

ATTITUDES TOWARD RAPE MYTHS: THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL
CONSTRUCTS AND PERSONALITY ON THE ACCEPTANCE
OF RAPE MYTHS

by

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my best friend, Lance Thomas Bleakney, you are dearly missed. 143

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I. INTRODUCTION

Sexual assault affects one in five U.S. women during their lifetime (Black et al. 2011) though that number is thought to be much higher because it is estimated that around $\frac{3}{4}$ of all rapes and instances of sexual harassment are never reported (RAINN, n.d.). The recent cultural event known as the #MeToo movement was started in 2006 by a sexual assault survivor and then reached global awareness on social media in 2017 when people began publicizing sex crime allegations using the hashtag #MeToo (Me Too, 2020). Additionally, the court cases of Brock Turner and Brett Kavanaugh, which involved a Stanford University swimmer and a Republican associate judge (respectively) who were accused of raping women and received little to no legal ramifications (Rocha & Winton, 2016; Klein, 2018), sparked controversy and national outrage. These events, along with the growing literature, indicate that there has become increased awareness of society's suspicions toward victims of rape and points to the stereotypes and myths surrounding rape. This study seeks to analyze the current literature and expand upon it and develop a profile of individuals who are more likely to endorse rape myths.

Rape Myth Acceptance

Rape myths were first defined by Burt (1980) as prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists. In her 1980 study, Burt described a link between rape myth acceptance and other attitudes concerning sexuality and violence. Specifically, Burt found that acceptance of rape myths was predicted by the endorsement of a) traditional stereotypes, b) adversarial sexual beliefs, c) sexually conservative beliefs, and d) the acceptance of interpersonal violence. Over half of the sampled individuals agree with statements such as "A woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on

the first date implies she is willing to have sex" and "In the majority of rapes, the victim was promiscuous or had a bad reputation." Furthermore, the same number believed that 50% or more reported rapes are reported as rape only because the woman was trying to get back at a man she was angry with or was trying to cover up an unwanted pregnancy (Burt, 1980). This suggests that rape myths are common beliefs, and those who endorse rape myths often endorse other negative beliefs and stereotypes about women.

A review of rape myths done by Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) provided insight into some of the potential mechanisms for endorsing rape myths by claiming that an explanation for rape myths was that they were excuses used to shift blame from perpetrators to the victim. Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) then proposed three characteristics of myths in an attempt to solidify the definition of rape myths further; 1) they are false or apocryphal beliefs that are widely held, 2) they explain some kind of cultural phenomenon, 3) they serve to justify existing cultural arrangements. Lonsway and Fitzgerald then combined these analyses with the assumptions of the cultural theories of rape to conclude that rape myths are "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression toward women."

Although the endorsement of rape myths is relatively common, this can have severe implications for victims of sexual assault's decision to report. This is problematic because sexual assault affects 1 in 5 women in the U.S. during their lifetime, as mentioned previously. Furthermore, more than 10% of all women are physically abused; more than 13% of college women were stalked in one school year by an intimate partner;

and most victims were 17 or younger at the time of their first forced sexual experience (Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 2008).

Rape myths might be further reducing report rapes; one reason people may choose not to report is that they are aware of these negative beliefs and afraid they will be blamed. In a recent study conducted by Kelement and colleagues (2018), after reading a rape scenario, individuals who scored higher in rape myth acceptance reported greater accuser culpability (i.e., they believed the victim to be at fault for the rape) as well as lower accuser credibility (i.e., they did not believe the victim to be a reliable source). This finding was then replicated and expanded on by three additional studies, which have further shown that the findings hold true for female accused rapist's accuser pleasure judgments (i.e., the accuser being pleased that they have accused someone of rape with it potentially being false). Sexual assault was further classified as a unique crime because the accuser in a rape case is examined for fault in the situation just as much as, and sometimes even more than, the accused (Kelement et al., 2018).

Furthermore, previous research has indicated that men accept rape myths at a higher rate than women (see Suarez & Gadalla, 2010, for a meta-analysis; Hayes et al., 2016). This indicates that gender is a strong predictor of rape myth acceptance.

Personality Features

Personality features are traits that showcase an individual's thought pattern, behaviors, and feelings (Diener & Lucas, 2021). Personality traits are usually consistent and stable, so the beliefs and attitudes they characterize remain constant in an individual's life and influence their choices. Certain beliefs and attitudes are either considered "old-fashioned" or outdated that can have detrimental effects on society.

Other traits and attitudes could be considered "dark" or self-serving, which can also have severe adverse effects on society and other individuals. These traits, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are crucial to investigate their relationship with the acceptance of rape myths.

Benevolent Sexism

Benevolent sexism is defined as a set of interrelated attitudes toward women that are sexist in terms of viewing women stereotypically and in restricted roles but are subjectively positive in feeling and tone (Glick & Fiske, 1996). In addition, benevolent sexism relies on kinder and gentler justifications for male dominance and gender roles, while hostile sexism seeks to justify male power and the exploitation of women as sexual objects through derogatory characterizations. An example of benevolent sexism is found in the statement, "Behind every great man is a strong woman." The statement sounds as if it is promoting women by calling them "strong" and even partially crediting her for the man's success. However, this statement is problematic and still sexist due to the woman being placed "behind" the man, her not being shown full and due credit, and painting a picture that a woman must be beside a man to be worthwhile. Hostile sexism, on the other hand, can be found in the statement, "Women exaggerate problems at work." This statement is much more apparent in its attack on women and purposefully undermines any claims a woman could make as an exaggeration. Despite the more positive tone often applied to benevolent sexism, vast literature concerning the relationship between rape myth acceptance and benevolent sexism suggests that people who endorse benevolent sexism are more apt to endorse rape myths (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2007; Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003).

Research indicates that specific components of benevolent sexism, such as gender differentiation or the belief that women are "refined ladies," can translate to the idea that women who violate that belief are partially responsible for making themselves vulnerable to sexual attack (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2007). Further previous research on gender differences found that male participants showed less favorable attitudes toward rape victims. In addition, participants whose attitudes were more negative toward rape victims tended to score higher in benevolent sexism. The authors inferred that people who endorse benevolently sexist attitudes might dislike women they perceive not to be living up to those ideals (Sakalh-Ugurlu, Yalçun, and Glick, 2007). A major argument being made is that any attempt at intervention to dissuade these ideals in gender differences must be aimed directly at the patriarchal attitudes that facilitate these beliefs to try and enact change (Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 2008).

Additionally, research suggests that certain observed differences in blame given to acquaintance and stranger rape victims can be explained in terms of benevolent or hostile sexism. One study found that higher benevolent sexist participants blamed the victim significantly more after reading an acquaintance-rape but not a stranger-rape scenario (Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003). This could be attributed to the idea that stranger-rape seems more random and "unprovoked," while someone could find acquaintance-rape to be justified given the presence of some kind of relationship between the two people. A second study conducted a year later (Viki, Abrams, & Masser, 2004) found that participants with higher levels of benevolent sexism attribute less blame to perpetrators of acquaintance rape and would suggest shorter prison sentences if a conviction was made. This is not consistent with the current legal code as rape laws in

most jurisdictions do not accept a distinction between acquaintance and stranger rape as sufficient enough means to reduce accountability.

System Justification Beliefs

Another factor that might influence the endorsement of rape myths is system justification beliefs which is a process that seeks to legitimize or defend the current group status arrangements, even if it is at the expense of people within those groups (Jost & Banaji, 1994). This can be closely tied to benevolent sexism due to its desire to sustain the inequality and discriminatory systems that are already in place through potentially appealing attitudes. According to this theory, there is a psychological motive to justify and defend the status quo (Jost & Banaji, 1994).

System justification theory applies to the gender inequalities of men and women; for example, men have greater social status, greater earning potential, and more prestigious occupational positions than women in the U.S. (Gauchat, Kelly, & Wallace, 2012). This discrepancy is often overlooked or justified by perceiving the inequality as fair or legitimate and just how things are according to social justification theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Research has found that people who are more likely to endorse the explanation of gender differences in line with system justification are also more likely to endorse and accept rape myths (Chapleau & Oswald, 2014). This suggests that the role of rape myths is a system-justifying ideology. These findings also suggest the idea that gender inequality is perceived as a woman's failure, so therefore, if a man sexually attacks a woman, is it due to her failure to conform around men successfully.

One related systems-justifying ideology is that of a just world. People are inclined to believe the surrounding world is a place where good things happen to good people, and

bad things happen to bad people. This sense of justice is the center of the just-world theory, which indicates that people get what they deserve in life (Lerner 2003; Lerner & Miller, 1978). Certain situations can threaten this belief, such as an innocent victim being harmed while the perpetrator runs free. The easiest way to remedy this discrepancy is to believe that the victim was not as innocent and must have done something to deserve their suffering.

A series of studies found that when participants were confronted with a victim who was threatening just-world beliefs, they were more likely to blame the victim for the incident. This was more significant when a participant's sense of social self was activated rather than their sense of personal self. Overall, the findings are consistent with a model in which people blame victims in order to psychologically cope with the idea that they may be vulnerable to uncontrollable harm (van Prooijen & van den Bos, 2009).

Dark Triad

Further personality features that might influence the endorsement of rape myths are three socially aversive traits known as Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy coined the *Dark Triad*. All three share a number of similarities and encompass a socially malicious character with tendencies toward egotism, lack of empathy, selfishness, and manipulation (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

There is less literature on the relationship between the Dark Triad and rape myth acceptance. A breakthrough study found that all three Dark Triad traits predicted rape-enabling attitudes. However, only psychopathy had a unique association with the three traits after the shared variance among traits was partialled out. These findings suggested that psychopathy drives the effect of the Dark Triad, yet the three traits work together as

a coordinated system to facilitate the “exploitive mating strategy of rape.” (Jonason, Girgis, and Milne-Home, 2017).

Furthermore, research has shown that similarly “dark” traits are associated with people’s tendency to endorse or enact sexual harassment. For example, it has been shown that narcissism and psychopathy were correlated with the likelihood to report sexually harassing others, rape proclivity (e.g., self-reported likelihood to perpetrate sexual assault; Malamuth 1981), and negative attitudes toward rape victims (Bevens & Loughan, 2019).

Additionally, some research suggests that the Dark Triad traits are correlated to intimate partner violence. A positive relationship was found between Dark Triad as a whole and intimate partner violence (Kiire, 2019). However, individual triad traits suggested diverse effects; psychopathy has been found to be related to the use of dominance and intimidation, Machiavellianism was not found to contribute to the prediction of psychological or physical and sexual abuse, and narcissism and psychopathy were found to be significant predictors of restrictive engulfment (Carton & Egan, 2017). Furthermore, psychopathy has been found to facilitate intimate partner violence through fast life strategy, which is characterized by prioritizing current reproduction, short-term relationships, antisocial behavior, and individual agency (Kiire, 2017).

The initial studies provide support for the relationship between traits associated with the dark triad and explicit endorsement of aggressive sexual interests and beliefs.

Empathy

Empathy is the ability to feel and understand another person's feelings, which might influence a person's endorsement or acceptance of rape myths. Most research done concerning rape myth acceptance and empathy focuses specifically on empathy for the victims rather than the participant's levels of empathy. Among the research examining empathy and rape myths, it has been shown that cognitive empathy (i.e., having an accurate understanding of what is going on in someone else's mind, including how they feel) and emotional empathy (i.e., a physical response to the emotions being experienced while in the presence of another person's emotional experience) had a strong correlation to rape myth acceptance (Binkley, 2016). Furthermore, one's own experience with or awareness of rape was not associated with the endorsement of rape myths such that even participants scoring high in empathy that knew a rape victim or were a victim themselves were not more likely to disagree with rape myths. Nevertheless, other research suggests that empathy might be an essential factor to consider with regards to one's likelihood to endorse sexually coercive behaviors. For example, a video-based rape prevention intervention program was developed to reduce college men's likelihood of engaging in sexually coercive behavior (O'Donohue, Yeater, & Fanetti, 2003). The experimental program effectively manipulated victim empathy, and the intervention produced a significant reduction in sexually coercive behaviors, which could perhaps extend to one's endorsement of rape myths, although this has yet to be tested. Despite the differing results in the effect empathy has on rape myth acceptance, it is crucial to include in the current study due to the inclusion of multiple other factors that may affect its significance.

Social Constructs

For the purposes of this study, social constructs are defined as groups people affiliate with in their daily lives that are heavily influenced by a person's values, beliefs, and morals. Social groups or constructs often have a code of beliefs (both written and unwritten) that affiliated members hold to and use as governing tools. The beliefs and ideals that come from the groups can be both helpful and detrimental in progress made surrounding rape myths.

Religion

Research has shown that there is an association between religious affiliation and rape myth acceptance with people who are more religious reporting acceptance of rape myths (Navarro & Tewksbury, 2018; Barnett, Siglar, & Wang, 2018). However, most of the research focuses solely on the Christian faith, which might not extend to other forms of religious affiliations.

In nearly all research done on this topic, Christianity has been found to have a significant correlation to rape myth acceptance (Navarro & Tewksbury, 2018; Barnett, Siglar, & Wang, 2018; Prina & Schatz-Stevens, 2020). In addition, religiosity – or the intensity of one's faith – is related to a greater acceptance of rape myths, with people who report greater religiosity also reporting higher rape myth acceptance (Navarro & Tewksbury, 2018). However, it seems that this association might depend on the type of religion individuals identify with. For example, research has shown that identifying as Baptist and Presbyterian was not associated with greater rape myth acceptance. In contrast, people who identified as Agnostic and Atheist were more likely to reject rape myths, while highly religious Catholics tended to accept rape myths (Navarro &

Tewksbury, 2018). This suggests that religious affiliation can potentially influence rape myth acceptance, though it might depend on the type of religion one identifies with. In a separate study, Protestants and Roman Catholics were shown to endorse rape myths significantly higher than the Atheist and Agnostic groups (Barnett, Sligar, & Wang, 2018). Additionally, the results indicated that religiosity was shown to be positively associated with rape myth acceptance. Diving deeper, the analysis indicated that religious women might not endorse rape myths in the way that their male counterparts do (Prina & Schatz-Stevens, 2020).

Previous research has attributed the relationship between religion and rape myth acceptance to the idea that Christian religion holds traditional and conservative attitudes, which are directly linked to benevolent sexism and sex-role stereotypes and traditional gender roles (Navarro & Tewksbury, 2018). It also implies that more religious individuals are more often exposed to more patriarchal teachings, resulting in a stronger endorsement of rape myths (Barnett, Sligar, & Wang, 2018).

Political Affiliation

Although political affiliation has been shown to affect many aspects of sexuality, such as gay or trans rights and abortion (Obergefell v. Hodges, 2015; Gupta, 2021; Kilgore, 2021), little research has been conducted concerning political affiliation and rape myth acceptance. However, the previous research has suggested that political affiliation (specifically a more conservative affiliation) might influence people's endorsement of rape myths. More specifically, there are currently three hypotheses proposed by Lambert and Raichle (2000) that have been analyzed to explain why conservative ideology might be related to perceptions of rape. The "just world hypothesis" proposes that people blame

others in an attempt to protect their view that people get what they deserve. The “personal responsibility hypothesis” proposes that conservative ideals are associated with an inclination to hold others personally accountable for their actions. Finally, the “legitimization hypothesis” proposes that conservatives are more determined to maintain traditional power. Across two studies, research indicated that the legitimization hypothesis held more support for an explanation as to why conservative identifiers would blame female rape victims than non-conservatives (Lambert & Raichle, 2000). This suggests that due to the desire to maintain traditional power roles in dominant and nondominant groups (i.e., men over women), conservative perceivers are more likely than their nonconservative counterparts to blame rape victims for their assault.

One study found that after learning of a sexual harassment charge against a politician, Democrats were only 52% likely to support the candidate for reelection, while 72% of Republicans retained their support (Craig & Cossette, 2020). Interestingly and most alarmingly, the findings reported that denying the accusation and blaming one's political enemies for fabricating the story was found to be most effective in restoring lost support for both parties.

Conclusion

The acceptance of rape myths perpetuates a society where rape is deemed acceptable and allowable. This topic has gained significant media attention in recent years with the court cases mentioned earlier and the heavy emphasis on political parties in the United States. Based on these recent developments, it is important for research first to identify the overall characteristics of individuals who endorse rape myths so that future

research may explore the ways to manipulate and ultimately put an end to these behaviors.

II. THE PRESENT STUDY

This study aims to better understand the types of individuals who are more likely to accept rape myths. This study intends to develop a general profile of individuals who are more likely to accept rape myths by conducting a comprehensive examination of the personality and social constructs described in this review. Previous research has looked into each of these constructs independently, but never simultaneously. The comprehensive examination of all of these factors will produce a cohesive understanding of individuals who endorse rape myths.

It is important to create such a profile so that interventions can be developed targeting behaviors and traits that are found to be most significant. These interventions can then aid in fixing those mindsets early so that the behaviors can begin to disappear along with rape myths. Also, the traits found to have a significant relationship in this study could serve as crucial information for victims or those seeking to protect themselves from individuals more likely to endorse rape myths. The general population can be more aware of what behaviors to be wary of and use that in their daily lives to protect themselves. Finally, any research or conversation surrounding the topic of rape in a way that reframes blame placement can serve to end the stigma surrounding rape so that victims can receive the support and justice they need.

Gaps to Address

Considering all previous research, there are a number of gaps in the literature that this study will fill. First and foremost, the majority of the studies conducted on rape myth acceptance have utilized college student populations. College campuses are high-risk

environments for these behaviors; however, the present study aims to focus on a more generalized adult population. This will then attempt to bridge the gap between these age groups to determine if the views found in earlier research that are applicable to college populations persist.

Additionally, a vast majority of the previous literature on empathy has to do with victim empathy rather than the participants' individual levels of empathy. This study will specifically look into the levels of empathy that the participants have in their daily lives and how those scores influence their likelihood to endorse rape myths.

Nearly all of the previous studies conducted on religion and religiosity in relation to rape myth acceptance have focused specifically on the Christian faith. There is little to no literature available concerning other religions in the world in relation to rape myth acceptance. This study plans to include participants who belong to other religious groups, including Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Agnosticism, and Atheism alongside Christianity, in order to determine if there are differences between religious groups in rape myth acceptance. This will provide more insight into the relationship between religion as a whole and rape myth acceptance.

Finally, nearly no research looks into the relationship between political affiliation and rape myth acceptance. Given the current political climate in the United States, a state of unrest is settling over the country, and the party divide is becoming more and more apparent. It is becoming increasingly more important to begin to look into if political party ideals fall in line with endorsing rape myths as that could have detrimental effects on the country should there be a correlation.

III. HYPOTHESES

Given the previous explanations regarding the personality and social factors that this study will be investigating, the following hypotheses are held:

1. Scores on the Benevolent Sexism subscale of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory will be positively correlated with scores on the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale.
2. Scores on the Social Dominance Orientation Scale will be positively correlated with scores on the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale.
3. Scores on the Just World Belief Scale will be positively correlated with scores on the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale.
4. Scores on each subscale of the Short Dark Triad scale will be positively correlated with scores on the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale.
5. Scores on each subscale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index will be negatively correlated with scores on the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale.
6. Participants who identify themselves as Christian and are highly active in their religion will be positively correlated with scores on the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale.
7. Participants who identify themselves as Conservative and are highly active in their party will be positively correlated with scores on the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale.

8. It is hypothesized that when all variables are examined simultaneously in a multivariate analysis, Benevolent Sexism, the Psychopathy subscale of the Short Dark Triad, Christian religious affiliation, and conservative political affiliation will continue to have a significant relationship with scores on the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale.

IV. METHOD

Participants

Participants were recruited using the Prolific online subjects pools. Participants included both males and females over the age of 18, and recruitment was not limited geographically. All participants were able to read/respond in English. This study recruited 475 participants before data cleaning.

Measures

One online, Qualtrics survey was used to assess the hypotheses for the present study. This survey gathered demographic information and assessed participant rape myth acceptance, benevolent sexism, system justification beliefs, dark triad, empathy, religious intensity, and political party intensity.

Demographics. Participants were asked to provide the following information: age, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, relationship status, parent relationship status, education level, if they had children, and if they received any kind of sex education while in school.

Religion. Participants were asked which religion they practice and were given the options of Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Agnosticism, Atheism, or Other. They were then be asked on a scale from one to ten how intense they are in practicing their faith, with one being "Low Participation" and ten being "High Participation."

Political Affiliation. Participants were asked which political affiliation they consider best suits their political ideology out of Conservative, Liberal, Moderate, or Other. They were then be asked on a scale from one to ten how intense they are in

participating in their affiliated party, with one being "Low participation" and ten being "High Participation."

Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale – Modified Version. The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA) – Modified Version (McMahon & Farmer, 2011; see Appendix A) is adapted from the original 45 item scale is used to assess the acceptance of rape myths, which are false attitudes and beliefs about rape committed against women (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999). This 22-item scale consists of four subscales, "She Asked For It," "He Didn't Mean To," "It Wasn't Really Rape," and "She Lied." These four subscales are then totaled to receive a sum score. Items were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). An example item would be "If a girl goes to a room alone with a guy at a party, it is her own fault if she is raped." The scale demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .92$).

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory. The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) is used to measure both hostile and benevolent sexism. Benevolent sexism is defined as a set of interrelated attitudes toward women that are sexist in terms of viewing women stereotypically and in restricted roles but are subjectively positive in feeling and tone (Glick & Fiske, 1996; see Appendix B). The ASI is composed of 22 total items, with 11 of them measuring benevolent sexism. For the purpose of this analysis, only scores regarding the benevolent sexism subscale will be used. Items are measured on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 0 (*disagree strongly*) to 5 (*agree strongly*). An example item would be "A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man." The scale demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .72$).

Social Dominance Orientation Scale – Modified Version. The Social Dominance Orientation Scale (SDO) is used to examine social dominance orientation, specifically endorsement of social hierarchies and endorsement of egalitarian beliefs (Mata, Ghavami, & Wittig, 2010; see Appendix C). The modified SDO consists of five items measuring the endorsement of social hierarchies and the endorsement of egalitarian beliefs. Items are measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). An example item would be “If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems.” The scale demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .72$).

Just World Belief Scale. The Just World Belief Scale is used to assess individual tendencies to believe that the world is inherently just and that people get what they deserve (Vonderhaar & Carmondy, 2015; see Appendix D). The scale consists of 15 items that are measured on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). An example item would be “People will experience good fortune if they themselves are good.” The scale demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .74$).

Short Dark Triad. The Short Dark Triad Scale (SD3) is a reliable and short scale that measures three socially adverse traits; Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy (Jones & Paulhus, 2014; see Appendix E). The SD3 consists of 27 total items, with 9 items measuring each trait. The items are measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 5 (*agree strongly*). Example items include “It’s wise to keep track of information that you can use against people later” and “I insist on getting the respect I deserve.” The sum scale demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .80$), with the Machiavellianism subscale ($\alpha = .76$) demonstrating good internal

consistency, the Narcissism subscale ($\alpha = .64$) demonstrating acceptable internal consistency, and the Psychopathy subscale ($\alpha = .69$) demonstrating acceptable internal consistency.

Interpersonal Reactivity Index. The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) is used to measure an individual's levels of empathy as both a set of constructs and unitary concepts (Davis, 1980; see Appendix G). The 28-item scale consists of four subscales, "Perspective Taking," "Fantasy," "Empathetic Concern," and "Personal Distress." The IRI is measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*does not describe me well*) to 4 (*describes me very well*). An example item would be "When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces." The sum scale demonstrated good internal consistency ($\alpha = .79$), with the Fantasy subscale ($\alpha = .76$) demonstrating good internal consistency, the Perspective Taking subscale ($\alpha = .34$) demonstrating poor internal consistency, the Emotional Control subscale ($\alpha = .51$) demonstrating poor internal consistency, and the Personal Distress subscale ($\alpha = .71$) demonstrating good internal consistency.

Procedure

Participants recruited through Prolific were sent a link to the Qualtrics survey that they completed online through their own device. It took approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. All survey information remained anonymous, and participant information remained confidential. At the start of the survey, participants were asked to provide informed consent within the Qualtrics online survey system, followed by a short demographic questionnaire. After participants provided consent and answered the demographic questions, they were presented with the remainder of the survey consisting

of the scales mentioned previously. Participants were permitted leave any questions blank if they were not comfortable answering them. Multiple manipulation checks were embedded throughout the survey. After completion of the survey, participants were thanked for their time.

Analytic Strategy

All data was cleaned and assessed for missing values, outliers, or inappropriate responses. Listwise deletion was used to remove participants who did not respond correctly to manipulation checks. Pairwise deletion was used for missing data. The dependent variable is the summation of the items on the IRMA scale. For demographic comparisons, independent t-tests and ANOVAs were used to determine differences in the IRMA based on gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, relationship status, age, parent relationship status, education level, participation in group activities, if they have children or not, and if they received any kind of sex education while in school. To test the first set of thesis hypotheses, Pearson correlations were conducted between the scores on the IRMA and the scores on each of the continuous variables of interest. An ANOVA was run to assess differences in IRMA scores based on religious affiliation and political affiliation. Due to significant findings, a subset analysis correlation was conducted to determine if the intensity correlates with scores on the IRMA. To test the second set of thesis hypotheses, a simultaneous multiple linear regression was conducted to determine which of the measures are most predictive of high scores on the IRMA. Only measures significant at the univariate level were included in the multivariate analysis. An alpha level of $p = .05$ was used to determine significance. All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 27 (IBM LLC, Inc).

V. RESULTS

Preliminary Results

A total of 368 participants remained in the sample after removing one participant that was identified as a potential “bot” and 106 participants that failed to pass any attention checks. Fourteen potential outliers were identified due to z-scores falling outside of three standard deviations or after being identified through casewise diagnostics. Regressions were run with and without the outliers and as no significant change was observed, the potential outliers were kept in for the final analyses. The general demographics of the participants in this sample were 55% female, 52.6% White, 11.7% Black, 66.2% Hispanic/Latino, and 67.6% between the ages of 18-24 years. A full demographic breakdown can be found in Table 1.

Demographic Comparisons

All demographic comparisons can be found in Table 2.

A one-way ANOVA was run to analyze the differences between Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance (IRMA) scores based on gender. Levene’s test was found to be significant, violating the homogeneity of variance. This can be explained due to the small number of participants identifying as Non-Binary and the subsequent small standard deviation. There was a statistically significant difference between groups as determined by that one-way ANOVA ($F(3, 366) = 25.88, p < .001, \eta^2 = .176$). A Dunnett T3 post hoc revealed that males ($M = 23.88, SD = 14.24$) were statistically significantly higher in IRMA than females ($M = 11.95, SD = 11.70, p < .001$) and non-binary ($M = 10.47, SD = 4.45, p = .013$). No significant difference was observed among the Transgender group.

A one-way ANOVA was run to analyze the differences between IRMA scores based on sexual orientation. Levene's test was found to be significant, violating the homogeneity of variance. This can be explained due to the small number of participants identifying as Lesbian or Other and the subsequent small standard deviations. There was a statistically significant difference between groups as determined by the one-way ANOVA ($F(5, 366) = 3.36, p = .006, \eta^2 = .044$). Due to the groups Asexual and Other having less than two cases, a follow up ANOVA was run excluding these two groups so that a Dunnett T3 post-hoc could be conducted. In the second ANOVA excluding Asexual and Other, Levene's test was still found to be significant, violating the homogeneity of variance. There was still a significantly significant difference between groups ($F(3, 364) = 5.09, p = .002, \eta^2 = .041$). Due to the violation of Levene's test, Dunnett T3 values were referred to in the post-hoc analysis. This revealed that Straight/Heterosexual participants ($M = 18.53, SD = 14.16$) were statistically significantly higher in IRMA than Lesbian participants ($M = 6.14, SD = 4.26, p < .001$) and Bisexual participants ($M = 12.29, SD = 13.37, p = .018$). No significant difference was observed among the Gay participants group.

A one-way ANOVA was run to analyze the differences between IRMA scores based on race. There was not a statistically significant difference between groups ($p = .185$).

A one-way ANOVA was run to analyze the differences between IRMA scores based on relationship status. Levene's test was found to be significant, violating the homogeneity of variances. This can be explained due to the large standard deviation of participants who indicated they were married. There was a statistically significant

difference between groups as determined by the one-way ANOVA ($F(3, 367) = 5.67, p = .001, \eta^2 = .045$). Due to the group Divorced/Separated having less than two cases, a follow-up ANOVA was run excluding this group so that a Dunnett T3 post-hoc could be conducted. In the second ANOVA excluding Divorced/Separated, Levene's test was still found to be significant, violating the homogeneity of variance. There was still a statistically significant difference between groups ($F(2, 366) = 8.53, p < .001, \eta^2 = .045$). Due to the violation of Levene's test, Dunnett T3 values were referred to in the post-hoc analysis. This revealed that Married participants ($M = 28.04, SD = 20.03$) were statistically significantly higher in IRMA scores than Single participants ($M = 16.71, SD = 13.03, p = .031$) and participants who indicated they were In a Relationship ($M = 15.89, SD = 13.51, p = .020$).

A one-way ANOVA was run to analyze differences between IRMA scores based on age. Levene's test was not found to be significant and there was a statistically significant difference between group as determined by the one-way ANOVA ($F(4, 362) = 6.24, p < .001, \eta^2 = .064$). A Tukey post-poc revealed that participants in the age range 41-50 years old ($M = 35.18, SD = 21.34$) were statistically significantly higher in IRMA scores than participants in the age range 18-24 years old ($M = 16.74, SD = 13.31, p < .001$) and participants in the age range 25-30 years old ($M = 14.56, SD = 13.05, p < .001$). No significant differences were found among the 31-40 years old and 51-60 years old age ranges.

A one-way ANOVA was run to analyze the differences between IRMA scores based on parent relationship status, education level, and type of sex education received in

school. No statistically significant differences were found between the comparison groups (all $ps > .05$).

An independent samples t-test was run to determine if there were differences in IRMA scores between participants who indicated they were of Hispanic or Latino origin and those who indicated they were not. Due to Levene's test being found significant and a violation of equality of variances, the results of the Welch t-test were referred to. A significant difference was found between those who indicated yes ($M = 14.42, SD = 12.05$) and those who indicated no ($M = 22.06, SD = 15.77$) in scores on the IRMA $t(198.3) = -4.74, p < .001, d = -.570$.

An independent samples t-test was run to analyze the relationship between number participants who indicated they had children compared to those who indicated they did not have children and scores on the IRMA. Due to Levene's test being found significant and a violation of equality of variances, the results of the Welch t-test were referred to. A significant difference was found between those who indicated they had children ($M = 24.28, SD = 13.28$) and those who indicated they did not ($M = 16.24, SD = 18.22$) in scores on the IRMA $t(42.93) = -2.67, p = .011, d = -.580$.

Hypothesized Variables of Interest Correlations

A Pearson's correlation was run to analyze the relationship between all hypothesized variables and scores on the IRMA. For this correlation, the Short Dark Triad (SD3) and the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) were each broken down into their respective subscales. Results indicated statistically significant, positive correlations between scores on the IRMA and Benevolent Sexism (BS), Social Dominance Orientation (SDO), Just World Beliefs (JWB), the SD3 sum score, and the

Machiavellianism and Psychopathy subscales on the Short Dark Triad. The Narcissism subscale of the SD3 was not found to be significantly correlated with scores on the IRMA.

Additionally, results showed a statistically significant, negative correlation between scores on the IRMA and the IRI sum score and the Fantasy and Empathetic Concern subscales of the IRI. The Perspective Taking and Personal Distress subscales of the IRI were not found to be significantly correlated with scores on the IRMA. Due to the Narcissism, Perspective Taking, and Personal Distress subscale not being significantly correlated to the IRMA, they were left out of the final regression analysis. Details pertaining to these correlations can be found in Table 3 and Table 4.

Religion and Political Analyses

A one-way ANOVA was run to analyze the differences between IRMA scores based on religious affiliation. Levene's test was not found to be significant, thus homogeneity of variance was not violated. Results indicated a statistically significant difference between groups ($F(7, 366) = 3.19, p = .003, \eta^2 = .059$). Due to the group Hinduism having less than two cases, a follow-up ANOVA was run excluding this group. In the second ANOVA excluding Hinduism, Levene's test was still not significant, thus not violating homogeneity of variance. There was still a statistically significant difference between groups ($F(6, 365) = 3.64, p = .002, \eta^2 = .057$). A Tukey's post hoc revealed that Christian participants ($M = 19.91, SD = 15.06$) had statistically significantly higher IRMA scores than Spiritual but Not Religious participants ($M = 8.65, SD = 12.63, p = .006$) and Agnostic participants ($M = 6.63, SD = 12.45, p = .019$). No significant

differences were found among the Buddhism, Islam, and Atheism groups. Details pertaining to this analysis can be found in Table 5.

Due to these significant findings, the religions were collapsed into three options (Christian, Spiritual/Non-Religious, and Non-Christian Religions) for follow-up subset correlations to assess the relationship between IRMA scores based on religious affiliation and the intensity of those religious practices. Results did not indicate any statistically significant difference between groups, however, when only analyzing differences among Christian denominations, a significant correlation between highly intense Catholicism practice and IRMA scores were found. Details about these correlations can be found in Table 6 and Table 7.

A one-way ANOVA was run to analyze the differences between IRMA scores based on political affiliation. Levene's test was not found to be significant, thus homogeneity of variance was not violated. There was a statistically significant difference between groups as determined by that one-way ANOVA ($F(3, 363) = 9.34, p < .001, \eta^2 = .072$). A Tukey post hoc revealed that Conservatives ($M = 25.19, SD = 14.22$) were significantly higher in IRMA scores than Liberals ($M = 13.76, SD = 13.04, p < .001$), and Other ($M = 8.00, SD = 14.87, p = .039$). Additionally, Moderates ($M = 19.86, SD = 13.81$) were significantly higher in IRMA scores than Liberals ($M = 13.76, SD = 13.04, p = .002$). Details pertaining to this analysis can be found in Table 8.

Due to these significant findings, a follow-up subset correlation was run to analyze differences between IRMA scores based on political affiliation and the intensity of that affiliation. Results indicated a significant, moderate correlation between intense

Conservative affiliation and IRMA scores. No other significant correlations were found. Details about these correlations can be found in Table 9.

Multiple Linear Regression Results

In order to account for the two categorical variables (religious affiliation and political affiliation), a generalized linear model was run to answer the final thesis question and analyze the differences between IRMA scores and all variables of interest that were significant at the univariate level together. In terms of the categorical variables, since none of the collapsed religion options had significant differences between groups but Christian denominations were found to have some significant differences, Christianity was the religion of interest. Thus, Spiritual/Non-Religious was used as the reference group. However, no significant differences were observed between Christianity ($p = .406$), Non-Christian Religions ($p = .429$), and Spiritual/Non-Religious ($p = .586$). A similar tactic was used to analyze political affiliation. Given that in the initial ANOVA, Conservatives and Moderates were both significantly higher than Liberals, Liberal was once again used as the reference group. Results of the regression indicated that when taking into account the variance from all other variables, Conservatives ($B = 4.63$, $SE = 2.17$, $p = .033$) were still significantly associated with higher scores on the IRMA when compared to Liberals. Moderates ($B = 2.78$, $SE = 1.45$, $p = .055$) were approaching a significant association and individuals who indicated Other ($p = .228$) were not found to have a significant association. In terms of the scale variables of interest, when accounting for the variance of all variables, The Machiavellianism subscale of the SD3 ($p = .800$) and the Psychopathy subscale of the SD3 ($p = .446$) were no longer found to be significantly associated with high scores on the IRMA. Benevolent Sexism ($B = .22$, $SE =$

.08, $p = .009$), the Fantasy Subscale of the IRI ($B = -.29$, $SE = .13$, $p = .030$), the Empathetic Concern of the IRI ($B = -.55$, $SE = .20$, $p = .005$), SDO ($B = .85$, $SE = .14$, $p < .001$), and JWB ($B = .19$, $SE = .08$, $p = .014$) were still all significantly associated with higher scores on the IRMA. Details regarding this regression can be found in Table 10.

VI. DISCUSSION

This study intended to develop a general profile of individuals who are more likely to accept rape myths by conducting a comprehensive examination of the personality and social constructs described previously in this review. Previous research has investigated each of these constructs independently, but never simultaneously. The comprehensive examination of all these factors will produce a cohesive understanding of individuals who endorse rape myths.

Correlations

Hypothesis 1 stated that Benevolent Sexism subscale of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (BS) would be positively correlated with scores on the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance scale (IRMA). This hypothesis was supported by the results of this study as the initial correlation analysis yielded a significant positive correlation between score on the IRMA and BS. These findings support and are consistent with nearly all previous research conducted on the relationship between rape myth acceptance and BS as it suggests that people who endorse benevolent sexism are more apt to endorse rape myths (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2007; Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003).

Components of BS can translate to the idea that women who violate their role in a sexist society are partially responsible for making themselves vulnerable to sexual attack (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2007). As such, the findings of the current study further support this notion.

Hypothesis 2 stated that scores on IRMA. This hypothesis was supported by the results of this study as the initial correlation analysis yielded a significant positive correlation between score on the IRMA and SDO. The results of the present study builds

on already existing research concerning the relationship of various forms of system justification beliefs. As previously indicated, SDO can apply to the gender inequalities of men and women (Gauchat, Kelly, & Wallace, 2012) and the motive to justify the status quo of the inequality hierarchy by perceiving this to be legitimate or “just the way things are” (Jost & Banaji, 1994). Given the significant positive correlation between SDO and scores on the IRMA, there is further support for the idea that people who are more likely to endorse the explanation of gender differences in line with system justification are also more likely to endorse and accept rape myths (Chapleau & Oswald, 2014).

Hypothesis 3 stated that scores on the Just World Belief Scale (JWB) will be positively correlated with scores on the IRMA. This hypothesis was supported by the results of this study as the initial correlation analysis yielded a significant positive correlation between score on the IRMA and JWB. The results of the present study also builds on already existing research concerning the relationship of various forms of system justification beliefs. Previous findings indicate that when participants were confronted with a victim who was threatening just-world beliefs, they were more likely to blame the victim for the incident (van Prooijen & ven den Bos, 2009). A rape victim threatens this just world ideal, unless blame can be somehow shifted onto the victim in question. The findings of the present study are consistent with previous research that indicates people tend to blame victims in order to psychologically cope with the idea that they may be vulnerable to uncontrollable harm and maintain the concept of a just world (van Prooijen & ven den Bos, 2009).

Hypothesis 4 stated that scores on each subscale of the Short Dark Triad (SD3) scale will be positively correlated with scores on the IRMA. This hypothesis was partially

supported by the results of this study as the initial correlation analysis yielded a significant positive correlation between scores on the IRMA, the SD3 sum score, the Machiavellianism subscale, and the Psychopathy subscale. However, the Narcissism subscale was not found to have a significant correlation to scores on the IRMA. This both supports and contradicts the Jonason, Girgis, and Milne-Horne (2017) study that found while all three Dark Triad traits predict rape enabling attitudes, only psychopathy had a unique association when the variance of all three were taken into account. The results of the present study could indicate a relationship between Machiavellianism and rape myth acceptance where one was not previously indicated while supporting that narcissism does not play an important role. These findings also support that as a whole, the SD3 has a relationship with rape myth acceptance and behaviors of that nature, which has previously been observed (Jonason, Girgis, & Milne-Horne, 2017; Kiire, 2019). It is difficult to make comparisons to previous research outside of the Jonason, Girgis, and Milne-Horne study, because there is less research on the relationship between the Dark Triad and rape myth acceptance specifically. However, the findings of the present study indirectly support the links found previously between psychopathy and the likelihood to report sexually harassing others, rape proclivity, and negative attitudes toward rape victims (Bevens & Loughan, 2019). Furthermore, the results depicted here indirectly add to the literature indicating a positive relationship between the SD3 as a whole and intimate partner violence (Kiire, 2019). The results of the current study could indicate a need for further research on the specific relationships between the subscales of the Dark Triad and rape myth acceptance.

Hypothesis 5 stated that scores on each subscale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) will be negatively correlated with scores on the IRMA. This hypothesis was partially supported by the results of this study as the initial correlation analysis yielded a significant positive correlation between scores on the IRMA, the IRI sum score, the Fantasy subscale, and the Empathetic Concern subscale. However, the Perspective Taking subscale and the Personal Distress subscale were not found to have a significant correlation with scores on the IRMA. The Empathetic Concern subscale remaining significant supports previous research that found emotional empathy to have a strong correlation to rape myth acceptance (Binkley, 2016). The fact that the Perspective Taking subscale was not found to be significantly correlated both supports and contradicts the findings of Binkley (2016) who reported that one's own experience or awareness of rape was not found to be associated with the endorsement of rape myths but that having an accurate understanding of what is going on in someone else's mind, including how they feel, did have a strong negative correlation with rape myth acceptance. These contradictory findings could indicate a need for deeper analysis into the role of empathy on rape myth acceptance and perhaps further branching of the scales measuring empathy.

Hypothesis 6 stated that participants who identify themselves as Christian and are highly active in their religion will be positively correlated with scores on the IRMA. This hypothesis was partially supported by the results of this study as the initial ANOVA analysis yielded a significant association between Christian participants and scores on the IRMA when compared to other religions. Additionally, intensity of religious participation was not found to be significantly correlated with scores on the IRMA. While this finding

supports previous research that has found Christianity to have a significant correlation to rape myth acceptance (Navarro & Tewksbury, 2018; Barnett, Siglar, & Wang, 2018; Prina & Schatz-Stevens, 2020), it does not support previous research that has found religiosity – or the intensity of one’s faith – to be related to a greater acceptance of rape myths, with people who report greater religiosity also reporting higher rape myth acceptance (Navarro & Tewksbury, 2018). However, when the religions were collapsed into three groups (Christian, Spiritual or Non-Religious, and Non-Christian Religions) to allow for subset correlation analyses, there was no longer a significant correlation. This is an intriguing and unexpected result and could potentially indicate that collapsing the other religions allowed them to overshadow the relationship Christianity had with scores on the IRMA due to less widespread variance. Due to Christianity initially having a significant relationship with scores on the IRMA, to further analyze this relationship, it was important to conduct a subset correlation analysis concerning individual Christian denominations. Results identified a significant correlation between highly intense Catholicism practices and scores on the IRMA, but no other Christian denominations displayed significant correlations. These findings further support previous research that indicate highly religious Catholics tended to accept and endorse rape myths (Navarro & Tewksbury, 2018; Barnett, Sligar, & Wang, 2018). Furthermore, given that BS, SDO, and Christian affiliation were all found to have significant relationships to scores on the IRMA in the present study, this supports past research indicating that the three may be connected because of the idea that the Christian religion holds traditional and conservative attitudes, which are directly linked to benevolent sexism, sex-role

stereotypes, and traditional gender roles the perpetuate social dominance ideology (Navarro & Tewksbury, 2018).

Hypothesis 7 stated that participants who identify themselves as Conservative and are highly active in their party will be positively correlated with scores on the IRMA. This hypothesis was supported by the results of this study as the initial ANOVA analysis yielded a significant association between Conservative participants and scores on the IRMA when compared to other political affiliations. Additionally, this hypothesis was further supported by the results of a follow-up subset correlation analysis which indicated a moderate positive correlation between intense Conservative affiliation and scores on the IRMA but no other significant correlations. These findings support research conducted by Lambert and Raichle (2000) who reported that the need for Conservative identifying people to maintain traditional power led them to place blame on female rape victims (which perpetuates rape myth acceptance) more than their non-conservative counterparts. However, as mentioned previously, very little research has been conducted on the direct link between Conservative affiliation and rape myth acceptance, so further research may be necessary to solidify these findings.

Hypothesis 8 was the main focus of the current study and stated that when all variables are examined simultaneously in a multivariate analysis, Benevolent Sexism, the Psychopathy subscale of the Short Dark Triad, Christian religious affiliation, and conservative political affiliation will continue to have a significant relationship with scores on the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale and thus be the strongest predictors of an endorsement of rape myths. This hypothesis was partially supported as results indicated that when taking into account the variance of all the variables together, BS and

Conservative affiliation were still found to have positive significant relationships with scores on the IRMA. Additionally, though not originally hypothesized, the Fantasy Subscale and the Emotional control subscales of the IRI were still found to have negative significant relationships with scores on the IRMA. These significant results continue to support past research and answer the research question of which traits when analyzed together form the general profile of someone who endorses rape myths. Furthermore, this study addresses the gaps of previous research that was traditionally one-dimensional in its analysis of rape myths and other variables by offering a multidimensional view, progressing and filling that gap.

Given that SDO and JWB are so closely tied to BS due to their desire to sustain the inequality and discriminatory systems that are already in place (Jost & Banaji, 1994) and maintain gender inequality (Chapleau & Oswald, 2014), they were not included in the final hypothesis. Since there is preestablished strong relationship BS has to rape myth acceptance, it was highly likely that SDO and JWB would be overshadowed by its inclusion and not strong enough on their own. However, results of the current study indicated that even with the added variance of other variables and the close tie to BS, SDO and JWB were both still found to have a positive significant association with scores on the IRMA. These findings could imply that despite the close relationship both SDO and JWB have to BS, they are not so similar that BS would overshadow them entirely.

In contrast to the previously stated hypotheses, the Machiavellianism and Psychopathy subscales of the SD3 were no longer found to be significant which resulted in no aspects of the Dark Triad having a significant relationship with scores on the IRMA while taking into account the variance of all variables. This is also an interesting and

unexpected result, especially concerning the psychopathy subscale. Considering that previous research has indicated the psychopathy subscale to be the “driving force of the Dark Triad” in relation to its relationship to rape myths (Jonason, Girgis, and Milne-Home, 2017), finding that it was no longer significant was surprising. Despite these past findings, it is possible that including the variance of so many other variables have overshadowed the relationship of each Dark Triad subscale with rape myth acceptance, thus indicating it no longer has unique variance.

Additionally, despite previous significant findings, the hypothesized significant relationship between Christianity and rape myth acceptance was not observed in the final multivariate analysis. This contradicts past research that has found Christianity to have a significant correlation to rape myth acceptance (Navarro & Tewksbury, 2018; Barnett, Siglar, & Wang, 2018; Prina & Schatz-Stevens, 2020). However, much like with the SD3 subscales, this could potentially be explained by the inclusion of multiple variables when in the past it had been analyzed on its own. The added variance of other variables likely overshadowed the effects of Christianity and as such it no longer had unique variance in the present study.

Despite the non-significant findings in regard to Christianity and SD3 at the multivariate level, both were significant at the univariate level and their role in contributing to the endorsement of rape myths should not be overlooked.

Limitations

The key limitations of this study are the limited demographic variability, the fact that the data were collected through a self-report online survey, and the sensitive nature of the topic, all of which could have introduced response bias.

There were so few participants who identified as Transgender, Asexual, and “Other” sexual orientation, Divorced/Separated, Buddhist, Islamic, Hindu, Protestant, Presbyterian, and Lutheran that they sometimes had to be excluded from their respective analyses in order to run a post hoc analysis. This could have potentially skewed results and painted a demographic picture that was not entirely accurate. Additionally, since certain religions had to be cut from the final analyses in order to allow for subset analysis, their exclusion could have also skewed the relationship religion had with rape myth acceptance. Furthermore, while the intent to use the Prolific platform was to obtain a more generalizable sample compared to using a college-based sample, the participants in this study were not as diverse as anticipated. As such participants followed demographics of 18-24 years old, White/Caucasian, Straight/Heterosexual, and Christian, which did not allow for the desired demographic spread.

Furthermore, self-report surveys can introduce a level of response bias which could in turn skew results and considering the sensitive topic of rape, it is reasonable to assume that some participants refrained from answering truthfully in order to seem “better” or to give a response they feel was wanted.

Future Directions

The aim of this study was to develop a general profile of individuals who are more likely to accept rape myths and serve as a foundation for future research on the topic. As such, future research should first include replications of this study in different demographic areas to ensure the profile established in this study is accurate across domains. Specifically, these different demographic areas should include populations like LGBTQ+, people of color, people with disabilities, or veterans. These are groups that

already have their own stigma surrounding them so it will be important to see if this profile holds up in populations already facing that kind of scrutiny or if there are differences. Research should also narrow the scope of this study by focusing solely on certain types of rape scenarios (stranger rape, acquaintance rape, intimate partner rape) to determine if rape myths are still as prevalent in these scenarios or face different prejudices. This could be in the form of vignette studies and can also employ language that insinuates the victim or rapist comes from similar groups as the participant to see how that sways judgement. Further narrowing should also focus on specific age groups and time points in life. By limiting to specific age groups, research can begin to determine if there is a time in someone's life where these beliefs may change or appear which could better aid with interventions.

Since this study successfully created a profile of individuals who are more likely to accept rape myths, this information can be used in the future as potential warning signs for victims or those simply wishing to protect themselves. While it is unreasonable to distance from every person that displays the traits found to be significant in this study, it serves as a good baseline for individuals to be wary of.

Additionally, future research should explore potential interventions aimed at "*fixing*" the behaviors this study has indicated are related to an endorsement or rape myths, to aid in changing these mindsets. While some traits may be more difficult to change or alter, interventions teaching deeper empathy and targeting benevolent sexism could be implemented in school or workplaces to aid in changing these mindsets early. Research targeting these behaviors and mindsets with the intent to change or rework them could be the steppingstone for ending the stigma surrounding rape.

As mentioned previously, with limited literature regarding the Dark Triad and rape myth acceptance that often has contradictory results, future research should focus on this relationship more closely and establish a uniform depiction of the relationship between the Dark Triad, each subscale, and rape myth acceptance. As also mentioned, very little research has been conducted on the relationship between political affiliation and rape myth acceptance, so further research may be necessary to solidify the findings of this study.

Finally, given that there were significant relationships found between some of the demographic variables and rape myth acceptance, future studies should either incorporate these demographics as moderators or as additional variables in the multivariate analyses. This will allow for analysis of differences across groups of the demographics to further understand where these personality features and social constructs are most prevalent and thus where interventions are most important.

Conclusion

The findings of the current study highlight that when accounting for all variables described previously, only BS, SDO, JWB, Conservative affiliation, and the Fantasy Subscale and the Emotional control subscales of the IRI continue to have significant relationships with scores on the IRMA and thus make up the general profile of individuals who endorse rape myths that this study set out to determine. This could indicate that when all these traits are found in one individual, there is a greater likelihood that they will endorse rape myths.

APPENDIX SECTION

Appendix A

Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance (IRMA)

Instructions: Please read each of the following statements and indicate the number that indicates how true each is of you:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Disagree Strongly

Subscale: She Asked For It

1. If a girl is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of control.
2. When girls go to parties wearing slutty clothes, they are asking for trouble.
3. If a girl goes to a room alone with a guy at a party, it is her own fault if she is raped.
4. If a girl acts like a slut, eventually she is going to get into trouble.
5. When girls are raped, it's often because the way they said "no" was unclear.
6. If a girl initiates kissing or hooking up, she should not be surprised if a guy assumes she wants to have sex.

Subscale: He Didn't Mean To

7. When guys rape, it is usually because of their strong desire for sex.
8. Guys don't usually intend to force sex on a girl, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away.
9. Rape happens when a guy's sex drive gets out of control.
10. If a guy is drunk, he might rape someone unintentionally.

11. It shouldn't be considered rape if a guy is drunk and didn't realize what he was doing.
12. If both people are drunk, it can't be rape.

Subscale: It Wasn't Really Rape

13. If a girl doesn't physically resist sex - even if protesting verbally - it can't be considered rape.
14. If a girl doesn't physically fight back, you can't really say it was rape.
15. A rape probably didn't happen if the girl has no bruises or marks.
16. If the accused "rapist" doesn't have a weapon, you really can't call it a rape.
17. If a girl doesn't say "no" she can't claim rape.

Subscale: She Lied

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

Appendix B

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI)

Instructions (Benevolent Sexism subscale only): Below is a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale:

0	1	2	3	4	5
Disagree	Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Agree	Agree
Strongly	Somewhat	Slightly	Slightly	Somewhat	Strongly

1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.
2. In a disaster, women shouldn't be rescued before men. (R)
3. People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.
4. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.
5. Women should be cherished and protected by men.
6. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.
7. Men are complete without women. (R)
8. A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.
9. Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.
10. Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.

11. Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

Note: Reversals are indicated with (R).

Appendix C

Social Dominance Orientation Scale (SDO)

Instructions:

Please read each of the following statements and indicate how true each is of you based on the scale below:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree

1. If certain groups stayed in their place, we would have fewer problems.
2. Group equality should be our ideal. (R)
3. Inferior groups should stay in their place.
4. We should do what we can to equalize conditions for different groups. (R)
5. Sometimes other groups must be kept in their place.

Note: Reversals are indicated with (R).

Appendix D

Just World Belief Scale

Instructions: Based on the scale, indicate how true each of the following are for you.

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree

1. Misfortune is least likely to strike worthy, decent people.
2. Bad events are distributed to people at random.
3. The course of our lives is largely determined by chance.
4. Generally people deserve what they get in the world.
5. People's misfortunes result from mistakes they have made.
6. I usually behave in ways that are likely to maximize good results for me.
7. People will experience good fortune if they themselves are good.
8. Life is too full of uncertainties that are determined by chance.
9. I almost always make an effort to prevent bad things from happening to me.
10. By and large, good people get what they deserve in the world.
11. Through our actions, we can prevent bad things happening to us.
12. I take the actions necessary to protect myself against misfortune.
13. In general, my life is mostly a gamble.
14. I usually behave so as to bring about the greatest good for me.
15. When bad things happen, it is typically because people have not taken the necessary actions to protect themselves.

Appendix E

The Short Dark Triad (SD3)

Instructions: Please indicate how much you agree with each of the following statements

1	2	3	4	5
Disagree		Neither Agree		Strongly
Strongly	Disagree	nor Disagree	Agree	Agree

Machiavellianism

1. It's not wise to tell your secrets.
2. I like to use clever manipulation to get my way.
3. Whatever it takes, you must get the important people on your side.
4. Avoid direct conflict with others because they may be useful in the future.
5. It's wise to keep track of information that you can use against people later.
6. You should wait for the right time to get back at people.
7. There are things you should hide from other people to preserve your reputation.
8. Make sure your plans benefit yourself, not others.
9. Most people can be manipulated.

Narcissism

1. People see me as a natural leader.
2. I hate being the center of attention. (R)
3. Many group activities tend to be dull without me.
4. I know that I am special because everyone keeps telling me so.
5. I like to get acquainted with important people.

6. I feel embarrassed if someone compliments me. (R)
7. I have been compared to famous people.
8. I am an average person. (R)
9. I insist on getting the respect I deserve.

Psychopathy

1. I like to get revenge on authorities.
2. I avoid dangerous situations. (R)
3. Payback needs to be quick and nasty.
4. People often say I'm out of control.
5. It's true that I can be mean to others.
6. People who mess with me always regret it.
7. I have never gotten into trouble with the law. (R)
8. I enjoy having sex with people I hardly know
9. I'll say anything to get what I want.

Note. Reversals are indicated with (R).

Appendix F

The Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI)

Instructions: For each item, indicate how well it describes you using the following scale:

0	1	2	3	4	5
Does not					Describes
describe me					me very
well					well

1. I daydream and fantasize, with some regularity, about things that might happen to me.
2. I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.
3. I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view. (R)
4. Sometimes I don't feel very sorry for other people when they are having problems. (R)
5. I really get involved with the feelings of the characters in a novel.
6. In emergency situations, I feel apprehensive and ill-at-ease.
7. I am usually objective when I watch a movie or play, and I don't often get completely caught up in it. (R)
8. I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.
9. When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them.
10. I sometimes feel helpless when I am in the middle of a very emotional situation.
11. I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.
12. Becoming extremely involved in a good book or movie is somewhat rare for me. (R)
13. When I see someone get hurt, I tend to remain calm. (R)

14. Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal. (R)
15. If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments. (R)
16. After seeing a play or movie, I have felt as though I were one of the characters.
17. Being in a tense emotional situation scares me.
18. When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them. (R)
19. I am usually pretty effective in dealing with emergencies. (R)
20. I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.
21. I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.
22. I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.
23. When I watch a good movie, I can very easily put myself in the place of a leading character.
24. I tend to lose control during emergencies.
25. When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while.
26. When I am reading an interesting story or novel, I imagine how I would feel if the events in the story were happening to me.
27. When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces.
28. Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.

Note: Reversals are indicated with (R).

Table 1.*Participant Demographics and IRMA Means and Standard Deviations*

Variable	n	Percent	M	SD
Gender				
Female	202	55.0%	11.95	11.70
Male	158	43.1%	14.24	1.13
Transgender	2	0.5%	23.00	14.14
Non-Binary	5	1.4%	13.40	4.45
Age				
18-24 years	248	67.6%	16.75	13.31
25-30 years	84	22.9%	14.56	13.05
31-40 years	18	4.9%	20.94	13.28
41-50 years	11	3.0%	35.18	21.34
51-60 years	6	1.6%	23.50	22.12
Race				
White/Caucasian	193	52.6%	17.81	14.61
Black/African America	43	11.7%	18.67	13.69
Asian	5	1.4%	17.60	12.07
Middle Eastern	6	1.6%	26.00	12.76
Other	120	32.7%	14.97	13.32
Hispanic/Latino Origin				

Yes	243	66.2%	14.41	12.05
No	124	33.8%	22.06	15.77
Sexual Orientation				
Straight/Heterosexual	296	80.7%	18.52	14.16
Gay	10	2.7%	11.80	9.65
Lesbian	7	1.9%	6.14	4.26
Bisexual	52	14.2%	12.29	13.37
Asexual	1	0.3%	-	-
Other	1	0.3%	-	-
Relationship Status				
Single	183	49.7%	16.71	13.03
In a relationship	159	43.2%	15.89	13.51
Married	25	6.8%	28.04	20.03
Divorced/Separated	1	.3%	-	-
Parent Relationship Status				
Single	14	3.8%	20.71	15.68
In a relationship	17	4.6%	18.71	15.48
Married	224	60.9%	17.62	14.37
Divorced/Separated	81	22.0%	15.51	13.72
Widowed	32	8.7%	15.38	11.26
Highest Level of Education				
Did not graduate from High School	4	1.1%	18.00	13.74

High School diploma or equivalent	98	26.6%	19.65	15.67
Some College	89	24.2%	16.16	11.70
Four-Year College Degree	133	36.1%	15.40	12.22
Post-Graduate Degree	44	12.0%	18.59	18.86
Children				
No	328	89.1%	16.24	13.28
Yes	39	10.6%	24.28	18.22
Clubs/Organizations Since High School				
Greek Life	8	2.2%	21.75	22.14
Sports Team	197	53.5%	18.39	13.61
Student Government	54	14.7%	15.44	13.87
Church Group	66	17.9%	19.09	14.45
Sex Education				
No Sex Education	52	14.2%	18.23	17.18
Abstinence Only	33	9.0%	19.21	14.73
Comprehensive Sex Education	277	75.5%	16.67	13.37
Other	5	1.4%	14.00	13.62
Religion				
Christianity	173	47.1%	19.91	15.06
Buddhism	2	0.5%	26.50	7.78
Islam	2	0.5%	26.50	24.75
Hinduism	1	0.3%	-	-

Spiritual but not Religions	41	11.2%	11.27	12.63
Agnosticism	63	17.2%	13.29	12.45
Atheism	64	17.4%	16.42	12.53
Other	21	5.7%	15.62	10.01
Denomination				
Catholic	119	68.8%	20.09	15.72
Baptist	3	1.7%	19.67	10.02
Protestant	1	0.6%	-	-
Methodist	4	2.3%	30.50	22.13
Presbyterian	1	0.6%	-	-
Church of Christ	10	5.8%	22.40	13.83
Lutheran	2	1.2%	13.50	3.54
Non-Denominational	11	6.4%	16.36	13.30
Pentecostal	3	1.7%	22.33	19.55
Other	19	11.0%	17.79	12.27
Political Affiliation				
Conservative	37	10.1%	25.19	14.22
Liberal	176	48.0%	13.76	13.04
Moderate	107	29.2%	19.87	13.81
Other	47	12.8%	17.19	14.87

Note: N = 368

Table 2.*Demographic Comparisons*

Variable	M	SD	p	
Gender				
Female	11.95*	11.70		
Male	14.24**	1.13	.000	
Transgender	23.00*	14.14		
Non-Binary	13.40	4.45		
Age				
18-24 years	16.75*	13.31		
25-30 years	14.56*	13.05		
31-40 years	20.94	13.28	.000	
41-50 years	35.18**	21.34		
51-60 years	23.50	22.12		
Race				
White/Caucasian	17.81	14.61		
Black/African America	18.67	13.69		
Asian	17.60	12.07	.185	
Middle Eastern	26.00	12.76		
Other	14.97	13.32		
Hispanic/Latino Origin				

Yes	14.41	12.05	.000
No	22.06*	15.77	
Sexual Orientation			
Straight/Heterosexual	18.52**	14.16	.002
Gay	11.80	9.65	
Lesbian	6.14*	4.26	
Bisexual	12.29*	13.37	
Relationship Status			
Single	16.71*	13.03	.002
In a relationship	15.89*	13.51	
Married	28.04**	20.03	
Parent Relationship Status			
Single	20.71	15.68	.299
In a relationship	18.71	15.48	
Married	17.62	14.37	
Divorced/Separated	15.51	13.72	
Widowed	15.38	11.26	
Highest Level of Education			
Did not graduate from High School	18.00	13.74	.193
High School diploma or equivalent	19.65	15.67	
Some College	16.16	11.70	

Four-Year College Degree	15.40	12.22	
Post-Graduate Degree	18.59	18.86	
<hr/>			
Children			
<hr/>			
No	16.24	13.28	
Yes	24.28*	18.22	.011
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Clubs/Organizations Since High School			
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Greek Life	21.75	22.14	.566
Sports Team	18.39	13.61	.065
Student Government	15.44	13.87	.343
Church Group	19.09	14.45	.211
<hr/>			
Sex Education			
<hr/>			
No Sex Education	18.23	17.18	
Abstinence Only	19.21	14.73	
Comprehensive Sex Education	16.67	13.37	.665
Other	14.00	13.62	
<hr/>			

Note: N = 368

Table 3.*Correlations Among the Study Variables*

Variable	<i>n</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. IRMA	368	—	.32**	.48**	.24**	.23**	.24**	.04	.21**	-.25**	-.01	-.26**	-.28**	-.09
2. ASI_BS	368		—	.40**	.31**	.29**	.27**	.21**	.16**	.11**	.13**	.03	.10	.07
3. SDO	368			—	.21**	.33**	.30**	.13*	.29**	-.17**	-.03	-.21**	-.20**	-.01
4. JWB	368				—	.36**	.39**	.27**	.12*	.04	.11*	-.02	.04	.01
5. SD3 (sum)	368					—	.82**	.63**	.76**	-.17**	-.20**	-.07	-.20**	-.05
6. SD3 Mach	368						—	.28**	.51**	-.11*	-.18**	-.08	-.12*	.03
7. SD3 Narc	368							—	.17**	-.10	-.04	.04	-.08	-.21**
8. SD3 Psyc	368								—	-.17**	-.22**	-.11*	-.26**	.05
9. IRI (sum)	368									—	.48**	.79**	.76**	.69**
10. IRI PT	368										—	.16**	.34**	.08
11. IRI FS	368											—	.49**	.36**
12. IRI EC	368												—	.33**
13. IRI PD	368													—

Note: IRMA = Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale; ASI_BS = Ambivalent Sexism

Inventory, Benevolent Sexism subscale; SDO = Social Dominance Orientation; JWB =

Just World Beliefs; SD3 = Short Dark Triad; SD3 Mach = Short Dark Triad,

Machiavellianism subscale; SD3 Narc = Short Dark Triad, Narcissism subscale; SD3

Psyc = Short Dark Triad, Psychopathy subscale; IRI = Interpersonal Reactivity Index; IRI

PT = Interpersonal Reactivity Index, Perspective Taking subscale; IRI FS = Interpersonal

Reactivity Index, Fantasy subscale; IRI EC = Interpersonal Reactivity Index, Empathetic
Concern subscale; IRI PD = Interpersonal Reactivity Index, Personal Distress subscale.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 4.*Scale Means and Standard Deviations*

Variable	M	SD
IRMA	17.13	14.07
ASI_BS	34.15	8.57
SDO	10.89	5.07
JWB	58.34	9.07
SD3 (sum)	75.60	12.15
SD3 Mach	28.29	5.88
SD3 Narc	27.18	5.11
SD3 Psyc	20.12	5.37
IRI (sum)	95.10	11.74
IRI PT	24.57	3.22
IRI FS	24.80	5.22
IRI EC	25.10	3.75
IRI PD	20.63	4.72

Note: IRMA = Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale; ASI_BS = Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, Benevolent Sexism subscale; SDO = Social Dominance Orientation; JWB = Just World Beliefs; SD3 = Short Dark Triad; SD3 Mach = Short Dark Triad, Machiavellianism subscale; SD3 Narc = Short Dark Triad, Narcissism subscale; SD3 Psyc = Short Dark Triad, Psychopathy subscale; IRI = Interpersonal Reactivity Index; IRI PT = Interpersonal Reactivity Index, Perspective Taking subscale; IRI FS = Interpersonal

Reactivity Index, Fantasy subscale; IRI EC = Interpersonal Reactivity Index, Empathetic
Concern subscale; IRI PD = Interpersonal Reactivity Index, Personal Distress subscale.

Table 5.*Religion Comparisons*

Religion	M	SD	p
Christianity	19.91**	15.06	
Buddhism	26.50	7.78	
Islam	26.50	24.75	
Spiritual but not Religions	11.27*	12.63	.002
Agnosticism	13.29*	12.45	
Atheism	16.42	12.53	
Other	15.62	10.01	

Table 6.
Correlations among High Intensity Religious Affiliation

Variable	<i>n</i>	IRMA
1. High Intense Christian Affiliation	169	.12
2. High Intense Non-Christian Religions Affiliation	24	.19
3. High Intense Spiritual/Non-Religious Affiliation	136	-.03

Note: IRMA = Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale.

Table 7.

Correlations Among High Intensity Christian Denominations

Variable	<i>n</i>	IRMA
1. High Intense Catholic Affiliation	119	.19*
2. High Intense Baptist Affiliation	3	.05
3. High Intense Protestant Affiliation	1	--
4. High Intense Methodist Affiliation	4	-.60
5. High Intense Presbyterian Affiliation	1	--
6. High Intense Church of Christ Affiliation	10	-.62
7. High Intense Lutheran Affiliation	2	-1**
8. High Intense Non-Denominational Affiliation	10	.34
9. High Intense Pentecostal Affiliation	3	.84
10. High Intense Other Affiliation	18	-.06

Note: IRMA = Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 8.

Political Affiliation Comparisons

Political Affiliation	M	SD	p
Conservative	25.19***	14.22	.000
Liberal	13.76*	13.04	
Moderate	19.87**	13.81	
Other	17.19	14.87	

Table 9.

Correlations Among High Intensity Political Affiliation

Variable	<i>n</i>	IRMA
1. High Intense Conservative Affiliation	36	.47**
2. High Intense Liberal Affiliation	171	-.11
3. High Intense Moderate Affiliation	105	.002
4. High Intense Other Affiliation	39	-.05

Note: IRMA = Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale.

** $p < .01$

Table 10.*Generalized Linear Model Results – Variables of Interest*

Variable	<i>n</i>	B	SE	<i>p</i>	LLCI	ULCI
1. Spiritual/Non-Religious	168	—	—	—	—	—
2. Non-Christian Religions	26	1.34	2.47	.586	-3.49	6.18
3. Christianity	172	1.09	1.38	.429	-1.61	3.80
4. Liberal	176	—	—	—	—	—
5. Conservative	37	4.63	2.17	.033	.37	8.88
6. Moderate	106	2.78	1.45	.055	-.06	5.62
7. Other	47	2.3	1.91	.228	-1.44	6.04
8. ASI BS	366	.22	.08	.009	.05	.39
9. SD3 Mach	366	.03	.13	.800	-.22	.29
10. SD3 Psyc	366	.10	.14	.446	-.16	.37
11. IRI FS	366	-.29	.13	.030	-.55	-.03
12. IRI EC	366	-.55	.20	.005	-.94	-.17
13. SDO	366	.85	.14	.000	.57	1.12
14. JWB	366	.19	.08	.014	.04	.33

Note: Dependent Variable: Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale

ASI_BS = Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, Benevolent Sexism subscale; SDO = Social

Dominance Orientation; JWB = Just World Beliefs; SD3 = Short Dark Triad; SD3 Mach

= Short Dark Triad, Machiavellianism subscale; SD3 Psyc = Short Dark Triad,

Psychopathy subscale; IRI FS = Interpersonal Reactivity Index, Fantasy subscale; IRI EC
= Interpersonal Reactivity Index, Empathetic Concern subscale.

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