existing archival dataset collected at the University of Montana in 2018. The core purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of false reports of sexual violence among young adults on a college campus. The online survey was open to all enrolled University of Montana undergraduate and graduate students, and responses to the survey were collected using voluntary response sampling from October 22nd, 2018, through the end of the fall semester, December 22nd, 2018. Participation was anonymous, voluntary, and conducted via Qualtrics, an online survey platform. The Safe Campus Survey (SCS) survey was advertised to university students through flyers posted in dormitories and other student-frequented buildings, class announcements, email, student coursework accounts, and posts on the

university web page. Students were incentivized to participate by the chance to win one of several gift cards totaling \$1500, and by their professors, who were encouraged to offer extra course credit for survey participation. Upon finishing the survey, participants were thanked for their response and had the option to provide an email address for entry into a raffle to win one of the following: two \$500 Amazon gift cards, three \$100 Amazon gift cards, two \$50 Amazon gift cards, or twenty \$5 campus coffee gift cards.

Screening

Approximately 2,045 undergraduate and graduate University of Montana students participated in the survey, and responses that were incomplete (e.g., any of the 23 items included in analyses were left blank), inconsistent (e.g., facetious responding, such as “toaster” or “microwave” to gender identity or entering “glkjdf” in text response boxes), and/or provided by participants younger than 18 or older than 25 were removed. Approximately $n = 612$ responses were eliminated for incompleteness, $n = 17$ for inconsistency, and $n = 356$ for non-target age. The final sample included 1060 participants. Little (1988)’s test of missing completely at random (MCAR) was conducted in SPSS for all items, and results suggested that missingness violated the MCAR assumption ($p < .001$). Missing data were likely due to length of survey and discomfort answering questions about sexual violence. Missing data values were excluded listwise and potential biases are discussed in the Limitations section.

Power

A statistical power analysis was conducted using G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) to estimate the sample size required to detect a small effect ($f^2 \geq 0.02$; Cohen, 1988). The current sample size ($N = 1060$) surpassed the sample size ($N = 878$) required to detect a small effect for multiple linear regression with six predictors, for simple linear regression ($N = 528$), and a small effect

($OR = 1.68$; Chen et al., 2010) for logistic regression ($n = 254$) with β set a 0.90 and α set at 0.05. To correct for multiple statistical tests while limiting the risk of Type II error, a False Discovery Rate (FDR; Rouam, 2013) correction was calculated for each statistical test at $\alpha = 0.05$. The False Discovery Rate correction is a statistical approach used to correct for higher error rates that occur with multiple comparisons. FDR is the expected number of false discoveries, or false positives which are erroneously believed to be true discoveries. This approach is used to correct for random effects that appear to be significant, but are in fact false positives (Type II Error; Rouam, 2013). This multiple test approach is considered more appropriate than the Bonferroni correction, which controls for the probability of making one false positive (Noble, 2009).

Overall sample characteristics. Descriptive data were calculated for all demographic items and can be found in Appendix C. The majority of the 1060 participants who met criteria for inclusion in analyses identified as White and non-Hispanic ($n = 939$, 88.58%), followed by Hispanic/Latinx ($n = 35$, 3.30%), Biracial ($n = 26$, 2.45%), Multiracial ($n = 19$, 1.79%), Asian or Pacific Islander ($n = 20$, 1.89%), American Indian/Native American/Indigenous/First Nation ($n = 11$, 1.04%), Black/African American ($n = 5$, 0.47%), and Other ($n = 5$, 0.47%). This is consistent with census-based population data for the Missoula County, Montana area (US Census Bureau, 2021). Most of the sample identified as women (including trans women; $n = 707$, 66.70%) or men (including transmen; $n = 304$, 28.68%), with the remaining 4.62% ($n = 49$) identifying as gender minorities (see Table 1). The modal age was 19 years old ($M = 20.69$, $SD = 2.06$) and skewness was within the normal range (0.54). Approximately 15.47% of participants were 18 years old, 18.87% of participants were 19 years old, 17.17% of participants were 20 years old, 17.17% were 21 years old, 11.79% were 22 years old, and the remaining 19.54% were between 23 and 25 years old. The age distribution was similar between women and men $\chi^2 = (7, N =$

1060) = 11.01, $p > .05$. Most of the sample identified as straight/heterosexual ($n = 849$, 80.1%) 10.6% as bisexual ($n = 112$), 1.0% gay ($n = 11$), 1.3% lesbian ($n = 14$), 1.3% queer ($n = 14$), 2.2% pansexual ($n = 23$), 1.4% asexual ($n = 15$), 0.1% aromantic ($n = 1$), 1.4% questioning ($n = 15$), and 0.6% other ($n = 6$).

Materials

Safe Campus Survey (SCS)

Data for the current study were collected online via the 245-item Safe Campus Survey (SCS) instrument, which was developed by the UM Dating & Intimate Partner Violence Lab as part of a larger study. The entire survey was estimated to take between 20 and 45 minutes to complete. To narrow the scope of the survey to fit the purposes of this study, 23 items from the larger survey were selected for inclusion. These items included four demographic questions (e.g., age, gender identity, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation), the five-item She Lied subscale of the updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (uIRMA; Burt, 1980) to assess participant attitudes toward sexual violence, and 14 novel items to specifically assess participant knowledge, proximity, and experiences with sexual violence victimization (Koss et al., 2006; see Appendices A and B).

Demographic Questions

Each participant also completed items assessing demographic characteristics, including gender identity (*cisgender man, cisgender woman, transgender woman, transgender man, non-binary, gender fluid, gender neutral/agender, gender queer, gender non-conforming/gender variant, questioning, and other*), socio-political beliefs (*very conservative, conservative, moderately conservative, independent, moderately liberal, liberal, very liberal, and other*), religious affiliation (*Christian vs. non-Christian (e.g., Spiritual but not affiliated with one*

religious organization, Atheist, Christian - Protestant, Christian – Catholic, Agnostic, Pagan, Jewish, Buddhist, Islamic/Muslim, Hindu, Scientology, and other)), and amount of time dedicated to religious practices (*never, occasionally (1-3x per year), once a month, once a week, 1-3x per week, daily, several times per day, always, and other*). Gender was binary coded for male gender (*cisgender men and transmen*). Political beliefs were conceptualized as a spectrum from *very conservative* to *very liberal*, with *independent* as the midpoint. Other political beliefs were not included in analyses. Religious affiliation was categorized as *Christian vs. all other religious identities*. Religiosity was conceptualized as a spectrum from *never* to *always*.

Updated Illinois rape myth acceptance scale (uIRMA; McMahon & Farmer, 2011)

The Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance scale (*uIRMA*; Appendix B) is a 19-item revised version of the original Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance scale developed by Payne et al., (1999). This scale is purported to assess attitudes toward rape, perpetrators, victims, and common myths about rape. The measure includes five subscales: She Asked for It (4 items), It Wasn't Really Rape (4 items), He Didn't Mean To (3 items), He Didn't Mean To - Intoxication (3 items) and She Lied (5 items). The *uIRMA* differs from the original scale in that it has fewer items and addresses more covert rape myths because rape myths have grown increasingly more subtle with time (McMahon & Baker, 2011). As such, several studies have reported decreases in rape myth acceptance scores over the last two decades (Beshers & DiVita, 2021; Byrne et al., 2021; Edwards et al., 2011; Thelan & Meadows, 2021) within college samples across the United States. However, it is unclear whether this is due to shifting language regarding rape mythology and outdated measures, or actual cultural decreases in rape myth acceptance. The *uIRMA* is considered one of the best existing measures of rape myth acceptance and is widely used in recent studies (Beshers & DiVita, 2021).

McMahon and Farmer (2011) noted that three of the 22 original items included in their scale did not significantly load on any of the five factors, and were therefore dropped from the updated scale. Responses are indicated on a five-point Likert Scale ranging from 1 = *strongly agree* to 5 = *strongly disagree*, with 3 = *neither agree nor disagree* at the midpoint. Thus, in the present study, total scores range from 19 to 95, with a score of 95 indicative of rape myth rejection and 19 indicative of rape myth acceptance (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). Total score on the *uIRMA* She Lied subscale, ranging from 5 to 25, with higher scores indicative of rape myth rejection, as the measure of interest for false report myth endorsement.

Measure Reliability. Overall, the *uIRMA* demonstrated good construct and concurrent validity and reliability, with a good (Lance et al., 2006) reported internal consistency alpha ($\alpha = 0.87$) for the overall measure, and alphas ranging from $\alpha = 0.64$ to $\alpha = 0.80$ for the five subscales. The She Lied subscale internal consistency was highest of the five factors at $\alpha = .80$. Correlations among the five factors were all statistically significant, ranging from $r = .39$ to $r = .67$ (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). One study by Das and Bhattacharjee (2021) on an Indian sample of 429 university students in Tripura reported similar internal consistency, with correlations among the five factors ranging from .57 to .68, and a Polish version of the *uIRMA* demonstrated good overall test-retest reliability ($r_s(142) = .86, p < .01$; Łyś et al., 2021). In all studies, a five factor model demonstrated better fit than a four factor model, differentiating rape excusing (He Didn't Mean To) and alcohol-specific rape excusing beliefs (He Didn't Mean To – Intoxication; Łyś et al., 2021).

Knowledge

Items assessing knowledge of sexual assault and of false allegations of sexual assault were developed based on legal definitions provided in the Montana Code Annotated and false

allegation literature for sexual assault and false reports of sexual assault (Lisak et al., 2010; MCA, Sexual Assault, 2019; MCA, False Reports to Law Enforcement Authorities, 2019). The sexual assault question offered contextual examples of five items that either did or did not meet the legal definition of sexual assault, such as, “touching someone sexually without their consent.” The other response options included rape definition distractor items (e.g., “having sex with someone without their consent,” and “having sex with someone who verbally refused to have sex”), an item referring to drugging (e.g., “giving someone date rape drugs without their consent”), an item that did not meet the sexual assault threshold (e.g., “touching someone without their consent”), and an “I don’t know” option. Participants were instructed to select the single choice that signified sexual assault. Similarly, to assess for false report knowledge, two examples of behaviors that constitute false reporting (e.g., “reporting rape to authorities when nothing at all happened” and “having consensual sex, regretting it, and claiming rape”) were included in the false report question, and participants were asked to select as many of the six choices (e.g., “waiting to officially report rape to authorities,” “when someone can't remember everything and still reports rape,” “when there is not enough evidence to prove the rape happened,” “reporting to authorities and changing your mind,” and “going to trial for rape and being found not guilty”) that they believed constituted a false report.

Proximity and Fear

To determine proximity to secondary sexual violence, participants were asked whether they know someone who knew a victim (e.g., “do you know someone who has been sexually assaulted, other than yourself?”) or false accuser (e.g., “do you know someone who has made a false report regarding sexual assault?”) of sexual violence. For affirmative responses to each of these two proximity items, participants were asked one follow-up question regarding how well

they knew the victim/false accuser/perpetrator, with response options including *Heard from someone else*; *Slightly Acquainted*; *Acquainted*; and *Very Acquainted*. Finally, participants were asked to rank their fear of being falsely accused on a Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = *Not at all afraid*; to 4 = *Very afraid*. Male gender and fear were entered into the model, and a male gender*fear interaction term was generated using Hayes' PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2017).

Victimization Experiences

Participants were presented with a series of five endorsement items asking about sexual victimization experiences since UM enrollment. Operational definitions were embedded in each question stem in order to capture responses from those who had not labeled their experiences as rape or sexual assault. For example, the item addressing unwanted sexual contact is, "Has anyone ever made sexual contact with you (sexual contact meaning kissing, touching, grabbing, fondling of breasts, buttocks, or genitals) without your consent?". Participants could select multiple responses, and response options included: *Yes, in the past year*; *Yes, since I've been at UM (not including this past year)*; and *No*. Sexual victimization was determined by at least one affirmative response (e.g., *Yes, in the past year* and/or *Yes, since I've been at UM*) to any of the three UM-specific items or the prior to UM but at least 18-years-old item. Three total items assessed victimization occurring while at UM, including unwanted sexual contact, invasive sexual contact with penetration (non-penile), and penile penetration. Question development was informed by Koss's Sexual Experiences Survey (Freyd et al., 2014; Koss et al., 2006, 2007) which demonstrated good internal consistency for women's victimization ($\alpha = .92$) and men's perpetration ($\alpha = .98$), and good two-week test-retest reliability.

Procedure

Upon clicking the anonymous survey link, participants were directed to complete the electronic informed consent form and then onto the survey if they checked the “I agree” box to participate. Participants were told that they could skip any question and/or choose to end the survey at any time. Participants were presented with a series of demographic questions followed by questions concerning knowledge of sexual violence, proximity to sexual violence perpetration and vicimization, beliefs and attitudes toward sexual violence, general experiences with safety on campus and in the surrounding community, and experiences with sexual violence victimization. Participants were each presented with questions in the same order, but certain questions required endorsement to populate follow-up questions. For example, questions about sexual violence proximity (e.g., “do you know someone who made a false allegation of sexual assault”) were followed by a question about level of acquaintance (e.g., “how well did you know this person?”) only if affirmatively endorsed, and level of acquaintance questions were therefore not presented to participants who did not endorse the initial proximity question (see Appendix A for a list of the 23 items presented in this survey). Due to the difficult nature of the topics covered, participants were provided with the university’s Student Advocacy Resource Center (SARC) 24-hour crisis number and encouraged to contact SARC for emotional support. SARC is a university agency that provides supportive services (e.g., advocacy, counseling) to students who have experienced identity-based harm (e.g., sexual assault). Other questions that followed as part of a larger study (e.g., experiences with intimate partner violence, trauma, and technology-facilitated violence) were not included in the current study.

Results

Data Handling and Preliminary Analyses

SPSS Version 27 Software was used for all analyses. Assumptions of simple and multiple linear regression (i.e., linearity, independence, normality, and homoskedasticity), and binary logistic regression (e.g., independence, linear relationship with logit) were met for respective analyses. Multicollinearity was expected among independent variables given the similarity and overlap between certain predictors (e.g., *religious affiliation* and *religiosity*). However, the highest intercorrelation ($r = .64^{**}$) was between *false accuser acquaintance* and *false accuser acquaintance level* and VIF and Tolerance scores (1.0 and 1.0, respectively) suggested that assumptions of multicollinearity were met, suggesting that correlation between variables is insufficient to explain the other variables in the regression model. Preliminary bivariate analyses including t-tests and Pearson correlations were conducted on hypothesized variables to identify significant differences among groups. All hypothesized variables demonstrated significant differences between groups and were therefore included in regression analyses for further exploration. Bivariate tables can be found in Appendix F and Regression tables in Appendix G. Descriptive statistics for the 1060 participants' responses to demographic items including gender identity, sociopolitical beliefs, religious affiliation, amount of time dedicated to religious practices, and knowledge questions can be found in Appendix C, and demographics by gender identity can be found in Appendix E. To correct for multiple statistical tests, a False Discovery Rate (FDR) correction was calculated for each test at $\alpha = 0.05$.

Analysis by Hypothesis

RQ1: How might definitional knowledge of sexual violence and false allegations of sexual violence be related to rejecting the false allegation myth?

Descriptives

Participants were asked to indicate their knowledge of false reports of rape by selecting as many of the six scenarios that qualify as a false report (e.g., “having consensual sex, regretting it, and claiming rape” and “reporting rape to authorities when nothing at all happened”). Most participants (69.81%) correctly identified the two false allegation examples ($n = 740$; see Table 5), which is better than chance given the six choices ($t(1059) = 49.49, p < .001, d = 1.52$) and evidences a very large effect based on Cohen’s (1988) conventions for effect size. Participants were also asked to identify the legal definition of sexual assault in Montana (e.g., touching someone sexually without their consent). All students taking the survey learned this definition through the required freshman and junior Bystander Intervention class. Given six choices, one of which was “I don’t know,” 56.23% ($n = 596$) of participants demonstrated accurate knowledge of the legal definition of sexual assault in Montana, which is only slightly better than chance ($t(1059) = 36.88, p < .001, FDR p < .001, d = 1.13$) and evidences a very large effect. Many students selected distractor items (i.e., “having sex with someone without their consent,” $n = 191, 18.02\%$ or, “touching someone without their consent,” $n = 134, 12.64\%$) and approximately 11.60% of participants ($n = 123$) selected “I don’t know.” The sexual intercourse item was presented first in the list of options, so perhaps participants selected this item without reading farther down the list to the correct choice, #4, which included sexual touching. This may indicate an issue of inattention rather than a gap in knowledge.

She Lied subscale score was calculated by summing the five She Lied items from the *uIRMA*. Most participants demonstrated high She Lied score and She Lied myth rejection ($M = 20.15, SD = 4.54$). Scores on the She Lied scale demonstrated mild left skew (-0.63) but were well within the normal range.

Hypothesis 1: Insufficient knowledge of the definition of sexual assault and of false allegations of sexual assault will predict higher rates of endorsement of the false report myth.

She Lied ~ FR Def Knowledge + SA Def Knowledge + Error (Model 1: Linear Regression)

False report definitional knowledge and *sexual assault definitional knowledge* explained 10.0% of the variance in *She Lied* subscale score, $F(2, 1057) = 56.41, p < .001, R^2 = .10, R^2_{adjusted} = .10$. An increase in *definitional knowledge of false reports* corresponded to a three-point increase in *She Lied* score while controlling for *sexual assault definitional knowledge* ($\beta = 2.95, 95\% \text{ CI } [2.38, 3.52], t = 10.17, p < .001; \text{FDR } p < .001$). *Sexual assault definitional knowledge* was associated with a 0.58-point increase in *She Lied* subscale score while controlling for *false report definitional knowledge* ($\beta = 0.58, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.53, 1.11], t = 2.16, p < .05; \text{FDR } p < .05$; see Table 8). The somewhat small adjusted r-square value suggests that *false report definitional knowledge* and *sexual assault definitional knowledge* together in a combined model explain a weak to moderate amount (Chicco et al., 2021; Cohen, 1988) of the variance in *She Lied* subscale score. *False report definitional knowledge* corresponded to a more substantial change in *She Lied* score.

RQ2: How does fear of being falsely accused impact men’s endorsement of the false allegation myth?

Descriptives

When asked to indicate their level of fear of being falsely accused of sexual assault, most participants (79.0%) indicated that they were *not at all afraid* of being falsely accused ($n = 837$), with 12.9% ($n = 137$) indicating being *slightly afraid*, 4.3% ($n = 46$) being *afraid*, and 3.8% ($n = 40$) being *very afraid*; see Table 4). When explored separately by gender identity, 92.42% ($n = 682$) of women and 49.36% ($n = 155$) of men indicated being *not at all afraid*, 6.70% ($n = 50$) of

women and 27.71% ($n = 87$) of men indicated being *slightly afraid*, 1.34% ($n = 10$) of women and 11.46% ($n = 36$) of men being *afraid*, and 0.54% ($n = 4$) of women and 11.46% ($n = 36$) of men being *very afraid* of being falsely accused.

Hypothesis 2: Men who are afraid of being falsely accused are expected to demonstrate higher rates of false report myth endorsement.

She Lied ~ *Fear* + *Male Gender* + *Male Gender*Fear* + *Error* (Model 2: Linear Regression)

Male gender, *fear*, and *male gender*fear* explained a moderate amount (13.4%) of the variance in participants' *She Lied* myth endorsement, $F(3, 1056) = 54.59$, $R^2 = .13$, $p < .001$, FDR $p < .001$). Furthermore, there was a significant main effect for *male gender* ($\beta = -2.13$, 95% CI [-2.76, -1.50], $t = 6.63$, $p < .001$; FDR $p < .001$), suggesting that, when *fear* is controlled, *male gender* is associated with increased *She Lied* myth endorsement. A significant main effect was also observed for *fear* ($\beta = -1.41$, 95% CI [-2.18, -.064], $t = -3.60$, $p < .001$; FDR $p < .001$), suggesting that, when controlling for group differences in *gender*, *fear* predicts *She Lied* myth endorsement. While *male gender* and *fear* were each associated with higher rates of *She Lied* myth endorsement and demonstrated a moderate effect, there was no evidence of *male gender* being moderated by *fear* of being falsely accused ($p = .81$; FDR $p = .83$; see Table 15).

RQ3: What individual factors contribute to someone's endorsement of the false allegation myth?

Descriptives

Political beliefs, *religious affiliation*, *religiosity*, *acquaintance with a survivor*, *acquaintance with a false accuser*, and *male gender* were included in Model 3. Most participants identified as either liberal (53.11% *moderately* to *very liberal*, $n = 563$) or independent (17.36%, $n = 184$), with approximately one quarter of participants (26.60%, $n = 282$) holding conservative

(e.g., *moderately to very conservative*) political beliefs ($M = 4.59, SD = 1.66$). Approximately one-third (36.70%, $n = 389$) of participants identified as Christian (Catholic or Protestant). Most participants (70.19%, $n = 744$) indicated dedicating limited (*never or occasionally*) time to their religious practices ($M = 2.24, SD = 1.60$). The majority of the sample (79.06%, $n = 838$) indicated they were acquainted with a survivor. Nearly one in five participants (18.58%) endorsed acquaintance with a false accuser ($n = 197$; see Table 3).

Hypothesis 3: Male gender, conservative political beliefs, conservative religious beliefs, religiosity, absence of acquaintance with a survivor, and acquaintance with a false accuser are expected to predict higher rates of false report myth endorsement in a combined model.

$$\begin{aligned} & \textit{She Lied} \sim \textit{Gender} + \textit{Political Beliefs} + \textit{Religious Affiliation} + \textit{Religiosity} + \textit{Survivor} \\ & \textit{Acquaintance} + \textit{False Accuser Acquaintance} + \textit{Error} \quad (\textit{Model 3: Linear Regression}) \end{aligned}$$

Male gender, political beliefs, survivor acquaintance, and false accuser acquaintance explained a substantial amount (38.8%) of the variance in *She Lied* myth endorsement, $F(8, 1009) = 79.98, R^2 = .39, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = .38, p < .001, \text{FDR } p < .001$. Within the model, significant main effects emerged for *male gender* ($\beta = 2.16, 95\% \text{ CI } [-2.66, 1.66], t = -8.51, p < .001; \text{FDR } p < .001$), *survivor acquaintance* ($\beta = -1.23, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.79, -0.67], t = -4.35, p < .001; \text{FDR } p < .001$), *false accuser acquaintance* ($\beta = 2.29, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.70, 2.88], t = 7.61, p < .001; \text{FDR } p < .001$), and *political beliefs* ($\beta = 1.19, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.03, 1.34], t = 14.89, p < .001; \text{FDR } p < .001$). *Religious affiliation* ($p = .83; \text{FDR } p = .83$) and *religiosity* ($p = .50; \text{FDR } p = .537$) were not significantly associated with *She Lied* subscale score. *Age* ($\beta = 0.11, 95\% \text{ CI } [0.00, 0.22], t = -2.02, p < .05; \text{FDR } p < .05$) and *race/ethnicity* ($\beta = -0.80, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.49, -0.10], t = -2.25, p < .05; \text{FDR } p < .05$) covariates were significantly associated with *She Lied* subscale score (see Table 16).

RQ4: Can Intergroup Contact theory explain the tendency to believe survivors and/or false accusers of sexual violence? Might being acquainted with a false accuser and/or survivor influence one's beliefs about false allegations of sexual violence?

Descriptives

In addition to indicating whether or not they were acquainted with a false accuser, participants were asked to indicate the degree of acquaintance. Of participants who indicated being acquainted with a false accuser (18.58%, $n = 197$), 19.80% indicated indirect acquaintance (*heard from someone else*, $n = 39$), 34.01% ($n = 67$) indicated being *slightly acquainted*, 30.46% ($n = 60$) indicated being *acquainted*, and 15.74% ($n = 31$) indicated being *very acquainted* (see Table 3).

Hypothesis 4a: Being acquainted with a false accuser of sexual violence will predict higher rates of false report myth endorsement.

She Lied ~ False Accuser Acquaintance + Error (Model 4a: Linear Regression)

She Lied ~ False Accuser Acquaintance Level + Error (Model 4b: Linear Regression)

Knowing a false accuser accounted for a small to moderate amount (10.5%) of the variance in *She Lied* subscale score, $F(1, 1058) = 123.59$, $R^2 = .10$, $R^2_{adjusted} = .10$, $p < .001$; FDR $p < .001$. Being *acquainted with a false accuser* was associated with an average decrease in *She Lied* score of nearly 4 points ($\beta = -3.77$, 95% CI [-4.44, -3.11], $p < .001$, FDR $p < .001$), suggesting increased false report myth endorsement for those who know a false accuser.

Level of acquaintance with a false accuser explained a small to moderate amount (10.8%) of the variance in *She Lied* subscale score, $F(2, 1057) = 64.27$, $R^2 = .11$, $R^2_{adjusted} = .11$, $p < .001$, FDR $p < .001$. Low *acquaintance with a false accuser* was associated with a 3-point decrease in *She Lied* score, indicating increased false report endorsement when compared with

those unacquainted with a false accuser, $\beta = -3.17$, 95% CI [-4.04, -2.30], $p < .001$, FDR $p < .001$. High level of acquaintance with a false accuser (*acquainted* or *very acquainted*) was associated with 4.5-point decrease in *She Lied* score ($\beta = 4.48$, 95% CI [-5.41, -3.55], $p < .001$, FDR $p < .001$) when compared to non-acquaintance with a false accuser (see Table 17). This 4.5-point increase equates a 1 SD decrease ($M = 20.15$, $SD = 4.54$) in *She Lied* score and increased false report myth endorsement for those closely acquainted with a false accuser. However, the small to medium effect size suggests limited practical applications.

Hypothesis 4b: Being acquainted with a survivor of sexual violence will positively predict higher rates of false report myth endorsement.

She Lied ~ Survivor Acquaintance + Error (Model 4c: Linear Regression)

She Lied ~ Survivor Acquaintance Level + Error (Model 4d: Linear Regression)

Descriptives

Approximately four in five participants (78.06%) indicated knowing a sexual assault survivor. Of those participants who indicated being acquainted with a survivor ($n = 838$), most (88.66%) indicated close acquaintance (*acquainted* or *very acquainted*, $n = 743$). Acquaintance with a survivor explained a very small amount (4.0%) of the variance in *She Lied* subscale score, $F(1, 1058) = 44.43$, $R^2 = .04$, $R^2_{adjusted} = .04$, $p < .001$; FDR $p < .001$, and was associated with lower *She Lied* score. Acquaintance with a survivor was associated with an increase in *She Lied* score of approximately 2 points on average ($\beta = 2.24$, 95% CI [-2.90, -1.58], $p < .001$, FDR $p < .001$), suggesting movement toward lower false report myth endorsement (see Table 18).

Degree of acquaintance with a survivor explained a very small amount (6.1%) of the variance in *She Lied* subscale score, $F(2, 1057) = 34.38$, $R^2 = .06$, $R^2_{adjusted} = .06$, $p < .001$; FDR $p < .001$. Those with a high level of acquaintance with a survivor (*acquainted* or *very*

acquainted) demonstrated an average increase in *She Lied* score of 2.6 points when compared to those unacquainted with a survivor ($\beta = 2.56$, 95% CI [1.90, 3.22], $p < .001$, FDR $p < .001$), suggesting lower false report myth acceptance for those close with a survivor. The very small effect size suggests very limited applications. Low level acquaintance with a survivor (*not at all acquainted* or *slightly acquainted*) was not associated with a significant change in *She Lied* subscale score ($p = .46$, FDR $p = .50$; see Table 18).

RQ5: How do one's own experiences with victimization influence false report myth endorsement?

Descriptives

Approximately 33.11% ($n = 351$) of the sample identified as a sexual assault survivor, as determined by endorsement of at least one of the four adult sexual victimization questions.

Hypothesis 5: Primary sexual violence victimization is anticipated to predict lower rates of false report myth endorsement.

$$\textit{She Lied} \sim \textit{Primary Victimization} + \textit{Error} \quad (\textit{Model 5: Linear Regression})$$

Primary victimization explained a very small amount (2.1%) of the variance in *She Lied* subscale score, $F(1, 1058) = 22.34$, $R^2 = .02$, $R^2_{\text{adjusted}} = .02$, $p < .001$, FDR $p < .001$.

Experiencing sexual violence corresponded to a 1.4-unit increase in *She Lied* score ($\beta = 1.39$, 95% CI [.81, 1.96], $p < .001$, FDR $p < .001$), suggesting lower false report myth endorsement (see Table 19), though the effect was very small.

RQ6: How do those acquainted with false accusers define sexual assault and false allegations?

Hypothesis 6 (exploratory): Those who know a false accuser are anticipated to misidentify false reports of sexual violence and incorrectly define sexual assault compared to those unacquainted with a false accuser.

*Sexual Assault Definitional Knowledge ~ False Accuser Acquaintance + Error (Model 6a:
Logistic Regression)*

Knowing a false accuser was not associated with knowledge of the definition of sexual assault ($p = .72$; FDR $p = .75$).

*False Report Definitional Knowledge ~ False Accuser Acquaintance + Error (Model 6b:
Logistic Regression)*

Acquaintance with a false accuser explained a very small portion of the variance (2.3%) (Nagelkerke R^2) in false report definitional knowledge and correctly classified 69.80% of the cases, $\chi^2(1) = 16.99$, $p < .05$; FDR $p < .05$. Individuals acquainted with a false accuser were approximately twice as likely ($OR = 1.98$, 95% CI [1.44, 2.72], $p < .001$, FDR $p < .001$) as those unacquainted with a false accuser to incorrectly identify a false report of sexual assault (see Table 20), though the effect was very small.

Discussion

The core purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of false reports of sexual violence among young adults on a college campus. Of particular importance were the attitudes, proximity, knowledge, and individual factors associated with false report myth endorsement and sexual violence. Significant knowledge gaps indicated the need for this study, including confusion about the definition of a false report of sexual assault, limited understanding of the relationship between fear of being falsely accused and false report myth endorsement, limited knowledge about the influence of individual characteristics and direct and indirect

experiences of sexual violence on false report myth endorsement, and an opportunity to apply Intergroup Contact Theory to decrease false allegation myth acceptance. Important outcomes emerged surrounding knowledge of sexual violence and false reports, individual factors associated with false report myth acceptance, attitudes toward sexual violence and false report myths, and experiences with sexual violence.

Knowledge

The results of this study support the notion that insufficient knowledge of sexual assault is associated with false report myth endorsement, but the small (0.5-point) average increase in false report myth rejection suggests limited meaning and applications, and education efforts targeting sexual assault definitional understanding may not be the most efficient use of resources. However, participants who demonstrated an understanding of the definition of a false report scored an average of three points lower on the measure of false report myth endorsement than those who misunderstood the definition of false reports, and with a substantially large effect. Thus, definitional knowledge of false reports may serve as a protective factor against the false report subset of rape myths, and educational efforts in this area may be beneficial in targeting this false allegation rape myth.

This finding highlighting the importance of knowledge of false reports and suggests that educating college students about clarifying false reports of sexual violence could be paramount to their rejection of the false report myth, hence combatting the prevalence of this particular rape myth on college campuses. The knowledge questions included in this study assessed the specificity of participants' knowledge of sexual assault as unwanted sexual touching, beyond the simpler conceptualization of sexual assault as a synonym for rape. The false report knowledge question offered complex and nuanced examples of barriers/myths about victims obtaining

justice through the reporting process. Such barriers (e.g., including memory gaps, delayed reporting of the assault, insufficient evidence of assault, withdrawing from an investigation, and a determination of “not guilty” in a court of law) are often misinterpreted as victim dishonesty, but are in fact rape myths. Participants who answered these questions correctly demonstrated accurate knowledge of false reports and were less likely to endorse false allegation rape myths. This information can be used to inform sexual violence prevention programming to include an educational component emphasizing the clarification of false allegations of sexual violence, including an explanation of law enforcement classification of false allegations. Such programs might employ vignettes and fictional case examples demonstrating differentiation of false or fabricated allegations from unfounded or baseless allegations of sexual violence (National Sexual Violence Resource Center [NSVRC], 2012). They might also include media literacy education with the goal of teaching young adults to be responsible consumers of news media regarding sexual violence (Hobbs, 2006; Siena & Roman, 2022). Through such education, young adults could learn to question media and develop critical thinking skills to challenge the reliability of sensational journalism. This information can further be used to fuel passage of public policy to promote responsible and ethical journalism free of sensationalism and “clickbait” that spreads harmful rape myths, sexism, and victim-blaming content, rather than reporting on facts. Such changes have the potential to markedly decrease the news media’s dangerous role in the spread rape myths especially harmful to those who suffer sexual victimization experiences. Combined with other ongoing educational efforts, such changes may have a compounding effect and impact overall rape culture through changes to the way that young adults are raised and taught about sexual violence in the home and at school.

These findings regarding knowledge of false reports are an important contribution to the sparse literature on false accusations of sexual assault, most of which has included only prevalence statistics and law enforcement perceptions of false accusations. This study offers a glimpse into the age group (18 to 25 years old) and university social groups with the highest sexual violence rates (Black et al., 2011; Sinozich & Langton, 2014; Rickert et al., 2004), and strong rape myth acceptance. From an intervention standpoint, a misunderstanding of the definition of false allegations suggests that the individual could be confused about what constitutes false allegations, and therefore misunderstand *any* allegations of sexual assault, including those that are genuine. They also may be conflating sexual assault with rape, as many participants endorsed rape distractor definitional items (e.g., having sex with someone without their consent, having sex with someone who verbally said no) which are a form of sexual assault (unwanted sexual touching/penetration), but do not encompass the threshold acts qualifying as sexual assault (unwanted sexual touching).

Furthermore, false report myth endorsement may be functioning as a defense mechanism to protect the individual who purports to know a false accuser from acknowledging the perpetrator's conduct. False reports comprise only 2% to 10% of all sexual assault reports (Jones et al., 2021; Lisak et al., 2010), yet 18.6% of the current sample indicated acquaintance with a false accuser. Most participants correctly identified the two examples of false allegations from the six options presented. However, those who demonstrated confusion about false allegations of sexual assault demonstrated higher rates of rape myth acceptance. Perhaps some of these participants had conceptualized false accusers as anyone who claimed to have been raped, without reporting to authorities, thus inflating their representation in this sample. Regardless, this association between lack of knowledge and rape myth acceptance highlights an important area

for educational intervention and further research. We need to understand whether the false accusers who participants purport to know have actually made false accusations, or whether participants are jumping to conclusions about the accuser. Further qualitative research could ask participants to describe the allegations against their acquaintance and ask them to explain why they believe the allegations to be false. This would allow more insight into the application of false report knowledge for those who know false accusers, and perhaps shed light on the influence of the perpetrator's influence on participant's beliefs about the accuser. This is of paramount importance to dispelling She Lied myths.

Attitudes toward Sexual Violence

Intergroup Contact Theory

Outcomes related to acquaintance with survivors and false accusers were consistent with expectations given Intergroup Contact Theory, which holds that prejudice and conflict can decrease with meaningful contact under certain conditions between outgroups. However, only acquaintance with false accusers demonstrated a small to moderate effect, while acquaintance with a survivor demonstrated very small effect, suggested limited real world applications. The current findings show that those acquainted with a false accuser are not only more likely to misidentify false reports of sexual violence, but are also more likely to believe the false report myth. Those who indicated knowing a false accuser scored nearly four points higher on the measure of false report myth endorsement than those who did not know a false accuser. Furthermore, while the presence or absence of acquaintance with a false accuser influenced myth endorsement, *degree* of closeness to a false accuser demonstrated additional impact on false report myth beliefs. Those who were indirectly or slightly acquainted with a false accuser scored three points higher on the measure of rape myth acceptance than those unacquainted with a false

accuser. Importantly, those *closely* acquainted with a false accuser scored 4.5 points higher on the measure of false report myth endorsement than those unacquainted with a false accuser. Thus, simply knowing a false accuser was a risk factor, but those closely acquainted with a false accuser were at even greater risk for false report myth endorsement. These results are consistent with findings by de Roos and Jones (2020a, 2020b), who demonstrated that mere acquaintance with a false accuser is associated with victim blaming and a negative reaction to child sexual abuse disclosure. The current study further expands upon their findings through the unique examination of adult disclosure and the compounded impact of degree of closeness.

While false accuser acquaintance was a risk factor for increased false report myth beliefs, acquaintance with a survivor was associated with lower false report myth endorsement, though the effect was small, suggesting limited clinical significance. Nonetheless, acquaintance with a survivor might serve as a protective factor against false report myth endorsement, as those acquainted with a survivor scored an average of two points lower on the measure of false report myth endorsement. Interestingly, while close acquaintance with a survivor was associated with a 2.5 point decrease in false report myth endorsement, indirect and slight acquaintance with a survivor was not associated with a decrease in false report myth endorsement. This suggests that mere acquaintance with a survivor in this sample was insufficient in protecting against false report myth endorsement, and only close acquaintance with a survivor affected false report myth beliefs. This indicates that meaningful relationships are more effective than mere acquaintanceship with a survivor in combatting false report myths, lending support to interventions based on Intergroup Contact Theory, which states that positive affect, empathy, and friendship are effective pathways in reducing intergroup conflict and prejudice.

Given these findings, sexual violence prevention might should examine Intergroup Contact Theory as a method of dispelling rape myths, especially because, when facilitated correctly, positive intergroup contact can generalize to other members of the larger group absent during the interaction (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). While acquaintance with a survivor evidenced limited clinical applications due to small effect size, acquaintance with a false accuser, and especially close acquaintance with a false accuser, evidenced a small to moderate effect. The findings regarding false accuser acquaintance suggest that knowing a false accuser is detrimental regarding one's false report myth beliefs. This intimates that individuals who report knowing a false accuser are an important group for targeted intervention. Individuals who believe they know a false accuser (18.6% of the current sample) should be provided education about false allegation definitions, and encouraged to apply this knowledge to their own acquaintances. Such knowledge will allow them to more accurately ascertain whether the accusations are indeed false, and thus determine whether they truly know a false accuser. This finding regarding false accuser acquaintance is similar to the results from previous research by de Roos and Jones (2020b), who found that proximity to a perpetrator was associated with increased skepticism and victim-blaming of a survivor in a mock news story. The current findings about false accuser acquaintance are aligned with their determination that knowing a perpetrator was associated with a more negative response to disclosure. As such, future research and education efforts could explore debunking false accuser acquaintance by providing education about false allegations and the process of filing a report of rape. This may provide reassurance for those afraid of being falsely accused, and may resolve discrepancies between perceived rates of false allegations for those who purport to know someone who made a false allegation.

While the small effect size suggests limited real life applications, further research is needed into acquaintanceship with a survivor and its impact on false report myth beliefs. The finding that acquaintance with a survivor predicts lower rates of false report myth endorsement contradicts de Roos and Jones's (2020a) finding that proximity to a survivor does not affect skepticism toward survivor disclosure. The current findings also support results from Crall and Goodfriend (2016), who ascertained that acquaintance with a survivor is associated with lower rates of rape myth acceptance. Should future studies confirm that acquaintance with a survivor is associated with false report myth endorsement, such findings could hold important implications for intervention efforts and techniques, as this would suggest that Intergroup Contact Theory applies to contact with sexual assault survivors and false accusers. As such, positive interactions in which survivors share about their victimization experiences with others would likely be beneficial as acquaintances are exposed to testimonial evidence contradicting rape myths, potentially activating rape myth rejection on an individual level. Additionally, survivors may mutually benefit if they receive support and validation from others for sharing their story.

Sexual violence prevention experts might examine Intergroup Contact Theory as a method of dispelling rape myths, especially because, when facilitated correctly, positive intergroup contact can generalize to other members of the larger group absent during the interaction (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). To illustrate, a recent study by Taschler and West (2017) found that men who had positive meaningful contact with women in power or authority or who were more occupationally senior reported lower intention to rape, lower rape myth acceptance, and lower hostile sexism. This suggests opportunities for a similar reduction in false report myth acceptance, increases in empathy, and survivor perspective-taking. However, this hypothesized impact is contingent upon further research, as the small effect found in this study is reminiscent

of previous research by de Roos and Jones (2020b), which showed that survivor acquaintance was not associated with participant skepticism toward a disclosure of sexual violence. Importantly, an individual must see and categorize the survivor in the interaction as representative of other survivors for attitudes and beliefs about rape myths to change and generalize to unknown survivors (Christ & Kauff, 2019; Hewstone & Greenland, 2000). According to Christ and Kauff (2019), another issue for minority groups involves an observed phenomenon in which some members of minority groups defensively shift away from their group identities, decreasing category saliency and rendering prejudice reduction generalization less likely. Similarly concerning, minority group members interacting with outgroup majorities demonstrated increased liking and perceived fairness of majority group members, thereby decreasing their motivation for social justice and expectations for majority group change and equitable reparations (Christ & Kauff, 2019). Early research seeking to remedy these issues has shown that when the majority group identifies and acknowledges the unfairness of their inherent privilege and their benefit from unequal status, positive interactions occur between groups without diminishing the sense of need for social justice and change. Given research showing that affective and cognitive processes underlie belief formation and prejudice reduction during interpersonal interactions, future interventions might focus to this end on decreasing anxiety and increasing perspective-taking (empathy), increased self-disclosure, and familiarity. Such shared experiences may be particularly helpful in increasing tendencies to believe survivors. Should sexual violence prevention explore Intergroup Contact Theory as a method of dispelling rape myths, further potential negative effects of intergroup contact should also be given careful consideration, as intergroup contacts can decrease prejudice, but unintended harm can be inflicted on the marginalized group responsible for decreasing another group's prejudice against

them (Christ & Kauff, 2019; Tropp, 2003). In exposing marginalized groups to those who hold harmful and invalidating beliefs against them, we open them up to potential harmful comments, disbelief, and hateful rhetoric. Such harm would be detrimental to survivors, and especially those in the early stages of their healing journey. A study by Tropp (2003) examined outcomes for minority groups during intergroup contact scenarios and found that even a single expression of prejudice had negative impacts on minority group members' attitudes toward interactions with outgroup members and in their expectations and anxiety levels regarding future interactions with outgroups. This could limit their willingness to enter future intergroup interactions. Furthermore, Tropp (2003) found that members of the majority group anticipated that they would be viewed as perpetrators of prejudice, causing them to similarly report decreased interest in intergroup interactions. One solution to these problematic negative effects may be to implement indirect forms of intergroup contact (e.g., vicarious, imagined, extended) to reduce prejudice as much as possible before engaging in face-to-face/direct intergroup contact, where, as we know, the risk of harm to the minority group is much higher. This is a crucial area for further research, and future studies in Intergroup Contact Theory should include positive and negative outcome measures for minority groups so that we may better understand the potential for harm and for positive outcomes among devalued and traumatized groups. Future research might compare the relative positive and negative impacts of direct and indirect approaches to intergroup contact and effectiveness in addressing bias. Indirect contact may perhaps be a safer but more effective solution which decreases the potential for harm, and interactions in which survivors are given respect and protected from the projection of rape mythology will be needed.

Overall, this study demonstrates the association between knowing a false accuser and higher false report myth acceptance. Being closely acquainted with a survivor was associated

with decreased false report myth beliefs, but with limited clinical applications due to small effect. These findings are important because they suggest that interventions in which survivors share stories might be enhanced by, for example, exercises in which the listener practices taking the perspective of the survivor and imagining the survivor's experience. Also beneficial may be activities in which the learner collaborates with the survivor, shares meaningful details about themselves, and discussing topics about which they share common views. Importantly, such interventions must take care to safeguard against unintended negative impact on devalued and minority groups. In exposing individuals who have historically been discriminated against and traumatized by majority groups to additional experiences with prejudice, we are risking further traumatization and negative outcomes. Although a goal of intergroup contact interventions is to reduce prejudice and ultimately benefit the minority group in the long run, researchers must explore an intervention that minimizes harm.

Fear and Gender

Both male gender and fear of being falsely accused of sexual violence were associated with increased false report myth endorsement and demonstrated a moderate effect, suggesting practical applications. However, there was no evidence for a gender by fear interaction in predicting false report myth endorsement. This suggests that while the fear of being falsely accused and male gender are each associated with false report myth endorsement, fear was not dependent on gender. Among participants experiencing the same level of fear, male participants were no more likely than non-male participants to endorse the false report myth. This finding suggests that rape myth interventions should target male-identified individuals and those demonstrating higher levels of fear, but not necessarily male-identified individuals demonstrating higher levels of fear. These findings support the implementation of such curricula

as Coaching Boys into Men (Futures Without Violence Fund, 2011) and Mentors in Violence Prevention (Katz, 1995), programs that are tailored toward boys and young men to deconstruct their conceptions of masculinity and violence. These programs demonstrate mixed effectiveness, but some researchers have found that they increase bystander intervention behavior and recognition of abusive behaviors (Miller et al., 2012). Perhaps such curricula could implement specific educational materials to dispel fears of false accusations and other rape myths. This is not to suggest that only men will benefit from education. Indeed, non-male identified individuals demonstrating higher levels of fear should also receive rape myth education and intervention to dispel the false report myth.

The current results indicate that fear is an important factor in rape myth intervention, as the fear of being falsely accused of sexual violence may serve as a motivation behind victim-blaming and rape myth acceptance. This was evidenced in Jones et al. (2021), whose study evidenced that those who feared being falsely accused of CSA were more likely to disbelieve a survivor coming forward with a CSA claim. Interventions targeting fear of being falsely accused may lower rape myth acceptance and victim blaming, diminishing two important barriers to survivors seeking help. Additionally, as male gender was associated with increased false report myth endorsement, educational efforts should be tailored to incorporate information specifically targeting male-identified individuals. This finding is consistent with past research and makes sense given that men are more likely to perpetrate sexual violence (Hail-Jares et al., 2020) and, therefore, to fear being accused of sexual violence (Anderson & Levine, 1999; Parr & Gosse, 2011). Such interventions might include explanations of the actual rates of false reporting (2% – 10%, Lisak et al., 2010) and wrongful conviction for sexual assault based on false allegations,

which currently represent only 4% of wrongful convictions (Hail-Jares et al., 2020), in order to alleviate fear generated from misinformation.

Individual Factors

Male gender, conservative political beliefs, acquaintance with a false accuser, and absence of acquaintance with a survivor were associated with false report myth endorsement in a combined model and demonstrated a moderate effect. Younger age and non-White race covariates were also associated with false report myth endorsement. Contrary to previous studies which found that religiosity and Catholic and Protestant religious affiliation were associated with rape myth acceptance (Aosved & Long, 2006; Barnett et al., 2018; Edwards et al., 2011; Ensz & Jankowski, 2020), there was no evidence that conservative Christian religious beliefs or level of religiosity were associated with false report myth endorsement. Male gender, younger age, non-White/non-Hispanic race/ethnicity, holding conservative political belief ideology, being acquainted with a false accuser, and not knowing a survivor were all factors associated with believing the false report myth. Existing literature has connected male gender, conservative political and religious beliefs, and absence of acquaintance with a survivor with rape myth acceptance (Aosved & Long, 2006; Barnett et al., 2018; Edwards et al., 2011; Ensz & Jankowski, 2020; Garza & Franklin, 2020; Hockett et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2021; Walker et al., 1993). The current study uniquely contributes acquaintance with a false accuser as a factor associated with rape myth acceptance. This combined model predicted 38% of the variance in rape myth acceptance, suggesting that although many of the factors contributing to false report myth endorsement were accounted for within the model, the majority remains unexplained. Though religiosity and religious affiliation were not associated with false report endorsement in our sample, perhaps conceptualizing religiosity and religious affiliation differently in future

studies would help to further elucidate this deviation from previous studies. For example, Ensz & Jankowski (2020) examined dimensions of religiosity, including openness, fundamentalism, exploration, and religious motivation in the context of rape myth acceptance, and found that religious and secular submission to external authorities was associated with higher rape myth acceptance, whereas religious exploration served as a protective factor against rape myth beliefs.

In this sample, younger age and non-White, non-Hispanic racial and ethnic identities were associated with She Lied rape myth acceptance. Very little research has examined race and ethnicity in the context of rape myth acceptance; however, there is some evidence that racism is associated with higher rape myth acceptance (Aosved & Long, 2006). Although racial and ethnic differences in She Lied myth acceptance emerged in the current study, it is difficult to draw conclusions due to small racial and ethnic groups sizes. The largest racial/ethnic groups after White/non-Hispanic ($n = 937$) were Hispanic ($n = 35$) and biracial ($n = 26$). The issue of underrepresentation of non-White individuals was also seen in a study of rape myth acceptance by Canan et al. (2018) and a metaanalysis by Suarez and Gadalla's (2010), whose authors were unable to draw conclusions about racial and ethnic implications beyond differentiating White and non-White groups. As in the current study, both previous studies cautiously concluded that being White (vs. non-White) was associated with lower rape myth acceptance. These vague findings may in and of themselves be reaffirming weaponized myths about Black men perpetrating sexual violence against White women. As such, future studies with more diverse samples are needed in order to explore rape myth acceptance among racial and ethnic groups and examine cultural influences on rape myth acceptance with greater accuracy. Such studies should contextualize this research given the history of Black men as targets of rape myths themselves,

with Black men being falsely accused of raping White women, in order to justify White racial violence targeting Black men (Armstrong et al., 2018).

Consistent with previous findings by Vonderhaar and Carmody (2015) regarding younger age's association with overall rape myth acceptance, in this sample, younger participants demonstrated stronger She Lied myth beliefs. Younger participants may not yet have primary or secondary experiences with sexual violence upon entering university, and as such may not have yet developed or thought critically about rape myths. Additionally, they have experienced relatively fewer "Red Zones" than their upperclassmen counterparts. "Red Zone" refers to the period between arrival on campus in August and Thanksgiving break, when more than 50% of sexual assaults occur. During this time, freshman women particularly are more likely to be sexually assaulted by male college students as they adjust to living away from home and form new social support networks (Kimble et al., 2008; RAINN).

The current findings regarding age, political beliefs, acquaintance with survivors and false accusers, and gender are important in tailoring messages and educational curricula. Rather than educating those who already reject rape myths, successfully educating individuals who are represented in one or more of these groups/identities is likely to have more impact on overall false report myth endorsement. These risk indicators may be used to inform targets for Intergroup Contact Intervention, as the combination of this demographic information may provide insight about how best to reach such individuals successfully and effectively (i.e., via increased contact with survivors and non-perpetrators).

Primary Victimization

Primary sexual violence victimization was associated with 1.5-point decrease in She Lied score and lower rates of false report myth endorsement, but evidenced a very small effect. This

finding contributes some limited evidentiary support for sexual violence victimization contributing specifically to false report myth rejection and offers further limited support for previous studies which found that firsthand sexual violence victims were more likely to believe rather than reject other survivors' disclosures and allegations of sexual violence (Cromer & Freyd, 2007; de Roos & Jones, 2020b, Miller & Cromer, 2015; Nuttall & Jackson, 1994; Vonderhaar & Carmody, 2015). However, the literature has also suggested that victims may have complex reactions to rape myths, and may be more likely to internalize rape myths, isolate themselves, and disbelieve other victims. For example, one study by Paul et al. (2009) found that college student victims of sexual violence perceived higher rape myth acceptance among their peers, and this overestimation was associated with lower rates of assault detail disclosure. In another recent study, victims internalized the normalization of sexual violence on campus, which negatively impacted their abilities to make meaning of their victimization and process their trauma (Sinko et al., 2019). Given the small effect size, the current study contributes limited evidence that victims hold beliefs inconsistent with overall rape mythology. Given that victims in this study demonstrated lower false report myth endorsement than other participants, victimization experience may confer protection against false report myth endorsement. Future research should attempt to disentangle where on the spectrum of healing and identity as a survivor and victim does someone experiencing primary victimization experience more false report myth rejection. Clinicians may specifically attend to where therapy clients fall on the victimization/survivor spectrum, and use this information to determine whether internalized rape-mythology need be targeted in treatment. Certain cognitive-behavioral treatments, such as Cognitive Processing Therapy (Resick & Schnicke, 1993), specifically target negative cognitive distortions (i.e., "Stuck Points") about the self and the world, including internalized rape myths.

These findings highlight the importance of teaching sexual violence victims with internalized rape myth beliefs to challenge these cognitions.

Limitations

Several limitations prevent generalization of the current findings to other populations. First, the current findings are limited to rape myth beliefs about women. This limitation is primarily due to the *uIRMA* questions about gender-based violence perpetrated specifically against women, excluding gender minorities. A recent study by Canan et al. (2022) tested the *Modified IRMA-Short Form (mIRMA-SF)* which updated the previous *uIRMA* scale with gender-inclusive language. For example, “if a girl is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of hand” was updated to “if someone is raped while they are drunk, that person is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of hand.” Using exploratory factor analysis, this study showed that the original *IRMA-SF* and the *mIRMA-SF* hold the same psychometric properties using. However, confirmatory factor analysis demonstrated a poor model fit, which the authors attributed to a floor effect due to limited variability in rape myth endorsement. As such, further research support is needed to assess *mIRMA-SF* validity. Future studies should continue to update the *uIRMA* to include violence perpetrated against gender and sexual minorities, as the current degree of rape myth beliefs targeting an estimated 5.6% of the US population (Jones, 2021), representing gender and sexual minorities, is unknown.

Although not unique to this sample, another *uIRMA*-related limitation emerged related to measurement: participants from this college campus demonstrated relatively low rape myth acceptance on four out of five subscales. Compared to our 2018 sample of college students at a northwestern rocky mountain university, one other recent study using the *uIRMA* collected data in 2010 and 2017 from students at a northeastern university (Beshers & DeVita. 2021). This

study showed that, over time, participant scores on all five subscales of the *uIRMA* at the same northeastern university decreased in rape myth acceptance over time. Compared to Beshers & DeVita's (2021) subscale scores, the current sample demonstrated higher scores on all but 1 *uIRMA* subscale and lower overall *uIRMA* scores, indicating lower rape myth acceptance at this rocky mountain university than the northeastern university (see Appendix D). Like the trend toward decreased rape myth acceptance found by Beshers & DeVita (2021), over the period of time between 2013 and 2018, Safe Campus Survey participants at this rocky mountain university have demonstrated a decrease in rape myth acceptance, with the overall *uIRMA* score increasing from 3.85 ($M, SD = 0.63$) among women and 3.54 ($M, SD = 0.67$) among men in 2013, to 4.01 ($M, SD = 0.48$) among women and 3.65 ($M, SD = 0.54$) among men in 2018 (Pepper et al., 2021). This shift is consistent with findings from other college campus sexual violence researchers. For example, in addition to Beshers & DeVita (2021) finding significant decreases in rape myth acceptance across all subscales and overall rape myth scores between 2010 and 2017, Byrne et al. (2021) similarly observed decreasing rates of rape myth acceptance between 1998 and 2018 among female students at a Pacific Northwestern university. Overall, this trend could be considered progress, as it suggests that rape myth acceptance is decreasing among university students. However, this does not necessarily mean that rape myths are no longer prevalent (Thelan & Meadows, 2021). Edwards et al. (2011) suggest high rates of social desirability and impression management creating floor effects as a possible explanation for seemingly lower rates of rape myth acceptance. This trend may also indicate that rape myths have become more subtle and/or more complex (Thelan & Meadows, 2021), shifting away from outright victim blaming and aggression toward women (e.g., "women want to be raped") as voicing such beliefs has become less socially acceptable, and shifting toward passive language (e.g., "although most

women wouldn't admit it, they generally find being physically forced into sex a real 'turn-on'"; Edwards et al., 2011). To assess for more subtle and rape myths, Canan et al. (2022) recommend the inclusion of race, SES, and other privileged statuses currently serving to protect perpetrators, and suggest that language should shift attention away from victims and toward perpetrators to include myths like, "men from nice middle-class homes almost never commit rape." Key shifts in language like this could advance us society toward placing responsibility for rape fully on the perpetrator instead of the victim.

Other limitations to this dataset involve the cross-sectional and categorical nature of some of the data collected. Given these data characteristics, the current findings likely lack sensitivity, and conclusions about causation are impossible. Questions using an interval scale would likely better capture nuances in political and religious beliefs, for example. Additionally, although bivariate analyses suggested that multicollinearity assumptions were met for all analyses in this study, there is a possibility that similar variables and confounding variables may exist within the data. For instance, underlying or overlapping variables may at least partly explain the association between gender and fear predicting false report rape myth acceptance. If men are the only gender accused of sexual assault, then an inherent association must exist between fear and male gender. Other such nuances may exist in the data and complicate the current findings. The current study aptly surveyed the target audience (college students) in which sexual violence is most prevalent; however, this presents another limitation to generalizability to other age groups and to 18 to 25-year-olds who do not attend college. Recent statistics estimate that college-aged non-university students comprise 38.2% of the US population (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022). Further research could explore rates of sexual violence among this sizable population which may similarly be at elevated risk, as some research suggests that prior victimization experience is the

strongest predictor of victimization among emerging adults (Wood et al., 2020), regardless of college attendance.

Finally, the overarching purpose of this study was to obtain information about the attitudes, beliefs, and understanding of false reports of sexual violence, but the length and voluntary nature of the questions asked within the Safe Campus Survey likely meant that those uncomfortable with the material discontinued the survey. Indeed, a missing data analysis suggested that data was not missing at random. Among those who stopped the survey may have been those who held problematic beliefs or perpetrated sexual violence. Therefore, the sample may be biased such that the overall level of rape myth acceptance may be an over- or under-estimation, and the captured attitudes toward sexual violence included in this study may be different from reality.

Future Directions

Knowledge of both the legal definition of sexual assault and definitions of false reports of sexual assault were each associated with lower rates of false report myth beliefs, although knowledge of the legal definition of sexual assault demonstrated only a very small improvement in false report myth acceptance. Overall, these findings suggest that sexual violence prevention programs should continue to educate on the definition of sexual assault, and should importantly incorporate discussion of what constitutes a false allegation of sexual assault, as this study demonstrated that false allegation knowledge was predictive of a larger decrease in false report myth beliefs than being informed about the definition of sexual assault.

Through teaching about false allegations of sexual assault, education efforts will also be targeting and ideally alleviating fears of being falsely accused of sexual assault. Educational programs might utilize cognitive behavioral techniques, such as Socratic questioning (Tolin,

2016), to reduce fear and decrease anxiety related to false accusations, and educate on the process of reporting sexual violence and sexual violence investigations. Male-identified individuals may specifically be recommended for such interventions, given that men have consistently been found to hold stronger rape mythology beliefs than women (Kahlor & Easton, 2011, Hockett et al., 2009). College students who know a false accuser or are afraid of being falsely accused are more likely to misunderstand what constitutes a false report, and thus should especially be targeted with education on false reports. In addition to gender and levels of fear, other aspects of identity and attitudes associated with higher rape myth acceptance may include conservative political beliefs and younger age. As such, sexual violence prevention and education should ideally begin even before college, when most young adults are forming their political ideologies and sexual scripts (Pham, 2016).

Several additional outcomes uncovered in this research would benefit from further study. First, the current findings suggest that Intergroup Contact Theory may be a beneficial avenue for combatting rape myth acceptance. Overall, rape myth acceptance seems to be gradually decreasing, as evidenced in this study and other recent research (Beshers & DiVita, 2021; Byrne et al., 2021; Milesi et al., 2020). Some researchers (Edwards et al., 2011; Thelan & Meadows, 2021) intimate that rape myths are evolving in complexity and becoming harder to target. As such, the current study's findings regarding intergroup contact with survivors and with false accusers are important, and suggest that continuing intervention research should explore ways for individuals holding rape myth beliefs to experience meaningful interactions with survivors. Importantly, survivors need to be protected from backlash and inappropriate comments. Some studies looking at Intergroup Contact Theory suggest that indirect technology-facilitated interactions may confer similar benefits in stereotype reduction to in-person contact. More

specifically, existing studies have documented the effectiveness of indirect intergroup contact via telecommunication and media exposure to undervalued and minority groups. For example, television shows and films portraying positive intergroup contact between outgroups meet criteria for both extended intergroup contact effects and vicarious intergroup contact, so long as that viewer relates to the ingroup and outgroup characters and perceives positive interactions between the characters. This should, based on research into indirect contact effects (Christ & Kauff, 2019; Pettigrew, 2011), result in at least short-term prejudice reduction. This research is in its infancy, and is well-illustrated by a 2009 study examining the contact effects among the conflicting Hutu and Tutsi in Rwanda (Paluck). These groups gathered for mutual listening sessions to a radio soap opera that demonstrated covert parallels to the conflict situation between these two groups. Results from this study suggested an increased sense of trust and intergroup cooperation for members of both groups following the conclusion of the soap opera listening sessions (Christ & Kauff, 2019; Paluck, 2009). Based on these findings, it is plausible that “mere exposure” (Pettigrew et al., 2011) effects and indirect intergroup contact may successfully reduce prejudice among viewers of certain television shows and films. Taken together, these findings highlight the importance intergroup contact and meaningful relationships in shaping beliefs and attitudes toward survivors and their stories, and ultimately decreasing rape myth acceptance.

Summary of Findings

In the current study, approximately half of participants demonstrated accurate knowledge regarding the definition of sexual assault, and most participants demonstrated accurate knowledge of the definition of a false allegation of sexual violence. Overall, most participants demonstrated low She Lied rape myth acceptance. Accurate false allegations, and to a lesser extent definitional knowledge of sexual assault, were associated with She Lied rape myth

rejection. Approximately one fifth of the current sample (50% of men and 9% of women and gender minorities) endorsed a fear of being falsely accused of sexual assault. Male gender and fear were each associated with She Lied myth acceptance. Male gender, conservative political beliefs, lack of survivor acquaintance, and false accuser acquaintance were associated with She Lied myth acceptance. Nearly one fifth of the current sample endorsed acquaintance with a false accuser, and She Lied myth endorsement increased with closer acquaintance with a false accuser when compared with those unacquainted with a false accuser. Most participants indicated being acquainted with a survivor, and close acquaintance with a survivor was associated with lower She Lied myth endorsement when compared with those unacquainted with a survivor, though the effect was very small and suggests limited practical application. Approximately one third of participants endorsed primary sexual violence victimization experiences. Those who experienced primary victimization demonstrated lower She Lied myth acceptance than those without such victimization history, but with a very small effect. Finally, those who were acquainted with a false accuser were more likely to lack accurate knowledge of the definition of a false allegation of sexual violence than those unacquainted with a false accuser, with a small effect. Findings from this study demonstrate the importance of educational intervention in dispelling rape myths.

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Appendix A: Safe Campus Survey (SCS) Items

Demographics

Q11/7 How would you describe your gender identity?

(Cisgender means that you self-identify with the gender that corresponds with your sex assigned at birth)

- A. Cisgender Man
- B. Cisgender Woman
- C. Transgender Woman
- D. Transgender Man
- E. Non-binary
- F. Gender Fluid
- G. Gender Neutral/Agender
- H. Gender Queer
- I. Gender Non-conforming/Gender Variant
- J. Two-Spirit
- K. Questioning

Q252/17 How would you describe your socio-political beliefs?

- A. Very Conservative
- B. Conservative
- C. Moderately Conservative
- D. Independent
- E. Moderately Liberal
- F. Liberal

G. Very Liberal

H. Other (please indicate)

Q253/18 How would you describe your religious/spiritual affiliation?

A. Atheist

B. Spiritual, but not affiliated with one religious organization

C. Christian-Protestant

D. Christian-Catholic

E. Jewish

F. Islamic/ Muslim

G. Buddhist

H. Hinduism

I. Sikhism

J. Agnostic

K. Pagan

L. Scientology

M. Other (please indicate) _____

Q254/19 How much time do you dedicate to your recognized religion or spirituality? How

frequently do you attend your house of worship or organized religious events?

A. Never

B. Occasionally (1-3 times per year)

C. Once a month

D. Once a week

E. Always

- F. 1-3 times per week
- G. Daily
- H. Several times per day
- I. Other (please indicate) _____

Knowledge

Q32/20 What is the legal definition of sexual assault in Montana?

- A. Having sex with someone without their consent
- B. Having sex with someone who verbally refused to have sex
- C. Giving someone date rape drugs without their consent
- D. Touching someone sexually without their consent
- E. Touching someone without their consent
- F. I don't know

Q213/21 Which of the following is a false report of rape? (Select all that apply)

- A. Having consensual sex, regretting it, and claiming rape.
- B. Reporting rape to authorities when nothing at all happened.
- C. Waiting to officially report rape to authorities.
- D. When someone can't remember everything and still reports rape
- E. When there is not enough evidence to prove the rape happened
- F. Reporting to authorities and changing your mind
- G. Going to trial for rape and being found not guilty.

Q200/23 Myth or Fact: The majority of sexual assault reports are true.

- A. Myth
- B. Fact

C. I don't know

Beliefs & Feelings

Q209/33 Do you know someone who has been sexually assaulted or raped (other than yourself)?

A. Yes

B. No

Q210/33 How well did you know this person?

A. Heard from someone else

B. Slightly acquainted

C. Acquainted

D. Very acquainted

Q211/34 Do you know someone who has made a false report regarding sexual assault?

A. Yes

B. No

Q212/34 How well did you know this person?

A. Heard from someone else

B. Slightly acquainted

C. Acquainted

D. Very acquainted

Q325/35 Has someone made a false report of sexual assault against you?

A. Yes

B. No

Q326/35 How well did you know this person?

A. Heard from someone else

- B. Slightly acquainted
- C. Acquainted
- D. Very acquainted

Q327/36 How afraid are you of being accused of sexual assault?

- A. Not at all afraid
- B. Slightly afraid
- C. Afraid
- D. Very afraid

Sexual Harassment & Sexual Assault Experiences

Q256/12 Have you had any experiences of sexual or physical abuse after you turned 18 years of age and before you enrolled at UM (i.e., the gap year(s) between after you turned 18 but before enrolling at UM)?

- A. Yes, physical abuse only
- B. Yes, sexual abuse only
- C. Yes, both physical and sexual abuse
- D. No

Q73/56 Has anyone ever made sexual contact with you (sexual contact meaning kissing, touching, grabbing, fondling of breasts, buttocks, or genitals) without your consent? Check all that apply.

- A. Yes, in the past year
- B. Yes, since I've been at UM (not including this past year)
- C. No

Q75/59 Has anyone ever attempted to have sexual intercourse with you (sexual intercourse meaning oral, anal, or vaginal penetration with the penis) without your consent, but penetration did not occur? Check all that apply

- A. Yes, in the past year
- B. Yes, since I've been at UM (not including this past year)
- C. No

Q77/62 Has anyone ever had sexual intercourse with you without your consent, and penetration did occur? Check all that apply.

- A. Yes, in the past year
- B. Yes, since I've been at UM (not including this past year)
- C. No

Q79/65 Has anyone ever attempted to have invasive sexual contact with you (invasive sexual contact meaning penetration of the vagina or anus with a tongue, finger, or object) without your consent, but penetration did not occur? Check all that apply.

- A. Yes, in the past year
- B. Yes, since I've been at UM (not including this past year)
- C. No

Q81/68 Has anyone ever had invasive sexual contact with you (invasive sexual contact meaning penetration of the vagina or anus with a tongue, finger, or object) without your consent, and penetration did occur? Check all that apply

- A. Yes, in the past year
- B. Yes, since I've been at UM (not including this past year)
- C. No

Appendix B: Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance (uIRMA)

1= *strongly agree* 2= *agree* 3= *neither agree nor disagree* 4= *disagree* 5= *strongly disagree*

Subscale: She Asked for It

1. If a girl is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for what happened.
2. When girls go to parties wearing revealing clothes, they are asking for trouble.
3. If a girl goes to a room alone with a guy at a party, it is her own fault if she is raped.
4. If a girl hooks up with a lot of guys, eventually she is going to get into trouble.

Subscale: It Wasn't Really Rape

5. If a girl doesn't resist sex – even if protesting verbally – it really can't be considered rape.
6. If a girl doesn't physically fight back, you can't really call it a rape.
7. If the accused "rapist" doesn't have a weapon, you really can't call it a rape.
8. If a girl doesn't say "no," she can't claim rape.

Subscale: She Lied

9. A lot of times, girls who say they were raped agreed to have sex and then regret it.
10. Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at guys.
11. Girls who say they were raped often led the guy on and then had regrets.
12. A lot of times, girls who claim they were raped just have emotional problems.
13. Girls who are caught cheating on their boyfriends sometimes claim that it was rape.

Subscale: He Didn't Mean To

14. When guys rape, it is usually because of their strong desire for sex.
15. Guys don't usually intend to force sex on a girl, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away.

16. Rape happens when a guy's sex drive gets out of control.

Subscale: He Didn't Mean To – Intoxication

17. If a guy is drunk, he might rape someone unintentionally.

18. If both people are drunk, it can't be rape.

19. It shouldn't be considered rape if a guy is drunk and didn't realize what he was doing.

Source: McMahon, S., & Farmer, G. L. (2011). An updated measure for assessing subtle rape myths. *Social Work Research*, 35(2), 71-81. <https://doi.org/10.1093/swr/35.2.71>

Appendix C: Demographics

Table 1

Demographics (N = 1060)

Race/Ethnicity ($M = 1.45, SD = 1.39$)	<i>n</i>	%
White (Non-Hispanic)	939	88.6%
Hispanic/Latinx	35	3.3%
Asian or Pacific Islander	20	1.9%
American Indian/Native American/Indigenous/First Nation	11	1.0%
Black/African American	5	0.5%
Biracial	26	2.5%
Multiracial	19	1.8%
Other	5	0.5%
<hr/>		
Gender Identity ($M = 1.92, SD = 1.11$)		
Cisgender Man	300	28.3%
Cisgender Woman	706	66.6%
Transgender Woman	1	0.1%
Transgender Man	4	0.4%
Non-binary	10	0.9%
Gender Fluid	5	0.5%
Gender Neutral/Agender	4	0.4%
Gender Queer	2	0.2%
Gender Non-Conforming/Gender Variant	1	0.1%
Questioning	2	0.2%
Other	25	0.3%
<hr/>		
Sexual Orientation ($M = 1.74, SD = 1.85$)		
Straight/Heterosexual	849	80.0%
Bisexual	112	10.6%
Gay	11	1.0%
Lesbian	14	1.3%
Queer	14	1.3%
Pansexual	23	2.2%
Asexual	15	1.4%

Aromantic	1	0.1%
Questioning	15	1.4%
Other	6	0.6%
<hr/>		
Age (years; $M = 20.69$, $SD = 2.06$)		
18	164	15.5%
19	200	18.9%
20	182	17.2%
21	182	17.2%
22	125	11.8%
23	74	7.0%
24	61	5.8%
25	72	6.8%

Table 2

Religious & Socio-Political Beliefs (N = 1060)

Socio - Political Beliefs ($M = 4.59$, $SD = 1.66$)	<i>n</i>	%
Very Conservative	29	2.7%
Conservative	117	11.0%
Moderately Conservative	136	12.8%
Independent	184	17.4%
Moderately Liberal	194	18.3%
Liberal	242	22.8%
Very Liberal	127	12.0%
Other	31	2.9%
<hr/>		
Religious/Spiritual Affiliation ($M = 4.10$, $SD = 3.30$)		
Spiritual, but not affiliated with one religious organization	242	22.8%
Atheist	203	19.2%
Christian - Protestant	244	23.0%
Christian – Catholic	145	13.7%
Christian - Other	34	3.2%
Agnostic	118	11.1%
Pagan	12	1.1%
Jewish	6	0.6%
Buddhist	9	0.8%

Islamic/Muslim	1	0.1%
Hindu	1	0.1%
Scientology	3	0.3%
Other (non-Christian)	42	4.0%
<hr/>		
Religiosity (Frequency of worship/practice) ($M = 2.24, SD = 1.60$)		
Never	477	45.0%
Occasionally (1-3x per year)	267	25.2%
Once a month	90	8.5%
Once a week	100	9.3%
1-3x per week	65	6.1%
Daily	30	2.8%
Several times per day	4	0.4%
Always	17	1.6%
Other	11	1.0%

Table 3

Proximity to Sexual Violence (N = 1060)

Primary Victimization		
	<i>n</i>	%
At least 1 Adulthood (18+) Victimization ($M = 0.33, SD = 0.47$)	351	33.1%
After 18 but prior to UM	82	7.7%
Sexual Abuse	65	6.1%
Physical and Sexual Abuse	17	1.6%
Sexual Contact w/o Consent	313	29.5%
Past year	213	20.1%
Yes, since enrollment at UM (not in last year)	142	13.4%
Intercourse w/o Consent (Penetration Occurred)	83	7.8%
Past year	44	4.2%
Yes, since enrollment at UM (not in last year)	39	3.7%
Invasive Sexual Contact w/o Consent (Penetration Occurred)	51	4.8%
Past year	32	3.0%
Yes, since enrollment at UM (not in last year)	19	1.8%

Know a Survivor (other than self; $M = 0.79$, $SD = 0.41$)		
Yes	838	79.1%
No	222	20.9%
Proximity to Survivor ($n = 837$; $M = 3.49$, $SD = 0.77$)		
Heard from someone else	26	3.1%
Slightly Acquainted	68	8.1%
Acquainted	213	25.4%
Very Acquainted	530	63.3%
Know a False Accuser ($M = 0.19$, $SD = 0.39$)		
Yes	197	18.6%
No	863	81.4%
Proximity to False Accuser ($n = 197$; $M = 2.42$, $SD = 0.98$)		
Heard from someone else	39	19.8%
Slightly acquainted	67	34.0%
Acquainted	60	30.5%
Very Acquainted	31	15.7%

Table 4

False Accusation ($N = 1060$)

Level of fear of being falsely accused ($M = 1.33$, $SD = 0.73$)		
Not at all afraid	837	79.0%
Slightly afraid	137	12.9%
Afraid	46	4.3%
Very afraid	40	3.8%
<i>uIRMA</i> Scores	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
<i>Overall Score</i> ($n = 1049$)	74.15	9.89
<i>She Lied Score</i> ($n = 1060$)	20.15	4.54
<i>She Asked for It</i> ($n = 1058$)	11.42	1.09
<i>It Wasn't Really Rape</i> ($n = 1054$)	17.82	3.07
<i>He Didn't Mean To</i> ($n = 1056$)	11.42	2.94
<i>He Didn't Mean To – Intoxication</i> ($n = 1059$)	12.38	2.30

Table 5*Definitional Knowledge (N = 1060)*

Definition of Sexual Assault ($M = 0.56, SD = 0.50$)	<i>n</i>	%
Correct	596	56.2%
Incorrect	464	43.8%
Definition of False Allegation of Sexual Assault ($M = 0.70, SD = 0.46$)		
Correct	740	69.8%
Incorrect	320	30.2%

Appendix D: *uIRMA* Comparisons

Table 6
***uIRMA* Cross-study Comparison**

	<i>Navarro & Tewksbury 2015 Survey</i>	<i>Beshers & DiVita 2021</i>		<i>Current Study</i>
		<i>2010 Survey</i>	<i>2017 Survey</i>	<i>2018 Survey</i>
<i>uIRMA</i> Subscale Score	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
<i>Overall Score (all items averaged)</i>	3.87 (0.67)	2.58 (0.55)	2.95 (0.63)	3.90 (0.52)
<i>She Lied Score (5 items)</i>	3.53 (0.94)	2.31 (0.78)	2.74 (0.87)	4.03 (0.91)
<i>She Asked for It (4 items)</i>	3.86 (0.84)	2.38 (0.74)	3.24 (0.74)	2.85 (0.37)
<i>It Wasn't Really Rape (4 items)</i>	4.48 (0.64)	3.17 (0.66)	3.42 (0.66)	4.70 (0.53)
<i>He Didn't Mean To (3 items)</i>	2.80 (1.72)	2.19 (0.79)	2.31 (0.88)	3.80 (0.98)
<i>He Didn't Mean To - Intoxication (3 items)</i>	2.20 (0.57)	2.89 (0.67)	3.00 (0.75)	4.13 (0.77)

Note. Comparison of the current sample *uIRMA* scores with two other recent study samples: Navarro and Tewksbury (2017) and Beshers and DiVita (2021). Beshers and DiVita collected data in 2010 and 2017 from a northeastern US university. Navarro and Tewksbury collected data from 27 universities across the US in 2015. Scores from other studies were reverse coded. All scores were averaged for comparison across 5-point scale, from 1 = *Strongly agree* to 5 = *Strongly disagree*. Thus, a higher score is representative of rape myth rejection, and a lower score with rape myth acceptance.

* Navarro and Tewksbury used the 22-item *uIRMA*, which had an extra item on the *It Wasn't Really Rape* subscale and 2 extra items on the *She Asked for It* subscale.

Appendix E: Demographics by Gender Identity

Table 7

Demographics by Gender Identity (N = 1060)

	<i>Women and Other</i> <i>(n = 743)</i>		<i>Men* (n = 314)</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Race/Ethnicity (Women and Others, $M = 1.39$, $SD = 1.30$; Men, $M = 1.58$, $SD = 1.59$)				
White (Non-Hispanic)	670	89.8%	269	85.7%
Hispanic/Latinx	24	3.2%	11	3.5%
Asian or Pacific Islander	15	2.0%	5	1.6%
American Indian/Native American/Indigenous/First Nation	7	0.9%	4	1.3%
Black/African American	2	0.3%	3	1.0%
Biracial	12	1.6%	14	4.5%
Multiracial	11	1.5%	8	2.5%
Other	5	0.7%	0	0.0%
Sexual Orientation (Women and Others, $M = 1.9$, $SD = 2.0$; Men, $M = 1.34$, $SD = 1.38$)				
Straight/Heterosexual	567	76.0%	282	89.8%
Bisexual	102	13.7%	10	3.2%
Gay	1	0.1%	10	3.2%
Lesbian	14	1.9%	0	0.0%
Queer	14	1.9%	0	0.0%
Pansexual	20	2.7%	3	1.0%
Asexual	12	1.6%	3	1.0%
Aromantic	1	0.1%	0	0.0%
Questioning	12	1.6%	3	1.0%
Other	3	0.4%	3	1.0%
Age (years; Women and Others, $M = 20.6$, $SD = 2.01$; Men, $M = 20.96$, $SD = 2.13$)				
18	123	16.5%	41	13.1%
19	143	19.2%	57	18.2%
20	137	18.4%	45	14.3%
21	130	17.4%	52	16.6%
22	83	11.1%	42	13.4%

23	45	6.0%	29	9.2%
24	40	5.4%	21	6.7%
25	43	6.0%	27	8.6%

Note. ‘Women and others’ includes cisgender women, trans women, and all other genders. Men includes cisgender men and trans men.

Table 8

Religious & Socio-Political Beliefs (N = 1060)

	<i>Women and Other</i> <i>(n = 746)</i>		<i>Men* (n = 314)</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
<i>Socio - Political Beliefs (Women and Others, M = 4.73, SD = 1.65; Men, M = 4.24, SD = 1.62)</i>				
Very Conservative	15	2%	14	4.5%
Conservative	76	10.2%	41	13.1%
Moderately Conservative	101	13.5%	35	11.1%
Independent	106	14.2%	78	24.8%
Moderately Liberal	135	18.1%	59	18.8%
Liberal	194	26.0%	48	15.3%
Very Liberal	102	13.7%	25	8.0%
Other	17	2.3%	14	4.5%
<i>Religious/Spiritual Affiliation (Women and Others, M = 4.15, SD = 3.28; Men, M = 3.99, SD = 3.33)</i>				
Spiritual, but not affiliated with one religious organization	185	24.8%	57	18.2%
Atheist	122	16.4%	81	25.8%
Christian - Protestant	180	24.1%	64	20.4%
Christian – Catholic	99	13.3%	47	15.0%
Christian - Other	28	3.8%	8	2.6%
Agnostic	84	11.3%	35	11.1%
Pagan	7	0.9%	5	1.6%
Jewish	5	0.7%	1	0.3%
Buddhist	6	0.8%	3	1.0%
Islamic/Muslim	1	0.1%	0	0.0%
Hindu	1	0.1%	0	0.0%
Scientology	2	0.3%	1	0.3%
Other (non-Christian)	18	2.5%	12	3.8%

Religiosity (Frequency of worship/practice)				
(Women and Others, $M = 2.20$, $SD = 1.53$; Men, $M = 2.33$, $SD = 1.77$)				
Never	331	44.4%	146	46.5%
Occasionally (1-3x per year)	197	26.4%	70	22.3%
Once a month	70	9.4%	20	6.4%
Once a week	68	9.1%	31	9.9%
1-3x per week	44	5.9%	21	6.7%
Daily	17	2.3%	13	4.1%
Several times per day	2	0.3%	2	0.6%
Always	10	1.3%	7	2.2%
Other	7	0.9%	4	1.3%

Table 9

Proximity to Sexual Violence

	<i>Women and Other (n = 746)</i>		<i>Men* (n = 314)</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Primary Victimization				
At least 1 Victimization (Women and Others, $M = 0.38$, $SD = 0.49$; Men, $M = 0.21$, $SD = 0.41$)	284	38.1%	67	21.3%
After 18 but prior to UM	74	10.0%	7	2.2%
Sexual Abuse	59	7.9%	6	1.9%
Physical and Sexual Abuse	16	2.1%	1	0.3%
Sexual Contact w/o Consent	280	37.5%	75	23.9%
Past year	171	22.9%	42	13.4%
Yes, since enrollment at UM (not in last year)	109	14.6%	33	10.5%
Intercourse w/o Consent (Penetration Occurred)	77	10.3%	6	2.0%
Past year	41	5.5%	3	1.0%
Yes, since enrollment at UM (not in last year)	36	4.8%	3	1.0%
Invasive Sexual Contact w/o Consent (Penetration Occurred)	50	6.7%	1	0.3%
Past year	32	4.3%	0	0.0%
Yes, since enrollment at UM (not in last year)	18	2.4%	1	0.3%
Know a Survivor (other than self) (Women and Others, $M = 0.83$, $SD = 0.37$; Men, $M = 0.69$, $SD = 0.46$)				

Yes	621	83.2%	217	69.1%
No	125	16.8%	97	30.9%
Proximity to Survivor (Women and Others, $n = 621$; $M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.74$; Men, $n = 216$; $M = 3.30$, $SD = 0.85$)				
Heard from someone else	16	2.6%	10	3.2%
Slightly Acquainted	45	7.2%	23	7.3%
Acquainted	144	23.2%	69	22.0%
Very Acquainted	416	70.0%	114	36.3%
Know a False Accuser (Women and Others, $M = 0.15$, $SD = 0.36$; Men, $M = 0.26$, $SD = 0.44$)				
Yes	115	15.4%	82	26.1%
No	631	84.6%	232	73.9%
Proximity to False Accuser (Women and Others, $n = 115$; $M = 2.34$, $SD = 0.99$; Men, $n = 82$; $M = 2.54$, $SD = 0.96$)				
Heard from someone else	26	22.6%	13	15.9%
Slightly acquainted	41	35.7%	26	31.7%
Acquainted	31	27.0%	29	35.4%
Very Acquainted	17	14.8%	14	17.1%

Table 10

False Accusation & Rape Myths (N = 1060)

	<i>Women and Other (n = 746)</i>		<i>Men* (n = 314)</i>	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Level of fear of being falsely accused (Women and Others, $M = 1.11$, $SD = 0.40$; Men, $M = 1.85$, $SD = 1.02$)				
Not at all afraid	682	91.4%	155	49.4%
Slightly afraid	50	6.7%	87	27.7%
Afraid	10	1.3%	36	11.5%
Very afraid	4	0.5%	36	11.5%
<i>uIRMA She Lied</i> Subscale Score				
<i>Overall Score</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	76.15	9.04	69.40	10.22
<i>She Lied Score</i>	21.07	4.18	17.96	4.63

<i>She Asked for It</i>	11.56	0.98	11.17	1.28
<i>It Wasn't Really Rape</i>	18.34	2.70	16.58	3.52
<i>He Didn't Mean To</i>	11.76	2.90	10.62	2.90
<i>He Didn't Mean To - Intoxication</i>	12.70	2.13	11.62	2.51

Table 11

Definitional Knowledge ($N = 1060$)

	<i>Women and Other</i> ($n = 746$)		<i>Men*</i> ($n = 314$)	
	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Definition of Sexual Assault (Women and Others, $M = 0.57$, $SD = 0.50$; Men, $M = 0.57$, $SD = 0.50$)				
Correct	416	55.8%	180	57.3%
Incorrect	330	44.2%	134	42.7%
Definition of False Allegation of Sexual Assault (Women and Others, $M = 0.72$, $SD = 0.45$; Men, $M = 0.64$, $SD = 0.48$)				
Correct	539	72.3%	201	64.0%
Incorrect	207	27.7%	113	36.0%

Appendix F: Bivariate Tables

Table 12

Sample *M* and *SD* using *t*-test for equality of means in She Lied (*N* = 1060)

	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	<i>p</i>	FDR .05 Correction
	All other genders	Men [†]					
Gender	21.07 (4.18)	17.96 (4.63)	-10.30***	537.81	0.72	< .001	< .001
	All other race/ethnicity	White, Non- Hispanic					
Race/Ethnicity	19.50 (4.80)	20.23 (4.50)	-1.68	1058	-.16	.093	.104
	Incorrect	Correct					
Sexual Assault Definitional Knowledge	19.69 (4.73)	20.51 (4.36)	-2.86**	952.76	0.18	.002	.003
False Report Definitional Knowledge	18.05 (4.86)	21.06 (4.08)	-9.69***	521.40	-0.70	< .001	< .001
	No Victimization	Primary Victim					
Primary Victimization	19.69 (4.58)	21.08 (4.33)	-4.73***	1058	-0.31	< .001	< .001
	Not Acquainted	Acquainted					
Survivor Acquaintance	18.38 (4.63)	20.62 (4.40)	-6.66***	1058	-0.50	< .001	< .001
False Accuser Acquaint.	20.85 (4.20)	17.08 (4.70)	-11.12***	1058	0.88	< .001	< .001
	All other Religions	Christian					
Religious Affiliation	20.90 (4.29)	18.85 (4.67)	-7.24***	1058	0.46	< .001	< .001
	Not Acquainted	Acquainted					
False Accuser Acquaintance: Low ⁺⁺⁺	20.42 (4.43)	17.68 (4.80)	6.00***	1058	0.61	< .001	< .001
False Accuser Acquaintance: High ⁺⁺⁺	20.50 (4.38)	16.37 (4.51)	-8.57***	1058	0.94	< .001	< .001
Survivor Acquaintance: Low ⁺⁺⁺	20.29 (4.52)	18.72 (4.54)	3.20	1058	0.35	.001	< .001
Survivor Acquaintance: High ⁺⁺⁺	18.44 (4.65)	20.88 (4.30)	-8.00***	556.35	-0.55	< .001	< .001
	Not Afraid	Afraid ⁺⁺					
Fear	9.16 (4.27)	12.42 (4.57)	-9.96***	1059	-0.75	< .001	< .001

Note. **p* < .01. ***p* < .05, ****p* < .001

† Men including transmen

†† Afraid = Slightly Afraid, Afraid, or Very Afraid

††† Low acquaintance = *Heard from someone else* or *slightly acquainted*; high acquaintance = *acquainted* or *very acquainted*

Table 13

***M*, *SD*, and Pearson Correlation (*r*), *N* = 1060 with She Lied**

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	FDR .05 Correction
Age	20.69	2.06	.065*	.035	.042
Political Affiliation ^{††}	4.59	1.66	.525***	< .001	< .001
Religiosity [†]	2.24	1.60	-.170***	< .001	< .001

Note. * $p < .01$. ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

[†] $N = 790$. One participant responded “other,” and “other” was omitted from scale

^{††} $n = 1030$. 30 participants responded “other” to political affiliation question and their responses to this question were omitted

Appendix G: Regression Tables

Table 14

Model 1: Multiple linear regression summary for the effect of definitional knowledge on She Lied subscale score, N = 1060

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	FDR <i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>F</i>	β	95% <i>CI</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Adj. <i>R</i> ²
Overall Model	64.36	< .001	< .001	17.76	56.41		[17.22, 18.30]	2, 1057	< .001	.10
False Report Def. Knowledge	10.17	< .001	< .001	2.95		0.30	[2.38, 3.52]			
Sexual Assault Def. Knowledge	2.16	.031	.038	0.58		0.06	[0.05, 1.11]			

Table 15

Model 2: Multiple linear regression summary for the effect of fear and male gender on She Lied subscale score, N = 1060

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	FDR <i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	95% <i>CI</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Adj. <i>R</i> ²
Constant	117.23	< .001	< .001	20.76	[20.42, 21.11]	54.59	3, 1056	< .001	.133
Male Gender	-6.63	< .001	< .001	-2.13	[-2.76, -1.50]				
Fear	-3.60	< .001	< .001	-1.41	[-2.18, -0.64]				
Male Gender*Fear	-0.24	.81	.827	0.11	[-0.78, 1.01]				

Table 16

Model 3: Multiple linear regression summary for the effect of male gender, political beliefs, religious affiliation, religiosity, and survivor and false accuser acquaintance on She Lied subscale score, N = 1018

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	FDR <i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	95% <i>CI</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Adj. <i>R</i> ²
Constant	4.60	< .001	< .001	6.84	[3.92, 9.76]		79.98	8, 1009	< .001	.38
Male Gender	8.51	< .001	< .001	2.16	[1.66, 2.66]	0.22				
Political Beliefs	14.89	< .001	< .001	1.19	[1.03, 1.34]	0.44				
Religious Affiliation	-0.21	.831	.831	-0.06	[-0.62, 0.50]	-0.01				

Religiosity	0.67	.503	.537	0.06	[-0.11, 0.22]	0.02
Survivor Acquaintance	-4.34	< .001	< .001	-1.23	[-1.79, -0.67]	-0.11
False Accuser Acquaintance	7.61	< .001	< .001	2.29	[1.70, 2.88]	0.20
<i>Covariates</i>						
Age	2.02	.043	.049	0.11	[0.00, 0.22]	0.05
Race/Ethnicity	-2.25	.025	.032	-0.80	[-1.49, -0.10]	-0.06

Table 17

Model 4a & 4b: Multiple linear regression summary for the effect of false accuser acquaintance and acquaintance level on She Lied subscale score

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	FDR <i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	95% <i>CI</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Adj. <i>R</i> ²
Constant	142.46	< .001	< .001	20.85	[20.56, 21.14]		123.59	1, 1058	< .001	.10
False Accuser Acquaintance	-11.12	< .001	< .001	-3.77	[-4.44, -3.12]	-0.32				
Constant	142.70	< .001	< .001	20.85	[20.56, 21.14]		64.27	2, 1057	< .001	.11
Indirect & Slight Acquaintance	-7.210	< .001	< .001	-3.17	[-4.04, -2.30]	-0.21				
Acquainted & Very Acquainted	-9.498	< .001	< .001	-4.48	[-5.41, -3.55]	-0.28				

Table 18

Model 4c & 4d: Multiple linear regression summary for the effect of survivor acquaintance and acquaintance level on She Lied subscale score

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	FDR <i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	95% <i>CI</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Adj. <i>R</i> ²
Constant	53.31	< .001	< .001	22.85	[22.02, 23.70]		44.43	1, 1058	< .001	.04
Survivor Acquaintance	-6.66	< .001	< .001	-2.24	[-2.90, -1.58]	-0.20				
Constant	62.10	< .001	< .001	18.32	[17.74, 18.90]		34.37	2, 1057	< .001	.06
Indirect & Slight Acquaintance	0.75	.46	.502	0.41	[-0.66, 1.47]	0.03				
Acquainted & Very Acquainted	7.61	< .001	< .001	2.56	[1.90, 3.22]	0.26				

Table 19**Model 5: Linear regression summary for the effect of primary victimization on She Lied subscale score, N = 1060**

Variable	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	FDR <i>p</i>	<i>B</i>	95% <i>CI</i>	β	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	Adj. <i>R</i> ²
Constant	116.59	< .001	< .001	19.69	[19.36, 20.02]		22.34	1, 1058	< .001	.02
Primary Victimization	4.73	< .001	< .001	1.39	[0.81, 1.96]	0.14				

Table 20**Model 6a & 6b: Logistic regression summary for the effect of acquaintance with a false accuser on false report and sexual assault definitional knowledge N = 1060**

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	Wald	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	FDR <i>p</i>	<i>Exp(B)</i>	95% <i>CI</i>
Constant	0.30	0.14	4.24	1	.040	.047	1.35	
False Report Def. Knowledge	0.68	0.16	17.42	1	< .001	<.001	1.98	[1.44, 2.72]
Constant	0.24	0.07	12.23	1	< .001	<.001	1.27	
Sexual Assault Def. Knowledge	0.06	0.16	0.13	1	.72	.751	1.06	[0.77, 1.45]

Appendix H: Correlation Tables

Table 21

Summary of intercorrelations for predictors, Pearson correlation, N = 1060

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	
1. Male Gender	-												
2. Age	-.02												
3. Political beliefs	.06*	.05											
4. Race/Ethnicity	.01	.01	.04										
5. Religion	.00	-.01	-.03	.01									
6. Religiosity	.03	-.00	-.37**	-.02	-.01								
7. Sexual Assault Def. Knowledge	-.05	.02	.04	-.04	.02	-.01							
8. False Report Def. Knowledge	.00	.08**	.20**	-.05	.01	-.05	.09*						
9. Primary Victimization	.10**	.08*	.12**	-.04	.03	-.04	.00	.04					
10. Survivor Acquaintance	-.11**	-.08**	.17**	.03	.01	-.02	-.04	-.13**	-.22**				
11. Survivor Acquaintance Level	.03	.00	.10**	-.01	-.01**	-.06	-.00	.04	.09**	.			
12. False Accuser Acquaintance	-.05	-.05	.24**	.01	-.01	-.10**	.01	-.13**	.01	-.08*	-.00		
13. False Acc. Acquaintance Level	-.03	.00	-.19**	.04	-.01	.11**	.05	-.09**	.01	-.06*	.02*	.64**	
14. Fear	.18**	.04	-.16**	.06	.02	.01	-.02	-.15**	-.02	.06*	-.06	.23**	.24**

