

Examining the Relationship Between Demographics and Legal Attitudes on the Acceptance of Sexually Aggressive Attitudes

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Abstract

The acceptance of modern rape myths surrounding sexual aggression can often be easily identified simply through the endorsement and day to day use of such, however when it appears that the influence of such acceptance is apparent in a court of law the ability to ensure these beliefs don't implicate a real criminal trial becomes an issue. Subsequently potential vetting procedures that could help to reduce such bias may become a necessity for members of the jury. This research aimed to investigate the potential relationship between demographic information (age, gender and ethnicity) and the acceptance of modern rape myths whilst also examining the level of influence the six subscales of the Pre-Trial Juror Attitudes Questionnaire (PJAQ) - racial bias, social justice, innate criminality, cynicism towards the defence, system confidence and conviction proneness - may have. Data was collected from a large cross-sectional sample ($N = 266$) of males and females. Results suggested that gender, racial bias, cynicism towards the defence and social justice were all significant indicators of being accepting of modern rape myths. Practical implications and the direction of future research is discussed.

Key Words: *Sexual aggression, Acceptance of modern rape myths, Pre-trial juror attitudes questionnaire, Gender, age, Ethnicity, Legal attitudes*

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Introduction

Prevalence of Sexual Violence

With sexual aggression becoming increasingly common over the last decade, in both stranger and domestic situations, the capability of individuals who are victims to come forward and report sexual assault and harassment remains difficult. Despite what society may impose, including the safety victims should feel in reporting, 5 in 6 victims often don't report what has occurred (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2019) with reasons being likened to embarrassment, uncertainty of the perpetrator being found guilty, feeling deserving of being treated in such a manner and the issue of secondary victimization. The psychological and physical consequences which can result from sexual aggression and victimisation are understood yet it is still a dominant issue with 510,000 women and 138,000 men sexually victimised each year. Yet records show that just over 120,000 sexual offences were recorded by police year on year (ONS, 2018). It is clear from literature that sexual victimisation, sexual coercion and sexual aggression can all be influenced or normalised as a result of exposure to hypermasculine mainstream media such as men's magazines (Hust, Rodgers, Ebreo & Stefani, 2019). The explosive nature of the internet has resulted in widespread availability of free pornography (Braithwaite, Coulson, Keddington & Fincham, 2015; Willmott, Boduszek & Robinson, 2018) and susceptibility of misogynistic beliefs within adolescents (Van Oosten, Peter & Valkenburg, 2015). The consumption and exposure to sexually explicit media both online and in magazine format which is available to buy freely is thought to have a moderating effect on personality and subsequently the potential objectification and victimization of women in a sexual nature (Hald & Malamuth, 2015; Mikorski & Szymanski, 2017; Sun, Bridges, Johnson & Ezzell, 2016). Although unwanted sexual attention – including victimization, aggression and harassment – is experienced by males, women and girls remain those most commonly victimised (Boduszek et al., 2017; ONS, 2018).

The Concept of Rape Myth Acceptance

Rape myths have been defined as beliefs and attitudes surrounding sexual violence and rape which are prejudiced and factually inaccurate however appear to be common and persistent (Crown Prosecution Service [CPS], 2017). These 'psychological neutralizers' are thought to allow men to commit such crimes, that are usually heavily frowned upon, by 'turning off' typical social prohibitions (Bohner, Pina, Viki & Siebler, 2010). More often than not the

myth is based upon blame, denial and justification e.g. ‘she liked it really’ or ‘It wasn’t as bad as claimed’ (Bohner, Siebler & Schmelcher, 2006; Willmott, 2016) as well as being specific to the presupposition of what a victim looks, acts and dresses like. Whilst considering the dubious nature of rape myths, the question remains how such contentious issues establish themselves in an individual and how do they evolve to become an understanding that sexual violence is acceptable. The inadvertent exposure to the acceptance of sexual violence, specifically against women, by family members and peers is something which has been addressed in literature. Being witness to interparental violence and being accepting of dating violence have been suggested to have a direct impact upon an individual’s blueprint which they adhere to in their own personal relationships (Karlsson, Temple, Weston & Le, 2016) and subsequently welcoming attitudes for sexual violence and rape myths. Intergenerational exposure to violence is something which is replete in the literature, focusing on the issue for a future risk of unacceptable behaviour (Ehrensaft, Cohen, Brown, Smailes, Chen & Johnson, 2003). The ‘cycle of violence’ (Walker, 1989) is also concentrated upon due to its similarity to be replicated for the cycle of rape myth acceptance and perpetration of sexually motivated crimes.

‘Lad culture’ – also referred to as a problematic form of masculinity, ‘rape culture’ ‘The perpetuation of rape myths, sexual objectification of women, and media’s legitimisation of sexual aggression and violence against women that is pervasive’ (Hildebrand & Najdowski, 2014 p.1060) as well as everyday sexism has been documented to have the ability to shift thinking in individuals as well as contribute to the possession of rape myth acceptance (Phipps, Ringrose, Renold & Jackson, 2018; Willmott & Boduszek, 2016). The ‘lad culture’ phenomenon is deemed to be a specific issue amongst higher education facilities, so much so that research commissioned by the National Union of Students (National Union of Students [NUS], Phipps & Young, 2013) found that ‘lad culture’ was often manifested in male sports societies – specifically rugby and football. Heavy alcohol consumption and ‘banter’ common in such groups - also referred to as ‘Locker room talk’ (Leone & Parrott, 2019; Simeone & Jeglic, 2019) was often believed to be the main signifier which involved the objectification of women and the occasional support of rape and sexual harassment attitudes (Jackson & Sundaram, 2015).

Establishing that rape myth acceptance may begin as a culturally derived issue is only the beginning. The contemporary coverage of prosecutions which include sexual perpetration have become an all too familiar issue in 21st century society – specifically post-Weinstein of

which all individuals appear to have abused their position of power and status. The true commonality of sexual perpetration of all kinds is truly unknown within a modern society so such documented cases highlight the covert and often undisclosed nature of such inappropriate behaviour. As would be expected rape myth acceptance is a risk factor for sexual offending and is especially high in convicted sex offenders (Johnson & Beech, 2017), a strong association is also prevalent between rape myth acceptance and rape proclivity – the likelihood or tendency to choose rape (Chapleau & Oswald, 2010; Edwards, Tuchik, Dardis, Reynolds & Gidycz, 2011). Despite a focus on consistent education in relation to consent, it still appears to be misconceived as to what constitutes such. Consent is legally defined in England by the Sexual Offences Act 2003 whereby ‘*if he agrees by choice and has the freedom and capacity to make that choice*’ (CPS, 2017) and is often specifically questionable when intoxication by alcohol or drugs are involved in an offence whereby an individual’s capacity and freedom to consent are heavily focused upon. Rape myth education is believed to be one of the most useful factors in developing more fair ideologies of the sexes; including effective sex education within schools, perpetrator programmes, initiatives throughout society (e.g. television advert) and mandatory training to those in a position of power (e.g. Police, CPS).

Rape Myth Acceptance & Demographic Characteristics

The influence that demographic factors may have upon the acceptance of rape myths have been widely tested within existing literature.

Extensive research from an array of authors has continually highlighted that men are generally more accepting of rape myths (Aosved & Long, 2006; Chapleau & Oswald, 2014; Diehl, Glaser & Bohner, 2014; Suárez & Gadalla, 2010). In particular, rape myth attitudes have been directly associated with the potentially violent, sexual tendencies seen in men (Booth, Willmott & Boduszek, 2017; Loh, Gidycz, Lobo & Luthra, 2005) which has been, speculatively, thought to link to the misogynistic views which remain popular throughout society today. Similar to such theory, research has found a well-established relationship between the consumption of ‘lad’s mags’ content and the development of derogatory behaviour and the increased acceptance of rape myths (Romero-Sanchez, Toro-Garcia, Horvath & Megias, 2017). Although a plethora of research focuses upon how males appear to be more easily accepting of rape myths, it still remains inconsistent with regards to the true

nature of gender and rape myths. A recent report has identified that 34% of women endorse the approval of attitudes surrounding rape myths (Fawcett Society, 2017), such findings have thought to be explained by the tradition nature of gender roles which still dominate society. The belief in such derogatory descriptions by a population who seem to experience sexual victimization the most has affected the reporting of such crimes (Hammond, Berry & Rodriguez, 2011; Weiss, 2010) as well as support received (Hayes, Lorenz & Bell, 2013). No significant difference in gender and the relationship with rape myth acceptance has also been documented in literature (Kennedy & Gorzalka, 2002; McKay, 2001; Süssenbach, Bohner & Eyssel, 2012), highlighting that both men and women may endorse rape myths. Issues in the reliability of the literature in terms of gender differences provides reasoning for such research to take place.

Previous research has also attempted to investigate the importance of age upon the acceptance of modern rape myths and typically the findings have also been mixed. A meta-analysis conducted by Anderson, Cooper & Okamura (1997) revealed that age, specifically as it increases, is a significant predictor of rape acceptance. In contrast however, research into bystander intervention in a sexual assault situation alongside the acceptance of modern rape myths found that although older individuals - specifically males - endorsed rape myths, they didn't endorse the acceptance as much as younger males (Diamond-Welch, Hetzel-Riggin & Hemingway, 2016). Similarly, it has been identified that in a student specific population those who are in younger years are more likely to feel responsible when it comes to deterring the acceptance of rape myths in comparison to older students (Christensen & Harris, 2019). Despite this however, a study conducted on 211 participants who completed the Revised Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (McMahon, 2010) as well as answering general demographic questions and interpreting a sexual assault scenario found contrasting results. It was identified that students on the whole disagreed with rape myths completely, with reasons why relating to the extensive sex education they receive (Crall & Goodfriend, 2016). A recent meta-analysis by Suarez & Gadalla (2010) found that age was not a significant predictor of rape myth acceptance. As a result of mixed overall findings, the need for further research is apparent.

Ethnic differences and their relationship with the acceptance of modern rape myths has been loosely examined in literature. Traditionally it has been identified that white individuals have the lowest levels of empathy for those involved in sexual assault situations whilst also having

the highest rates of acceptance for rape myths (Diamond-Welch et al, 2016; Willmott, Boduszek & Booth, 2017). In comparison to other demographic characteristics it has been well established that an individual's ethnic group provides the weakest influence upon the acceptance of modern rape myths (Navarro & Tewksbury, 2017) as Suarez & Gadalla's (2010) meta-analysis found that race and ethnicity have the highest levels of variability when acknowledging their relationship with rape myth acceptance. In contrasting nature however, educational investigation has identified that racial and ethnic differences do exist with the claim that black individuals are less likely to subscribe to the undesirable nature of rape myths (McQuiller Williams, Porter & Smith, 2016). Clear inconsistencies within research into the relationship shared between ethnicity and the acceptance of modern rape myths led to the rationale for this research to also focus upon this.

Rape Myth Acceptance & Legal Attitudes

The use of the Pre-Trial Juror Attitudes Questionnaire has frequently been used throughout literature when the main focus is examining the influence of rape myth acceptance in 21st century society. A study based in the United States of 172 undergraduate students used the Pre-trial juror attitudes questionnaire to examine the impact acceptance has upon the blame which is attributed to a victim. It was concluded that the acceptance of modern rape myths, through the use of the PJAQ, play a key role in mediating the relationship between gender and the attribution of responsibility (Hammond et al, 2011). It was specifically highlighted that pre-existing beliefs surrounding the nature of rape and the circumstances which surround it could lead to definite bias in the responsibility in rape cases. Similarly, research by Maeder, Yamamoto & Saliba (2015) highlighted the impact of race and its relationship with responsibility - racial bias being one of the subscales of the pre-trial juror attitudes questionnaire.

Publicized cases of crimes of a sexual nature which have been highlighted within the media have recently involved a 'high status' perpetrator (Pica, Sheahan & Pozzulo, 2017) such as sporting athletes and those involved in the television industry. Previous research has highlighted the fact that the perpetrators social status and occupation are extremely influential, leading to the perception being more favourable within a criminal court regardless of the crime they have committed (Booth, Willmott & Boduszek, 2018; Devine & Caughlin, 2014; Loeffler & Lawson, 2002; Mazzella & Feingold, 1994). Specifically, Jules &

McQuiston (2013) examined the potential influence of an individual's occupation e.g. physician vs supermarket worker - it was identified that those of higher status (in this case the physician) were perceived as more trustworthy amongst jurors. The use of the Pre-Trial Juror Attitudes Questionnaire throughout literature is a reliable way to consistently examine legal attitudes and rape myth acceptance.

Acceptance of rape myths within legal environments are becoming more apparent parallel to their increased infamous popularity in general society. Traditionally, rape myths aimed to be challenged within a court of law in the hope of prosecuting a criminal who has committed a sexual offence however research has identified that the prevalence within a legal environment is also on the increase (Adler, 1987; Lees, 2002). Relying on the questionable knowledge that rape myths provide when placed in a position of justice, the potential damage this can do to a criminal case has been documented (Temkin, Gray & Barrett, 2018). Schmersal (2009) examined the direct and in-direct effects of having clearly biased pre-existing attitudes upon the verdicts given in court. After in depth research it was determined that prior beliefs can play both a direct and an in-direct role within the legal system. Furthermore, it has been identified that those who are highly accepting of modern rape myths are more likely to see the defendant as not guilty, believe that consent was agreed and also lay some blame upon the victim for what occurred (Frese, Moya & Megias, 2004; Gray, 2006; Hammond et al, 2011). Furthermore, the aspects that lawyers focus upon in criminal cases, such as inappropriate background information, has been found to be taken in a more literal sense by those who are accepting of rape myths than those who aren't (Temkin et al, 2018). Angiolini (2015) identified that as well as rape myths becoming more and more prevalent in criminal court cases (Smith & Skinner, 2017), organisations such as the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) are also influenced by rape myths. Biases which have been identified amongst jurors themselves no doubt bring controversy in terms of how reliable they are, and the verdicts returned, racial bias - both against the perpetrator and victim as well as the juror themselves for example (Willmott, Boduszek & Booth, 2017). Impartiality and fairness have been questioned in literature as it has been found that when individuals hold strong attitudes towards one aspect of a criminal case e.g. level of sexual activity, the same individual is more likely to accept that the 'victim' consented to sexual intercourse regardless of the evidence which may or may not be implicating them (Willmott & Oostinga, 2017). It is clear that there are substantial issues when it comes to potential legal attitudes and the acceptance of modern rape myths, of which need further examination.

Rape Myth Acceptance & Racist Attitudes

In today's society with a magnitude of ethnicities co-existing amongst each other, the infamous issue of racism has become prominent. Racism and rape myths have been identified to interact, specifically when it comes to placing the blame after a crime of a sexual nature is committed. Research has highlighted that individuals who endorse prejudiced views are more likely to make categorisation decisions based upon one's race (Blascovich, Wyer, Swart & Kibler, 1997). Literature focusing on the relationship between rape myth acceptance and oppressive beliefs, despite its importance, is under-researched. The interrelatedness of rape myth acceptance and racism was examined however by Aosved & Long (2006) who identified that predominant attitudes within society - whether these be racism, sexist or religious intolerance - would help to facilitate the continued acceptance of rape myths. Similar to this theory it was suggested in the mid 20th century that individuals who demonstrate prejudice towards a group of individuals are likely to maintain this viewpoint against multiple groups of people (Allport, 1954). It has been suggested that racism and sexism are inherently similar with minority ethnic groups reporting parallel issues to females (Aosved & Long, 2006) with greater endorsement of sexist beliefs having an association with the endorsement of racist beliefs. Religious intolerance - which can often include aspects of racist thoughts and behaviours was identified to be a significant predictor of rape myth acceptance (Aosved & Long, 2006), this isn't to say that all individuals who retain some religious intolerance are highly accepting of rape myths as Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems theory (1977, 1979) proposes focusing upon the individuals relationships and with whom they have the most frequent and direct contact with - predominantly the context must be understood.

Current Study Rationale

Very little research has tested the relationship between legal attitudes and rape myth acceptance. The previous literature which has examined the association between demographic characteristics and rape myth acceptance (RMA) has produced mixed and inconsistent findings. Therefore, the need for the research was necessary in order to re-examine the importance of demographic characteristics and legal attitudes, upon the acceptance of modern rape myths using a contemporary measure of RMA. Although research exists which acknowledges the relationship between racist attitudes and likelihood of accepting rape myths, again the need to re-examine such an association alongside a broader range of demographic and attitudinal predictor variables, within one model, was considered necessary. At present very little, or no, research to the author's knowledge exists which examines the relationship between social justice, conviction proneness, innate criminality, racial bias, cynicism towards the defence and system confidence upon rape myth acceptance scores.

Research Aims

A: To investigate the relationship between participant demographics (e.g. age, gender and ethnicity) and legal attitudes upon the acceptance of modern rape myths.

Method

Sample

Participants were recruited through a combination of opportunity and snowball sampling, approaching general community and student samples. An in-house university research participation system termed ‘SONA’ allowed undergraduate psychology students to be targeted, advertising the study via an intranet platform. Online community sample recruitment through social media (including Facebook and Twitter) asked interested participants to complete the survey via an online Qualtrics link and encouraged participants to share the study link via their own extended social networks. The cross-sectional design adopted led to a total participant sample of 266 aged 18 – 70 years old ($M = 25.02$, $SD = 8.72$). Participants self-reported education status displayed 50.8% of participants ($n = 153$) were qualified to university degree level and above, with 49.2% ($n = 148$) reporting vocational or GCSE qualifications below university degree level. Males made up 18.6% of the study sample and females, 81.4%. In relation to ethnicity, 88.4% were Caucasian and 11.3% represented BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) participants.

Measures

The Acceptance of Modern Myths around Sexual Aggression (AMMSA) developed by Gerger, Kley, Bohner and Siebler, 2007) measures a total of 30 items through self-report mechanisms to determine attitudes held towards sexual aggression (*e.g. Item 17: ‘When a man urges his female partner to have sex, this cannot be called rape’*). The AMMSA is unidimensional in nature with responses measured on a seven point-likert scale (1 = ‘completely disagree’ to 7 = ‘completely agree’). Scores thereby range from 30 to 210 with higher scores indicating a greater acceptance of modern myths surrounding sexual aggression ($\alpha=.92$).

The Pre-Trial Juror Attitudes Questionnaire (PJAQ) (Lecci and Myers, 2008) is a 29 item self-report scale measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 “strongly disagree” through to 5 “strongly agree” adopted to determine varying participant attitudes towards the law and legal justice (*e.g. Item 3: ‘Too often jurors hesitate to convict someone who is guilty out of pure sympathy’* and *Item 14: ‘Police routinely lie to protect other Police officers’*). Social justice, racial bias, conviction proneness, innate criminality, cynicism towards the defence and system confidence are the six sub scales used. Higher scores on each sub-scale indicate

greater endorsement of such attitudes and bias ($\alpha=.73$ to $.81$) with the overall internal reliability reported as $.85$.

Demographic information was captured using self-reported open-ended responses to the following questions (e.g. “How old are you?”, “How would you describe your gender?”, “How would you describe your ethnicity?”). Based on the responses given, age remained as a continuous variable, with gender and ethnicity recoded as (1) male, (0) female; (1) Caucasian, (0) BAME.

Procedure

The cross-sectional study design chosen for this study meant that participants individually filled in a questionnaire made up of two attitudinal assessment scales (AMMSA and PJAQ) described above (see Item 2 in appendix). Prior to beginning the questionnaire, participants were required to complete and confirm their consent to take part in the study. Participants were made aware via an information sheet that they had both the right to withdraw during and after completion of the on-line survey. They were encouraged to answer all survey questions as honest in nature as possible. The questionnaire was available online to complete in their own time which took approximately 20 minutes from the information sheet and consent form to debriefing. After completing demographic information questions, participants given information about how they should answer the following attitudinal questions before submitting the complete online survey. After completion of the questionnaire, participants were provided with contact numbers of both the primary researcher and the project supervisor should they require any information or need any questions answering. Additionally, contact numbers of free and impartial organisations which have the ability to provide support should participants require it e.g. the Samaritans.

Analytic Procedure

Descriptive statistics were specifically calculated for the continuous variables for age, Acceptance of Modern Myths of Sexual Aggression (AMMSA) scale scores and the six subscales of the Pre-Trial Juror Attitudes Questionnaire (PJAQ); conviction proneness, system confidence, cynicism towards the defence, racial bias, social justice and innate criminality. The percentages and frequencies for the categorical variables; gender and ethnicity were calculated for the complete sample. Linear Multiple Regression analysis, selected due to the outcome variable being continuous, was conducted on the full sample in

order to establish whether age, ethnicity, gender and the six subscales of the PJAQ had a significant association with the acceptance of modern rape myths (AMMSA). The association was measured at an individual level and one single point in time. Version 24 SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science) was used in order to record and analyse the data collected.

Results

A complete preliminary test of the model was undertaken prior to analysis revealing no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity (Tabachnick, Fidell & Ullman, 2007).

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistics for the categorical variables in this research are presented in Table 1. From such it is clear to see that the sample was predominantly female (81.4%) and Caucasian (88%) however there was still a fair representation of males (18.6%) and those of BAME (Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic) (12%).

Table 1: Frequencies of Ethnicity and Gender (N=266)

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	56	18.6
Female	245	81.4
Ethnicity		
White	266	88.0
BAME	34	12.0

Note: BAME = Black, Asian & Ethnic Minority

Descriptive statistics for all continuous variables are presented in Table 2. Participant mean age was 25.02 ($SD = 8.72$), whilst mean AMMSA score was 84.34 ($SD = 26.34$). Individual mean and standard deviation scores for all six subscales of the Pre-Trial Juror Attitudes Questionnaire are also presented, ranging from the highest - cynicism towards the defence 29.40 ($SD = 6.78$) - to the lowest - innate criminality 11.28 ($SD = 4.08$).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Age, PJAQ and AMMSA scale scores for all Participants (N=266)

Scale	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Observed Min	Observed Max
Age	25.02	8.72	18	70
AMMSA	84.34	26.34	30	183
CON	21.97	6.34	6	38
CP	20.01	6.27	5	32
CYN	29.40	6.78	12	46
RB	12.43	4.16	5	22
SJ	18.76	4.21	7	28
INNCR	11.28	4.08	4	25

Note: AMMSA = Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression total score, CON = System confidence, CP = Conviction Proneness, CYN = Cynicism towards defence, RB = Racial bias, SJ = Social justice, INNCR = Innate criminality (Subscales of Pre-Trial Juror Attitudes Questionnaire).

Table 3: Regression Correlation for Factors Influencing the Acceptance of Modern Rape Myths for Full Sample

	AMMSA	CON	CP	CYN	RB	SJ	INNCR	GEN	AGE	ETHN
AMMSA	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
CON	.31***	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
CP	.27***	.52***	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
CYN	.21***	.25***	.42***	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
RB	.39***	.32***	.36***	.17**	.	.	.	.	.	.
SJ	-.14*	-.12*	-.002	.19*	-.03	.	.	.	.	.
INNCR	.35*	.56***	.38***	.27***	.45***	.001	.	.	.	.
GEN	-.24***	.05	.13	.02	.005	.15**	-.06	.	.	.
AGE	.07***	-.07	-.12*	-.09	.07	.01	-.02	-.13*	.	.
ETH	-.04	.02	.04	.07	.03	.01	.06	-.04	.01	.

*Note: AMMSA = Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression, CON = System confidence, CP = Conviction proneness, CYN = Cynicism towards the defence, RB = Racial Bias, SJ = Social justice, INNCR = Innate criminality (Subscales of Pre-Trial Juror Attitudes Questionnaire) GEN = Gender, ETH = Ethnicity. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.*

Linear Multiple Regression

A linear multiple regression analysis was successfully performed to investigate the relationship between the six subscales of the Pre-Trial Juror Attitudes Questionnaire (PJAQ); cynicism towards the defence, social justice, racial bias, innate criminality, conviction proneness and system confidence and participant demographics (age, gender and ethnicity) upon the acceptance of modern rape myths (AMMSA). All predictor variables apart from age and ethnicity were found to be statistically correlated with the acceptance of modern myths around sexual aggression ($p < .001$).

Considering all the predictor variables against the model, a regression equation was found to be statistically significant ($F(9, 256) = 11.81, p < .001$) which indicates that the model was able to identify what specifically impacts the acceptance of modern rape myths. In the full sample, the predictor variables (six subscales of PJAQ, age, gender, ethnicity) account for 29% ($R^2 = .293$) of variance in attitudes towards the acceptance of modern rape myths.

Four of the nine predictor variables made a statistically significant contribution to the model (as seen in table 4) with cynicism towards defence (CYN) ($\beta = .12, p < .05, d = 1.17$), gender (GEN) ($\beta = .23, p < .001, d = .80$), racial bias (RB) ($\beta = .26, p < .001, d = .75$) and social justice (SJ) ($\beta = -.11, p < .05, d = 1.22$) all exhibiting very large effect size estimators.

Table 4: Regression Analysis for Factors Influencing the Acceptance of Modern Rape Myths

Variables	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	OR (95% CI)
Age	.16	.16	1.05 (-.14/.47)
Gender	15.38	3.61	.23*** (-22.49/-8.28)
Ethnicity	-2.71	.198	-1.37 (-6.60/1.19)
CON	.40	.29	0.10 (-.17/.97)
CP	.28	.29	.07 (-.28/.84)
CYN	.46	.23	.12* (.004/.92)
RB	1.60	.38	.26*** (.85/2.35)
SJ	-.67	.34	-.11* (-1.35/-.001)
INNCR	.76	.44	1.73 (-.11/1.63)

*Note: Dependent variables: CON = Confidence in system, CP = Conviction Proneness, CYN = Cynicism towards defence, RB = Racial bias, SJ = Social justice, INNCR = Innate criminality, OR = odds ratio. SE = standard error. 95% CI = confidence interval. *p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.*

Discussion

This research provides a contribution to the broad and in-depth discussion surrounding the factors that are associated with rape myth acceptance, contemporarily termed the acceptance of modern rape myths surrounding sexual aggression. Research was conducted with one main objective in mind, to investigate the potential relationship between participant demographics (age, gender and ethnicity) and legal attitudes (the six subscales of the pre-trial juror attitudes questionnaire) and to what extent these may impact the acceptance of modern rape myths.

In terms of the relationships observed, system confidence, conviction proneness, cynicism towards the defence, racial bias, gender and age were all significantly associated with rape myth acceptance (as measured using the AMMSA scale). Moreover, such results highlight that for all continuous predictor's including system confidence, conviction proneness, cynicism towards the defence, racial bias and age participants who scored higher in the aforementioned factors are more likely to be accepting of modern rape myths e.g. *'She was asking for it'*. A relationship was also identified between social justice, innate criminality and the acceptance of modern myths however not to the same statistically significant extent, which is suggestive of subscription to modern rape myths but lacking in the same level of agreeableness to those who score highly in racial bias for example. No significant relationship was established between an individual's ethnicity and the acceptance of modern rape myths. Comparing to pre-existing literature it is clear to see that the legal attitudes that individuals buy into plays a major part in their thought processes of rape myth acceptance, specifically the level of confidence in the justice system, proneness of conviction and sceptic beliefs regarding the defence.

Congruent to particular past research which highlighted the gender differences in rape myth acceptance and general attitudes towards sexually motivated crimes (Loh et al, 2005; Romero-Sanchez et al, 2017; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010), results from this research identified that gender differences are at the forefront of rape myth acceptance and subscription to such. Males specifically were found in this research to be much more accepting of modern rape myths when compared to their counterparts which expands on past research into the relationship between rape myth acceptance and gender differences. Reasons behind the large difference in acceptance of modern rape myths when considering gender has been examined in previous research, Hald & Malamuth (2015) found that the exposure to both pornographic and non-pornographic material e.g. music videos and films played a key role in influencing

the supportive acceptance of modern rape myths. Similarly, Van-Oosten et al (2015) identified issues which lie within media consumption which offer rife heteronormative stereotypes and generally sexist content. Suarez & Gadalla (2010) developed their research on from previous literature with the hope of verifying a potential hypothetical relationship between myths and attitudes of a prejudiced nature and found that the AMMSA score was significantly affected by the reading of 'lad's mags'.

Some past research also highlights the impact that prejudiced racial attitudes have upon the acceptance of modern rape myths surrounding sexual aggression, often with traditionalist opinions remaining at the forefront of such. Specifically, racist attitudes are often adopted and then applied to other minority groups within society leading to presupposed categorised beliefs of that group (Blascovich et al, 1997) or in layman's terms '*tarnishing all with the same brush*'. In keeping with research into the relationship between racist attitudes and acceptance of rape myths, the results from this research highlighted similar findings - beliefs of a prejudice nature, specifically racist beliefs, are likely to lead to rape myths becoming entrenched in society (Aosved & Long, 2006) and in turn those who absorb adverse and cynical attitudes are much more likely to acknowledge that rape myths are in fact true.

Strengths & Limitations

Identified strengths of this research are the large sample size acquired in a short space of time. In its entirety this provides a more accurate and precise valuation of mean figures as well as allowing easier identification of outliers within the results. The margin for error is also significantly reduced as a result of the larger sample size. Additionally, the use of contemporary and up to date measures in this research is also a sign of the sound nature of the results. Both AMMSA (Gerger, 2007; Gerger, Kley, Bohner & Siebler, 2007; Pollard, 1992; Watson, 2016; Willmott et al., 2018) and PJAQ (Korva, Porter, O'Connor, Shaw & Brinke, 2013; Lecci & Myers, 2008; Schmiersal, 2009) have substantial research highlighting their reliability and accuracy in comparison to other methods used within this field of psychological research. The AMMSA scale in particular is credited with being a subtler measure in relation to its covert wording of questions, decreasing the opportunity participants have at identifying future questions. Also, it is a contemporary measure in comparison to other scales measuring rape myth acceptance e.g. Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA) (Payne, Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1999; McMahon & Farmer, 2011) which directly

focuses upon themes involved in rape myths such as ‘She asked for it’ and ‘She lied’. Despite the IRMA being accurate in terms of the statements it describes, being structurally sound (Payne et al, 1999) and building upon issues with previous rape myth acceptance scales, its psychometric properties are belittled by the AMMSA scale - which in turn doesn’t focus solely on rape myths.

As with all research, this study presents limitations. Firstly, the utilization of a disproportionally biased sample towards females and Caucasian individuals meaning the findings may not be directly applicable to the worldwide population. A female biased sample was to be expected due to the difference in personality characteristics and attention paid between males and females, previous literature has highlighted that generally females are more likely to participate than males (Curtin, Presser & Singer, 2000; Moore & Tarnai, 2002). The unbalanced nature of the ethnic representation within this sample is acknowledged and the way in which participants were collected may act as an explanation for this - the recruitment through use of the researcher’s social media accounts as well as word of mouth which snowballed to other individuals. Prior research which examined gender bias within a research sample also brought to the attention of the researcher that those of white ethnic origin are more likely to participate in the collection of research data than those of BAME (Curtin et al, 2000; Groves, Singer & Corning, 2000; Voigt, Koepsell & Daling, 2003). It is suggested that with a larger, more evenly balanced sample size in relation to gender and ethnicity, it is likely that results of future research will be coherent and comparable to the results identified in previous literature e.g. Aosved & Long, 2006; Chapleau & Oswald, 2014; Diehl, Glaser & Bohner, 2014; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010.

Another identified issue is the use of self-report methods within this research, such as the use of the pre-trial juror attitudes questionnaire and the acceptance of modern myths surrounding sexual aggression. Issues surrounding the reliability of self-report measures has been consistently questioned throughout literature - even more so when questionnaires are posted online, often increasing social desirability effects likely due to embarrassment or implied stigma’s (Watson, 2016). A recent study into the effectiveness of anonymity measures found that complete anonymity often compromises the answers provided with less effort given into their chosen answer (Lelkes, Krosnick, Marx, Judd & Park, 2012).

Research Implications

Findings that can be drawn from this research are the direct effect demographic information can have upon the acceptance of rape myths, gender particularly. Despite educational advantages which focus upon the dismissal of rape myths, the situational factors such as cultural differences and developmental process must clearly impact individuals in a certain way which allows for continue reiteration of rape myth acceptance. Furthermore, the findings from this research could indicate the potential for screening for selected members of the jury prior to taking part in criminal trials, specifically those of a sexual nature. Rape myths have been found to be problematic for jury impartiality, it could be argued that removing those most likely to subscribe to rape myths may make the jury process fairer (Willmott, 2017). Additionally, the same application could be used for those high in racist attitudes, through identification of extreme religious or racist beliefs.

Application of findings into general society is also a key part of research (Dlamini et al., 2017; Ryan et al., 2017; Thew et al., 2018; Willmott et al., 2017). It has been identified that men score higher in rape myth acceptance and this could be an indicator as to why so many incidents of sexual violence occur within society, usually with the male as the perpetrator. As a result, it could be argued that education within mainstream society plays a vital role therefore schools and higher educational facilities should seek to address men's increased acceptance of rape myth beliefs by teaching them why such beliefs are factually inaccurate and damaging to women. Outside of educational environments, it is crucial that rape myths are still identified and individuals are educated about them if the end aim is to significantly reduce them or distinguish them completely. Rape myth training within professional work environments should also be focused on, with the potential to reduce sexism and derogatory comments or behaviour both in and outside of the workplace – this could involve focusing upon what rape myths individuals believe, what is seen as appropriate and what actually becomes of a victim of rape. Additional televised advertisements which build upon research that portray the damaging, yet often covert, nature of rape myths and the acceptance may also be of help as it would have the ability to spread to a wider population and audience.

Conclusion

To conclude, through use of a large cross-sectional opportunity sample, it was demonstrated that the acceptance of rape myths and predictors such as demographic characteristics - particularly gender alongside three aspects of legal attitudes; racial bias, cynicism towards the defence and social justice are significantly related to rape myth beliefs. It is suggested that

further research be conducted to examine those factors which were found to not report a significant relationship with the acceptance of modern rape myths in order to verify the true nature of accepting modern rape myths. This research has allowed for scope to be provided for further research into the influencing factors.

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*SPSS output.***Frequencies****Statistics**

		Gender	Ethnicity
N	Valid	301	301
	Missing	0	0
Range		1	11
Minimum		1	-9
Maximum		2	2

Frequency Table

Gender					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	56	18.6	18.6	18.6
	Female	245	81.4	81.4	100.0
	Total	301	100.0	100.0	

Ethnicity					
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	-9	1	.3	.3	.3
	WHITE	266	88.4	88.4	88.7
	BLACK	34	11.3	11.3	100.0
	Total	301	100.0	100.0	

Descriptives**Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Age	300	18	70	25.02	8.719
AMMSA	301	30.00	183.00	84.3322	26.33785
CON	272	6.00	38.00	21.9743	6.33878
CP	272	5.00	32.00	20.0110	6.26505
CYN	267	12.00	46.00	29.4007	6.78015
RB	272	5.00	22.00	12.4301	4.16127
SJ	272	7.00	28.00	18.7610	4.21098
INNCR	272	4.00	25.00	11.2831	4.08453
Valid N (listwise)	266				

Correlations

		AMMSA	CON	CP	CYN	RB	SJ	INNCR	Gender	Age	Ethnicity
Pearson Correlation	AMMSA	1.000	.307	.266	.212	.387	-.141	.354	-.244	.074	-.035
	CON	.307	1.000	.516	.245	.318	-.115	.563	.047	-.067	.020
	CP	.266	.516	1.000	.424	.363	-.002	.379	.134	-.117	.041
	CYN	.212	.245	.424	1.000	.169	.185	.266	.019	-.089	.068
	RB	.387	.318	.363	.169	1.000	-.031	.446	.005	.065	.033
	SJ	-.141	-.115	-.002	.185	-.031	1.000	.001	.150	.011	.013
	INNCR	.354	.563	.379	.266	.446	.001	1.000	-.063	-.017	.061
	Gender	-.244	.047	.134	.019	.005	.150	-.063	1.000	-.129	-.039
	Age	.074	-.067	-.117	-.089	.065	.011	-.017	-.129	1.000	.007
	Ethnicity	-.035	.020	.041	.068	.033	.013	.061	-.039	.007	1.000
Sig. (1-tailed)	AMMSA	.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.011	.000	.000	.113	.283
	CON	.000	.	.000	.000	.000	.030	.000	.224	.139	.373
	CP	.000	.000	.	.000	.000	.485	.000	.014	.029	.252
	CYN	.000	.000	.000	.	.003	.001	.000	.379	.074	.134
	RB	.000	.000	.000	.003	.	.307	.000	.470	.147	.294
	SJ	.011	.030	.485	.001	.307	.	.496	.007	.428	.418
	INNCR	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000	.496	.	.154	.393	.160
	Gender	.000	.224	.014	.379	.470	.007	.154	.	.018	.261
	Age	.113	.139	.029	.074	.147	.428	.393	.018	.	.457
	Ethnicity	.283	.373	.252	.134	.294	.418	.160	.261	.457	.
N	AMMSA	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266
	CON	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266
	CP	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266
	CYN	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266
	RB	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266
	SJ	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266
	INNCR	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266
	Gender	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266
	Age	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266
	Ethnicity	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266	266

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.542 ^a	.293	.269	22.41181

a. Predictors: (Constant), Ethnicity, Age, SJ, INNCR, Gender, CYN, RB, CP, CON

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	53396.977	9	5932.997	11.812	.000 ^b
	Residual	128585.989	256	502.289		
	Total	181982.966	265			

a. Dependent Variable: AMMSA

b. Predictors: (Constant), Ethnicity, Age, SJ, INNCR, Gender, CYN, RB, CP, CON

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B		Correlations			Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Zero-order	Partial	Part	Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	66.378	11.914		5.571	.000	42.916	89.840					
	CON	.402	.288	.098	1.397	.164	-.165	.969	.307	.087	.073	.561	1.784
	CP	.282	.285	.068	.987	.325	-.280	.843	.266	.062	.052	.590	1.694
	CYN	.460	.232	.119	1.985	.048	.004	.916	.212	.123	.104	.765	1.307
	RB	1.598	.381	.255	4.196	.000	.848	2.348	.387	.254	.220	.747	1.340
	SJ	-.673	.342	-.109	-1.971	.050	-1.346	-.001	-.141	-.122	-.104	.907	1.103
	INNCR	.760	.440	.119	1.727	.085	-.107	1.626	.354	.107	.091	.581	1.721
	Gender	-15.382	3.607	-.233	-4.265	.000	-22.484	-8.279	-.244	-.258	-.224	.923	1.083
	Age	.163	.155	.057	1.052	.294	-.142	.468	.074	.066	.055	.956	1.046
	Ethnicity	-2.707	1.979	-.072	-1.367	.173	-6.604	1.191	-.035	-.085	-.072	.991	1.009

a. Dependent Variable: AMMSA