

Predictors of Rape Myth Acceptance Among Male Clients of Female Street Prostitutes

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Although female street prostitutes are frequent victims of violence, there has been little research on their male clients. This study explores the level of "rape myth acceptance" and the predictors of rape myth acceptance among 1,286 men arrested for trying to hire street prostitutes in San Francisco (n = 950), Las Vegas (n = 254), and Portland, Oregon (n = 82). Rape myths are attitudes believed to support sexual violence against women. Questionnaires were administered to arrested clients prior to participation in programs designed to discourage reoffense. Results indicate low levels of rape myth acceptance among respondents, although a small number expressed higher levels. The strongest predictors of rape myth acceptance in regression analyses were attraction to violent sexuality, sexual conservatism, and thinking about sex less frequently.

Although the number of prostitutes in the United States is difficult to estimate, Department of Justice arrest statistics for prostitution consistently hover around 100,000 per year (Barkan, 1997; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1992). These statistics tend to underestimate the number of arrests associated with prostitution, as prostitution-related activities may be processed under other statutes, such as nuisance laws (San Francisco Task Force on Prostitution, 1996), and arrests of juvenile prostitutes may be processed as status offenses (Alexander, 1987).¹

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Empirical research and narrative accounts consistently reveal that prostitutes are frequent victims of violent crime, including beating, rape, and murder (Davis, 1993; Horgard & Finstad, 1992; Silbert, 1981), most of which is never reported to police (McKeganey & Barnard, 1996; Silbert, 1981). Silbert and Pines (1983), in a survey of 200 street prostitutes in San Francisco, found that 65% reported being physically abused or beaten by a customer and 66% reported being physically abused or beaten by a pimp. Farley and Barkan (1998) reported that among a sample of 130 working prostitutes, also in San Francisco, 82% reported having been physically assaulted and 68% reported having been raped since entering prostitution. These percentages are consistent with other research (Benson & Mathews, 1995; Council for Prostitution Alternatives, 1994; Miller, 1993, 1995; Silbert, 1981).

Reports of violence are particularly compelling when we recognize that a substantial proportion of prostitutes begin working while still minors. Juvenile prostitution is a problem in many major U.S. cities (Bracey, 1979; Harlan, Rodgers, & Slattery, 1981; Weisberg, 1985). Although estimates vary, the average age of entry into prostitution is thought to be younger than age 18 (Council for Prostitution Alternatives, 1994; Silbert, 1981). This means that the issue of prostitution is not simply one of violence against women but of the sexual abuse of children. Reports indicate that the clients of juvenile prostitutes are not generally individuals with a preference for sex with children but simply men who prefer to have sex with younger prostitutes. The issue of child sexual abuse does not enter into their understanding of their behavior (Ending Child Prostitution, Pornography, and Trafficking, 1996).

Miller (1995) argues that the lack of attention paid to this problem is testimony to the devaluation of street prostitutes and may reflect a devaluation of women in general. Very little research has addressed the male clients of female prostitutes, partly because of their inaccessibility (Faugier & Cranfield, 1995; Special Committee on Prostitution and Pornography, 1985). Consistent with legal efforts to reduce prostitution that focus on arresting the prostitute, the lack of attention paid to these men may also reflect a double standard in which women are seen as responsible for male deviance (Davis, 1993).

In an effort to better understand the men who patronize prostitutes and their contribution to a system that often involves violence against women, this article looks specifically at the predictors of rape myths among men arrested for trying to hire street prostitutes. The term *rape myths* was conceived by Burt (1980) to refer to a set of attitudes believed to support sexual violence against women. Underlying this idea is the proposition that violence against women is not the psychopathological behavior of a small number of sick men (Marolla & Scully, 1986) but a sociocultural phenomenon in which persons may rely on a series of culturally available attitudes to justify and support their violent behavior. These attitudes may also serve to "deny or reduce perceived injury or to blame the victims for their own victimization" (Burt, 1980, p. 217). This should not be construed to mean that most prostitution clients participate in violence against prostitutes—a small number of regular users may be largely responsible for client violence against prostitutes. Instead, the premise of this study is that prostitution clients may endorse attitudes that contribute to a system of violence and make them insensitive to victimization of prostitutes. Of course, the fact that clients may have contact with prostitutes in private, often anonymous settings that would allow them to perpetrate violence with few repercussions also means that their attitudes deserve careful scrutiny.

Rape myths are "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists" (Burt, 1980, p. 217) that serve to justify or support sexual violence against women and diminish support for rape victims. They include the idea that women who are raped are in some way responsible for the violence against them, the idea that women often lie about being raped for selfish reasons, and the idea that only sexually promiscuous women are raped. Miller and Schwartz (1995) argue that rape myths uniquely converge around prostitutes, bad girls who are somehow seen as responsible for the violence directed against them. Support of rape myths is consistent with the idea that the rape of a prostitute is unproblematic or that prostitutes cannot be raped (Marolla & Scully, 1986; Miller & Schwartz, 1995).

Previous research indicates that acceptance of rape myths or rape-supportive attitudes is associated with placing greater

blame on the victims of sexual assault (Abbey & Harnish, 1995; Kopper, 1996), reported participation in sexual assault, willingness to commit rape if one would not be caught, and aggression against women in a laboratory setting (Malamuth, 1981, 1983; Malamuth, Sockloskie, Koss, & Tanaka, 1991). Perhaps most powerfully, Marolla and Scully (1986), in their comparison of the attitudes of convicted rapists with the attitudes of other felons, found an association between status as a rapist and the support of rape myths.

Most of the small number of studies of the clients of prostitutes focus primarily on sexual behavior or AIDS (Barnard, McKeganey, & Leyland, 1993; Day, Ward, & Perotta, 1993; Freund, Lee, & Leonard, 1991; Freund, Leonard, & Lee, 1989), providing us with little information that would be useful for understanding violence or attitudes that may perpetuate violence against prostitutes. Two studies, one American and one Scottish, explored motivations for seeking prostitutes in more detail. Both indicate that one motivation for clients is that prostitutes will allow them to do things they would not ordinarily be allowed to do with other women (Holzman & Pines, 1982; McKeganey & Barnard, 1996). Although violence was not mentioned, the idea that a prostitute is someone who can be treated differently than other women may be consistent with violent behavior. Reports from prostitutes who have been beaten by clients indicate that 40% of the perpetrators "got off on it, enjoyed it, and saw it as part of sex" (Silbert & Pines, 1983). The American study also indicated the presence of negative attitudes toward prostitutes among more than half of the 30 clients interviewed, as indicated by the following statement by one client:

I guess I have sort of a negative feeling toward a woman who's a prostitute because I think she's cheap, I guess. While I do believe in prostitution—that I think it should exist, I don't have high regard for the woman who is the prostitute. (as cited in Holzman & Pines, 1982, p. 103)

It is not surprising that male clients in both studies did not report an interest in violence as a motivation for seeking prostitution. Both did find, however, that clients were excited by the deviant nature of the encounter. For some of these men, additional deviance in the form of violence may also be exciting.

Because there have been no coordinated attempts to develop theoretical perspectives toward clients of prostitutes, any attempt to derive formal hypotheses about the relationships between variables must be seen as preliminary. With the understanding that this research is a beginning, the authors pose five hypotheses for the purposes of analysis.

Hypothesis 1: Consistent with feminist perspectives that see prostitution as an expression of male supremacy and an attempt to keep women in their place (Dworkin, 1993; Pateman, 1988), we hypothesize that men who are regular patrons of prostitutes will score higher on the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale than men who have never been to a prostitute or men who have been very rarely.

Hypothesis 2: Because rape myths are attitudes that see women as deserving of violence, we hypothesize that clients who find rough or violent sexuality appealing will be more likely to endorse rape myths.

Hypothesis 3: Because rape myths reflect a traditional and conservative attitude toward women's place in society (Burt, 1980), we hypothesize that clients who are sexually conservative—in other words, more judgmental about sexual morality—will be more likely to endorse rape myths.

Hypothesis 4: The use of some types of pornography may promote the idea that women like or deserve sexual abuse (McKinnon, 1987). Therefore, we hypothesize that clients who use pornography more frequently will be more likely to endorse rape myths.

Hypothesis 5: Because research consistently links adult sexual offenses with childhood physical and sexual abuse (Fagan & Wexler, 1988; Graham, 1996), we hypothesize that clients who have been physically or sexually abused will be more likely to endorse rape myths.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were men attending three path-breaking programs designed to educate men arrested for trying to hire street prostitutes about the problematic nature of the sex industry and its exploitation of women. Questionnaires were passed out prior to each workshop and collected anonymously. Of the respondents, 950 attended a day-long workshop in San Francisco, California, called the "First Offenders Prostitution Program," and 254 attended a similar model in Las Vegas. Another 82 attended a

weekend workshop in Portland, Oregon, administered by the now defunct Sexual Exploitation Education Project.² These programs provide an unprecedented opportunity to gather information on this heretofore inaccessible population.

Virtually all of the participants in this study were arrested in prostitution stings in which they propositioned a female police officer posing as a prostitute. Because of this, clients who patronize prostitutes in other settings are underrepresented. The overwhelming majority of men arrested in these three cities participated in the intervention programs, either by choice or because they were required by the court to attend. For this reason, participants in this study may be seen as generally representative of the men arrested for trying to hire street prostitutes in these three cities.

In terms of their demographic characteristics, 60% of the respondents were White; 17% were Hispanic, Chicano, or Latino; 13% were Asian; 5% were Black; and 5% were of another ethnicity or a combination of ethnicities. Of the participants, 36% had completed a bachelor's or higher degree, whereas 37% reported attending some college and 27% reported a high school education or below. Of the participants, 42% were currently married nonseparated, 35% were never married, 15% were divorced, 6% were separated, and 2% were widowed. Their ages ranged from 18 to 88, with a mean of 38 and a median of 37. Of the participants, 18% claimed never to have had sexual relations with a prostitute, indicating that their only experience had been propositioning the police decoy, whereas 22% reported that they had not had sexual relations with a prostitute during the past year. Furthermore, 21% reported having had sexual relations with a prostitute one time only during the past year, whereas 29% claimed to have had sexual relations with a prostitute more than one time but less than once per month. Finally, 8% reported having had sexual relations with a prostitute one to three times per month, and 2% reported having had sexual relations with a prostitute once or more per week.

MEASURES

The dependent variable in this study, rape myth acceptance, was an abbreviated 8-item version of Burt's (1980) 19-item measure.

Table 1 presents these items as well as the percentage of participants choosing each response. The original measure included 11 statements, such as "When women go around braless or wearing short skirts and tight tops, they are just asking for trouble," to which respondents reacted on a 7-point scale ranging from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*. We used six of these items, but due to the need for questionnaire consistency, we asked for responses on a 4-point scale: *strongly agree*, *somewhat agree*, *somewhat disagree*, and *strongly disagree*. Burt also included two items asking, "What percentage of women who report a rape would you say are lying because they are angry and want to get back at the man they accuse?" and "What percentage of reported rapes would you say were invented by women who discovered they were pregnant and wanted to protect their reputation?" We included these two items along with their original 5-point response scale ranging from *almost all* to *almost none*. The original measure also included six items asking how likely participants would be to believe various individuals, such as their best friend, an Indian woman, a White woman, and several others, if they reported to the participants that they were raped. Because of the need to be very discriminating in question selection and also methodological reservations about these items, they were not included.

Because items differed in their number of responses and their distributions, we converted responses to z scores before adding the items to create our final Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. Although each standardized item had a mean of zero, the mean for the entire scale was $-.127$, with a minimum of -5.6 , a maximum of 23.91 , a skewness of 1.25 , and a standard deviation of 5.28 . The alpha reliability coefficient for the scale was $.825$, indicating good reliability.

Additional multi-item measures included two items measuring participation in sexual assault from Koss (1988), two items evaluating pornography use, two items measuring sexual and physical abuse as a child, a four-item measure of whether they found violent sexuality appealing, and a four-item measure of sexual conservatism.

The measure of sexual conservatism used four General Social Survey items, including questions regarding sex before marriage, sex among teenagers, sex among couples of the same sex, and

TABLE 1
Responses to Selected Rape Myth Items

<i>Item</i>	<i>Responses</i>	<i>Percentage Selecting Each Response</i>
A woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on their first date implies that she is willing to have sex. (<i>n</i> = 1,174)	Strongly agree	4.6
	Somewhat agree	17.6
	Somewhat disagree	27.3
	Strongly disagree	50.4
When women go around braless or wearing short skirts and tight tops, they are just asking for trouble. (<i>n</i> = 1,186)	Strongly agree	6.9
	Somewhat agree	22.1
	Somewhat disagree	27.5
	Strongly disagree	43.6
In the majority of rapes, the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation. (<i>n</i> = 1,157)	Strongly agree	4.8
	Somewhat agree	11.6
	Somewhat disagree	25.8
	Strongly disagree	57.7
If a girl engages in necking or petting and she lets things get out of hand, it is her own fault if her partner forces sex on her. (<i>n</i> = 1,155)	Strongly agree	4.4
	Somewhat agree	10.6
	Somewhat disagree	21.6
	Strongly disagree	63.3
Women who get raped while hitchhiking get what they deserve. (<i>n</i> = 1,161)	Strongly agree	3.3
	Somewhat agree	5.0
	Somewhat disagree	12.5
	Strongly disagree	79.2
A woman who is stuck-up and thinks she is too good to talk to guys on the street deserves to be taught a lesson. (<i>n</i> = 1,158)	Strongly agree	2.4
	Somewhat agree	3.7
	Somewhat disagree	8.2
	Strongly disagree	85.7
What percentage of women who report a rape would you say are lying because they are angry and want to get back at the man they accuse? (<i>n</i> = 1,188)	Almost all	4.5
	About three fourths	7.3
	About half	15.6
	About one fourth	26.9
	Almost none	45.6
What percentage of reported rapes would you guess are merely invented by women who discovered they were pregnant and wanted to protect their own reputations? (<i>n</i> = 1,175)	Almost all	3.7
	About three fourths	5.5
	About half	13.4
	About one fourth	26.9
	Almost none	50.6

extramarital sex. Responses included *always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, not wrong at all, and don't know*. Responses were converted to z scores before being combined. The alpha reliability coefficient for the measure was .659. The measure

of attraction to violent sexuality included four statements: "I like rough hard sex," "Sex is more fun if the woman fights a little," "Some women like to be smacked around a little during sex," and "Being angry makes me more likely to want sex." Respondents were asked if they *agree strongly*, *agree somewhat*, *disagree somewhat*, or *disagree strongly* with each of these statements. Responses were converted to z scores before being combined. The alpha reliability coefficient for the measure was .633.

Variables measured by individual questions included marital status, age, service in the armed forces, number of sexual partners in the past year, frequency of sexual relations during the past year, frequency of thoughts about sex, and frequency of visiting prostitutes during the past year.

RESULTS

Table 1 depicts the responses of the arrested men to the items that comprised our rape myth acceptance measure. The item most frequently endorsed stated that women who wear short skirts or tight tops are asking for trouble, with 29% agreeing somewhat or strongly. Of the participants, 22% agreed that a woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man implies that she is interested in sex, and 16% agree that in the majority of cases, victims of rape are promiscuous or have bad reputations. Furthermore, 15% agreed that a girl who engages in necking or petting is at fault if her partner forces sex on her. Far fewer agreed that women who get raped while hitchhiking get what they deserve (8%) or that a woman who is stuck up and refuses to talk to men deserves to be taught a lesson (6%). In terms of the questions about dishonesty in rape reporting, 27% believed that half or more of the women who report rape are lying because they want to punish the man they accuse, and 23% believed that half or more reported rapes are invented by women who want to protect their reputations.

Overall, the level of rape myth acceptance seems relatively low. Of the men who answered all eight items, about 30% did not score positively for rape myth acceptance on any individual item. In other words, they disagreed somewhat or strongly with all of the attitude statements and believed that almost none of the women who report rape do so for illegitimate reasons. Another 38% scored positively on only one or two items, indicating that they

somewhat or strongly agreed with one of the attitude statements or that they believed that about one fourth or more of the women who report rape do so falsely. Of the participants, 12% scored positively on three items. In addition, less than half of 1% had answers that indicated rape myth acceptance on all eight rape myth items. On the other hand, 20% indicated rape myth acceptance on four or more items. Of these men, we identified 33 who were also above the median in sexual conservatism—in other words, judgmental about sexual morality—and had patronized prostitutes more than once during the prior year. These men may be at increased risk for perpetrating violence against women.

Comparing these responses to the responses of other samples is difficult because virtually all published reports fail to describe respondents' answers to individual items. The different number of Likert-type scale responses on our questions and the fact that we used an abbreviated version of Burt's (1980) measure complicates such comparisons. However, some basic contrasts are warranted. Burt's original article mentions briefly in the discussion section that more than half of her random sample of Minnesota adults agreed that a woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man implies that she is interested in sex; that in the majority of cases, victims of rape are promiscuous or have bad reputations; and that 50% or more of the women who report rape are lying because they want to protect their reputation or punish the men they accuse. In comparison to Burt's sample, the men in our sample were less likely to endorse rape myths, as none of these items were endorsed by more than 30% of the respondents in our sample. This is true despite the fact that our questions lacked a neutral category, which should theoretically push at least a few people into agreement.

Other studies provide even fewer details that would allow for comparison with our sample but still deserve inspection. Abbey and Harnish (1995) report a median cutoff of 2.5 among the male undergraduates in their sample for the original 19 items, each scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale, for a proportion of .36 ($2.5/7 = .36$). The median for the eight items (before standardization) asked of the men in this study is 1.50, but six of eight items are scored on a 4-point scale and two on a 5-point scale for a proportion of .35 ($1.50/4.25 = .35$). Kopper (1996) reports, among her sample of undergraduates, a mean of 42.63 for the total scale of 19

TABLE 2
Correlation and Regression Coefficients of Selected Variables With Rape Myth Acceptance

	Pearson Correlation Coefficient <i>r</i>	Standardized Regression Coefficient	
		All Variables Beta	Selected Equation Beta
Currently married	-.026	.011	
Age	-.009	.074	.067*
Served in armed forces	.028	-.029	
Experienced abuse as a child	.035	.026	
Participation in sexual violence	.132***	NA	
Number of sexual partners in past year	-.099**	NA	
Frequency of sex in past year	-.107***	-.017	
Frequency of thoughts about sex	-.304***	-.248***	-.254***
Use of pornography	.050	-.004	
Sexual conservatism	.232***	.212***	.216***
Violent sexuality appealing	.482***	.446***	.443***
Frequency of prostitution in past year	-.022	.033	
Summary statistics for equation including all variables			
<i>R</i> = .567			
Adjusted <i>R</i> ² = .310			
<i>SE</i> = 4.166			
Regression <i>df</i> = 10			
Residual <i>df</i> = 621			
Summary statistics for selected equation			
<i>R</i> = .565			
Adjusted <i>R</i> ² = .314			
<i>SE</i> = 4.154			
Regression <i>df</i> = 4			
Residual <i>df</i> = 627			

p* < .05. *p* < .01. ****p* < .001.

items, all rescored on a 7-point scale. Her mean item score for the 19 items is 2.24, for a proportion of .32 ($2.24/7 = .32$). In comparison, the mean item score of respondents in our sample is 1.64 for a proportion of .39 ($1.64/4.25 = .39$). Although caution is warranted in interpreting these comparisons, it seems evident that this sample of men arrested for soliciting prostitution was not substantially more likely to endorse rape myths than selected samples of nonoffenders.

Table 2 reports the correlation and regression coefficients of selected variables with rape myth acceptance. Five variables were significantly correlated with acceptance of rape myths, including reported participation in sexual violence, use of pornography,

attraction to violent sexuality, thinking about sex less frequently, and sexual conservatism.

For the regression analyses, two of these variables were not included, participation in sexual violence and number of sexual partners in the past year. The former was excluded because there was very little variability in response, with fewer than 2% reporting any previous participation in sexual violence, and its inclusion would not have been meaningful. The latter was not included because number of sexual partners in the past year was highly correlated with number of prostitution contacts during the past year, another included variable, causing problems with multicollinearity. In exploratory analyses, number of sexual partners did not emerge as a significant predictor of rape myths in regression equations unless number of prostitution contacts was also included.

In the first regression analysis, the predictor variables were included simultaneously in the equation revealing four significant predictors of rape myth acceptance, attraction to violent sexuality, sexual conservatism, frequency of visiting prostitutes during the past year, and thinking about sex less frequently.

The third column in Table 2 provides the results of a second regression equation in which variables were eliminated through a stepwise selection process. The same four variables emerged as significant predictors of rape myth acceptance. Although stepwise selection of the best predictors has its critics, the selected equation was identical when forward-selection or backward-selection procedures were used.

DISCUSSION

One-sided efforts to reduce prostitution (or, more often, to reduce its visibility) by arresting prostitutes have been uniformly decried by feminists as unfair and discriminatory (Carmen & Moody, 1985; Davis, 1993; Sullivan, 1992). Although legal statutes are phrased in gender-neutral language (Miller, Romenesko, & Wondolkowski, 1993; Sullivan, 1992), the vast majority of those arrested are women (Alexander, 1987; Miller et al., 1993). Only about 10% of arrests for prostitution are of the clients (Alexander, 1987), virtually all of whom are men (Miller et al., 1993).

Recently, greater attention has been paid to the role of the male clients of female prostitutes in contributing to a system that often involves violence against women. Schewe and O'Donahue (1993) argue that prevention programs to reduce men's potential to sexually abuse should become a national imperative. The First Offenders Prostitution Program of San Francisco and Las Vegas as well as the now defunct Sexual Exploitation Education Project of Portland, Oregon, are at the forefront of a movement to hold men responsible for problems to which they contribute. These programs were developed to provide workshops for men who have been arrested for trying to hire street prostitutes. Each has identified the need for greater information on these men to improve their programs. In addition, the lack of empirical attention paid to these men makes information about their attitudes particularly valuable.

This study is the beginning of an effort to characterize the clients of street prostitutes. Although the respondents participating in this study may be seen as generally representative of the arrested clients of street prostitutes in the cities from which they were sampled, it is possible that clients gathered from other cities or other settings would be different. The picture that emerges from this study is not one of an unusual set of disturbed or violent men but of men who may be very similar to men in general. Other researchers have noted the lack of distinctiveness of this population of men (Boyle, 1995; Diana, 1985; Holzman & Pines, 1982). In particular, the clients of prostitutes do not seem to be more likely to endorse rape myths than other samples of men. One might argue that respondents in this sample altered their responses because it is socially undesirable to report negative attitudes such as these. Although this may be true for some of the respondents, there is no reason to suspect that endorsing rape myths would be more undesirable among these respondents than among other samples. Perhaps a better explanation for the relatively low levels of rape myth acceptance among the respondents in this sample might be that cultural changes have made misogyny less acceptable than it was when Burt conducted the original study in 1980.

Recent research indicates that there are many reasons why men patronize prostitutes. Some seek prostitutes because they want to be free of the obligations associated with conventional relationships (Jordan, 1997; McKeganey & Barnard, 1996; Monto, 2000).

Some want a different type of sex than do their regular partners (McKeganey & Barnard, 1996; Monto, 2000). Some are attracted to the illicit or dangerous nature of the prostitution encounter (Holzman & Pines, 1982; Monto, 2000). Some seek control over their sexual encounters (Monto, 2000), and some seek prostitution in an effort to establish intimacy with women (Holzman & Pines, 1982; Jordan, 1997). Although they may not acknowledge that their participation in prostitution contributes to a system that leaves women vulnerable to violence, interviews conducted by Sanchez (1997) indicated that some clients are aware of the violence and hardship faced by prostitutes.

Whereas rape myth acceptance was not high among respondents, many endorsed at least a few of the rape myth items. Findings reinforce the potentially negative consequences of such attitudes. Consistent with our hypotheses, we found that rape myth acceptance was associated with an attraction to violent sexuality. This is disturbing although not surprising. It means that men who found violent sexuality appealing endorsed beliefs that would tend to see women as deserving violence or as responsible for the violence directed against them. Other scholars have identified an association between belief in rape myths and a narrow definition of what constitutes rape (Miller & Schwartz, 1995), meaning that men who are attracted to violent sexuality and endorse rape myths may also be less likely to view violent sexual behavior as rape. In the extreme, these beliefs may be combined to support the idea that raping a prostitute is not really rape (Miller & Schwartz, 1995). Although few men in our sample reported participation in sexual violence, those who did were much higher in rape myth acceptance.

Controlling for the other variables, men who were regular clients of prostitutes were also more likely to endorse rape myths. This is true especially for those men who reported visiting prostitutes once per week or more. This may point to the existence of a small population of men who are at a high risk of perpetrating violence among the larger population of clients of prostitutes.

Interesting and consistent with our hypothesis was a strong relationship between sexual conservatism and rape myth acceptance. Such a relationship was hypothesized by Burt (1980) and supported empirically by Marolla and Scully (1986). Although being judgmental about sexuality may seem strange coming from

men who have been arrested for trying to hire prostitutes, it may reflect a sexual double standard (Marolla & Scully, 1986) that sees women's sexuality as immoral, or it may reflect a moral consistency in which the prostitution client finds both his own and the prostitute's behavior immoral. In either circumstance, signs of sexual conservatism should be reason for concern among men who might have the opportunity to act out violently toward those they view as immoral.

Frequency of pornography use was correlated with rape myth acceptance; however, it did not emerge as a significant predictor in the regression equations. This may point to a more complex relationship in which pornography use by particular individuals, such as those who are sexually conservative or attracted to violent sexuality, may be associated with rape myth acceptance, whereas pornography use by other individuals may not be associated with rape myth acceptance. In addition, pornography that normalizes coercion or violent sexuality might have a different relationship to rape myth acceptance than pornography that appears to depict more consensual forms of sexuality.

We failed to find a relationship between rape myth acceptance and the experience of sexual and physical abuse as a child. This is interesting because research has consistently found a relationship between abuse and sexual offenses (Fagan & Wexler, 1988; Graham, 1996; Kendall-Tackett, Williams, & Finkelhor, 1993), and prostitutes themselves often report histories of sexual abuse and physical abuse (Bagley & King, 1990; Briere, 1989; Simons & Whitbeck, 1991). This finding is consistent with contemporary strategies of the criminal justice system that treat prostitution seeking as qualitatively different from other sexual offenses.

Other variables we included for exploratory purposes—age, marital status, participation in the military, frequency of sex during the past year, and number of sexual partners during the past year—were not significantly associated with rape myth acceptance. However, how often the respondent reported thinking about sex was consistently negatively associated with acceptance of rape myths. Perhaps there is some comfort in the fact that men who are most frequently occupied by thoughts of sex are not supportive of attitudes that would tend to support sexual violence. This finding is counterintuitive, as popular conceptions of male sexuality seem to regard men who are highly preoccupied with

sex as perverts or fiends who might also hold other negative attitudes such as rape myths.

Rape myths, as conceived by Burt (1980), Miller and Schwartz (1995), and other scholars are not an unusual set of ideas held by unusual individuals but are culturally prevalent ideas that people can draw upon to justify violent behavior or to deny injury to victims of violence. Brinson (1992), in a study of prime time television dramas, demonstrates that rape myths are pervasive in that medium, although ideas inconsistent with rape myths are also communicated. Contradictory messages such as these are consistent with the cultural oppositions prevalent in a modern society such as ours (Monto, 1997).

The relatively moderate level of rape myth acceptance among the men sampled bodes well for programs that aim to discourage men from soliciting prostitution, as a high level of rape myth acceptance might diminish men's openness to learning about the harm associated with prostitution. In addition, Schewe and O'Donahue (1993) point out that individuals with extreme attitudes toward rape and sexual assault may respond to interventions very differently and less positively than individuals with more moderate attitudes. Fortunately, research has demonstrated the potential for interventions, even relatively brief interventions, to reduce rape myths (Schewe & O'Donahue, 1993, 1996). This also bodes well for programs such as San Francisco's First Offenders Prostitution Program.

NOTES

1. Arrest statistics fail to provide accurate information about the extent of prostitution in the United States. They focus almost entirely on street prostitutes, neglecting other common forms of prostitution. In addition, they often reflect multiple arrests of the same woman.

2. See Monto (1998) for a description of the Portland intervention program.

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