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Examining the Relationship Between Victimization, Psychopathy, and the Acceptance of Rape Myths

Abstract

Rape myths are attitudes that implicitly and explicitly blame victims for their own sexual victimization. Greater adherence to rape myths is linked to several negative outcomes, including the neutralization of gender-based violence and the perpetration of sexual violence. Few studies have considered how previous life experiences and individual-level traits influence the development and greater adherence to rape myths. The current study examines how traits associated with the three-factor model of psychopathy (i.e., egocentric, callous, and antisocial dimensions) and adherence to traditional gender roles mediate the relationship between prior childhood/adolescent victimization and the acceptance of rape myths in a sample of college men and women ($N = 789$). Path modeling indicates that experiences of psychological victimization (before age 16) increased egocentric psychopathic traits, which then increased the acceptance of rape myths in men. In women, however, sexual victimization (before age 16) increased the acceptance of traditional gender roles, which then influenced the acceptance of rape myths. Additionally, the egocentric facet of psychopathy exerted indirect effects on the acceptance of rape myths through traditional views on gender roles in both men and women. These findings highlight the need to continue to examine egocentric personality traits in relation to the development of rape myths in adolescent and young adult populations. Directions for collegiate programming are discussed.

Keywords

child abuse, sexual assault, situational factors, psychopathy, rape myths, victimization

Disciplines

Criminology | Family, Life Course, and Society | Gender and Sexuality | Psychology | Social Psychology and Interaction

Comments

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Examining the Relationship between Victimization, Psychopathy, and the Acceptance of Rape Myths

Sexual violence (SV) against college students has been a problem for decades (Fisher, Daigle, & Cullen, 2009; Kirkpatrick & Kanin, 1957; Koss, 1989; Krebs et al., 2009). Indeed, a considerable body of work suggests that a large portion of SV is committed against minors and college age individuals. Given the prevalence and consequences of SV among college students, it is important to examine attitudes that may motivate individuals to commit or endorse SV within these samples. Prior studies have linked the acceptance of rape myths – defined as stereotyped, prejudicial, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists (Burt, 1980) – to the perpetration of SV in samples of college age men (Russell et al., 2017; Seto & Lalumiere, 2010) and women (Russell & Hand, 2017). While the link between the acceptance of rape myths and perpetration of SV is well documented, less work has explored how prior victimization and personality traits contribute to the development of rape myth acceptance (RMA). Considering these limitations, it is evident that continued empirical research examining the influence of prior victimization and individual-level personality traits on RMA can be used to inform campus wide programming efforts aimed at reducing RMA, and by extension SV, on college campuses.

Study of the etiology of RMA has largely focused on how cognitive distortions indicative of patriarchy influence the onset and adherence to rape myths (Bleecker & Murnen, 2005; Debowska et al., 2018; Forbes et al., 2006). While it is undoubtedly true that societal norms influence beliefs about expected relationship dynamics, an alternative line of inquiry suggests that society's expectations are only part of the explanation. There is growing empirical support for the notion that the perpetration of violence and perceptions of victim blameworthiness are influenced by (1) individual experiences of victimization (Fagan & Wexler, 1988; Fox et al.,

2015; Ireland & Smith, 2009; Koss, & Dinero, 1988), and (2) personality traits associated with uncaring and egocentric dimensional constructs (Abbey et al., 2011; Debowska et al., 2015; DeGue et al., 2010; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2013; Watts et al., 2017).

Regarding the former, the cycle of violence can help explain the relationship between victimization, victim blaming attitudes, and the perpetration of SV (Fox et al., 2015; White & Smith, 2004; Widom, 1989). While mixed results have been reported (Carmody & Washington, 2001), the cycle of violence literature indicates that individuals who perpetrate violence are more likely to have been victimized earlier in life compared to those who did not experience victimization (Widom, 1989). Research suggest the same holds true for experiences of victimization and attitudes later in life, including RMA (Eriksson & Mazerolle, 2015; Ireland & Smith, 2009; Temple et a., 2013). Consequently, victimization experiences may affect the development of RMA. Yet, there exists considerable variation among those who experience early life victimization and if they go on to endorse rape myths (Carmody & Washington, 2001).

Two potential explanations for the observed variation in experiences of early victimization and RMA are personality traits associated with psychopathy and views on traditional gender roles. In general, psychopathy is a cluster of dysfunctional interpersonal, affective, and behavioral characteristics (Hare, 1991; 2003) linked to various forms of offending, including sexual offending (Abbey et al., 2011; Seto & Lalumière, 2010).¹ While viewed as an antecedent of sexually violent behavior (Abbey et al., 2011; DeGue et al., 2010; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2013; Watts et al., 2017), the construct of psychopathy has recently been applied to

¹ The rationale for examining psychopathy, as opposed to other dimensionally constructed latent traits, like sociopathy, had to do with the use of a validated non-clinical measure of psychopathy (i.e., Levenson Self-Report Psychopathy; LSRP; Levenson et al., 1995) scale. While many of the measured dimensions of the LSRP overlap with conceptually relevant aspects of other collective personality constructs, like sociopathy (Lillienfeld et al., 2017; Pement, 2013; Walsh & Wu, 2008), the LSRP is a well validated measure of psychopathy in non-clinical samples that can be administered by non-clinicians (Levenson et al., 1995; Sellbom, 2011).

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3 better understand rape supportive attitudes, including RMA (Debowska et al., 2015). At the same
4
5 time, greater adherence to traditional gender roles, which constitute support for behaviors,
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7 attitudes, and values considered to be appropriate for either men or women, have also been
8
9 linked to greater RMA (Aronowitz et al., 2012; Zawacki et al., 2003). Taken together, models
10
11 seeking to explain variance in RMA should account for dimensional facets of psychopathy and
12
13 traditional views on gender roles.
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17 Collectively, prior studies indicate that early experiences of victimization influence
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19 RMA. Traits associated with psychopathy remain a relatively untested construct in relation to the
20
21 observed variation between early experiences of victimization and RMA (Abbey et al., 2011;
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23 Debowska et al., 2015; DeGue et al., 2010; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2013; Watts et al., 2017). To
24
25 extend the literature on this subject, the current study models the mediating effect that the three-
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27 factor model of psychopathy (i.e. egocentric, callous, and antisocial dimensions) and traditional
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29 views on gender roles have on the relationship between self-reported psychological and sexual
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31 victimization in childhood/adolescence and RMA in a sample of college men and women (N =
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33 789). We test whether the direct effect of childhood/adolescent psychological or sexual
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35 victimization on RMA will be attenuated by the three-factor model of psychopathy or a greater
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37 adherence to traditional gender roles. Findings from this study provide new insights into a
38
39 developing line of literature that seeks to assess how personality traits influence the relationship
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41 between early experiences of victimization and attitudes about SV.
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46 47 **Rape Myth Acceptance** 48

49 Rape myths constitute attitudes that implicitly and explicitly blame victims for sexual
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51 victimization. Individuals who accept rape myths are more likely to believe that victims are
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53 responsible for their own assault, reject rape as a legitimate crime, and deny harm done to
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3 victims (Burt, 1980). While cognitive distortions that promote negative perceptions of gender-
4 violence and victim-blaming attitudes are concerning, an even more troubling aspect of RMA is
5 the association with the commission of SV (Lisak & Miller, 2002; Marx et al., 1999; Wheeler et
6 al., 2002). In their systematic review of RMA and SV, Yapp and Quayle (2018) found that RMA
7 increased the likelihood of perpetrating one or more acts of sexual aggression. These results are
8 consistent with earlier works on RMA and sexual aggression (Koss & Dinero, 1988; Lisak &
9 Miller, 2002; Marx et al., 1999; Wheeler et al., 2002), indicating a directional relationship
10 between RMA and the perpetration of SV. Consistent with prevalence statistics on gender-based
11 violence (Smith et al., 2018), research also finds that men are more likely than women to accept
12 rape myths (Ewoldt et al., 2000; Wheeler et al., 2002) and commit acts that meet the legal
13 definition of rape and sexual assault (Abbey & McAuslan, 2004).

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Recognition of the effect that RMA has on the likelihood of perpetrating SV (Yapp & Quayle, 2018), paired with observations of greater acceptance of rape myths in men (Ewoldt et al., 2000; Wheeler et al., 2002), has prompted researchers to consider etiological explanations for RMA (Debowska et al., 2015; Mouilso & Calhoun, 2013; Watts et al., 2017). To date, research on RMA has posited that rape myths are cognitive distortions produced by a patriarchal society which relies on these distortions to justify and neutralize SV. Indeed, studies using traditional views on gender roles as proxy measures of the acceptance of social norms finds that greater adherence to traditional gender roles largely contributes to the observed variation in RMA (Aaronowitz et al., 2012; Wheeler et al., 2002). In fact, traditional views on gender roles is one of the key factors Burt (1980) used to initially examine RMA. Interestingly, adherence to traditional gender roles explained only some of the variance in RMA, with the remaining variation attributable to artifacts associated with victimization experiences and personality.

Early Victimization Experiences and RMA

Studies have found that variation in RMA may be partially explained by early victimization (Koss & Dinero, 1988). This relationship is consistent with general findings in the cycle of violence literature (Fox et al., 2015; White & Smith, 2000; Widom, 1989) and etiological models of sexual aggression more specifically (Abbey et al., 2011; Bouffard et al., 2015; DeGue et al., 2010; Knight & Sims-Knight, 2003; Malamuth et al., 1991). Accordingly, victimization has been modeled as a key exogenous variable within the developmental framework of SV. For example, Knight and Sims-Knight (2003) discovered an indirect relationship between participants' self-reported experiences with physical, verbal, and sexual abuse by parents and sexual coercion/violent fantasizing through callous-unemotional traits and antisocial behavior. Child abuse/parental violence was also linked to sexual promiscuity and coercive behavior through an indirect relationship with delinquency in a sample of college age men (Malamuth et al., 1991).

Research has applied this observed association between childhood victimization and sexual aggression to evaluations of RMA (Burt, 1980; Koss & Dinero, 1988; Mouislo & Calhoun, 2013; Watts et al., 2017). Debowska and colleagues (2015) found a positive relationship between recent experiences with violence and RMA in separate samples of Polish adults and prisoners. However, these results contradict Burt's (1980) original analysis of RMA, which reported no significant effect of early victimization on RMA. Familial and social confounds may explain mixed findings regarding victimization experiences and their association with RMA (Bleecker & Murnen, 2005; Debowska et al., 2018; Forbes et al., 2006).

Alternatively, variation in the relationship between prior victimization and the development of

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3 RMA may also be accounted for by factors at the individual level, such as the presence of traits
4 associated with psychopathy.
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7 **Psychopathy and RMA**

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10 Psychopathy is a broad term used to describe a group of personality traits typically
11 associated with the increased propensity to engage in crime and deviance (Hare, 1991; 2003). It
12 is conceptualized as a multi-faceted construct that includes dimensional factors related to
13 impulsivity, narcissism, egocentricity, callousness, a lack of empathy, arrogance, deceitfulness,
14 and manipulation (Cooke & Michie, 2001; Hare, 2003). A considerable amount of research
15 identifies traits associated with psychopathy in the onset and persistence of various outcomes
16 including general offending, violent offending, and gender-based violence (Loeber et al., 2009).
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26 Acknowledgment of the role that dimensional traits representative of the overarching
27 conceptualization of psychopathy have on the etiology of crime and analogous behaviors
28 (Leistico et al., 2008) provides a rationale for integrating this personality construct into
29 explanations of SV. While few studies have included psychopathy in a framework of SV, results
30 have begun to demonstrate its tenability as an explanatory variable of sexual aggression (Abbey
31 et al., 2011; Kosson et al., 1997). Particularly relevant is a study by Mouliso and Calhoun (2013),
32 which found a positive relationship between psychopathy and RMA with SV perpetration in a
33 sample of college age men. Watts and colleagues (2017) provide additional support for
34 considering the overlap between psychopathy and RMA. Their results revealed significant
35 positive correlations between fearlessness, self-centeredness, callousness, disinhibition, and
36 meanness with RMA across two samples of college students. Callousness was also found to
37 increase the likelihood of RMA in samples of university students and prisoners in Poland
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3 relationship between childhood/adolescent psychological and sexual victimization on RMA in
4 sample of 789 men and women.
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7 8 **Methods**

9 10 **Participants**

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12 The current study used data collected from college students taking introductory criminal
13 justice courses at a large southeastern University in the fall of 2016.² Procedures and instruments
14 were approved by the Institutional Review Board at this University. Surveys and informed
15 consent were distributed to approximately 872 students. Of that original sample, 793 participants
16 provided reliable information related to general demographics including gender, age, and
17 race/ethnicity. Four individuals were removed from the analysis as outliers on measures of
18 psychopathic traits. Thus, the final analytic sample included 789 participants. Demographics for
19 the analytic sample are shown in Table 1. The average age of participants was roughly 20 years
20 old. Self-reported race/ethnicity indicated that the sample was comprised of students who
21 identified as white (39.70%), Latinx (36.40%), Black (14.80%), Asian (1.40%), and other
22 (7.70%). More women (61.90%) participated in the survey than men (38.10%).
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38 **Measures**

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40 **RMA.** The Illinois RMA scale (Payne et al., 1999) was used to evaluate respondents'
41 acceptance of rape myths. This 22-item Likert type scale asks respondents to rate their level of
42 agreement (1= *strongly disagree* to 5= *strongly agree*) on specific items such as "If a girl is
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50 ² Most participants were criminal justice majors. While some scholars have reported criminal justice students are
51 more punitive when it comes to crime and punishment (see Lambert, 2004; Mackey & Courtright, 2000), other
52 studies do not find statistically significant differences between criminal justice and non-criminal justice majors on
53 attitudes involving victimization and crime (Hensley et al., 2002). Research also finds that SV, and the acceptance of
54 rape myths more specifically, occur at similar rates on college campuses as in the general population (Fisher et al.,
55 2009).
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3 raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of hand.”
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5 Items on the scale represent a latent construct related to the acceptance of rape myths. As such, it
6
7 is necessary to establish factorial validity of the latent construct within the analytic sample
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10 (Byrne, 2013). To this end, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was used to test for factorial
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12 validity. Model fit was assessed using the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA),
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14 the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI). Analysis relied on the
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16 Robust Weighted Least Squared (WLSMV) estimator to appropriately account for the ordered
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18 categorical nature of RMA item response categories. Following Hu and Bentler (1999), cut-off
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20 points for model fit criteria were: CFI > .90, TLI > .90, and RMSEA < .05. CFA results indicate
21
22 good fit in the analytic sample (CFI = .96, TLI = .94, RMSEA = .04).
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26 ***Insert Figure 1 and Table 1 About Here***
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28 **Psychopathy.** Psychopathy was measured with the 26-item Levenson Self-Report
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30 Psychopathy scale (LSRP; Levenson et al., 1995), which was originally developed to evaluate a
31
32 two-factor model of psychopathy.³ More recent analyses by Sellbom (2011), however, suggests
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34 the LSRP provides a better fit within the three-factor psychopathy framework, where
35
36 psychopathy is characterized by *egocentricity*, *callousness*, and *antisocial behavior*. Indeed, CFA
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38 testing the factorial validity of the LSRP within the current sample indicated good fit for the
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40 three-factor model (CFI = .91, TLI = .90; RMSEA = .04). Analyses thus relied on 19-items from
41
42 the LSRP (Sellbom, 2011) capturing the three-factor model.
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51 ³ The LSRP (Levenson et al., 1995) was created for measuring psychopathy in non-clinical samples. Several studies
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53 have assessed the reliability and validity of the LRSP at measuring psychopathy in non-clinical samples, including
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55 college students (Cooke & Michie, 2001; Sellbom, 2011). Thus, it is one of the better tools for assessing
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57 psychopathy in samples of individuals who may not display clinical levels of latent dimensional traits associated
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59 with psychopathy.
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3 **Traditional gender roles.** The current analysis relied on the Social Roles Questionnaire
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5 (SRQ; Baber & Tucker, 2006) to measure participants' views on traditional gender roles. The
6
7 SRQ is a 13-item tool that assesses adherence to traditional gender roles through a 4-point Likert
8
9 scale where 0 = *strongly disagree* and 3 = *strongly agree*. CFA yielded good overall model fit
10
11 for the use of traditional gender roles as a latent trait within the analytic sample (CFI = .95, TLI
12
13 = .93; RMSEA = .05).
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17 **Psychological and sexual victimization.** To account for the effect that early
18
19 victimization has on RMA, the current study relied on retrospective accounts of both
20
21 *psychological* and *sexual* victimization during childhood/adolescence.⁴ Psychological
22
23 victimization was measured using the Childhood Maltreatment Interview Schedule – Short Form
24
25 (CMIS-SF; Briere, 1992) and was captured as a latent indicator comprised of responses to seven
26
27 questions: “When you were 16 or younger, how often did the following happen to you in the
28
29 average year? Your parents, or stepparents, or foster parents, or other adult in charge of you as a
30
31 child 1) yelled at you, 2) insulted you, 3) criticized you, 4) tried to make you feel guilty, 5)
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33 ridiculed or humiliated you, 6) embarrassed you in front of others, or 7) made you feel like you
34
35 were a bad person?” Response categories were measured on a six-point Likert scale where 0 =
36
37 *never* and 6 = *over 20 times a year*. CFA for the psychological victimization indicator was good
38
39 (CFI = .98, TLI = .99; RMSEA = .03).⁵ Sexual victimization was measured as a dichotomous
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48 ⁴ Physical abuse was omitted from analyses due to low reported variance within the subsample of men (i.e., men
49 reported no physical abuse), resulting in inflated standard errors and standardized coefficients in the path analysis.

50
51 ⁵ Approximately 17.40% of the current sample reported that their parents, stepparents, foster parents, or other adult
52 in charge of them only yelled at them and reported no other experiences of psychological abuse. Of those who
53 experienced being yelled at 20 or more times a year (25.9% of the total sample), roughly 26.60% reported being
54 insulted, 42.10% reported being criticized, 29.40% reported being made to feel guilty, 19.21% reported being
55 ridiculed or humiliated, 19.20% reported being humiliated in front of others, and 24.00% reported being made to
56 feel like they were a bad person. No significant relationships changed in analyses with the seven-item latent
57 psychological victimization measure as opposed to the six-item latent construct (i.e. when the latent variable did not
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3 indicator (0 = none; 1 = sexual victimization) in response to the question “to the best of your
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5 knowledge, before the age of 16, were you ever sexually abused.”
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8 **Control variables.** Respondents’ age (measured in years) and race/ethnicity were
9
10 included as control variables in all models. Models were estimated separately in samples of men
11
12 and women. A dichotomous indicator was used to capture race/ethnicity where 0 = white and 1 =
13
14 Person of Color (60.30%).
15

16 17 **Analytic Procedure** 18

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20 Analyses estimated the mediating effect of the three-factor model of psychopathy and
21
22 traditional views on gender roles on the relationship between childhood/adolescent psychological
23
24 and sexual victimization on RMA in a series of linked steps. First, we performed several
25
26 independent samples *t*-tests to check for significant differences in egocentricity, callousness,
27
28 antisociality, views on traditional gender roles, sexual and psychological victimization, and
29
30 RMA scores across gender. This is consistent with previous research that has noted considerable
31
32 gender differences in each of these variables (Ewoldt et al., 2000; Watts et al., 2017). The second
33
34 step in the analysis involved the estimation of path models where key exogenous variables were
35
36 regressed onto RMA. Path modeling is the ideal analytic strategy for this type of analysis as it
37
38 allows for the estimation of direct and indirect regression paths between both latent and observed
39
40 variables. A hypothesized model for the proposed relationship between the three-factor model of
41
42 psychopathy, adherence to traditional gender roles, and psychological or sexual victimization on
43
44 RMA is presented in Figure 1. Additionally, findings from the independent samples *t*-tests
45
46 provided justification for estimating gender stratified models. Thus, in accordance with
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54 include yelling). Given the distribution of the item and based on preliminary model fit analyses, we elected to retain
55 the seven-item latent variable.
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3 recommendations by Byrne (2013), path models were estimated in men and women. Only the
4 most parsimonious model presented. Similar to the confirmatory models for each measure, path
5 model fit was assessed using RMSEA, CFI, and TLI (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Path analyses were
6 conducted with the robust weighted least squares (WLSMV) estimator in *Mplus* Version 8
7 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017) due to the ordered categorical nature of the latent variables.
8 Standardized estimates are reported.
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16 Results

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19 The results of the univariate analyses and independent samples *t*-tests presented in Table
20 1 show that men ($M = 28.07$; $SD = 15.27$) were more likely to adhere to rape myths than women
21 ($M = 18.68$; $SD = 13.62$; $t = 8.43$, $df = 536.26$, $p < 0.01$). Compared to women, men reported
22 significantly higher levels of egocentricity (Men $M = 10.09$; $SD = 4.65$; Women $M = 8.36$; $SD =$
23 4.48 ; $t = 4.98$, $df = 728.00$, $p < 0.01$) and callousness (Men $M = 4.32$; $SD = 2.18$; Women $M =$
24 3.33 ; $SD = 2.03$; $t = 6.40$, $df = 771.00$, $p < 0.01$). Women were more likely than men to report
25 experiencing sexual victimization (Men = 3.00%; Women = 14.00%; $t = 7.70$, $df = 598.06$, $p <$
26 $.01$). No statistically significant differences emerged between men and women in reports of
27 psychological victimization (Men $M = 12.40$; $SD = 11.60$; Women $M = 13.31$; $SD = 11.75$; $t = -$
28 1.08 , $df = 757.00$). Compared to women, men had greater adherence to traditional gender roles
29 (Men $M = 20.97$; $SD = 5.24$; Women $M = 16.87$; $SD = 5.30$; $t = 10.22$, $df = 735.00$, $p < 0.01$).
30 These findings are consistent with prior research and provides rationale for estimating the effects
31 of these key exogenous variables on RMA in separate models for men and women.
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49 Path models were fitted to the data to examine the relationship between the three-factor
50 model of psychopathy, views on traditional gender roles, and psychological and sexual
51 victimization on RMA. Results for the subsample of men are presented in Figure 2. Significant
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3 positive direct effects were observed between psychological victimization and egocentricity ($\beta =$
4 0.21, $p < 0.01$) as well as egocentricity and RMA ($\beta = 0.32, p < 0.01$). There was a significant
5
6 positive direct association between egocentricity and adherence to traditional gender roles ($\beta =$
7 0.50, $p < 0.01$). Greater adherence to traditional gender roles also directly and significantly
8 increased RMA ($\beta = 0.36, p < 0.01$). Furthermore, adherence to traditional gender roles was
9
10 found to account for 39.60% ($\beta = 0.17, p < 0.01$) of the total direct effect of egocentricity on
11
12 RMA ($\beta = 0.48, p < 0.01$).
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19 ***Insert Figures 2 and 3 About Here***
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21 Path models were then fitted to the data for the subsample of women (see Figure 3).
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23 There were no significant effects of psychological victimization on any of the key exogenous
24 variables or RMA. A significant and positive direct effect was found between sexual
25
26 victimization and increased views toward traditional gender roles ($\beta = 0.12, p = 0.04$). Greater
27
28 adherence to traditional gender roles ($\beta = 0.44, p < 0.01$) and egocentricity ($\beta = 0.22, p < 0.01$)
29
30 directly increased RMA in women. There was also an observed direct relationship between
31
32 egocentricity and traditional gender roles ($\beta = 0.48, p < 0.01$). Views on traditional gender roles
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34 accounted for 48.84% ($\beta = 0.21, p < 0.01$) of the observed variance in the total direct effect from
35
36 egocentricity to RMA ($\beta = 0.43, p < 0.01$).
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43 Discussion

44 This study examined how childhood/adolescent victimization, psychopathy traits, and
45 adherence to traditional gender roles influenced RMA in a sample of college men and women.
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47 Based on the hypothesized model (see Figure 1), we estimated whether the three-factor model of
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49 psychopathy and views on traditional gender roles would have a mediating effect on the
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51 relationship between sexual and psychological victimization on RMA. Consistent with the
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3 hypothesized model, men who reported experiencing more instances of psychological
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5 victimization showed an increase in the egocentric aspects of psychopathy. In turn, men with
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7 higher levels of egocentricity were more likely to accept rape myths. Higher egocentricity in men
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9 was also associated with increased acceptance of traditional gender roles which was linked to
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11 greater RMA. Egocentricity and the acceptance of traditional gender roles were also associated
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13 with increased levels of RMA in women. Contrary to results from the subsample of men,
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15 however, sexual victimization, but not psychological victimization, had a statistically significant
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17 effect on adherence to traditional gender roles in women. Thus, results from the current sample
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19 provide new insights into our understanding of RMA. Findings suggest that the direct effect of
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21 psychological and sexual victimization on RMA is partially mediated by the egocentric aspects
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23 of psychopathy and views on traditional gender roles in men and women.
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29 The effect of egocentricity on RMA adds to previous research on psychopathy, RMA,
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31 and sexual aggression (Debowska et al., 2015; Watts et al., 2017). Egocentricity is a personality
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33 construct indicative of having an inflated sense of self and a lack of empathy for the wellbeing of
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35 others. Novel findings from the current analysis add to the literature on egocentricity and RMA
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37 by observing that men and women with higher levels of egocentricity were more likely to
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39 endorse rape myths, which in many ways demonstrate a lack of empathy on behalf of the victim.
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41 Egocentric personalities, then, may manifest into cognitive distortions that emphasize patriarchal
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43 norms that reinforce power and control over women and victims.
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47 Consistent with previous literature (Aronowitz et al., 2012), the current analysis also
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49 found that much of the observed variance in RMA was attributable to views on traditional gender
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51 roles. Adherence to traditional gender roles was found to directly increase RMA and indirectly
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53 influence RMA through an association with the egocentric facet of psychopathy in both men and
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3 women. Support for this relationship was found to be greater in women with reported
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5 experiences of sexual victimization. This relationship was not observed in men, and yet, men
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7 who embraced traditional gender roles were more likely to accept rape myths. Traditional gender
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9 roles were also found to indirectly increase the effect of egocentricity on RMA in both men and
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11 women. This is a relatively novel and important observation. Men and women who display a
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13 higher level of egocentric traits are more likely to embrace traditional gender roles and accept
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15 rape myths. These findings provide new evidence for the effect that personality characteristics
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17 associated with self-centeredness and views on traditional gender roles have on the development
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19 of cognitive distortions that support attitudes conducive to blaming victims of gender-violence.
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24 Findings from this study provide key insights for future research and practice. Relevant to
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26 future research, this study demonstrates the utility of considering individual-level traits when
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28 examining the etiology of RMA. Similar to Debowska and colleagues (2015), our results
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30 document the mediating effect that traits associated with psychopathy have on the relationship
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32 between early experiences of victimization and RMA. However, our results extend beyond the
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34 current literature by showing a link between the egocentric domain of psychopathy with
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36 traditional views on gender roles. Future research needs to further explore how these personality
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38 traits and attitudes toward gender roles influence RMA across multiple settings, samples, and age
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40 groups. Practically, we believe this study can aid in the development of college programs aimed
41
42 at reducing RMA and negative attitudes regarding gender. By acknowledging the role that
43
44 egocentricity has on RMA, collegiate programming can begin to assess individual needs by
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46 evaluating students' egocentric traits as well as their perceptions of traditional gender roles.
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51 Doing this can provide a more holistic but also individually tailored program to reduce RMA.
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3 Limitations to this study provide directions for future research in several ways. First, this
4 analysis was based on cross-sectional indicators of psychopathy, traditional gender roles, and
5 RMA as well as retrospective accounts of victimization experiences. Furthermore, sexual
6 victimization was estimated with a dichotomous indicator, which limits the ability to fully
7 capture variation that exists across this victimization type. Future studies should explore the
8 etiology of RMA from a longitudinal perspective that can acquire more detailed measures of
9 victimization and the development of psychopathy. Second, this study could not account for
10 familial, peer, and socio-cultural effects on RMA. Future studies should incorporate multiple
11 perspectives and levels of analysis to better understand RMA. Third, this study utilized a sample
12 of college students to assess psychopathy. Though traits associated with psychopathy are
13 relatively normally disbursed across the population (Lilienfeld et al. 2017; Pement, 2013), the
14 current sample is non-clinical and may not adequately capture all aspects of psychopathy.
15 Finally, findings from this study must be framed within the context and consideration of
16 diversity. Despite being drawn from a student population at a diverse university, this sample is
17 not representative of all ages, gender identities, ethnicities, and experiences. Indeed, a more
18 intersectional approach that can capture “multiple social identities” is warranted (Raphael et al.,
19 2019, p. 2043). Future work would benefit from the inclusion of quantitative and qualitative
20 methods that give respondents a voice. Furthermore, it might be warranted to oversample
21 minoritized groups in future research to determine if these relationships hold across different
22 gender identities, races, and ethnicities.
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49 Overall, the current study adds this body of literature by suggesting that the relationship
50 between victimization and RMA is mediated by personality indicators associated with
51 psychopathy. Results from this study also demonstrate the complexity with which gender
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attitudes are formed. Gender-based violence and its antecedents are of great concern in our society and, thus, we must examine every aspect of our contextual traits and experiences to better understand how these attitudes and behaviors develop.

For Peer Review

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Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Full Sample (N = 789).

	Mean (%)	SD	Range	<i>t</i> -test (df)
Rape myth acceptance	22.24	14.97	0 - 67	8.43 (536.26)**
<i>Men</i> ⁰	28.07	15.27	0 - 64	
<i>Women</i>	18.68	13.62	0 - 67	
Egocentricity	9.01	4.62	0 - 25	4.98 (728.00)**
<i>Men</i> ⁰	10.09	4.65	0 - 25	
<i>Women</i>	8.36	4.48	0 - 24	
Callousness	3.71	2.14	0 - 12	6.40 (771.00)**
<i>Men</i> ⁰	4.32	2.18	0 - 12	
<i>Women</i>	3.33	2.03	0 - 12	
Antisocial	5.35	2.53	0 - 14	.70 (764.00)
<i>Men</i> ⁰	5.43	2.38	0 - 12	
<i>Women</i>	5.30	2.62	0 - 14	
Psychological victimization	(13.00) 7.00	<u>11.60</u>	0 - 42 41	-1.08 -.59 (757.00)**
<i>Men</i> ⁰	(23.00) 12.40	<u>11.30</u>	0 - 42 42	
<i>Women</i>	<u>13.31</u> (6.60)	<u>11.75</u>	0 - 42 42	
Sexual victimization	(9.00)		0 - 1	7.70 (598.06)**
<i>Men</i> ⁰	(3.00)		0 - 1	
<i>Women</i>	(13.90)		0 - 1	
Traditional gender roles	18.41	5.63	5 - 36	10.22 (735.00)**
<i>Men</i> ⁰	20.97	5.24	5 - 36	
<i>Women</i>	16.87	5.30	5 - 31	
Age	20.06	1.73	18 - 27	
Ethnicity				
<i>White</i> ⁰	(39.70)			
<i>Person of Color</i>	(60.30)			
Gender				
<i>Men</i>	(38.10)			
<i>Women</i>	(61.90)			

Notes: ⁰Reference category for *t*-tests. ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

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3 **Figure 1. Hypothetical Model of the Relationship between Victimization, Psychopathy, and**
4 **RMA.**
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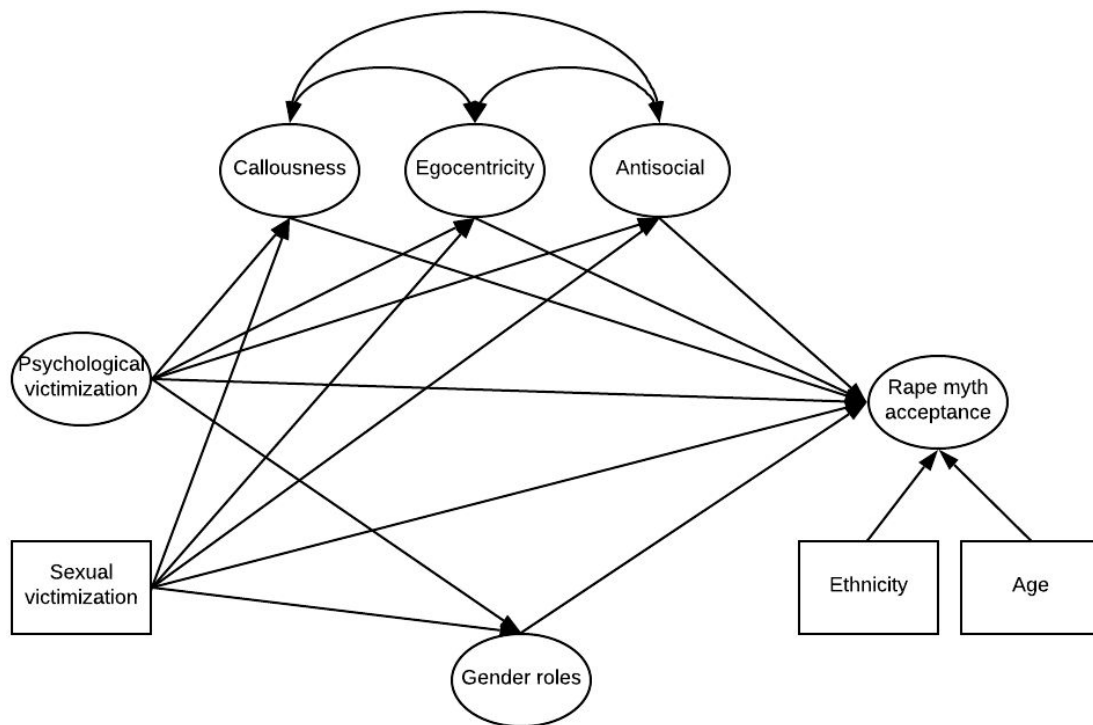
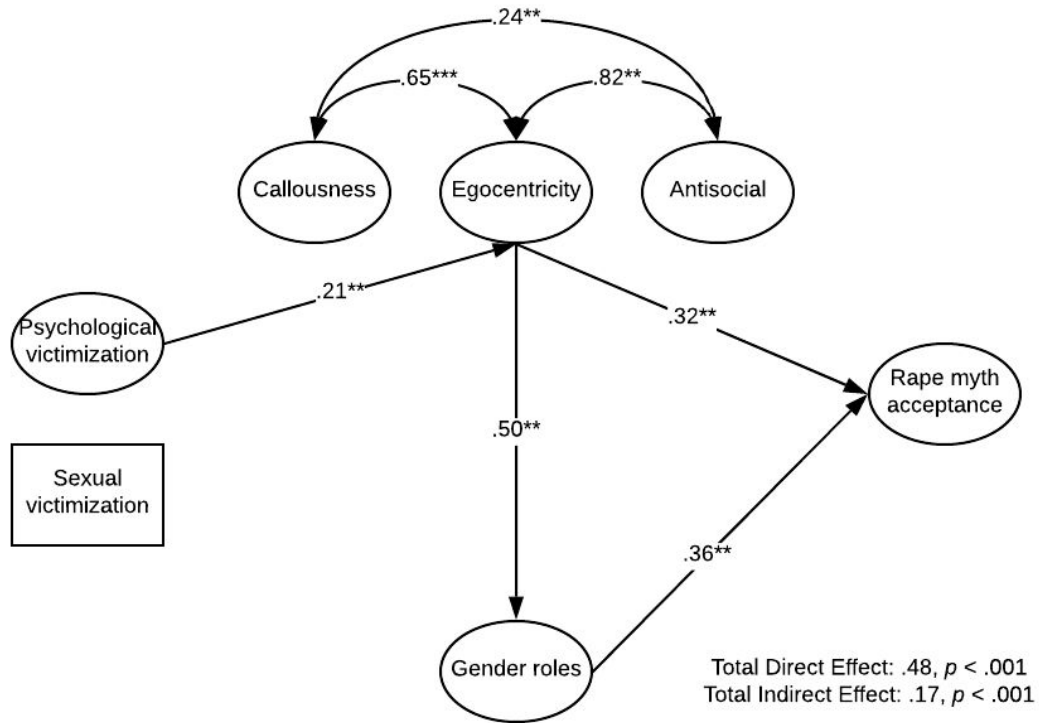
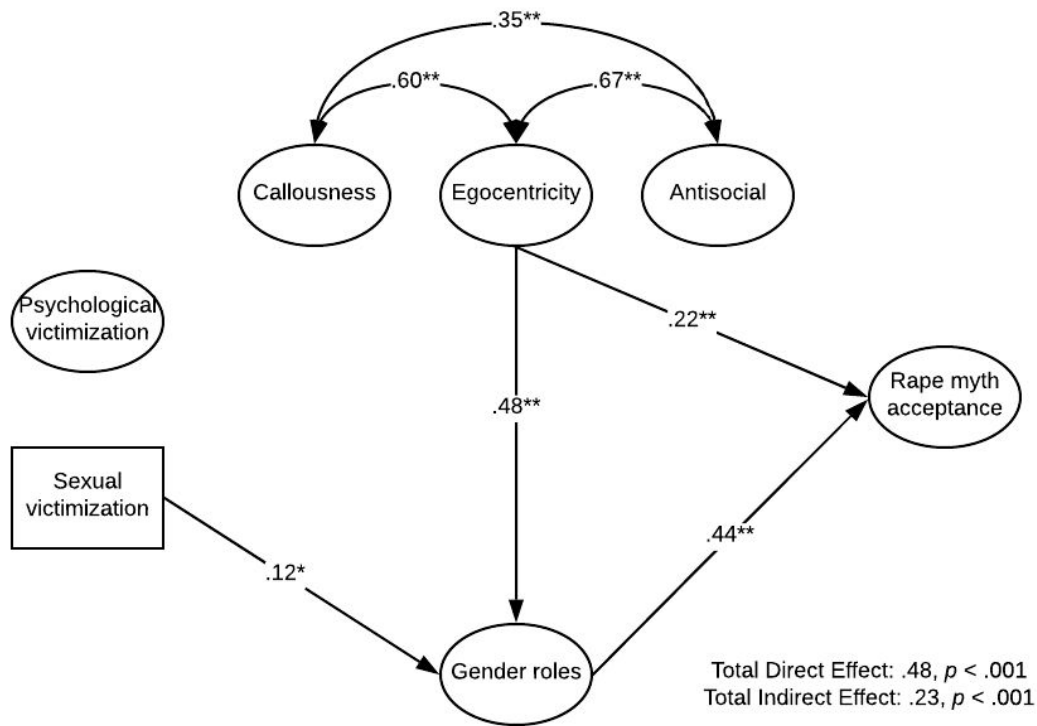


Figure 2. Path Model Fitted in Men (N = 301).



Notes: Standardized coefficients presented. Only statistically significant paths are presented. Total direct effect represents the direct effect from egocentricity to rape myth acceptance. Total indirect effect represents the indirect effect egocentricity has on rape myth acceptance through traditional gender roles. Model fit statistics: CFI = .96; TLI = .96; RMSEA = .04. ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Figure 3. Path Model Fitted in Women (N = 488).



Notes: Standardized coefficients presented. Only statistically significant paths are presented. Total direct effect represents the direct effect from egocentricity to rape myth acceptance. Total indirect effect represents the indirect effect egocentricity has on rape myth acceptance through traditional gender roles. Model fit statistics: CFI = .98; TLI = .98; RMSEA = .03. ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.