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Predicting Rape Myth Acceptance in College

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Abstract

This study examined how the following factors found in the American college experience predicted college students' acceptance of myths concerning rape: students' gender, personal knowledge of a rape survivor, attitude toward alcohol consumption, actual alcohol consumption, and fraternity/sorority (Greek) membership. Eighty-eight male and 239 female college students completed a demographic survey, the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Payne, 1993), and the Alcohol Expectancy Questionnaire (Brown, Christ, and Goldman, 1987). Results indicate that the college students' actual alcohol consumption rate was not predictive of rape myth acceptance. However, all other factors examined in the study interacted in predicting rape myth acceptance. Gender, attitude toward alcohol consumption, and Greek membership interacted in explaining overall rape myth acceptance. Specifically, male and female Greek members with negative attitudes toward alcohol consumption did not differ in the extent to which they believed rape myths. However, when their alcohol attitudes were positive, male Greek members believed in rape myths more than female Greek members. A different pattern appeared among non-Greek members. Specifically, male non-Greeks believed in rape myths more than female non-Greeks, regardless of alcohol consumption attitude. The second prominent interaction pattern emerged from the following two factors when predicting overall rape myth acceptance: gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor. For male participants, knowing a rape survivor personally made them

less likely to believe in rape myths than males without such knowledge. On the other hand, personal knowledge of a rape survivor did not have an influence on female participants' beliefs. Implications of these complex interactions on specific areas of rape myth acceptance, as well as on efforts to reduce sexual violence against women, were discussed.

Predicting Rape Myth Acceptance in College

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This study examined how the following factors found in the American college experience predicted college students' acceptance of myths concerning rape: students' gender, personal knowledge of a rape survivor, attitude toward alcohol consumption, actual alcohol consumption, and fraternity/sorority (Greek) membership. Eighty-eight male and 239 female college students completed a demographic survey and the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Payne, 1993). Results indicate that the college students' actual alcohol consumption rate was not predictive of rape myth acceptance. However, all other factors examined in the study interacted in predicting rape myth acceptance. Implications of these complex interactions on specific areas of rape myth acceptance, as well as on efforts to reduce sexual violence against women, were discussed.

Today's college students have been raised in an environment in which rape is recognized as a social problem. For decades, the feminist movement in the United States has focused considerable public attention on the issue of rape. Rape legislation reform and rape awareness have been significant social concerns since at least the 1970s. However, rape remains a serious social problem and many myths persist regarding rape in American society.

Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) define rape myths as "attitudes and generally false beliefs about rape that are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women." Typical myths revolve around the belief that victims somehow contribute to their own victimization or that the perpetrators are not really responsible for their actions.

Burt (1980) found that more than 50% of the random sample of adults she surveyed endorsed rape supportive attitudes such as, "In the majority of rapes, the victim was promiscuous or had a bad reputation." Burt argued that these beliefs serve to justify rape and focus blame on the victim rather than the perpetrator. Rape supportive beliefs have been linked to men's self-reported perpetration of sexual assault, hypothetical willingness to commit rape if not caught, and laboratory aggression against a female confederate (Malamuth, 1981; 1983; Malamuth, Sockloskie, Koss, & Tanaka, 1991).

Burt (1980) also reported that rape supportive beliefs may also be related to misperceptions of sexual intent.

Individuals who rate high in rape myth acceptance tend to agree with items such as, "A woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on their first date implies that she is willing to have sex" or "When women go around braless or wearing short skirts they are just asking for trouble". This suggests that individuals with high rape myth acceptance are likely to interpret ambiguous cues as signs of sexual availability.

This research reexamines acceptance of rape myths among college students. While the relationship between different social and demographic variables and general rape myth acceptance has been previously studied, the purpose of this study is to focus on possible factors specific to the American college experience that may influence rape myth acceptance. Seven sub-domains of rape myth acceptance (Payne, 1993) will be examined to explore which specific types of myths are predicted by certain variables in the college experience.

Factors in the College Experience that May Predict Rape Myth Acceptance

Previous studies indicate that the following factors are related to rape myth acceptance and sexual assault: gender, alcohol consumption/attitudes, fraternity/sorority membership, and knowing a rape survivor.

Gender. Previous research has confirmed fairly wide general acceptance of rape myths (Feild, 1978; Burt, 1980; Giacopassi & Dull, 1986). Gender differences are vital to rape research as most studies show distinct differences in attitudes and rape myth acceptance between males and females.

Males consistently uphold rape myths more than females in both college and non college populations (Feild, 1978; Burt, 1980; Ashton, 1982; Blumberg & Lester, 1991; Brady, Chrisler, Hosdale, Osowiecki, & Veal, 1991; Ellis, O'Sullivan, & Sowards, 1992; Szymanski, et al, 1993; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Kowalski (1993) also found that rape myth acceptance was influenced by gender. Specifically, men who scored high in rape myth acceptance perceived mundane dating behaviors more sexually than either men who scored low in rape myth acceptance or women, regardless of rape myth acceptance. Overall, the research suggests that women are less supporting of rape myths than men (see Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994 for a comprehensive review).

Knowing a rape survivor. A few studies have examined the relationship between knowing a survivor of rape, and rape myth acceptance. Two investigations have reported that knowing a rape survivor predicts lower levels of rape myth acceptance among college students (Gilmartin-Zena, 1987; Ellis, O'Sullivan, & Sowards, 1992), whereas another found no such relationship (Borden, Karr, & Caldwell-Colbert, 1988). These results suggest that rape myth acceptance may be influenced by having an acquaintance reveal her experience, especially because the personality and characteristics of the victim may directly challenge rape myths.

Alcohol consumption/attitude. A second important variable is alcohol consumption and how it influences students' rape myth acceptance. Alcohol consumption can be examined in two ways. The first is the individual's actual consumption of alcohol (i.e., amount of alcohol actually

consumed). Alcohol consumption by the perpetrator, the victim, or both, has consistently been linked to sexual assault (Koss, 1988; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987; Scully, 1991). In a national college sample, Koss (1988) found that 74% of the perpetrators and 55% of the survivors of rape had been drinking alcohol prior to the incident.

The second way to explore alcohol and its effect on rape myth acceptance is to focus on an individual's beliefs and attitudes about the effects of alcohol consumption. Roehrich and Kinder (1991) found that psychological expectancies regarding the use of alcohol may often be more powerful than its pharmacological effects. Specifically, male undergraduates in an experiment who were led to believe that they consumed alcohol (placebo) showed increased arousal to deviant stimuli (rape, violent erotica) compared to males who were told that the beverage they drank had no alcohol. Furthermore, the authors discovered that many males possess a profound belief in the magical abilities of alcohol to reduce their sexual anxiety or guilt, and enhance their sexual arousal. Roehrich and Kinder (1991) conclude that alcohol consumption attitudes exert a strong influence on the sexual behavior of males.

Alcohol may also serve as an excuse to engage in behaviors these males might otherwise label as deviant. Abbey & Harnish (1995) examined alcohol attitudes by having participants read vignettes in which a young man and woman who were socializing consumed either alcoholic or nonalcoholic beverages. They found that when individuals portrayed in vignettes were drinking alcohol, they were

perceived as being most sexual and their drinking was viewed as most appropriate. The authors claim that perceived alcohol consumption may make it more probable that these misperceptions will eventually become sexual assaults, either because a man mistakenly believed that his female companion really wanted sex or because he felt she had led him on to the point that force was justifiable.

A study by George and his colleagues is also relevant to understanding the effects of alcohol on judgments of rape. George, Gournic, and McAfee (1988) reported that male and female college students, responding to a questionnaire about alcohol expectancies (i.e. beliefs and attitudes about the effects of alcohol consumption), perceived a female drinker to be more sexual than a male drinker. Furthermore, the authors found that an alcohol-consuming female in the company of a male drinker was perceived to be more sexually receptive than a cola-drinking female. These findings suggest that a man might be more likely to initiate sexual activity with a drinking woman than with a nondrinker because of expectations about the sexual receptivity of the drinker.

Finally, Norris & Cubbins (1992) found that an acquaintance rape scenario in which both members of a dating couple have been consuming alcohol is not judged as severely as when only the woman has been drinking. The implication is that a woman and a man drinking together may signify an expectation that sexual activity will occur. In contrast, if only the woman has been drinking, the man may be viewed as taking advantage of a woman who is in a vulnerable condition. Thus, there are cognitive and behavioral processes through

which alcohol consumption during heterosexual social interactions can contribute to sexual assault.

Fraternity/Sorority (Greek) membership. Greek Membership will be another vital component of the overall picture of rape myth acceptance on college campuses. A recent study (Kalof, 1993) explored the link between sorority membership and rape-supportive attitudes and sexual victimization experiences. The author found that sorority membership seems to be associated with conservative and traditional attitudes about gender, sexuality, and rape. Compared to other college women, sorority members held more stereotyped attitudes about the acceptance of interpersonal violence and the acceptance of rape myths. Another study by Schaeffer and Nelson (1993) compared rape myth acceptance of males living in a co-ed dormitory to rape myth acceptance of males who resided in a fraternity house. The results showed that males living in the fraternity house had higher rape myth acceptance than those residing in the co-ed dormitory.

Study Goals and Hypotheses

The predictors of rape myth acceptance mentioned above have been examined separately in previous work. However, their interactions with each other have not yet been studied. Exploring the interactions among these predictors may provide more specific predictions of rape myth acceptance. For example, is a male fraternity member with a high alcohol consumption rate more accepting of rape myths than a male fraternity member with a low alcohol consumption rate? Furthermore, alcohol consumption may play dual and separate roles in the prediction of rape myth acceptance. It may be

more accurate to differentiate the roles of actual drinking versus the attitudes/beliefs about alcohol consumption in predicting rape myth acceptance. Because all of the above predictors are integral parts of the typical American college experience, this research examines exactly how rape myth acceptance is predicted by factors specific to the college experience.

Consistent with the previous studies, it is predicted that:

1. Males will be more accepting of rape myths than females.
2. Participants who do not know a rape survivor will be more accepting of rape myths than those who know a rape survivor.
3. Participants with a high rate of alcohol consumption will be more accepting of rape myths than those with a low alcohol consumption rate.
4. Participants who perceive alcohol consumption to have a positive or magical effect will be more accepting than those who do not hold such perceptions.
5. Fraternity and sorority members will be more accepting of rape myths than non-Greeks.
6. Finally, there is interest in examining the possible interactions between two or more of the variables in predicting rape myth acceptance. It is expected that such interactions will portray a more precise picture of rape myth acceptance.

Method

Participants

The research participants were 327 undergraduate students from Eastern Illinois University. The sample

contained 88 (27%) males and 239 (73%) females with a mean age of 19.7. Fifty percent of the males were fraternity members while 42.6% of the females were sorority members.

Instruments

The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Payne, 1993) was used to measure rape myth acceptance in this study. It contained 40 statements that focused on the participants' attitudes and beliefs about rape myths. Coefficient alpha for the scale was reported as .93 based on a sample of 780 university students; item to total correlations ranged from .31 to .67 (Payne, 1993). All statements were positively worded to reflect cultural rape myths, and responses were provided on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = not at all agree to 7 = very much agree; 5 negatively worded filler items were provided in the scale to inhibit possible response bias. Table 1 represents the seven sub-domains of rape myth acceptance built into Payne's scale. These sub-domains further break down rape myths into specific categories of acceptance.

Insert Table 1 here

The Alcohol Expectancy Questionnaire, which was developed by Brown, Christ, and Goldman (1987), was also used in this study. The shortened form used here contained 18 items which were specifically designed to assess attitudes and beliefs about alcohol consumption. Some examples of items on this scale were: "Drinking makes the future seem brighter", "I often feel sexier after I've had a few drinks",

"Alcohol makes me worry less", and "After a few drinks it is easier to pick a fight." The Alcohol Expectancy Questionnaire has demonstrated internal consistency coefficients ranging from .72 to .92 and test-retest reliability of .64 for an eight week period. Responses were provided on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 = not at all agree to 7 = very much agree.

To measure participants' actual alcohol consumption the following question was posed: "About how many alcoholic beverages do you consume in one week?" (e.g. one drink is defined as one beer, one mixed drink, one glass of wine, or one shot of 80 proof alcohol). A separate question tapped into the participants' personal knowledge of a rape survivor ("Do you know someone personally who is a rape survivor?"). Another question about rape education was asked: "Have you received any rape education?" Various demographic information including years of education, age, race, gender and Greek membership was also gathered.

Results

There was an initial set of eight predictors of rape myth acceptance that were chosen for the study. However, three of the predictors (i.e., years of education, age, and race) were excluded from the data analyses because the range of responses obtained from the participants for each of these predictors was too restricted (e.g., most of the participants' age ranged from 18 to 21).

Likewise, a fourth predictor, exposure to any form of rape education, was excluded because only 29 of the 88 male participants claimed they had rape education. Consequently,

there were only eight non-fraternity male participants who reported having any rape education.

Attitude toward alcohol consumption was classified as either negative or positive. Participants whose average score on the Alcohol Expectancy Questionnaire was below 3.5 (the median of the responses on a Likert scale ranging from 1 to 7) were placed in the negative attitude group, while those whose scores were above the median were placed in the positive attitude group. Participants in the positive group generally believed that consuming alcohol produces favorable effects. For example, "Drinking gives me more confidence in myself." Whereas participants in the negative group generally did not believe that consuming alcohol produces favorable effects.

Actual alcohol consumption was categorized as either high or low. Participants who reported that they usually consume five alcoholic drinks (the median of the responses) or more per week were placed in the high alcohol consumption group, while those who reported that they usually consume less than the median were placed in the low alcohol consumption group.

Thus, the final set of predictors were: gender (male vs. female), personal knowledge of a rape survivor (with vs. without), attitude toward alcohol consumption (negative vs. positive), actual alcohol consumption (low vs. high), and Greek membership (member vs. non-member).

A series of tests were conducted on these predictors to find out if any of the predictors were correlated with each other. Only actual alcohol consumption and attitude toward

alcohol consumption were correlated, $r(326) = .37, p < .001$.

Because independence could not be established between the two latter predictors (a requirement in conducting analysis of variance tests), one set of analyses predicting rape myth acceptance excluded one predictor while a separate set of analyses excluded the other.

The first set of analyses was a series of 2 (gender: male vs. female) x 2 (personal knowledge of a rape survivor: with vs. without) x 2 (attitude toward alcohol consumption: negative vs. positive) x 2 (Greek membership: member vs. non-member) analyses of variance on overall rape myth acceptance, as well as, on each of the seven elements of rape myth acceptance.

The second set of analyses was a series of 2 (gender: male vs. female) x 2 (personal knowledge of a rape survivor: with vs. without) x 2 (actual alcohol consumption: high vs. low) x 2 (Greek membership: member vs. non-member) analyses of variance on overall rape myth acceptance, as well as, on each of the seven elements of rape myth acceptance.

Predicting Overall Rape Myth Acceptance

An average score on the 40 items of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale was obtained for each participant. The average overall rape myth acceptance score for all participants was 1.92 on the 1 to 7-point Likert scale. This average score suggests that the participants, in general, do not accept rape myths.

Analysis including attitude toward alcohol consumption as a predictor. Results of the 4-way analysis of variance on overall rape myth acceptance including attitude toward

alcohol consumption as one of the predictors indicated that there was no significant 4-way interaction.

However, there was a significant 3-way interaction between gender, attitude toward alcohol consumption, and Greek membership, $F(1,303) = 7.34, p < .01$. Specifically, male and female Greek members with negative attitudes toward alcohol consumption did not differ in the extent to which they accept rape myths ($M = 1.61$ and $M = 1.58$, respectively). However, when their alcohol attitudes were positive, male Greek members were more accepting of rape myths ($M = 2.49$) than female Greek members ($M = 2.05$).

A different pattern of results appeared among non-Greek members. Specifically, male non-Greeks with negative alcohol attitudes were more accepting of rape myths ($M = 2.28$) than female non-Greeks ($M = 1.66$). The same result was observed among male and female non-Greeks whose alcohol attitudes were positive ($M = 2.21$ and $M = 1.97$ respectively).

Insert Figure 1 here

There was also a main effect of personal knowledge of a rape survivor, $F(1,303) = 9.89, p < .01$. Specifically, participants who did not personally know a rape survivor were more accepting of rape myths ($M = 2.01$) than participants who knew a rape survivor ($M = 1.76$).

Analysis including actual alcohol consumption as a predictor. Results of the 4-way analysis of variance on overall rape myth acceptance including actual alcohol consumption as one of the predictors indicated that there

were no significant 4-way or 3-way interactions.

However, there was a significant 2-way interaction between gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor, $F(1,311) = 10.36, p < .01$. Specifically, males who did not personally know a rape survivor were more accepting of rape myths ($M = 2.45$) than males who knew a rape survivor ($M = 1.73$). Whereas females who did not personally know a rape survivor did not differ from females who knew a rape survivor ($M = 1.84$ and $M = 1.77$ respectively).

Insert Figure 2 here

Predicting Rape Myths About Victim Precipitation

Participants' average scores on the 11 items of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale that focused on rape myths about victim precipitation were obtained.

Analysis including attitude toward alcohol consumption as a predictor. Results of the 4-way analysis of variance on these scores including attitude toward alcohol consumption as one of the predictors indicated that there were no significant 4-way or 3-way interactions.

However, there were two significant 2-way interactions. The first involved an interaction between gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor, $F(1,303) = 6.85, p < .01$. Specifically, males who did not personally know a rape survivor were more accepting of the idea that victims are primarily responsible for the rape ($M = 2.65$) than males who knew a rape survivor ($M = 1.81$). On the other hand, females who did not personally know a rape survivor ($M = 1.95$) did

not differ from females who knew a rape survivor ($M = 1.75$).

Insert Figure 3 here

The second 2-way interaction was between attitude toward alcohol consumption and membership in the Greek system, $F(1,303) = 7.49$, $p < .01$. Specifically, Greek members who had positive attitudes toward alcohol consumption accepted the idea that victims are primarily responsible for the rape ($M = 2.34$) more than Greek members who had negative attitudes toward alcohol consumption ($M = 1.58$).

However, non-Greeks who had positive attitudes toward alcohol consumption ($M = 2.13$) did not differ from non-Greeks who had negative attitudes toward alcohol consumption ($M = 1.93$).

Insert Figure 4 here

Analysis including actual alcohol consumption as a predictor.

Results of the 4-way analysis of variance on these scores including actual alcohol consumption as one of the predictors indicated that there were no significant 4-way or 3-way interactions.

However, there was a significant 2-way interaction between gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor, $F(1,311) = 6.15$, $p < .01$. Specifically, males who did not personally know a rape survivor were more accepting of the idea that victims are primarily responsible for the rape ($M =$

2.67) than males who knew a rape survivor ($M = 1.78$). On the other hand, females did not differ regardless of personal knowledge of a rape survivor ($M = 1.95$ and $M = 1.75$ respectively).

Insert Figure 5 here

Predicting Rape Myths About the Implicit Definition of Sexual Assault

Participants' average scores on the 5 items of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale that focused on rape myths about the implicit definition of sexual assault were obtained.

Analysis including attitude toward alcohol consumption as a predictor. Results of the 4-way analysis of variance on these scores including attitude toward alcohol consumption as one of the predictors indicated that there were no significant interactions or main effects.

Analysis including actual alcohol consumption as a predictor. Results of the 4-way analysis of variance on these scores including actual alcohol consumption as one of the predictors also indicated that there were no significant interactions or main effects. Overall, participants did not accept myths about how rape is defined.

Predicting Rape Myths About the Male Intention to Sexually Aggress

Participants' average scores on the 5 items of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale that focused on rape myths about the male intention to sexually aggress were

obtained.

Analysis including attitude toward alcohol consumption as a predictor. Results of the 4-way analysis of variance on these scores including attitude toward alcohol consumption as one of the predictors indicated that there were no significant 4-way interactions.

However, there was a significant 3-way interaction between gender, personal knowledge of a rape survivor, and attitude toward alcohol consumption, $F(1,303) = 6.22, p < .01$. Specifically, when the participant personally knew a rape survivor, males with positive alcohol attitudes accepted the idea that rape happens because of the man's strong desire for sex ($M = 3.06$) more than males with negative alcohol attitudes ($M = 2.13$). Female participants who personally knew a rape survivor and had positive alcohol attitudes did not differ ($M = 2.82$) from those who had negative alcohol attitudes ($M = 2.60$).

When the participant did not know a rape survivor, males with positive alcohol attitudes ($M = 3.38$) did not differ from males with negative alcohol attitudes ($M = 3.18$). However, female participants with positive alcohol attitudes were more accepting of the idea that rape happens because of the man's strong desire for sex ($M = 3.22$) than females with negative alcohol attitudes ($M = 2.39$).

 Insert Figure 6 here

Analysis including actual alcohol consumption as a predictor. Results of the 4-way analysis of variance on

these scores including actual alcohol consumption as one of the predictors indicated that there were no significant 4-way or 3-way interactions.

However, there was a significant 2-way interaction between gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor, $F(1,311) = 6.03, p < .01$. Specifically, males who did not personally know a rape survivor were more accepting of the idea that rape happens because of the man's strong desire for sex ($M = 3.32$) than males who knew a rape survivor ($M = 2.59$). On the other hand, females who knew or did not know a rape survivor did not differ ($M = 2.79$ and $M = 2.75$ respectively).

Insert Figure 7 here

Predicting Rape Myths About Victim Desire or Enjoyment

Participants' average scores on the 5 items of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale that focused on rape myths about victim desire or enjoyment were obtained.

Analysis including attitude toward alcohol consumption as a predictor. Results of the 4-way analysis of variance on these scores including attitude toward alcohol consumption as one of the predictors indicated that there were no significant 4-way or 3-way interactions.

However, there was a significant 2-way interaction between gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor, $F(1,303) = 11.26, p < .001$. Specifically, males who did not personally know a rape survivor were more accepting of the idea that victims desire or enjoy rape ($M = 2.13$) than males

who knew a rape survivor ($M = 1.44$). On the other hand, females who knew or did not know a rape survivor did not differ ($M = 1.49$ and $M = 1.58$ respectively).

Insert Figure 8 here

There was also a main effect of attitude toward alcohol consumption, $F(1,303) = 12.49$, $p < .001$. Specifically, participants with positive alcohol attitudes were more accepting of the idea that victims desire or enjoy rape ($M = 1.81$) than participants with negative alcohol attitudes ($M = 1.44$).

Analysis including actual alcohol consumption as a predictor. Results of the 4-way analysis of variance on these scores including actual alcohol consumption as one of the predictors indicated that there were no significant 4-way or 3-way interactions.

However, there was a significant 2-way interaction between gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor, $F(1,311) = 6.92$, $p < .01$. Specifically, males who did not personally know a rape survivor were more accepting of the idea that victims desire or enjoy rape ($M = 2.13$) than males who knew a rape survivor ($M = 1.43$). On the other hand, females who knew or did not know a rape survivor did not differ ($M = 1.48$ and $M = 1.58$ respectively).

Insert Figure 9 here

Predicting Rape Myths About False Charges of Rape

Participants' average scores on the 4 items of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale that focused on rape myths about false charges of rape were obtained.

Analysis including attitude toward alcohol consumption as a predictor. Results of the 4-way analysis of variance on these scores including attitude toward alcohol consumption as one of the predictors indicated that there were no significant 4-way or 3-way interactions.

However, there was a significant 2-way interaction between gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor, $F(1,303) = 8.14, p < .01$. Specifically, males who did not personally know a rape survivor were more accepting of the idea that women lie about rape ($M = 3.42$) than males who knew a rape survivor ($M = 2.34$). On the other hand, females who knew or did not know a rape survivor did not differ ($M = 2.48$ and $M = 2.33$ respectively).

 Insert Figure 10 here

There was also a main effect of attitude toward alcohol consumption, $F(1,303) = 23.95, p < .001$. Specifically, participants with positive alcohol attitudes were more accepting of the idea that women lie about rape ($M = 2.92$) than participants with negative alcohol attitudes ($M = 2.26$).

Analysis including actual alcohol consumption as a predictor. Results of the 4-way analysis of variance on these scores including actual alcohol consumption as one of the predictors indicated that there were no significant 4-way or 3-way interactions.

However, there was a significant 2-way interaction between gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor, $F(1,311) = 7.38, p < .01$. Specifically, males who did not personally know a rape survivor were more accepting of the idea that women lie about rape ($M = 3.45$) than males who knew a rape survivor ($M = 2.31$). On the other hand, females who knew or did not know a rape survivor did not differ ($M = 2.47$ and $M = 2.33$ respectively).

Insert Figure 11 here

Predicting Rape Myths About Trivialization of the Crime

Participants' average scores on the 5 items of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale that focused on rape myths about trivializing the crime of rape were obtained.

Analysis including attitude toward alcohol consumption as a predictor. Results of the 4-way analysis of variance on these scores including attitude toward alcohol consumption as one of the predictors indicated that there were no significant 4-way interactions.

However, there was a significant 3-way interaction between gender, attitude toward alcohol consumption, and Greek membership, $F(1,303) = 10.02, p < .01$. Specifically, when the participant was a non-Greek member, males with positive alcohol attitudes did not differ from males with negative alcohol attitudes in the extent to which they accepted the idea that rape is a trivial crime ($M = 1.59$ and $M = 1.54$ respectively). Likewise, female non-Greek members with positive alcohol attitudes and those with negative

alcohol attitudes did not differ ($\underline{M} = 1.31$ and $\underline{M} = 1.18$, respectively).

However, when the participant was a Greek member, males with positive alcohol attitudes ($\underline{M} = 2.09$) were more accepting of the idea that rape is a trivial crime than males with negative alcohol attitudes ($\underline{M} = 1.20$). On the other hand, female Greek members with positive alcohol attitudes and those with negative alcohol attitudes did not differ ($\underline{M} = 1.3$ and $\underline{M} = 1.15$, respectively).

Insert Figure 12 here

There was also a main effect of personal knowledge of a rape survivor, $F(1,4) = 10.01$, $p < .01$. Specifically, participants who did not personally know a rape survivor were more accepting of the idea that rape is a trivial crime ($\underline{M} = 1.43$) than participants who knew a rape survivor ($\underline{M} = 1.21$).

Analysis including actual alcohol consumption as a predictor. Results of the 4-way analysis of variance on these scores including actual alcohol consumption as one of the predictors indicated that there were no significant 4-way or 3-way interactions.

However, there was a significant 2-way interaction between gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor, $F(1,311) = 9.21$, $p < .01$. Specifically, males who did not personally know a rape survivor were more accepting of the idea that women lie about rape ($\underline{M} = 1.86$) than males who knew a rape survivor ($\underline{M} = 1.26$). On the other hand, females who

knew or did not know a rape survivor did not differ ($\underline{M} = 1.26$ and $\underline{M} = 1.20$ respectively).

Insert Figure 13 here

Predicting Rape Myths About the Deviance of the Act of Rape

Participants' average scores on the 5 items of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale that focused on rape myths about the deviance of the act or rape were obtained.

Analysis including attitude toward alcohol consumption as a predictor. Results of the 4-way analysis of variance on these scores including attitude toward alcohol consumption as one of the predictors indicated that there were no significant 4-way interactions.

However, there was a significant 3-way interaction between gender, attitude toward alcohol consumption, and Greek membership, $F(1,303) = 6.87, p < .01$. Specifically, male and female Greek members with negative alcohol attitudes did not differ in the extent to which they accepted the idea that rape is primarily a deviant act ($\underline{M} = 1.24$ and $\underline{M} = 1.31$, respectively).

On the other hand, when their alcohol attitudes were positive, male Greek members were more accepting of the idea that rape is primarily a deviant act ($\underline{M} = 1.97$) than female Greek members ($\underline{M} = 1.68$).

However, the opposite pattern of results was evident among non-Greek members. Specifically, male non-Greeks with negative alcohol attitudes were more accepting of the idea that rape is primarily a deviant act ($\underline{M} = 1.91$) than female

non-Greeks ($M = 1.36$). On the other hand, male and female non-Greeks with positive alcohol attitudes did not differ in the extent to which they accepted the idea that rape is primarily a deviant act ($M = 1.64$ and $M = 1.56$, respectively).

Insert Figure 14 here

Analysis including actual alcohol consumption as a predictor. Results of the 4-way analysis of variance on these scores including actual alcohol consumption as one of the predictors indicated that there were no significant interactions or main effects.

Discussion

The present study examined rape myth acceptance and how it is predicted by several factors in the college experience. As hypothesized, gender, personal knowledge of a rape survivor, attitude toward alcohol consumption, and Greek membership predicted rape myth acceptance. However, the college students' actual alcohol consumption rate did not show any relationship with rape myth acceptance.

The college students' knowledge of a rape survivor independently predicted rape myth acceptance. As seen in previous work (Gilmartin-Zena, 1987; Ellis, O'Sullivan, & Edwards, 1992), participants who knew a rape survivor did not believe in general rape myths as much as participants who did not know a rape survivor. The present study specifically shows that participants who knew a rape survivor were less likely to perceive rape as a trivial crime than participants

who did not know a rape survivor.

Attitude toward alcohol consumption also independently predicted rape myth acceptance. As reported in earlier studies (Roehrich & Kinder, 1991; Abbey & Harnish, 1995; George, Gournic, & McAfee, 1988; Norris & Cubbins, 1992), positive attitudes toward alcohol consumption may lead to acceptance of sexual violence. Participants in the present study who had positive attitudes toward alcohol consumption were more likely to believe that the victim enjoyed being raped than those who had negative attitudes toward alcohol consumption.

Likewise, consistent with previous studies (Feild, 1978; Burt, 1980; Ashton, 1982; Blumberg & Lester, 1991; Brady, Chrisler, Hosdale, Osowiecki, & Veal, 1991; Ellis, O'Sullivan, & Sowards, 1992; Szymanski, et al, 1993; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Kowalski, 1993), gender played a crucial role in predicting rape myth acceptance. However, the present study illustrates that the college students' gender interacted with other factors in explaining rape myth acceptance.

The same observation was evident about the students' membership in Greek organizations. Consistent with other studies (Kalof, 1993; Schaeffer & Nelson, 1993), Greek membership predicted rape myth acceptance. However, this factor also interacted with other variables in the predictions.

Gender, attitude toward alcohol consumption, and Greek membership interacted in explaining overall rape myth acceptance (See Figure 1). Specifically, male and female

Greek members with negative attitudes toward alcohol consumption did not differ in the extent to which they believed rape myths. However, when their alcohol attitudes were positive, male Greek members believed in these rape myths more than female Greek members.

A different pattern appeared among non-Greek members. Specifically, male non-Greeks believed in these rape myths more than female non-Greeks, regardless of alcohol consumption attitude.

This same interaction pattern was observed when predicting two specific myths about rape myth acceptance: whether the college students viewed rape as a trivial crime and whether they perceived rape as a deviant act (See Figures 12 and 14).

The second prominent interaction pattern emerged from the following two factors when predicting overall rape myth acceptance: gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor. For male participants, knowing a rape survivor personally made them less likely to believe in rape myths than males without such knowledge. On the other hand, personal knowledge of a rape survivor did not have an influence on female participants' beliefs (See Figure 2).

This same interaction pattern was also evident when predicting five other specific rape myths: on whether the victim was perceived to have precipitated the rape, the male had the intent to sexually aggress, the victim enjoyed or desired the rape, the victim was likely to have brought up false charges, and whether the rape was viewed as a trivial crime (See Figures 3, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 13).

Although the college students' attitude toward alcohol consumption proved to be predictive of rape myth acceptance, their actual alcohol consumption rate was not. This result is problematic because initial analyses conducted indicate that attitude toward alcohol consumption and actual alcohol consumption rate were correlated. Thus, it was expected that both would predict rape myth acceptance in the same manner.

One possible explanation for the discrepancy in results may be the way the students' consumption rate was gathered and measured. Actual consumption was assessed by a direct question: "About how many alcoholic beverages do you consume in one week?" Participants may have answered more conservatively to this type of question for two possible reasons. First, college students may not be aware of exactly how many alcoholic drinks they consume in one week. This is especially true in a state of intoxication, when accurate recall of such information becomes substantially impaired. Second, some college students may be in denial of exactly how much they drink. Having to accurately report this information on paper would force them to accept that they might have a problem with alcohol. Therefore, some students may have minimized their weekly consumption of alcoholic beverages.

Strengths of the study

The present study achieved its goal of examining four factors of the college experience that interacted in predicting not only general rape myth acceptance, but also specific categories of rape myth acceptance. It was discovered that some of the individual variables were not as

predictive as when their interactions with other factors were closely examined. These interactions indicate that when addressing the issue of rape myths, no factor can be singled out and responded to individually. Efforts to reduce beliefs in rape myths should take into account these complex interactions.

For instance, male Greek members with positive attitudes toward alcohol consumption supported rape myths more than any other student type. Similarly, female Greek members with positive attitudes toward alcohol consumption supported rape myths more than both male and female Greeks with negative attitudes toward alcohol consumption. Education efforts and interventions should be centered on this population of students. Also, males who did not know a rape survivor had relatively high rape myth acceptance. They too should be targeted for education and be exposed to rape survivors who share their personal accounts of sexual violence.

Limitations and Future Directions

Because college students were used in this study, results cannot be generalized to other populations. Likewise, within the population of college students, the results can perhaps only be generalized to those who share the characteristics of the present study's sample.

Another limitation of this work was the uneven distribution of men (27%) and women (73%). As a consequence of this limited sample of men, some categories in the study were under represented. For instance, only 29 of the 88 male participants (33%) claimed they had rape education. Moreover, only eight non-fraternity male participants

reported having any rape education. Thus, previous rape education as a potential predictor of rape myth acceptance was excluded from subsequent data analyses.

One possible improvement of this study would be to administer a pretest survey to freshmen students followed by a post test survey three years later. This longitudinal technique may tell a more complete story of how the college experience influences rape myth acceptance.

Another interesting aspect of this study worth noting is the lack of any significant result for one of the seven specific types of rape myth acceptance: implicit definition of sexual assault. None of the predictors were related to this specific area of rape myth acceptance. This may indicate that participants, whether they are male or female, Greek or non-Greek members, etc., do not vary in their understanding of the definition of sexual assault. In other words, they agree that a rape victim does not have to have bruises or marks as evidence of rape. Perhaps the overall effort to stop sexual violence against women is succeeding in at least this one area. This also suggests that more emphasis should be placed in other areas now that it seems most people understand the definition of rape. Next, we need to achieve that same understanding about other types of rape myths. This study proves that many people still believe that women lie about rape and cause it to happen. There is also a persistent belief that men rape because of their strong desire for sex. One by one, these and other myths must be challenged and dispelled. Only then will society be prepared to accept the truth about rape. This acceptance will

hopefully lead to a significant reduction of sexual violence against women.

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Table 1

Seven Sub-domains of Rape Myth Acceptance

1. Victim precipitation of rape. Example: "When women go around wearing low-cut tops or short skirts, they're just asking for trouble."
 2. Implicit definition of sexual assault. Example: "A rape probably didn't happen if the woman has no bruises or marks."
 3. Male intention to sexually aggress. Example: "When men rape, it is because of their strong desire for sex."
 4. Victim desire or enjoyment. Example: "Even though the woman may call it rape, she probably enjoyed it."
 5. False charges. Example: "Many so-called rape victims are actually women who had sex and 'changed their minds' afterwards."
 6. Trivialization of the crime. Example: "Women tend to exaggerate how much rape affects them."
 7. Deviance of the act. Example: "Rape mainly occurs on the 'bad' side of town."
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Figure Caption

Figure 1. Overall rape myth acceptance as a function of gender, attitude toward alcohol consumption, and Greek membership.

Figure 2. Overall rape myth acceptance as a function of gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor.

Figure 3. Rape myth acceptance (victim precipitation) as a function of gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor.

Figure 4. Rape myth acceptance (victim precipitation) as a function of attitude toward alcohol consumption and Greek membership.

Figure 5. Rape myth acceptance (victim precipitation) as a function of gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor.

Figure 6. Rape myth acceptance (male intention to sexually aggress) as a function of gender, attitude toward alcohol consumption, and personal knowledge of a rape survivor.

Figure 7. Rape myth acceptance (male intention to sexually aggress) as a function of gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor.

Figure 8. Rape myth acceptance (victim desire or enjoyment) as a function of gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor.

Figure 9. Rape myth acceptance (victim desire or enjoyment) as a function of gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor.

Figure 10. Rape myth acceptance (false charges) as a function of gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor.

Figure 11. Rape myth acceptance (false charges) as a function of gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor.

Figure 12. Rape myth acceptance (trivialization of the crime) as a function of gender, attitude toward alcohol consumption, and Greek membership.

Figure 13. Rape myth acceptance (trivialization of the crime) as a function of gender and personal knowledge of a rape survivor.

Figure 14. Rape myth acceptance (deviance of the act) as a function of gender, attitude toward alcohol consumption, and Greek membership.

Figure 1

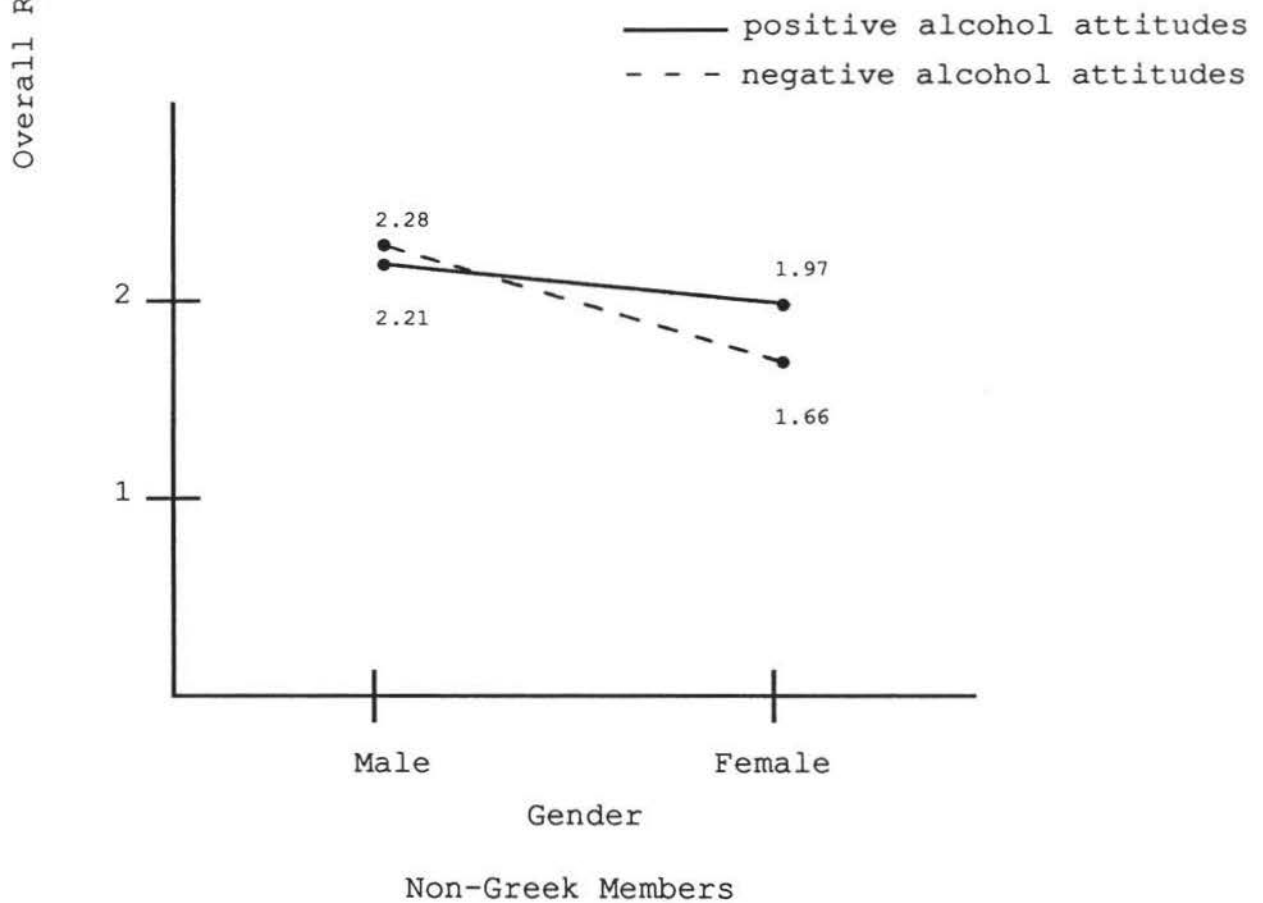
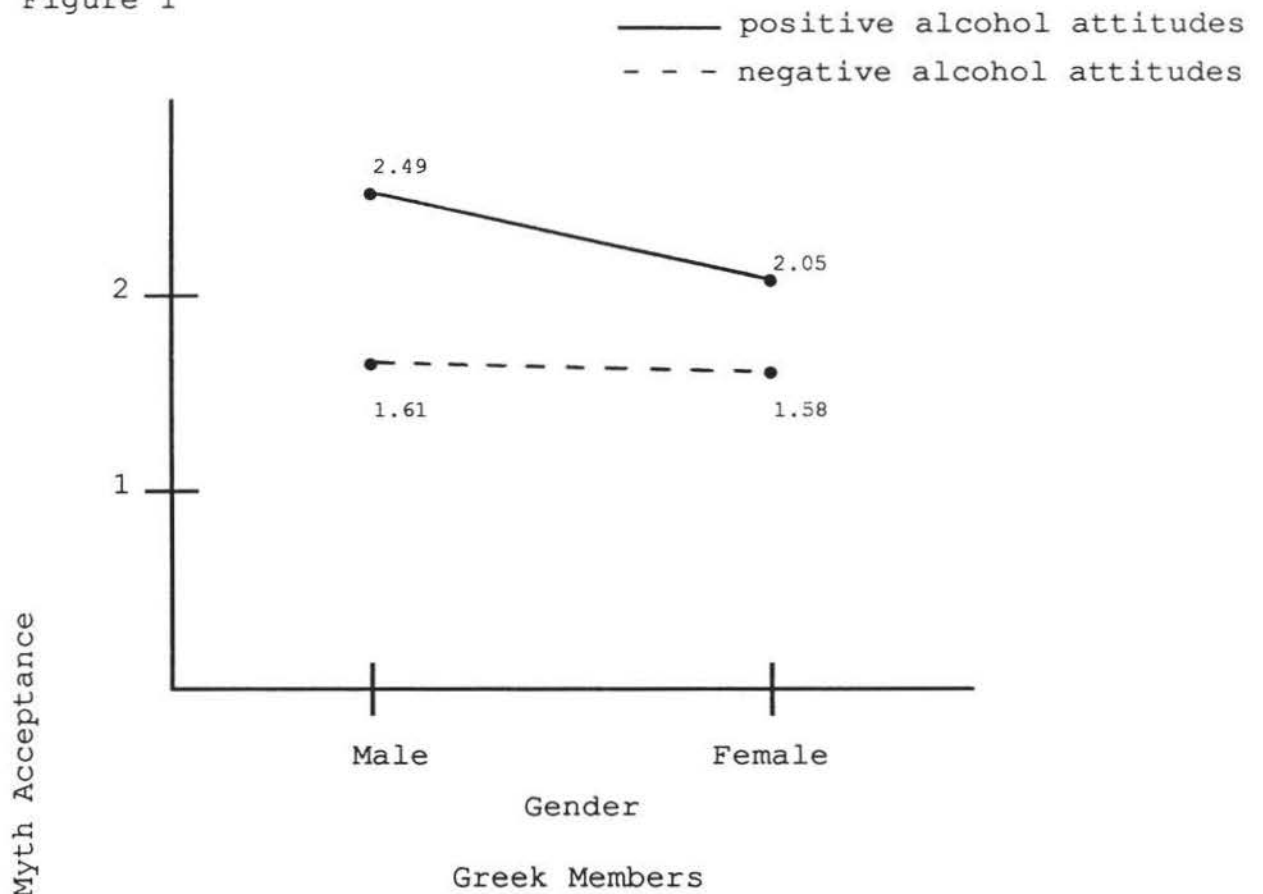


Figure 2

— w/o knowledge of rape survivor
- - - with knowledge of rape survivor

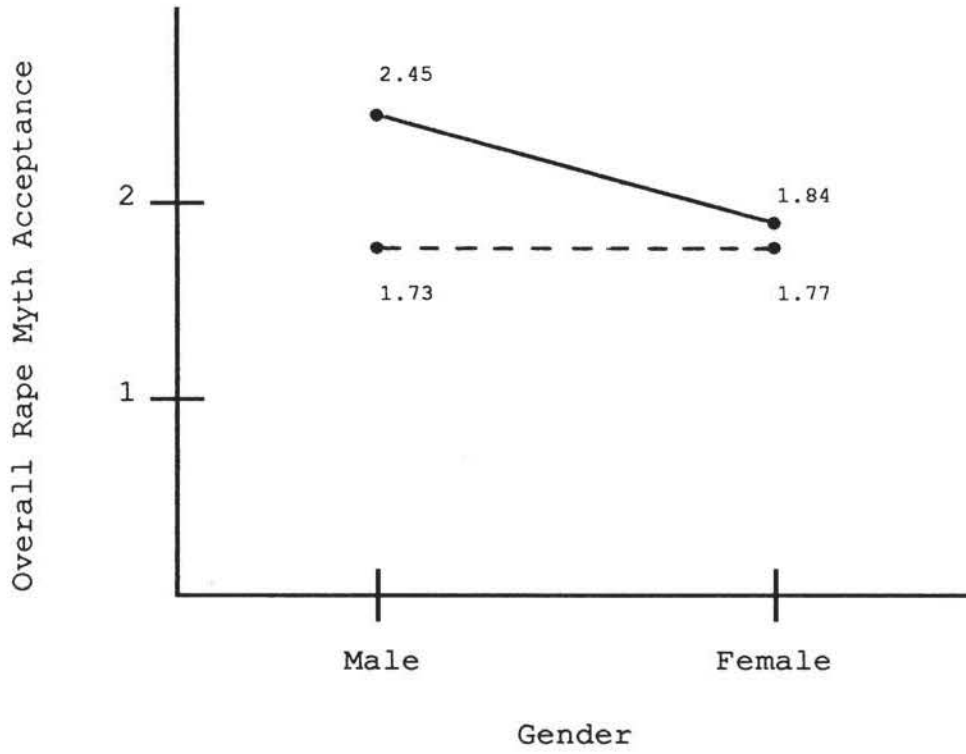


Figure 3

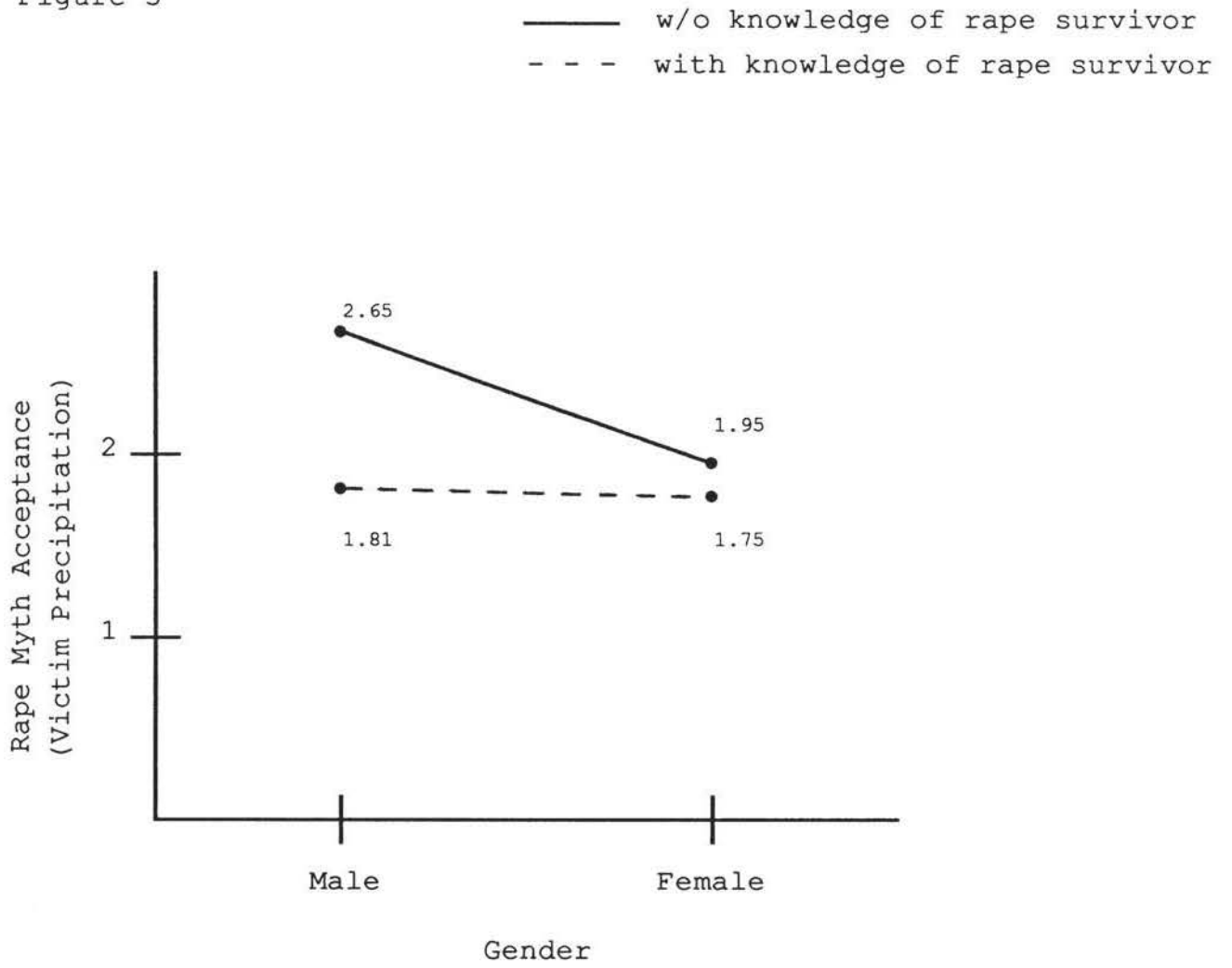


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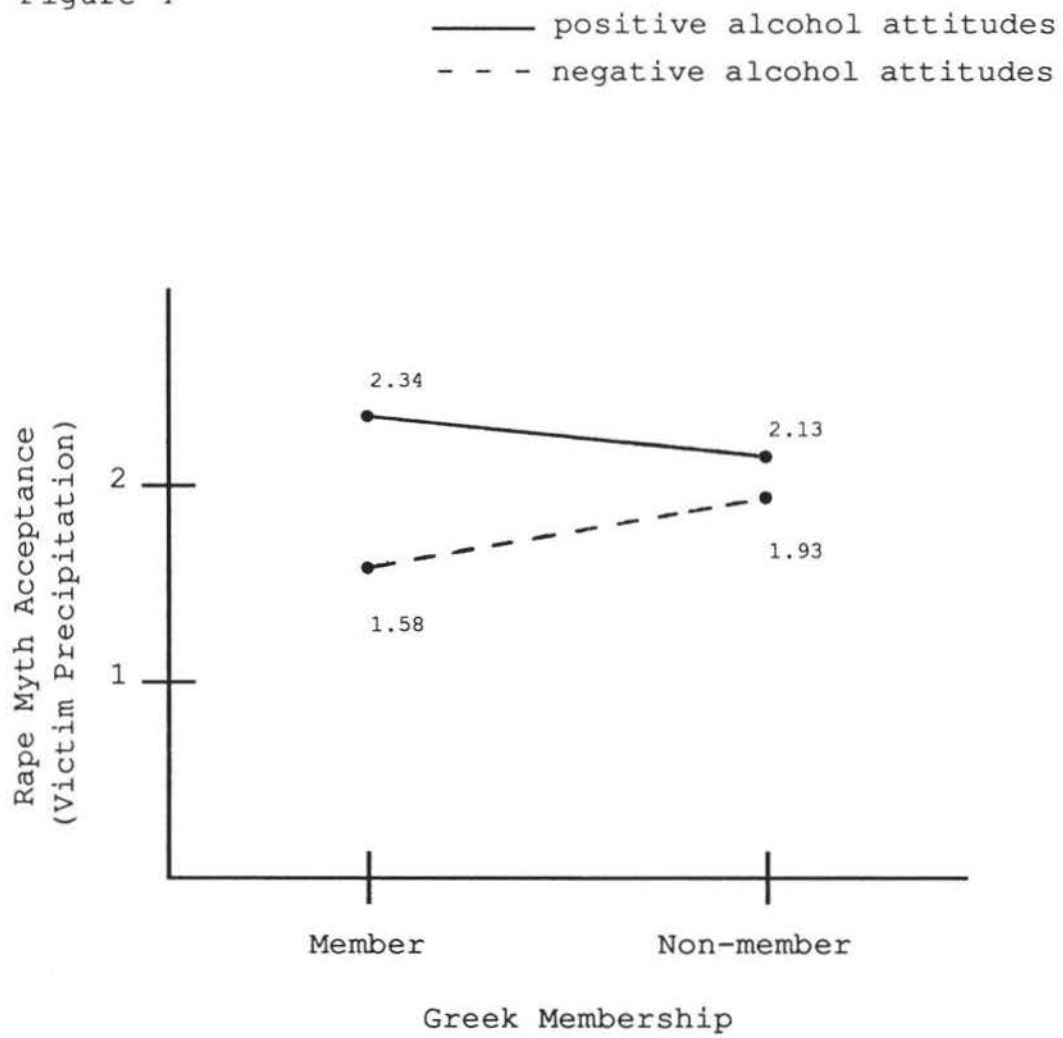


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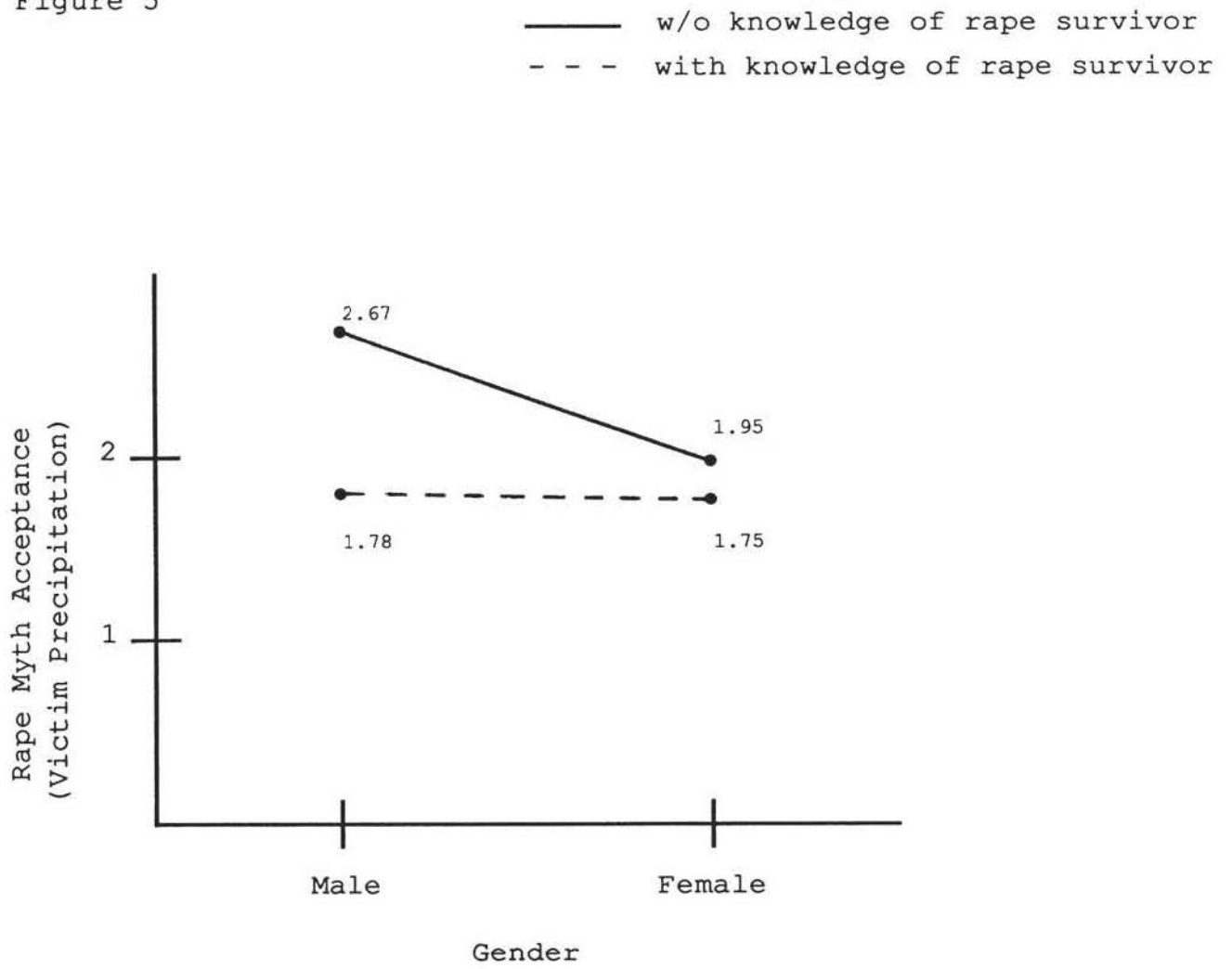
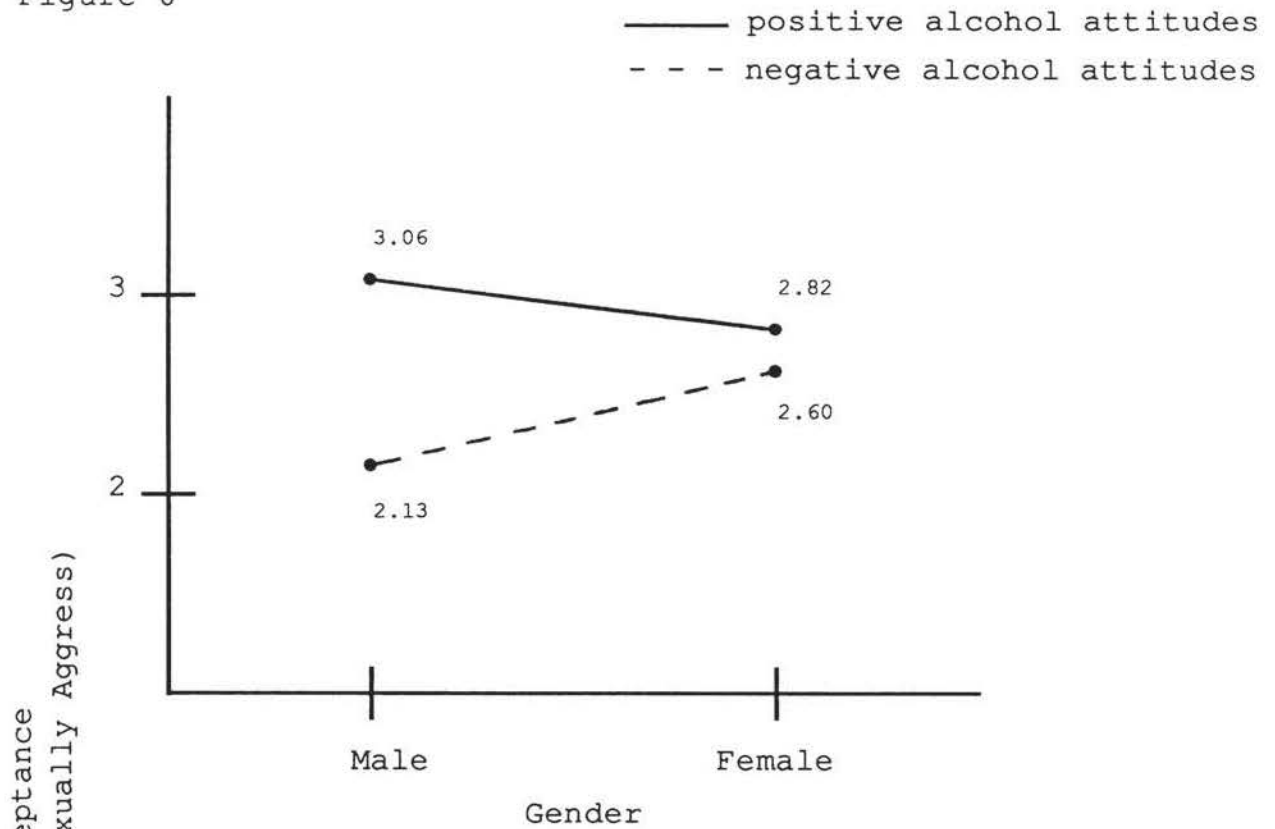
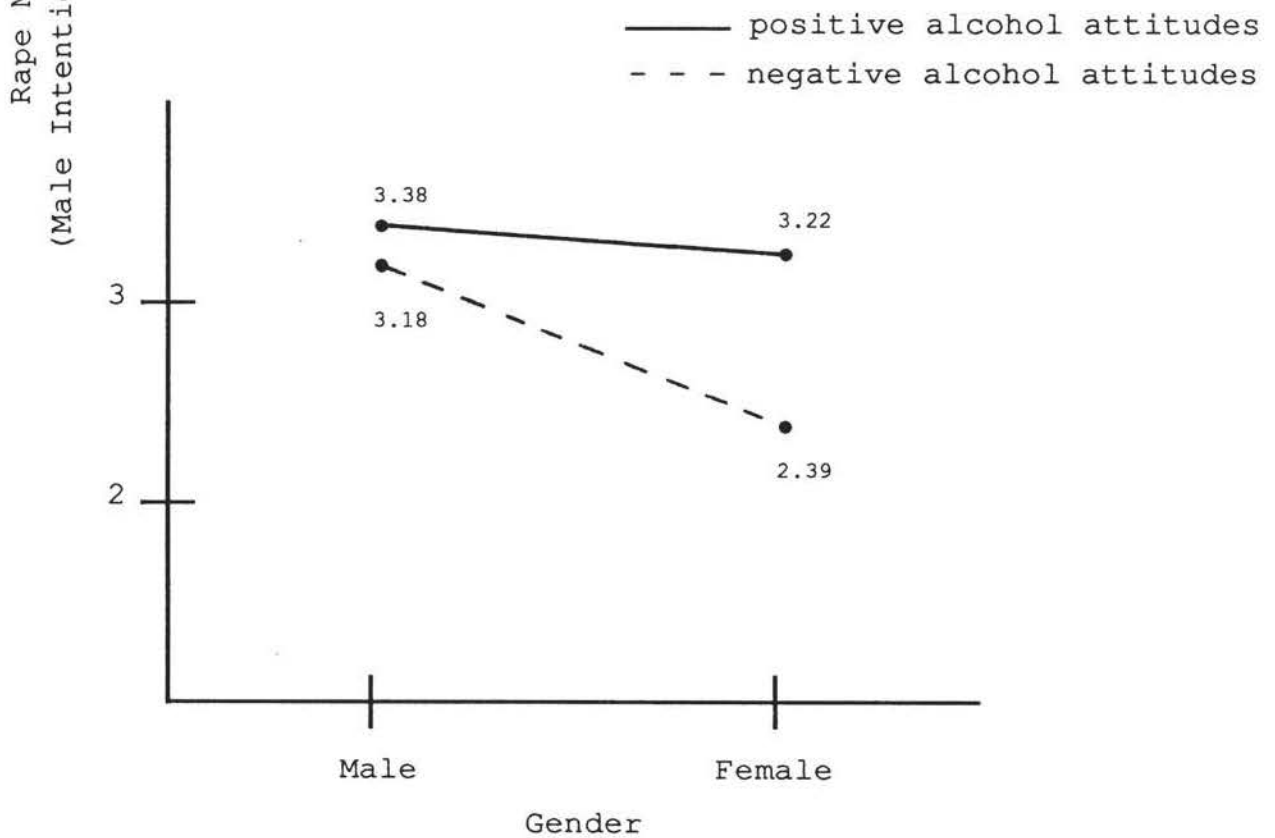


Figure 6



With Personal Knowledge of a Rape Survivor



Without Personal Knowledge of a Rape Survivor

Figure 7

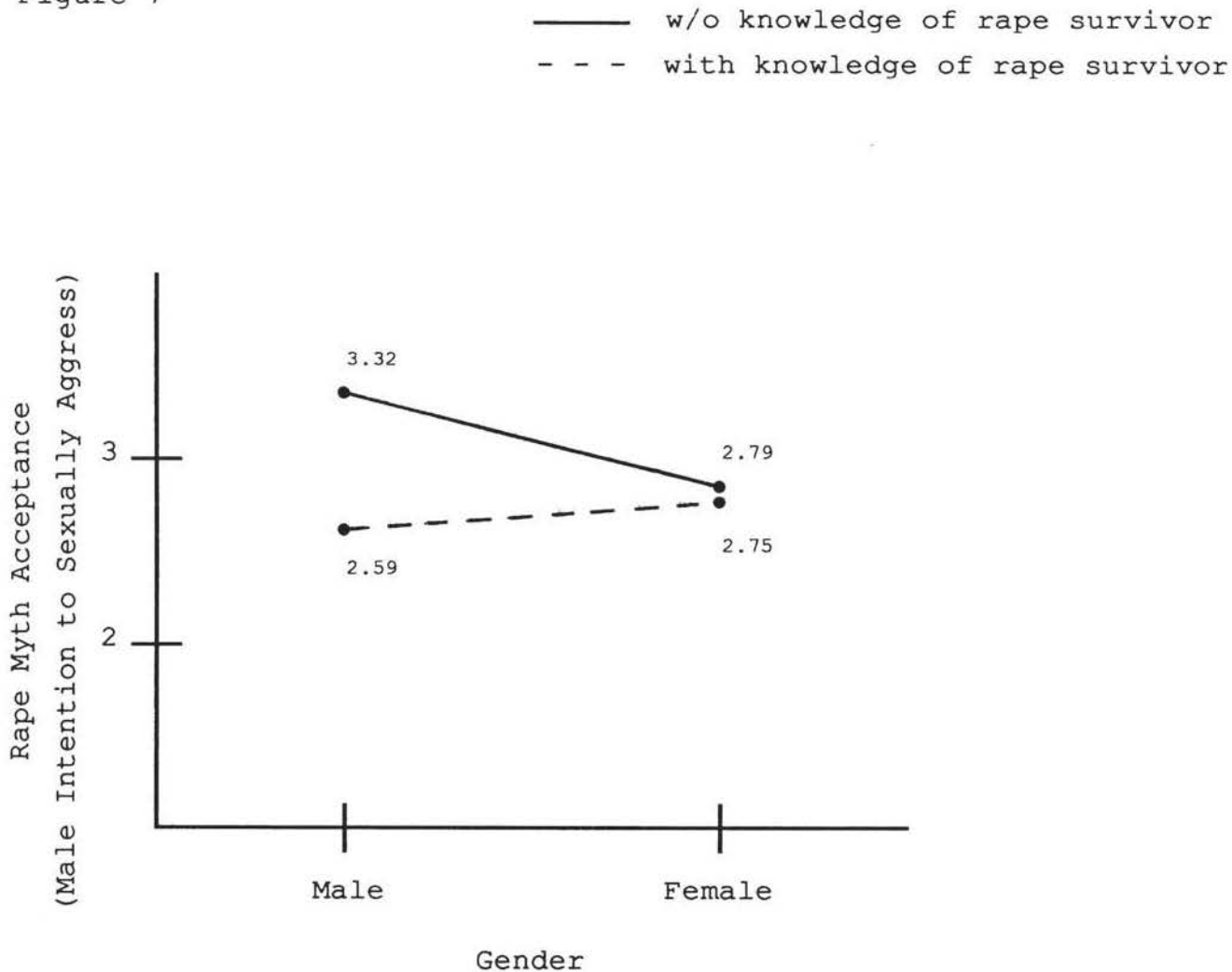


Figure 8

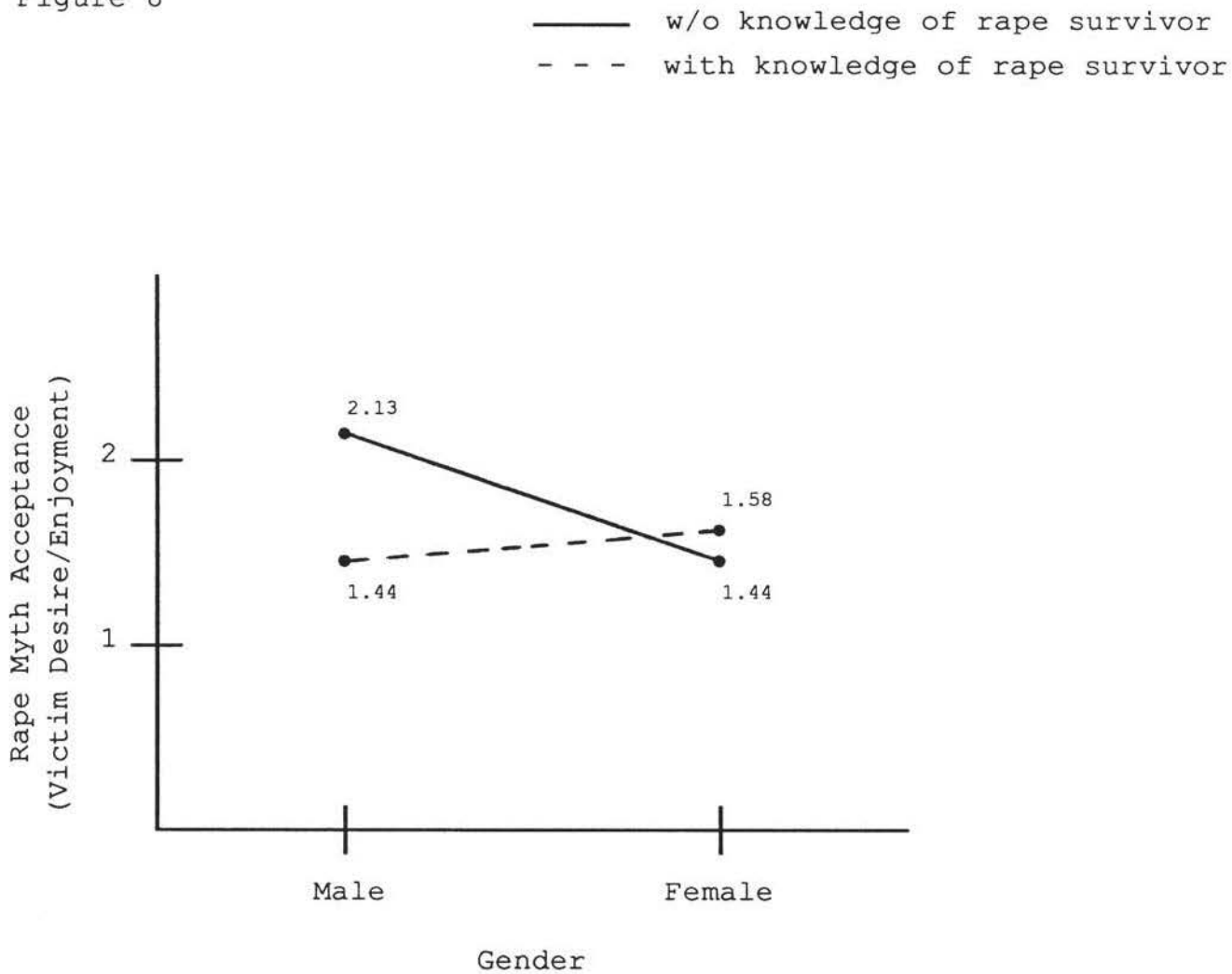


Figure 9

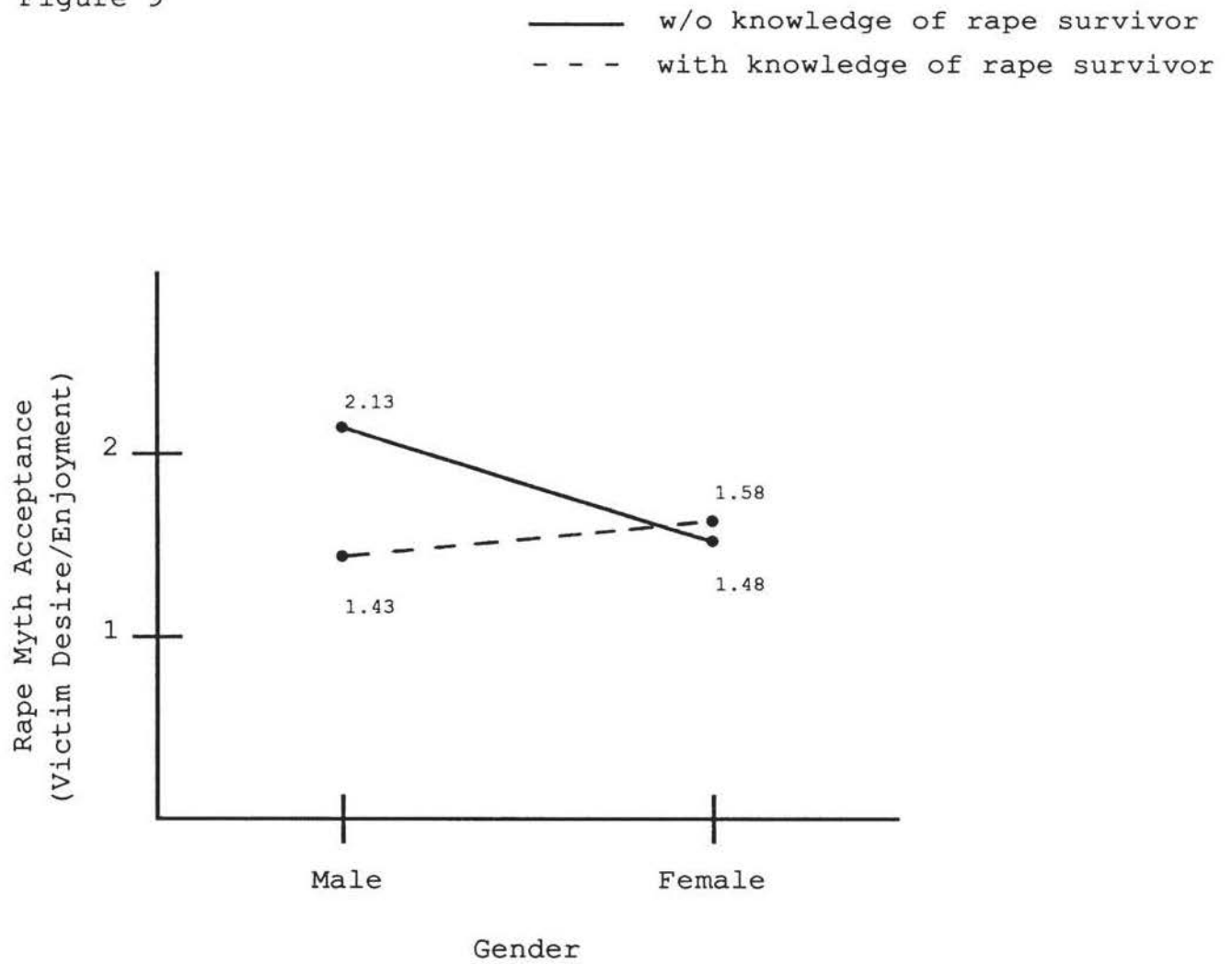


Figure 10

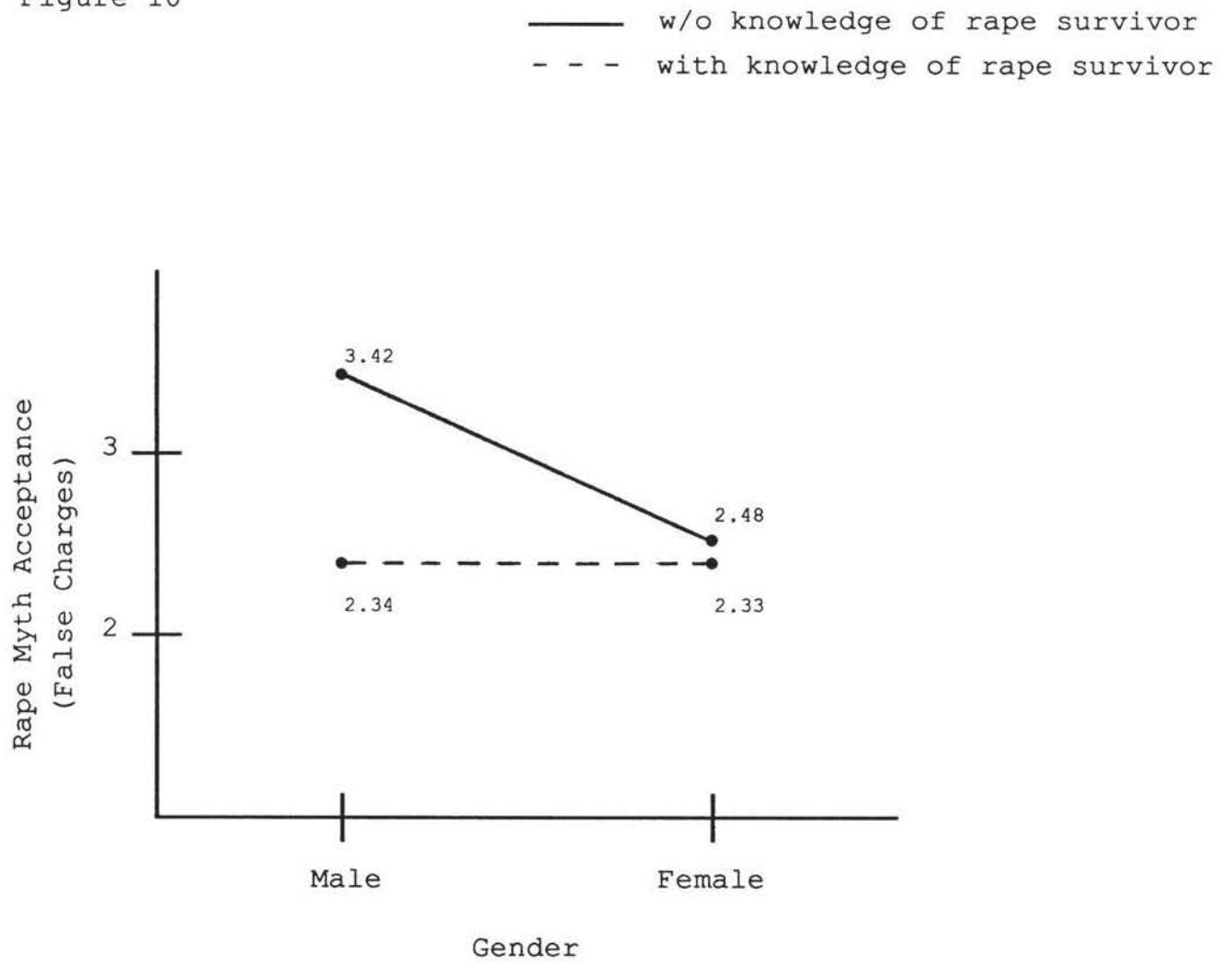


Figure 11

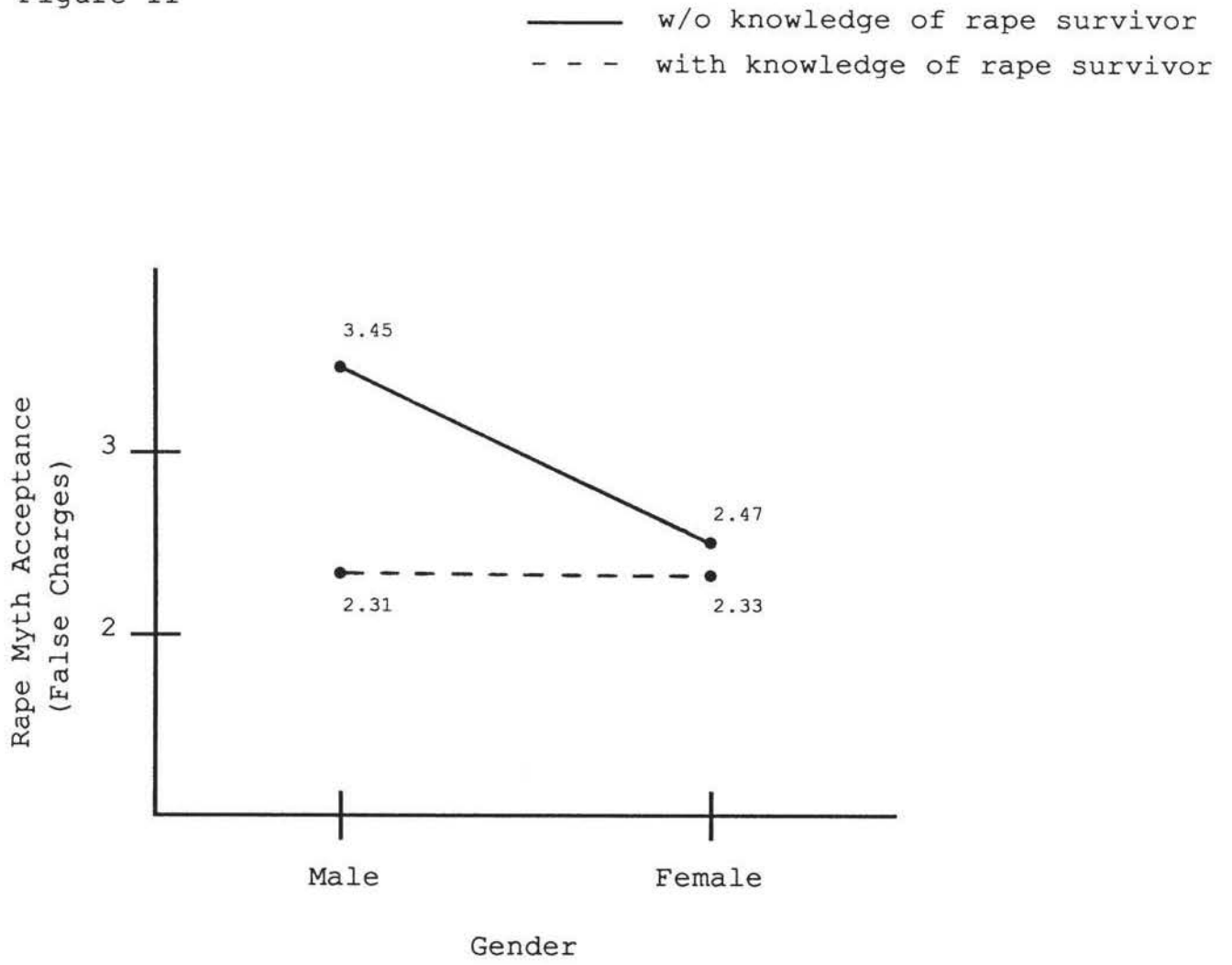


Figure 12

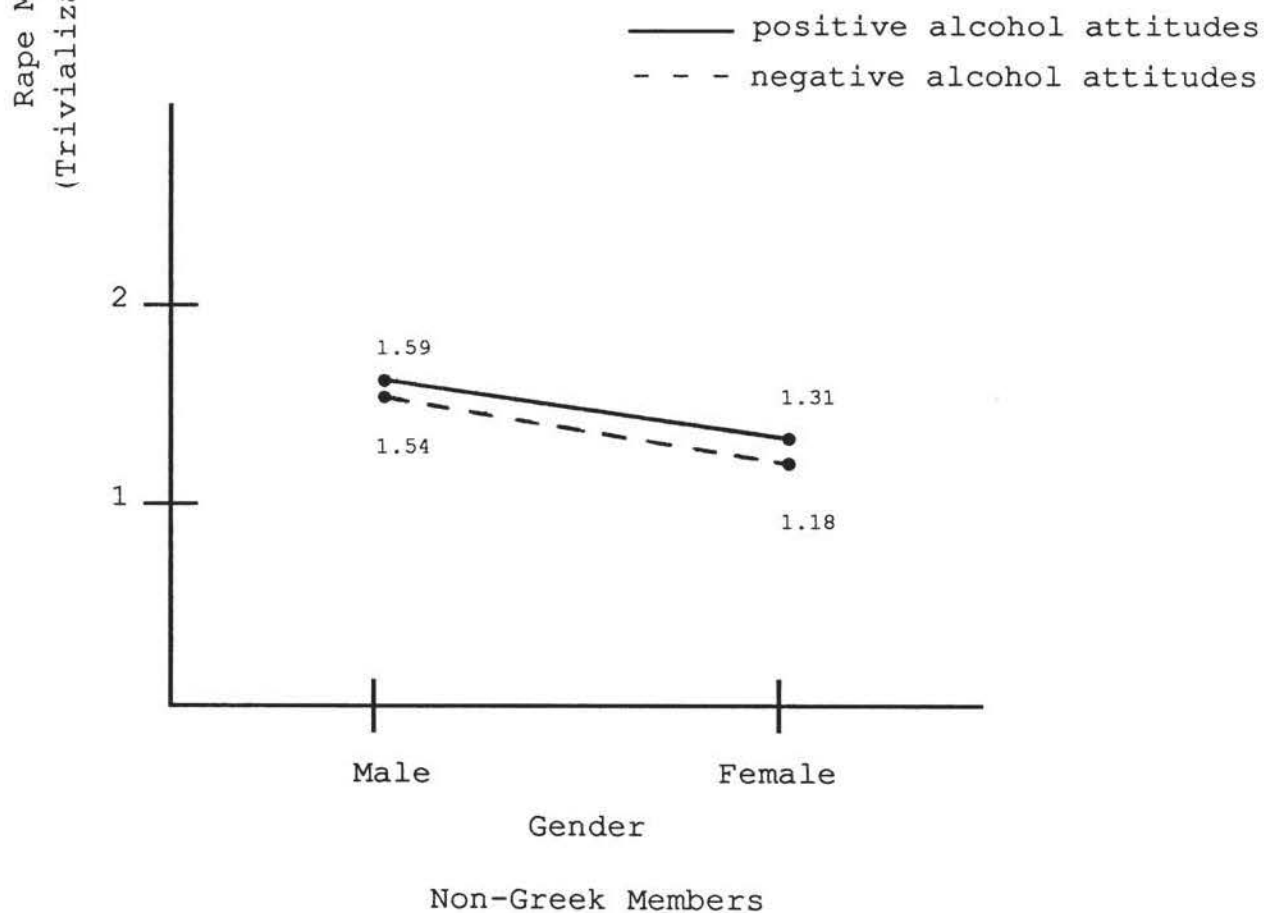
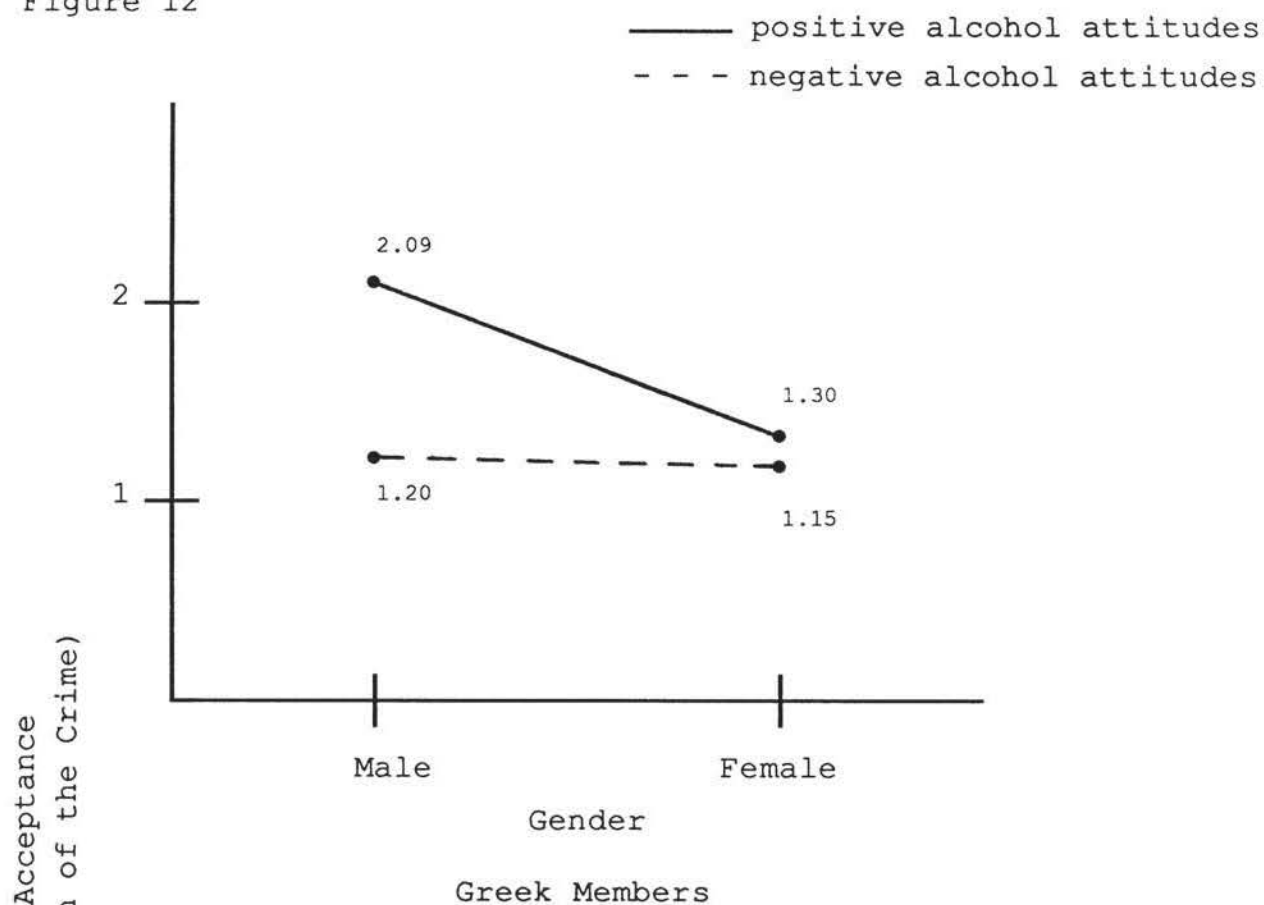


Figure 13

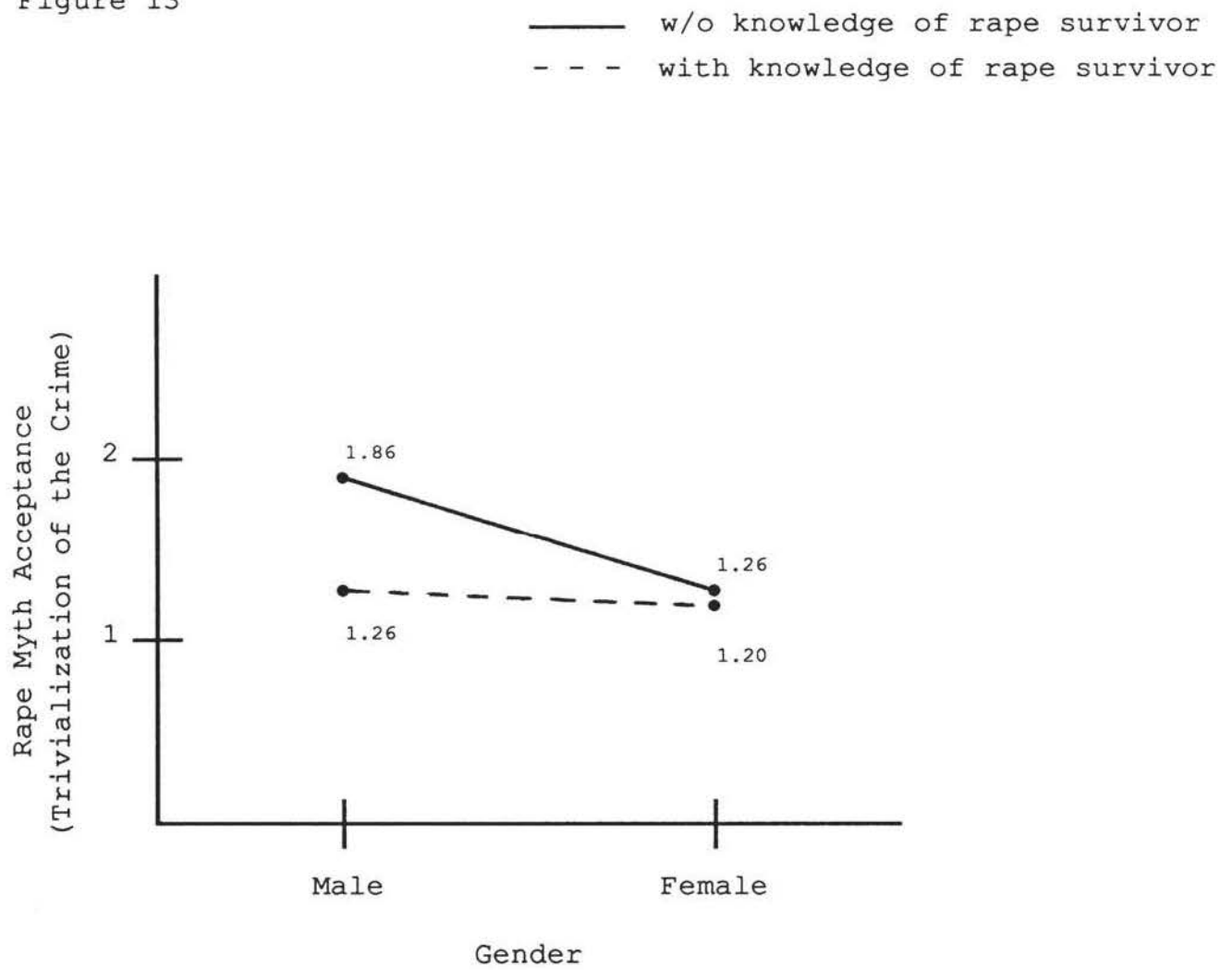


Figure 14

