

# Social Perception of Rape in Japan: Comparing Spanish and Japanese University Students

KITAKAZE, Nahoko<sup>1)</sup>

ITO, Takehiko<sup>2)</sup>

INOUE, Takayo<sup>1)</sup>

<sup>1)</sup> Meiji Gakuin University   <sup>2)</sup> Wako University

<e-mail: [napogoal@gmail.com](mailto:napogoal@gmail.com) >

13th Pacific Rim College of Psychiatrists Scientific  
Meeting, October 30-November 2, Tokyo, Japan

# Abstract

- Rape Myth Acceptance (RMA) refers to one's attitudes and beliefs that tend to minimize the psychological impacts of the rape victims by blaming the victims themselves. The purpose of the present study is to compare the results of judgments of rape scenarios among the Japanese college sample with those of the Spanish college sample in reference to the Frese, Moya & Megias (2004) study and to identify the possible interactions between RMA and situational factors.
- **Method:** Ninety-three Japanese undergraduates were asked to complete the questionnaires during class period. **Measures:** **The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale** (Payne, et al., 1999) was used to measure the RMA. **Rape scenarios** taken from Frese et al. (2004) was used to judge the victim's responsibility, perpetrator's responsibility, intensity of the trauma, and the likelihood to report the crime to the police in four different rape situation (acquaintance rape, marital rape, stranger rape, and date rape).

- **Results:** 1) The victim blaming was found to be significantly higher among the Japanese samples than among the Spanish samples for all the rape scenarios ( $p < .01$ ); 2) The intensity of trauma was found to be significantly lower in Japanese than in Spanish for all scenarios (acquaintance rape, marital rape:  $p < .01$ , stranger rape:  $p < .05$ ). 3) The ANOVA revealed the significant interaction between the type of rape, gender, and RMA existed in marital rape situation only ( $F(3,85) = 3.27$ ,  $p < .05$ ).
- **Discussion:** The present study showed that the Japanese participants had more severe judgment for the rape victims and more minimize the victim's agony than the Spanish participants. These findings have important evidence that it is important to facilitate educational programs to reduce RMA in Japan.

# Introduction

Rape victims have suffers from not only  
( 1 ) direct physically and psychological wound  
but also  
( 2 ) stigma which harms them indirectly.

It is crucial for mental healthcare providers to pay particular attentions to the ways in which they provide care to the victims of rape, so that the victims are again victimized because of the ways they are treated.

“ The rape myth can be engraved people’s consciousness which facilitates them to accuse victims.”

(by Asian Woman’s Fund)

# What is Rape Myths ?

- “Rape myths are attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women.” (Lonsway & Fitzgerald,1994)
- Rape myths usually include the following items :
  - victims deserve, cause, invite, ask for, or want to be raped.
  - victims who get raped could have avoided it and therefore are at fault.
  - victims are sexually promiscuous, or they are sexually active with the offender, and thus she/he was a willing partner in a sex act.
- These myths are learned through cultural socialization by our family, peers, religious instruction, schools, media, and community. (Schmid, H., 2004)

# Judgments of rape

Frese et al. (2004)

- 1) High RMA attribute more responsibility to the victim, estimate victim trauma as less severe, and would be less likely to recommend the victim to report the rape to the police than people with low RMA.
- 2) Characteristics of the context in which rape takes place influence the social perception of rape.
- 3) The less stereotypic the rape situation was, the grater was the influence of attitudes toward rape on attributions.

# Purpose

- (1) To compare the results of judgments of rape scenarios among the Japanese college sample with those of the Spanish college sample in Frese, Moya & Megias (2004) .
- (2) To identify the possible interactions between RMA and situational factors.

# Method

**Participants :** 93 Japanese undergraduates (52 men, 39 women and 2 unknown; mean age =20.5;  $SD=2.2$ ).

**Procedure :** They were asked to complete the questionnaires during class period.

**Questionnaires : The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale( IRMAS:** Payne, et al., 1999 ; translated by Tsukahara, 2004 was used to measure the RMA.

**Rape scenarios** taken from Frese *et al.* (2004) was used to judge the victim's responsibility, perpetrator's responsibility, perception of victim's trauma, and the likelihood to report the crime to the police in three different rape situation (acquaintance rape, marital rape, and stranger rape). We also added a date rape situation.



# Rape scenarios

- (a) **Aacquaintance rape** : Imagine that a young woman who is drunk and dressed in a short skirt leaves a party accompanied by a man who she doesn't know very much and this man forces her to have sexual intercourse with him.
- (b) **Marital rape**: Imagine that a young woman who doesn't want to have sexual intercourse with her husband, who comes home drunk, is forced by him.
- (c) **Stranger rape** : Imagine that a young woman is threatened by a knife and forced to have sexual intercourse with an unknown man in the doorway of her house when she comes home at night.
- (d) **Date rape** : Imagine that a young woman who doesn't want to have sexual intercourse with her boyfriend is forced by him.

# Experimental design

## Independent variables

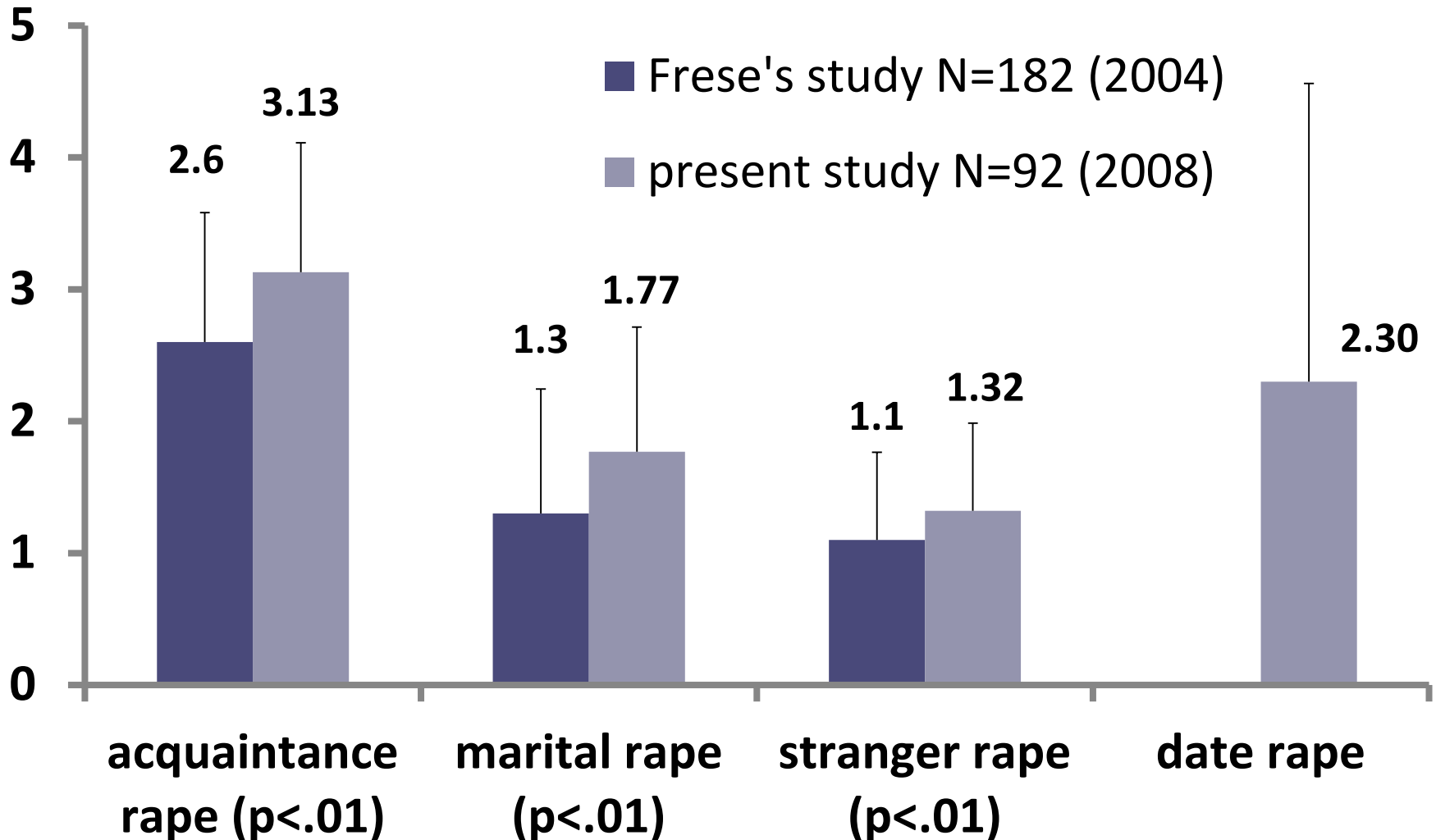
- Nationality: Japanese vs. Spanish
- Rape Myth Acceptance: High vs. Low IRMAS Scores
- Situations of rape scenario : acquaintance rape, marital rape, stranger rape,  
+ date rape (Japanese only)

## Dependent variables

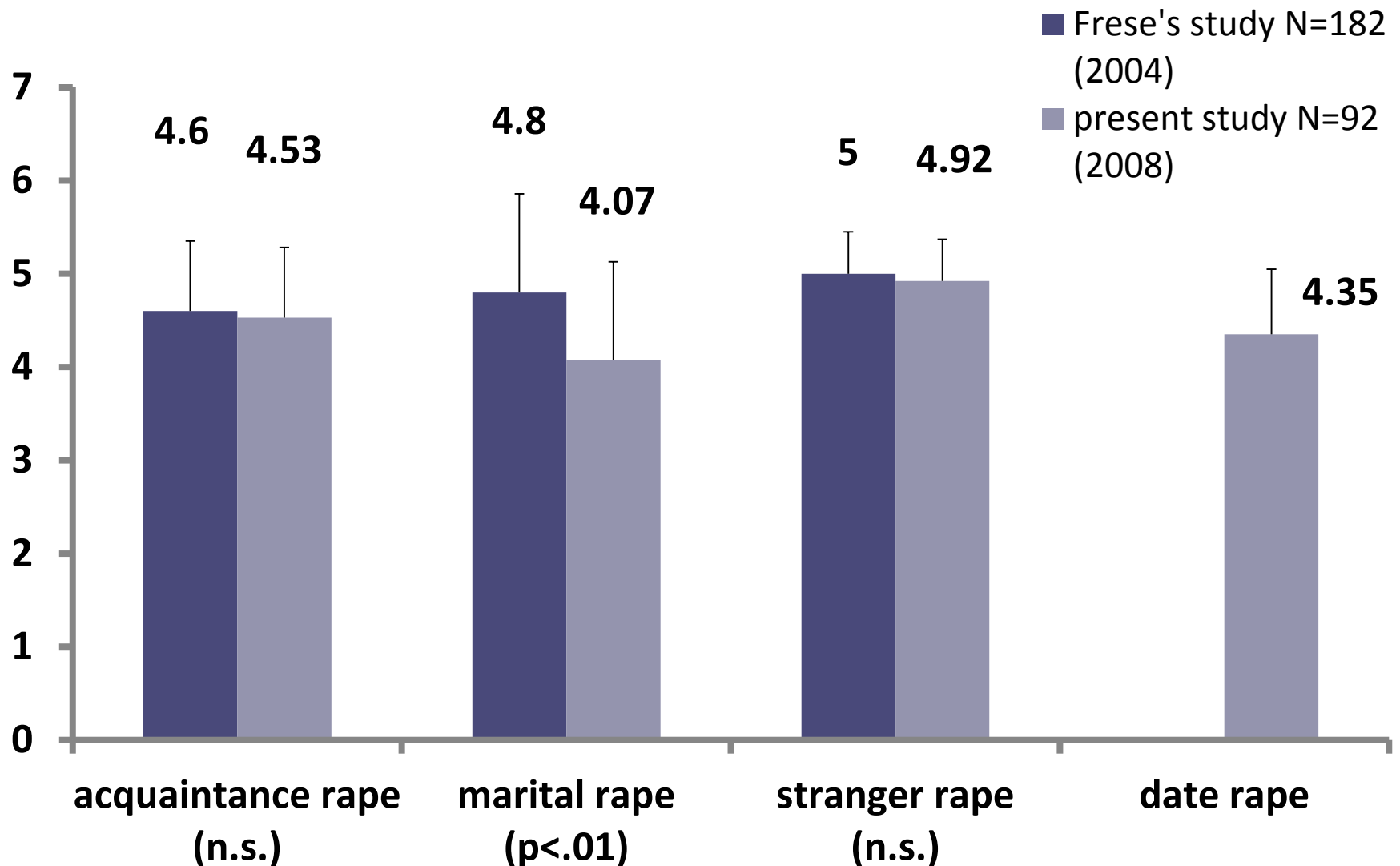
Participants' judgment about:

- (1) the victim's responsibility
- (2) perpetrator's responsibility
- (3) intensity of the trauma
- (4) the likelihood to report the crime to the police

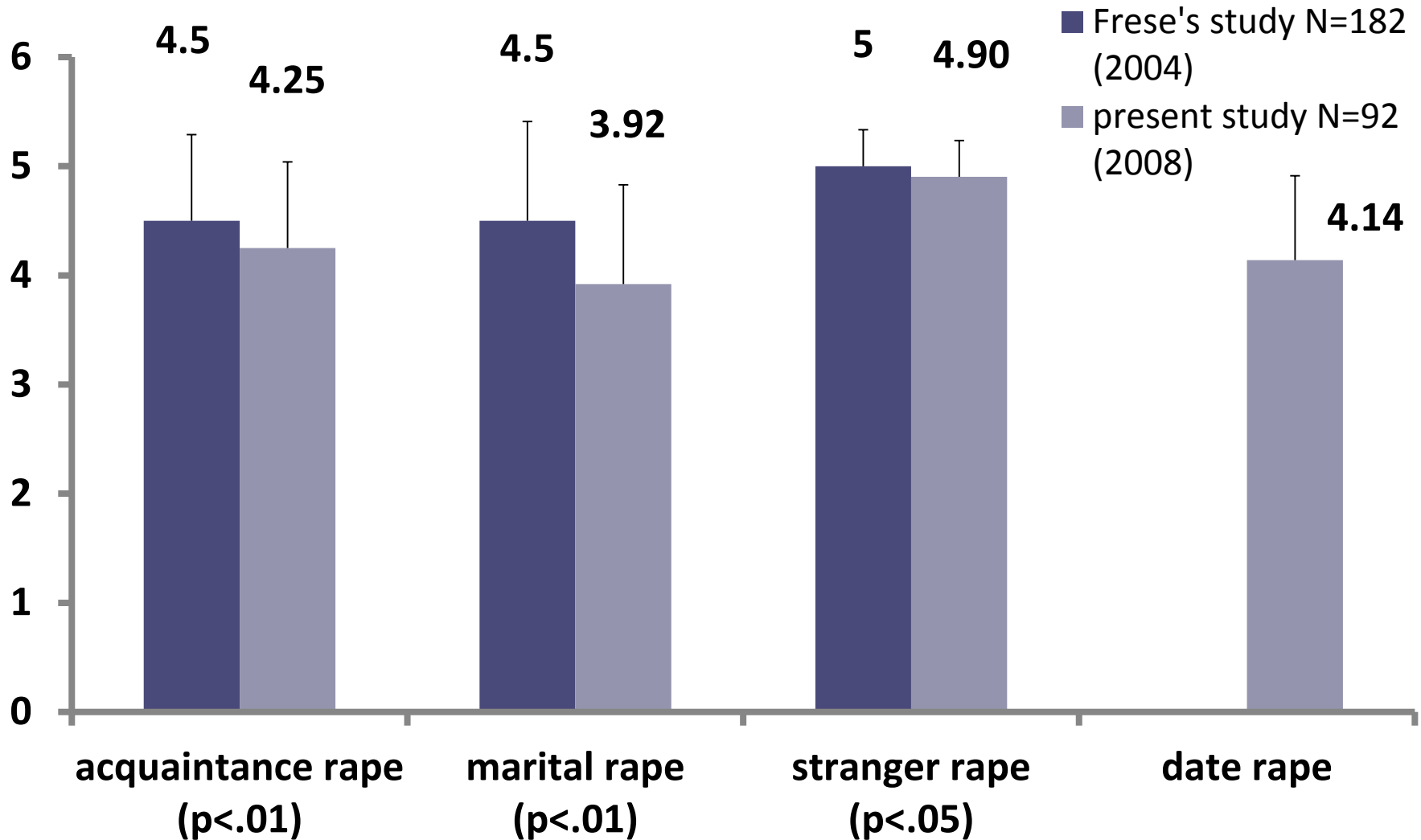
# Results: (1) Victim's responsibility



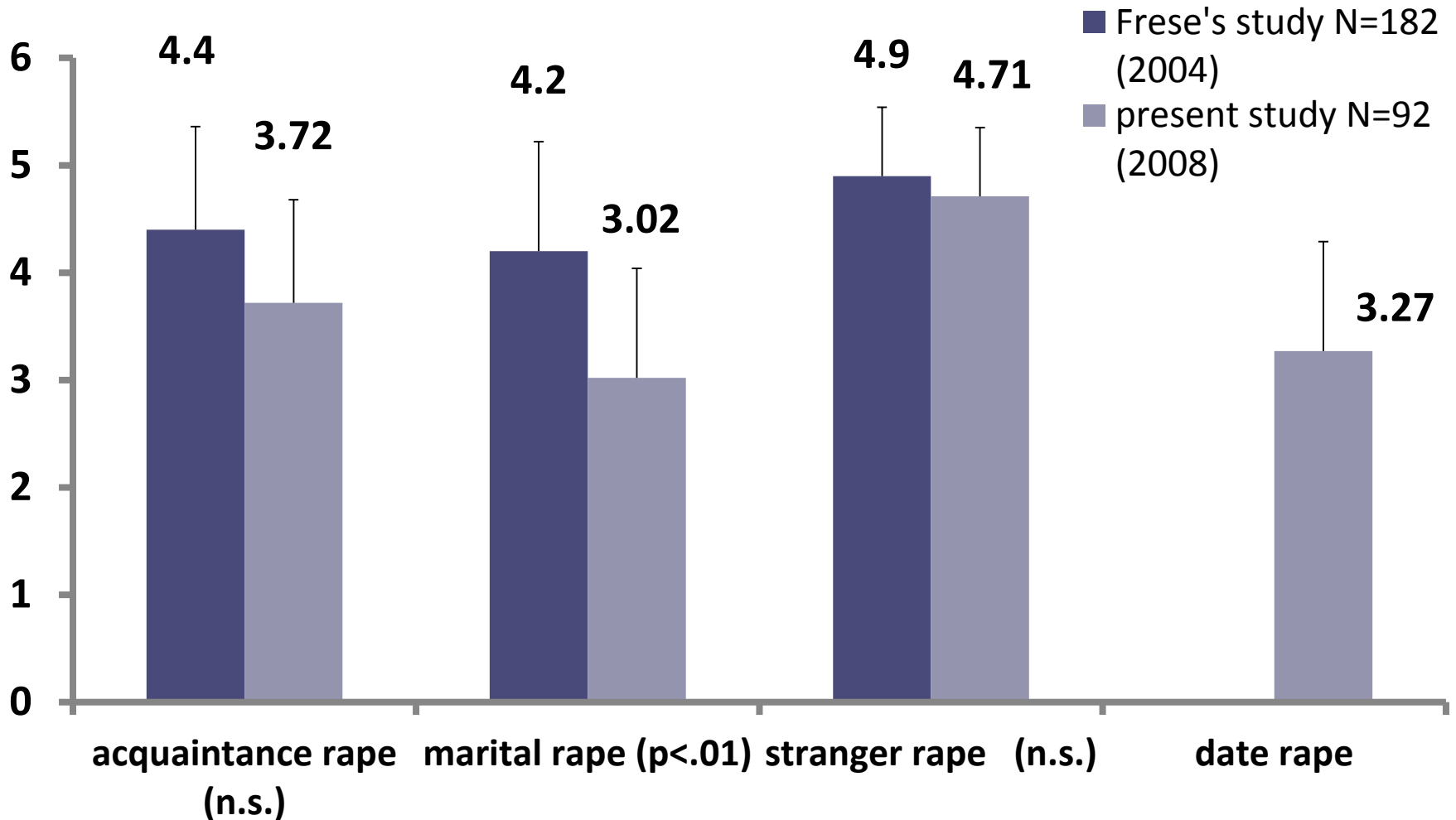
# Results: (2) Perpetrator's responsibility



# Results: (3) Intensity of the trauma



# Results: (4) the likelihood to report the crime to the police



# Results: (5) Rating of judgments of rape scenario with RMA and type of rape

Table 1 Main effect for Rape Myth Acceptance

	(1) Victim	(2) Perpetrator	(3) Trauma	(4) Police report
RMA High (N=46)	2.45 (SD=.89)	4.41 (SD=.46)	4.13 (SD=.53)	3.60 (SD=.68)
RMA Low (N=45)	1.80 (SD=.47)	4.52 (SD=.68)	4.47 (SD=.41)	3.77 (SD=.62)
<i>t</i>	4.35***	-.89 (n.s.)	-3.49***	-1.20 (n.s.)

Table 2 Main effect for type of rape

\*\*\*p<.001

	(1) Victim	(2) Perpetrator	(3) Trauma	(4) Police report
<u>A</u> cquaintance rape	3.13 (SD=.99)	4.53 (SD=.76)	4.24 (SD=.78)	3.73 (SD=.97)
<u>M</u> arital rape	1.79 (SD=.95)	4.08 (SD=1.06)	3.94 (SD=.89)	3.04 (SD=1.02)
<u>S</u> tranger rape	1.34 (SD=.67)	4.92 (SD=.46)	4.90 (SD=.34)	4.70 (SD=.64)
<u>D</u> ate rape	2.30 (SD=2.31)	4.35 (SD=.71)	4.14 (SD=.77)	3.26 (SD=1.03)
<i>F</i>	31.23*** A>D,M>S	30.99*** S>A,D>M	41.09*** S>A,D>M	81.82*** S>A>D,M

✘ Interaction between type of rape and RMA was non-significant.

# Summary of Results

- (1) **The victim blaming** was significantly higher among the Japanese than the Spanish for all the three scenarios ( $p<.01$ ).
- (2) Perception of **perpetrator's responsibility** was significantly lower in Japanese than Spanish only for the scenario of marital rape:  $p<.01$ ).
- (3) Perception of **the intensity of trauma** was significantly lower in Japanese than Spanish for all the three scenarios (acquaintance rape, marital rape:  $p<.01$ , stranger rape:  $p<.05$ ).
- (4) **Likelihood to report the crime to the police** were significantly lower in Japanese than Spanish only for the marital rape scenario ( $p<.01$ ).



# Summary of Results

Interaction between type of rape and RMA was non-significant.

- Students with **High Rape Myth acceptance** attribute more responsibility to the victim, estimate victim trauma as less severe than Low RMA.
- **In the date rape situation**, as well as in the marital rape situation, the responsibility of the woman was perceived higher and the likelihood to recommend a police report was lower than in the stranger rape situation.

The responsibility attributions for the perpetrator were higher and victim's trauma was more severe than in the marital rape situation.

# Discussion 1:

## Comparison with Frese et al.(2004)

- The present study demonstrated that the Japanese participants had more severe judgment for the rape victims and more minimized the victim's agony than the Spanish participants.
- Japanese students had lower-level awareness of the problem in acquaintance rape, especially marital rape, than Spanish students.

*Latino Americans* have less positive attitudes toward rape victims and more believe in stereotypical myths about rape than European Americans (Jimenez & Abreu , 2003) .

Bracero (1998) argued that Latino cultures have relatively rigid sex-role expectations and norms tied to **machismo** and **marianismo** standards that privilege men at the expense of woman.

Japanese may have a more traditional set of sex-role values compared with Spanish.



# Discussion 2: Effects of Rape Myth

## Acceptance and rape situation

The results have not demonstrated the interaction between attitude toward rape and the type of rape. That is, In the case of responsibility of victim-perpetrator, intensity of trauma and the likelihood report to the police, individuals with high RMA differed from those with low RMA not only in the acquaintance rape situation but also in the stranger rape situation. In addition, characteristics of the context in which rape take place affect the judgments of rape. RMA and type of rape may influence them separately.

Although acknowledgement of rape was judged for 80-90% of students in stranger rape, in date or marital rape, that was reduced to 40-60% (Iwasaki, 2003). The awareness of “ambiguity” rape is important .

# Conclusion

These findings that Japanese participants were less supportive for the rape victim than Spanish participants have implications for medical staff and counselors who are concerned with care for rape victim. They may need to be supportive and reassuring to victims for having done everything possible to survive the assault.

In addition, our results should have important implication for necessity of designing adequate programs such as preventive education targeting at the RMA in order to reduce the profession's prejudice for rape victims and training for acquaintance rape.

# References

- Bracero, W. (1998). Intimidades: Confianza, gender, and hierarchy in the construction of Latino-Latina therapeutic relationships. *Cultural Diversity and Mental Health*, 4(4), 264-277.
- Frese, B., Moya, M., & Megias, J.L. (2004). Social perception of rape. How rape myth acceptance modulates the influence of situational factors. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 19, 143-161.
- IWASAKI, Naoko (2003). Studies on Sexual Victimization. *Studies in human sciences*, 5, 301-308.
- Jimenez, Jorge A., & Abreu, J.M. (2003). Race and sex effects on attitudinal perceptions of acquaintance rape. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 50, 252-256.
- Lonsway, K.A., & Fitzgerald, L. F. (1994). Rape myths: In review. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 18, 133-164.
- Parrot, A. (1988). *Date Rape and Acquaintance Rape*. New York. The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc.
- Payne, D.L., Lonsway, K.A., & Fitzgerald, L.F. (1999). Rape myth acceptance: exploration of its measurement using the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 33, 27-68.
- Schmid, S.L. (2004). DATE RAPE/ ACQUAINTANCE RAPE. In Smith, M.D. (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of rape*. Greenwood Press. 54-56.