

Tesis Doctoral

**PERCEPCIÓN SOCIAL DE LAS AGRESIONES SEXUALES HACIA
MUJERES:**

EL PAPEL DEL ALCOHOL Y LOS MITOS SOBRE LA VIOLACIÓN

**SOCIAL PERCEPTION OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AGAINST WOMEN:
THE ROLE OF ALCOHOL AND RAPE MYTHS**

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Granada, Febrero de 2012

Editor: Editorial de la Universidad de Granada
Autor: Mónica Romero Sánchez
D.L.: GR 1893-2012
ISBN: 978-84-902-8078-2

UNIVERSIDAD DE GRANADA

FACULTAD DE PSICOLOGÍA

Departamento de Psicología Social

**PERCEPCIÓN SOCIAL DE LAS AGRESIONES
SEXUALES HACIA MUJERES:
EL PAPEL DEL ALCOHOL
Y LOS
MITOS SOBRE LA VIOLACIÓN**

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*“La violación entró en el Derecho por la puerta trasera
como si fuera un crimen contra la propiedad de algunos hombres por otros hombres.
Las mujeres, por supuesto, fueron consideradas la propiedad”*

Susan Brownmiller

*“He comprendido con claridad que todo lo que había vivido
como neurosis personal, enfermedad personal, era, en cambio,
el síntoma del desasosiego y el sufrimiento de todas las mujeres”*

Lea Melandri

*“As long as there is rape...there is not going to be any peace or justice
or equality or freedom. You are not going to become what you want to become
or who you want to become. You are not going to live in the world you want to live in”*

Andrea Dworkin

Agradecimientos/Acknowledgments

El trabajo realizado durante estos cuatro años se “resume” en las poco más de trescientas páginas que recoge esta Tesis Doctoral. Lo aprendido y lo vivido durante este proceso no sería capaz de resumirlo. Son muchas las personas que han formado parte de dicho proceso, y a todas ellas intentaré agradecerse, aún a sabiendas de que las palabras quedarán cortas:

A mis tutores, **Jesús López Megías y Miguel Moya Morales**. Gracias a ellos esta Tesis doctoral es hoy día un hecho y no una posibilidad. Gracias por haberos convertido en la guía de mis pasos durante el transcurso de este trayecto, por haberlo hecho sin vacilar mostrándome siempre el mejor camino. Lo aprendido gracias a vosotros trasciende estas páginas.

Gracias al profesor **Hugo Carretero Dios** esta Tesis doctoral es un poco más cierta, un poco más precisa. Todo lo enseñado durante más de nueve años me permiten ser hoy día más crítica, más reflexiva, más exhaustiva, más inconformista con mi trabajo. Gracias por escucharme y apoyarme durante este tiempo.

To Barbara Krahé, thank you very much for giving me part of your time along these years, and for doing it with so much kindness. I really appreciate your work, your thoroughness, your ideas and your enthusiasm for the research.

Un agradecimiento especial a todas las personas que componen el **grupo de investigación** del que formo parte. Gracias a los profesores por estar tan pendientes de nosotros, por brindarnos vuestra ayuda siempre que la necesitamos, por estimular nuestro conocimiento y hacernos crecer poco a poco. Sin dudar, a mis **compañeros**, con especial cariño. Gracias por haber compartido sueños, experiencias, risas, lágrimas, esperanzas y desesperanzas. Gracias por enseñarme tantas cosas.

No puedo dejar de agradecer la colaboración de todas las personas que han aceptado participar voluntariamente en nuestros estudios. A pesar del tiempo robado, de las molestias, de la insistencia, lo habéis hecho siempre con agrado. Sinceramente, gracias. Sin vosotros este trabajo no se podría haber llevado a cabo.

Más allá de lo académico, estos agradecimientos van dirigidos a una parte muy importante de mi vida: mis amigos y familia. A ellos van dedicadas las siguientes líneas:

A **Jesús**, más que un “maestro”, un amigo. Tu calor humano, tu forma de estar en la vida, de posicionarte ante tantas cosas me han alentado siempre a continuar. Gracias, no olvido lo vivido ni lo cambio a pesar de los contratiempos que a veces nos acompañaron.

Pili, amiga, ya ha llegado. Lo hemos conseguido. Gracias mil por estar siempre al otro lado del teléfono, por las interminables horas de conversación, por

compartir tus pensamientos y escuchar las míos. Los pasitos que hemos dados juntas me han ayudado a crecer.

A **Rocío**, parte de mis razones de ser. ¡Qué suerte aprender a “vivir” teniéndote cerca!

Gracias **Eva**, gracias por convertirte en un estímulo personal. No concibo haber recorrido este camino sin que lo adornaras de palabras, de poemas, de versos compartidos. *“Soy la que soy,/casualidad inconcebible/ como todas las casualidades”*.

Con especial afecto a **Manu**, por regalarme minutos de su talento y engrandecer esta tesis.

A **Hu-go**...por ponerle guiones a mi vida. *“And so it is, just like you said it would be, life goes easy on me, most of the time, and so it is.....”*

Sin dudarlo, a mis **amigos y amigas**. Algunos lleváis toda una vida a mi lado, creciendo juntos y compartido infinidad de momentos; a otros os he ido encontrando durante estos últimos cuatro años, listos y preparados para recuperar el tiempo “perdido”. Gracias mil por la infinidad de “regalos” que me dais a diario.

A mis **hermanas**, Cristina y Jéssica. Gracias, gracias por regalarme la certeza de contar con vosotras incondicionalmente. Por saber que, aún en la distancia, seguimos jugando juntas, muy juntas, agarradas de la mano para no separarnos nunca. Os quiero.

A mis puntos cardinales, mis **padres**. Da igual lo que pueda escribir, lo que pueda decir, lo que pueda sentir. Nada me basta para agradeceros tanto.

Finalmente, a ti, **Alicia**. A todas las “Alicias” de este mundo. Vuestro dolor forma parte de mi dolor. Espero que algún día dejemos de sentirlo.

Soy y estoy gracias a vosotros....

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PLANTEAMIENTO GENERAL

OVERVIEW

Of the different types of violence exerted by men against women, sexual violence is one of the most devastating and humiliating forms. This type of violence affects many women regardless of their social status, level of education and origin. Sexual violence has physical and psychological consequences that can be personal (Ullman, Starzynski, Long, Mason & Long, 2008) and social (United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2011), fracturing communities and paralyzing development.

Sexual violence can manifest itself in different ways, from verbal abuse, harassment and sexual coercion to sexual assault and rape. It usually takes place in the context of relationships between people who know each other (friends, partners or ex-partners) (Abbey, McAuslan & Ross, 1998). It is difficult to obtain exact figures on the occurrence of sexual violence, among other reasons, because it is one of the least reported crimes. Yet, its global prevalence is estimated to range between 10% and 33% (Organización Mundial de la Salud, 2002; Watts & Zimmerman, 2002); in fact, it is estimated that one in every four women will experience sexual violence in her lifetime (e.g., Hakimi, Hayati, Marlinawati, Winkvist & Ellsberg, 2001; United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2011).

Despite the high prevalence of sexual violence and the growing number of cases reported in the last few years, there is a strong gap between cases reported by victims and resulting sentences. This phenomenon is known in the literature as the “justice gap” (Temkin & Krahe, 2008). The justice gap has been studied in Social Psychology, which has shown the existence of an underlying attitudinal problem. People’s perceptions and judgments on episodes of rape and sexual assault are influenced by stereotypical beliefs and attitudes about victims, perpetrators and the sexual incident itself. This leads to the

attribution of blame to the victim, the exoneration of the perpetrator and a decrease in the estimated importance and seriousness of the event (Horvath & Brown, 2009; Jordan 2004; Koss, 2000; Ullman, 1996). Perceivers' acceptance of "rape myths" has been identified as a key factor in their perception of incidents of sexual assault (see Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler & Viki, 2009; Littleton & Axsom, 2003; Temkin & Krahe, 2008; Pollard, 1992, for a review). In addition, other factors related to the situation (e.g., the victim-perpetrator relationship), the victim (e.g., alcohol use, sexual past, respectability) and the perpetrator (e.g., alcohol use, social status) also influence people's assessments and judgments (Abbey, 2011a; Ben-David & Schneider, 2005; Girard & Senn, 2008; Horvath & Brown, 2009).

The main objective of the present doctoral dissertation was to contribute from a psychosocial approach to a better understanding of the factors that influence people's judgments on episodes of sexual violence. The research particularly focused on studying two of these variables: alcohol and rape myths, since both have shown to be key in such assessments (Abbey, 2011b; Bohner et al., 2009; Finch & Munro, 2005; Temkin & Krahe, 2008). We explored how the presence of alcohol, both when it is consumed by the victim and when it is strategically used by the perpetrator, influence the attribution of blame to the victim and the estimated seriousness of the incident. We also explored the influence of the perceiver's acceptance of rape myths on such assessments. All these effects were explored in the context of the sexual assaults that occur in the context of sporadic relationships among youth. In addition, given that most cases of sexual assault are perpetrated by men against women, the present study focused on analyzing this categorization of victim and perpetrator (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006).

The present doctoral dissertation is structured into four sections or chapters. The first section approaches the existing literature on sexual violence against women from a psychosocial point of view, highlighting the context of sexual assault. There is a special focus on the factors related to the occurrence and perception of sexual assault, particularly the role of alcohol and the perceiver's ideology – rape myths, in this case. Chapter 2 includes the main objectives and hypotheses that form the basis of the studies performed. Chapter 3 presents seven studies that form the empirical part of the doctoral dissertation. Finally, Chapter 4 presents the main conclusions and theoretical and practical implications derived from the findings.

Given that the studies of this dissertation were written with the intention of being published, the reader will find a repetition of the concepts, explanations and theories they contain. In compliance with the requirements of the European Doctorate of the University of Granada, some sections were written in Spanish while others were written in English.

CAPÍTULO 1:
INTRODUCCIÓN
INTRODUCTION

1. CONCEPTUALIZACION Y MAGNITUD DE LA VIOLENCIA SEXUAL HACIA LA MUJER

1.1. Contextualizando la violencia sexual hacia la mujer

A lo largo de la historia de la humanidad la mujer ha sido objeto de la dominación masculina en prácticamente todos los ámbitos en los que transcurre la vida de una persona. Dicha dominación ha oscilado y oscila a través de distintos niveles y esferas, desde la consideración de la mujer como el sexo débil e inferior hasta su confinamiento en la esfera de lo privado o el reparto desigual de funciones y responsabilidades. Esta supremacía masculina no ha perdurado en el vacío sino que ha sido apoyada y se ha visto acrecentada por la cultura patriarcal existente en las sociedades pasadas y contemporáneas. Es en esta cultura donde el concepto de dominación masculina se encuentra estrechamente vinculado al de violencia masculina, ya que ésta constituye una de las herramientas más rápidas para conseguir ejercer control en determinadas situaciones e imponer la voluntad sobre el más débil (Alberdi y Matas, 2002).

Las formas en las que la violencia masculina hacia la mujer ha sido, y continúa siendo ejercida, son múltiples (violencia doméstica, feminicidio, mutilación genital femenina, trata de mujeres, infanticidio de niñas, acoso sexual, prostitución forzada, o violencia sexual, entre otras) (Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2006) y no se restringen a un ámbito o comunidad concreta sino que afectan a cualquier edad, clase social, raza o cultura, convirtiéndose en un aspecto estructural en la organización del sistema social imperante. Mediante el ejercicio de estas formas de violencia la sociedad “garantiza” posiciones desiguales para hombres y mujeres, concediendo, en la mayoría de los casos, al hombre la figura de dominador y a la mujer la de subordinada. No

obstante, es necesario resaltar que la dominación masculina no solo se consigue con la violencia física, sino que también la violencia simbólica ejerce un papel crucial, desplegándose a través de ideologías, sentimientos y creencias (Bourdieu, 2000), aceptadas y sostenidas tanto por los dominados como por los dominadores. Dicha violencia simbólica es entendida por el sociólogo Pierre Bourdieu (2000) como la “violencia amortiguada, insensible e invisible para sus propias víctimas, que se ejerce esencialmente a través de los caminos puramente simbólicos de la comunicación y del conocimiento, del reconocimiento o, en último término, del sentimiento” (p. 12).

Aunque pueda parecer que la violencia simbólica es menos dañina o perjudicial que la física, sus efectos son tanto o más devastadores ya que promueve y facilita la adquisición de roles diferenciados y estereotipados para hombres y mujeres, a la vez que legitima el uso de la violencia física cuando dichos roles son transgredidos. Más aún, el poder de la violencia simbólica no solo afecta a aquellos que puedan verse directamente implicados en una situación de violencia física o psicológica, sino que también se extiende al resto de personas que conforman el sistema social. Sirva como ejemplo el papel que la violencia sexual ejerce sobre todas las mujeres, convirtiéndolas en víctimas indirectas de este delito al sembrar un temor constante sobre la posibilidad de sufrirlo (Brownmiller, 1975). Es más, tal y como se propone desde planteamientos feministas, este tipo de violencia puede funcionar como una herramienta de control social a través de la cual los hombres ejerzan su poder sobre las mujeres, sometiéndolas a un estado de temor continuado (Brownmiller 1975; ver también Griffin, 1979). En este sentido, investigaciones empíricas confirman que el miedo a ser violadas es una realidad diaria para muchas mujeres, quienes ven limitada su libertad, reduciéndose

consecuentemente su calidad de vida (Dobash y Dobash, 1992; Gordon, Riger, LeBailly y Heath, 1980)

De los distintos tipos de violencia masculina que se han ejercido sobre las mujeres, una de las formas más devastadoras y humillantes ha sido precisamente la violencia sexual, ya que “no solo es una de las mayores violaciones de los derechos humanos que existen hoy día, sino que también destruye vidas, fractura comunidades y paraliza el desarrollo” (United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2011). Debido a ello, numerosas investigaciones se han centrado en estudiar las consecuencias que provoca en sus víctimas, constatándose problemas de ansiedad y depresión (Elliott, Mok, y Briere, 2004), auto-percepción negativa (Kaukinen y DeMaris, 2005), trastorno de estrés postraumático (Cascardi, Riggs, Hearst-Ikeda, y Foa, 1996; Kilpatrick y Resnick, 1993), intentos de suicidio (Davidson, Hughes, George, y Blazer, 1996; Kilpatrick et al., 1985), problemas con la bebida y abuso de drogas ilegales (Kaukinen y DeMaris, 2005, Ullman 2003), disminución de la autoestima y de la satisfacción sexual (Van Berlo y Ensink, 2000), entre otros.

Sin embargo, a pesar de la gravedad y del daño que supone para las mujeres esta forma de violencia masculina, no siempre ha sido reconocida como un problema social, relegándola a la esfera de lo privado e invisibilizando su existencia. Motivos como el temor a denunciar, el desconocimiento del carácter delictivo de las relaciones sexuales no consentidas, el vacío legal en algunos países o el considerar algunas formas de violencia sexual como pertenecientes a la esfera de lo “privado” (e.g., violación marital) han contribuido notablemente a su ocultación.

Es a partir de la década de los setenta del siglo pasado, con la “segunda ola” feminista en defensa de los derechos de las mujeres, cuando comienza a cambiar el

análisis y reconocimiento de la violencia sexual como problema social, pasando así de la esfera de lo privado a su reconocimiento público. Sin duda, tanto las demandas desarrolladas por el Movimiento de Liberación de las Mujeres (1970) como la obra de Susan Brownmiller (1975), "*Against our Will: men, women and rape*", contribuyeron notablemente a desvelar la prevalencia real de esta violencia y, por ende, a despertar el interés por su estudio. De esta forma, desde el ámbito de la psicología, la sociología, la antropología, el feminismo, el derecho y disciplinas afines, comenzaron a surgir numerosas investigaciones, todas ellas encaminadas a explorar los factores que la rodean. Uno de los primeros objetivos de dichas investigaciones fue la delimitación exacta del concepto de violencia sexual; sin duda, contar con una definición que recogiera las características más significativas de este delito permitiría obtener datos más ajustados sobre su prevalencia y por lo tanto ayudaría a visibilizarlo.

1.2. Conceptualización de la violencia sexual hacia la mujer

Como ya se ha indicado, desde que al inicio de los setenta surgiera el interés por el estudio de la violencia sexual, han sido numerosas las definiciones planteadas por diferentes ámbitos y disciplinas, para referirse a este tipo de violencia ejercida contra la mujer. En sus primeras formulaciones, como señala Gavey (2005), diversas autoras feministas propusieron una definición amplia, que permitía abarcar el variado rango de formas de violencia sexual (desde tocamientos sexuales no deseados hasta las agresiones sexuales con penetración), posibilitando de esta forma la obtención de índices de prevalencia más ajustados a la realidad. No obstante, a pesar de estos primeros esfuerzos, durante años siguieron utilizándose definiciones concretas y restringidas, que se correspondían con el tratamiento legal y jurídico de los casos,

limitándose a los episodios de violación (Gavey, 2005). Sin embargo, investigaciones posteriores sobre prevalencia, como las llevadas a cabo por Koss (e.g., Koss, Gidycz y Wisniewski, 1987) o Gavey (1991a, 1991b) desvelaron que el acto de violación no era la única forma de ejercer violencia sexual contra la mujer, sino tan sólo la más extrema de un continuo que comprende desde formas sutiles de coerción sexual, como besos o tocamientos sexuales no deseados, hasta acciones más graves de relaciones sexuales no consentidas. De forma paralela, trabajos como los de Kelly (1987, 1988a), con su propuesta de “continuo de violencia sexual”, los de Finkelhor e Yllo (1985, 1988) o Rusell (1982), sobre las violaciones sexuales ejercidas dentro del matrimonio, y los de Muehlenhard y Linton (1987), destacando el fenómeno de las agresiones sexuales en citas, permitieron comprender y situar el concepto de violencia sexual más allá del estereotipo de relación sexual no consentida que implica el uso de fuerza física por un extraño.

Como puede vislumbrarse de lo anterior, la conceptualización de la violencia sexual no ha estado exenta de polémica a lo largo del tiempo, siendo múltiples las definiciones y tratamientos utilizados. No obstante, a pesar de la amplia gama de propuestas surgidas, una de las más recientes y aceptadas en los últimos años ha sido la formulada por la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS, 2002), que define a la violencia sexual como:

“Todo acto sexual, la tentativa de consumar un acto sexual, los comentarios o insinuaciones sexuales no deseados, o las acciones para comercializar o utilizar de cualquier otro modo la sexualidad de una persona mediante coacción por otra persona, independientemente de la relación de ésta con la víctima, en cualquier ámbito, incluidos el hogar y el lugar de trabajo” (p. 149).

A nivel terminológico, también es importante distinguir entre tres conceptos que aún siendo diferentes, pueden confundirse con facilidad: violación, agresión sexual y abuso sexual. Para ello, en primer lugar, remitiremos a la definición que proporciona el Diccionario de la Real Academia de la Lengua Española (DRAE) (22ª Edición, 2001), según el cual la *violación* es el “delito consistente en violar (tener acceso carnal con alguien en contra de su voluntad o cuando se halla privado de sentido o discernimiento)”, la *agresión sexual* sería entendida como “aquella que por atentar contra la libertad sexual de las personas y realizarse con violencia o intimidación es constitutiva de delito” y el *abuso sexual* el “delito consistente en la realización de actos atentatorios contra la libertad sexual de una persona sin violencia o intimidación y sin que medie consentimiento”. Por otro lado, si nos fijamos en las definiciones que aporta la literatura especializada, encontramos que en general el término *agresión sexual* es utilizado para describir un amplio rango de actos sexuales forzados que incluyen desde tocamientos y besos no deseados hasta penetraciones anales, orales y/o vaginales, mientras que el término *violación* es reservado para referirse sólo a aquellas conductas sexuales que conllevan penetración anal, vaginal u oral y sin que medie el consentimiento de la víctima (Horvath y Brown, 2009).

Sin embargo, las diferenciaciones más extendidas entre las distintas formas de violencia sexual, no sólo en nuestro país sino en general en los países pertenecientes a contextos culturales y sociales semejantes al nuestro, son las establecidas a nivel legislativo en los distintos Códigos Penales. En este sentido, la definición legal de términos como violación, agresiones sexuales o abusos sexuales constituye el marco de referencia por el que cada país juzga los delitos de violencia sexual, estipulando qué criterios han de ser incluidos para que se considere el suceso con una u otra figura

jurídica. Entre dichos criterios legales destaca la ausencia de consentimiento por parte de la víctima como factor primordial para que una agresión de estas características sea considerada delito de violencia sexual (Temkin y Krahe, 2008).

No obstante, las figuras jurídicas sobre los delitos sexuales han ido experimentado variaciones temporales y geográficas, razón por la cual resulta bastante complicado realizar comparaciones estadísticas internacionales. Sirvan como ejemplo las modificaciones que en su tratamiento y definición legal han experimentado dentro del Código Penal español. En su formulación de 1973 los delitos sexuales quedaban encuadrados dentro de los “delitos contra la honestidad”, algo que no fue modificado hasta la reforma de la Ley Orgánica 3/1989, de 21 de junio, que pasó a considerarlos “delitos contra la libertad sexual”. Este mismo Código, en su artículo 429, distinguía entre *violación* y *agresión sexual*, definiendo la primera como “acceso carnal por vía vaginal o bucal haciendo uso de fuerza o intimidación, cuando la víctima se hallara privada de sentido o se abusara de su enajenación, o cuando ésta fuera menor de 12 años, sin necesidad de que concurren las circunstancias anteriores”. En el caso de la agresión sexual, el Código la diferenció de la violación por la no existencia de acceso carnal.

Ya en el 1995, la Ley Orgánica 10/1995 de 23 de noviembre, introdujo varias reformas importantes referidas a los delitos sexuales. Desapareció el concepto de violación quedando subsumido por el de agresión sexual, el cual se definió como un “atentado contra la libertad sexual de otra persona, con violencia o intimidación, con o sin acceso carnal”. Poco tiempo después, la Ley Orgánica 11/1999, de 30 de abril, de modificación del Título VIII del Código Penal, pasó a considerar toda violencia sexual como “*delitos contra la libertad e indemnidad sexuales*”, reapareciendo el delito de

violación para aquellas agresiones sexuales con penetración, ya sea con acceso carnal por cualquier vía (vagina, ano o boca) o introducción de objetos.

Finalmente, la Ley Orgánica 15/2003, de 25 de noviembre, llevó a cabo una amplia reforma del Código Penal, afectando igualmente al título VIII (referido a los delitos de libertad e indemnidad sexual). Entre otras novedades, se introducen modificaciones en los artículos 182 y 183, equiparando la introducción de miembros corporales al acceso carnal y a la introducción de objetos, de tal forma, que quien llevara a cabo estas acciones con violencia o intimidación, sería condenado como reo de violación.

Tras las sucesivas reformas y cambios experimentados en el Código Penal, podríamos resumir las definiciones legales y sanciones:

- La “agresión sexual” haría referencia a cualquier conducta ejercida contra la libertad e indemnidad sexual de otra persona, *con violencia o intimidación* y sin que exista consentimiento de la víctima, quedando sancionado con pena de prisión de uno a cuatro años (artículo 178).
- En cuanto al “abuso sexual”, comprendería igualmente aquellos actos que atenten contra la libertad e indemnidad sexual de otra persona, pero realizados *sin violencia o intimidación* y sin que medie el consentimiento de dicha persona (principalmente menores de trece años, personas privadas de sentido o de cuyo trastorno mental se abusare), oscilando la pena de prisión entre uno y tres años o consistiendo en una multa de dieciocho a veinticuatro meses (artículo 181).
- En cuanto al delito de “violación”, queda este constituido como los comportamientos anteriormente descritos (abuso o agresión sexual), siempre

que existiera acceso carnal por cualquier vía (vaginal, anal o bucal) mediante el pene o debido a la introducción de objetos, siendo la pena de prisión de seis a doce años (artículo 179).

Tras este acercamiento a la conceptualización de la violencia sexual queremos resaltar que, aunque tal y como hemos presentado, existen distintas formas tanto de ejercerla como de definirla, en la presente Tesis Doctoral hemos optado por el término “agresión sexual”, pero no en su acepción jurídica, sino tal y como habitualmente se utiliza en la literatura psicosocial (DeGue y DiLillo, 2005; Koss, 2005; White, Kadlec, Sechrist, 2006). Por tanto, al utilizar el término agresión sexual no nos estaremos refiriendo al concepto de agresión sexual incluido en el Código Penal español, el cual incorpora necesariamente el uso de violencia o intimidación, sino al significado usual en la literatura psicosocial, de “cualquier conducta ejercida con el fin de conseguir mantener contactos sexuales con otra persona en contra de su voluntad” (Krahé, 2001).

2. PREVALENCIA E INCIDENCIA DE LA VIOLENCIA SEXUAL HACIA LAS MUJERES

2.1. Estudios con población general

Numerosos estudios e informes transculturales han intentado conocer la prevalencia e incidencia de la violencia sexual hacia las mujeres (e.g., Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2003; Organización de las Naciones Unidas, 2006). Sin embargo, estimarla con exactitud ha resultado ser una tarea ardua debido a que la violencia sexual incorpora algunos de los delitos menos informados y denunciados (Kelly, Lovett y Regan, 2005; Temkin y Krahé 2008). No obstante, se estima que entre

el 10% y el 33% de las mujeres son víctimas de violencia sexual en algún momento de sus vidas (OMS 2002; Watts y Zimmerman, 2002), es decir, globalmente una de cada cuatro mujeres aproximadamente es sometida a un acto de esta naturaleza (e.g., Ellsberg, 1997; Hakimi, Hayati, Marlinawati, Winkvist, y Ellsberg, 2001; United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2011).

Concretamente, en España, según los datos ofrecidos por el Instituto de la Mujer (2009), el número total de delitos denunciados contra la libertad e indemnidad sexual de las mujeres durante el año 2009 ascendió a un total de 6.563, de los cuales 2.080 fueron considerados agresiones sexuales sin penetración y 1.315 agresiones sexuales con penetración (violaciones). En cuanto a cifras aportadas por algunos de los escasos estudios realizados en nuestro país sobre prevalencia de la violencia sexual en población general, García-Linares et al., (2005), en una muestra compuesta por 182 mujeres procedentes de Servicios y Centros de Ayuda a la Mujer de la Comunidad Valenciana, indicaron que, de las 75 mujeres que informaron haber sufrido algún tipo de violencia por parte de su pareja, alrededor del 75% indicaron haber sido forzadas a mantener relaciones sexuales con penetración vaginal. En la misma línea, Medina-Ariza y Barberet (2003) en un estudio realizado a nivel nacional, encontraron que el 11.48% de las 2.015 mujeres entrevistadas reconocieron haber sido víctimas de agresiones sexuales por parte de sus parejas o exparejas.

La violencia sexual suele suceder fundamentalmente en las relaciones que se establecen entre personas conocidas (amigos, parejas o ex parejas) (Abbey, McAuslan y Ross, 1998). En el caso concreto de las relaciones de pareja o maritales, según los datos aportados en el estudio multipaís realizado por la Organización Mundial de la Salud (OMS, 2002), los índices de prevalencia oscilan entre el 6% y el 59%. En esta línea,

diversos trabajos han indicado que este tipo de violencia ejercida en el seno de la pareja, no es infrecuente ni tampoco exclusiva de una región del mundo en particular. Por ejemplo, se ha encontrado que el 23% de las mujeres residentes en el norte de Londres informaron haber sido víctimas, alguna vez en su vida, de violación o intento de violación por parte de sus parejas. Cifras semejantes han sido encontradas en otras zonas: 23% en Guadalajara (México), 21.7% en León (Nicaragua), 22.5% en Lima (Perú), 14.2% en Inglaterra, Gales y Escocia (cifras combinadas) o 11.6% en Suiza (Ellsberg, 1997; Hakimi et al., 2001; Tjaden y Thoennes, 2000).

Pero la violencia sexual contra las mujeres no sólo se produce en el seno de la pareja, sino que también es común en otros escenarios. Así, el estudio realizado por la OMS (2006) mostró que el porcentaje de mujeres que habían sido víctimas de violencia sexual fuera de la pareja, después de los 15 años de edad, variaba desde menos del 1% en Etiopía y Bangladesh hasta el 10% y el 12% en Perú, Tanzania y Samoa. Cifras análogas son encontradas en países como Canadá, en el que el 11.6% de las mujeres entrevistadas denunciaron casos de violencia sexual fuera de la pareja o en Nueva Zelanda y Australia, donde alrededor del 10% y el 20% de las mujeres experimentaron diversas formas de violencia sexual (tocamientos sexuales no deseados, tentativa de violación y violación) por parte de alguien que no era su pareja.

2.2. Estudios con población universitaria

Aunque las agresiones sexuales suelen ocurrir en las distintas etapas de la vida, los datos demuestran que son especialmente frecuentes en la adolescencia y en la juventud (Abbey, Ross, McDuffie y McAuslan, 1996a; Bureau of Justice Statistics,

1995; Fisher, Cullen y Turner, 2000; Koss et al., 1987; Mohler-Kuo, Dowdall, Koss y Wechsler, 2004; Walby y Allen, 2004).

Uno de los primeros estudios que intentó conocer en profundidad la prevalencia de las agresiones sexuales entre población universitaria fue el llevado a cabo por Kirkpatrick y Kanin (1957), quienes investigaron una muestra compuesta por 291 mujeres pertenecientes a 22 universidades norteamericanas. Estos autores encontraron que el 28% de las universitarias declaró haber experimentado algún tipo de agresión sexual en citas con compañeros durante el año previo al estudio. En la misma línea, Koss et al. (1987) realizaron otra investigación con una muestra compuesta por 3817 mujeres y 2972 hombres, procedentes de 32 universidades de Estados Unidos. Para evaluar la incidencia de las experiencias sexuales no consentidas, utilizaron cuestiones específicas sobre comportamientos sexuales forzados, coerción o presión verbal con fines sexuales, intento de violación y violación. Sus resultados mostraron que desde los 14 años, un 15% de las mujeres reconocía haber experimentado algún acto que encajaba dentro de la definición legal de violación y un 12% había sido víctima de algún intento de violación. Igualmente, el 54% de las mujeres declararon haber experimentado alguna forma de agresión sexual. Por otra parte, el 57% de estas agresiones había ocurrido en citas con amigos o compañeros. Cifras análogas han sido halladas por otros investigadores en distintos países (véase, por ejemplo, Abbey, McAuslan, Zawacki, Clinton y Buck, 2001; Girard y Senn, 2008; Moler-Kuo et al. 2004; Sipsma, Carroble, Montorio y Everaerd, 2000; Testa, VanZile-Tamsen, Livingston, y Koss, 2004). En Canadá, un estudio llevado a cabo con jóvenes de 15 a 19 años, comprobó que el 54% de ellas habían sufrido “coerción sexual” en una cita (Price, Byers, Sears, Whelan y Saint-Pierre, 2000). En Estados Unidos, la tasa media de prevalencia de agresiones

sexuales es del 22% para los estudiantes de nivel secundario y del 32% para los estudiantes del primer nivel universitario (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2000). En España, los índices de prevalencia son similares. Por ejemplo, Sipsma et al., (2000) señalaron que el 33.2% de las estudiantes universitarias de su muestra informaron haber sido víctimas de algún tipo de coerción sexual. Así mismo, Hernández y González (2009), en un estudio realizado también con estudiantes universitarias, informan que el 12.6% de ellas reconocen haber sido víctimas de relaciones sexuales forzadas con penetración por parte de su pareja actual o pasada. Por otro lado, Fuertes, Ramos, De la Orden, Del Campo y Lázaro (2005) llevaron a cabo un estudio en el que encontraron que un 15% de los 196 estudiantes universitarios que participaron, admitieron haber forzado sexualmente a mujeres. En la misma línea, Fuertes, Ramos, Martínez, Palenzuela y Tabernero (2006), en un trabajo con 477 estudiantes universitarias, constataron que el 30.9% de ellas habían sido forzadas en alguna ocasión a mantener contactos sexuales.

3. PERCEPCION SOCIAL DE LA VIOLENCIA SEXUAL

La forma en la que la violencia sexual es considerada y abordada tanto por la sociedad como por los expertos en la temática ha cambiado considerablemente en los países occidentales durante los últimos treinta años. Como ya ha sido señalado en apartados anteriores, es a partir de los años 70 cuando el interés por estos delitos contra las mujeres comienza a acrecentarse y son numerosas las disciplinas que se ocupan de él. En el caso de la Psicología, las primeras investigaciones se centraron en analizar las consecuencias emocionales que padecían las víctimas tras un episodio de violencia sexual, destacando entre ellos las investigaciones relacionadas con la sintomatología

asociada al trastorno por estrés postraumático (PTSD, por sus siglas en inglés) (Burgess y Holmstrom, 1974, 1985). Estas autoras publicaron por primera vez en 1974 un trabajo en el que identificaban una serie de reacciones conductuales, somáticas y psicológicas que experimentaban las víctimas de violación y que definieron como “una reacción de estrés y pánico agudo frente a una situación amenazante para la vida” (Burgess y Holmstrom, 1974, p. 982). A partir de este primer estudio y de forma progresiva, los psiquiatras y psicólogos clínicos fueron prestando una mayor atención a la sintomatología de PTSD presente en víctimas de violación, hasta ese momento principalmente asociada a excombatientes de guerras (Cascardi et al., 1996; Clum, Calhoun y Kimerling, 2000; Foa y Rothbaum, 1998; Rothbaum, Foa, Riggs, Murdock y Walsh, 1992).

No obstante, la investigación psicosocial pronto comenzó a aportar un conocimiento y una perspectiva igualmente valiosa en el análisis de la violencia sexual, el referido a su percepción social (Krahé, 1991). Una de las principales áreas en este campo fue el de las actitudes, entendidas como evaluaciones o juicios generales, relativamente estables, que las personas realizan sobre un “objeto de pensamiento” (personas, objetos, grupos o ideas), tanto negativas como positivas (Eagly y Chaiken, 2007; Fazio, 2007; Petty y Wegener, 1998; Petty, Briñol, y DeMarree, 2007). El interés por el estudio de las actitudes en este campo surgió al comprobar la influencia que ejercen en los juicios que las personas realizan sobre los episodios de agresiones sexuales, especialmente en aspectos relacionados con la credibilidad de la víctima (Temkin y Krahé, 2008), la consideración de la violación como genuina (“real rape”) o falsa (Krahé, 1991; Temkin, 1999) y la atribución de culpa a la propia víctima de violación (Horvath y Brown, 2009; Jordan 2004; Koss, 2000; Ullman, 1996).

El estudio de dichos procesos atributivos se ha visto facilitado por la Teoría de la Atribución, formulada inicialmente por Heider (1958) y desarrollada posteriormente por diversos autores (e.g., Jones y Davis, 1965; Jones et al., 1972; Kelley, 1967, 1972; Kelley y Michaela, 1980, Weiner, 1974, 1986), que trata de explicar cómo las personas realizamos inferencias sobre las causas de nuestra propia conducta y la de los demás, es decir, explicar por qué nos comportamos como lo hacemos. Para ello, parte del supuesto de que buscamos alcanzar una comprensión de los acontecimientos que nos rodean a través de un procesamiento de análisis causal realizado sobre conductas, situaciones y relaciones interpersonales. La motivación primaria que empuja a realizar dichos análisis es conseguir comprender el mundo y las relaciones que en él se establecen, para de esta forma poder predecirlo y controlarlo (Heider, 1958). No obstante, Heider señala que este proceso atributivo sólo se pone en marcha cuando la persona se enfrenta a una situación incoherente, generadora de incertidumbre o conflicto. Es decir, cuando la situación es habitual, estos procesos atributivos no son puestos en marcha, en lugar de ello, entran en juego una serie de esquemas estereotipados de comportamientos y expectativas, los cuales guían la respuesta sin necesidad de reflexión. Por el contrario, cuando la situación es incoherente, inesperada o conlleva resultados negativos, la persona necesita llevar a cabo el proceso atributivo que le ayude a explicar y comprender la situación para, de esta forma, poder emitir una respuesta adecuada (e.g., Deschamps, 1983; Deschamps y Beauvois, 1994; Weiner, 1986).

Con el objetivo de analizar las atribuciones que las personas realizan sobre víctimas y agresores sexuales, numerosas investigaciones han hecho uso de la metodología de escenarios, consistente en proporcionar a los participantes breves descripciones acerca de episodios ficticios de agresiones sexuales, en los cuales suelen

manipularse variables de interés para el investigador (Finch, 1987; Sleded, Durrheim, Kriel, Solomon y Baxter, 2002). Las presentaciones de los mismos suelen estar seguidas por una serie de cuestiones en las que se les pide a los participantes que lleven a cabo juicios sobre las agresiones sexuales descritas, incluyendo cuestiones relacionadas con la culpabilidad de la víctima (por ejemplo, “La mujer debería ser culpabilizada por lo que le ha sucedido”), la responsabilidad del agresor (por ejemplo, “El hombre debería recibir un castigo por la conducta que llevó a cabo”), la valoración del incidente (por ejemplo, “Lo ocurrido es un acto de seducción”) o el castigo que ha de recibir el agresor (por ejemplo, “En el caso de que el hombre sea considerado culpable de violación, ¿qué condena crees que debería recibir?”). Con esta metodología, se ha detectado que aunque mayoritariamente las personas responsabilizan más al agresor por lo sucedido, también se observa una tendencia a culpabilizar a la propia víctima (Ben-David y Schneider, 2005; Cameron y Stritzke, 2003; George y Martínez, 2002; Jordan, 2004; Maurer y Robinson, 2008; Pollard, 1992; Schuller y Hastings, 2002; Wenger y Bornstein, 2006), llegando a relacionarse dicha culpabilidad con una tolerancia indirecta hacia la agresión sexual en sí misma, que incluso puede aceptarse dentro de las interacciones sexuales normalizadas. En esta línea, variables relativas a la propia víctima (e.g., ingesta de alcohol de forma previa a la agresión), características relacionadas con el agresor (e.g., atractivo físico) y factores situacionales (e.g., relación previa entre víctima y agresor) han sido identificadas como claves que influyen o modifican las atribuciones que las personas realizan sobre víctimas y perpetradores (véanse Temkin y Krahé, 2008; Pollard, 1992, para revisiones). No obstante, dichas valoraciones no solo se ven influidas por las características relacionadas con la situación o con los agentes implicados (víctima y agresor); también se han identificado una serie

de variables ideológicas (e.g., actitudes sexistas o aceptación de mitos sobre la violación) o esquemas de conocimiento (e.g., “guiones” sexuales) presentes en el perceptor, que influyen notablemente en dichos juicios.

Dada la importancia que estas variables tienen en la comprensión de las atribuciones que las personas realizan sobre episodios de victimización sexual y ya que su estudio constituye una parte crucial en la presente Tesis Doctoral, se dedicarán los siguientes apartados a profundizar en ellas.

3.1. La influencia de las variables contextuales: víctima, agresor y situación

3.1.1. Características de la Víctima

La investigación psicosocial ha revelado la existencia de diversas variables, relacionadas con la víctima, determinantes en la percepción social de las agresiones sexuales. Una de las primeras identificadas fue su *respetabilidad*. Jones y Aronson (1973) la conceptualizaron, en un estudio pionero, como “estado civil” y la manipularon a través de tres categorías: mujer soltera, casada o divorciada. Los resultados de este estudio mostraron que cuando el estado civil de la víctima podía ser considerado como más respetable (mujer casada o soltera versus divorciada) se le atribuía una mayor culpabilidad por lo sucedido. No obstante, estudios posteriores no han podido replicar este hallazgo obteniéndose resultados opuestos, es decir, cuando la respetabilidad de la víctima es mayor se le atribuye una menor culpabilidad. En este sentido, se ha observado que cuando la víctima es descrita como dependienta comercial es culpabilizada más que una víctima descrita como maestra (Krahé, 1985, Luginbuhl y Mullin, 1981, Whatley, 1996). El *pasado sexual* de la víctima, es otra de las variables que se han incorporado dentro de este constructo de la respetabilidad, observándose una

menor credibilidad en el testimonio y una mayor culpabilidad para aquellas víctimas que informaron haber mantenido contactos o relaciones sexuales previas con su agresor (Ben-David y Schneider, 2005; Forbes, Jobe, White, Bloesch y Adam-Curtis, 2005; Schuller y Hastings, 2002). No obstante, la culpabilización de la víctima en función de su pasado sexual no solo se restringe a la actividad sexual mantenida con el agresor, sino que también comprende aquellos casos en los que ha experimentado victimización sexual previa. Por ejemplo, en el estudio llevado a cabo por Tyson (2003) se encontró que aquellas mujeres que habían experimentado agresiones sexuales en el pasado eran percibidas de forma más negativa que las que no tenían un historial previo de victimización sexual.

El *atractivo físico* de la víctima también ha sido identificado como decisivo en las valoraciones sobre su culpabilidad, encontrándose que aquellas víctimas menos atractivas son responsabilizadas más por la agresión sufrida (Thornton y Ryckman, 1983; Tieger, 1981, Vrij y Firmin, 2001), entre otras razones, por considerar que al ser menos atractivas han tenido que llevar a cabo conductas que incitaran sexualmente a su agresor.

La *raza* es otro factor relevante en este tipo de valoraciones. Estudios como el de Willis (1992) o el de Foley, Evancic, Karnik, King y Parks (1995) han encontrado que las víctimas de raza negra violadas por conocidos son juzgadas más culpables que las violadas por desconocidos y que dichas agresiones son percibidas como delitos menos serios que cuando son ejercidas contra mujeres blancas. Por otro lado, también se ha observado que cuando la raza del perpetrador es tomada en cuenta, los participantes juzgan la violación cometida por un agresor blanco más creíble si la raza de la víctima también es blanca, pero no si ésta es de raza negra. Sin embargo, estudios como el de

George y Martínez (2002) han mostrado que la raza de la víctima no influye cuando el perpetrador es de raza negra.

En relación al *comportamiento* de la víctima, diferentes investigaciones han puesto de manifiesto que lo que ésta haga antes de la agresión y la forma en que responda durante y después de ella, influirá notablemente en las valoraciones que realicen los perceptores. En este sentido, aquellas mujeres cuyo comportamiento se aleja de los roles o estereotipos tradicionalmente asociados a víctimas de agresión sexual tendrán una mayor probabilidad de ser culpabilizadas. Por ejemplo, variables como vestir de manera “provocativa”, no mostrar una resistencia activa frente a su agresor o ingerir alcohol o drogas, han sido identificadas como de especial relevancia. En relación a la *forma de vestir*, varios trabajos han mostrado que cuando la víctima llevaba ropa que podía ser considerada como sugerente y “provocativa” (e.g., ropa ajustada o minifalda) se la valoraba como más culpable y promiscua que cuando vestía un atuendo más clásico o conservador (e.g., pantalón) (Wathley, 2005; Workman y Freeburg, 1999). En cuanto a la *resistencia* frente al agresor, se atribuye más culpabilidad y responsabilidad a aquellas víctimas que no oponen ninguna resistencia (Cohn, Duphuis y Brown, 2009; Ong y Ward, 1999; Trujano y Raich, 2000) o cuando esta resistencia es ejercida de forma verbal pero no física (Hannon, Hall, Kuntz, Van Laar y Williams, 1995).

Finalmente, el *consumo de alcohol y drogas* ha recibido una atención especial por parte de los investigadores. En general, se ha observado que el consumo de ambas sustancias comporta juicios de culpabilidad y responsabilidad hacia la víctima (Cameron y Strizke, 2003; Girard y Senn, 2008; Maurer y Robinson, 2008).

Dado que la relación entre el alcohol y la percepción social sobre agresiones sexuales, representa uno de los objetivos principales en la presente Tesis Doctoral, dedicaremos el último apartado de este primer capítulo a su desarrollo.

3.1.2. Características del Agresor

En relación con las características y conductas llevadas a cabo por el agresor, aunque menos abundantes, algunas investigaciones se han ocupado de su influencia en las atribuciones de responsabilidad ante episodios de violación y agresión sexual. *Rasgos personales* como el atractivo físico, la altura o la raza del agresor han sido relacionados con la responsabilidad atribuida. Por ejemplo, se han observado juicios más laxos en responsabilidad cuando el agresor es descrito como físicamente atractivo (Vrij y Firmin, 2001), de menor estatura que la víctima (Ryckman, Graham, Thornton, Gold y Lindner, 1998) o cuando se trata de violaciones interraciales (e.g., menor responsabilidad cuando un hombre de raza blanca agrede sexualmente a una mujer de raza negra en comparación a cuando un hombre de raza blanca agrede a una mujer de raza blanca) (George y Martínez, 2002). El *estatus social* o el *atuendo* también juegan un papel relevante. Así un mayor estatus social (Deitz y Byrnes, 1981) y un atuendo elegante y arreglado (Yarmey, 1985) hacen que se responsabilice en menor medida al perpetrador. Finalmente, algunos estudios también han señalado la *conducta* del agresor como variable influyente. Por ejemplo, en estudios en los que se ha manipulado la estrategia utilizada para agredir sexualmente, cuando se describe al agresor haciendo uso de la fuerza es culpabilizado más que cuando recurre al alcohol para conseguir este fin (Krahé, Temkin y Bieneck, 2007, Krahé, Temkin, Bieneck y Berger, 2008).

3.1.3. Características Situacionales

Dentro de las variables situacionales, la *relación existente entre víctima y agresor* ha recibido una especial atención. En general, se ha constatado que cuanto más estrecha e íntima es la relación que mantienen víctima y perpetrador, mayor es la culpabilidad atribuida a aquella, menor la responsabilidad del agresor y más leve la gravedad percibida del incidente (Ben-David y Schneider, 2005; Cowan, 2000; Freetly y Kane, 1995, Frese, Moya y Megías, 2004; Golge, Yavuz, Muderrisoglu, y Yavuz, 2003; Monson, Langhinrichsen-Rohling y Binderup, 2000). Por ejemplo, Krahe y cols. (2008) en dos estudios llevados a cabo con estudiantes y titulados en Derecho, encontraron que la responsabilidad atribuida al agresor era menor, la culpabilidad a la víctima mayor y la pena impuesta más leve, a medida que aumentaba la relación entre ambos (extraños, conocidos sin relaciones sexuales previas y ex parejas). Es más, en los casos en los que la agresión ocurre entre personas que mantienen o han mantenido una relación sexual o afectiva en el pasado, disminuye la consideración de lo ocurrido como violación o agresión sexual (Krahe et al., 2007; Simonson y Subich, 1999; Viki, Abrams y Masser, 2004).

3.2. La influencia de las variables relativas al perceptor: ideología y esquemas de conocimiento

Los juicios o atribuciones causales no solo dependen de la información que se posea sobre el incidente, sino también pueden verse influidos por características individuales del perceptor. En este sentido, las investigaciones han destacado variables como la raza (Nagel, Matsuo, McIntyre y Morrison, 2005), las creencias religiosas (Sheldon y Parent, 2002), o el sexo de quien emite el juicio (Grubb y Harrower, 2008;

Jimenez y Abreu, 2003; Ben-David y Schneider, 2005) como relevantes a la hora de atribuir una mayor o menor culpabilidad a víctimas y agresores sexuales.

Sin embargo, gran parte de la investigación ha destacado la importancia que el conocimiento previo o los esquemas mentales del perceptor tienen en dichas atribuciones. Desde la teoría de la atribución se ha hipotetizado cómo la ideología del perceptor o los esquemas de conocimiento influyen en el procesamiento de la información causal. Así, esta teoría propone que aunque las personas suelen recurrir a la información disponible en la propia situación para emitir sus juicios, dicho procesamiento también se ve influido por el conocimiento previo y las creencias generalizadas (Kunda, 1999). En ese sentido, las personas mostramos una mayor tendencia a guiar el procesamiento de la información basándonos en los datos disponibles (*bottom-up*) cuando poseemos información suficiente sobre el evento a evaluar y si estamos lo suficientemente motivados como para llevar a cabo el procesamiento cognitivo que dicha evaluación implica. No obstante, cuando el cuerpo de datos disponible es escaso o la situación descrita es ambigua, tendemos a recurrir a nuestros esquemas y creencias a la hora de buscar las causas (*top-down*). En el caso concreto de una agresión sexual, encontraríamos que las personas se basarían en esquemas de conocimiento previos o estereotipos (e.g., mitos sobre la violación) cuando la información disponible sobre la agresión sexual fuese escasa o ambigua, por ejemplo, cuando la víctima acepta las invitaciones de su agresor a ingerir alcohol de forma previa a la agresión o cuando la relación existente entre ambos es estrecha; mientras que, por ejemplo, se llevaría a cabo un procesamiento principalmente basado en datos cuando la víctima de la agresión sexual ha sido asaltada por un extraño mediante el uso de la fuerza (véase para revisión, Temkin y Krahé, 2008).

No obstante, es necesario resaltar que ambos modos de procesar la información no actúan de manera totalmente independiente sino que tienden a interactuar entre sí; es decir, cuando una persona lleva a cabo el análisis de una determinada información, los datos o claves que obtiene del exterior se mezclan con las creencias generalizadas o el conocimiento almacenado en su memoria (e.g., Bem, 1981), de tal forma que la conducta o valoración resultante de dicho procesamiento puede ser el resultado de la combinación de ambos modos de procesamiento. El uso predominante de uno u otro dependerá, por tanto, de características personales del individuo (experiencia previa o motivación para implicarse en el procesamiento de dicha información, entre otros) y de las características de la situación (por ejemplo, mayor o menor ambigüedad).

Teniendo en cuenta la relevancia que tanto esquemas previos de conocimiento como estereotipos tienen en los juicios que las personas realizan sobre episodios de agresión sexual, se dedicaran los siguientes apartados a exponer y profundizar en algunos de ellos: “mitos sobre la violación” y “guiones o esquemas de conocimiento”.

3.2.1. Los mitos sobre la violación

En 1970, diversos sociólogos (e.g., Schwendinger y Schwendinger, 1974) y feministas (e.g., Brownmiller, 1975) propusieron el concepto de “mitos sobre la violación” con el propósito de explicar las creencias falsas y culturalmente aceptadas en torno a las agresiones sexuales que se ejercen contra las mujeres. Años después, en 1980, Marta Burt encontró que más de un 50% de adultos, seleccionados al azar, apoyaban una serie de actitudes relacionadas con la violación del tipo de “en la mayoría de las violaciones, la víctima es una persona promiscua o tiene una mala reputación”, que sirven para justificarla y culpabilizar a la víctima. Burt denominó a estas actitudes “mitos sobre la violación” (RMA por sus siglas en inglés) y los definió como

“prejuicios, estereotipos o falsas creencias sobre las violaciones, las víctimas y los agresores” (p. 127). Más tarde, Lonsway y Fitzgerald (1994) realizaron un análisis de la definición propuesta por Burt y, ante diversas discrepancias con la propuesta original, decidieron modificarla y conceptualizar los mitos como “actitudes y creencias, generalmente falsas pero amplia y persistentemente mantenidas, las cuales sirven para justificar las agresiones sexuales que los hombres cometen contra las mujeres” (p. 134). Recientemente Bohner (1998) los ha definido como “creencias descriptivas o prescriptivas sobre la violación (sobre sus causas, contexto, consecuencias, agresores, víctimas y la interacción entre ellos) que sirven para negar, minimizar o justificar la violencia sexual que los hombres ejercen sobre las mujeres” (p. 14).

Aunque las definiciones y propuestas sobre el concepto “mitos sobre la violación” han sido diversas, todas ellas señalan la existencia de cuatro categorías generales de mitos: aquellos dirigidos a *culpabilizar a la víctima de violación* (e.g., “las mujeres tienen un deseo inconscientes de ser violadas”), los relacionados con el *escepticismo ante la violación* (e.g., “muchas denuncias de violación son infundadas”), aquellos que *exoneran al agresor* (e.g., “el alcohol es a menudo el causante de que un hombre viole a una mujer”) y finalmente, los que aluden a *determinados tipos de mujeres como más propensas a ser violadas* (e.g., “una mujer que lleva ropa provocativa no debe sorprenderse si un hombre intenta forzarla a mantener relaciones sexuales”). En torno a dichas definiciones y categorías han surgido numerosos instrumentos, llegando a identificarse hasta 24 escalas de medida distintas (por ejemplo, Burt, 1980; Costin 1985; Cowan y Quinton, 1997; Feild, 1978; Payne, Lonsway y Fitzgerald, 1999; Gerger, Kley, Bohner y Siebler, 2007), siendo la “Acceptance of

Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression” (AMMSA) (Gerger et al., 2007) la más reciente de todas ellas.

La aplicación de estas escalas ha permitido detectar que la aceptación de mitos sobre la violación no se circunscribe a un país concreto, sino que se trata de creencias sostenidas de forma generalizada (véase Ward, 1995, para una revisión). No obstante, también se ha demostrado empíricamente que aunque los mitos sobre la violación sean ampliamente aceptados, su distribución no es homogénea y se relacionan con factores socio-estructurales de cada país (e.g., distribución desigual del poder entre sexos o niveles de analfabetismo en las mujeres) (Ward, 1995) y con diversas variables personales y actitudinales del individuo, por ejemplo, sexo de la persona que sostiene dichos mitos, la aceptación de roles de género tradicionales o el mantenimiento de actitudes positivas hacia la violencia, entre otros (Anderson, Cooper y Okamura, 1997; Burt, 1980; Jiménez y Abreu, 2003).

3.2.2. Funciones de los mitos sobre la violación: cognitivas, afectivas y comportamentales

Como ya ha sido señalado, la aceptación de mitos sobre la violación conlleva una evaluación distorsionada y estereotipada sobre la agresión sexual o violación objeto de evaluación y sobre las personas implicadas (víctima y agresor), además de verse relacionados con la tendencia a la perpetración de violencia sexual en hombres (Desai, Edwards y Gidycz, 2008; Edwards, Turchik, Dardis, Reynolds y Gidycz, 2011; Loh, Gidycz, Lobo y Luthra, 2005). Ante esto cabría preguntarse, ¿cuáles son las razones que llevan a las personas al mantenimiento y aceptación de dichos mitos?, ¿por qué incluso algunas víctimas de violación sostienen y aceptan creencias falsas sobre este tipo de delitos? Es decir, ¿cuáles son las funciones de estos mitos? Para dar respuesta a esta

última pregunta, las investigaciones realizadas a partir de los años 70 han identificado tres categorías principales: funciones cognitivas, funciones afectivas y funciones comportamentales (ver Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler y Viki, 2009, para una revisión).

a) Funciones cognitivas

Desde la aplicación de la “teoría de la atribución” al estudio de la percepción social de las agresiones sexuales, los mitos sobre la violación han sido señalados como factor clave en los juicios que las personas realizan sobre víctimas y agresores, encontrándose que una mayor adherencia a estas creencias se relaciona con una mayor culpabilización de la víctima y exoneración de responsabilidad al agresor (Frese et al., 2004; Morry y Winkler, 2001; Pollard, 1992; Temkin y Krahe, 2008; Trujano y Raich, 2000). Por tanto, los mitos pueden funcionar como esquemas generales de conocimiento que guían y organizan la interpretación que las personas realizan sobre información específica en episodios de violación (Bohner et al., 2009, Temkin y Krahe, 2008), de tal forma que ante informaciones (relación víctima-agresor, características personales de la víctima o presencia de alcohol) que pueden generar dudas sobre si lo ocurrido es o no un acto de violación, aquellas personas que presentan altas puntuaciones en RMA tenderían a culpabilizar más a la víctima y a inferir aspectos no presentes en la información disponible (e.g., Abbey y McAuslan, 2004; Ben-David y Schneider, 2005; Pollard, 1992), concluyendo que se trata de un acto de violación.

Por ejemplo, Frese y cols. (2004) llevaron a cabo un estudio en el que analizaron la influencia de RMA y de factores situacionales en la percepción de tres escenarios diferentes de violación (violación en cita por un conocido, violación por el marido y violación por un extraño). Los resultados de este trabajo mostraron que aquellos participantes con altos mitos, en comparación con los de bajos mitos, culpabilizaron

más a la víctima, consideraron que la violación era menos traumática y recomendaron menos su denuncia a la policía, especialmente en el escenario que representaba una violación por un conocido. Estos datos ponen de manifiesto que, en general, los juicios de los participantes dependen de la interacción entre su grado de RMA y las claves situacionales, de tal forma que cuanto menos estereotípica sea la situación de violación (violación en cita por conocido), mayor es la influencia de las actitudes en las atribuciones causales que se realizan.

Otras investigaciones, realizadas dentro del marco judicial, también han mostrado esta función cognitiva de los mitos en los juicios que emiten abogados, jueces y fiscales en casos de delitos sexuales. Por ejemplo, Krahe et al., (2008), encontraron, en una muestra compuesta por 451 estudiantes de Derecho, que aquellos participantes con puntuaciones más altas en RMA culpabilizaron más a la víctima y exoneraron al agresor, especialmente cuando la relación entre ambos era estrecha, y cuando la táctica usada por el agresor para perpetrar la agresión fue dar alcohol a la víctima en lugar de utilizar la fuerza física.

Es necesario señalar que esta función cognitiva de los mitos también está presente en las propias víctimas. Así, cuando ellas sostienen mitos sobre lo que debe ser una violación genuina o real, pueden llegar a no considerar lo que les ha ocurrido como una agresión o incluso a culpabilizarse por su comportamiento, disminuyendo de esta forma la probabilidad de denunciar lo ocurrido (DuMont, Miller y Myhr, 2003; Kahn, Mathie y Torgler, 1994; Peterson y Muehlenhard, 2004).

b) Funciones afectivas

A nivel afectivo, el grado de aceptación de mitos por parte de las mujeres está relacionado con la presencia de sentimientos de amenaza y vulnerabilidad ante un

ataque sexual (e.g., Bohner et al., 2009). En este sentido, aquellas que presentan puntuaciones altas en RMA sostienen la creencia de que la violación es un acto dirigido únicamente a un subtipo determinado de mujeres (aquellas cuyo comportamiento transgrede los roles de género tradicionales), distintas a ellas, lo que les otorga un cierto sentimiento de seguridad. Por el contrario, las mujeres que muestran un claro rechazo a los mitos pueden experimentar efectos negativos en su autoestima, ya que contemplan que la violación es una amenaza potencial para cualquier mujer, incluidas ellas mismas (e.g., Bohner, 1998; Bohner y Lampridis, 2004). En este sentido, podría decirse que una mayor aceptación de mitos funcionaría como un amortiguador de miedo y ansiedad al permitir a las mujeres sentirse menos vulnerables a experimentar una agresión sexual y, por tanto, mantendrían niveles altos de su autoestima (Bohner et al., 2009).

c) Funciones comportamentales

La adhesión a mitos sobre la violación ha sido vinculada a la racionalización de comportamientos y actos sexualmente agresivos (Bohner, et al., 2009; Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980), trivializando y justificando la ocurrencia de los mismos. Más aún, el hecho de restar importancia a actos sexualmente coercitivos, puede impulsar a hombres a convertir sus tendencias sexuales agresivas en conductas. En este sentido, el nivel de RMA se ha visto relacionado no solo con la ocurrencia de agresiones sexuales (Koss, Leonard, Beezely y Oros, 1985) sino también con la proclividad a la violación por parte de hombres (Bohner, Siebler y Schmelcher, 2006; Chiroro, Bohner, Viki, y Jarvis, 2004; Malamuth, 1981; Malamuth y Check, 1985, Willan y Pollard, 2003), entendida ésta como la probabilidad autoinformada por los hombres de cometer una violación en un caso hipotético en el que se les asegure que no serían descubiertos (Malamuth, 1981). En esta línea, Bohner, Jarvis, Eyssel y Siebler (2005), Bohner et al. (2006) y

Bohner, Pina, Viki y Siebler (2010) han llevado a cabo una serie de trabajos en los que además de mostrar la correlación existente entre las actitudes de apoyo a la violación y la intención de violar, también han encontrado datos acerca de la función normativa que los mitos sobre la violación (propios y ajenos) tienen a la hora de predecir este tipo de proclividad autoinformada. Por ejemplo, en el estudio llevado a cabo en 2006 proporcionaron a los participantes información sobre el nivel de mitos de sus compañeros (bajo, alto y muy alto); sus resultados mostraron que la proclividad informada fue mayor en aquellos participantes con puntuaciones altas en RMA, pero que también habían sido informados falsamente de que sus compañeros mostraban una alta aceptación de este tipo de mitos. De esta forma, la adhesión a mitos sobre la violación, como esquemas cognitivos, puede facilitar la ocurrencia de agresiones sexuales.

Por otro lado, en el ámbito de las decisiones judiciales, también se ha encontrado una estrecha relación entre la aceptación de mitos sobre la violación y la imposición de sentencias. Por ejemplo, Temkin y Krahé (2008) encontraron que los participantes con mayor adhesión a mitos recomendaban sentencias más cortas en casos en los que el acusado era declarado culpable.

3.2.3. Los guiones como esquemas de conocimiento

Los “scripts” o “guiones mentales” han sido conceptualizados como representaciones del conocimiento que guían la secuencia de acontecimientos que han de ocurrir en un contexto o situación concreta y determinan el rol que deben tener las personas implicadas (Abelson 1976; Fiske y Taylor, 1991; Schank y Abelson, 1977). Más aún, los “guiones” contienen elementos tanto descriptivos (rasgos y acciones que suelen encontrarse en una situación) como normativos (conductas aceptadas o esperadas

en dicha situación). Así mismo, influyen en los procesos de atención, organización, interpretación y recuerdo de la información (Baldwin, 1992; Zadney y Gerard, 1974), actúan inconscientemente (Demorest, 1995) y se desarrollan a partir de la experiencia propia y ajena (Schank y Abelson, 1995).

La identificación de los “guiones” como guías de conducta ha sido aplicada a un amplio rango de dominios comportamentales, incluyendo entre ellos la conducta sexual (Frith y Kitzinger, 2001; Krahe, Bieneck y Scheingerger-Olwig, 2007; Kurth, Spiller y Travis, 2000; Littleton, Axsom y Yoder, 2006; Rose y Frieze, 1993; Simon y Gagnon, 1986). Concretamente, dentro del campo de la sexualidad, la investigación sobre “guiones” ha sido aplicada a diferentes conductas sexuales, incluyendo violación y seducción (e.g., Littleton y Axsom, 2003; Ryan, 2011, para una revisión); violación entre conocidos (e.g., Carroll y Clark, 2006) y “hook ups” (Littleton, Tabernik, Canales y Backstrom, 2009). La definición dada en este ámbito los identifica como “modelos cognitivos que las personas utilizan para guiar y evaluar las interacciones sociales y sexuales” (Rose y Frieze, 1993, p. 499), es decir, determinan qué tipo de acciones suelen tener lugar en una interacción sexual e indican en qué orden se espera que ocurran (Frith, 2009). Dichos “guiones” están especialmente presentes en interacciones ambiguas, como una primera cita, en la cual la persona ante la incertidumbre de cómo actuar suele guiar su comportamiento basándose en los esquemas que posee de encuentros sexuales tanto propios como ajenos.

Los “guiones” sexuales de adolescentes y jóvenes suelen incorporar una secuencia de acontecimientos que se inician con besos, caricias y tocamientos, pudiendo finalizar o no en el acto sexual (Krahe, et al., 2007; Lenton y Bryan, 2005; Littleton y Axsom, 2003). No obstante, estos “guiones” no son iguales en chicos que en chicas,

identificándose un doble estándar. En el caso de los hombres, suelen incluir componentes como una actividad sexual incontrolada una vez ésta es iniciada, búsqueda de relaciones sexuales como fuente de placer personal, múltiples parejas sexuales y papel de iniciadores en los encuentros sexuales. Por el contrario, los de mujeres suelen incorporar una preferencia por el afecto y el cariño antes que por el sexo, pasividad ante las relaciones sexuales, creencias sobre la primacía del placer sexual del hombre sobre el suyo propio y rol de protectoras sobre su sexualidad, resistiendo y limitando activamente los contactos sexuales (Byers, 1996; Metts y Spitzberg, 1996). En concreto, esta última característica de protectoras de su sexualidad se ha relacionado con el hecho de que algunas mujeres se nieguen o resistan cuando realmente desean mantener relaciones sexuales (“token resistance”) (Muehlenhard y Hollabough, 1988) y con el hecho de que algunos hombres interpreten una negativa emitida por una mujer como falsa resistencia a mantener relaciones sexuales (Krahé, Scheinberger-Olwig y Kolpin, 2000; Osman, 1998; Osman y Davis, 1997).

Teniendo en cuenta las creencias sobre el rol diferenciador de hombres y mujeres en los encuentros sexuales así como el guión de pasos que preceden a una relación sexual, no es sorprendente que muchas personas perciban episodios de sexo forzado o agresiones sexuales como interacciones sexuales normalizadas. De hecho, aquellas agresiones sexuales que contienen rasgos similares a los contenidos en los guiones de interacciones sexuales “normalizadas”, es menos probable que sean identificadas como relaciones sexuales no consentidas. Por ejemplo, Littleton y Axsom (2003), en dos estudios llevados a cabo con universitarios estadounidenses, hallaron que usar alguna estrategia manipulativa por parte del hombre para conseguir mantener relaciones sexuales o la existencia de relación previa entre dos personas, son elementos

presentes tanto en los guiones típicos de un caso de violación como en los de un caso de seducción.

Como estos mismos autores señalan, el que conductas sexuales normalizadas y coercitivas se solapan puede desembocar en una interpretación errónea de episodios de agresión sexual como contactos sexuales consentidos, con el consecuente aumento de tanto de la ocurrencia de agresiones sexuales como de la realización de atribuciones de culpabilidad a las propias víctimas de agresión.

3.3. Otras variables ideológicas relativas al perceptor: el sexismo ambivalente y las creencias en el mundo justo

Como se ha indicado en párrafos anteriores, los mitos sobre la violación y los guiones sexuales constituyen creencias o esquemas de conocimiento que influyen y guían los juicios que las personas realizan sobre las agresiones sexuales. Sin embargo, no son las únicas variables que han sido identificadas por su importancia en este campo; la ideología sexista y las creencias en el mundo justo son también de gran relevancia.

Por *ideología sexista* se entiende el conjunto de creencias sobre roles de género, las características y comportamientos considerados apropiados para hombres y mujeres y las relaciones que existen entre ambos sexos. Tradicionalmente, el sexismo ha sido concebido como una actitud de desprecio dirigida hacia hombres y mujeres en función de su pertenencia biológica a uno u otro grupo. Concretamente, la literatura ha definido el *sexismo tradicional* u *hostil* como una “actitud de prejuicio o conducta discriminatoria basada en la supuesta inferioridad o diferencia de las mujeres como grupo” (Cameron, 1977, p. 340). No obstante, este planteamiento fue modificado y complementado a raíz de la propuesta elaborada por Peter Glick y Susan Fiske (1996)

sobre la “Teoría del Sexismo Ambivalente” (TSA), la cual distingue dos tipos de sexismo diferentes aunque relacionados: el sexismo hostil y el sexismo benévolo. El primero de ellos se concibe como “un conjunto de actitudes interrelacionadas hacia las mujeres que son sexistas en cuanto las considera de forma estereotipada y limitada a ciertos roles (madres, esposa), pero que tiene un tono afectivo (para el perceptor) y tiende a suscitar en el conductas consideradas como prosociales (ayuda) o de búsqueda de intimidad (revelación de uno mismo)” (Glick y Fiske, 1996, p. 491), mientras que el sexismo hostil, conllevaría un amplio rango de creencias y sentimientos negativos hacia las mujeres, coincidiendo con la noción clásica de prejuicio como antipatía hacia los miembros de un grupo social (Allport, 1954).

La TSA ha sido aplicada a una amplia gama de estudios relacionados con la violencia ejercida hacia las mujeres, siendo la violencia sexual uno de los campos de interés (Abrams, Viki, Masser y Bohner, 2003; Durán, Moya, Megías, Viki, 2009; Sakalli-Ugurlu, Sila Yalçin y Glick, 2007; Yamawaki, 2007). En este sentido, se han relacionado de formas distintas los dos tipos de sexismo con diferentes variables de interés. Así, mientras que el sexismo hostil parece guardar relación con la proclividad a cometer agresiones sexuales por parte de los hombres (e.g., Abrams et al., 2003; Masser, Viki y Power, 2006), el sexismo benévolo se ha vinculado más con la culpabilización de la víctima cuando el comportamiento de ésta transgrede el rol tradicional de género (Abrams et al., 2003; Viki y Abrams, 2002; Yamawaki, 2007).

Otra de las variables ideológicas que ha recibido especial atención en relación a la percepción social de las agresiones sexuales es la denominada “creencia en el mundo justo”, según la cual las personas o grupos tienen la necesidad de creer que el mundo es un lugar justo, en el que los individuos consiguen aquello que merecen y merecen

aquello que tienen (Lerner, 1977, 1980; Lerner y Matthews, 1967). De esta forma, cuando las personas valoran situaciones que son injustas y/o en las cuales hay víctimas, tratan de reestablecer el sentido de justicia y su creencia de que el mundo es un lugar justo, atribuyendo la responsabilidad de lo acaecido a las víctimas y convenciéndose de que merecen su destino ya que son responsables de él (Lerner y Miller, 1978). Aplicado al estudio de las agresiones sexuales, las creencias en un mundo justo se han relacionado con actitudes negativas hacia las víctimas de violación y atribuciones de culpabilidad (Kleinke y Meyer, 1990). Sirva de ejemplo el estudio de Whatley y Riggio (1993), en el que se puso de manifiesto que aquellos participantes que presentaban altas puntuaciones en la escala de creencia en el mundo justo culpabilizaron más a la víctima de violación en comparación con los que presentaron bajas puntuaciones

En definitiva, podríamos decir que estas variables ideológicas o actitudinales (mitos, guiones sexuales, actitudes sexistas y creencias en el mundo justo) juegan un papel primordial a la hora de guiar y/o influir los juicios que las personas realizan sobre episodios de violación. No obstante, ha de tenerse en cuenta que dichas variables no “actúan” en el vacío sino que su función se ve influida o depende de la presencia de otras variables relativas a la víctima (e.g., raza, historia sexual previa a la agresión o ingesta de alcohol), al agresor (e.g., estatura o atractivo físico...) y/o a la situación (e.g., relación víctima y agresor).

4. EL PAPEL DEL ALCOHOL EN LA INCIDENCIA Y PERCEPCIÓN SOCIAL DE LAS AGRESIONES SEXUALES

El alcohol es uno de los factores de mayor riesgo en la ocurrencia de violaciones y está ciertamente presente en una amplia proporción de incidentes sexuales. Dicha

relación ha sido bien establecida y documentada a través de una gran variedad de estudios (Abbey, 2011a; Carr y VanDeusen, 2004; Franklin, 2010; Horvath y Brown, 2006; Kelly et al., 2005; Ullman y Najdowski, 2010). Se estima que aproximadamente la mitad de las agresiones sexuales son cometidas por hombres que previamente habían consumido alcohol (Abbey, 2002; Abbey, Zawacki, Buck, Clinton y McAuslan, 2004; Testa, 2002; Ullman, 2003, para una revisión) mientras que, en el caso de las mujeres víctimas, los porcentajes oscilan entre un 30% y un 79% (Abbey, 2002; Crowell y Burgess, 1996; Lovett y Horvath, 2009). Entre jóvenes universitarios, diferentes estudios han puesto de manifiesto que el abuso de alcohol está asociado con al menos el 50% de las agresiones sexuales cometidas (Abbey, Ross, McDuffie y McAuslan, 1996b; Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, y Martin, 2007; Mohler-Kuo, et al., 2004). En esta línea, el informe emitido en 1994 por la *Commission on Substance Abuse at Colleges and Universities* (CASA, siglas en inglés) indicó que el alcohol estuvo presente en 9 de cada 10 violaciones perpetradas en campus universitarios estadounidenses. En el mismo contexto, el *Campus Sexual Assault Study* (Krebs et al., 2007), reveló que de entre aquellos universitarios que reconocieron haber intentado o llevado a cabo agresiones sexuales, un 81% había ingerido alcohol antes del incidente. Entre ellos, el 94% declararon estar borrachos cuando cometieron la agresión. En general, se ha observado que la ocurrencia de este tipo de agresiones se da especialmente en relaciones esporádicas donde el contacto previo entre víctima y agresor es mínimo (Lovett & Horvath, 2009; Littleton, Grills-Taquechel y Axsom, 2009; Ullman, 2003).

4.1. Alcohol e incidencia de agresiones sexuales. Factores explicativos

Aunque el consumo de alcohol no es un requisito para la violencia sexual, su frecuente coocurrencia sugiere que juega un papel relevante en la incidencia de determinadas agresiones sexuales. En este sentido, se han propuesto distintas explicaciones en un intento por esclarecer el vínculo entre el uso-abuso de alcohol y la mayor probabilidad de ocurrencia de este tipo de agresiones. La primera de ellas refiere el consumo de alcohol como causa de la ocurrencia de agresiones sexuales al elicitar conductas agresivas; por ejemplo, se ha observado que el alcohol reduce el control cortical sobre los impulsos agresivos que pueden ser inhibidos por las personas (Taylor y Chermack, 1993). En segundo lugar, se ha señalado el deseo de cometer una agresión sexual como la causa principal que lleva a ingerir alcohol, es decir, su consumo podría conllevar la excusa necesaria para cometer actos que socialmente son condenados, por ejemplo, la violencia sexual (George y Stoner, 2000). La tercera explicación propuesta considera que la relación entre ambas variables es espuria, es decir, existe una tercera variable que causa tanto el consumo de alcohol como la comisión de agresiones sexuales. Por ejemplo, rasgos de personalidad como la impulsividad han sido relacionados con el consumo excesivo de alcohol y las conductas sexualmente agresivas (Ouimette, 1997; Prentky y Knight, 1991). En general, resulta complicado esclarecer cual de estas tres explicaciones tiene un mayor peso en la relación entre ambas variables; incluso podría ocurrir que las tres fuesen aplicables dependiendo del agresor y del incidente sexual (Abbey, 2011b).

A pesar de la dificultad de converger en una única explicación para la relación entre alcohol y agresiones sexuales, sí ha sido posible señalar dos elementos a partir de los cuales el consumo de alcohol incrementa la probabilidad de ocurrencia de violencia

sexual: psicológicos y farmacológicos. En relación con los efectos psicológicos, los investigadores han destacado el papel de las creencias sobre los efectos producidos por el alcohol (Abbey, McAuslan, Ross, McDuffie, y Zawacki, 1995; Crowe y George, 1989), mientras que los farmacológicos han girado en torno a las alteraciones cognitivas que produce en quien lo ingiere (Hindmarch, Kerr y Sherwood, 1991; Peterson, Rothfleisch, Zelazo y Pihl, 1990; Tranel, Anderson y Benton, 1994).

a) Efectos psicológicos

En relación con el primero, las personas tienden a sostener la idea de que el alcohol incrementa la sexualidad y, en particular, los hombres esperan, en mayor medida que las mujeres, contactos sexuales más íntimos tras una cita en la que el alcohol estuvo presente (Crowe y George, 1989). De hecho, los estudios indican que, en situaciones de cita, los universitarios declaran beber más de lo habitual y dar alcohol a sus parejas para incrementar la probabilidad de mantener relaciones sexuales (Cooper, 2002; Dermen y Cooper, 1994). Se ha observado que dichas expectativas pueden tener poder por sí mismas, independientemente de los efectos farmacológicos que produzca el alcohol. Por ejemplo, en un estudio llevado a cabo por George, Stoner, Norris, Lopez y Lehman (2000), en el que hombres y mujeres fueron emparejados con personas desconocidas del sexo opuesto, se observó que aquellos participantes que creían haber consumido alcohol (aunque no lo hubieran hecho) informaron una mayor activación sexual, percibieron a sus parejas más desinhibidas sexualmente y les mostraron diapositivas eróticas durante más tiempo (conducta identificada en dicho estudio como muestra de interés sexual), únicamente cuando mantenían fuertes creencias sobre la capacidad del alcohol para desinhibir o aumentar los contactos sexuales. En relación a los hombres, las expectativas sobre el consumo de alcohol no sólo se han visto

conectadas con la sexualidad sino también con sentimientos de poder y agresividad (Brown, Goldman, Inn y Anderson, 1980; George y Norris, 1991; Presley, Meilman, Cashin y Leichliter, 1997). En este sentido, si un hombre mantiene fuertes expectativas sobre el efecto positivo que el alcohol tiene en su sexualidad y sensación de poder, tras su ingesta hay una mayor probabilidad de que malinterprete las conductas amistosas de una mujer como muestras de interés sexual y que recurra a la fuerza física para conseguir mantener relaciones sexuales (Abbey, 2002). Más aún, varios estudios han mostrado que universitarios que creían estar consumiendo alcohol se sentían más excitados sexualmente ante escenas de sexo forzado que quienes creían no estar consumiéndolo (George y Marlatt, 1986; George y Norris, 1991).

b) Efectos farmacológicos

En cuanto a las alteraciones o déficits cognitivos que el alcohol produce en quienes lo ingieren, se ha señalado la reducción de la capacidad para llevar a cabo procesos cognitivos de orden superior, como la abstracción o resolución de problemas (Hindmarch, et al., 1991; Peterson et al., 1990) y la dificultad para emitir respuestas de inhibición, especialmente cuando la tarea conlleva la supresión de una respuesta especialmente saliente (Abroms, Fillmore, Marcinski, 2003). En este sentido, cuando una persona está borracha, tiende a focalizarse más en las claves salientes, inmediatas y superficiales del entorno, que en aquellas otras distales, encubiertas o sutiles. Así, factores que suelen inhibir las conductas sexualmente agresivas, como la empatía por la víctima o las consecuencias a largo plazo, suelen ser menos salientes que la activación sexual o los sentimientos de frustración o enfado, especialmente entre aquellos hombres que tienen una mayor predisposición a llevar a cabo conductas sexualmente agresivas (Abbey, 2002).

Las expectativas sobre el alcohol y los déficits cognitivos que produce en quienes lo ingieren no siempre aparecen de forma aislada sino que se ha descrito una acción sinérgica entre ambos elementos, conocido como “efecto de miopía del alcohol”. Dicho efecto fue descrito por Steele y Josephs (1990) en la teoría que lleva el mismo nombre. De acuerdo con la teoría de la miopía del alcohol, en una situación de alto riesgo el consumo de bebidas alcohólicas constriñe la atención hacia aquellos factores más salientes del entorno (por ejemplo, claves sexuales). Así, cuando una mujer se encuentra ingiriendo alcohol en un entorno cargado de componentes sexuales, las expectativas positivas que pueda tener con relación a los efectos que el alcohol produce en su desinhibición sexual interactúan con los efectos miópicos producidos por tal ingesta, restringiendo su atención a aquellas señales más salientes del entorno, en este caso las sexuales, en contraposición con aquellas otras relacionadas con la amenaza de una posible agresión sexual. Esto lleva a la hipótesis de que un consumo excesivo de alcohol y las expectativas positivas que se tienen sobre él, pueden potenciar el riesgo de la mujer a ser víctima de una agresión sexual (Testa, VanZile-Tamsen, Livingston y Buddie, 2006). En el caso del agresor, Steele y Josephs (1990) señalaron que el consumo excesivo de bebidas alcohólicas produce un sesgo atencional interpretativo respecto a los estímulos ambiguos. Así, aquellos hombres que están interesados en mantener relaciones sexuales, tenderán a interpretar las señales ambiguas de las mujeres como más sexuales, malinterpretando conductas que demuestran tan sólo amistad (p.e. “si ella sonrío es porque se siente atraída por mí” “está bailando conmigo, eso es una señal de interés sexual”) e ignorando o minimizando las evidencias que contradigan lo que ellos desean (p.e. “ella retrocedió cuando la toqué, puede que sea tímida”) (Abbey,

2002; George y Stoner, 2000), resultando en conductas sexualmente coercitivas para conseguir mantener relaciones sexuales.

No obstante, aunque los estudios hayan proporcionado una amplia cantidad de datos que sitúan al alcohol como factor de riesgo, es necesario considerar con cautela el rol del mismo en la ocurrencia de agresiones sexuales. El uso o consumo de alcohol por parte de víctima y agresor de forma previa a la agresión, tiende a interactuar con otras variables situacionales, conductuales, actitudinales y cognitivas (e.g., agresividad, impulsividad, aceptación de mitos sobre la violación, scripts sexuales, situaciones sociales de riesgo, etc.) (Abbey, 2002, 2011a, 2011b). Diversas teorías apuntan que los riesgos de victimización se incrementan cuando hay una situación de riesgo, víctimas potenciales y agresores motivados (véase Meier y Miethe, 1993, para una revisión). En este sentido, beber en situaciones de riesgo, como fiestas, pubs u otros encuentros sociales similares, puede exponer a las víctimas potenciales a agresores motivados, dando lugar a incrementos del riesgo de ocurrencia de una agresión sexual o violación.

Hay que señalar que no siempre el consumo de alcohol, por parte de la víctima, es voluntario sino que las investigaciones también han identificado la administración subrepticia de alcohol u otras drogas (GHB, Rohypnol y Ketamina) como estrategia o táctica utilizada por los agresores para conseguir mantener relaciones sexuales (Lovett y Horvath, 2009; Scott-Hamm y Burton, 2005, Fuertes et al., 2005) aunque estas últimas en menor medida, debido a que el consumo de alcohol está socialmente más aceptado y su obtención es más fácil (Kilpatrick, Resnick, Ruggiero, Conoscenti, McCauley, 2007).

4.2. Alcohol y percepción social de agresiones sexuales

La presencia de alcohol en episodios de agresiones sexuales influye asimismo de manera notable en las percepciones sociales que se realizan sobre lo ocurrido. Así, se ha observado que cuando víctima y/o agresor han ingerido alcohol se endurecen los juicios de culpabilidad y responsabilidad hacia ella (Abbey et al., 1996b; Cameron y Strizke, 2003; Maurer y Robinson, 2008; Schuller y Stewart, 2000), mientras que, en el caso del agresor, se observan juicios más laxos sobre su responsabilidad (Cameron y Strizke, 2003, Stormo, Lang y Stritzke, 1997). En este sentido, el alcohol parece jugar un rol agravante en la asignación de culpabilidad a víctimas y mitigante en los juicios de responsabilidad sobre agresores sexuales. Las explicaciones dadas sobre este “doble estándar” señalan que, en el caso de las víctimas, su consumo de alcohol está asociado a la percepción de interés o disponibilidad sexual (e.g. Abbey, Buck, Zawacki y Saenz, 2003, Abbey, et al., 2004; Adam-Curtis y Forbes, 2004; George et al., 2000), incrementando su responsabilidad por lo ocurrido, al considerarse que ellas mismas se han expuesto a situaciones peligrosas (Jordan, 2004). Por el contrario, el mismo nivel de consumo de alcohol por parte del agresor carece de relevancia en relación a su disponibilidad e intenciones sexuales, es más, dicha ingesta lo exculpa de la responsabilidad de sus acciones debido a la percepción de pérdida de control que conlleva dicha ingesta en los hombres (Maurer y Robinson, 2008).

Las investigaciones han distinguido además cómo se perciben las agresiones sexuales cuando la víctima ingiere alcohol previamente a la agresión (e.g. Sims, Noel y Maisto, 2007), y cuando dicha ingesta es voluntaria o involuntaria (Finch y Munro, 2005). En relación al consumo de alcohol de forma previa a la agresión, estudios como el de Norris y Cubbins (1992), Maurer y Robinson (2008) y Wenger y Bornstein (2006)

muestran cómo se le otorga una mayor culpabilidad y menor credibilidad a la víctima cuando es caracterizada como borracha antes de la agresión.

En cuanto a la ingesta de alcohol voluntaria o involuntaria, en el estudio llevado a cabo por Finch y Munro (2005), se observó que los participantes atribuían una mayor responsabilidad a aquellas víctimas de violación cuando eran representadas ingiriendo voluntariamente alcohol en comparación a cuando dicha ingesta había sido ocasionada por la administración subrepticia de su agresor.

Resultados similares han sido mostrados por aquellos estudios que han analizado el consumo de drogas por parte de las víctimas (Girard y Senn, 2008; Wenger y Bornstein, 2006), observándose nuevamente mayores atribuciones de culpabilidad y menor credibilidad de la víctima cuando ésta es representada habiendo consumido drogas previamente a la agresión. En este sentido, el estudio llevado a cabo por Wenger y Bornstein (2006), en el que una muestra compuesta por 152 universitarios estadounidenses valoró diferentes escenarios de violación donde el consumo de alcohol y drogas por parte de víctima y agresor fue manipulado, mostró cómo el testimonio de la víctima era más creíble y los veredictos sobre culpabilidad del agresor mayores cuando ésta era representada sobria versus ingiriendo alcohol o drogas en el momento de la agresión sexual.

En general, se ha observado que esta tendencia a culpabilizar a víctimas de violación cuando se encuentran bajo los efectos del alcohol, es particularmente pronunciada entre aquellos participantes que presentan niveles altos en RMA (Krahé et al., 2008; Estudio 1), principalmente porque la información relacionada con la ingesta de alcohol por parte de este tipo de víctimas se aleja del estereotipo de “violación real” (Frese et al., 2004).

Como se ha mostrado en párrafos anteriores, los resultados obtenidos sobre la ingesta de alcohol por parte del agresor, muestran patrones inversos a los encontrados en el caso de las víctimas, es decir, cuando la información proporcionada sobre el agresor indica que estaba borracho o que había ingerido alcohol de forma previa a la agresión, la responsabilidad atribuida a él es menor; no obstante, cuando víctima y agresor han ingerido alcohol, él es culpabilizado más si su nivel de intoxicación es inferior al de la víctima (Stormo et al., 1997). En esta línea también se ha estudiado el alcohol como estrategia coercitiva utilizada por el agresor, observándose juicios más leves sobre su responsabilidad y sobre el incidente sexual cuando es representado utilizando el alcohol en comparación al uso de la fuerza física para conseguir mantener relaciones sexuales (Bieneck y Krahe, 2011; Krahe et al., 2007, Estudio 2; Schuller y Wall, 1998). De hecho, Krahe et al. (2008), en un estudio reciente llevado a cabo con estudiantes de Derecho, observó que los participantes culpaban más a la víctima y restaron responsabilidad al agresor cuando ambos eran conocidos o habían mantenido una relación de pareja en el pasado, y cuando éste hizo uso del alcohol en comparación con la fuerza física, siendo dicho resultado especialmente significativo en aquellos participantes altos en RMA.

En general puede decirse que el alcohol juega un papel primordial tanto en la ocurrencia de agresiones sexuales, especialmente en población universitaria, como en las valoraciones y juicios que las personas realizan sobre incidentes, víctimas y agresores sexuales. No obstante, ha de tenerse en cuenta que estos efectos no ocurren de forma aislada sino que interactúan con otras variables situacionales (características de víctima y agresor, contexto en el que tiene lugar la agresión, etc.) e ideológicas (aceptación de mitos sobre la violación, ideología sexista, etc.).

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CAPÍTULO 2:
OBJETIVOS DE INVESTIGACIÓN
AIMS OF RESEARCH

A partir de los contenidos expuestos en la revisión teórica, podemos concluir la relevancia que las variables situacionales e ideológicas tienen sobre los juicios y atribuciones que los perceptores realizan ante episodios de agresión sexual y violación. La presente Tesis doctoral se focalizará primordialmente en el papel que el alcohol, como variable contextual, desempeña en los juicios que se realizan sobre las agresiones sexuales contra mujeres en el contexto de relaciones esporádicas. Como muestra la evidencia empírica, el alcohol está presente en un alto porcentaje de agresiones sexuales (Lovett y Horvath, 2009; Moler-Kuo, Dowdall, Koss y Wechsler, 2004; Ullman, 2003), e influye notablemente en las atribuciones de culpabilidad que se realizan sobre las víctimas y los agresores así como en la valoración del incidente (Finch y Munro, 2005; Maurer y Robinson, 2008; Wenger y Bornstein, 2006). Al mismo tiempo, los juicios y atribuciones que las personas realizan sobre incidentes de violencia sexual también se ven influidos por sus ideologías, actitudes y esquemas de conocimiento (Temkin y Krahe, 2008), siendo en el caso de las agresiones sexuales los mitos sobre la violación (RMA) un factor decisivo (Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler y Viki, 2009; Girard y Senn, 2008; Temkin y Krahe, 2008).

Teniendo esto en cuenta, el objetivo principal que se pretendió con la presente Tesis Doctoral fue estudiar, desde una perspectiva psicosocial, la influencia que factores situacionales -como el uso/abuso de alcohol-, e ideológicos -como la aceptación de mitos sobre la violación-, ejercen en la ocurrencia y valoración de episodios de agresión sexual que tienen lugar en relaciones esporádicas entre universitarios.

Este objetivo general se concretó en los siguientes objetivos específicos e hipótesis, que llevaron a la realización de los siete estudios que conforman la Tesis:

El *primer objetivo* planteado, que supuso el punto de partida para la realización del Estudio 1 de esta Tesis, puede desglosarse en una doble vertiente: por un lado, se pretendió explorar la incidencia del uso, por parte de universitarios españoles, de la estrategia de dar alcohol a chicas para doblegar su eventual rechazo a mantener contactos o relaciones sexuales. Y por otro lado, analizar la posible relación existente entre determinadas actitudes sobre la violación (“mitos sobre la violación”) y la valoración de esta estrategia. Asimismo, también se exploró la relación entre dichas actitudes y la percepción que los jóvenes tienen sobre las chicas que consumen alcohol en contextos sociales (pubs, fiestas o discotecas) cuando interactúan con conocidos recientes. En este primer estudio esperábamos encontrar que los hombres justificaran más que las mujeres el uso-abuso de alcohol en contextos sociales, como forma de conseguir mantener relaciones sexuales no consentidas, y evaluaran más negativamente a las mujeres que consumen alcohol en dichos contextos. Por otro lado, y en relación con la aceptación de mitos sobre la violación, hipotetizamos que mayores niveles de RMA estarían relacionados tanto con una mayor justificación del uso de esta estrategia (alcohol) para conseguir mantener relaciones sexuales, como con evaluaciones más negativas sobre las mujeres que ingieren alcohol con conocidos recientes en contextos de fiesta.

Dada la relación existente entre la aceptación de mitos sobre la violación y las valoraciones que se realizan sobre episodios de agresión sexual, y debido a que la escala para medir estos mitos utilizada en el Estudio 1 mostró algunas deficiencias metodológicas, el *segundo objetivo* de la Tesis consistió en validar la versión española de la *Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression Scale* (AMMSA) (Gerger et al., 2007). El Estudio 2 se llevó a cabo para determinar la estructura factorial,

consistencia interna y validez concurrente de la versión española de la escala AMMSA. Con el objetivo de analizar la validez externa de la versión española de la escala AMMSA, a la vez que corroborar su estructura factorial, se llevó a cabo el Estudio 3 mediante el que se evaluó su relación con una serie de constructos tradicionalmente correlacionados con la aceptación de mitos sobre la violación: culpabilidad atribuida a víctimas de agresión sexual, responsabilidad de su agresor, valoración de la conducta de la mujer como “falsa resistencia” a mantener relaciones sexuales y proclividad del perceptor a cometer actos de violencia sexual.

Debido a la inclusión de mitos más actuales y sutiles en la escala AMMSA que los recogidos en escalas tradicionales traducidas y validadas al español, como la Rape Supportive Attitude Scale (RSAS) (Lottes, 1991; versión española de Sierra, Rojas, Ortega y Martín, 2007) y la Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS) (Burt, 1980; versión española de Frese, Moya y Megías, 2004), esperábamos encontrar una mayor consistencia interna, evidencias más adecuadas de validez, puntuaciones medias más altas y distribuciones más próximas a la normalidad que en las escalas anteriormente citadas.

Teniendo en cuenta los hallazgos sobre la incidencia del uso de alcohol como estrategia coercitiva para mantener relaciones sexuales y las valoraciones realizadas por los universitarios sobre episodios de agresión sexual, el *tercer objetivo* que nos planteamos fue ampliar, mediante metodología cualitativa, el análisis de las ideas, opiniones, experiencias y actitudes presentes en el discurso de universitarios y universitarias sobre estos aspectos. En esta línea, el Estudio 4 fue llevado a cabo utilizando la técnica de grupos focales. Para ello se configuraron dos grupos con participantes del mismo sexo en cada uno de ellos. La aplicación de esta técnica nos

permitió explorar las opiniones de los jóvenes, presentes en sus propios discursos, en relación a las relaciones sexuales consentidas y coercitivas que tienen lugar hoy día en su grupo de iguales, a la vez que indagar en aspectos tales como el uso/abuso de alcohol y la comunicación de intenciones sexuales.

El *cuarto objetivo* propuesto fue analizar cómo se percibe el uso estratégico del alcohol como estrategia coercitiva para mantener relaciones sexuales. Concretamente, el Estudio 5 puso a prueba la hipótesis de que cuando la estrategia coercitiva utilizada por el agresor sexual era dar alcohol a la víctima (vs. utilizar la fuerza física), se le culpabilizaría más a ella y menos a él y además se valoraría con mayor laxitud el episodio de agresión sexual. Asimismo, exploramos el posible efecto moderador sobre estos juicios de la aceptación de mitos (RMA) por parte de los participantes.

Dado que las valoraciones sobre agresiones sexuales se ven también influidas por la ingesta previa de alcohol por parte de la víctima (Jordan, 2004; Maurer y Robinson, 2008; Wenger y Bornstein, 2006), el *quinto objetivo* planteado fue analizar nuevamente los juicios de los perceptores sobre incidentes sexuales, pero teniendo en cuenta en este caso su aceptación o rechazo explícito al consumo de alcohol, que podrían actuar como posible indicador de interés sexual de la víctima por el agresor. De esta forma, en el Estudio 6 se manipuló la aceptación o rechazo de la víctima a las invitaciones de su agresor a beber alcohol así como el interés sexual previo y explícito que la mujer había mostrado por él. Esperábamos que tanto la aceptación de la mujer a consumir alcohol como sus muestras de interés sexual por el agresor, llevarían a los participantes a incrementar sus juicios de culpabilización sobre ella y a valorar menos negativamente lo ocurrido, sobre todo en quienes sostuviesen creencias prejuiciosas sobre las agresiones sexuales (RMA).

El Estudio 6, al igual que el resto de trabajos centrados en analizar la influencia que el consumo de alcohol por parte de la víctima tiene en la percepción social de incidentes de violencia sexual, no permitió desentrañar si quien valora este tipo de incidentes toma en consideración exclusivamente el hecho de que la mujer se encuentre bebida, o en cambio considera la circunstancia de que haya aceptado explícita o implícitamente la invitación que le realizó su agresor, o más bien una combinación de ambos factores. Teniendo esto en cuenta, el *sexto objetivo* de la Tesis pretendió clarificar y diferenciar los efectos que ambos factores (consumo de alcohol y aceptación a las invitaciones del agresor) tienen en las valoraciones de un episodio de agresión sexual y en los juicios emitidos sobre la culpabilidad de la víctima. De esta forma, en el último estudio realizado se manipularon tanto el tipo de bebida ingerida por la víctima (alcohólica vs. no alcohólica) como su conducta de aceptar o rechazar la invitación de su agresor a tomar una bebida. En este sentido, hipotetizamos para el Estudio 7 un efecto de interacción entre ambas variables en los juicios de culpabilización hacia las víctimas, de tal forma que éstos serían mayores cuando las víctimas no sólo hubiesen ingerido alcohol sino que además lo hubiesen hecho al aceptar la invitación formulada por su agresor. Así mismo, como en anteriores estudios, esperábamos obtener un efecto moderador de RMA sobre la influencia de estas variables en los juicios de los participantes.

CAPÍTULO 3:
ESTUDIOS EMPÍRICOS
EMPIRICAL STUDIES

**Uso de Alcohol como Estrategia para Conseguir Mantener Relaciones Sexuales
No Consentidas: Incidencia en Universitarios Españoles y Relación con la
Aceptación de Mitos sobre la Violación. ¹**

(Estudio 1 de la Tesis Doctoral)

**Alcohol Use as a Strategy for Obtaining Nonconsensual Sexual Relations:
Incidence in Spanish University Students and Relation to Rape Myths Acceptance.**

(Study 1 in this Doctoral Thesis)

¹ Este estudio ha sido publicado en: Romero-Sánchez, M., & Megías, J.L. (2010). Alcohol Use as a Strategy for Obtaining Nonconsensual Sexual Sexual Relations: Incidence in Spanish University Students and Relation to Rape Myths Acceptance. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 13, 864-874.

Resumen

Este estudio analizó la incidencia en población universitaria de la estrategia de los hombres de dar alcohol a mujeres para facilitar su aceptación a mantener contactos sexuales. También se exploró el papel que juegan en la valoración de esta práctica las actitudes o mitos sobre la violación; finalmente se analizó la valoración de las mujeres que aceptan invitaciones a tomar alcohol cuando interaccionan con hombres. Trescientos cuarenta y nueve estudiantes (154 hombres y 195 mujeres) pertenecientes a la Universidad de Granada participaron en este estudio. El 28% de los varones reconoció haber dado alguna vez alcohol a una mujer para conseguir mantener contactos sexuales con ella; por su parte, el 44% de las mujeres indicó haber sido objeto alguna vez de esta práctica. Los resultados también mostraron que los hombres, en comparación con las mujeres, rechazaban en menor medida esta estrategia; no obstante, estas diferencias en función del sexo se vieron moduladas por el grado de aceptación de los mitos sobre la violación por parte de los participantes. Asimismo, se observó que los hombres y en general quienes sostienen mitos sobre la violación, tienden a percibir como promiscuas a aquellas mujeres que aceptan tomar alcohol en interacciones con hombres.

Palabras clave: agresión sexual, mitos sobre la violación, alcohol, actitudes, incidencia.

Abstract

This study analyzed the strategy of college men who give alcohol to women to facilitate their acceptance when pursuing sexual relationships. It also studied the role of attitudes towards sexual assaults (rape myths) in the social perception of this practice; finally, this research examined how the fact that, in some cases, college women accept taking alcohol in their interactions with college men was perceived. Participants were 349 heterosexual students (154 men and 195 women) from the University of Granada. 28% of males reported having given alcohol to females in order to have sexual contacts with them, while 44% of females acknowledged having suffered this practice. Men, compared to women, were more favorable to this practice; however, this effect was moderated by their rape myths endorsements. It was also found that males and, in general, those participants who endorsed rape myths, tended to consider that women who accept alcohol in their interactions with men are promiscuous.

Keywords: sexual assault, rape myths, alcohol, attitudes, incidence.

According to the World Report on Violence and Health (Krug, Dahlberg, Mercy, Zwi & Lozano, 2002, p. 149), sexual violence is defined as “any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.”

According to the same report, the most common sexual assault on a global scale is perpetrated by a male toward a female victim, though various studies have confirmed that men are also the victims of sexual violence perpetrated by other men, or by women (Davies & Rogers, 2006; Krahe, Scheinberger-Olwig & Schütze, 2001; Muñoz-Rivas, Graña, O’Leary & González, 2009; Russell & Oswald, 2001). However, it is worth noting that sexual violence is one social affliction that is not neutral in terms of gender: in addition to the fact that the roles of victim and perpetrator are not equally distributed between the two sexes, men and women in general utilize different coercive strategies, they are victims of different kinds of coercion on the part of their attackers, and the trauma of victimization affects them unequally (Flack, Daubman, Caron, Asadorian, D’Aureli et al., 2007; for a summary, see Krahe, 2001).

Although we do not know the exact magnitude of the issue of men’s sexual assault toward women, it is estimated that world-wide, one in every four women will be the victim of sexual violence at some time in her life (e.g. Ellsberg, 1997; Hakimi, Hayati, Marlinawati, Winkvist, & Ellsberg, 2001).

Sexual assault among university students

Sexual assault, particularly when perpetrated by acquaintances in social/dating situations (parties, bars, sporadic encounters...), is especially frequent in university populations (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000; Flack et al., 2007; Fuertes, Ramos, De la Orden, Del Campo & Lázaro, 2005; Fuertes, Ramos, Martínez, Palenzuela & Taberero, 2006; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987; Sipsma, Carrobles, Montorio & Everaerd, 2000; Wheeler, George, & Dahl, 2002).

One of the first studies that tried to characterize the prevalence of sexual assault in a university population was conducted by Kirkpatrick & Kanin (1957), whose sample was comprised of 291 female students from 22 North American universities. Of the students in the sample, 28% stated that they had experienced some type of sexual assault by a peer during the year prior to the study. More recent studies conducted in the United States and other countries continue to paint a bleak picture. Generally, the percentage of female university students that acknowledge having been the victim of some kind of sexual assault is around 30%, while around 20% of male university students admit to having perpetrated some type of sexual assault (Abbey, McAuslan, Zawacki, Clinton & Buck, 2001; Benson, Charlton & Goodhart, 1992; DeKeserdy, Schwartz & Tait, 1993; Flack et al., 2007; Girard & Senn, 2008; Koss et al., 1987; Moler-Kuo, Dowdall, Koss & Wechsler, 2004).

In Spain, several studies have also shown that sexual aggression is a problem among university students. Sipsma et al. (2000) found that 33.2% of female university students had experienced some form of sexual victimization, and 24.3% of male students admitted having engaged in sexually aggressive behavior. Fuertes et al. (2005) conducted a study with a sample of 196 male university students, and found that around

15% admitted to having been involved in sexual conduct against a woman's will. Fuertes et al. (2006) also confirmed that in a sample of 477 female university students, 30.9% had been the victim of coercive sexual behavior by a male acquaintance. Recently, Hernández & González (2009) reported that 12.6% of their female university student population acknowledged being the victim of forced sexual relations with penetration by an ex or present partner.

The role of alcohol in the occurrence of sexual assault among university students

One of the factors of greatest interest about sexual assault among university students is the use-abuse of alcohol by the victim, the assailant or both (Abbey, 2002; Abbey, McAuslan & Ross, 1998; Cooper, 2006; Flack et al., 2007; Fuertes et al., 2005; Fuertes et al., 2006; Girard & Senn, 2008; Ullman, 2003). It is estimated that approximately half of sexual assaults are committed by men that have previously ingested alcohol (Abbey, Ross & McDuffie, 1994; Crowell & Burgess, 1996), while between 30% and 79% of women report having ingested alcohol at the same time as their attackers (Abbey et al., 1994; Crowell & Burgess, 1996). For example, in Moler-Kuo et al.'s (2004) study, approximately 1 in 20 female university students interviewed reported having been the victim of rape since the beginning of the school year, and 72% of these acts occurred when the victims were under the influence of alcohol and thus, less able to resist.

In one of few studies in Spain about male university students' sexual coercion strategies, Fuertes et al. (2005) found that 8.7% of the sample acknowledged having used alcohol or other drugs to attain some type of sexual contact with women. Nevertheless, having asked about alcohol and other drugs together, it is not possible to

estimate the use of alcohol alone. This data supports beyond a doubt an interesting view of reality. Consider the following indirect piece of data about the link between alcohol and unwanted sexual relations in Spain. A recent study by Calafat, Juan, Becoña, Mantecón & Ramón (2009) found that 17.5% of young people between the ages of 14 and 25 from three different autonomous communities recognize having had sexual relations under the influence of alcohol or drugs that they later regretted in the last 12 months.

Several different mechanisms have been proposed to explain the relationship between the use-abuse of alcohol and committing sexual assaults (Beynon, McVeigh, McVeigh, Leavey & Bellis, 2008). On the one hand, alcohol consumption provokes a level of intoxication that modifies one's perception of the facts, diminishes inhibitions, and affects our very ability to recognize risky situations. On the other hand, when under the influence of alcohol, one's ability to give voluntary consent to have sexual relations is reduced. Certain beliefs about the effects of alcohol have also been cited, such as the notion that alcohol increases sexuality or that alcohol awakens a greater sense of power and aggressive tendencies in men (Abbey, McAuslan, McDuffie, Ross & Zawachi, 1995; Crowe & George, 1989).

On the subject of these beliefs, Fuertes et al. (2006) discovered an interesting relationship between the expectations of female university students about alcohol consumption, and their experiences with sexual victimization. To be specific, students that had not suffered a sexual assault at the hand of a peer had more negative beliefs about the effects of alcohol in sexual interactions. These results could indicate that girls that expect alcohol consumption to make them lose control or make them more

vulnerable are more resistant to consuming it, and so they are less exposed to the possibility of later sexual assault.

It has also been suggested that beliefs about traditional gender roles hold a double standard for alcohol consumption in men and women: male perpetrators who have been drinking tend to be considered less guilty than sober perpetrators, while female victims who have been drinking are judged more harshly than sober victims (Abbey, Ross, McDuffie & McAuslan, 1996b; Cameron & Strizke, 2003; Maurer & Robinson, 2008; Schuller & Stewart, 2000). Furthermore, when victims were under the influence of alcohol at the time they were raped, they are granted less credibility, and are blamed more for the assault than victims who were sober (Jordan, 2004; Wenger & Bornstein, 2006).

Ideological variables and the occurrence of sexual assault: the role of rape myths

Gender attitudes and stereotypes play a very important role in sexual assault (for a summary, see Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler & Viki, 2009). In Burt's classic studies (1980), it was suggested that more than 50% of randomly selected adults support a series of attitudes about rape such as "in the majority of rapes, the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation," "she provoked her attacker," "she secretly liked it," or "she lied about the incident." These attitudes in a way justify rape, blaming the victim and exonerating the perpetrator. Burt termed these stereotypes "rape myths" and defined them as "prejudices, stereotypes or false beliefs about rape, its victims or its assailants." Later, Lonsway & Fitzgerald (1994) defined them as "generally false attitudes and beliefs that are widely and persistently maintained, and serve to justify the sexual assaults that men commit against women" (p. 134). Recently, Bohner (1998)

defined them as “descriptive or prescriptive beliefs about rape (about its causes, context, consequences, assailants, victims and the interaction between these elements) that serve to negate, minimize or justify men’s sexual violence towards women” (p. 14).

These myths about rape are widely accepted by the general population (e.g. Gerger, Kley, Bohner & Siebler, 2007), transmitted by the media (e.g. Franiuk, Seefeldt, Cepress & Vandello, 2008), and they influence the behavior of attackers, victims’ reporting behavior, and how legal cases are treated (Temkin & Krahé, 2008).

Research studies conducted in Spain have demonstrated the existence of myths and false beliefs amongst university students about sexual assault. For example, Trujano & Raich (2000) found that when university students were asked to attribute blame to the victims in several different rape stories, they were influenced by the victim’s “respectability” (a term related to the use of unconventional attitudes or behaviors that are contrary to traditional gender roles). They also observed that when the victim of rape was described as not having opposed the attack with resistance, observers passed judgments such as *she did not want to avoid the rape* and *surely it was pleasurable to her*.

Sipsma et al. (2000) also analyzed students’ attitudes or myths about sexual assault in a Spanish university population. 412 students participated in this study and reported to what extent they considered it acceptable for a boy to force a girl to have sexual relations under different circumstances. 17.5% of men and 6.3% of women considered forced sex to be acceptable in more than one of the situations described. The degree of acceptance of these rapes was significantly related to the characteristics of the different descriptions, which reflected some of the most prominent myths about rape. For example, the greatest acceptance of rape was produced when it was reported that the

boy and girl had already had sexual relations before, or when it was said that she had excited the boy so much that he could not “stop” his sexual behavior.

Finally, Frese, Moya & Megías (2004) also conducted a study of Spanish university students that analyzed the influence of acceptance of “rape myths” and situational factors on the perception of three different rape scenarios (rape on a date with an acquaintance, rape by your husband, and rape by a stranger). Participants wrote down 4 judgments of each rape situation: the victim’s responsibility, the perpetrator’s responsibility, the intensity of the trauma, and the probability of reporting the crime to the police. The results of this study showed that, generally speaking, participants’ judgments depended on the interaction between their level of acceptance of rape myths and situational clues, such that the less stereotypical the rape situation was (rape by an acquaintance or one’s husband), the greater the influence of these attitudes on attributions of blame.

Studies conducted in Spain in university populations, however, have still not clearly investigated the use-abuse of alcohol in the context of sexual assault against women, and whether or not this is related to acceptance of rape myths. The statistics about alcohol consumption on the part of the Spanish university population show that more than 80% of young people drink alcohol on weekends, and that 81% do so in bars, pubs or nightclubs (Delegación del Gobierno para el Plan Nacional sobre Drogas, 2006). Considering that the majority of interactions between young people occur in these places of leisure, and that the greatest percentage of victims of sexual assault in Spain are between the ages of 18 and 35 (AMUVI, 2001), it would be interesting to determine whether in the Spanish university population, there is also a link between alcohol use-abuse, the acceptance of rape myths, and sexual assaults against women.

In the present study, alcohol use-abuse specifically refers to men providing alcohol to girls as a strategy to access sexual relations with them. Using this type of strategy would demonstrate that when denied sexual relations, men utilize alcohol as a way to deplete the woman's will and subtly coerce her.

With this in mind, the primary objective of the present research study is two-fold; on the one hand, it is to reveal the incidence in a university population of men' using the strategy of giving women alcohol to avoid their later refusal to have sexual relations. The second is to determine the relationship between attitudes about rape (myths), university students' perceptions of the strategy, and their perceptions of women' behavior who consume alcohol when they find themselves in situations where they interact with an acquaintance.

Our hypotheses were the following:

Hypothesis 1: We expect to find a significant rate of men who exhibit the behavior of giving alcohol to women in social/dating situations with acquaintances in order to interfere with their eventual resistance to having sexual relations. This behavior may possibly be reported with greater frequency by the victims (women) than by the perpetrators (men).

Hypothesis 2: Men will justify more than women the use-abuse of alcoholic beverages in certain social situations as a way of coercing nonconsensual sexual relations.

Hypothesis 3: The level of acceptance of "rape myths" will be positively correlated with the level of acceptance of men's strategy of giving women alcohol in order to facilitate nonconsensual sexual relations.

Hypothesis 4: Men (compared to women) and participants with greater acceptance of myths about rape will evaluate the behavior of women consuming alcohol more negatively in a social/dating context, and they will associate it with her being promiscuous.

Method

Participants

Three hundred sixty three students at the University of Granada (Spain) accepted voluntary participation in this study. The final sample, by only including heterosexual participants, was composed of 349 students (154 men and 195 women). The women ranged in age from 18 to 45 years old ($M = 20.79$; $SD = 3.72$) and the men ranged in age from 17 to 44 years old ($M = 20.83$; $SD = 3.70$) (though the age ranges are wide, 94% of participants $-n = 328-$ were between 17 and 25 years old).

Materials and Instruments

Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS) (Burt, 1980). A reduced version of the RMAS was applied that included only the first 11 items on the scale. It lists a series of statements that refer to people's myths or erroneous beliefs about rape. The other 8 items on the scale were not analyzed because they use response options that differ from the first 11 items, and because most of them evaluate beliefs about different groups of women, which is not of interest to the present study. The 11 items selected used a Likert-type response scale with 7 options ranging from "1" (totally disagree) to "7" (totally agree). The scale's internal consistency in this study was $\alpha = .79$, which is similar to other studies conducted by our research team ($\alpha = .73$). Here are some sample

items from the scale: “Any healthy woman can resist a rapist if she really wants to” and “in the majority of rape cases, the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation.”

Scenario. A hypothetical scenario was described during the study in order to determine university students’ view of the strategy of giving women alcohol in order to have nonconsensual sexual relations with them, and also to determine how they evaluate the behavior of women consuming alcohol in a social/dating context with acquaintances. The scenario includes a description of an interaction between a man and a woman in a social/dating situation (a party) in which he makes sexual advances on her, but she rejects them on various occasions. Given these circumstances, participants were asked their opinions about different behaviors that he could enact, and also about her behavior (see more below). Each response option was followed by a Likert-type scale with 11 response alternatives (0 = totally disagree through 10 = totally agree). This allowed participants to express their values related to these behaviors. Specifically, the scenario and the questions included were the following:

“Juan is at a party with friends. He has been flirting for a while now with a girl he likes a lot and she is having a very good time with him. He wants to take things further but she has turned him down multiple times.” What should Juan do next?

- (a) Buy her several drinks in order to have sexual relations with her.*
- (b) Continue insisting and verbally pressuring her until she consents to having sexual relations with him.*
- (c) Talk to her and tell her openly that he wants to have sexual relations with her.*
- (d) Abandon the idea of taking things further with her.*

If the woman accepts the drinks Juan buys her, even though she does not want to take things further with Juan, how would you interpret that?

- (a) The woman accepts the drinks because, really, she also wants to take things further with Juan, and this way, it will be easier to accomplish.*
- (b) Women that drink to excess are usually very promiscuous: she really wants to take things further with Juan.*
- (c) The woman accepts the drinks because she is very comfortable conversing with Juan and she wants to keep talking with him.*
- (d) The woman accepts the drinks because she is having a good time and this way, her drinks are free.*

Measurement of the Incidence of Sexual Assault. A version of the Sexual Experience Scale (SES) (Koss et al., 1987) was used to measure incidence of sexual assault. It collects information about the occurrence of coercive sexual acts, specifically, the victimization of women and sexual assaults committed by men. This version consists of 10 items with a frequency scale that includes several options (*Never, once, twice, more than twice*). Three of the items measure the incidence of undesired sexual contact (fondling, kissing, or petting but not intercourse) through pressure, abuse of authority, or threat; two items measure unconsummated attempts to have nonconsensual sexual relations with intercourse by means of threat or the use of alcohol or drugs; and the other five measure the incidence of nonconsensual consummated sexual relations with intercourse involving pressure, abuse of authority, alcohol or drug use, or threats. We used a version created for victims to assess the women, and a version for attackers to evaluate the men. The scale's internal consistency in this study was $\alpha = .68$ for the women's version, and $\alpha = .55$ for the men's version.

We included an additional question to assess the boys' use of the strategy of using alcohol as a means to have sexual relations with girls in social/dating situations. For the men, this item was formulated in the following way: *"Have you ever tried to get a woman with whom you were flirting at a party, gathering, etc. to drink alcohol so that you could take it further with her?"* For women, the question was phrased: *"Have you ever felt that a man you were flirting with at a party, gathering, etc. was trying to get you go drink alcohol so that he could go further with you?"* Both groups of participants marked their responses on the same frequency scale as the other items on the SES.

Design and Procedure

A quasi experimental design was used with two independent variables: rape myth acceptance (RMA) in two levels (High RMA group vs. Low RMA group) and participants' sex. The dependent variables were: (1) participants' evaluations of the possible behaviors Juan could use to respond to the woman's rejection of his sexual advances and (2) their evaluations of the woman's behavior when she finally accepted the alcohol Juan offered her. Incidence of sexual assault was considered in terms of its relationship with the ideological variables used in the study (RMA), and with the dependent variables.

Data collection was performed in the students' own classrooms, where we asked for their voluntary, anonymous participation in a study about young people's attitudes about different contemporary subjects. Once they accepted collaboration, participants received one of the two questionnaires described above (the two were only different in that one included the men's version of the SES and the other had the women's version of the SES). The questionnaire included the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS; Burt, 1980), a scenario developed specifically for this study, questions about the

scenario, the SES (Koss et al., 1987), a question to determine the incidence of the strategy of providing alcohol (or receiving alcohol, in the booklets created for the women), and last, some socio-demographic information about the participants, in that order. Once the booklets were completed, they were turned in to the experimenters, who then thanked participants for their collaboration. Participants who asked for it were given summarized information about the objectives of the study, and how they could later access its findings.

Results

Incidence of sexual assault

With regards to Hypothesis 1, it was found that 27% ($n = 96$) of participants in this study reported having been implicated in some incident of sexual assault, according to the indications of the SES. The men reported having committed fewer assaults (16%, $n = 25$) than the women reported having experienced (36%, $n = 71$), $\chi^2(1) = 24.25$, $p < .001$.

With the objective in mind of determining the incidence of sexual assaults linked to alcohol use-abuse, a separate analysis was performed of SES items 5 (men's version: *Have you ever given a woman alcohol or drugs in order to have sexual relations with her, unsuccessfully, in spite of the fact that she did not want to?*; women's version: *Has a man ever tried to penetrate you when you did not want him to, giving you alcohol or drugs to serve that purpose, without ultimately having intercourse?*) and 8 (men's version: *Have you ever had sexual intercourse with someone by giving her alcohol or drugs, in spite of the fact that she did not want to?*; women's version: *Have you ever had sexual intercourse with a man who had given you alcohol or drugs to achieve that*

end?) as well as an additional item added by the authors (men's version: *Have you ever tried to get a woman you were flirting with at a party, gathering, etc. to drink alcohol in order to take it further with her?*; women's version: *Have you ever felt that a man you were flirting with at a party, gathering, etc., was trying to get you to drink alcohol so that he could take it further with you?*).

These analyses indicate that for men, 6% ($n = 9$) reported having at some time given alcohol or drugs to a woman in order to get her to have sexual relations with him, but without success. 3% ($n = 5$) reported having had sexual intercourse by providing a woman with alcohol or drugs, and 28% ($n = 44$) said that they had tried to get a woman to drink alcohol in order to take it further with her.

As for the female participants, 3% ($n = 6$) reported having suffered an attempted rape by having been given alcohol or drugs. Two women reported having had forced sexual intercourse with a man by having been given alcohol or drugs (1%). Last, 44% ($n = 87$) of women reported having had an experience where at a party, gathering, etc., a man tried to get them to drink alcohol in order to take things further with them.

Perception of the strategy of providing alcohol

To test hypotheses 2 and 3 and in so doing, determine men's and women's evaluations of men's behavior of giving alcohol to women to deplete their will not to have sexual relations, answers to the questions about the scenario were analyzed as a function of rape myth acceptance (scores on the RMA scale). A procedure was followed wherein participants are assigned to two groups (High RMA group and Low RMA group) by dividing along the median according to their scores on the RMA scale. Four 2x2 ANOVAs were performed for participants' evaluations of each of the four possible behaviors of the male protagonist from the story (Juan).

With respect to the evaluation of the first behavior described (“*buy her several drinks in order to have sexual relations with her*”), statistically significant effects were found for the variables (a) Sex, $F(1,333) = 51.1, p < .001, \eta^2 = .13$, (b) RMA group, $F(1,333) = 25.3, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07$, and also (c) the interaction between them, $F(1,333) = 13.1, p < .001, \eta^2 = .04$. As Figure 1 depicts, men reported greater agreement than women with the statement that Juan, in response to the woman’s refusal, *should buy her several drinks in order to have sexual relations with her*. Participants in the High RMA group also reported greater agreement with this statement, as compared to the Low RMA group. Nonetheless, these primary effects were moderated by the interaction between the two variables such that men from the High RMA group showed less disagreement with these behaviors than those in the Low RMA group, $F(1,141) = 18.4, p < .001, \eta^2 = .12$. Meanwhile, for the women, greater acceptance of rape myths did not decrease their clear disagreement with this behavior, $F(1,192) = 2.6, p > .1$ (Figure 1).

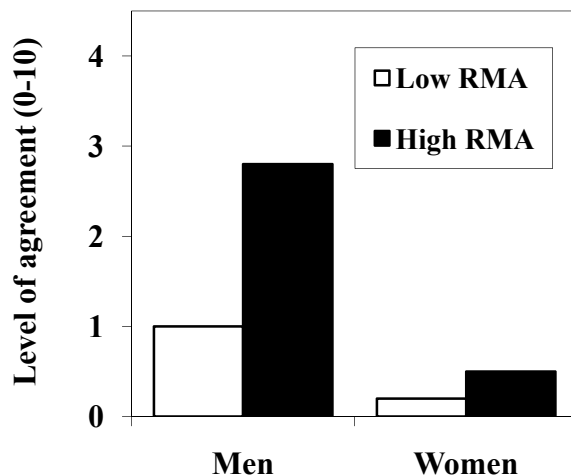


Figure 1. Level of agreement with the statement “Juan, responding to the woman’s refusal, should buy her several drinks to have sexual relations with her.”

With respect to participants’ evaluations of the second statement (*keep insisting and verbally pressuring her until she consents to have sexual relations with him*), that

also implies a form of coercion and nonconsensual sexual relations, and the results of the 2x2 ANOVA were similar to those of the first statement (Figure 2).

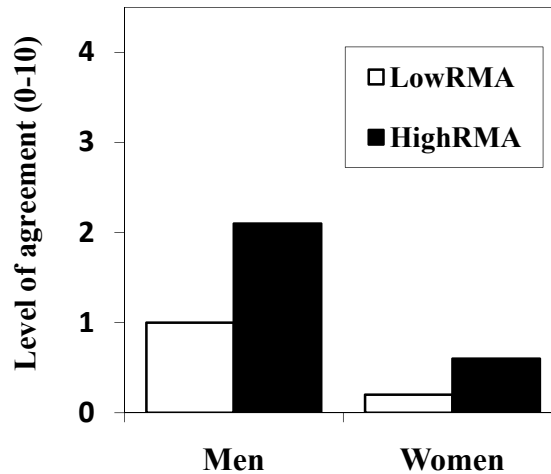


Figure 2. Level of agreement with the statement “Juan, responding to the woman’s refusal, should keep insisting and verbally pressuring her until she consents to having sexual relations with him.”

Men were in greater agreement than women with this behavior, $F(1,333) = 30.0, p < .000, \eta^2 = .08$. Participants in the High RMA group also reported greater agreement with this behavior, $F(1,333) = 14.3, p < .001, \eta^2 = .04$, and these primary effects were moderated by the interaction between the two variables, $F(1,333) = 3.8, p = .05, \eta^2 = .01$, such that for the men, $F(1,141) = 8.6, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$, but not for the women, $F(1,192) = 3.8, p > .05$, greater acceptance of rape myths was related to less disagreement with this behavior.

Options “c” and “d” described two non-coercive statements. For the evaluations of the behavior “*talking to her and openly telling her that he wants to have sexual relations with her*,” the 2x2 ANOVA (Sex x RMA group) did not reveal significant differences as a function of any of our independent variables, nor was the interaction between them found to be significant. Finally, women were in greater agreement than

men with the statement “*abandon the idea of taking things further with her,*” $F(1,334) = 4.6, p < .05, \eta^2 = .01$, though in this case, the myths did not have an influence, nor was the interaction with the Sex variable significant.

Perception of the woman's behavior of accepting alcohol

In the last two items, a hypothetical situation was described wherein the woman, although she did not want to have sexual relations with the man, accepted his buying her drinks. In this case, we asked about participants' level of agreement and disagreement using a series of statements. The first says that the woman accepts the drinks Juan offers her “*because really, she also wishes to take things further with Juan and this way, it will be easier to accomplish.*” Analyses of the evaluations of this woman's behavior by accepting the drinks from Juan show, in confirmation of our final hypothesis, statistically significant effects for the Sex variable, $F(1,332) = 6.81, p < .01, \eta^2 = .02$, and the RMA group variable, $F(1,332) = 28.35, p < .001, \eta^2 = .08$, though no significant effects were found for their interaction. Figure 3 conveys that men, as compared to women, report greater agreement with this statement. Participants in the High RMA group, as compared to the Low RMA group also reported greater agreement with this statement (Figure 3).

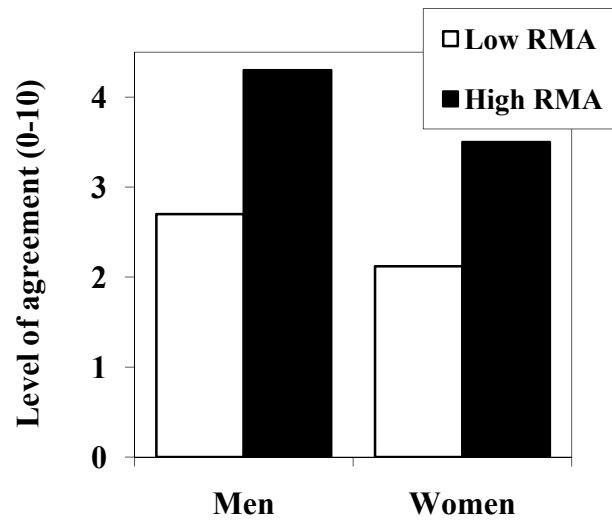


Figure 3. Level of agreement with the statement “The woman accepts the drinks because really, she also wants to take things further with Juan, and this way, it will be easier to accomplish.”

Regarding evaluations of the second statement (“*women that drink to excess are usually very promiscuous: in reality, she wants to take things further with Juan*”), the results of the 2x2 ANOVA were similar to those found for the last statement (Figure 4).

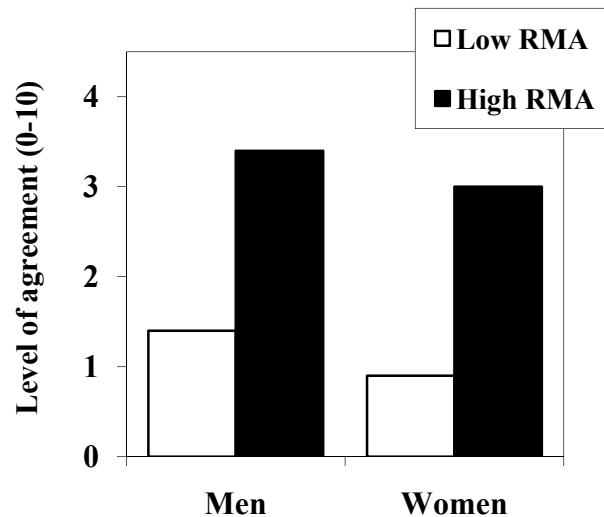


Figure 4. Level of agreement with the statement “Women that drink to excess are usually very promiscuous: in reality, she wants to take things further with Juan.”

Thus, the Sex variable, $F(1,331) = 4.04, p < .05, \eta^2 = .01$, as well as the RMA Group variable, $F(1,331) = 51.44, p < .001, \eta^2 = 0.14$, had statistically significant effects, but not the interaction between the two. In this case, it was also found that men, relative to women, and participants in the High RMA group relative to the Low RMA group, reported greatest agreement with this interpretation.

Options “c” and “d” described two less prejudiced statements about the woman’s behavior. As for the first, “*the woman accepts the drinks because she is very comfortable in the conversation she is having with Juan, and she wants to keep talking with him,*” the 2x2 ANOVA (Sex x RMA group) revealed significant differences as a function of the Sex variable, $F(1,332) = 3.98, p < .05, \eta^2 = .01$, but not for the RMA group variable. Regarding the second statement, “*the woman accepts the drinks because she is having a good time and this way, her drinks will be free,*” statistically significant differences were again found as a function of Sex, $F(1,332) = 4.57, p < .05, \eta^2 = .01$, but not as a function of RMA group. In neither case was the interaction between the two variables found to be significant. For both statements, women reported greater agreement with their contents than the men did.

Discussion

The present study has two important objectives: on the one hand, to determine the incidence of male university students’ strategy of giving women alcohol in order to avoid their eventual refusal to have sexual relations, and on the other, to determine the relationship between attitudes about rape (myths) and university students’ perceptions of this strategy, and of women’ behavior when they consume alcohol in situations where there is sexual interaction.

To achieve this, together with other measures of the incidence of sexual assault, male university students were asked if they used the strategy of giving women alcohol to facilitate their sexual interactions, while women were asked if this had ever happened to them. As Hypothesis 1 predicted, the results demonstrate that approximately one in every four male university students report having given a woman alcohol, at least once, in order to “take it further” with her. Nevertheless, the frequency of this behavior is greater according to the girls’ own perceptions, given that almost half of them recognize having experienced this at least once. These data support the findings of studies conducted in other countries (Abbey, Ross, McDuffie & McAuslan, 1996a; Abbey et al., 1998; Girard & Senn, 2008; Harrington & Leitenberg, 1994; Kanin, 1985; Mosher & Anderson, 1986; Testa, 2002), and establish the incidence in our sample of a behavior that is neither explicitly nor openly considered sexual assault, but that does in fact involve intentional debilitation of the woman’s will and ability to eventually resist an unwanted sexual interaction.

In order to determine the possible relationship between this behavior and the attitudes and stereotypes about sexual assault (rape myths – RMA), participants evaluated a hypothetical situation, and the possible behaviors the man could use to respond to the woman’s refusal to have sexual relations with him. Additionally, the perception of a related behavior was analyzed: consumption of alcohol by a woman who rejects the sexual advances of a man.

As Hypothesis 2 predicted, significant differences were found in the evaluation of men’s strategy of giving women alcohol as a way of facilitating nonconsensual sexual relations as a function of sex. Similarly, men more often than women justified the use-abuse of alcoholic beverages as a way of forcing nonconsensual sexual

relations, as we expected based on the literature about differences in evaluation of sexual assaults as a function of sex (McDonald & Kline, 2004; Temkin & Krahé, 2008; Wakelin & Long, 2003). Furthermore, as Hypothesis 3 formulated, participants who score high on the RMA report less disagreement with the use of alcohol to debilitate the woman's resistance. Also, the greater the acceptance of myths about rape, the less negative the evaluation of the use of the coercive strategy mentioned earlier (pressuring and insisting). However, the primary effects of the sex and RMA variables were found to be moderated by the interaction between the two, such that women, independently of their RMA, were in strong disagreement with the use of alcohol, pressure and insistence. Meanwhile, for men, that rejection was less the greater their acceptance of the myths was.

These results show a clear relationship, especially for men, between the social perception of the strategy of use-abuse of alcohol, and acceptance of rape myths (see also Girard & Senn, 2008). How might this relationship be explained? According to Temkin & Krahé (2008), rape myths act as an interpretive mental schema of sexual assault, especially when the contextual and situational elements we know do not provide clear information about what happened. In situations with little information, then, our judgments and evaluations are not formed mainly on the facts (bottom-up processing), but are based on our schemas and attitudes (top-down processing). In these situations, myths become most influential. Applying these ideas to the present study, we can say that, really, the situation described in the hypothetical scenario includes little conclusive information about what exactly happened, and above all, the interaction described does not fit a commonly accepted stereotype about sexual assault that has come to be known as the "real rape" (perpetrated by a stranger, through the use of force, and with great

physical resistance on the part of the woman). When there is a lack of information or situational ambiguity, participants base their judgments mainly on beliefs or myths about sexual assaults. One might also ask: why are there differences between men and women in the influence of these myths? This is perhaps because men usually perceive greater ambiguity than women do in circumstances in which this type of sexual interaction occurs (Temkin & Krahé, 2008).

On a similar note, it is interesting to observe how participants' evaluations of the non-coercive behaviors included in the scenario (options c and d) did not turn out to be affected by RMA level, or by the sex variable. In other words, myths, as interpretive schemas, only permeate our judgment about behaviors that are in some way related to rape stereotypes, but not about behaviors that respect women's sexual freedom.

Another variable of interest to the present study was the evaluation of alcohol consumption by women in the context of sexual relations (Hypothesis 4). Our prediction suggested that men (relative to women), and participants with high scores on the RMA (relative to those with low scores) evaluate this behavior more negatively, and more often associate it with women being promiscuous. The results support our hypothesis. It was found that men, relative to women, report greater agreement with the idea that the woman accepted alcohol from the man (Juan) because really, she wanted to have sexual relations with him, and with the statement that women that drink alcohol during sexual interactions are promiscuous. These differences also occurred as a function of RMA level; participants with high acceptance of rape myths agreed more with both statements.

These last results also support the findings of prior research that has identified a double standard in evaluating alcohol ingestion according to sex, such that men who

have been drinking are seen in a positive light, while women who drink tend to be perceived as sexually promiscuous (Abbey et al. 1996b; Cameron & Stritzke, 2003; Crowe & George, 1989). According to Maurer and Robinson (2008), it seems that for women, alcohol consumption is associated with their sexual intentions, so drinking increases their “responsibility” over what might happen to them, but that is not so for men. When men consume alcohol, it exempts them from responsibility for their actions, which are attributed to loss of self-control.

Finally, regarding the non-prejudiced evaluations of the woman’s behavior who accepts alcohol, differences as a function of rape myth acceptance were not found (response options c and d: “*The woman accepts the drinks because she feels very comfortable conversing with Juan and wants to keep talking with him;*” “*The woman accepts the drinks because she is having a good time and this way, her drinks are free*”). Nevertheless, women reported greater agreement with these two response options than men did, possibly due to the fact that women tend to perceive fewer sexual intentions than men in this type of situation (Maurer & Robinson, 2008).

Our research, however, has certain limitations that should be taken into consideration. One such limitation is the participants’ level of honesty. It is possible that when dealing with such a delicate matter as, for example, to admit being the active agent of a sexual assault, male participants may have tried to hide or falsify their responses as a way of improving their image. Similarly, we cannot guarantee that women’s responses were completely honest, and that no social desirability effect occurred. It is also necessary to highlight that the study employed artificial scenarios created specifically for this study, which could detract from the credibility of the information presented.

We also wish to draw your attention to the small size of some of the effects, which is apparent in the reported values of η^2 . As Frías, Pascual & García (2000) mentioned, we must not forget that to evaluate the importance of any result, we cannot only consider its level of significance, but also the effect size, especially when the finding claims to have practical application.

Nevertheless, in spite of these limitations, this study contributes new data about the incidence of a coercive sexual behavior in a Spanish university population: providing a woman with alcohol in order to have sexual relations with her. Also, the present study explores the relationship between this strategy and variables that are ideological in nature (rape myths). The results fall in line with the findings of other research studies about alcohol use as a strategy in sexual assault, and about the influence of ideological variables in our perceptions and evaluations of sexual assault. However, perhaps the most relevant contribution of the present study is the effect found of interaction between sex and myths when it comes to evaluating the behavior of using alcohol to facilitate nonconsensual sexual relations. The fact that men in comparison to women show less disagreement with sexually coercive strategies (providing alcohol) when they have permissive attitudes toward rape (high acceptance of rape myths) indicates that in ambiguous social situations where alcohol is present, ideological variables are strong heuristics for interpreting reality. However, future research should more precisely determine the extent of this phenomenon by performing more exhaustive analyses of psychosocial and situational variables that could clarify the role of other factors related to these results. To study variables such as sexist beliefs about women, expectations surrounding the effect of alcohol on sexuality, the possibility that women use these strategies, too, differences between men and women in how they

communicate and interpret intentions and sexual advances, as well as the relationship between victim and attacker, among others, would be of particular interest to analyzing in depth the growing number of sexual assaults registered in Spain. These findings could inspire campaigns designed to prevent behaviors that, beyond a doubt, infringe on women's sexual self-determination.

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Validación española de la escala Aceptación de Mitos Modernos

Sobre las Agresiones Sexuales (AMMSA).²

(Estudios 2 y 3 de la Tesis Doctoral)

Spanish Validation of the Acceptance of Modern Myths about

Sexual Aggression Scale (AMMSA).

(Studies 2 and 3 in this Doctoral Thesis)

² Estos estudios han sido publicados en: Megías, J. L., Romero-Sánchez, M., Durán, M., Moya, M., & Bohner, G. (2011). Spanish Validation of the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression Scale (AMMSA). *The Spanish Journal of Psychology*, 14, 912-925.

Resumen

Dos estudios fueron llevados a cabo con población universitaria con el objetivo de validar la versión española de la escala “Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression” (AMMSA) (Gerger, Kley, Bohner y Siebler, 2007). Esta escala mide de manera sutil los mitos actuales sobre las agresiones sexuales. En el Estudio 1, 305 estudiantes completaron la versión española del AMMSA y otras escalas relacionadas. En el Estudio 2, 263 participantes completaron la versión española de la escala AMMSA y respondieron a una serie de preguntas acerca de un caso hipotético de agresión sexual a una mujer joven, perpetrado por un hombre al que conocía. La versión española de la escala AMMSA mostró una alta consistencia interna y evidencia adecuada de validez en ambos estudios. Comparada con las escalas tradicionales de aceptación de mitos sobre la violación, las puntuaciones medias en la escala AMMSA fueron mayores y sus distribuciones se aproximaron más a la normalidad. Estos hallazgos sugieren que la versión española de la escala AMMSA es un instrumento útil para estudiar la percepción social de las agresiones sexuales.

Palabras clave: agresión sexual, escala, mitos, validación, violación, violencia contra las mujeres

Abstract

Two studies were conducted with college students to validate the Spanish-language version of the “Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression” scale (AMMSA) (Gerger, Kley, Bohner & Siebler, 2007). This scale assesses modern myths about sexual aggression in a subtle way. In Study 1, 305 students completed the Spanish AMMSA and other scales with related content. In Study 2, 263 participants completed the Spanish AMMSA and answered questions about a hypothetical sexual assault perpetrated by a male acquaintance against a young woman. The Spanish AMMSA showed high internal consistency and adequate evidence of validity in both studies. Compared to traditional scales of rape myth acceptance, mean scores on the AMMSA were higher and their distributions more closely approximated normality. These findings suggest that the Spanish version of the AMMSA scale is a useful instrument to study the social perception of sexual aggression.

Keywords: sexual aggression; scale; myths; validation; rape; violence against women

Violence against women has become a global problem of startling proportions. The data provided by different reports reveal that the reality of this issue is alarming. For example, a multinational study by the World Health Organization (2005) found that between 13% and 61% of women, depending on the country, reported having been the victim of some form of physical violence at some time in their lives. In the same survey, between 20% and 75% of women reported having experienced psychological violence, and between 6% and 59% of women reported having experienced sexual violence.

That being said, the actual incidence of sexual violence against women is difficult to estimate because, among other factors, it is one of the most under-reported crimes (Kelly, Lovett & Regan, 2005; Koss, 1992; Temkin & Krahé, 2008). In Spain, according to official statistics (Instituto de la Mujer, 2009), the total number of crimes against women's right to sexual self-determination reported in 2007 rose to a total of 6.845 cases; of those, 2.320 were sexual abuse cases, 262 were sexual abuse cases with penetration, 431 were sexual harassment cases, 2.259 were sexual assaults, and 1.573 were sexual assaults with penetration³. These data tell us that every day in Spain, about 18 cases of sexual crimes against women are committed. What is more, far from decreasing, these statistics indicate that cases of sexual violence against women that come to light are actually on the rise. According to data from the last 6 years, the number of reported crimes progressively increased, except for the year 2006, when a small decrease was observed from 2005 (number reported in 2002: 6.065; in 2003: 6.191; in 2004: 6.825; in 2005: 7.207; in 2006: 6.798; and in 2007 –up to December–:

³ The Spanish Penal Code makes the distinction between *sexual abuse* (any act against the sexual liberty or indemnity of another person without violence or intimidation and without consent), *sexual harassment* (asking for favors of a sexual nature for oneself or a third person within the context of a working, teaching, or service-providing relationship, whether continuous or habitual, and with said behavior causing an objectively, severely intimidating, hostile, or humiliating situation for the victim), and *sexual assault* (any act against the sexual liberty of another person, with violence or intimidation).

6.845) (Instituto de la Mujer, 2009). Nonetheless, these rates are far lower than the rates expected when survey data of Spanish populations are taken into account. For example, Medina-Ariza and Barberet (2003), in a study conducted at the national level, found that 4.70% of women interviewed disclosed having been the victim of a severe sexual assault perpetrated by current or former romantic partners.

One possible cause for the social invisibility of sexual violence against women lies in people's attitudes toward the victims, perpetrators, and the act of rape itself. These attitudes frequently include blaming the victim, minimizing the psychological impact of the assault, and justifying the perpetrator's actions, which leads to a certain tolerance toward sexual assault that has negative repercussions on victims, makes their recovery process more difficult (Campbell, Ahrens, Sefl, Wasco & Barnes, 2001; Kubany et al., 1995), and significantly decreases the probability that they will report the crime.

In the literature on the social perception of sexual violence, beliefs seen as relating to the origin and perpetuation of sexual violence have been grouped together under the label of "rape myths" (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980). "Rape myth acceptance" (RMA) has to do with people's stereotypical ideas about rape, such as the notion that women falsely accuse men of rape, that rape is not painful, that women desire or enjoy rape, or that women themselves are the cause of rape or deserve to be raped for engaging in certain inappropriate or risky behaviors (Burt, 1980).

Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) defined rape myths as "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women" (p. 134). However, this definition does not include the myths' specific contents and also rests on two very elusive concepts: the

criteria defining an attitude as “false” and the need for these beliefs to be “widely and persistently held” (Gerger, Kley, Bohner & Siebler, 2007). To resolve these issues, Bohner (1998) proposed that rape myths be defined not as false, but as “wrong” from an ethical perspective, and that their prevalence over time be considered an empirical problem rather than a defining element. Bohner’s (1998) approach, then, considered the myths’ content and functions as central components and defined them as “descriptive or prescriptive beliefs about rape (i.e., about its causes, context, consequences, perpetrators, victims, and their interaction) that serve to deny, belittle, or justify men’s sexual violence against women” (p. 14; authors' translation).

Since they were first proposed in the 1970s to the present day, numerous studies have analyzed the cognitive, affective, and behavioral functions of rape myth acceptance (for a review, see Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler & Viki, 2009). At the cognitive level, high acceptance of these myths has been found to relate to increased victim blame and exoneration of the perpetrator. Furthermore, people with high RMA scores tend to consider rape less traumatic for the victim and are less likely to recommend she report what happened to the police (Frese, Moya & Megías, 2004; Krahe, 1988). At the affective level, Bohner et al. (2009) suggest that women’s level of acceptance of these myths may influence their feelings of danger and vulnerability to rape. Women with high RMA scores maintain that rape only occurs to certain women who do not behave in a manner appropriate to their role and are therefore perceived differently, such that these women themselves would surely be spared such an assault. Conversely, women who clearly reject these myths may experience negative effects on their self-esteem, perceiving rape as a potential threat to all women (e.g., Bohner & Lampridis, 2004; Bohner, Weisbrod, Raymond, Barzvi & Schwarz, 1993). Finally, at

the behavioral level, rape myth acceptance has been consistently found to relate to various self-report measures of men's rape proclivity (Abrams, Viki, Masser & Bohner, 2003; Bohner et al., 1998; Bohner, Siebler & Schmelcher, 2006; Malamuth, 1981; Malamuth & Check, 1985).

Although RMA as a construct has been very useful in research on the social perception of rape, some authors have suggested certain methodological problems stemming from the way in which it is measured (Bohner et al., 2009; Eyssel & Bohner, 2008; Gerger et al., 2007). Traditionally, various scales have been used, the most well-known being those by Feild (1978), Burt (1980), Costin (1985), and Payne, Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1999), which cover traditional, "old-fashioned" rape myths (Eyssel & Bohner, 2008). Although the specific content of the items on each scale varies, in the majority of cases, they tend to blame the victim (e.g., "women sometimes provoke rape by their appearance or behavior"), exonerate the perpetrator (e.g., "men often cannot control their sexual urges"), and deny or downplay the violence inherent in rape (e.g., "if a woman isn't a virgin, then it shouldn't be a big deal if her date forces her to have sex").

It is apparent from the phrasing of these items of scales measuring the acceptance of "traditional" rape myths that nowadays, they may sound overly explicit and obvious, leaving the scales very vulnerable to social desirability effects. Also, similar to other types of prejudice such as racism (Swim, Aikin, Hall & Hunter, 1995) and sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996), it may be that the content of rape myths has changed in recent decades such that nowadays, it would be more difficult socially to express clear agreement with the items included in the traditional scales. In fact, the averages observed by researchers who use these scales provide indirect evidence for the idea that

the content of rape myths is in a state of flux. For example, Frese et al. (2004) used a Spanish language version of Burt's (1980) scale and obtained an average RMA score of 2.7 on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 7. Bohner et al. (2006), using a German language version of Costin's (1985) scale, found that men's average scores were 2.6 (Exp. 1) and 2.7 (Exp. 2), also on a scale from 1 to 7. These findings point to the fact that the content of these myths may have changed.

That participants' RMA scores are situated at the extreme low end of the scale implies an asymmetrical distribution; this poses an important methodological concern given that the majority of statistical analyses require normal distributions of scores or error terms. Furthermore, such low baseline scores make it more difficult to detect any effects of experimental manipulations aimed at reducing RMA or to show significant differences in RMA between groups or participants, due to a floor effect (Eyssel & Bohner, 2008).

Gerger et al. (2007) addressed these issues by developing a new 30-item scale that measures the "Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression" (AMMSA). Following a similar logic to the one adopted in research about new forms of racism and sexism, this scale measures myths in a more subtle, less obvious way and not only refers to rape but also other, less severe forms of sexual aggression. In accordance with this new perspective, Gerger et al. defined myths about sexual aggression as "*descriptive or prescriptive beliefs about sexual aggression (i.e., about its scope, causes, context, and consequences) that serve to deny, downplay, or justify sexually aggressive behavior that men commit against women*" (p. 425; italics in original).

The content of AMMSA items covers the following categories (Gerger et al., 2007, p. 425): (a) denial of the scope of the problem (e.g., "Many women tend to

misinterpret a well-meant gesture as a ‘sexual assault’), (b) antagonism toward victims’ demands (e.g., “Women often accuse their husbands of marital rape just to retaliate for a failed relationship”), (c) lack of support for policies designed to help alleviate the effects of sexual violence (e.g., “Nowadays, the victims of sexual violence receive sufficient help in the form of women’s shelters, therapy offers, and support groups”), (d) beliefs that male coercion forms a natural part of sexual relationships (e.g., “When a woman starts a relationship with a man, she must be aware that the man will assert his right to have sex”), and (e) beliefs that exonerate male perpetrators by blaming the victim or the circumstances (e.g., “Any woman who is careless enough to walk through “dark alleys” at night is partly to be blamed if she is raped”).

To carry out their validation and analysis of the AMMSA scale’s psychometric properties, Gerger et al. (2007) conducted 4 studies. Across studies, the scale’s internal consistency was found to range from .90 to .95 (Cronbach’s α). In three of the studies, they also evaluated the scale’s test-retest reliability with delays between measurements ranging from 3 to 13 weeks, also obtaining acceptable values between .67 and .88. Item-total correlations ranged from .21 to .82, and analyses of the scale’s factor structure performed by Gerger et al. suggested a single factor. In addition, the scale exhibited high correlations (from .79 to .88) with one of the most recently developed measures of “traditional” rape myth acceptance, the IRMA (Payne et al., 1999). It also correlated highly (from .76 to .80) with other related constructs that express hostility toward women and masculine ideology such as hostile sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996), as well as a series of beliefs that to some extent condone rape, such as “adversarial sexual beliefs” (Burt, 1980) or the “acceptance of interpersonal violence” (Burt, 1980). Similarly, Gerger et al. found significant, though lower, correlations between AMMSA scores and

other constructs such as right-wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and belief in a just world, which cover more general content but are all associated with justifying and maintaining the “status quo” of social inequality.

Also, participants’ scores on the AMMSA scale were symmetrically, almost normally distributed in all 4 studies by Gerger et al. (2007). The AMMSA scale thus manages to avoid some of the methodological problems mentioned above afflicting traditional measures of RMA: asymmetrical distributions of scores and their placement in the lower range of the scale.

Several research studies conducted in recent years (Bohner, Jarvis, Eyssel & Siebler, 2005; Bohner et al. 2006; Eyssel & Bohner, 2011; Eyssel, Bohner & Siebler, 2006; Temkin & Krahe, 2008) have provided consistent evidence for the benefits of using the AMMSA scale in research on sexual aggression. For example, Eyssel et al. (2006) used it to study the effects of knowing other people’s AMMSA scores on men’s expressed proclivity toward rape. Their results showed that men scored lower on the measure of rape proclivity when they were made to think that other participants’ scores on the AMMSA scale were low. Temkin and Krahe (2008), looking at judicial decisions, found that participants scoring higher on the AMMSA scale recommended shorter sentences for a defendant who was found guilty of rape and also attributed more responsibility for the rape to the victim. In addition, this study demonstrated that the AMMSA scale measures beliefs about sexual aggression in a subtle, non-obvious way: about 44% of participants scored above the scale’s midpoint (59% of men and 34% of women), which is evidence that with this type of item wording, more participants show agreement with myths about sexual aggression.

In light of the above, we consider it undoubtedly of interest to adapt the AMMSA scale into Spanish because in Spanish, we do not yet have access to any scale with its characteristics that allows us to evaluate modern myths about sexual aggression. As far as we know, in Spanish, only Burt's (1980) scale has been used to measure rape myths (Frese et al., 2004), which implies all the methodological problems with traditional measures of myths discussed above. Nonetheless, Lottes's (1991) Rape Supportive Attitude Scale (RSAS) was recently adapted into Spanish by Sierra, Rojas, Ortega, and Martín (2007). As described in a study by Sierra et al. (2007), the distribution of Spanish college students' scores on the RSAS continues to be biased toward the lower end of the scale, with mean scores ranging from 1.30 to 2.97 on a Likert-type scale (1 = *totally disagree*; 5 = *absolutely agree*), even though its mid-point is 3. In fact, the percentage of participants who expressed some degree of agreement with the content of the majority of the items did not exceed 10%. Additionally, the content of the RSAS's items resembles that of other scales measuring traditional myths, with a very blatant, unsubtle phrasing of beliefs, which leads to participants agreeing very little with its contents.

The present research includes two studies that will analyze the psychometric properties of a Spanish AMMSA scale and validate it. The scale had been previously translated following the recommended process for translating trans-cultural research instruments (Brislin, 1970): a bilingual individual (psychologist and translator) translated the scale from English to Spanish and another bilingual person (translator) translated it back into English again. Any discrepancies between the original and translated versions, now both in English, were discussed and resolved through

agreement between this study's authors and the translators, which gave way to the definitive version in Spanish that is presented here.

In the first study, 306 students at the University of Granada responded to the Spanish version of the AMMSA scale and to other scales that measure constructs that are theoretically related to it. Specifically, they completed Burt's (1980) RMA scale as well as the ambivalent sexism inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Spanish version by Expósito, Moya, & Glick, 1998), which measures hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS). These data allowed us to determine the scale's factor structure, internal consistency, and concurrent validity. Study 2 was conducted with a different sample of 263 students at the University of Granada and aimed to complete an analysis of the scale's factor structure as well as to obtain more external sources of its validity. Specifically, with the help of a hypothetical sexual assault scenario, correlations were computed between scores on the scale and the constructs victim blame, aggressor's responsibility, "token resistance," the woman's aggressiveness, and self-reported proclivity toward rape (men only). We hypothesized that the AMMSA scale would show a high correlation with Burt's (1980) RMA scale, a traditional measure of rape myth acceptance, as well as with the HS (Glick & Fiske, 1996), which measures hostile attitudes toward women. Though we also hypothesized that there would be a relationship between AMMSA and BS (Glick & Fiske, 1996) scores, we expected this relationship to be weaker than those with the rest of the constructs because BS implies apparently more positive attitudes toward women than those addressed in myths about sexual aggression. On a related note, we expected that men's scores on the AMMSA scale would be a good predictor of their self-reported proclivity toward rape (Bohner et al., 1998). Finally, we expected that there would be a positive correlation between

AMMSA scores and both blaming the victim and belief in “token resistance.” At the same time, we hypothesized a negative correlation between AMMSA scores and attributing responsibility to the aggressor.

STUDY 1

Study 1’s purpose was to determine the factor structure and internal consistency of the Spanish version of the AMMSA scale, as well as correlations between it and other related constructs. Specifically, participants filled out a questionnaire that included the AMMSA scale together with Burt’s (1980) RMA scale and the ASI (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Spanish version by Expósito et al., 1998).

Method

Participants

Three hundred and five students belonging to 8 different departments at the University of Granada participated in this study, representing several different fields: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Engineering. Their mean age was 21 years ($SD = 2.7$). Of all the participants, 206 were women with an average age of 20.8 years ($SD = 2.5$) and 99 were men with a mean age of 21.3 years ($SD = 3.0$). The difference in age between men and women did not turn out to be statistically significant, $t(304) = -1.60, p = .11$.

Instruments

Participants completed the following scales:

- 1) The Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression Scale (AMMSA; Gerger et al., 2007). The AMMSA scale (see appendix) consists of 30 items that

subtly evaluate the acceptance of modern myths about sexual aggression. It is a self-report measure in which participants indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with each statement on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 7 (*totally agree*). Sample items from the AMMSA scale are: “*Once a man and a woman have started ‘making out,’ a woman’s misgivings against sex will automatically disappear;*” “*It is a biological necessity for men to release sexual pressure from time to time;*” “*If a woman invites a man to her home for a cup of coffee after a night out this means that she wants to have sex;*” “*The discussion about sexual harassment on the job has mainly resulted in many a harmless behavior being misinterpreted as harassment;*” “*Alcohol is often the culprit when a man rapes a woman.*” In studies of the scale’s development and validation (Gerger et al., 2007), its English and German versions showed high internal consistency (Cronbach’s α between .90 and .95) and good test-retest reliability (between .67 and .88).

- 2) Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS; Burt, 1980). This consists of items that contain myths surrounding rape. In our study, a shorter version was used that took 10 items from the Spanish adaptation, previously translated and used by Frese et al. (2004). Items on the RMAS have a 7-point Likert-type response format where 1 means “*totally disagree*” and 7 means “*totally agree*” with the statement presented. The following items, for example, are included on this scale: “*One reason that women falsely report a rape is that they frequently have a need to call attention to themselves;*” “*In the majority of rapes, the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation;*” “*Many women have an unconscious wish to be raped, and may then unconsciously set up a situation in which they are*

likely to be attacked.” The scale’s internal consistency in this study was found to be $\alpha = .72$, similar to what was observed in other studies conducted by our research group ($\alpha = .73$, Frese et al., 2004).

- 3) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Spanish version by Expósito et al., 1998). This scale comprises 22 items that represent two subscales of 11 items each; its objective is to assess the components of ambivalent sexism: hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS). All items are assessed on a Likert-type scale with six response options ranging from “0” (*totally disagree*) to “5” (*totally agree*). Some example items measuring BS are: “*Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess; Women should be cherished and protected by men; Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores; Men are incomplete without women*”. Some example items measuring HS are: “*Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them; Women are too easily offended; Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.*” The ASI’s internal consistency observed in this study was $\alpha = .92$, with $\alpha = .90$ for HS and $\alpha = .85$ for BS. In line with the findings of prior research, HS and BS were found to be positively correlated in our study, $r = .61$; $p < .001$.

Procedure

Each group of students completed the questionnaire in their usual classroom for approximately 30 minutes. The instructions, both verbal and written, guaranteed to participants the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. All participants consented to answering the questionnaire anonymously, collaborating in a completely voluntarily manner without any compensation or reward for participation. As for the scales’ order of presentation, participants completed the RMAS first, the ASI second,

and the AMMSA third. Finally, they were asked to provide some personal data (age, sex and degree/department).

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis.

Exploratory factor analysis was applied to determine the factor structure of the Spanish AMMSA. The results of Bartlett's test of sphericity, $\chi^2(435) = 2952.6$, $p < .0001$, and a value of the KMO index over .80 confirmed that the matrix of correlations was suitable to carry out this analysis. Next, a principal components analysis was applied to the AMMSA's 30 items using SPSS (version 15.0). This yielded 7 components with eigenvalues greater than one, together explaining 57.75% of variance. The first seven eigenvalues were: 9.06, 1.88, 1.53, 1.37, 1.31, 1.12 and 1.04. The ratio between the first eigenvalue and the second was 4.82, in other words, the first factor explained more than 4 times as much of the total variance as any of the other factors. This ratio, as well as a visual inspection of the scree plot, suggested a one-factor solution, thus replicating the structure of the original scale (Gerger et al., 2007).

Estimating Reliability

The 30 items that comprise the AMMSA scale showed high internal consistency ($\alpha = .91$), similar to that of the original version of the scale (α between .90 and .95; Gerger et al., 2007). The correlations between each item and the total² ranged from .21 to .68, also very similar to those found for the original scale by Gerger et al. (2007). Therefore, we retained all the items on the scale; each participant's mean across the 30 items was defined as their AMMSA score.

*Means*⁴

Table 1 displays participants' mean scores on the AMMSA and RMAS scales, separate for each sex. The average AMMSA scores were found to be in the range of those obtained by Gerger et al. (2007) for both men ($M = 3.32$; range of means on the original scale: 3.15 to 3.60) and women ($M = 2.96$; range of means on the original scale: 2.72 to 3.30). Evidently, mean AMMSA scores were significantly higher than mean RMAS scores for men and women alike, which is evidence of the AMMSA's greater sensitivity in detecting myths. A mixed model ANOVA, 2 (type of scale: AMMSA vs. RMAS) x 2 (Sex), confirmed those impressions, indicating main effects of both type of scale, $F(1,303) = 544, p < .001, \eta^2 = .64$, and sex, $F(1,303) = 10.6, p = .001, \eta^2 = .03$. The interaction effect was not significant.

Table 1. Male and Female Participants' Mean Scores on the AMMSA and the RMAS.

	AMMSA		RMAS	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Men	3.32	0.88	2.11	0.88
Women	2.96	0.94	1.86	0.71

Note. AMMSA, Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression; RMAS, Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. Each item's value ranged from 1 to 7 points such that higher values indicated greater acceptance of myths.

Distributions

The distribution of AMMSA and RMAS scores for the present study's sample is displayed in Figure 1. It shows that the distribution of the AMMSA scale is virtually normal, which is confirmed by the nonsignificant result of a Kolmogoroff-Smirnov test,

⁴ The Appendix presents the means of all items and each one's correlation with the scale's total.

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$p = .22$. Conversely, the distribution of RMAS scores is clearly asymmetrical and is far from normal, $p < .0001$. Thus, one of our most important objectives in proposing to validate this scale has been met in that we have obtained a measure with a symmetrical distribution of scores that is nearly normal.

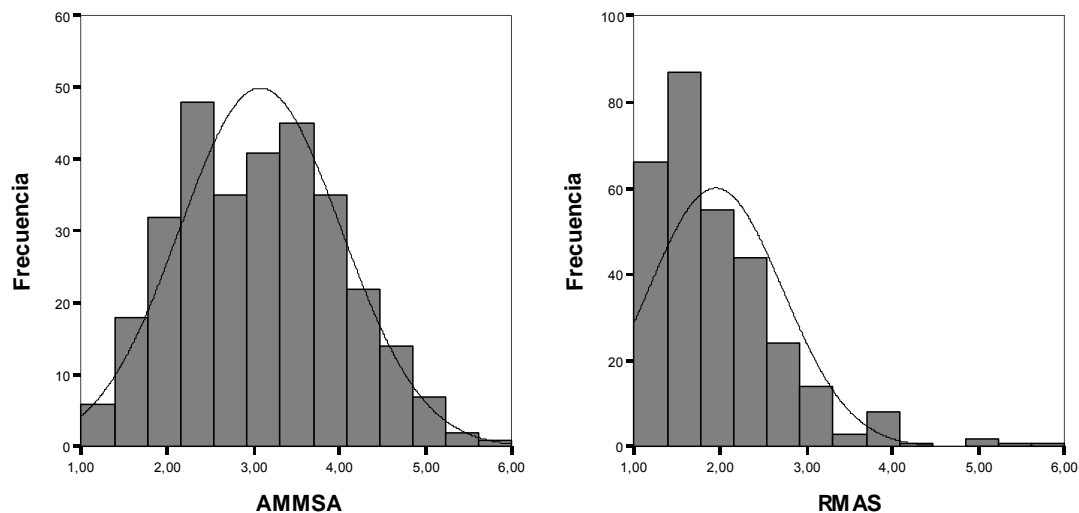


Figure 1. Distributions of Scores on the Acceptance of Modern Myths About Sexual Aggression Scale (AMMSA) and the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS).

External Evidence of Validity

As expected, participants' scores on the AMMSA scale were highly correlated ($r = .57$) with scores on the RMAS scale, which evaluates acceptance of traditional rape myths. Of the two types of sexism measured by the ASI (Glick & Fiske, 1996), we expected a higher correlation between the AMMSA and hostile sexism, compared to benevolent sexism. In support of our predictions, the AMMSA was found to be significantly correlated with both, but more so with HS ($r = .71$) than with BS ($r = .58$), $z(283) = 3.44, p < .001$.

Discussion

We can conclude from the results of this study that the Spanish version of the 30-item AMMSA scale has adequate internal consistency, and evidence for its construct validity has been provided as well. On a related note, scores on this scale followed a symmetrical, almost normal distribution, thereby resolving some of the methodological problems that have been attributed to traditional scales that measure rape myth acceptance. The psychometric properties of the Spanish version of the AMMSA scale were found to be very similar to those reported for the original German and English versions developed by Gerger et al. (2007); this leads us to assert that we have achieved a good adaptation of the original instrument. The fact that the correlation between the AMMSA scale and the measure of traditional myths (RMAS) used in the present research was lower ($r = .57$) than the one observed between AMMSA and IRMA by Gerger et al. (2007) (r_s around .80) may be due to the content of the items on Burt's (1980) RMAS scale, which detect more traditional and out-of-date myths than does the IRMA scale by Payne et al. (1999), which was created much later.

STUDY 2

In order to contribute further evidence of the Spanish AMMSA's validity while at the same time confirming its factor structure, we conducted a second study in which we evaluated its relationship with a series of constructs that have been found to correlate with RMA: amount of blame attributed to female victims of sexual violence, responsibility attributed to the perpetrators, evaluation of women's behavior as "token resistance" to sexual interactions, and men's proclivity toward sexual violence. To do so, we constructed a scenario describing a hypothetical rape committed by a man

against a woman and asked participants about the issues above. Male and female participants were asked the same things except for questions about rape proclivity, which were directly only to the men.

Numerous studies of rape myth acceptance have dealt with attributions of blame in rape scenarios (for reviews, see Krahe, 1991; Pollard, 1992). From the earliest research about the RMA construct, one of the most consistent findings has been that respondents' RMA levels are positively correlated with victim blame and negatively correlated with attributing responsibility to the perpetrator (Eyssel & Bohner, 2008).

Another construct related to self-reported proclivity to rape is the perception of "token resistance" (e.g., Masser, Viki & Power, 2006). People who hold this idea believe that when a woman resists sexual advances, she really does so to give the appearance of being virtuous and chaste, whereas deep down, she wants to submit to the man. Thus, this construct should also be positively correlated with AMMSA scores.

To assess rape proclivity, Bohner et al. (1998) developed an instrument containing various scenarios describing acquaintance rape (though the word "rape" is not mentioned in the descriptions). For each scenario, participants were asked to indicate, first, if they would have behaved like the perpetrator and second, how much they would have enjoyed getting their way in that situation. Participants' mean scores of these two items across all the scenarios were used to measure their proclivity toward rape. Several studies have observed a significant relationship between rape myth acceptance and this measure of rape proclivity both when traditional measures of myths were used (e.g. Abrams et al., 2003) and when the AMMSA was employed (Eyssel, Bohner, Süssenbach, & Schreiber, 2009; Gerger et al., 2007, Study 4).

Method

Participants

Two hundred and sixty three students participated in this study, different from those in Study 1 and belonging to 7 different departments at the University of Granada representing the fields of Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Engineering. Their average age was 20.7 years ($SD = 2.2$). Of all the participants, 150 were women with a mean age of 20.7 years ($SD = 2.2$) and 111 were men with a mean age of 20.8 years ($SD = 2.3$). The age difference between men and women was not significant, $t(259) = -.53, p = .60$.

Instruments

Participants responded to a questionnaire that included the following instruments:

- 1) The “Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression Scale” (AMMSA; Gerger et al., 2007) described above.
- 2) A fictional scenario describing an interaction between a young man and woman who, after meeting at a bar, spend the better part of the night having fun together at the bar. When it closes, the man invites the woman to his apartment and she accepts. Over the course of their time together at his apartment, he begins to make sexual advances, but she rejects them. Nevertheless, the man disregards her protests and ends up sexually assaulting her. After reading the story, participants were asked to respond to a series of items expressing their evaluation of the victim’s level of blame for what happened (4 items, of which 2 were created for the purposes of this research and 2 were selected from those used by Abrams et al., 2003, and Cameron & Stritzke, 2003), the perpetrator’s responsibility (3 items; Abrams et al., 2003; Cameron & Stritzke, 2003), and the

“token resistance” exhibited by the victim (5 items; Masser et al. 2006). The scale’s internal consistencies were, respectively, $\alpha = .78$ for victim blame, $\alpha = .51$ for the aggressor’s responsibility and $\alpha = .92$ for “token resistance.”

- 3) Subsequently, only male participants responded to the two items measuring their self-reported proclivity toward sexual assault (Bohner et al., 1998; Romero-Sánchez, Durán, Carretero-Dios, Megías & Moya, 2010). The first asked participants to what extent they would have behaved in the same way as the man in the story if placed in a similar situation, and the second item asked if in a similar situation, they would have enjoyed getting their way. According to the suggestions of Bohner et al. (1998), answers to these two items were combined into a single, mean value for both; this was our measure of self-reported proclivity. The consistency of this short scale was $\alpha = .75$.

Procedure

Study 2’s procedure was similar to the one described in Study 1. The order of presentation was always such that participants completed the AMMSA scale first, read the scenario next, and finally answered the items about blaming the victim, the aggressor, “token resistance,” and rape proclivity (men only).

Results

Exploratory Factor Analysis

With the intention of determining the factor structure of the AMMSA scale using a new sample, we repeated the same process as in Study 1. The results of Bartlett’s test of sphericity, $\chi^2(435) = 2625.9, p < .0001$, and a KMO index value over .80 confirmed that the matrix of correlations was suitable to perform this analysis. Next,

a principal components analysis of the scale's 30 items was carried out. This yielded 8 components with eigenvalues greater than 1 that together explained 59.23% of variance. The first eight eigenvalues were: 8.22, 1.80, 1.68, 1.57, 1.27, 1.17, 1.04 and 1.01. The ratio between the first and second eigenvalues was 4.56, which means that the first factor explained more than 4 times the amount of variance than each of the other factors did. This ratio, as well as a visual inspection of the scree plot, once again suggested a one-factor solution, thus replicating the results of Study 1. Though in the literature on RMA, multi-factor solutions are sometimes reported, this tends to be inconsistent across different studies. Also, at the moment, there is no theory in place to suggest that this construct has a multidimensional structure (for a more in-depth discussion, see Gerger et al., 2007, footnote 3, pp. 430-431).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Next, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed (LISREL 8.8) for the 30 AMMSA items. The CFA was based on an asymptotic covariance matrix, and the method of diagonally weighted least squares was used (DWLS in LISREL). The one-factor model was tested. According to the recommendations of Hu and Bentler (1999), and Tanaka (1993), next we used multiple approximations to evaluate the model's goodness of fit, specifically the following indices: root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), the adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) and the non-normal fit index (NNFI, also known as the Tucker-Lewis coefficient, TL) (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). These measures indicated that the model fit the data well ($\chi^2(405) = 1,714.07$, $RMSEA = .07$, $AGFI = .93$, $NNFI = .92$). Therefore, a one-factor solution was deemed most appropriate for the AMMSA scale.

Estimating Reliability

The 30 items on the AMMSA scale showed high internal consistency ($\alpha = .90$), very similar to the level observed in Study 1 ($\alpha = .91$) and that reported for the scale's original version (α between .90 and .95; Gerger et al., 2007). The correlations of each item with the total ranged from .26 to .68, also very similar to the findings of Study 1 and Gerger et al. (2007). In sum, these data corroborate the one-factor solution, so all the items on the scale were retained.

Mean Scores

As in Study 1, participants' mean AMMSA scores fell into the range observed by Gerger et al. (2007) for both men ($M = 3.60$; range of means in the original scale: 3.15 to 3.60) and women ($M = 3.07$; range of means in the original scale: 2.72 to 3.30) and were very similar to the scores observed in Study 1. Also, as expected, men scored higher on the AMMSA than did women, $t(261) = 4.73, p < .0001$.

External Evidence of Validity

AMMSA scores were found to be positively and significantly correlated with attribution of blame to the victim for women ($r = .36, p < .001$) as well as men ($r = .51, p < .001$), such that participants who showed greater acceptance of myths estimated the victim's responsibility for the incident as higher. Conversely, responsibility attributed to the aggressor was found to be negatively correlated with AMMSA scores (women: $r = -.17, p = .05$; men: $r = -.21, p < .05$), indicating that greater acceptance of myths is associated with the tendency to blame the aggressor less. Finally, AMMSA scores were also found to correlate positively with the belief that the woman who was sexually assaulted had shown "token resistance" to the man's sexual advances (women: $r = .36, p = .001$; men: $r = .51, p < .001$). For men, we also analyzed the correlation between

their AMMSA scores and their rape proclivity; as expected, that correlation was also found to be positive and statistically significant ($r = .27, p < .01$).

Discussion

The results of Study 2 corroborate the one-factor structure of the AMMSA scale in Spanish, which again showed a high internal consistency. AMMSA scores' significant and meaningful correlations with victim blame, exonerating the perpetrator, perceptions of "token resistance," and rape proclivity provided additional sources of evidence for its criterion validity.

General Discussion

We were successful in validating the AMMSA scale in Spanish so as to provide a more subtle measure of modern myths about sexual aggression. The psychometric analyses performed in Studies 1 and 2 indicated that the Spanish version of the scale possesses adequate consistency, and provided evidence that its construct validity was similar to that of the original versions in English and German (Gerger et al., 2007).

Study 1 demonstrated that participants' distribution of scores on the scale follows a symmetrical, almost normal distribution, thereby resolving one of the problems afflicting traditional measures of rape myths. As mentioned above, the fact that the traditional measures' contents are so explicitly, obviously expressed gives way to an asymmetrical, biased distribution of scores that tends toward the low end of the scale. The same occurred in Study 1 with participants' scores on one such scale (RMAS; Burt, 1980). Such a biased distribution of scores violates some of the common assumptions made in conducting statistical analyses, which makes it difficult to test hypotheses about mean differences, especially in studies with a limited number of

participants. Similarly, such low mean scores as are often obtained with traditional measures of rape myths can mask, because of a possible floor effect, the potential impact of interventions designed to change rape-related attitudes. The RSAS scale (Lottes, 1991), which was recently validated in Spanish by Sierra et al. (2007), is affected by the same problems derived from a biased distribution of scores. It is thus possible that the Spanish version of the AMMSA is currently the only Spanish-language scale that allows for these difficulties to be avoided.

Regarding the Spanish AMMSA's factor structure, the analyses carried out in Studies 1 and 2 revealed that a one-factor structure is most consistent. Our analysis of the eigenvalues' ratio, the scree plot, and confirmatory factor analysis corroborated this notion. The one-factor structure was also confirmed by the high internal consistency of the 30 items obtained in both Studies 1 and 2. Hence, the factor solution of the Spanish version replicates the one adopted by Gerger et al. (2007) for the original versions in English and German.

Construct validity was indicated by the fact that participants' AMMSA scores were highly positively correlated with scores on another scale (RMAS, Burt, 1980) that measures rape myth acceptance, the construct most closely related to acceptance of myths about sexual aggression. Furthermore, as hypothesized, AMMSA scores were found to be positively correlated with scores of hostile (HS) and benevolent (BS) forms of ambivalent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Nevertheless, the correlation was larger with HS than with BS, which indicates greater conceptual proximity between myths about sexual aggression and hostility toward women. In this case, too, the relationship between the AMMSA and the two forms of ambivalent sexism was similar to the one reported by Gerger et al. (2007).

Study 2 provided additional, new sources of external validation of the scale. With the help of a hypothetical scenario narrating a sexual assault committed by an acquaintance in a social/dating situation, we were able to determine participants' attributions of blame to the victim and the perpetrator for the incident. In addition, they reported their opinions about the notion of "token resistance" to sexual advances on the part of the victim, and men also reported their predisposition to behave like the aggressor in a situation similar to the one described (rape proclivity). As hypothesized, participants' AMMSA scores were found to be positively correlated with the level of blame attributed to the victim and negatively correlated with the responsibility attributed to the aggressor. Similarly, acceptance of modern myths about sexual aggression was found to be positively correlated with the belief that the woman who was sexually assaulted only feigned her resistance and protest against the aggressor. These results reinforce the findings of Gerger et al. (2007) and expand on them by incorporating data about "token resistance," a construct with which this scale had not previously been related.

Furthermore, AMMSA scores were found to correlate positively with self-reported rape proclivity in men. The higher their scores on the scale, the greater was the agreement they reported with the possibility of behaving like the aggressor in the scenario and enjoying it if they were in a similar situation. In a study by Gerger et al. (2007; Study 4), this correlation was found to be significant only in a sample of German-speaking men, but not in a sample of English-speaking men. Although this difference may have been related to cultural differences between the two samples, Gerger et al. (2007) attributed this unforeseen result mainly to their small sample size. In larger samples such as ours, regardless of cultural differences, the correlation

between AMMSA and proclivity toward rape seems to be sufficiently robust (see also Eyssel et al., 2009).

It is important to note, however, that the correlations in Study 2 between the AMMSA and the different variables mentioned above were always found to fall between .3 and .5, which correspond to medium-large sizes (Cohen, 1988), except for the correlations with the variable “proclivity toward rape,” where the value was .27, and in correlations with the variable “responsibility attributed to the aggressor,” which, though significant, were small in size (Cohen, 1988). In this last case, this may have been due to the low internal consistency of the items measuring this variable.

The studies comprising the present research also imply certain limitations that deserve mention. First of all, both studies’ samples were convenience samples, comprised exclusively of college students. Applying and validating this scale in new samples of the general population would be an interesting complement to this research. That being said, although our samples were not representative of the general population, they were in many respects more homogeneous than the general population, which implies a more conservative test situation for many of the correlations we have used to validate this scale. Second, the scale should also be validated in an experimental context, similar to what is underway in research on the original version (Eyssel et al., 2006; Eyssel & Bohner, 2011). Third, to determine the predictive validity of the AMMSA regarding sexual assault, it would be useful to have access to objective behavioral measures of sexual assault in addition to the self-report measures of proclivity.

In summary, we conclude that the Spanish version of the AMMSA scale exhibits adequate psychometric properties of internal consistency, sufficient sources of validity,

and the statistical distribution needed to be used to measure the acceptance of modern myths about sexual aggression. It expands the area of application from rape to sexual aggression in general and its items have more subtle, indirect phrasing and content, allowing for greater sensitivity in the detection of this type of belief.

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APPENDIX

Spanish Version of the “Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression”

Scale

Item	Item-total Correlations	Means
1. Cuando se trata de contactos sexuales, las mujeres esperan que sean los hombres quienes tomen la iniciativa.	.45	4.54
2. En cuanto un hombre y una mujer empiezan a “enrollarse”, los reparos de la mujer respecto al sexo desaparecen automáticamente.	.29	2.86
3. Muchas mujeres se quejan de agresiones sexuales por motivos insignificantes, sólo para demostrar que son mujeres con fuertes convicciones igualitarias.	.60	1.97
4. Para conseguir la custodia de sus hijos/as, las mujeres a menudo acusan falsamente a sus ex maridos de tener inclinaciones hacia la violencia sexual.	.56	2.96
5. Interpretar gestos “inocentes” como “acoso sexual” es un arma muy común en la batalla de los sexos.	.64	2.99
6. Para los hombres es una necesidad biológica liberar de vez en cuando su tensión sexual acumulada.	.51	4.23
7. Tras una violación, las mujeres hoy en día reciben mucho apoyo.	.41	4.02
8. Hoy en día, un amplio porcentaje de violaciones está causado, en parte, por mostrar la sexualidad en los medios de comunicación, ya que esto incrementa el impulso sexual de potenciales violadores.	.43	3.18
9. Si una mujer invita a un hombre a tomar una copa en su casa después de haber salido por la noche, significa que quiere sexo.	.45	3.40
10. Mientras no vayan demasiado lejos, los comentarios e insinuaciones sexuales que se hacen a las mujeres quieren decirles solamente que son atractivas.	.54	3.69
11. Cualquier mujer que sea tan poco precavida como para andar sola de noche por callejones oscuros tiene parte de culpa si es violada.	.46	1.80
12. Cuando una mujer comienza una relación con un hombre, debe tener claro que el hombre hará valer su derecho de mantener relaciones sexuales.	.50	2.38
13. La mayoría de las mujeres prefiere ser elogiada por su físico que por su inteligencia.	.47	3.00
14. La sensibilidad de nuestra sociedad hacia los delitos sexuales es desproporcionada debido a que la sexualidad ejerce de por sí una atracción social desproporcionada.	.55	2.63
15. Aunque a las mujeres les gusta hacerse las tímidas, eso no significa que no quieran sexo.	.57	4.20

Validación en español de AMMSA
Spanish Validation of AMMSA

Item	Item-total Correlations	Means
16. Muchas mujeres tienden a exagerar el problema de la violencia machista.	.65	2.76
17. Cuando un hombre presiona a su pareja para mantener relaciones sexuales, esto no puede llamarse violación.	.39	2.20
18. Cuando una mujer soltera invita a un hombre soltero a su piso está indicando que no es reacia a mantener relaciones sexuales.	.53	3.38
19. Cuando los políticos tratan el asunto de las violaciones, lo hacen sobre todo porque este tema atrae a los medios de comunicación.	.38	3.68
20. Cuando se habla de “violación en el matrimonio”, se confunde entre coito conyugal normal y violación.	.47	2.74
21. La sexualidad de un hombre funciona como una olla a presión – cuando la presión es muy alta, tiene que “soltar vapor”.	.51	3.62
22. Las mujeres a menudo acusan a sus maridos de violación conyugal sólo para vengarse de una relación fracasada.	.57	2.60
23. En numerosas ocasiones, el debate sobre el acoso sexual en el trabajo ha provocado que un comportamiento inofensivo haya sido malinterpretado como acoso.	.62	3.14
24. En las citas lo que suele esperarse es que la mujer “eche el freno” y el hombre “siga adelante”.	.57	3.51
25. Aunque los robos armados conllevan peligro para la vida de las víctimas, estas personas reciben mucho menos apoyo psicológico que las víctimas de violaciones.	.44	4.09
26. El alcohol es a menudo el causante de que un hombre viole a una mujer.	.41	3.68
27. Muchas mujeres tienden a interpretar exageradamente gestos bienintencionados como “acoso sexual”.	.68	2.74
28. Hoy en día, las víctimas de violencia sexual reciben ayuda suficiente en forma de centros de acogida de mujeres, posibilidades de terapia y grupos de apoyo.	.40	3.76
29. En lugar de preocuparse por supuestas víctimas de violencia sexual, la sociedad debería atender problemas más urgentes, como es la destrucción medioambiental.	.53	2.25
30. Hoy en día, los hombres que realmente agreden sexualmente a las mujeres reciben un castigo justo.	.21	1.90

Note. The data are from Study 1 ($N = 305$). Each item’s response scale ranged from 1, *totally disagree* to 7, *totally agree*.

¿Cuál es el discurso de los universitarios acerca de las agresiones sexuales?

Un estudio de grupo focal.

(Estudio 4 de la Tesis Doctoral)

What is the discourse of college students on sexual assault?

A focus group study.

(Study 4 in this Doctoral Thesis)

Resumen

La ocurrencia de agresiones sexuales, perpetradas por conocidos, en situaciones sociales o de cita es frecuente entre universitarios. Con solo pocas excepciones, la mayoría de los estudios llevados a cabo en este campo han utilizado metodologías cuantitativas. Sin embargo, es difícil capturar la complejidad de las ideas de los jóvenes sobre dicho tópico recurriendo únicamente a este tipo de metodologías. El presente estudio exploró las ideas y opiniones de los universitarios acerca de las relaciones sexuales no consentidas. Catorce estudiantes universitarios de ambos sexos participaron en la realización de dos grupos focales, los cuales fueron analizados mediante el uso de análisis temáticos. Once temas emergieron de dichos análisis. Los resultados obtenidos son discutidos en relación a sus implicaciones en la reducción de la violencia ejercida contra las mujeres.

Palabras clave: agresión sexual, alcohol, comunicación, universitarios, grupo focal.

Abstract

Sexual assaults perpetrated by acquaintances in social/dating situations are common among college students. With only a few exceptions, studies on this topic have been carried out using quantitative methodologies. However, it is difficult to capture the complexities of young people's ideas about this topic using quantitative methodologies alone. This study explored college students' ideas about non-consensual sexual encounters. Fourteen Spanish undergraduate students took part in two single-gender focus groups which were analyzed using thematic analysis. Eleven themes emerged from the analysis. Implications of these findings for reducing sexual assaults against women are discussed along with suggestions for future research directions.

Keywords: sexual assault, alcohol, communication, college students, focus groups

Over the last few decades there has been a growing interest in research on sexual assault against women. Although various studies and reports have attempted to reveal the true incidence of this phenomenon (e.g. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006; United Nations Development Fund for Women, 2008; World Health Organization, 2002), it is difficult to make accurate estimates because, among other reasons, this kind of violence is one of the least reported crimes (Kelly, Lovett & Regan, 2005; Temkin & Krahé, 2008).

Although sexual violence against women is frequent in many contexts (United Nations, 2006), its prevalence among undergraduate students is especially relevant. Studies conducted with university samples have revealed that sexual violence against women is four times greater in this age range than in the general population (Humphrey & Kahn, 2000). One of the best-known surveys on the prevalence of sexual assault in this population was conducted by Koss, Gidycz and Wisniewski (1987) in a sample of 6,159 American college students. In the survey, 54% of female students indicated they had experienced some form of sexual abuse; 15% reported experiencing an act that met the legal definition of rape and 12% reported experiencing attempted rape. Of these women, 17% reported experiencing rape or attempted rape in the year before the survey was conducted.

Similar results have been obtained in other studies also conducted with American college students (Abbey, McAuslan, Zawacki, Clinton & Buck, 2001; Moler-Kuo, Dowdall, Koss & Wechsler, 2004). Studies performed with Spanish samples also show similar figures. In a study conducted with 349 Spanish undergraduate students by Romero-Sánchez and Megías (2010), for example, 36% of female students reported experiencing some kind of sexual assault. Likewise, Sipsma, Carrobles, Montorio and

Everaerd (2000) pointed out that 33.2% of female students in their sample reported experiencing some kind of sexual coercion, while 24.3% of males reported perpetrating some act of this kind. In a sample of 196 male college students, also in Spain, Fuertes, Ramos, De la Orden, Del Campo and Lázaro (2005) found that about 15% of the sample reported being involved in sexual conduct against a woman's will. Recently, in a study conducted with Spanish female college students, Hernández and González (2009) reported that 12.6% acknowledged being the victim of forced sexual relations with penetration by an ex or present partner.

Much of the research on sexual assault in the university population has focused on exploring the factors that influence its occurrence. Several variables have been identified as relevant, such as alcohol use or abuse and miscommunication and misinterpretation of sexual intent (Abbey et al., 2001; Horvath & Brown, 2006; Kelly et al., 2005; Loh, Gidycz, Lobo & Luthra, 2005; Ullman 2003). Studies have found alcohol to be involved in many cases of sexual assault, especially in sporadic or casual relationships. It is estimated that approximately half of sexual assaults among college students are perpetrated by men who have previously consumed alcohol, while between 30% and 79% of women report having consumed alcohol at the same time as their attackers (Abbey, Ross & McDuffie, 1994; Crowell & Burgess, 1996). Even in other studies, such as that conducted by Moler-Kuo et al. (2004), in which 1 in 20 female college students interviewed reported having been the victim of rape since the beginning of the school year, 72% of these acts occurred when the victims were under the influence of alcohol.

Alcohol use not only affects women's probability of sexual victimization but also the way others perceive the assault. Alcohol consumption by the victim is

associated to perception of sexual availability and predisposition to engage in sexual contact (Abbey, Ross, McDuffie & McAuslan, 1996, George et al., 1997). In general, there are several beliefs associated to traditional gender roles that have a double standard regarding alcohol use in men and women. Perpetrators who have been drinking tend to be considered less guilty than sober ones, while female victims who have been drinking are judged more harshly than sober victims (Cameron & Strizke, 2003; Maurer & Robinson, 2008; Schuller & Stewart, 2000). In fact, victims who are known to have been under the influence of alcohol at the time they were raped are granted less credibility and blamed more for “putting themselves in danger” (Jordan, 2004; Wenger and Bornstein, 2006). A woman’s mere acceptance of having an alcoholic drink with a boy in a social interaction situation is perceived as a sign of promiscuity and of the wish to have sex (Romero-Sánchez & Megías, 2010).

According to Abbey, McAuslan and Ross (1998), the link between alcohol and sexual assault is partially mediated by misperception of sexual intent. In other words, alcohol consumption in men can increase the chances that they will misperceive a woman’s behavior as indicating sexual desire instead of kindness or friendship. Yet, the interpretation of sexual intent does not always seem to be mediated by alcohol consumption. In some cases, as highlighted by Osman (2003), sexual assault perpetrated by men against women is the result of miscommunication between both. The more frequently men misperceive women’s sexual intentions, the more frequently they commit sexual assault. Misperception of sexual intent is not necessary for sexual assault to occur, nor is it associated with all sexual assaults. However, misperception of sexual intentions frequently contributes to sexual assault. These communication distortions may be due to the fact that some men believe women offer “token resistance” to their

sexual advances (e.g., Krahe, Scheinberger-Olwig & Susanne Kolpin, 2000; Osman, 1998), so that their rejection of sexual advances is interpreted in fact as a covert way of saying “yes” (Muehlenhard & Hollabaugh, 1988). However, empirical evidence shows that, although some women may exhibit this “token resistance” to engage in sexual contact, when women say “no” they are usually expressing their refusal to continue (Muehlenhard & Rodgers, 1998).

The perception of “token resistance” is associated to existing stereotypes on traditional sexual roles. According to such stereotypes, in a social interaction the man is expected to take the initiative in sexual relations, while the woman is expected to initially resist such advances, even if she is also interested in engaging in sexual contact (Harnish, Abbey & DeBono, 1990). Men characterized by such beliefs on women’s token resistance may think that women’s refusal is part of flirting and therefore that they should insist and even act aggressively to convince them to engage in sexual relations (Check & Malamuth, 1983; Muehlenhard, 1998).

Much of the research conducted on these and other factors involved in the occurrence and perception of sexual assault has been approached through large-scale national and international surveys (e.g., Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2006; World Health Organization, 2002) and all kinds of quantitative studies (Cooper, 2006, Farris, Treat, Viken & McFall, 2008; Frese, Moya & Megías, 2004; Koss et al., 1987, Krahe, Temkin, Bieneck & Berger, 2008). However, such studies are based on the perspective of the researcher, who introduces the variables that will be assessed. As a result, it is not possible to determine whether the variables identified are the most relevant or the only ones with an influence on the occurrence of sexual assault among college students and its social perception. To ensure the validity of studies with college students on this topic

and maximize the chances of obtaining results that are useful to conduct effective prevention strategies, it is necessary to become familiar with the experiences, opinions and attitudes of the population studied. One way to obtain this knowledge is to have direct discussions with this group of people on their ideas and experiences, using qualitative methodologies. Yet, there are surprisingly few qualitative studies conducted on this subject (e.g., Finch & Munro, 2005; Norris, Nurius & Dimeff, 1996; Testa & Livingston, 1999), even though it has repeatedly been highlighted that research strategies such as focus groups are important to “understand the experience of participants and generate hypotheses that can be tested in the future” (Norris et al. 1996, p.129) and access areas of interest previously unknown by researchers that participants themselves may express in the course of the discussion (Frith, 2000). The objective of the present study was to use the focus group methodology to explore the ideas of college students on the sexual assaults that occur in their peer group. Are the variables studied by researchers really in the discourse of college students themselves on the occurrence of sexual assault?, what attitudes and opinions do young people have on the phenomenon of sexual assault?, is this type of violence frequent?

To answer some of the questions raised on non-consensual sexual relations among college students, the present study organized two focus groups with male and female college students. This methodology was chosen because, as pointed out above, the discourse of participants provides direct information on the ideas and experiences of young people on the factors involved in sexual assault as well as its causes and consequences. The study focused on exploring the ideas of college students on non-consensual sexual experiences in casual encounters, as this problem has a high incidence in this population worldwide (Fisher, Cullen & Turner, 2000; Romero-

Sánchez & Megías, 2010; Wheeler, George, & Dahl, 2002). The procedure followed in both focus groups was to start by exploring participants' opinions on sexual relations among youth today and then start a discussion about non-consensual sexual relations; with a special focus on factors such alcohol use/abuse, communication of sexual intent among youth or interpretation of sexual signals.

Method

Participants

A total of fourteen college students (8 males and 6 females) of several schools of the University of Granada participated in the study. The age of female participants ranged from 19 to 22 years ($M = 21$; $SD = 1.09$) and that of male participants ranged from 18 to 25 years ($M = 2.7$; $SD = 2.56$). As for sexual orientation, most students were heterosexual (in the male group, only one participant reported being homosexual; in the female group, one participant reported being bisexual). In the sample, 28.6% of males and 83.3% of females reported being in an intimate relationship.

Procedure

The students were invited to participate in a discussion group of college students to talk about issues related to sexual relations. Participants were selected with the assistance of university teachers of various specialties (technical and humanities fields). The teachers were asked to select the students they believed would be most participative and would feel most comfortable in this type of group among those aged between 18 and 25 years (the mean age range of college students). Students interested in participating were contacted by telephone to agree on a day and a time to conduct the focus group and give them brief indications of their participation in the research. In

total, two separate focus groups (one composed of 6 females and one composed of 8 males) of people who did not know each other each discussed ideas related to sexual assault among youth (the term “non-consensual sexual relations” was chosen so that it would sound more familiar). Each of the groups was conducted by a moderator and an assistant. It was decided to form single-gender focus groups, including the moderator and the assistant, to facilitate the discussion flow and prevent inhibitions in participants’ opinions (Krueger, 1988)

Following recommendations on conducting focus groups (Krueger, 1988), the moderator and the assistant received the participants as they entered the room. The moderator provided information about the objectives of the focus group and the procedure that was going to be followed, highlighting the main subject of the discussion (to avoid any biases, participants were told it would be sexual relations among youth). Participants were invited to ask any questions before the start, asked permission to record the session and told that, if they felt uncomfortable at any time during the focus group session, they could leave the room with no explanation. In order to facilitate the discussion, the moderator followed a series of guiding questions previously prepared by two experts on sexual assault with the advice of a researcher familiar with the focus group methodology (see Appendix 1). The questions matched the objectives of the present study. As recommended in the specialized literature (Krueger and Casey, 2000; Morgan, 1997), the guiding questions were prepared by starting with the more general questions and progressively introducing more specific questions closely linked to the researchers’ objectives. Discussions of both focus groups were recorded and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. While the sessions were being recorded, the assistant took notes on the order of participation and the main ideas of each contribution. Once the

session was over, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire on their personal experiences (sexual orientation, alcohol use and intimate and sexual relationships, among others), guaranteeing their anonymity at all times (see Appendix 2). After this, participants were given a certificate of cooperation and thanked for their participation. At that point, any questions or comments of interest that came up during the development of the session were discussed with them. Additionally, the objectives of the study were explained and participants were given information about the resources available to them should they become aware of or experience an episode of sexual assault.

Recordings of the focus groups were transcribed, and the content of the resulting text was coded according to the guiding questions (Silverman, 1993, Braun & Clarke, 2006). Following the method of thematic analysis, the resulting information was grouped into general themes (e.g., sexual communication, token resistance, victim blame, perpetrator exoneration and responsibility) to simplify and organize it for better management (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Members of the research team reviewed the information independently and provided feedback on its classification. Their comments were used to present the final results extracted from the discussion groups. Any differences that came up during the selection and clustering of themes were discussed and solved by researchers.

Results

Eleven main themes extracted from both focus groups represented the ideas of the college students on the factors involved in non-consensual sexual relations among their peers. Although, overall, the themes that emerged from the questions raised were the same in the male and female group, different perspectives and ideas were observed,

especially regarding the role of the victim and the perpetrator (see themes four and eight as examples). In order to better illustrate the opinion of participants on the resulting themes, we have included several examples of their comments and ideas. Participants' contributions are represented with the letter "R" and a number. Next to each letter, a parenthesis specifies whether the participant belonged to the female or male focus group.

Theme 1. Generational differences in sexual relations

Both males and females agreed that sexuality is experienced more openly and freely today than in the past. Both groups mainly talked about the elimination of taboos and the decrease of male sexism and focused their discourse on the current status of women and how they experience their sexuality.

R2 (Woman)-... Sexuality, from a woman's point of view, has changed a lot from years ago. In fact, my mother, who is only 40, has only been with my father. She was a virgin until marriage... The typical case. Women... and now we still have much progress to make but I think today, especially for women, we have taken a major step regarding sexuality. Taboos are slowly disappearing; sex education is also a bit present in every classroom and... I don't know.

R6 (Man)-. I think it is very different. I mean, before..., even our parents or our grandparents..., talking about sex was taboo. I mean, you couldn't talk about sexuality issues. Today you can.

In general, participants in both groups agreed that sexuality is experienced more openly and freely today. Yet, they also highlighted negative aspects of the present situation. More specifically, men considered that women's status has not progressed as much as men's and added that today women are still judged more harshly than men.

R3 (Man)-...although there are still remains of the past. Today, when a girl hooks up with a boy one night, she still thinks... "I'm such a slut, I'm a whore." However, if a guy does it, "I'm such a stud, I'm great." And that's because of the mentality we used to have and that is still taught.

Women highlighted the social pressure exerted today on girls regarding the onset and frequency of sexual relations. Participants in both groups discussed the role played by the group of friends and the various media in conveying to girls models of sexual behavior that that they often do not wish.

R2 (Woman)-.... Even the media, what we women get today...that's what they convey. You must have sexual relations. Be the best in your class. Be pretty. Be advanced for your age...

R4 (Woman)-....And you even dare do something and perhaps you don't even know what you're doing but since everybody's doing it it's like an imposition. Or just to show off...

R4 (Woman)-....I think your own girlfriends too. You go out one night and they say, "Come on, do it. Now that you have the chance." They just do it with the best intention in the world, to encourage you.

Theme 2. Communicating sexual desires and intentions among youth. Misinterpreting communication

Although men and women agreed that communication between them is more open today, they also pointed out that quite a few things are still taken for granted, especially by men, which is the source of misinterpretation of sexual intentions. Both groups provided different explanations on these communication distortions. According to the women, men tend to interpret behaviors such as having a conversation, accepting

a drink, dancing... as clear signs of sexual intent. However, three female participants stated that they sometimes flirt or make advances to feel pretty or increase their self-esteem or because they like the other person but in fact they do not wish to have sexual relations. Men argued that such misunderstandings are usually due to the fact that women use more subtle communication, messages that they cannot always interpret correctly.

R5 (Woman)-....But I think sometimes too much is taken for granted. Because, for example, the fact that you are talking to a man, you're having a nice conversation... is often taken to mean you want to end up...

R6 (Man)-. Women tend to have a more subtle communication and we can't interpret it well, you know? They are difficult to interpret... You just need to see their faces most of the time!!

Theme 3. Token resistance offered by women

The third theme discussed was related to women's token resistance to sexual relations. Participants of both groups expressed several points of view on this issue. Women discussed the perception of women's token resistance. One of them said that men tend to interpret refusal to have sexual relations as acceptance.

R6 (Woman)-. That's what I was going to say. Each person interprets it their own way. I mean... You can say no but he may think, "In fact she's dying to. Of course she wants to."

However, they admitted that sometimes women show this pattern of token resistance. The discussion was focused on explaining the causes of this phenomenon, why a woman rejects sexual advances even though she wants to have sexual relations. Women said this was due to the social judgment other people might make of her and the

education women receive. Men also mentioned the negative social assessment made by others, lack of self-assurance and pride. They also argued that men sometimes refuse to have sexual relations with women, but did not mention why.

R2 (Woman)-. I think it's because of the education we receive.

R2 (Man)-. So that she won't be considered a whore, a slut, etc. When we (men) see a woman who hooks up or makes out with a guy, we think, "what a slut, what a whore."

Many of my friends think so...

R1 (Man)-. I think it's because of a lack of self-assurance. But I also think women pretend to be more proud. Just because they are women they act proud. For example, they think, "I am a woman so today I will say no."

Several female participants highlighted that, even if all these circumstances occur, if the woman openly rejects the men's sexual intentions and yet a sexual relation takes place, it should be considered rape.

R3 (Woman)-. If you say no... that's it. I mean, if you're saying no and he forces you... that's rape.

R2 (Woman)-. But you can go to his place and have a drink with him and that doesn't give him the right to touch you! I don't care. If I go to his place and he proposes (to have sex) and I say no... I consider that rape. It's my body and I can do as I please with it! If I'm saying no, don't touch me. Even if I am passed out on the couch.

Theme 4. Saying yes when you actually do not wish to have sex (compliance)

Both groups had different perspectives on the reasons why women sometimes have sexual relations even though they do not wish to. Women highlighted the verbal pressure usually exerted by men, their own inability to say no once they have initiated

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any kind of sexual contact, alcohol and drug use, fear of disappointing the other person or themselves and fear of being hurt by the man.

R3 (Woman)-. Yes, just because he puts pressure on you and you're not capable of saying "Well no, this is the limit." Just because you can't... you say yes.

R4 (Woman)-. You get carried away and you can't find the right moment to say "No" ...

R6 (Woman)-.If they don't express it it's for the reasons we discussed earlier... because they don't want to disappoint (the man), they don't want to disappoint themselves either...

R3 (Woman)-. Or for fear of making him mad and getting hurt. Men are stronger so we are always afraid of being hurt by them, of being forced to do things we don't want to do.

Unlike women, men explained compliance by referring to characteristics of women. Four participants stated that this behavior is due to women's lack of self-esteem, an inferiority complex and lack of assurance or fear of losing the man they like.

R2 (Man)-. Perhaps it's also because of a lack of assurance...perhaps all her friends fuck on the first date and she doesn't want to feel rejected by the group... so she fucks as well.

R6 (Man)-. It's because of the male sexism that is still rooted in our society and in most societies. Because of this, women have that inferiority complex and are not strong enough to refuse something specific....

R3 (Man)-....Perhaps you like the men and have sex with him for fear of losing him. That also happens...

This group also discussed whether situations in which a woman agrees to have sexual relations when she in fact does not wish to can be considered sexual assault or

rape. Most participants argued that if the woman says yes, it cannot be considered rape. It is ultimately the woman's responsibility.

R7 (Man)-. If you're with a woman who says yes when in fact she doesn't want to...and I want to have a sexual relation with her...it's the woman's problem if she doesn't have the assurance to tell you she doesn't want to!!!

Theme 5. Alcohol and drug use as a strategy to obtain have sexual relations

Both groups pointed out that men and women tend to consume alcohol to lower their inhibitions and do things that they would not do if they were sober. They added that, when they go out at night, they usually consume it to help them flirt with other people. However, they added that alcohol is used as a strategy to obtain sexual relations. Female participants argued that men buy women drinks to get them drunk and have sexual relations with them.

R2 (Woman)-. Alcohol is a key weapon. Getting the woman drunk so that she will fall for sure.

R3 (Woman)-. Because they know that when you are drunk you don't even know what you are doing. You get more carried away and lose your inhibitions. That's why they give you all these drinks because you're already tipsy and...And they tell you "Come, I'll take you to my place so you can splash some water on your face"

Participants in both groups said that women also invite other people to have a drink, but gave different reasons for this. As shown below, men stated that women do so because alcohol intake "helps" get the other person to accept having sexual contact; women, however, stated that women usually invite men to drink alcohol because it helps both lower their inhibitions, which makes it easier to start a conversation with someone.

R2 (Woman)-. When women invite a man to have a drink they tend to do it so that they can talk to him, have a conversation, to create a good atmosphere. But they are not directly thinking "I'm going to have sex with him."

R4 (Man)-. I think both men and women do it. I have girlfriends who say "I'll wait for the boy I like to leave the party so he'll already be a bit drunk, and then I'll go and talk to him, it'll be easier." Clearly if you approach someone who has been drinking, you're less likely to be rejected, don't you think? Because things will flow much more easily, because if she really feels something for you...if she's sober she might ignore you or hide, but if she's a bit drunk it will be easier. But as I said ...it can be used as a tool by women and men.

Both groups considered use of drugs to obtain sexual relations as a very serious situation. Yet, although women said that it almost does not happen in Spain, compared to other countries, men stated that it often happens in Spain.

R2 (Man)-. I do think drugs are used to have sexual relations. There are awareness campaigns and you see cases on the news... so I think so.

Theme 6. Social perception of alcohol consumption in women

Although there were some discrepancies among female participants, they all tended to agree that society judges a woman getting drunk more harshly than a man getting drunk. They discussed the consequences associated to a woman or a man getting drunk. The female group argued that men tend to take sexual advantage of a drunk woman whereas women tend to help a drunk man.

R2 (Woman)-. But when you see a drunk woman with a lot of men they all take advantage of her. And when you see a guy who is completely drunk with a lot of women,

they help him, they don't take advantage of him. I can guarantee that. All the women who see a drunk man are not going to try to fuck him and laugh at him but guys do.

The male group expressed a variety of opinions. Two men considered that society still judges drunk women more harshly than drunk men, one man argued that this is due to women's "fragility" and another three said that the perception is the same for men and women and added that they perceive it that way.

R 6 (Man)-. It's not that it is seen as wrong, but I think that's what is perceived. When you see a drunk woman. I think there is still the feeling of "Look at that woman, she's just asking for it." I think it is considered much more normal to see a drunk man than a drunk woman.

R7 (Man)-. The woman is still seen as being more fragile. I think society sees a drunk man differently from a drunk woman. It's all because of the role they've had of being much weaker, needing more help, if they stay like that (drunk) they are more unprotected because they are women. That's where the differences lie.

R1 (Man)-. Yes, completely. If she wants to drink, let her drink. We're used to seeing women on the street...there are thousands of drunk woman and thousands of drunk guys among us, why draw a difference?

R2 (Man)-. A guy who is so drunk he can't stand up and a woman in the same situation make the same impression.

Participants also argued that behaviors are different when men are drunk and when women are drunk. Two men said that, under those circumstances, men tend to protect women.

R1 (Man)-. If you see a drunk woman and she is alone...not for sexual relations, if womn's alone and drunk you try to protect her.

Theme 7. Blaming the victim of sexual assault

In women, certain attitudes, dressing provocatively or making advances to men were considered by the male group as risk behaviors for experiencing sexual assault.

R7 (Man)-. However, if a woman comes looking for you, starts to dance with you, with little laughs, starts to touch you and so on... well...There are women who behave that way but just to have fun. That woman may be more likely to lead to that situation and then eventually refuse to. Because of each woman's character, gestures may be misinterpreted and the man may think she wants to when she actually doesn't.

R5 (Man)-. Her being more open. Also the way she cares for herself. Some women take great care of themselves, they are well dressed and groomed...just because they like to look that way. It's not that they are trying to be provocative. It's because they like to dress up and feel pretty because that's how they are but they are also provocative. I don't know. It's just one more way.

Although participants in the male group highlighted several characteristics of women that can make them more likely to experience sexual assault, at no point did they mention that such behaviors or characteristics could make them guilty of or responsible for experiencing sexual assault.

In the female group, participants underlined that although a woman's behavior may make her more likely to experience assault, under no circumstances can the victim be blamed for the assault. They all agreed that the blame always belongs to the assailant and never to the assailed.

R3 (Woman)-. You can dress as you very well please. You may be asking for it but when it comes to judging, nobody can say it's your fault; no matter how provocative your

behavior, the man has to control himself. He doesn't have the right to take advantage of anybody.

R2 (Woman)-...I know, you can't avoid those things but if they happen it's not your fault. It has happened because somebody has acted wrong, and has violated the law... It's not your fault. You can't be judged for that.

Theme 8. Causes of sexual assault against women

In the discussion about the reasons for sexual assault against women, men and women referred to different factors. Women referred to socio-cultural factors such as power, the feeling of possession and sexist attitudes.

R6 (Woman)-. I think...I don't know, it may happen for many reasons, but mainly because of the factors....that people still think women belong to men.

R2 (Woman)-. It's the instinct of men. Of being manly. Being strong. Here I am...I think that's what it is.

Female participants also highlighted that, in the context of partying, an important cause of sexual assault is men's misinterpretation of women's sexual intentions.

R6 (Woman)-. Or just that they are so simple that they don't want to see that the woman doesn't want and think, "she's saying yes." I don't know... It's like, "If you've played along with me and you've been drinking with me now..."

The explanations of male participants referred to factors related to the perpetrator, such as his personality, alcohol or drug use, the existence of a psychological disorder, biological characteristics or physiological needs. One participant argued that the assault could also be due to the rejection shown by the woman and five men gave explanations involving multiple causes.

R4 (Man)-. Alcohol plays an important role in a rape.

R3 (Man)-. *If you're high on drugs it's more likely. You're less scared of the consequences or responses that will come later. You won't care.*

R4 (Man)-. *It's a mental problem, I think. People who rape are not completely sane. I think. I think people who rape once always rape. Alcohol, drugs or anger may play a role. But above all I think it's a mental problem.*

R6 (Man)-. *I think it's a biological problem. Both men and animals seek to reproduce, they seek...*

R1 (Man)-...*I agree. Exactly. If they have that personality and they've taken drugs, they will express it more. It will be less expressed without drugs, but it's personality after all.*

R6 (Man)-...*What we said about allowing certain expectations to build up and then not fulfilling them. That activates sexual desire and then cuts it off abruptly, which leads to a feeling of violence.*

Theme 9. Perpetrator exoneration and responsibility

Female participants argued that the perpetrator can only be exonerated when the woman does not clearly express her refusal, and therefore when a misunderstanding may have occurred. In contrast, male participants argued that the act of rape may sometimes be understood and forgiven when the perpetrator does not know another way to achieve sexual intimacy.

R5 (Woman)-. *Of course, I think in that case (when the woman does not clearly express she does not want to have sexual relations) you have to be honest and if you are not conscious of what has happened then abide by the consequences. In that case you can't blame anybody...*

R6 (Man)-. *But perhaps a guy can't just talk to a girl. His way of becoming close to her is by raping her. You know? It's the only way I see of forgiving someone or trying to*

understand them. It's just the only way he can obtain sex with somebody of the other sex...

Male participants argued that, in non-consensual sexual relations in which the woman has made advances to the man or alcohol has been consumed by one of them or both, the sexual assault can be understood and justified.

R2 (Man)-. As long as it doesn't necessarily lead to rape. When the woman is saying no and the man is there trying groping her all over and kissing her and then the woman says no. In that case I think it can be forgiven. If the man was very drunk and the woman made advances to him... It's a different thing if it ends up in rape, penetration.

R5 (Man)-. I think it could be forgiven when high doses of alcohol and drugs are involved. When the person is completely uninhibited and has no control over what he does. That is, when he's practically an animal whose brain is practically not working and only acts by instinct. In that case, perhaps.

Theme 10. Relevance of the problem of non-consensual sexual relations among undergraduate students

In the female group, there were different opinions about the incidence of sexual assault against women by men in the university context. In general, however, they agreed that it does happen, especially when alcohol is involved. They added that the opposite also happens: under the influence of alcohol, men have sexual relations with women they would not have been interested in if they had been sober. Yet, they considered that differently from sexual assault against women by men and did not call it rape or sexual assault; they argued that such cases refer to men who had sexual relations with a woman because they were drunk, but not because the woman forced them to.

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Regarding sexual assault in general under the effects of alcohol, the female group considered it a serious problem that happens at increasingly younger ages.

R2 (Woman)-. Yes, and I think it's increasingly frequent and besides kids drink at younger and younger ages and drink more. I've seen people at the Spring festival in Granada and you see kids 13 years old who are totally stoned...who don't even know where they're going, or who they are with, in alcohol-induced comas... It's concerning. In that state you can be raped and anything can happen to you!!!

In contrast, men argued that sexual assault is not very frequent; they considered that what occurs is “mild” forms that cannot be considered rape or “non-consensual sexual relations.”

R1 (Man)-. Perhaps harassment, but I don't think it reaches the point of non-consensual sexual relations.

R6 (Man)-. I think this happens very little in the university context (referring to rape). I know very few cases of rape, with or without violence.

In parallel to sexual assault among college students, the issue of sexual assault in intimate relationships also came up in the discussion. In this case, three men argued that it does happen, but has different causes to sexual assault in casual encounters. In intimate relationships, unwanted sexual relations take place so as not to hurt the other person's feelings, because of psychological harassment from the assailant or because of the stress experienced by the couple.

Some participants argued that rape does not occur in intimate relationships. They argued that this type of sexual relations is not considered rape but rather something that forms part of “coexistence.” It was also argued that it is difficult to judge what happens within an intimate relationship.

R3 (Man)-. It is also less likely to happen. Because in a couple there is more communication, more knowledge, more control. So...I don't know. I can't conceive rape in a steady couple. I mean, when you still don't know the person and you're a rapist you go directly for it. But, raping your girlfriend? I just can't...

R6 (Man)-. I think it does happen. But we can't really judge what happens in a couple. Each couple is different...and the issue of non-consensual sex, we'd have to see what really happened. You have a partner, one day you don't feel like it and your partner does. One day you accept to do it... It's not non-consensual sex. The opposite can also happen. I don't think that's non-consensual. It's things that happen in couples.

In the female group, the conversation focused on the emotional blackmail that takes place in intimate relationships when the man wishes to have sexual relations. Female participants argued that women usually agree to have sexual relations even when they do not feel like them for fear of not pleasing their partner, to avoid fights, so that he does not feel rejected, for fear that he will leave them or not to fall short of the expectations he might have of them.

R2 (Woman)-. Or because you feel you're not going to satisfy your partner. The fear among us women of being left for another woman, "I'm not good enough for him," "I have to be better in bed so that he doesn't find another woman." As women, we are often afraid of those things.

Theme 11. Preventing sexual assault

This theme only came up in the female group. Participants agreed that it is necessary to work on prevention in schools and universities. They added that such initiatives should use teaching programs and methods students feel comfortable with to share their doubts and experiences regarding sexuality and be given information that

educates them to make responsible use of their sexuality and not focus on prohibition. They considered that many of the assaults that occur today could be avoided if there was more thorough and practical education on sexuality.

R5 (Woman)-. Providing information they can relate to...I don't know...I think information should be provided differently, it should be about things you can relate to, telling you about experiences, about how the other person may feel so that you can feel empathy...I don't know.

R4 (Woman)-. I think it could be through practical examples, or working with them, as she said, in a dynamic way, through role playing or something similar which really shows them what could happen so it is a sort of training and instead of theory you do practical work, exercises, like role playing and things like that.

Finally, and in order to collect data of interest on them, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire (see Appendix 2) whose results are shown below (see percentages in Table 1).

A more detailed analysis of the responses showed that, as regards frequency of partying, it was daily in the case of two men and weekly for three men. In the female group, it was weekly in five participants and monthly in only one case. As regards frequency of alcohol use, it was weekly in the case of two men, once every two weeks for two men and monthly for one man. In the female group, it was weekly in five cases and monthly in one case. As for the use of coercion and pressure strategies, only one participant in the female group stated she had used verbal pressure to get the other person to have sexual relations with her. Finally, as regards the strategy used with participants to get them to have sexual relations with somebody else, one man stated that alcohol was used on one occasion to get him to have sexual relations and another

man stated he had been under verbal pressure. In the female group, one participant stated alcohol had been used as a strategy to have sexual relations with her, another participant mentioned the use of verbal pressure, and another participant mentioned the use of physical force.

Table 1. Percentages regarding questions about certain characteristics of participants

QUESTIONS	PERCENTAGES BY SEX			
	<u>Females</u>		<u>Males</u>	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Do you usually go out partying?	100%	0%	57%	43%
2. Do you usually drink alcohol when you go out?	100%	0%	71.4%	28.6%
3. Are you sexually active?	100%	0%	57%	43%
4. Have you ever had sexual relations with a person the night you met him/her?	50%	50%	57%	43%
5. Do you think your behavior has ever exerted pressure or coerced anybody into having sexual relations with you?	16.7%	83.3%	0%	100%
6. Have you ever felt somebody exerted pressure or coerced you into having sexual relations?	50%	50%	28.6%	71.4%

Discussion

The main objective of the present study was to explore the ideas, opinions and experiences of college students about sexual assault occurring in their peer group. The

methodology chosen for this was the focus group technique. It is a qualitative methodology used to obtain information from the opinions, attitudes and personal experiences of participants by analyzing the discourse generated by the interaction between them (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

The questions asked in the focus groups elicited several themes, some of which are particularly interesting to explore in greater depth how this age group perceives sexual assault. One of the main themes raised by both groups was the incidence of sexual assault in the context of sporadic relationships among youth. Considerable differences were observed between the discourse of men and women. According to women, this type of assault has a high incidence and happens particularly when alcohol is involved. In contrast, men stated that its frequency is very low and that, in most cases, the incidents that occur are of low intensity and cannot be considered rape or non-consensual sexual relations. In the same group, similar opinions were also expressed regarding possible assault or rape in intimate relationships; men minimized their importance, considering many of such episodes as “something that is part of coexistence.”

These differences in the perception of men and women can be explained in different ways. On the one hand, they are consistent with the findings of other studies and reports of a quantitative nature, which have systematically found that the percentage of females who admit being victims of sexual coercion or assault is higher than that of males who admit having perpetrated such behaviors (Forbes & Adams-Curtis, 2001; Koss et al. 1987; Romero-Sánchez & Megías, 2010). Another possible explanation could be the different assessments made by males and females about what constitutes an act of sexual assault. In line with these findings, previous studies have shown that males

perceive incidents as being rape or sexual assault to a lesser extent than females (Foley, Evancic, Karnik, King & Parks, 1995, Workman & Orr, 1996). For example, Maurer & Robinson (2008) conducted a study with 652 college students, manipulating victim dress and alcohol consumption of the victim and the perpetrator in rape scenarios. They found that males' perception of the episode as rape was lower than that of females. Taking this into account, it would be interesting to further explore the reasons for such discrepancies between males and females, which would make it possible to adjust the assessment of cases of sexual assault that are wrongly considered as consensual sexual relations.

Another of the themes of particular relevance dealt with in both groups was that of perceived causes of sexual assault. In general, men tended to list causes related to the assailant as precipitating factors (e.g. psychological disorders, alcohol or drug consumption, physiological needs or sexual advances), whereas women tended to refer to ideological or socio-cultural factors (e.g. power asymmetries or male-chauvinist attitudes) and misunderstandings in the communication of sexual intentions. Some of the causes evoked were the same as those postulated by causal theories and models of sexual assault. Feminist theories, for example, attribute male hostility and assault (e.g. rape) against women to ideological factors – the patriarchal culture. According to them, such factors facilitate the development of sexual roles that uphold an unequal distribution of power between men and women (e.g. Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980); according to the miscommunication model (Tannen, 1992), misunderstandings in sexual communication between males and females are an important cause for such assaults; more integrating models such as that postulated by Abbey et al. (1996) list alcohol or drug consumption as risk factors, among others. Males' reference to physiological needs

seems closer to evolutionary models, which refer to phylogenetic postulates related to the production of offspring to explain rape (Thornhill & Palmer, 2000). This finding may be useful to design programs aimed at changing attitudes and preventing sexual violence, since it may be more effective to design different strategies for males and females than general proposals aimed at reducing prejudiced attitudes and behaviors related to sexual assault.

Similar gender differences were found when participants discussed the factors that might exonerate a sexual assailant from responsibility. Again, men referred to characteristics of the perpetrator (e.g. alcohol intake or the inability to obtain sexual relations in any other way), whereas women referred to miscommunication between the victim and the perpetrator. These and other similar variables have been highlighted by previous studies, which have shown that when such variables are present, the assailant is attributed less responsibility by perceivers (Krahé et al., 2008; Newcombe, van den Eynde, Hafner & Jolly, 2008). As regards alcohol consumption, for example, sexual assailants that were drunk have been attributed less responsibility. The argument for this is that their behavior was the result of loss of self-control caused by alcohol consumption (Maurer & Robinson, 2008; Stormo, Lang & Stritzke, 1997).

Regarding the occurrence of sexual assault, the importance given by participants to “communication and interpretation of sexual intentions” should be highlighted. Yet, although this factor was mentioned by both groups, gender differences were found in its assessment. Women argued that it is men who usually make mistake when interpreting women’ behavior, whereas men referred to the subtlety of the messages or hints given by women as the cause of confusions and errors. Such gender differences in the emission and interpretation of behaviors in contexts associated to sexual behaviors (e.g.

parties, bars, dates or clubs) have also been found to be related to the occurrence of sexual assault in quantitative studies (e.g. Farris et al., 2008). From an applied perspective, this finding suggests the potential benefits of improving communication skills for the sexual interaction between men and women, since it would allow them to better express and interpret their own sexual intentions and those of others respectively.

In the context of miscommunication, participants in both groups expressed different opinions on token resistance and compliance. As regards token resistance, women mentioned negative social assessment and education received by them as the reasons why they sometimes reject sexual advances even though they want to have sexual relations, whereas men referred to negative assessment made by others, lack of self-assurance and pride. Regarding the causes attributed by both groups to compliance, different perspectives were also expressed. For example, women mentioned verbal pressure exerted by men, the inability to say no once sexual contact has been initiated and alcohol or drug consumption, whereas men referred again to personal characteristics of women, such as lack of self-esteem, pride and an inferiority complex. Such results may be explained by the influence exerted on young people by their sexual scripts (Metts & Spitzberg, 1996; Simon & Gagnon, 1986). These mental scripts include sequences of typical behaviors of men and women that should take place in a sexual interaction, that is, they prescriptively define the sexual roles associated to each sex. In men, sexual scripts usually establish that they should take the initiative and lead the situation while women resist such advances even though they are interested in them (Byers, 1996; Carpenter, 1998). However, according to women's scripts, openly expressing their intentions or sexual desires is not seen in the same way, as it may lead to negative assessment by others (Check & Malamuth, 1983; Muehlenhard, 1998).

Thus, the influence of the beliefs contained in these scripts on the expected sexual behaviors of males and females can generate various communication problems: (1) in the case of men, it may lead them to interpret that women are expressing token resistance when they are really not, increasing their belief about the need to keep insisting and even acting aggressively (Check & Malamuth, 1983); (2) in the case of women, it may lead them to send ambiguous signals on their sexual intentions, in a cognitive conflict between desires and expectations. In addition, sexual scripts also offer an explanation about the reasons that lead women to consent to undesired sexual relations. Such reasons are reflected in beliefs such as “sex helps maintain an intimate relationship,” “it is the duty of women to satisfy their partner sexually” or the “inability to stop men’s sexuality” (Walker, 1997).

Participants also described their beliefs and opinions about the role of alcohol in social and sexual interactions among youth. As the main cause of alcohol consumption, they highlighted that it helps them lower their inhibitions when interacting and having sexual contacts. Indeed, previous studies have found that some of the most frequent expectations of youth regarding alcohol consumption are its supposed effect of reducing social anxiety and its potential ability to enhance sexual desire and pleasure (Abbey & Harnish, 1995; George, Cue, Lopez, Crone & Norris, 1995). Both men and women agreed that alcohol is deliberately used for these purposes, particularly by males. Numerous studies in the literature have analyzed alcohol involvement in sexual assault in the context of a relationship in which the woman is the victim and the man is the perpetrator. Such studies have usually presented situations in which both were under the influence of alcohol (Abbey, Zawacki, Buck, Clinton & McAuslan, 2004; Lovett & Horvath, 2009; Walby & Allen, 2004). Yet, the present data suggest that further studies

are needed to analyze the assessment of deliberate use of alcohol in sexual interactions by males and females.

Participants also discussed how society judges alcohol consumption by males and females. Women argued that today's society judges alcohol consumption more harshly in females than males, whereas most men argued society judges both sexes equally regarding alcohol consumption. These results partially support the findings of earlier studies, which mentioned a double standard regarding alcohol consumption in men and women, rating it more positively in males than females (Cameron & Stritzke, 2003; Maurer & Robinson, 2008). In these studies, alcohol consumption was usually associated with sexual availability and interest mainly by males, people with a high belief in myths and/or males with a prior history of sexual assault (Abbey & Harnish, 1995; Morr & Mongeau, 2004; Romero-Sánchez & Megías, 2010).

In spite of all these findings, the results of the present study should be considered in the light of their limitations. First, it is necessary to mention the characteristics of the sample. The fact that no participants reported having suffered or committed a sexual assault may have influenced the results. We are aware that the absence of occurrence of sexual assault among the participants may not be true, considering both the honesty of participants and the questions used. It would be interesting to further explore the perceptions, attitudes and opinions of young people who have suffered or perpetrated such assaults on the issues discussed, as it may introduce other approaches in the study of sexual assault among college students. In addition, discussions of participants only focused on heterosexual relations. Thus, the study cannot be used to draw conclusions or improve our understanding on what happens in relations between homosexual people.

In short, the results make it possible to draw conclusions that improve our knowledge of the factors surrounding the occurrence and assessment of sexual assault and its assessment by college students. The opinions expressed on the root causes of this phenomenon, the gender differences in the comments made and the assessment of victims and perpetrators are some of the issues that should be assessed by future studies conducted by both researchers and educators interested in eradicating sexual assault among young people.

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APPENDIX 1

Guiding questions for conducting the focus groups

1. Introductory question

We would like to know your perception and ideas about sexual relations among young people today. Do you think they are different from sexual relations in the past or are they basically the same?

2. Transition question

What do you think about communication of sexual intentions among young people today? Do you think it is expressed openly? Is it still restricted? Do men express themselves more openly than women?

3. Key questions

a. Do you think it is true that some women or men who express they don't wish to have sexual relations in fact would like to have sex? Why do you think this happens?

b. What about the opposite? That is, do you think there are women or men who accept to have a sexual relation when they actually don't want to do it? Why do you think they might act that way?

c. Do you think men or women use alcohol when they partying in order to "take things further" with the other person? Does the same happen with drugs?

d. Does society perceive a woman getting drunk just like a man getting drunk?

e. What role do you think alcohol plays in non-consensual sexual relations in the university environment or among young people? What about drugs?

f. Do you think some women are more likely to be forced to have sexual relations than others because of their attitude or their behavior?

g. In your opinion, under which circumstances would it be possible to excuse or understand a man who has sexual relations with a woman without her consent? What about the other way round, when the woman is the assailant?

h. Do you think non-consensual sexual relations are an important problem among university students?

4. Final question

Considering everything that was discussed in this session, do you feel there is something else that is important and would like to raise?

5. Summary

A summary is made of the most important points dealt with in the session.

APPENDIX 2

Questionnaire on participants' characteristics

Thank you again for your participation. Before leaving the room, please remember to fill out the following questionnaire (mark the option that best defines you with an X in every case):

1. Do you usually go out partying? YES _____ NO _____
If the answer is yes, please state how often:
Daily _____ Weekly _____ Every two weeks _____
Monthly _____
2. Do you usually drink alcohol when you go out partying? YES _____ NO _____
If the answer is yes, please state how often:
Daily _____ Weekly _____ Every two weeks _____
Monthly _____
3. Are you currently in a romantic relationship? YES _____ NO _____
4. Are you sexually active? YES _____ NO _____
5. Your sexual orientation is:
Heterosexual _____ Homosexual _____ Bisexual _____
6. Have you ever had sexual relations with a person the night you met him/her?
YES _____ NO _____
7. Do you think your behavior has ever exerted pressure or coerced anybody into having sexual relations with you?
YES _____ NO _____
If the answer is yes, please indicate which strategy you used (you can mark one or several options at the same time)
Alcohol _____ Verbal pressure _____ Physical force _____
8. Have you ever felt somebody exerted pressure or coerced you into having sexual relations? YES _____ NO _____
If the answer is yes, please indicate which strategy the person used (You can mark one or several options at the same time)
Alcohol _____ Verbal pressure _____ Physical force _____

**El papel del Alcohol e Interés Sexual de la Víctima en la Percepción de
Universitarios Españoles sobre Episodios de Agresión Sexual.⁵**

(Estudios 5 y 6 de la Tesis Doctoral)

**The Role of Alcohol and Victim Sexual Interest in Spanish Students' Perceptions
of Sexual Assault.**

(Studies 5 and 6 in this Doctoral Thesis)

⁵ Estos estudios han sido aceptados para su publicación en Romero-Sánchez, M., Megías, J.L., & Krahé, B. (in press). The role of alcohol and victim sexual interest in Spanish students' perceptions of sexual assaults. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*.

Resumen

Dos estudios analizaron los efectos de la información relacionada con la aceptación de mitos sobre las agresiones sexuales en las percepciones de universitarios españoles sobre episodios de agresión sexual. En el Estudio 1, 92 participantes leyeron un escenario donde se describía una interacción sexual no consentida y posteriormente valoraron el incidente descrito y la culpabilidad de la víctima. En la historia descrita, el hombre recurre a la fuerza física u ofrece alcohol a la mujer para conseguir vencer su resistencia. El nivel de mitos sobre las agresiones sexuales (RMA) fue tenido en cuenta como variable de diferencia individual. Los participantes consideraron en mayor medida el incidente como agresión sexual y culpabilizaron menos a la víctima cuando el hombre usó la fuerza física frente al ofrecimiento de alcohol a la víctima. En el Estudio 2, 164 universitarios leyeron un escenario en el que la víctima rechazaba los avances sexuales de un hombre después de haber aceptado o rechazado su invitación a beber alcohol. Además, la mujer era representada sintiendo un claro interés sexual por el hombre o no se hacía mención a dicho interés. El nivel de RMA de los participantes fue nuevamente incluido. Los resultados mostraron que aquellos participantes con puntuaciones altas en RMA culpabilizaron más a la víctima que los participantes con bajo nivel en RMA, y valoraron en menor medida lo ocurrido como un episodio agresión sexual, especialmente cuando la víctima aceptaba la invitación a beber alcohol y era descrita sintiéndose sexualmente atraída por el agresor. Estos hallazgos son discutidos en relación a sus implicaciones para la prevención y tratamiento legal de incidentes de agresión sexual.

Palabras clave: agresión sexual, mitos sobre las agresiones sexuales, alcohol, culpabilidad de la víctima y falsa resistencia.

Abstract

Two studies investigated the effects of information related to rape myths on Spanish college students' perceptions of sexual assault. In Study 1, 92 participants read a vignette about a nonconsensual sexual encounter and rated whether it was a sexual assault and how much the woman was to blame. In the scenario, the man either used physical force or offered alcohol to the woman to overcome her resistance. Rape myth acceptance (RMA) was measured as an individual difference variable. Participants were more convinced that the incident was a sexual assault and blamed the woman less when the man had used force rather than offering her alcohol. In Study 2, 164 college students read a scenario in which the woman rejected a man's sexual advances after having either accepted or turned down his offer of alcohol. In addition, the woman was either portrayed as being sexually attracted to him or there was no mention of her sexual interest. Participants' RMA was again included. High RMA participants blamed the victim more than low RMA participants and were less certain that the incident was a sexual assault, especially when the victim had accepted alcohol and was described as being sexually attracted to the man. The findings are discussed in terms of their implications for the prevention and legal prosecution of sexual assault.

Keywords: sexual assault, sexual assault myths acceptance, alcohol, victim blame, token resistance.

Sexual aggression against women, particularly in social or dating situations, is a widespread problem in university populations (e.g., Abbey, McAuslan, Zawacki, Clinton & Buck, 2001; Moler-Kuo, Dowdall, Koss & Wechsler, 2004). Starting university has been described as moving into a “red zone” in which young women are at an increased risk of experiencing unwanted sexual contacts (Flack et al., 2008). Sexual aggression on college campuses happens against the backdrop of shared social constructions that define whether or not a particular interaction qualifies as a sexual assault. For example, trying to get a woman drunk so as to overcome her resistance against sexual interactions may be seen by students as a normal part of the dating script and the woman’s own fault rather than a case of sexual assault. Similarly, threatening to use force against a woman who has previously shown signs of attraction may be regarded as excusable (Krahé, Bieneck, & Scheinberger-Olwig, 2007), also leading to victim blame. The widely shared “real rape” stereotype restricts the definition of sexual assault to stranger attacks involving physical force, excluding incidents that do not fit the stereotype from the category of sexual assault (Krahé & Berger, 2009).

Therefore, studying the conditions under which nonconsensual sexual interactions are interpreted as sexual assaults or elicit some degree of victim blame is important for understanding the cognitive representation of sexual aggression that may guide sexual behavior. Identifying features of sexual assault scenarios that precipitate attributions of blame to the victim is also relevant with respect to the problem of “secondary victimization”, i.e., derogatory responses to victims by their social environment (Krahé, 1991). Being blamed by others for what happened to them promotes attributions of self-blame and feelings of guilt in victims of sexual assault, which in turn predict higher depression, fear, and problem drinking (Meyer & Taylor,

1996; Ullman, Starzynski, Long, Mason, & Long, 2008). Self-blame has been associated with a lower probability of reporting the assault to the police for fear of not being believed (Koss 1992; Ward, 1995), and to a higher rate of sexual revictimization (Miller, Markman, & Handley, 2007).

The two studies presented in this paper addressed the cognitive representation of sexual assault in Spanish university students. We investigated their perceptions of whether a nonconsensual sexual interaction qualified as sexual assault and their tendency to blame the victim, taking into account individual differences in “rape myth acceptance”, that is adherence to common misconceptions about sexual assault (Gerger, Kley, Bohner, & Siebler (2007).

Several studies have reported substantial prevalence rates for sexual aggression and victimization in Spanish student samples. Sipsma, Carrobbles, Montorio, and Everaerd (2000) found that 33.2% of female university students had experienced some form of sexual victimization, and 24.3% of male students admitted having engaged in sexually aggressive behavior. Studies by Fuertes and colleagues established that 30.9% of female students had been coerced into sexual acts by a male acquaintance (Fuertes, Ramos, Martínez, Palenzuela, & Tabernero, 2006), and 15% of male students admitted having had sex with a woman against her will (Fuertes, Ramos, De la Orden, Del Campo, & Lázaro, 2005). Hernández and González (2009) reported that 12.6% of their female sample had been forced into sexual intercourse by a former or present partner. Recently, Romero-Sánchez and Megías (2010) found that 36% of female students had experienced some form of sexual contact without consent.

Alcohol is involved in many cases of sexual assault (Abbey, Zawacki, Buck, Clinton, & McAuslan, 2004; Horvath & Brown, 2006; Ullman, 2003), especially in the

context of casual relations and dating situations (Lovett & Horvath, 2009). In a sample of Spanish college students, 28% of men reported that they had tried to get a woman to drink alcohol to have sexual contact with her, and 44% of women said they had experienced such behavior from a man (Romero-Sánchez & Megías, 2010). In a study by Calafat, Juan, Becoña, Mantecón, and Ramón (2009), 17.5% of participants between the ages of 14 and 25 reported sexual relations under the influence of alcohol or drugs in the last 12 months that they had subsequently regretted.

Information about alcohol use critically affects people's perception of nonconsensual sexual encounters, with traditional gender roles suggesting a double standard in evaluating men and women. There is evidence that drunken female victims are judged more harshly than sober victims (Cameron & Stritzke, 2003; Maurer & Robinson, 2008). When a victim is known to have been under the influence of alcohol during a rape, she is seen as less credible and more to blame as she has "put herself in danger" (Jordan, 2004; Wenger & Bornstein, 2006). By contrast, male aggressors who are drunk are considered less guilty than sober aggressors (Stormo, Lang, & Stritzke, 1997). Research by Krahe and collaborators has shown that the perpetrator of a sexual assault is blamed less and the victim more when she is unable to resist due to the effects of alcohol, compared to incidents where the aggressor uses force to overcome her resistance (Krahe, Temkin, & Bieneck, 2007, Study 2; Krahe, Temkin, Bieneck, & Berger, 2008), and that this effect is not found for robbery cases (Bieneck & Krahe, 2011). However, the picture becomes more complex when victim and aggressor intoxication are considered in combination. When the aggressor was presented as less intoxicated than his victim, this increased the perceived blameworthiness of his behavior (Stormo et al., 1997).

Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that some people are more responsive than others to information about victim intoxication in their social perceptions of sexual assault. Two perceiver variables associated with differences in the perception of rape incidents are rape myth acceptance (RMA) and gender. Gerger et al. (2007, p. 425) defined rape myths as “*descriptive or prescriptive beliefs about sexual aggression (i.e., about its scope, causes, context, and consequences) that serve to deny, downplay or justify sexually aggressive behavior that men commit against women*”. Several studies have demonstrated a link between RMA and attributions of blame to the victim (e.g. Check & Malamuth, 1985; Mason, Riger, & Foley, 2004). The more individuals endorse rape myths, the less likely they are to regard a sexual assault vignette as rape and to hold the assailant responsible (Girard & Senn, 2008; see Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler, & Viki, 2009, for a review). Regarding the link between RMA and perceptions of alcohol-related rape, Krahe et al. (2008; Study 1) found that the tendency to blame an intoxicated victim was particularly pronounced among participants high on rape myth acceptance. In a recent study with Spanish university students, Romero-Sánchez and Megías (2010) presented participants with a scenario in which the girl turns down the advances of a boy she had just met at a party. After talking and having a good time for a while, she explicitly rejects his sexual advances. Participants were asked to indicate their approval of different behavioral options the boy could pursue next, including the option of buying her several drinks in order to have sexual contact with her. Among male participants, those with high RMA scores were more approving of this strategy than those with low RMA scores. Women showed less approval of this option compared to men, regardless of their RMA.

Concerning the role of gender in the perception of sexual assault, a large body of research has found that men are more inclined to blame the victim and less likely to interpret a nonconsensual sexual interaction as sexual assault (e.g., Basow & Minieri 2011; Grubb & Harrower, 2009). However, other studies failed to obtain gender differences in attributions of blame (e.g., Newcomb, van den Eynde, Hafner, & Jolly, 2008; Temkin & Krahe, 2008, Study 3). To further clarify the role of gender in perceptions of sexual assault, potential gender differences were examined in our studies.

The present research was designed to further investigate the social perception of alcohol-related sexual assaults and to relate it to individual differences in RMA in two samples of Spanish college students. Utilizing the scenario method, participants were presented with hypothetical cases of a nonconsensual sexual interaction in which the aggressor and victim had not known each other before, taking place in a party setting. Study 1 extended previous research about the role of victim intoxication on perceivers' appraisals of the incident as sexual assault and on attributions of victim blame to non-rape sexual aggression. In Study 2, we further examined the significance of alcohol-related information in shaping perceptions of sexual assault by exploring the impact of the victim's acceptance or rejection of alcohol offered by the perpetrator. In addition, we examined the hypothesis that when the victim was said to have been sexually attracted to the man, participants would tend to interpret her rejection of his sexual advances as "token resistance".

STUDY 1

As mentioned above, the research of Krahe and her collaborators (Krahe, Temkin, et al., 2007, 2008; Bieneck & Krahe, 2011) demonstrated that victim blame in

rape cases committed by strangers or acquaintances was greater when the perpetrator exploited the victim's intoxicated state than when he used physical force. A within-subjects manipulation was employed in these studies that required the various scenarios to differ not only in terms of alcohol versus use of force, but also in other details. To overcome this problem, the present study was designed to replicate Krahe et al.'s (2008, Study 1) results in a Spanish sample, using a between-subjects design. This enabled us to use scenarios identical in content except for the manipulation of the coercive strategy used by the aggressor. In addition, we sought to replicate the findings by Krahe et al. for nonconsensual sexual acts other than rape, such as kissing and sexual touching. These forms of sexual coercion are far more common than rape in university samples (Romero-Sánchez & Megías, 2010). In addition to manipulating the coercive strategy used by the perpetrator, participants' rape myth acceptance was measured using a Spanish version of the "Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression" scale (AMMSA; Gerger et al., 2007) adapted and validated by Megías, Romero-Sánchez, Durán, Moya, & Bohner (2011). Specifically, we aimed to study how judgments of victim blame and perceptions of the incident as a sexual assault were affected by (1) information about the perpetrator's coercive strategy (alcohol versus physical force) and (2) participants' RMA.

Hypotheses

We hypothesized that the scenario would be perceived more as a sexual assault if the perpetrator used physical force than if he offered the woman alcohol in order to obtain sexual contact (*Hypothesis 1*).

We also hypothesized that the victim would be blamed more when the perpetrator exploited her intoxicated state than when he used physical force (*Hypothesis 2*).

Based on previous research, we hypothesized that participants scoring high on RMA would be less likely to regard the incident as a sexual assault and more likely to blame the victim than participants scoring low on RMA (*Hypothesis 3*).

Finally, we hypothesized an interaction between RMA and coercive strategy such that differences in RMA would affect participants' ratings of assault and victim blame more in the alcohol-related assault than in the forcible assault scenario (*Hypothesis 4*).

Method

Participants

Ninety-two college students (53 women and 39 men) at the University of Granada, Spain, participated on a voluntary basis. Ages ranged from 18 to 28 years (women: $M = 20.55$, $SD = 1.92$; men: $M = 21.03$, $SD = 2.65$).

Instruments

Rape myth acceptance. The Spanish version of the *Acceptance of Modern Myths About Sexual Aggression Scale* (AMMSA; Gerger et al., 2007) by Megías et al. (2011) was used to measure rape myth acceptance. The AMMSA is a self-report measure designed to assess “modern” myths regarding sexual violence with more subtlety than “traditional” RMA measures (e.g., Burt, 1980; Costin, 1985; Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999). In this study, a 16-item short form was used (which has adequate psychometric properties similar to the 30-item long version), based on research by Eyssel, Bohner, and Siebler (2006). It includes items such as “*Women often accuse their*

husbands of marital rape just to retaliate for a failed relationship,” “Women like to play coy. This does not mean they do not want sex,” “Many women tend to misinterpret a well-meaning gesture as a sexual assault,” or “The discussion about sexual harassment on the job has mainly resulted in many a harmless behavior being misinterpreted as harassment.” Responses were made on a scale ranging from (1) completely disagree to (7) completely agree.

Sexual assault scenarios. Two sexual aggression scenarios were created to incorporate the experimental manipulation. Each described an interaction between a girl, Alicia, and a boy, Juan, in a casual dating situation (a party in a bar). After a while, Juan makes sexual advances to Alicia, but she turns him down. He then either uses physical force or buys her several alcoholic drinks before kissing and sexually touching her. The scenarios varied in terms of the coercive strategy used by the perpetrator (alcohol vs. physical force) but contained a clear statement of the victim’s non-consent. The English translation of the scenario is presented in Appendix A, the original text of the scenarios can be obtained from the first author.

Dependent measures. Six questions were presented to measure victim blame: “Do you believe Alicia should feel guilty for what happened at the end of this story,” “Do you believe Alicia incited Juan to act like he did at the end of this story,” “Do you believe Alicia could have behaved differently to change the outcome of this story,” “Do you believe Alicia got what she deserved,” “Do you believe Alicia could have prevented what happened at the end of this story,” and “Do you believe Alicia should blame herself for what happened at the end of this story”. Each question was answered on a 7-point, Likert-type rating scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. Higher scores indicated more blame attributed to the victim. One item was included to

evaluate participants' perceptions of the event (*"The outcome of the evening is a sexual assault"*). This item was accompanied by a 7-point response scale ranging from (1) completely disagree to (7) completely agree.

Two additional items were included as manipulation checks. For the coercive strategy used by the perpetrator, we asked *"Does Juan physically force Alicia to kiss him and touch her sexually"* and *"Does Juan buy Alicia several whisky drinks so that he can kiss her and touch her sexually."* The two questions were answered on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1) totally disagree to (5) totally agree.

Procedure

Participants were approached at several libraries at the University of Granada and asked if they would volunteer to participate in a study about young people's attitudes toward several current topics. They were ensured that their responses would be anonymous and confidential, and used only for research purposes. Of those approached, only five students declined to participate. Students who agreed to participate were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions (alcohol or physical force). They completed the Spanish short-form version of the AMMSA, the hypothetical sexual aggression scenario with the manipulation of coercive strategy, the manipulation check items, the item measuring participants' judgment of the incident as a sexual assault and the questions designed to assess victim blame. Half of the participants completed the measures in this order, for the other half the AMMSA was presented at the end. No order effects were found. In addition, participants were asked to indicate their age, sex, and sexual orientation. Finally, participants were thanked and given summarized information about the aims of the study and how to access its final results.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

First, the dimensionality and internal consistency of the six questions addressing victim blame were analyzed. They had adequate corrected item-total correlations, ranging from .23 to .67. The principal components factor analysis yielded a KMO of .736 and a statistically significant Bartlett index $\chi^2(15) = 124.54, p < .001$, and revealed only one main factor with an eigenvalue of 2.65, accounting for 44.18% of the variance. The saturation of the items in this factor ranged from .26 to .84. Accordingly, the items were averaged into an overall victim blame score for each participant. This aggregate measure of victim blame showed an adequate internal consistency of $\alpha = .73$.

Table 1 presents the correlations between the measures of RMA, victim blame, and the perception of the incident as sexual assault. It also contains the means and SDs for the total sample and for men and women separately. As expected, a significant positive correlation was found between RMA and victim blame, and a negative correlation was found between victim blame and perception of the incident as a sexual assault. However, the correlation between RMA and considering the incident as a sexual assault was nonsignificant. As shown in Table 1, there were no sex differences on any of the three variables. Therefore, participant sex was not included in the further analyses.

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Table 1. Study 1: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations.

	Total	SD	Men	Women	F	P	(2)	(3)
(1) Rape myth acceptance	3.60	.84	3.78	3.47	3.06	.08	-.11	.35**
(2) Sexual assault	3.86	2.04	4.28	3.55	2.95	.09	-	-.45**
(3) Victim blame	3.55	1.19	3.32	3.71	2.42	.12		-

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. Scale range: 1-7.

The manipulation checks revealed that the variation of coercive strategy was successful. Perceptions that Juan physically forces Alicia to kiss him and touches her sexually were significantly higher in the force condition ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.35$) than in the alcohol condition ($M = 2.22$, $SD = 1.08$), $F(1, 89) = 48.32$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .35$. Conversely, perceptions that Juan buys Alicia several whisky drinks so that he can kiss her and touch her sexually were significantly higher in the alcohol condition ($M = 4.35$, $SD = 1.06$) than in the force condition ($M = 2.38$, $SD = 1.51$), $F(1, 89) = 67.14$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .43$. Based on this clear difference in means, all participants were retained in the sample.

Perceptions of the Incident as Sexual Assault and Attributions of Victim Blame

A 2 x 2 MANOVA was performed with coercive strategy and participants' RMA (high vs. low, median split) as the independent variables and participants' evaluations of the incident as a sexual assault and victim blame as the dependent variables. The analysis yielded a significant multivariate effect for both coercive

strategy, $F(2, 87) = 12.76, p >.001, \eta^2 = .27$, and RMA, $F(2, 87) = 5.82, p >.01, \eta^2 = .12$, and both univariate effects were significant. Regarding coercive strategy, participants were more certain that the incident was a sexual assault when the perpetrator used physical force ($M = 4.65, SD = 2.0$) than when he used alcohol to overcome the woman's refusal ($M = 3.12, SD = 1.78$), $F(1, 88) = 14.08, p = .001, \eta^2 = .14$. This finding supports Hypothesis 1. As predicted in Hypothesis 2, victim blame was higher when the aggressor used alcohol ($M = 4.05, SD = 1.07$) than when he used force ($M = 3.07, SD = 1.14$), $F(1, 88) = 19.93, p <.001, \eta^2 = .18$.

The univariate effect of RMA on perceptions of the incident as a sexual assault was nonsignificant, $F(1, 88) = .04, p = .91$, but the univariate effect on victim blame was significant, $F(1, 88) = 10.05, p <.01, \eta^2 = .10$. In line with Hypothesis 3, participants with high RMA scores blamed the victim more ($M = 3.88, SD = 1.07$) than did participants with low scores ($M = 3.27, SD = 1.23$). The multivariate interaction of coercive strategy and RMA was nonsignificant, disconfirming Hypothesis 4.

Discussion

This study examined the perception of sexual assaults between strangers during a casual encounter at a party as a function of two different coercive strategies used by the aggressor to overcome the victim's resistance: (1) giving her alcohol or (2) using physical force. A between-subjects manipulation was employed so that the scenarios would be identical in content except for the aggressor's strategy to corroborate earlier research that used a within-subjects manipulation (e.g. Krahe, Temkin, et al., 2007, 2008). The results replicated those reported by other studies (Bieneck & Krahe, 2011; Krahe, Temkin, et al., 2007, 2008) in a different cultural context and with regard to

sexual assaults less severe than rape. Participants were less convinced that the incident was a sexual assault and they blamed the victim more when alcohol played a role than when the aggressor used force. Finally, individual differences in RMA were significantly associated with victim blaming such that the victim was judged as more blameworthy by participants holding stereotypical beliefs about sexual aggression. However, contrary to our prediction, differences in RMA did not moderate the impact of the aggressor's coercive strategies on attributions of victim blame.

STUDY 2

In Study 1, participants were less inclined to consider the incident as an assault and assigned more blame to the victim when alcohol rather than physical force was used by the aggressor to overcome her resistance. The experimental manipulation in this study referred to the aggressor's coercive strategy. However, perceptions of the incident and victim blame are also affected by the woman's alcohol-related behavior prior to the sexual assault. Past research showed that the victim was seen as less credible and blamed more if she was said to have drunk before the assault (Jordan, 2004; Maurer & Robinson, 2008; Wenger & Bornstein, 2006). Building on these findings, Study 2 analyzed how information that the woman accepted or rejected the man's offers to buy her alcohol prior to the sexual assault affected participants' perception of the incident and attributions of victim blame. As noted earlier, the "real rape" stereotype suggests only assaults by a stranger using physical force and assaulting an unsuspecting victim in a dark alleyway represent genuine rape cases (Temkin & Krahé, 2008). Therefore, information that the victim had accepted alcohol from the aggressor should undermine the perception of the case as a "real sexual assault" and promote attributions of blame to the victim. Study 2 was designed to examine this proposition. We predicted that victim

blame would be higher if the woman had accepted rather than rejected the man's offer of alcohol because her behavior would be seen as an indication that she was sexually attracted to him.

In addition to manipulating the victim's acceptance or rejection of alcohol as an implicit cue of sexual attraction, we included an explicit statement of the victim's sexual attraction in our experimental design. We expected that the rejection of the man's sexual advances would more likely be seen as "token resistance" if the woman was said to have felt sexually attracted to the man than in the absence of such information. Token resistance refers to the rejection of sexual advances despite being willing to engage in sexual contact, that is "saying no when you mean yes" (Muehlenhard & Hollabough, 1988). As in Study 1, participants' rape myth acceptance was included as an individual difference variable expected to affect the perception of the incident as an assault and the attribution of victim blame.

Hypotheses

We hypothesized that participants would be less likely to consider the incident a sexual assault if the woman accepted the man's offer of alcohol, if she was said to have been sexually interested in him, and if they scored high on RMA (*Hypothesis 1*). This hypothesis predicted main effects of acceptance of alcohol, information about of sexual interest, and perceiver RMA on perceptions of the incident as a sexual assault.

Based on previous research, we hypothesized that individual differences in RMA would have a greater impact on perceptions of the incident as assault if the woman behaved in a way that deviated from the stereotype of a "real" sexual assault, specifically, if she accepted alcohol or said "no" to the man's advances despite being

sexually interested (*Hypothesis 2*). This hypothesis predicted interactions of RMA with acceptance of alcohol and information about sexual interest, respectively.

We also hypothesized that participants would attribute more blame to the woman when she accepted the man's offer of alcohol, when she was said to have been sexually interested in him, and if they scored high on RMA (*Hypothesis 3*). This hypothesis predicted main effects of acceptance of alcohol, information about of sexual interest, and perceiver RMA on ratings of victim blame.

We expected that individual differences in RMA would have a greater impact on victim blame in the scenarios in which the woman accepted alcohol or said "no" to the man's advances despite being sexually interested (*Hypothesis 4*). This hypothesis predicted interactions of RMA with acceptance of alcohol and display of sexual interest, respectively, on perceived victim blame.

It was further expected that participants would be more likely to see the woman's behavior as "token resistance" if they scored high on RMA and if she was portrayed as sexually interested in the man (*Hypothesis 5*).

Finally, we hypothesized that individual differences in RMA would have a greater impact on ratings of perceived "token resistance" in the scenario in which the woman was said to be sexually interested in the man than in the absence of information about her sexual interest (*Hypothesis 6*).

Method

Participants

164 college students (84 men and 80 women) from the University of Granada, Spain, participated in this study. Participants ranged in age between 18 and 28 years (men: $M = 20.0$, $SD = 2.50$; women: $M = 20.3$, $SD = 1.86$).

Instruments

Sexual aggression scenarios. Four different sexual aggression scenarios were created to incorporate the experimental manipulations. Each scenario described an interaction, similar to the one in Study 1, between a girl, Alicia, and a boy, Juan, in a casual dating situation in which, after the boy tries unsuccessfully to have sexual relations with the girl and she rejects him, he ends up sexually assaulting her. The scenarios varied in terms of the victim's acceptance or rejection of the man's offer of alcohol (acceptance or rejection) and information about the woman's sexual interest (stated or not stated). The format of the scenarios is presented in Appendix B.

Token resistance. Perceived "token resistance" was measured by the following five items developed by Masser, Viki, and Power (2006), translated into Spanish: "At first, Alicia pretended to resist Juan so that he would not think she is too 'easy,'" "Even though Alicia said 'no,' in reality, she wanted to have sexual contact with Juan," "Alicia ultimately enjoyed having sexual contact with Juan," "Alicia really wanted Juan to overcome her initial resistance," and "Alicia really wanted Juan to make her his." Responses were made on a seven-point, Likert-type rating scale ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. Higher scores indicated higher levels of perceived token resistance.

Rape myth acceptance, perception of the incident as sexual assault, and victim blame.

The measures of rape myth acceptance, perception of the incident as a sexual assault and victim blame were the same as in Study 1.

In addition, three questions were incorporated as manipulation checks: “*Did Alicia accept Juan’s offer of alcohol (whisky?)*”, “*At the beginning of the story, how sexually attracted does Alicia feel toward Juan?*”, and “*How drunk/tipsy is Alicia at the end of the night?*” The three questions were answered on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from (1) totally disagree/not at all to (5) totally agree/very much.

Procedure

The procedure was the same as in Study 1. Of those approached, only seven students declined to participate. Once students agreed to participate, they were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions (sexual interest not stated-acceptance of alcohol / sexual interest not stated-refusal of alcohol / sexual interest stated-acceptance of alcohol / sexual interest stated-refusal of alcohol). They completed the AMMSA rape myth acceptance measure, the sexual aggression scenario, the manipulation check items, the token resistance items, an item to measure the perception of assault, and the questions designed to assess victim blame. As in Study 1, half of the participants answered the questionnaires in this order and the other half answered the AMMSA at the end. Again, no order effects were found. In addition, participants were asked to indicate their age, sex, and sexual orientation. Students were then thanked for their participation and told about the aims of the study and how to access a summary of the results.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

First, an exploratory factor analysis was performed to determine the factor structure of the five items comprising the *token resistance* measure. The results of Bartlett's test of sphericity, $\chi^2 = 341.65$, $df = 10$, $p < .001$, and a value of .82 on the KMO index confirmed that the matrix of correlations was suitable for performing this analysis. Next, a principal components analysis was conducted, yielding one common factor with an eigenvalue of 3.15 that explained 60.03% of the variance. On this basis, the five items were averaged into an overall token resistance score for each participant.

Mean scores were also calculated for the AMMSA scale and the victim blame measure. A multivariate analysis of variance using participant sex as the independent variable and AMMSA, perception of assault, victim blame and token resistance as dependent variables yielded a significant multivariate effect, $F(4, 159) = 4.18$, $p < 0.01$, $\eta^2 = .09$. An inspection of the univariate effects revealed that men scored higher than women on the AMMSA scale, $F(1, 162) = 10.11$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .05$. Based on this finding, gender was included in the subsequent test of the hypotheses. No gender differences were found on the three dependent variables. The means, internal consistencies, and zero-order correlations are shown in Table 2. All measures showed good levels of reliability.

All variables were significantly intercorrelated. Victim blame was positively correlated with RMA and token resistance, and negatively with perceptions of the incident as a sexual assault. Token resistance correlated positively with RMA and negatively with the perception of the incident as a sexual assault. Finally, RMA and perception of assault were negatively correlated.

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Table 2. Study 2: Means, Zero-order Correlations, and Internal Consistencies.

	Total	Men	Women	(2)	(3)	(4)	α
	(SD)	(SD)	(SD)				
(1) Rape myth acceptance	3.54 (.92)	3.76 (.91)	3.31 (.90)	.38***	.40***	-.18*	.83
(2) Token resistance	2.51 (1.35)	2.57 (1.35)	2.46 (1.36)	-	.49***	-.46***	.86
(3) Victim blame	3.17 (1.31)	3.34 (1.36)	2.29 (1.23)		-	-.28***	.85
(4) Sexual assault	4.95 (1.98)	5.2 (1.79)	4.7 (2.15)			-	

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, Scale range: 1-7

The analysis of participants' scores on the manipulation check questions confirmed the validity of the experimental manipulation. Agreement that Alicia accepted Juan's offer of alcohol (whisky) was significantly higher in the two groups who were presented with scenarios in which the woman accepted alcohol ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.06$) than in groups where participants were told she had refused his offer of alcohol ($M = 1.32$, $SD = .88$), $F(1, 162) = 355.78$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .68$. As for the "sexual interest" variable, participants agreed significantly more that at the beginning of this story, Alicia was said to be sexually attracted to Juan in the two groups that had learned the woman was sexually interested than in the two groups where no information about her sexual interest was provided, $F(1, 162) = 291.647$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .64$ (sexual interest stated: $M = 4.21$, $SD = .95$; sexual interest not stated: $M = 1.98$, $SD = .70$). Finally, Alicia was perceived to be more drunk/tipsy at the end of the night when she accepted

the aggressor's offer to buy her alcohol ($M = 3.70$, $SD = .88$) than when she turned it down ($M = 1.10$, $SD = .33$), $F(1, 162) = 617.31$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .79$. Because of the high effect sizes, none of the participants was screened out.

Perception of the Incident as Sexual Assault

To test Hypotheses 1 and 2, we conducted a $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$ (Participant Sex \times RMA \times alcohol acceptance \times sexual interest) ANOVA with perceptions of the incident as a sexual assault as dependent variable. Participants were categorized as high vs. low on RMA based on median split. As predicted, participants with lower RMA scores more strongly agreed with the statement that the incident was a sexual assault, $F(1, 148) = 8.48$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .05$ (low RMA: $M = 5.31$, $SD = 1.89$; high RMA ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 2.01$)). However, there were no main effects of the alcohol acceptance/rejection or sexual interest manipulations. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was only partially supported by the data. One unexpected result was that men saw the event more as an assault than did women, $F(1, 148) = 5.84$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .03$ (men: $M = 5.20$, $SD = 1.78$; women: $M = 4.7$, $SD = 2.15$).

As predicted in Hypothesis 2, a significant interaction was observed between RMA and acceptance vs. rejection of alcohol, $F(1, 148) = 4.78$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Figure 1 shows that RMA had a greater effect on ratings of the incident as assault when the woman accepted rather than rejected the man's offer of alcohol. Follow-up analyses confirmed that there were no differences between high and low RMA participants, $t(80) = .30$, $p = .76$ when the woman refused the alcohol, but high RMA individuals were less likely to see the incident as a sexual assault when the woman accepted alcohol, $t(80) = 3.30$, $p < .001$ [low RMA, $M = 4.34$, $SD = 2.00$; high RMA: $M = 5.63$, $SD = 1.51$].

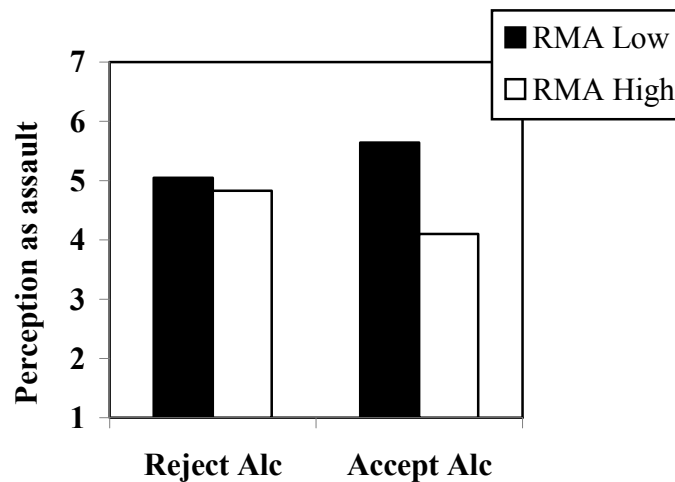


Figure 1. Study 1: Perception of the incident as assault as a function of participants' rape myth acceptance and victim's acceptance of alcohol.

Also in line with Hypothesis 2, a significant interaction emerged between RMA and sexual interest, $F(1, 148) = 4.88, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$. RMA did not affect perceptions of the sexual assault in the absence of cues about victim sexual interest. However, when the victim was stated to feel sexually attracted to the man, high RMA participants were less inclined to see the incident as a sexual assault ($M = 4.23, SD = 2.17$) than were low RMA participants ($M = 5.62, SD = 1.86$).

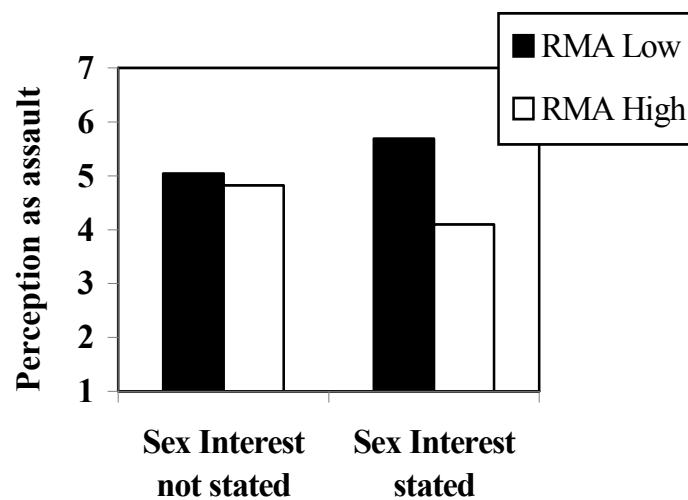


Figure 2. Study 2: Perception of the incident as assault as a function of sexual interest information and participants' rape myth acceptance.

These second-order interactions were qualified by the third-order interaction between RMA x Alcohol Acceptance/Refusal x Sexual Interest, $F(1, 148) = 4.60, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$. Follow-up analyses revealed that for low RMA participants, there were no main effects or interactions between the alcohol acceptance and the sexual interest conditions. For high RMA individuals on the other hand, the incident was considered more as an assault only when the woman rejected the offer of alcohol *and* was not said to be sexually interested, $F(1, 75) = 4.39, p < .05, \eta^2 = .06$ (see Figure 3). In other words, it seems that high RMA individuals were only prepared to see the incident as an assault if the woman behaved in a manner consistent with the “real rape” stereotype.

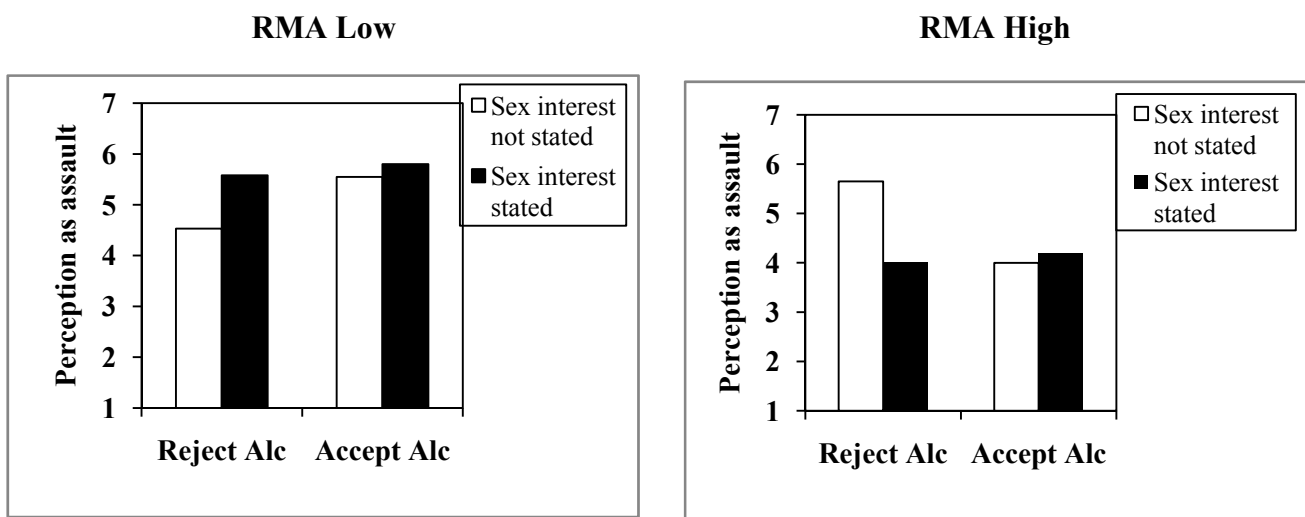


Figure 3. Study 2: Perception of the incident as assault as a function of RMA, alcohol acceptance and sexual interest information.

Victim Blame

To examine Hypotheses 3 and 4, a parallel $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$ ANOVA was conducted with victim blame as the dependent variable and participant sex and RMA (high vs. low), victim’s acceptance of alcohol (acceptance versus rejection) and information about victim sexual interest (stated versus not stated) as independent

variables. As predicted in Hypothesis 3, participants blamed the victim more when she accepted rather than rejected alcoholic drinks from the aggressor, $F(1, 148) = 17.28, p < .001, \eta^2 = .10$ [refusal ($M = 2.71, SD = 1.22$); acceptance ($M = 3.54, SD = 1.28$)]. Furthermore, participants with high RMA scores blamed the victim more than did those with low RMA scores, $F(1, 148) = 10.33, p < .01, \eta^2 = .06$ (low RMA: $M = 2.81, SD = 1.23$; high RMA: $M = 3.44, SD = 1.28$). However, information about the woman's sexual interest had no effect on victim blame ($F < 1$). The main effect of participant sex was also nonsignificant, $F(1, 148) = 1.127, p = .30$. In combination, the results partially supported Hypothesis 3.

Of the interactions predicted in Hypothesis 4, only the two-way interaction between Sexual Interest and participant sex reached significance, $F(1, 148) = 4.86, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$. Men blamed the victim more than did women, but only when there was no information about her sexual interest, $t(80) = 2.55, p < .01$ (see Figure 4). Finally, no interaction was found between RMA and the alcohol acceptance and sexual interest variables, contrary to the predictions in Hypothesis 4.

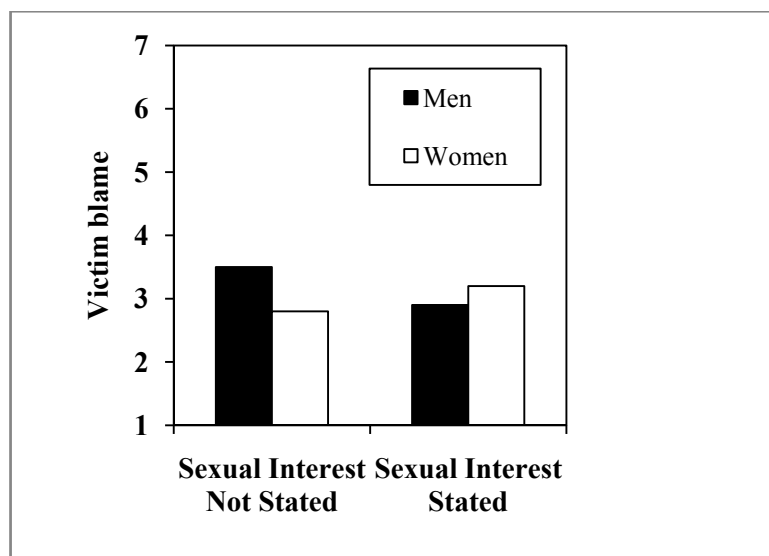


Figure 4. Victim blame as a function of victim's sexual interest and participant sex.

Perceived Token Resistance

To test Hypotheses 5 and 6, a further 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 ANOVA (Sex x RMA x Alcohol Acceptance x Sexual Interest) was performed with token resistance as the dependent variable. As predicted in Hypothesis 5, a main effect of Sexual Interest was found, $F(1, 148) = 10.40, p < .01, \eta^2 = .06$, such that evaluations of the woman's behavior as token resistance were higher when she was said to have been sexually interested in the man than when no sexual interest information was provided (sexual interest stated: $M = 2.83, SD = 1.45$, sexual interest not stated: $M = 2.17, SD = 1.17$). Also, token resistance ratings were higher among high RMA participants ($M = 2.90, SD = 1.37$) than among low RMA participants ($M = 2.09, SD = 1.21$), $F(1, 148) = 15.81, p < .01, \eta^2 = .09$. These results fully support Hypothesis 5. The main effect of participant sex was nonsignificant.

In support of Hypothesis 6, a marginally significant interaction was observed between RMA and sexual interest information, $F(1, 148) = 3.56, p = .06, \eta^2 = .02$. Post hoc analyses revealed that participants' RMA influenced their perceptions of "token resistance" only when the woman was said to be sexually interested, and not in the absence of sexual interest information (see Figure 5).

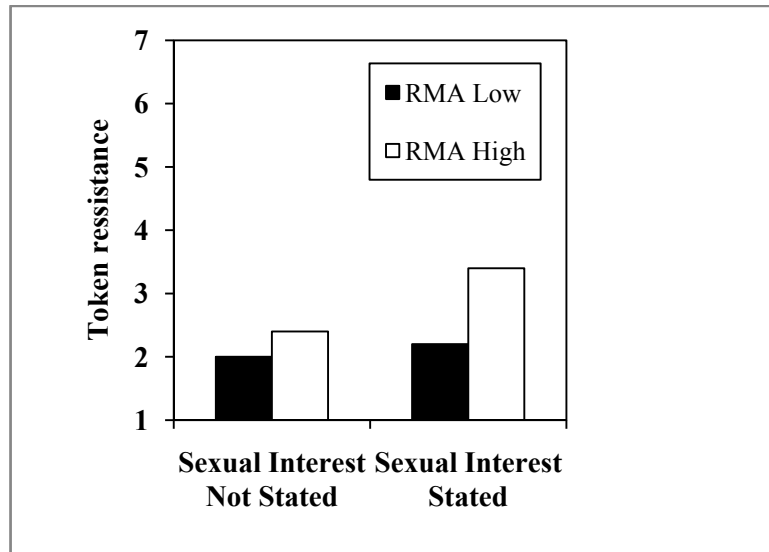


Figure 5. Perceived token resistance as a function of victim's sexual interest and participants' RMA.

Finally, a three-way interaction was found between Sex x Alcohol Acceptance x Sexual Interest, $F(1, 148) = 5.14, p < .05, \eta^2 = .03$. Follow-up analyses showed when the woman refused alcohol, women, but not men, were sensitive to the information about her sexual interest. In the alcohol refusal condition, women were more likely to see her behavior as token resistance when the woman was said to be sexually attracted to the man. (M sex interest stated = 3.27, $SD = 1.75$, versus M sex interest not stated = 1.74, $SD = .99$). In the alcohol acceptance condition, information about victim sexual interest made no difference to women's ratings of her behavior as token resistance. Men's perception of token resistance was unaffected by information about sexual interest regardless of whether she accepted or refused the aggressor's offer of alcohol.

Discussion

This study was designed to show that a woman's behavior prior to a sexual assault influenced participants' evaluations of the incident as sexual assault and victim blame in a casual dating situation where alcohol is involved. The results showed that the degree to which participants subscribed to rape myths affected their judgments about the scenarios depicting nonconsensual sexual contacts. Participants with high RMA were less inclined to see the scenario as a sexual assault, more likely to blame the victim, and more likely to perceive her behavior as token resistance. The situational manipulations of the woman's acceptance versus rejection of alcohol offered by the aggressor and of the information regarding her sexual attraction to him had little effect on their own, but they did affect the conclusions reached by those high in RMA. Participants scoring high on RMA were less likely to see the scenario as a sexual assault when the woman had accepted alcohol from the aggressor and when she was said to feel sexually attracted to him, whereas low RMA participants did not respond to this information in their perceptions of the scenario.

Few significant sex differences were observed in the data and did not follow a consistent pattern. For example, a main effect of sex on perceptions of the incident as assault was found such that contrary to the findings of previous research, women were less likely than men to view the incident as assault. The other effect involving participant sex was the three-way interaction of sex, sexual interest, and acceptance of alcohol on ratings of the victim's token resistance. Overall, it can be concluded that individual differences RMA, were more influential than biological sex in predicting differences in perceptions of the sexual aggression scenarios.

General Discussion

Alcohol plays a role in many incidents of men's sexual aggression against women, and it also affects the social perception of nonconsensual sexual interactions (Wenger & Bornstein, 2006). The studies found evidence from Spanish samples showing that alcohol-related information in a sexual assault situation significantly affected participants' evaluations, both when it was presented as a coercive strategy used by the aggressor and when it was voluntarily accepted by the victim. Although levels of victim blame were in the lower range of the response scale, participants high on rape myth acceptance were found to be responsive to this information and were led to blame the victim more and downplay the severity of a sexual transgression by seeing it less as a sexual assault or interpreting the victim's refusal as token resistance.

Study 1 replicated and extended the scope of previous findings in the international literature regarding the use of alcohol as a coercive strategy. Specifically, along the lines of the work of Krahe, Temkin, et al. (2007, 2008; also Bieneck & Krahe, 2011) participants were less inclined to see non-consensual kissing and touching of a girl by a boy in a party setting as a sexual assault when the aggressor used alcohol as opposed to force to overcome the victim's refusal. At the same time, victim blame was higher when alcohol rather than force was used by the aggressor. Furthermore, individuals more accepting of myths about sexual assault took the incident less seriously and blamed the victim more than those rejecting these myths.

The finding that alcohol use as a coercive strategy diminished the perceived severity of the incident relative to the use of force and increased victim blame can be explained by the "real rape" stereotype referring to an assault by a stranger involving physical force and active victim resistance. As shown consistently in previous research

(e.g. Emmers-Sommer & Allen, 1999; Frese, Moya, & Megías, 2004), the more the circumstances of a sexual assault differ from those implied in the stereotype, the less credibility is granted to the victim, the more she is blamed for what happened, and the less severe the incident is perceived to be. Using alcohol instead of force as a coercive strategy moves the incident away from the stereotype. Similarly, in the present scenarios the victim had only just met the aggressor, so participants may have blamed her for accepting alcohol from the man, considering it “imprudent” of her to drink alcohol with a stranger with unknown intentions. In fact, Krahe, Temkin, et al. (2007, 2008) found that victim blame was higher when the perpetrator exploited the victim’s intoxicated state rather than using physical force, but only when the aggressor was described as a stranger or acquaintance. When he was described as a former romantic partner, victim blame was reduced

The results of Study 2 demonstrated that alcohol affected judgments about sexual assault scenarios beyond its use as a coercive strategy by the aggressor. Information that the victim had accepted or rejected the aggressor’s offer of alcohol influenced perceptions of nonconsensual sexual interactions, particularly among people subscribing to rape myths. Earlier studies showed that when the woman had been drinking before a sexual assault, she was seen as less credible and blamed more (Jordan, 2004; Wenger & Bornstein, 2006). However, previous research did not investigate how people would respond to information that the victim voluntarily accepted alcohol from her aggressor prior to the assault. Acceptance of alcohol by the woman may provide implicit cues about her sexual interest and promote misperceptions of her sexual intentions (Farris, Treat, Viken, & McFall, 2008). The results of Study 2 confirmed this line of reasoning. The victim was blamed more when she accepted rather than refused

the aggressor's offer of alcohol regardless of participants' RMA. High RMA participants were inclined to see the incident as sexual assault when the woman had rejected alcohol and when there was no indication of her sexual attraction to the man.

Information that the woman felt sexually attracted to the aggressor prior to the sexual assault promoted the interpretation that her rejection of his sexual advances was not more than token resistance, concealing her true sexual intentions. Perceived token resistance is a risk factor for sexual assault as it legitimizes the use of coercion to overcome a woman's rejection (Krahé, Scheinberger-Olwig, & Kolpin, 2000). Including this dependent variable, Study 2 showed that participants were more inclined to see the woman's rejection of the man's sexual advances as token resistance when the scenario contained the information that she had felt sexually attracted to him at the beginning of the encounter. As expected, this effect was moderated by individual differences in RMA such that only high RMA participants interpreted the woman's refusal in this scenario as token resistance. It is important to note that there was no mention in the scenario of behavioral cues that would have signaled her sexual interest to the man, it was simply stated that she *felt* sexually attracted to him. Nonetheless, high RMA participants paid attention to this information, qualifying the incident as less of a sexual assault and interpreting the woman's rejection of the sexual advances as token resistance.

Altogether, the results of Study 2 showed once again that information about the victim influences the social perception of sexual assault. A woman who had earlier accepted alcohol was blamed more, and the scenario seen less as a sexual assault, especially by participants high on RMA. The alcohol-related scenarios were at odds with the "real rape" stereotype of a forcible assault on an unsuspecting victim and

therefore created a more ambiguous stimulus situation for the participants. Such ambiguity leads to a predominance of top-down, schematic processing over data-driven, bottom-up processing (e.g. Dunning & Sherman, 1997; Kunda & Sherman-Williams, 1993). When the database is limited or the information is inconsistent, people rely on cognitive schemas, such as rape myths (Bohner et al., 2009), as demonstrated by the consistent impact of RMA on judgments about the case scenarios in the two studies.

The findings from our studies have practical implications both for the prevention of sexual aggression in college students and for addressing the problem of secondary victimization. By revealing Spanish students' understanding of what constitutes a sexual assault, to what extent women are to blame for sexual victimization, and what constitutes genuine rather than token resistance, the findings provide a starting point for challenging these cognitive representations. Research with German adolescents has shown that the cognitive representations of sexual encounters in the form of sexual scripts were significantly correlated with sexual behavior (Krahé, Bieneck, & Scheinberger-Olwig, 2007). Gaining a better understanding of how students define a sexual assault and condone sexual transgressions that fall outside the "real rape" stereotype is a prerequisite for designing prevention programs addressing these conceptions. On the basis of the present findings, the message to be transported by prevention efforts would be that coercing a woman into sexual acts by getting her drunk is no more acceptable than using physical force, and that the acceptance of alcohol by a woman does not constitute a license to disregard her refusal. Highlighting the role of RMA as an individual difference variable, it would also follow from the present findings to tailor prevention efforts to participants' pre-existing attitudes about sexual assault, particularly challenging misconceptions about sexual assault in people with

high RMA. For example, using a social norms approach, Bohner, Siebler, and Schmelcher (2006) reduced men's rape proclivity by providing normative feedback that acceptance of rape myths in their reference group was lower than participants' own score, which was particularly effective in men with high levels of RMA (see Bohner et al., 2009, for a review).

In addition, the findings are relevant to the legal prosecution of sexual assaults. There is consistent evidence across the Western world of high attrition rates for rape complaints from reporting to convictions, with cases not conforming to the real rape stereotype being more likely to be dropped in the process (Lovett & Kelly, 2009). Acceptance of rape myths has been shown to play a significant role in influencing decision making by police officers, judges, and members of the public eligible for jury service (Temkin & Krahe, 2008), but evidence from Spain on these issues is scarce. The present findings join this body of research by showing that acceptance of rape myths is a particular problem with respect to cases that disconfirm the real rape stereotype, for example by involving an intoxicated victim or a victim that has signaled sexual interest at an earlier stage. Therefore, strategies are needed for reducing the impact of rape myths on decision-making on sexual assault cases. Potential approaches discussed in the literature include (a) developing screening tools for jurors with high levels of RMA, (b) introducing expert testimony to dispel police or jurors' misconceptions; and (3) designing interventions for challenging rape myths and replacing them with more accurate views of rape (Temkin & Krahe, 2008).

There are some limitations that should be noted about the two studies. First, the studies are subject to general criticisms of the external validity of the scenario method. However, even though scenarios cannot capture the full amount of detail available in

more realistic contexts, such as court hearings, this method offers a degree of control over potentially confounding variables that is impossible to achieve in real-life cases that differ in a multitude of factors (Bieneck, 2009). Second, the samples in the two studies were relatively small and represented ad hoc convenience samples. The small sample size may explain the failure to find the predicted interactions of coercive strategy and RMA in Study 1. Third, we cannot conclusively explain the finding in Study 2 that women perceived the incident as less of a sexual assault than men. This result, not previously reported in the literature, should also be explored in future studies. Fourth, the scores on the measures of RMA, victim blame, and perceived token resistance were below the midpoint of the respective scales. We cannot rule out social desirability concerns here. However, significant differences in line with our theoretical predictions were found despite the relatively low overall means. Fifth, participants' experiences of sexual victimization were not assessed- although studies suggest that having been a victim of sexual assault may influence attributions of blame (Mason et al., 2004; Miller, Amacker & King, 2011). Finally, more research is needed to show the generalizability of our findings to other types of sexual assault (e.g., rapes), committed by assailants closer to the victim (e.g., acquaintances, romantic partners, or former romantic partners).

Despite these limitations, the two studies contribute to the growing international literature on the social perception of sexual assault by providing evidence from a Spanish context on college students' evaluations of nonconsensual sexual encounters involving alcohol. Against the background of substantial prevalence rates of sexual assault among Spanish students, it was demonstrated that alcohol used as a coercive strategy by the aggressor or accepted by the victim promotes the tendency to blame the

victim and to trivialize sexual transgressions, particularly among people subscribing to stereotypical myths about sexual aggression. The findings reflect social norms defining what is - and what is not - sexual assault that are relevant for understanding sexual scripts as well as sexual behavior.

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APPENDIX A

Study 1: Use of Alcohol vs. Use of Force to Obtain Sexual Contacts (English translation, original in Spanish)

Juan is out with some friends in a bar in the city. He has been watching a girl for a while that he really likes but until now, he has not decided to approach her. She is dancing with some friends and also seems to be interested in him because she has glanced at him several times. Juan decides to approach her and he introduces himself. She responds by saying that her name is Alicia, and the two begin to talk as they laugh and dance. The night goes on and the two continue flirting and having a good time together. Juan is very attracted to Alicia and he would like to “take it to the next level” with her, but Alicia turns him down several times. Juan, despite her constant rejection, he grabs her strongly [alcohol condition: he decides to buy her shots of whisky so that he can go further with her]. Finally, [alcohol condition: after Alicia has had several whiskies] Juan ends up kissing her and touching her sexually.

APPENDIX B

Study 2: Victim’s Sexual Interest Information and Acceptance vs. Rejection of Alcohol (English Translation)

Alicia goes out with her group of girlfriends to their favourite pub in the city. Minutes after arriving, a guy approaches Alicia and introduces himself as Juan. The two start to talk and the night passes by with laughter and conversation. [Sexual interest info: Alicia thinks Juan is rather attractive and feels very sexually attracted to him, she even imagines “taking it to the next level” with him]. Suddenly, Juan gets close to Alicia and kisses her, meanwhile offering to buy her a whisky. She accepts his offer and the night continues with Juan buying her more whisky, and with laughter and conversation. [Alcohol rejection: She rejects his offer to drink whisky but accepts drink coca-cola]. At some point in the night, Juan approaches Alicia more intimately and starts to passionately kiss and touch her. Alicia protests and tells him she doesn’t want to go too far with him, but Juan pays no attention to her refusal and protest, and continues kissing her and touching her sexually.

**Percepción Social de Agresiones Sexuales en Función de la Conducta de la Víctima
y el Tipo de Bebida Consumida.**

(Estudio 7 de la Tesis Doctoral)

**Social Perception of Sexual Assault as a Function of Victim Behavior
and Type of Beverage.**

(Study 7 in this Doctoral Thesis)

Resumen

Diferentes investigaciones han puesto de manifiesto una mayor atribución de culpabilidad a víctimas de agresión sexual cuando han ingerido alcohol de forma previa a la agresión. Este hecho podría estar relacionado no sólo con los efectos atribuidos al consumo de alcohol, sino también con la aceptación de la víctima a beber con el agresor. El presente estudio examinó la influencia que la conducta de la víctima (aceptar frente a rechazar la invitación a tomar una bebida), y el tipo de bebida (alcohólica frente a no alcohólica), tenían en las percepciones de estudiantes universitarios sobre un episodio de agresión sexual. Las diferencias individuales en aceptación de mitos sobre las agresiones sexuales (RMA) también fueron tenidas en cuenta. Los resultados mostraron que los participantes atribuyeron más culpa a la víctima y consideraron el hecho más como un acto de seducción, cuando aceptó las invitaciones de su agresor a tomar una bebida que cuando las rechazó. No obstante, este resultado fue moderado por sus puntuaciones en RMA. Estos hallazgos son discutidos en relación a estudios previos sobre RMA y valoraciones de episodios de agresión sexual.

Palabras clave: conducta de la víctima, alcohol, mitos sobre las agresiones sexuales, agresión sexual.

Abstract

Previous studies have shown more victims blaming if they had consumed alcohol previously to their sexual assaults. This fact might be related not only to alcohol consumption but also to the victim's acceptance to have a drink with the perpetrator. This study analyzed the influence of the victim behaviour (accepting versus rejecting the invitation to have a drink) and type of beverage (alcoholic versus non alcoholic), in college students' perceptions of a sexual assault incident. Individual differences on sexual assaults myths acceptance (RMA) were also measured. The results showed that participants blamed the victim more and considered the incident more as a seduction when she accepted the invitation to drink. However, this effect was moderated by their RMA scores. These findings are discussed in relation to previous research on RMA and social perception of sexual assaults.

Key words: victim behavior, alcohol, sexual assault myths, sexual assault.

El alcohol constituye uno de los factores de mayor riesgo en la ocurrencia de violaciones (Abbey, 2002; Abbey, 2011; Abbey, Ross, McDuffie y McAuslan, 1996; Carr y Van Deusen, 2004; Testa, 2002) y está ciertamente presente en un alto porcentaje de incidentes sexuales: aproximadamente la mitad de las agresiones sexuales son cometidas por hombres que previamente habían ingerido alcohol (Testa 2002; Ullman, 2003, para una revisión), mientras que, en el caso de las mujeres víctimas, los porcentajes oscilan entre el 35% y el 79% (Abbey, 2002; Abbey, Zawacki, Buck, Clinton, y McAuslan, 2001; Crowell y Burgess, 1996; Lovett y Horvath, 2009). El vínculo existente entre consumo de alcohol y ocurrencia de agresiones sexuales, ha sido bien establecido y documentado a través de estudios internacionales (Horvath y Brown, 2006, 2007; Ullman, Karabastos y Koss, 1999; Walby y Allen, 2004), siendo dicha relación especialmente consistente en población universitaria. En esta línea, en el informe emitido en 1994 por la *Commission on Substance Abuse at Colleges and Universities* (CASA, siglas en inglés) se indicó que el alcohol estuvo presente en 9 de cada 10 violaciones perpetradas en campus universitarios estadounidenses (CASA, 1994). En el mismo contexto, el *Campus Sexual Assault Study* (Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, y Martin, 2007), reveló que entre aquellos universitarios que reconocieron haber intentado o llevado a cabo agresiones sexuales, el 81% había ingerido alcohol antes del incidente. Entre ellos, el 94% declararon estar borrachos cuando cometieron la agresión. En el caso de las víctimas, el estudio llevado a cabo por Moler-Kuo, Dowdall, Koss y Wechsler (2004), reveló que 1 de cada 20 universitarias entrevistadas informaron haber sido víctimas de violación desde el inicio del curso, ocurriendo el 72% de estas agresiones cuando la víctima estaba bajo los efectos del alcohol. En países europeos, diversos estudios revelan también la existencia de este

fenómeno (Calafat, Juan, Becoña, Mantecón, y Ramón, 2009; Romero-Sánchez y Megías, 2010; Scott-Ham y Burton, 2005). Según indica la literatura, esta relación entre ingesta de alcohol y ocurrencia de agresiones sexuales tiene su mayor dimensión en relaciones esporádicas donde el contacto previo entre víctima y agresor es mínimo (Lovett y Horvath, 2009; Ullman, 2003).

Gran parte de la investigación surgida en torno a la ocurrencia de agresiones sexuales cuando el alcohol está presente, se ha centrado en explorar los mecanismos que subyacen a tal relación, destacando el papel de las creencias sobre los efectos producidos por el alcohol

(e.g. incremento de la sexualidad y/o agresividad) (Abbey, McAuslan, McDuffie, Ross y Zawachi, 1995; Crowe y George, 1989) y el de los déficits cognitivos que provoca en quienes lo ingieren (e.g. reducción de la capacidad para llevar a cabo procesamientos cognitivos de orden superior, como la abstracción o resolución de problemas) (Hindmarch, Kerr y Sherwood, 1991; Peterson, Rothfleisch, Zelazo y Pihl, 1990; Tranel, Anderson y Benton, 1994). No obstante, la literatura especializada ha ido más allá a la hora de indagar en la relación existente entre ambas variables (alcohol y agresiones sexuales), explorando también la percepción social de este fenómeno.

La información sobre la ingesta de alcohol, por parte de víctima y/o agresor, afecta notablemente a los juicios y percepciones que las personas realizan sobre relaciones o contactos sexuales no deseados (Adams-Curtis y Forbes, 2004; Cameron y Stritzke, 2003; Dudley, 2005; Finch y Munro, 2005), que también se ven influidos a su vez por la existencia de roles de género tradicionales, sugiriendo un doble estándar en la evaluación de mujeres-víctimas y hombres-agresores. En general, los agresores bebidos suelen ser considerados menos culpables que los sobrios (Stormo, Lang y Stritzke,

1997). Mientras que, en el caso de las víctimas, aquellas mujeres que han ingerido alcohol de forma previa a la agresión, suelen ser juzgadas más severamente que las sobrias (Abbey et al., 1996; Cameron y Strizke, 2003; Maurer y Robinson, 2008; Schuller y Stewart, 2000). Aquellas víctimas que se encuentran bajo los efectos del alcohol en el momento de ser agredidas sexualmente, son culpabilizadas más por considerarse que se exponen ellas mismas a situaciones peligrosas (Jordan, 2004; Wenger y Bornstein, 2006).

La presencia de alcohol en episodios de violación no sólo afecta a los juicios que las personas realizan sobre víctima y agresores, también influye en las valoraciones que se realizan sobre el propio incidente. Norris y Cubbins (1992), en un estudio llevado a cabo con universitarios, encontraron que ante un escenario donde se describía una cita que finalizaba en violación, hombres y mujeres tendieron a percibir el incidente como encuentro sexual consentido cuando víctima y agresor eran representados ingiriendo alcohol, pero no así cuando eran descritos sobrios. Más aún, cuando se estudia esta percepción social en función de la estrategia utilizada por el agresor, las investigaciones muestran un patrón de resultados similar. Por ejemplo, Romero-Sánchez, Megías y Krahé (en prensa, Estudio 1), en un trabajo llevado a cabo con noventa y dos estudiantes universitarios españoles, encontraron que los participantes valoraron más lo ocurrido como una agresión sexual cuando el perpetrador hizo uso de la fuerza física que cuando recurrió al uso deliberado del alcohol. Hallazgos similares han sido obtenidos en otros estudios (Bieneck y Krahé, 2011; Schuller y Wall, 1998).

No obstante, no todas las personas responden de igual forma a la valoración de incidentes de violación en los que el alcohol ha estado presente. El sexo o las actitudes han sido señalados como factores relevantes en la emisión de este tipo de juicios. En

relación a las actitudes, se ha identificado a los mitos sobre las agresiones sexuales como variable crítica que afecta a las valoraciones que los perceptores realizan sobre víctimas y agresores sexuales. Estos mitos han sido definidos como “creencias descriptivas o prescriptivas sobre las agresiones sexuales (sobre su alcance, causas, contexto y consecuencias) que sirven para negar, minimizar o justificar la violencia sexual que los hombres ejercen contra las mujeres” (Gerger, Kley, Bohner y Siebler, 2007, p. 425).

Varios estudios han mostrado el vínculo o relación existente entre tales mitos y las atribuciones que se realizan sobre incidente, víctima y agresor, cuando el alcohol ha estado presente. Romero-Sánchez et al., (en prensa, Estudio 2) mostraron que cuando los participantes eran expuestos a escenarios de agresión sexual donde la víctima podía aceptar o por el contrario rechazar la invitación de su agresor a ingerir alcohol, sólo aquellos participantes con puntuaciones altas en mitos sobre las agresiones sexuales valoraron en menor medida el incidente como agresión sexual y culpabilizaron más a la víctima cuando aceptó la invitaciones de su agresor. En la misma línea, Krahe, Temkin, Bieneck y Berger (2008, Estudio 1), también observaron que la tendencia a culpabilizar a una víctima intoxicada por alcohol era particularmente pronunciada entre participantes altos en mitos.

En general, las investigaciones llevadas a cabo para explorar la influencia del alcohol sobre las valoraciones de agresiones sexuales, han analizado dos aspectos diferentes: (1) cómo se percibe que el agresor dé alcohol a la víctima en comparación a cuando hace uso de la fuerza (Bieneck y Krahe, 2011; Krahe, Temkin y Bieneck, 2007; Krahe, et al., 2008; Romero-Sánchez y Megías, 2010; Romero-Sánchez et al., en prensa, Estudio 1), y (2) cómo se juzga el hecho de que víctima y/o agresor hayan consumido

alcohol de forma previa a la agresión (Girard y Senn, 2008; Jordan, 2004; Norris y Cubbins, 1992; Wenger y Bornstein, 2006).

Como se ha indicado anteriormente, los perceptores tienden a culpabilizar más a la víctima cuando ha consumido alcohol previamente a la agresión. Algunas de las explicaciones dadas sobre este hecho, destacan la importancia de ciertas claves sexuales relacionadas con la creencia de que el alcohol hace a las mujeres más receptivas ante invitaciones sexuales (Abbey, Ross, McDuffie y McAuslan, 1996; George, Cue, Lopez, Crowe y Norris, 1995). Esta creencia estereotípica puede predisponer a los hombres que la sostienen a interpretar acciones o conductas amistosas de una mujer bebida como señales de su deseo de mantener contactos o relaciones sexuales; si en estas circunstancias, la mujer rechaza los avances sexuales del hombre y es forzada, se le culpabilizará más por haber “enviado señales equívocas” (Abbey, et al., 1996; Abbey, 2002; George et al., 1997; Romero-Sánchez y Megías, 2010). Por ejemplo, en el estudio llevado a cabo por George et al. (1995), los participantes leyeron un escenario en el cual se describía a una pareja cenando en un restaurante. Durante la cena la mujer podía consumir varias bebidas alcohólicas o no alcohólicas. Los resultados mostraron que las mujeres que bebían alcohol era percibidas comportándose de una manera más sexual y mostrándose interesadas sexualmente en su pareja.

No obstante, la mera conducta de aceptación de invitaciones por parte de la víctima, independientemente de la presencia o no de alcohol, también puede conllevar la percepción errónea de interés sexual, tal y como sostienen las investigaciones sobre “scripts” o guiones sexuales. Según estos estudios, las personas mantienen una serie de guiones que incluyen el tipo de acciones que suelen tener lugar en una interacción sexual, el orden en el que se espera que ocurran (Frith, 2009), e incluso expectativas

normativas sobre la conducta de otros y el desenlace de las situaciones (Metts y Spitzberg, 1996; Simon y Gagnon, 1986). Más aún, se han detectado guiones sexuales similares para interacciones sexuales consentidas y para interacciones sexuales coercitivas, que incorporan elementos comunes como el consumo de alcohol y drogas y la comunicación ambigua de intenciones sexuales (“token resistance”, decir no cuando sí se desea mantener contactos sexuales y “compliance”, decir sí aún no deseando mantener contactos sexuales), entre otros (Krahé, Bieneck y Scheinberger-Olwig, 2007a, 2007b). En este sentido, si una mujer, en un contexto cargado de componentes sexuales, se muestra amigable o receptiva ante las invitaciones de un hombre, por ejemplo, aceptando tomar una copa o bailando con él, tales conductas podrían ser interpretadas erróneamente como muestras o señales de su interés sexual, con la consecuente culpabilización de ella en el caso de la ocurrencia de una agresión sexual posterior.

En general, los estudios que han analizado las repercusiones que el consumo de alcohol por parte de víctimas de agresión sexual tiene en las atribuciones de culpabilidad y en las valoraciones del incidente, han presentado conjuntamente la ingesta de alcohol y la conducta de aceptación o rechazo a consumirlo, sin que ello haya permitido desentrañar la aportación específica de cada uno de estos dos factores en su percepción social. En este sentido, el presente estudio fue diseñado con el objetivo principal de clarificar los efectos que ambas condiciones (consumo de alcohol y aceptación a las invitaciones del agresor) tienen en las valoraciones de un episodio de agresión sexual y en los juicios emitidos sobre la culpabilidad de la víctima. Teniendo esto en cuenta, y a través del uso de escenarios ficticios de agresión sexual en un contexto de fiesta, en este estudio se manipularon tanto el tipo de bebida ingerida por la

víctima (alcohólica vs. no alcohólica) como la conducta de la víctima de aceptar o rechazar explícitamente la invitación de su agresor a tomar una bebida. Adicionalmente, y debido a la influencia que los mitos sobre las agresiones sexuales ejercen en estos juicios, el nivel de mitos sobre las agresiones sexuales de los participantes se midió utilizando la versión española de la “Escala de Aceptación de Mitos Modernos sobre las Agresiones Sexuales” (AMMSA, siglas en inglés; Gerger et al., 2007) adaptada y validada en castellano por Megías, Romero-Sánchez, Durán, Moya y Bohner (2011).

Hipótesis

Las hipótesis formuladas en este estudio fueron las siguientes:

Hipótesis 1. Se espera que los participantes culpabilicen más a la víctima, consideren en menor medida el incidente como una agresión sexual y más como un acto de seducción cuando la mujer acepte la invitación del hombre a tomar una bebida (vs. la rechace), cuando consuma una bebida alcohólica (vs. ingiera un refresco) y cuando puntúen alto en mitos sobre las agresiones sexuales (RMA, siglas en inglés) (vs. bajo). Esta hipótesis predice por tanto efectos principales tanto de la aceptación vs rechazo a tomar una bebida, como del tipo de bebida y de RMA del perceptor en la culpabilidad atribuida a la víctima y la valoración del incidente como acto de agresión sexual o seducción (*Hipótesis 1a*). No obstante, esperamos juicios más severos cuando se mencione que la víctima no sólo ha aceptado las invitaciones de su agresor, sino que además éstas invitaciones conllevaron la ingesta de alcohol (*Hipótesis 1b*).

Hipótesis 2. En consonancia con la literatura, se predice también un efecto moderador de RMA sobre los efectos de nuestras dos variables independientes de interés. Así, se espera que el comportamiento de la víctima influya especialmente sobre

los juicios de los participantes con alta adhesión a los mitos sobre las agresiones sexuales, pero no tanto sobre las valoraciones de los que no sostienen estas creencias estereotípicas y prejuiciosas.

Método

Participantes

Ciento treinta y siete estudiantes (65 mujeres y 72 hombres) de diversas titulaciones de la Universidad de Granada (España) participaron voluntariamente en este estudio. La edad de la muestra estuvo comprendida entre los 18 y 28 años (mujeres: $M = 21.05$, $DT = 2.25$; hombres: $M = 21.22$, $DT = 2.40$).

Instrumentos y medidas

Todos los participantes rellenaron un cuadernillo que incluía las siguientes escalas y medidas:

Escala de Aceptación de mitos modernos sobre las agresiones sexuales (AMMSA; Gerger et al., 2007 -versión española de Megías et al., 2011). El AMMSA es una medida autoinformada, compuesta por 30 ítems y diseñada para medir los mitos “modernos” sobre la violencia sexual de una forma más sutil que las medidas “tradicionales” de RMA (e.g., Burt, 1980; Costin, 1985; Payne, Lonsway, y Fitzgerald, 1999). En este estudio, basándonos en la investigación de Eyssel, Bohner y Siebler (2006), se optó por utilizar una versión reducida compuesta por 16 ítems, cuyas propiedades psicométricas son similares a las de la versión completa. Incorpora para cada ítem un formato de respuesta tipo Likert de 7 puntos, cuyas opciones van desde “1” (*totalmente en desacuerdo*) hasta “7” (*totalmente de acuerdo*). Algunos ejemplos de ítems incluidos en el AMMSA son: “*Las mujeres a menudo acusan a sus maridos de violación conyugal sólo para vengarse de una relación fracasada*”, “*Cuando una*

mujer comienza una relación con un hombre, debe tener claro que el hombre hará valer su derecho de mantener relaciones sexuales". La consistencia interna obtenida para esta escala fue adecuada $\alpha = .85$, y similar a la encontrada en estudios previos con la versión completa y reducida (Megías et al., 2011; Romero-Sánchez et al., en prensa)

Escenarios de agresión sexual. Cuatro escenarios fueron creados específicamente para introducir las manipulaciones experimentales. En cada uno de ellos se describía una interacción casual entre una mujer, Alicia, y un hombre, Juan, que se conocen en un pub. Después de que Juan reciba el rechazo de Alicia a su petición de mantener relaciones sexuales, la historia finaliza en una agresión sexual por parte de él. En dos de los escenarios se indicaba que previamente a la agresión sexual, Alicia aceptaba el ofrecimiento de Juan a tomar una bebida (alcohólica en uno y no alcohólica en el otro), mientras que en los otros dos escenarios se decía que Alicia había rechazado la invitación de Juan y se había pagado su propia bebida que, en un caso fue alcohólica y en otro no alcohólica. La descripción exacta de los escenarios puede consultarse en el Apéndice B.

Manipulation checks. Después de cada uno de los cuatro escenarios, los participantes respondieron a dos ítems dirigidos a comprobar la efectividad de la manipulación experimental. En el caso de la aceptación/rechazo de la invitación a tomar una bebida la pregunta fue formulada de la siguiente forma: "*¿Aceptó Alicia las invitaciones de Juan?*". En cuanto al tipo de bebida consumida, la pregunta fue: "*¿Qué tipo de bebida estuvo tomando Alicia durante la noche?*". La primera pregunta fue contestada marcando sí o no, mientras que la segunda fue respondida eligiendo entre las opciones: bebida alcohólica (whisky) o bebida no alcohólica (coca-cola/refresco).

Medidas dependientes. A continuación, se les presentaron a los participantes seis preguntas extraídas de Romero-Sánchez et al. (en prensa), para medir las atribuciones de culpabilización a la víctima. Dichas preguntas fueron redactadas de la siguiente forma: “¿Crees que Alicia debería sentirse culpable por lo sucedido al final de esta historia?”, “¿Crees que Alicia incitó a que Juan actuara como lo hizo al final de esta historia?”, “¿Crees que Alicia podría haberse comportado de otra forma para cambiar lo que sucedió al final de esta historia?”, “¿Crees que a Alicia le ocurrió lo que se merecía?”, “¿Crees que Alicia podía haber prevenido lo que sucedió al final de esta historia?”, “¿Crees que la conducta de Alicia provocó lo que sucedió al final de esta historia?”. Las preguntas fueron contestadas en una escala de respuesta tipo Likert que oscilaba desde “1” (*totalmente en desacuerdo*) hasta “7” (*totalmente de acuerdo*). Puntuaciones altas indicaban una mayor culpabilización atribuida a la víctima. Esta medida mostró una adecuada consistencia interna, $\alpha = .86$.

Se incluyeron también dos ítems para conocer la valoración general de los participantes sobre lo ocurrido (“*Lo que ocurre en la historia descrita es un acto de seducción*” y “*Lo sucedido en la historia descrita es una agresión sexual*”). Estos ítems fueron seguidos de una escala de respuesta tipo Likert de 7 puntos que iba desde “1” (*totalmente en desacuerdo*) hasta “7” (*totalmente de acuerdo*).

Finalmente, se incluyó una pregunta adicional con el objetivo de comprobar si los participantes percibían “borracha/bebida” a la víctima en aquellos escenarios en los que se indicaba que consumía alcohol, en comparación con aquéllos en los que se la describía tomando un refresco. Esta pregunta tenía un formato de respuesta tipo Likert desde “1” (*nada borracha/bebida*) hasta “5” (*muy borracha/bebida*).

Diseño y procedimiento

Se siguió un diseño factorial mixto 2 (conducta de la víctima: aceptación frente a rechazo a la invitación de su agresor) x 2 (tipo de bebida consumida por la víctima: alcohólica frente a no alcohólica) siendo ambos factores manipulados entre-grupos. Como variable de diferencias individuales, se midió el grado de aceptación de mitos sobre las agresiones sexuales (RMA) de los participantes. Y como variables dependientes se consideraron las atribuciones de culpabilización a la víctima por la agresión sufrida y las valoraciones globales (agresión o seducción) sobre el incidente descrito.

El muestreo por conveniencia utilizado para configurar la muestra final se basó en solicitarle a cualquier estudiante que se encontrara en alguna de las Bibliotecas de la Universidad de Granada, su participación voluntaria en un estudio sobre las actitudes de los jóvenes hacia diversos temas. Las instrucciones aseguraban el anonimato y confidencialidad de sus respuestas y el uso de las mismas con fines de investigación. Aquellos que accedían a participar eran aleatoriamente asignados a una de las cuatro condiciones experimentales (víctima acepta la invitación de su agresor y toma una bebida alcohólica; víctima acepta la invitación de su agresor y toma una bebida no alcohólica; víctima rechaza la invitación de su agresor a tomar una bebida y, en su lugar, ella misma pide y paga una bebida alcohólica o víctima rechaza la invitación de su agresor a tomar una bebida y, en su lugar, ella misma pide y paga una bebida no alcohólica). En cada uno de los cuadernillos que se les entregaban a los participantes aparecían, en este orden, las instrucciones, la versión española reducida del AMMSA, los escenarios sobre el caso hipotético de agresión sexual con las diferentes condiciones experimentales, los ítems que hacían las funciones de “manipulation checks”, un ítem

adicional para comprobar si se percibía o no a la mujer como borracha/bebida, dos ítems que recogían las valoraciones de los participantes sobre la historia descrita (agresión sexual o seducción) y las preguntas dirigidas a evaluar la atribución de culpabilidad sobre la víctima. Adicionalmente, se les pedían a los participantes varios datos socio-demográficos como edad, sexo, orientación sexual y nacionalidad. Una vez contestadas estas últimas preguntas, el cuadernillo era recogido, agradeciéndoles su colaboración y explicándoles los objetivos del estudio así como la forma de acceder a los resultados finales.

Resultados

Análisis preliminares

La Tabla 1 presenta las correlaciones entre las medidas de RMA, culpabilización de la víctima, percepción del incidente como acto de seducción y percepción del incidente como agresión sexual. También contiene las medias y desviaciones típicas para la muestra total y para hombres y mujeres por separado. Como se esperaba, todas las variables correlacionaron entre sí. La medida de culpabilización de la víctima correlacionó positivamente con el AMMSA y la percepción del incidente como acto de seducción, y negativamente con la percepción del incidente como agresión sexual. La escala AMMSA correlacionó positivamente con la percepción del incidente como agresión sexual y negativamente con la percepción del incidente como acto de seducción. Finalmente, las variables percepción del incidente como acto de seducción y como agresión sexual correlacionaron negativamente.

Como se muestra en la Tabla 1, no hubo diferencias significativas en las puntuaciones de hombres y mujeres en ninguna de las tres variables dependientes ni en

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las puntuaciones en RMA, por lo que la variable sexo no fue incluida en los análisis posteriores.

Tabla 1. Estadísticos descriptivos y correlaciones de las medidas

	Total	Hombres	Mujeres	F	P	(2)	(3)	(4)
	(DT)	(DT)	(DT)					
(1) RMA	3.19 (.88)	3.25 (.87)	3.13 (.89)	.64	.42	.39**	-.24**	.34**
(2) Culpabilidad de la víctima	2.51 (1.22)	2.69 (1.18)	2.31 (1.25)	3.3	.07	-	-.35**	.40**
(3) Agresión Sexual	5.34 (1.54)	5.17 (1.71)	5.54 (1.31)	2	.16		-	-.31**
(4) Seducción	3.76 (1.90)	3.9 (1.92)	3.6 (1.87)	.86	.35			-

Rango de las escalas: 1-7; ** $p < .01$.

Los análisis de las puntuaciones de los participantes en las dos preguntas que servían para comprobar la manipulación experimental confirmaron la validez de ésta. No obstante, quince participantes fueron excluidos de la muestra final (137) por no contestar correctamente a los dos ítems. Finalmente, las medias obtenidas en el ítem adicional “¿Cómo de bebida/borracha estaba Alicia?”, fueron significativamente más altas en los dos grupos en los que el escenario describía a la mujer ingiriendo una bebida alcohólica ($M = 3.28$, $DT = .79$) que en los grupos en los que se decía a los participantes que la víctima consumió una bebida no alcohólica ($M = 1.06$, $DT = .30$), $F(1, 135) = 451.24$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .77$.

Análisis principales

Se llevaron a cabo diversos análisis de regresión jerárquica múltiple con el objetivo de comprobar cómo nuestras manipulaciones experimentales (aceptación vs rechazo a las invitaciones del agresor, ingesta de alcohol vs. ingesta de bebida no alcohólica) y los mitos (RMA) de los participantes afectaron a las variables dependientes (culpabilización de la víctima, percepción del incidente como acto de seducción y percepción de lo ocurrido como agresión sexual). La variable continua (RMA) fue centrada para realizar estos análisis (Jaccard, Turrisi y Wann, 1990). En el primer paso se comprobaron los efectos principales de todas las variables, y en el segundo y tercer paso se introdujeron las interacciones de segundo y tercer orden. A continuación se presentan los resultados de dichos análisis agrupados en función de las distintas variables dependientes.

Culpabilización de la Víctima

En el análisis de regresión tomando como variable criterio la culpabilización de la víctima (véase Tabla 2), la ecuación general fue significativa, $F(3,136) = 11.43, p < .001$, revelando efectos significativos tanto para la variable aceptación/rechazo a la invitación del agresor, $\beta = .21, t = 2.74, p < .01$, como para el nivel de RMA de los participantes $\beta = .43, t = 5.52, p < .001$, pero no para el tipo de bebida consumida por la mujer, $\beta = .03, t = .45, p = .64$. Es decir, los participantes culpabilizaron más a la víctima cuando aceptaba las invitaciones de su agresor ($M = 2.71, DT = 1.27$) en comparación a cuando las rechazaba ($M = 2.34, DT = 1.17$). En relación al nivel de mitos de los participantes, se observó que cuanto más puntuaron en RMA más culpabilizaron a la mujer.

Tabla 2. Análisis de Regresión del efecto de RMA de los participantes y conducta de la víctima (aceptación vs. rechazo a las invitaciones de su agresor) en las valoraciones sobre culpabilidad de la víctima

Variable	Ajuste en R^2	F	Error típ.	Beta	t
Paso 1	.205	11.43***	1.10		
Aceptación vs. Rechazo			1.19	.21	2.76**
RMA			1.09	.43	5.52***
Paso 2	.253	7.35***	1.08		
RMA x Aceptación vs Rechazo			.21	.27	2.71**

Nota. Sólo los resultados significativos son incluidos en la tabla. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; Conducta de la víctima: 0 = Rechazo; 1 = Aceptación.

En el segundo paso del análisis y en consonancia con la Hipótesis 2, se observó una interacción significativa entre RMA y la aceptación vs rechazo de la víctima a la invitación de su agresor, $\beta = .27$, $t = 2.72$, $p < .01$ (véase Figura 1). El análisis de efectos simples (*simple slopes*) (Aiken y West, 1991) mostró que cuando los participantes presentaron puntuaciones altas en RMA, otorgaron una mayor culpabilidad a la víctima si ésta aceptaba la invitación de su agresor a tomar una bebida, frente a la situación donde la víctima rechazaba dicha invitación, $\beta = .45$, $t = 3.93$, $p < .001$. Por el contrario, el comportamiento de la víctima no influyó sobre los juicios de los participantes con puntuaciones bajas en RMA, $\beta = .01$, $t = .14$, *n.s.*

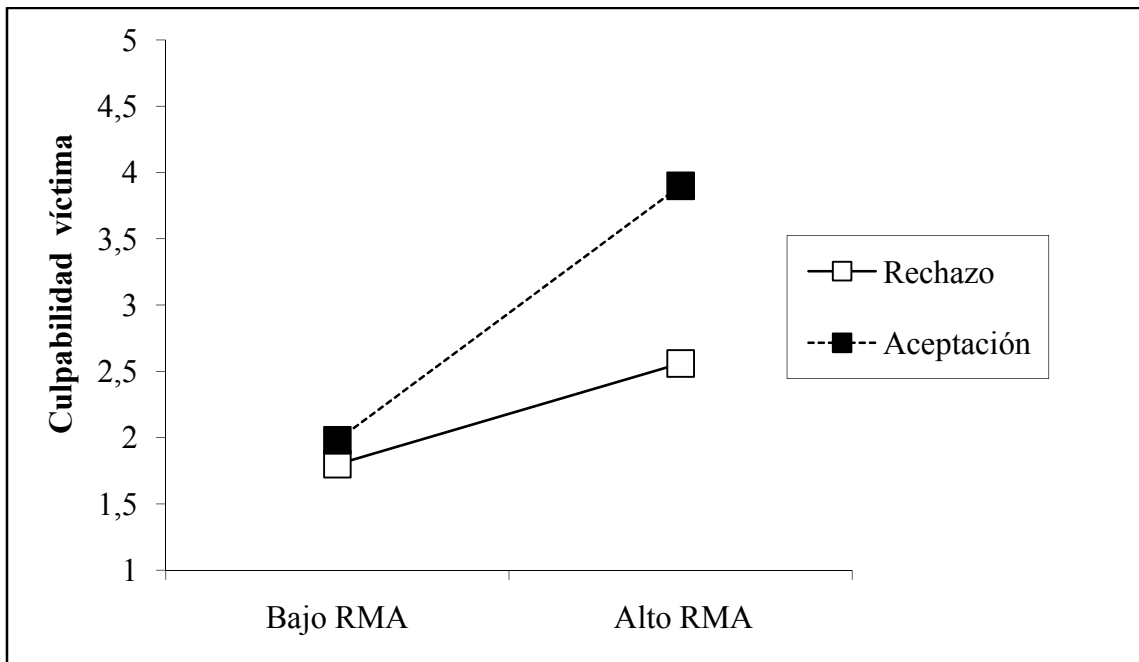


Figura 1. Culpabilización atribuida a la víctima en función de la conducta llevada a cabo (aceptación o rechazo a la invitación de su agresor) y puntuaciones de los participantes en RMA.

Finalmente, ninguna otra interacción de segundo o de tercer orden fue significativa.

Tomados en conjunto, estos resultados muestran un apoyo parcial a lo esperado en las Hipótesis 1a y 2, de tal forma que la aceptación de la mujer a la invitación de su agresor a tomar una bebida, y no la ingesta de alcohol per se, parece ser el factor más influyente a la hora de atribuirle culpabilidad por lo ocurrido. En cuanto al nivel de RMA de los participantes y en consonancia con la literatura previa, una mayor aceptación de mitos se relacionó con juicios más severos de culpabilidad hacia la víctima. No obstante, estos efectos principales han de ser interpretarlos a la luz de la interacción entre ambas variables, de tal forma que la aceptación a una bebida dio lugar a una mayor culpabilización de la víctima, pero sólo entre aquellos participantes con alta adhesión a mitos. Finalmente, no se observaron resultados significativos que avalasen la Hipótesis 1b, la cual predecía una mayor culpabilización de la víctima no

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sólo cuando aceptase las invitaciones de su agresor sino cuando además dicha bebida fuese alcohólica.

Percepción del Incidente como Agresión Sexual o Acto de Seducción.

En relación a la valoración de lo ocurrido como agresión sexual (véase Tabla 3), la ecuación de regresión general para el primer paso fue significativa, $F(3,136) = 3.05$, $p < .05$. Sin embargo, sólo se encontró un efecto significativo para la variable mitos sobre las agresiones sexuales, $\beta = -.23$, $t = -2.76$, $p < .05$, poniendo de manifiesto que cuanto mayores eran las puntuaciones en mitos de los participantes, menos se percibía el incidente como agresión sexual. Ningún otro efecto alcanzó la significación estadística para el primer, segundo o tercer paso.

Tabla 3. Análisis de Regresión del efecto de RMA de los participantes y conducta de la víctima (aceptación vs. rechazo a las invitaciones de su agresor) en las percepciones del incidente como acto de agresión sexual.

Variable	Ajuste en R^2	F	Error típ.	Beta	t
Paso 1	.064	3.05*	1.50		
RMA			.15	-.23	-2.76**

Nota. Sólo los resultados significativos son incluidos en la tabla. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; Conducta de la víctima: 0 = Rechazo; 1 = Aceptación.

Por su parte, en el análisis de regresión tomando como variable predictora la percepción del incidente como acto de seducción (véase Tabla 4), la ecuación general para el primer paso también fue significativa, $F(3,136) = 7.71$, $p < .001$, observándose efectos principales para la variable aceptación/rechazo a la invitación del agresor, $\beta = .18$, $t = 2.24$, $p < .05$, y para el nivel de RMA de los participantes, $\beta = .36$, $t = 4.53$, $p < .001$. En este sentido, la percepción del incidente como acto de seducción fue mayor

cuando la víctima aceptó las invitaciones de su agresor ($M = 4$, $SD = 1.88$) que cuando las rechazó ($M = 3.54$, $SD = 1.9$). De igual forma, cuanto mayor fueron las puntuaciones de los participantes en RMA, más percibieron lo sucedido como un acto de seducción. En el segundo y tercer paso tampoco se encontraron interacciones significativas de segundo o tercer orden entre las variables.

Tabla 4. Análisis de Regresión del efecto de RMA de los participantes y conducta de la víctima (aceptación vs. rechazo a las invitaciones de su agresor) en las percepciones del incidente como acto de seducción.

Variable	Ajuste en R^2	F	Error típ.	Beta	t
Paso 1	.148	7.71***	1.77		
Aceptación vs. Rechazo			.308	.18	2.24*
RMA			.17	.37	4.53***

Nota. Sólo los resultados significativos son incluidos en la tabla. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$; Conducta de la víctima: 0 = Rechazo; 1 = Aceptación.

Estos resultados confirman parcialmente lo esperado en la Hipótesis 1a, pero no muestran apoyo empírico para las predicciones de la Hipótesis 2. En relación a la conducta de la víctima, se observa nuevamente que es la aceptación a las invitaciones de su agresor, y no la ingesta de alcohol, lo que influye significativamente en percibir la agresión sexual descrita como un acto de seducción (Hipótesis 1a). En cuanto al nivel de mitos de los participantes, los análisis también revelaron que una mayor adhesión a estas creencias se asoció con una mayor valoración de lo ocurrido como acto de seducción (Hipótesis 1a). No obstante, no hubo interacción significativa alguna entre las variables manipuladas y nivel de mitos (Hipótesis 2).

Discusión

El presente estudio contribuye a la comprensión del papel que el alcohol y la conducta de la víctima (aceptación vs. rechazo a las invitaciones de su agresor) tiene en las valoraciones que las personas realizan sobre episodios de agresión sexual. Los resultados apoyan y amplían la investigación previa (Ben-David y Schneider, 2005; Romero-Sánchez et al., en prensa; Temkin y Krahé, 2008) en relación al impacto negativo de RMA y de ciertos comportamientos de la víctima sobre las valoraciones de episodios de agresión sexual. Aunque las puntuaciones obtenidas en las medidas de RMA y culpabilización de la víctima se situaron por debajo del punto medio de la escala de respuesta, la información sobre la aceptación de la mujer a las invitaciones de su agresor a tomar una bebida influyó en las percepciones de los participantes sobre la culpabilidad de ésta y en su valoración sobre el incidente descrito, especialmente entre aquellos que mostraron una mayor aceptación de mitos.

Estudios previos han mostrado cómo el consumo de alcohol por parte de la mujer conlleva juicios de culpabilidad más severos si ha bebido alcohol de forma previa a la agresión (Cameron y Stritzke, 2003; Jordan, 2004; Sims, Noel y Maisto, 2007; Wenger y Bornstein, 2006) o si ha aceptado las invitaciones de su agresor a beber alcohol (Romero-Sánchez et al., en prensa, Estudio 2). Sin embargo, en estas investigaciones previas el consumo de alcohol ha ido ligado siempre a su aceptación explícita o implícita por parte de la víctima. Pero no han delimitado si es la conducta de la víctima o el consumo de alcohol en sí mismo, lo que influye en las atribuciones que las personas realizan sobre víctima e incidente sexual. De hecho, la aceptación de la víctima a las invitaciones de su agresor, independientemente del tipo de bebida consumida, puede conllevar claves erróneas sobre su interés sexual, en el sentido en que

dicho comportamiento formara parte de los guiones o “scripts” sexuales del perceptor y, por lo tanto, influyera o determinara la serie de pasos sucesivos que se espera desencadenen en una relación sexual (Frith, 2009). En este sentido, el propósito principal del presente estudio fue precisamente esclarecer si los juicios de culpabilización hacia una víctima de agresión sexual cuando bebe alcohol, dependían de su aceptación a las invitaciones del agresor, del mero hecho de haberlo consumido o de ambas cosas a la vez.

Los resultados del estudio apoyaron en parte las hipótesis planteadas. Aunque las atribuciones de culpabilidad a la víctima se situaron en el rango inferior de la escala de respuesta, se observó que tanto la mayor culpabilización de la mujer como la disminución de severidad percibida de la agresión sexual, no dependieron tanto de su ingesta de alcohol como de la aceptación a las invitaciones del agresor a tomar una bebida (independientemente de que ésta fuera alcohólica o no), siendo esto especialmente así para las personas que presentaron una gran adhesión a los mitos sobre la violación.

La mera aceptación de una mujer a la invitación realizada por un hombre en una situación cargada de componentes sexuales (p.e. una discoteca, fiesta, pub...), puede conllevar la percepción errónea de que la mujer tiene interés sexual en el hombre (Farris, Treat, Viken, y McFall, 2008, Frith y Kitzinger, 1997), dando lugar al inicio de contactos sexuales no deseados. Los resultados obtenidos en este estudio apoyan esta línea de razonamiento. El incidente fue percibido más como un acto de seducción y la víctima fue culpabilizada más cuando aceptó las invitaciones de su agresor, pero no así cuando las rechazó, con independencia de la ingesta de alcohol. Por otro lado, cuando en una agresión sexual las circunstancias difieren de las incluidas en el estereotipo de

“violación real”, se tiende a culpar más a la víctima y al incidente se le otorga menor importancia (Frese, Moya y Megías, 2004). En este sentido, podría decirse que la conducta de aceptar las invitaciones de una persona desconocida en un contexto proclive a la ocurrencia de contactos sexuales, alejaría a la mujeres del prototipo de “víctima creíble” y al incidente del prototipo de “violación real”; con la consecuente culpabilización atribuida a la mujer por llevar a cabo conductas imprudentes, que la ponen en riesgo de sufrir agresiones o contactos sexuales no deseados.

En línea con lo esperado en las Hipótesis 1a y 1b sobre el tipo de bebida consumida, esperábamos encontrar una mayor culpabilidad de la víctima cuando ingiriese alcohol y una interacción significativa entre el tipo de bebida consumida y su conducta de aceptación/rechazo. Sin embargo, ninguno de estos efectos fue significativo, en contra de lo que se ha venido observando en la literatura previa en relación con el consumo de alcohol (Cameron y Strizke, 2003; Maurer y Robinson, 2008; Romero-Sánchez, et al., en prensa; Schuller y Stewart, 2000; Sims, Noel y Maisto, 2007). Estos resultados inesperados podrían ser explicados por un proceso de competición entre claves (Wasserman, 1990), concretamente un efecto de *ensombrecimiento*, el cual se produce cuando las personas deben realizar atribuciones sobre diversas causas potenciales (en este caso: conducta de la víctima -aceptar/rechazar las invitaciones del agresor-, causa 1; tipo de bebida – alcohol/refresco-, causa 2) de una consecuencia (agresión sexual), cuando ambas causas se presentan simultáneamente (Prices y Yates, 1995). Según esto, al manipular conjuntamente tanto la conducta de aceptar/rechazar las invitaciones del agresor como la ingesta de alcohol/refresco se podría haber producido un efecto de ensombrecimiento, de tal forma que la primera variable restaría u oscurecería el efecto del tipo de bebida consumida sobre los juicios

de los participantes. Así, al hacer explícita la conducta de la víctima ante el agresor (aceptar vs. rechazar su invitación), ésta podría convertirse en una clave predictora tan saliente de la consecuente agresión sexual, que el tipo de bebida ingerida perdería casi toda su capacidad predictiva. Si esto fuese así, la conducta de la víctima restaría o ensombrecería el efecto de la ingesta de alcohol sobre los juicios de los participantes. Ensombrecimiento que por otro lado forma parte de los elementos definitorios de los diseños factoriales (León y Montero, 2001).

En relación a la Hipótesis 2, los resultados obtenidos no mostraron un efecto moderador de RMA sobre los juicios de los participantes en función del tipo de bebida ingerida por la víctima. Sin embargo, sí se encontró un efecto moderador de estas creencias sobre la influencia de la conducta de la víctima en los juicios relacionados con su responsabilidad en lo ocurrido, culpabilizándola más cuando aceptó las invitaciones del agresor, independientemente del tipo de bebida consumida. En línea con investigaciones previas (Frese et al., 2004; Stormo, et al., 1997), nuevamente la ideología de los participantes (RMA) parece modular la relevancia que determinadas características y factores situacionales del incidente sexual tienen en los juicios que las personas realizan sobre incidentes sexuales.

Los resultados del presente estudio conllevan una serie de implicaciones prácticas para el desarrollo de programas de prevención de agresiones sexuales. Investigaciones previas han mostrado el solapamiento existente entre guiones sexuales de seducción y de agresión sexual (e.g. Littleton y Axsom, 2003) y la relación entre la presencia de tales guiones y las conductas sexuales que las personas llevan a cabo (Krahé, et al., 2007b). En este sentido, determinar los elementos que se incorporan en la concepción de “agresión sexual” entre los jóvenes es un paso importante a la hora de

desarrollar programas preventivos. Teniendo en cuenta los resultados de este estudio, un aspecto a trabajar en este sentido debería ser la creencia errónea de que la aceptación de una invitación por parte de una mujer es una muestra de su interés sexual, ya que, tal y como hemos visto, esta idea favorece la “licencia” para culpabilizarla por las agresiones sexuales que pueda sufrir. En relación a los mitos sobre las agresiones sexuales, discutir estas actitudes también debería formar parte de los programas de prevención ya que, como se ha observado, se relacionan significativamente y sistemáticamente con las valoraciones de las agresiones sexuales, especialmente cuando en tales incidentes se encuentran presentes elementos que las alejan del estereotipo de “violación real”.

Este estudio ha de analizarse también a la luz de algunas limitaciones. En primer lugar, no se midió la posible victimización sexual de las participantes, a pesar de que distintos estudios han puesto de manifiesto su influencia sobre las atribuciones de culpabilidad a las víctimas (Mason, Riger y Foley, 2004; Miller, Amacker y King, 2011). Otra de las limitaciones estaría relacionada con las características de la muestra utilizada, jóvenes universitarios. Esto podría ser un aspecto a tener en cuenta en futuras investigaciones, en las que se quiera explorar si el patrón de resultados obtenidos es similar en jóvenes de otro nivel educativo, en adolescentes o en personas de edad adulta, especialmente en este último grupo donde quizás el consumo de alcohol o el tipo de interacción descrita no sea tan frecuente. No obstante, el haber estudiado esta muestra permite comparar los resultados obtenidos con los de otras investigaciones similares, ya que la mayor parte de la literatura sobre la percepción social de agresiones sexuales donde puede o suele estar presente el alcohol, se ha centrado en jóvenes universitarios. Finalmente, sería interesante indagar en la posibilidad de generalizar este

patrón de resultados a agresiones sexuales en las que la relación de víctima y agresor fuese más cercana (e.g. marido, novio, amigo...).

A pesar de estas limitaciones, el presente estudio permite extraer algunas conclusiones relevantes que mejoran el conocimiento de los factores que influyen en los juicios que las personas realizan sobre casos de agresión sexual. En este sentido y teniendo en cuenta que los resultados obtenidos han de ser tomados con la necesaria cautela, podemos decir que la percepción social de estos delitos se ve muy influida por conductas específicas de la víctima como su aceptación o rechazo a las invitaciones de su agresor, especialmente en aquellas personas que muestran una gran adhesión a mitos sobre agresiones sexuales. En suma, estos hallazgos abren nuevos caminos para continuar explorando el papel que el alcohol, los guiones sexuales y los factores actitudinales tienen en la valoración de las personas sobre lo que constituye o no una agresión sexual y en las atribuciones de responsabilidad a víctima y agresor.

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APÉNDICE A:

Información sobre la conducta de la víctima y el tipo de bebida consumida

A: Víctima acepta las invitaciones de su agresor a beber alcohol/coca-cola.

Alicia acude con su grupo de amigas al pub que más les gusta de la ciudad. Minutos después de llegar, un chico se acerca a Alicia y se presenta como Juan. Los dos comienzan a hablar, para acabar conversando de forma fluida y entre risas. Juan le propone a Alicia invitarla a una bebida. Ella acepta su invitación a un [Tipo de bebida: cubata de whisky / Coca-cola], y la noche continúa con las risas, la conversación y las invitaciones de Juan a [Tipo de bebida: whiskys/Coca-Cola] En un momento de la noche, Juan se acerca de manera más íntima a Alicia y comienza a besarla y tocarla apasionadamente. Alicia protesta y le dice que no quiere llegar tan lejos con él pero Juan no hace caso a las negativas y protestas de Alicia y continúa besándola y realizándole tocamientos sexuales.

B: Víctima rechaza las invitaciones de su agresor y bebe alcohol/coca-cola.

Alicia acude con su grupo de amigas al pub que más les gusta de la ciudad. Minutos después de llegar, un chico se acerca a Alicia y se presenta como Juan. Los dos comienzan a hablar, para acabar conversando de forma fluida y entre risas. Juan le propone a Alicia invitarla a una bebida. Ella rechaza su invitación y decide pagarse ella misma su [Tipo de bebida: cubata de whisky/Coca-cola]. La noche continúa entre las risas, la conversación y Alicia pagándose sus [Tipo de bebida: cubatas de whisky/Coca-colas]. En un momento de la noche, Juan se acerca de manera más íntima a Alicia y comienza a besarla y tocarla apasionadamente. Alicia protesta y le dice que no quiere llegar tan lejos con él pero Juan no hace caso a las negativas y protestas de Alicia y continúa besándola y realizándole tocamientos sexuales.

CAPÍTULO 4:
DISCUSIÓN GENERAL
GENERAL DISCUSSION

1. DISCUSSION

The present doctoral dissertation analyzed the social perception of sexual assault against women. As shown in Chapter 1, the perception of sexual assault is influenced by multiple factors, including situational factors (e.g., the victim-perpetrator relationship), factors related to the victim and the perpetrator (e.g., physical attractiveness, alcohol use/abuse or ethnic group) and factors related to the perceiver (e.g., prior knowledge schemata, ideology or attitudes). Among such factors, the present study focused on alcohol and rape myths because both factors have shown to be relevant in the occurrence and assessment of incidents of sexual assault (Abbey, 2011a, 2011b; Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler & Viki, 2009). The overall objective of this dissertation was to explore the influence exerted by alcohol use/abuse and acceptance of rape myths on the occurrence and social perception of episodes of sexual assault in the context of casual relationships among college students.

Seven studies were performed to obtain greater knowledge of the abovementioned factors. The first empirical part of the dissertation (Studies 1 to 4) was aimed at exploring the relevance of alcohol in the occurrence and perception of incidents of sexual assault taking place in our social and cultural context and the relationship between alcohol and acceptance of rape myths. Another objective of this empirical work was to validate the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression Scale (AMMSA) (Gerger, H., Kley, H., Bohner, G., & Siebler, F, 2007) for its use in a Spanish population.

Study 1 showed that about one in every four men interviewed had used alcohol as a strategy to obtain sexual relations and about half of women admitted having been subjected to it, with similar results to those reported in studies performed in other

countries (Abbey, Ross, McDuffie & McAuslan, 1996a; Girard & Senn, 2008; Testa, 2002). However, differences between men and women were found in the assessment of alcohol use for sexual purposes and the negative perception of its use by women. More specifically, men rejected this strategy less than women and perceived women who had drunk alcohol more negatively than female participants; yet, gender-based differences were modulated by participants' degree of rape myth acceptance (RMA). These findings are consistent with previous studies, which have demonstrated that men and, in general, people with higher levels of RMA show greater approval of the use of coercive strategies to obtain sexual relations (Girard & Senn, 2008; McDonald & Kline, 2004; Temkin & Krahé, 2008; Wakelin & Long, 2003) and uphold and endorse the existence of a "double standard" on alcohol use that implies perceiving women more negatively than men (Abbey, Ross, McDuffie & McAuslan, 1996b, Cameron & Strizke, 2003; Crowe & George, 1989).

The moderating role played by myths in these first results can be understood by referring to the different modes of causal information processing. As suggested in the previous literature, the following hypothesis can be made: in fictitious scenarios of sexual assault such as those used in the present research, where the information provided is ambiguous and inconclusive, people are more inclined to base their judgments mainly on their mental schemata or rape myths (schema-based or top-down processing) instead of focusing mainly on the content of the account (data-based or bottom-up processing) (see Temkin & Krahé, 2008).

In view of the above, it can be stated that, regarding the influence exerted by alcohol and level of RMA on participants' judgments, the results of this first study agree with the previous literature (Cameron & Strizke, 2003; Girard & Senn, 2008;

Temkin & Krahe, 2008, Testa, 2002). Moreover, these results expand our knowledge of the influence exerted by myths on men as heuristics in the interpretation and assessment of ambiguous situations where alcohol is involved.

The first study showed the relevance of rape myths on judgments and assessments of episodes of sexual assault. Yet, there are no scales available in Spanish to subtly assess myths about sexual aggression. Therefore, Studies 2 and 3 were aimed at validating the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression Scale (AMMSA) (Gerger et al., 2007) in Spanish college students. Study 2 presented the first psychometric data (factor structure, internal consistency and concurrent validity) for the Spanish version of the AMMSA scale. Results showed that the Spanish version of this 30-item scale is one-dimensional, reliable and valid, similarly to the English and German versions developed by Gerger et al. (2007).

Study 3 was performed with a double objective: corroborating the factor structure of the Spanish version of the AMMSA scale and obtaining data on its external validity. Again, results showed the one-dimensional structure of the scale and its adequate external validity, with positive and significant correlations with other constructs traditionally associated with rape myths in the literature: blaming of the victim (Eyssel & Bohner, 2008), exoneration of the perpetrator (Cameron & Stritzke, 2003) and rape proclivity (Eyssel, Bohner, Süßenbach & Schreiber, 2009; Gerger et al., 2007, Study 4). This study also provided the first data on the positive correlation between the victim's "token resistance" construct and AMMSA scores. Both studies provide sufficient information supporting the use of the AMMSA scale in new contexts such as Spain and pave the way for further research on the psychometric properties of this instrument in various population samples.

As a complement to this first study series, it was considered appropriate to explore the main topics of interest with qualitative methodologies. The aim of this procedure was to further ensure that the relevant aspects of social perception of sexual assault analyzed are found indeed in the spontaneous discourse of interactions among youth. Using a qualitative approach, Study 4 used the focus group technique and provided valuable information about the opinions, attitudes and behaviors of college students on the factors and players involved in the occurrence of sexual assault. The issues discussed included the causes of sexual assault, the role of alcohol, the responsibility of the victim and the perpetrator and the occurrence and relevance of this kind of offences. Overall, considerable gender-based differences were observed. More specifically, men provided less categorical opinions than women regarding issues such as the incidence of sexual assault in casual relationships, the causes of sexual assault, reported factors that might exonerate a perpetrator from responsibility or differences in communication or interpretation of sexual intentions. For example, men gave less importance to the occurrence of sexual assault in their peer group and referred to causes directly related to the perpetrator as precipitating factors (psychological disorders and alcohol and drug use, among others), whereas women reported ideological or social factors. Participants also highlighted sexual communication as a key factor in the occurrence of sexual assault; men reported their difficulty to interpret the subtle messages and hints sent by women, whereas women referred to men's misinterpretation of women's gestures and behaviors in contexts that favor sexual contacts or relations.

Regarding the role of alcohol, men mainly highlighted alcohol consumption aimed at obtaining sexual relations because of its direct effect on sexual pleasure and

desire, the fact of deliberately giving alcohol to someone to obtain sexual relations and a double standard regarding alcohol use by men and women.

Overall, the results of Study 4 are congruent with those usually found by quantitative studies, which have observed that men tend to give less importance to cases of rape (Maurer & Robinson, 2008; Workman & Orr, 1996) and exonerate the perpetrators from responsibility to a greater extent, referring, among other causes, to the loss of self-control triggered by excessive alcohol use (Stormo, Lang & Stritzke, 1997). In addition, these findings also support the results of Study 1 on the relationship between alcohol and the occurrence and perception of sexual assault, that is, the negative perception of women who drink alcohol and the use of alcohol as a coercive strategy. These findings also provide interesting data to study other relevant variables that influence not only the occurrence of sexual assault but also its perception, such as misunderstandings or miscommunication of sexual intent (Farris, Treat, Viken & McFall, 2008; Frith, 2009; Osman, 2003).

Through quantitative and qualitative data, the findings of the first four studies provide information about alcohol use as a coercive strategy to achieve sexual relations, the relationship between alcohol and endorsement of certain attitudes such as rape myths and the influence of alcohol on the perceiver, especially when assessing the victim's behavior.

In the light of this information and in order to clarify the links or possible connections between these variables, the second empirical block of this dissertation (Studies 5, 6 and 7) was developed. This block focused on broadening the study of social perception of sexual assault when alcohol is involved, either as a strategy used by the perpetrator to weaken the victim's will, or because the victim accepts it or consumes

it in her interaction with the perpetrator. The role of the perceiver's attitudes (RMA) was always considered as well in all these cases.

The second block started with Study 5, whose results showed the influence of the type of strategy used by the perpetrator (physical force vs. giving alcohol to the victim) and the perceiver's level of RMA on both the assessment of an episode of sexual assault and the attributions of blame to the victim. Compared to physical force, alcohol use led perceivers to consider the assault as less severe and attribute greater blame to the victim. As for individual RMA differences, higher acceptance of rape myths was related to greater attribution of blame to the victim, regardless of the type of strategy used by the perpetrator. These results are in line with and extend previous findings (Krahé, Temkin & Bieneck, 2007; Krahé, Temkin, Bieneck & Berger, 2008; Bieneck & Krahé, 2011), changing the type of sexual incident described (in this case, forced kissing and touching), the context where it occurred (a party) and the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator (recent acquaintances). As shown consistently in the literature (e.g., Emmers-Sommer & Allen, 1999; Frese, Moya & Megías, 2004), the more the circumstances of a sexual incident differ from the stereotype of "real rape," the less credibility and greater blame is attributed to the victim and the less severe the incident is considered to be. Alcohol use as a coercive strategy and its consumption by the woman may have distanced the perceivers from this stereotype in this study.

The results of Study 6 proved that, apart from being used as a coercive strategy, alcohol can also affect perceivers' judgments of nonconsensual sexual relations. Information on the victim's acceptance of the perpetrator's invitations to drink alcohol led to more severe judgments on her blame and a lower identification of the incident as an act of assault. Previous studies have shown a similar pattern of results (Jordan, 2004;

Wenger & Bornstein, 2006). However, no studies to date have analyzed the judgments made when it is indicated that the woman accepted the invitations of the perpetrator. It seems that the acceptance of alcohol by women is interpreted as indicating their sexual interest and thus leads to a misinterpretation of their sexual intentions (Farris et al., 2008). In this study, when the victim's sexual interest in the perpetrator was explicitly indicated, her refusal of his sexual advances was in fact perceived as "token resistance."

As regards participants' level of RMA, Study 6 showed that greater acceptance of this type of beliefs led to lower identification of the incident as sexual assault, but only when the victim was described as accepting the perpetrator's invitations to drink alcohol and when it was stated that the victim had sexual interest in him. The incident was also given less importance in this latter circumstance.

Again, the presence of alcohol in sexual assault scenarios replicated the results of Studies 1 and 5, considering the victim's behavior this time. A possible explanation of results regarding RMA level seems to be related to the stereotype of "real rape" mentioned above. When the victim is described as exhibiting behaviors that are inconsistent with this stereotype (e.g., accepting a stranger's invitations to drink alcohol or showing sexual interest in him), this creates an ambiguous situation that leads perceivers to assess the little information available based on their cognitive schemata – in this case, their beliefs about rape (RMA) (Bohner et al., 2009; Krahe et al., 2008).

Finally, the results of Study 7 also showed the relevance of the victim's behavior on perceiver's judgments of nonconsensual sexual relations. More specifically, when the victim's acceptance or rejection of a stranger's invitations to have a drink and the type of drink consumed (alcoholic vs. non-alcoholic) were manipulated jointly, results showed that judgments on victim blame were influenced by the victim's behavior rather

than the type of drink, but only in participants with high acceptance of rape myths. In addition, the victim's acceptance of the invitation also led perceivers to understand the incident rather as an act of seduction between two people, even though the woman had clearly expressed her refusal to have sexual contact.

Again, these results are consistent with the findings of Studies 1, 5 and 6 as well as those of previous studies (Ben-David & Schneider, 2005; Temkin & Krahe, 2008) on the influence of RMA and the victim's behavior on judgments of episodes of sexual assault. Yet, a new finding was observed: the factor that most influenced perceivers' judgments was the woman's acceptance of the invitation rather than the fact of drinking alcohol. According to the literature on the "misinterpretation of sexual intent" (Farris, et al., 2008, Frith & Kitzinger, 2001) and the postulates of studies on sexual scripts (Frith, 2009; Krahe, Bieneck & Scheinberger-Olwig, 2007a, 2007b; Littleton & Axsom, 2003), a woman's mere acceptance of a man's invitation in a context loaded with sexual components can erroneously become a sign of the woman's supposed sexual interest if this behavior is part of the sexual script of the perceiver. As an element of this script, the woman's behavior may make the sequence of successive steps expected to end in a sexual interaction salient in the perceiver; this would lead the perceiver to interpret the victim's refusal "token resistance" and the event as a normal episode of seduction. As regards the absence of significant effects of the variable "type of drink consumed," this unexpected result may be due to a possible effect of "overshadowing" between cues. In other words, the simultaneous competition between the victim's acceptance behavior and alcohol intake may lead the former to reduce or conceal the possible predictive effect of the latter (Prices & Yates, 1995; Wasserman, 1990). However, this hypothesis is still only a conjecture and therefore requires future empirical verification.

The following general conclusions can be drawn from the results of the seven studies of the empirical part of this dissertation: people's judgments and assessments of sexually coercive situations in which alcohol is present differ depending on the role played by alcohol in them; when alcohol is used by the perpetrator as a strategy or consumed by the victim, such judgments are affected by perceivers' own attitudes or interpretive schemata (e.g., RMA) as well as other variables or cues present in the situation (e.g., the victim's sexual interest or behavior). However, the mere presence of alcohol, regardless of its role, usually leads to greater attributions of blame to the victim and a perception of the sexual assault as being less serious.

2. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of this doctoral dissertation have several theoretical implications that broaden our knowledge of the influence of alcohol and rape myths on people's judgments, as described above. Yet, these findings also have practical implications, both for the general population and the legal sector.

First of all, regarding the general population, these results may have implications for the development and improvement of sexual assault prevention programs in college settings. The literature has shown the importance of cognitive representations of sexual encounters on the sexual behavior of adolescents and college students (for example, Krahé et al., 2007a, 2007b). Understanding the factors involved in sexual assault and how college students understand sexual assault and justify some types of sexual assault that do not match the stereotype of "real rape" is a prerequisite for designing and improving effective prevention programs. The findings of the present dissertation suggest that efforts should be targeted to designing educational strategies in which alcohol is treated as a key factor in preventing the occurrence of sexual assault. College

students should be made aware that alcohol use and abuse leads to high rates of sexual assault, causes a myopic effect and has physical consequences for victims and perpetrators (loss of self-control and consciousness, difficulty to reason, etc.) and also leads to misinterpretation of sexual intentions in casual encounters among their peer group. Such initiatives are likely to elicit greater awareness of the phenomenon and lead to lower or more cautious alcohol consumption and therefore reduce the occurrence of alcohol-related sexual assault.

Moreover, as proven in the studies performed, alcohol does not only influence the occurrence of assaults but also affects people's judgments and assessments. In fact, it leads to greater attribution of blame to victims, to a distorted perception of sexual incidents and to misperceptions of women's refusal to have sexual contacts or relations ("token resistance"). Prevention programs should include information highlighting the following points: using alcohol to coerce a woman into having sexual relations is not more acceptable than using physical force; a woman's acceptance of a man's invitation to have a drink is not a license to ignore her eventual refusal to have sexual contacts; and alcohol consumption does not imply sexual intentions or show signs of promiscuity.

Results on the moderating role of myths in these assessments should also be considered to improve programs that already include similar variables in their contents. College students should be made aware of such myths and shown how these beliefs are present in many people and condition them when judging victims and misinterpreting certain sexual transgressions. This could be done by following an approach based on the social norm. Indeed, as shown by research conducted by Bohner, Siebler & Schmelcher (2006; also see Bohner et al., 2009), providing normative feedback on the lower acceptance of myths of people in our ingroup decreases RMA levels and rape proclivity.

This effect is especially significant among people initially showing higher acceptance of such beliefs.

Furthermore, as mentioned above, the findings of these studies also have positive implications for the legal sector. The literature shows consistent evidence (for a review, see Temkin & Krahé, 2008) of the high percentage of reported sexual offences that do not lead to convictions, particularly in cases that do not correspond to “real or genuine rape” (Lovett & Kelly, 2009). Several factors have been related to the occurrence of this phenomenon including rape myths. Although studies have shown the influence exerted by this type of beliefs on police officers, judges and juries (Temkin & Krahé, 2008), there is no evidence of this in Spain. The conclusions reached on the influence of myths on perceivers show that acceptance of such myths alters people’s assessments on episodes of sexual violence, especially when such episodes include factors that disconfirm the stereotype of real rape. The present studies have shown that myths play a role in the assessment of the sexual incidents described when the victim is shown as drinking alcohol, accepting the perpetrator’s invitations or showing sexual interest in him. This may be an interesting issue to deal with in programs aimed at eradicating or modifying such attitudes in judges and juries. Such initiatives may lead to an improvement of the legal treatment of this type of offence and thus increase the number of convictions and reduce the secondary victimization caused sometimes by inefficient and lengthy legal proceedings (Campbell, Wasco, Ahrens, Self & Barnes, 2001; Campbell & Raja, 2005; Madigan & Gamble, 1991; Martin & Powell, 1995).

3. LIMITATIONS

Despite the relevance and implications of the results obtained, this dissertation has several general limitations that should be considered. First, most of its studies used fictitious scenarios that included experimental manipulation. The manipulated variables were introduced through hypothetical situations of sexual assault. This implies a certain lack of realism and limited external validity. Because of this, caution should be applied when generalizing the results to other contexts (e.g., real trials). Another drawback of this method is that it is not possible to describe situations that include all the aspects and factors present in a real case of assault. Despite these disadvantages, fictitious scenarios have often been used as a research technique in studies on the social perception of sexual assault. This is due to the fact that they allow a high degree of control that makes it possible to select the target variables and control for other factors and variables (Bieneck, 2009; Temkin & Krahe, 2008).

A second limitation of this work is the level of honesty of participants. In general, participant responses in studies dealing with sensitive issues such as sexual assault may not be totally honest and could be influenced by social desirability issues. For example, in Study 1 and Study 3, men may have given false answers when asked about their role as perpetrators. There is no certainty either that women were totally honest when admitting having suffered this type of assault.

The third limitation of this work is related to the absence of measures of sexual victimization in Studies 5, 6 and 7. As suggested by some studies, the fact of being victims of this type of aggressions may considerably influence perceivers' attributions of blame to other victims (Mason, Riger & Foley, 2004; Miller, Amacker & King, 2011).

A fourth limitation is related to the characteristics of the sample – college students. The fact of focusing only on this sector of the population limits the generalization of the results. However, use of this sample makes it possible to compare the results obtained with those of other similar studies, given that most of the literature on the prevalence and social perception of alcohol-related sexual assault has focused on college students (Abbey, 2002; Cameron & Strizke, 2003; Girard & Senn, 2008; Maurer & Robinson, 2008; Ullman & Najdowski, 2010).

Finally, regarding the participation of college students, it should be noted that, overall, the scores of the dependent variables considered (for example, victim blame, “token resistance” and assessment of the incident) were in the low part of the measuring scales. Regardless of the independent variable manipulated, no high values were observed in the dependent variables mentioned. Therefore, the conclusions reached were based on the differences and trends found in score ranges that did not represent all the possible values.

4. FUTURE RESEARCH

Considering the results obtained and the limitations noted, this research suggests several ideas for the design and implementation of new studies in this area.

First of all, it would be interesting to consider a different type of relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. The victim and the perpetrator were recent acquaintances in all the studies that formed the empirical part of the dissertation. Yet, as shown by previous studies (Abrams, Viki, Masser & Bohner, 2003; Durán, Moya, Megías & Viki, 2010; Krahe et al., 2008), the type of relationship influences perceivers’ judgments on episodes of sexual violence. Thus, it would be interesting to clarify whether the presence of alcohol in contexts of sexual assault in more stable

relationships between victims and perpetrators, such as intimate relationships or marriages, leads to a similar pattern of results to those found in the present studies.

There is a high prevalence of sexual assault in the college population (Humphrey & Kahn, 2000). However, this population has certain characteristics that may influence the social perception of this type of assault. To clarify the factors that affect this perception, it should be noted that judgments made on some of the behaviors described in the scenarios of the present studies may be affected by the age of perceivers and the protagonists of such scenarios. Certain behaviors such as going out to clubs at night, drinking alcohol in this context and so on may be perceived as normal for college students. However, if the same behaviors were described for women who are not expected to act that way because of their age, the pattern of results expected would show a greater relevance of attitudinal variables (e.g., RMA or sexist ideology). This would provide a new variant of interest in presenting situations of assault that do not match the stereotype of “real rape.”

One of the most innovative results of this doctoral dissertation was the differentiation between the effect associated to the victim’s consumption or non-consumption of alcohol in a specific social context and the victim’s behavior regarding her acceptance or rejection of the perpetrator’s invitations. Given the relevance of the conclusions reached in this area, the important role that the victim’s acceptance seems to have on the assessment of sexual incidents should be further explored. For example, a woman’s rejection or acceptance of invitations to drink alcohol may be interpreted differently depending on whether she is presented as being a usual consumer of alcohol or not. In this case, the perception of incidents of sexual assault should be affected not

only by the fact of accepting the perpetrator's invitation but also by a stable characteristic associated to the victim (alcohol consumer vs. non-consumer).

Finally, given that all the studies included in this dissertation modified the contents of scenarios of sexual assault as a manipulation procedure, it would be interesting to include other materials that can be used to manipulate our variables. This could include television news reports in which the information on the sexual incident is modified. With current video editing software, it is possible to use real images of the main television bulletins and manipulate the audio content depending on the interest of the research. This approach would be useful to study hypothetical cases of sexual assault less artificially than with the scenarios described.

In short, we consider that the findings of this doctoral dissertation on the role of alcohol and rape myths in the social perception of sexual assault in a college population not only broaden the existing knowledge on this study area but also raise many issues for future research. Future studies should further explore the variables that are responsible for women's double victimization in crimes against their sexual freedom, given that they are victims of assault and victims of prejudiced social assessment.

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