

Victim-blaming rape myths prevalent in China, according to study

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A new collaborative study led by researchers at the University of Pennsylvania provides the first psychometric measure to assess attitudes about rape in China.

Penn researchers translated a widely used measure of [rape](#) myth endorsement in the United States called the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance, or IRMA scale into a cross-cultural equivalent measure they named the Chinese Rape Myth Acceptance scale, or CRMA.

"The study showed that rape myths shifting the blame from perpetrators to victims are pervasive and generally accepted in China," said lead author Jia Xue, a Ph.D. candidate in social welfare at Penn's School of Social Policy & Practice.

The article, "Rape Myths and the Cross-Cultural Adaptation of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale in China," published in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, was co-authored by Xue's Penn colleagues, Naixue Cui, a Ph.D. candidate in the School of Nursing; Karin Rhodes, an associate professor and director of the Center of Emergency Care Policy Research in the Department of Emergency Medicine in the Perelman School of Medicine; and Richard Gelles, the Raymond Welsh Chair of Child Welfare and Family Violence in the School of Social Policy & Practice. Gang Fang, an associate professor at Beijing Forestry University, and Hui Huang, an assistant professor at Florida International University, were additional co-authors.

Compared with studies of rape in the U.S., there is scant research on the causes of and attitudes about rape in China. In 2000, the Chinese Health and Family Life Survey revealed that 32 percent of married urban Chinese women reported experiencing at least one marital rape.

In the current study, the researchers examined similarities and differences between attitudes of people in China and those in the U.S. regarding myths about rape and rape victims. The sample included 975 university students enrolled in seven universities in six cities in China.

The Chinese students completed a questionnaire that surveyed their attitudes about rape by examining their responses through the lens of the CRMA scale. CRMA employed words that hold similar meanings in U.S. and Chinese cultures and translated colloquialisms and idioms used in the IRMA scale. For example, the term "bad side of town" in the IRMA scale, which had no equivalent concept in Chinese society, was translated into a Chinese term with a similar meaning, "places with weak public security."

From there the researchers generated a five-factor model. Themes it covered included the idea that rape victims "want to be raped" or "are responsible for being raped," false rape allegations, violence and rape motivation.

The study found that Chinese culture considers a rape at least partly a woman's fault. Rape is socially constructed as a taboo where victims are likely to be blamed.

Xue said that comparative research on rape attitudes reveals that Asian students are more likely than Caucasian students to believe that female victims cause the rape and that women should be responsible for preventing it.

The Chinese place great value on the concept of "face," mianzi, which metaphorically means reputation, respect, prestige or honor, said Xue.

In China, being a rape victim is considered so shameful and unspeakable that reporting such an incident will result in a loss of face and reputation for the victims and their families. It is likely that the social stigma of "losing face" associated with "female chastity" results in slightly different cultural interpretations of rape in China as compared with Western societies.

"We find that Chinese male students endorse rape myth statements to a greater degree than female students, which is consistent with previous research findings that Asian men agree with rape myth more than Asian women," Xue said.

The study showed that more men than women, about 36 percent versus 22 percent, endorsed statements such as "a woman who dresses in skimpy clothes should not be surprised if a man tries to force her to have sex."

The finding indicated that both U.S. and Chinese societies have the same gender-based outlook regarding blaming female victims' rape on their sexualized appearance.

Xue, whose research focuses on intimate and domestic violence and sexual violence against women and children, said that she will use CRMA to extend the sample beyond university students in future studies to predict rape proclivity, judgments of victim blaming and community members' acceptance of marital rape.

More information: J. Xue et al. Rape Myths and the Cross-Cultural Adaptation of the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale in China, *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (2016). [DOI:](#)

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