

# Impact of rape participation program



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## Article Summary: Foubert, Newberry, &amp; Tatum

Foubert, J. D., Newberry, J. T., & Tatum, J. L. (2007). Behavior Differences Seven Months Later: Effects of a Rape Prevention Program. *The Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice* , 44, 728-749.

The authors of this article investigated the effects of male first year students' participation in the rape prevention program, The Men's Project, and compared groups of participants who joined a fraternity and those who did not join a fraternity against a control group of first year male students who did not participate in the rape prevention program. The present study included a longitudinal design aspect of surveying the participants in an additional post-test seven months after program participation. The authors' primary hypotheses were (1.) First year fraternity participants are more likely to commit sexually coercive acts than first year non-fraternity participants, (2.) First year fraternity participants who completed The Men's Program would commit fewer acts of sexual coercion than first year fraternity participants who did not complete The Men's Program, and (3.) Participants in The Men's Project would exhibit a significant decline in rape myth attitudes, both immediately after program completion, and seven months' post program. All hypotheses were confirmed, with the surprising finding that the rape myth attitudes of the non-fraternity experimental group participant's seven-month post-test did not maintain the decline that was seen among the fraternity members who had completed The Men's Project.

## Methodology

## Participants

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Study participants (N= 565) were first year full-time undergraduate male students, living on campus, at a midsized university in the southeast region of the United States. The participants were randomly assigned to either participate in the experimental group, attending The Men’s Project, or assigned to the control group, attending another benign program, each as an extension of the university orientation requirements. Fraternity recruitment took place after initial orientation, so random assignment to fraternities was not possible.

### Materials and Procedure

Male university graduate students received extensive training on The Men’s Project and administering the study. First year male undergraduate students were required by the university to attend The Men’s Program or another inequivalent one. The questionnaire utilized to measure attitudes toward sexual assault was the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA), short form. The Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) was given to each participant to assess participants’ prior experiences perpetrating sexually coercive acts. Participants were randomly assigned to four groups: Pretest, no pretest, participation in The Men’s Program, control group not participating in The Men’s Program. The graduate students conducted all surveys of the participants: Administering pretesting to one half of the participants that included the short form of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, the Sexual Experiences Survey, a short demographic survey; administering the posttest immediately following program completion to all participants; administering an additional post-test seven months later, at the end of the academic year to all participants. Participants were rewarded with a gift card

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for full participation in the study, but were only required by the university to attend the program. There was a 90% participation rate of the first-year male students.

Experimental Group Procedure. The language used by the trained administrators of The Men's Project was designed to evoke a sense of a workshop environment, created to empower the participants in how to *aid rape survivors*, as opposed to language that inferred the participant may be a potential rapist. Participants first watched a rape video involving a heterosexual male police officer who was raped by two heterosexual perpetrators and a detail of the hospital experience of the rape survivor. This established rape as a crime of power, and illustrated how the rape examination can be secondary victimization. This process was pivotal to diminish homosexual stereotypes of men raping men. The film is then followed by a series of instructions to develop the skill set for assisting rape survivors. The definition of consent is provided, then instruction for bystander intervention in potential sexually coercive abuse situations. A guided imagery exercise requires participants to imagine a female loved one being sexually assaulted, and the imagery includes a bystander who is not coming to the aid of the victim. This specific exercise is to create better empathy toward rape survivors. Participants are then asked to illustrate how they would intervene in a hypothetical scenario of a woman who is not able to give consent in a sexually coercive situation. A discussion of participants' considerations of their own behaviors with alcohol and intimate situations is followed by an illustration of the pervasiveness of sexual assault and violence against women, concluding The Men's Project presentation.

## Results

The authors' hypotheses were all confirmed. First year participants who joined a fraternity were significantly more likely to perform a sexually coercive act (8%), versus those students who were not fraternity members (2.5%). The second hypothesis that fraternity students who participated in The Men's Project would commit fewer sexual coercive acts, was confirmed as well. It was found to be significantly fewer than the fraternity members who did not participate in The Men's Project, translating into 6% of The Men's Project fraternity participants, compared to 10% of the fraternity students in the control group. The authors' third hypothesis had more complex findings. An analysis design of a two by two by three mixed ANOVA was computed. The results showed a statistically significant decline in rape myth acceptance from pre-test to post-test, and a significant long-term decline first-year fraternity students, however, those students who did not join fraternities experienced significantly less long term decline in reported rape myth acceptance, regardless of condition.

## Discussion

Limitations of this study are primarily concerned with testing effects and generalizability. This study was limited to one midsized college campus, focused on a sample of only first year male students. Future studies should provide varied regional environments, larger college populations, and include subgroups of populations other than fraternity and first year students.

The most compelling aspect of this study is that the authors have successfully provided quantitative evidence that a comprehensive college campus rape prevention program has provided measurable change in both attitudes and behaviors of a group of first year fraternity men, resulting in a reduction of sexually coercive behaviors. As discussed by the authors, the sexually coercive behaviors that were reported, were considered the least severe of unwarranted sexual contact, compared to sexual assaults and attempted rape among the sexually coercive acts reported by the fraternity participants in the control group. Furthermore, the implication of the seven-month post-test findings is that long term attitudinal change can be achieved by implementation of such a program. The findings that the non-fraternity participants did not show the same decline in rape myth acceptance attitudes gives way to future research to investigate the social dynamics that are in play within the fraternity that may be reinforcing the long-term decline in rape myth acceptance. Also, what social or emotional dynamics are or are not coming into play in the non-fraternity group that does not reinforce long term decline in rape myth acceptance? The findings of this study lay the foundation for future research, program development, and policy considerations.

## Reference

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