



Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Scholars Compass

Theses and Dissertations

Graduate School

2021

BEYOND BLACK OR WHITE: AN EXAMINATION OF INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES, BLAME ATTRIBUTION, AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Ashlynn D. Bell
Virginia Commonwealth University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd>

Part of the Psychology Commons

© The Author

Downloaded from
<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/6568>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate School at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact jibcompass@vcu.edu.

BEYOND BLACK OR WHITE: AN EXAMINATION OF INTERSECTIONAL IDENTITIES,
BLAME ATTRIBUTION, AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE.

Ashlynn D. Bell

Master's Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Science

Virginia Commonwealth University

April 2021

ABSTRACT

While there may be more discussions of sexual violence than there have been in previous years, cases continually arise where the responsibility of those who have been assaulted is called into question (Alaggia & Wang, 2020). Secondary victimization, or victim blaming, is partially responsible for the continued misattribution of responsibility to survivors. These perspectives minimize the experiences of survivors, which dissuades individuals from the reporting of perpetrators. The current study aimed to evaluate whether particular intersecting identities influenced perceptions of responsibility, in a hypothetical scenario depicting an assault. The race, gender identity, as well as perceptions of respectability of the hypothetical survivor were varied, and perceived responsibility was later assessed with a questionnaire. A multiple analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) assessed the individual effects of each manipulation as well as the overall combinations of the different manipulations, after controlling for rape myth acceptance and just world beliefs. While the proposed hypotheses were not supported, additional findings regarding the effect of demographic factors on attributions of responsibility were present. The influence of perceived respectability of the survivor, sexual socialization, and stage of adulthood provided unexpected insight on perceptions of perpetrator responsibility . Future directions of research, as well as suggestions for better investigation of sexual violence perceptions were discussed.

Introduction

In recent years, survivors of sexual violence have felt empowered to come forward and share their experiences of trauma and resilience, in light of the #Metoo movement (Anderson & Overby, 2020; Alaggia & Wang, 2020). This movement was initially created by Tarana Burke in 2006. However, the #Metoo movement has received more recent attention from Alyssa Milano's tweet in 2017, calling for women to reply "me too" if they were a survivor of sexual violence (Camus, 2019). Even with the recent shift to recognize and affirm survivors of sexual violence, there still remain some dissenting voices who fear that false accusations may result in excessive repercussions for the accused (Deggans, 2018). While this movement has done a profound job of showing solidarity and initiating conversations about sexual violence, more tangible change is still needed to protect survivors. Sexually violent offenses continue to be a case where exceptions are made for perpetrators. Especially, when perpetrators maintain more societal advantages, and survivors hold fewer privileges (Martinez, Wiersma-Mosley, Jozkowski & Becnei, 2018). Whether or not a survivor of sexual violence holds identities that are valued in the larger society, can inform how a case will be perceived (Jozowski & Wiersma-Mosley, 2017). These special cases where perceptions of guilt are altered, create a need for a more in depth understanding of how blame is assigned in sexual violence cases. The current study will evaluate the impact of social factors (i.e., what social factors) on perceptions of a rape, specifically whether such social factors affect who is blamed.

When discussing sexual violence, varying terms are used to describe specific acts and behaviors. Some terms, like "sexual violence," are more universally used to encompass a multitude of sexual offenses. Specifically, behaviors defined as, "any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, acts to traffic, or otherwise directed



against a person's sexuality using coercion by any person" (BJS, 2014). While this term generally covers most offenses, there are supplementary terms that are more focused on specific criminal acts (i.e. rape). Rape has been defined as any completed or attempted unwanted vaginal, anal, or oral penetration through the uses of physical force, threats of physical harm, or instances of incapacitation or inability to consent (e.g. alcohol or drug facilitated penetration) (NCVS, 2013). While rape is an act that can be assumed under the descriptor of sexual violence; rape and sexual violence are not synonymous. Rape is any instance of unwanted penetration whether completed or attempted, while sexual violence is an umbrella term, including but not limited to rape.

When distinguishing how an instance of sexual violence would be classified, elements of the incident are used to make distinctions. For instance, a perpetrator having a status of influence or power over a survivor would represent an instance of sexual coercion. This could be considered sexually coercive because, unwanted penetration would occur after an individual was pressured in a non-physical way through the misuse of influence or power (NCVS, 2013). However, every nonconsensual sexual act does not necessarily include unwanted penetration, the Department of Justice's Office on Violence against Women (OVW) would regard these events as sexual assault (DOJ, 2019). While there are similarities in the descriptions of terms such as sexual violence, sexual assault, and rape, they are not to be used interchangeably. In the current work, sexual violence will be used as a comprehensive term to include all acts of sexual aggression or coercion. Rape will be used when referencing the specific criminal act of either completed or attempted unwanted penetration.

Sexual Violence & Gender



Incidents of rape and sexual violence are an ongoing epidemic within the U.S. It is currently believed that one in five women will be raped at some point in their lifetime, and one in three women will experience some form of sexual violence (Muehlenhard, Peterson, Humphreys & Jozkowski, 2017). While these rates provided by Muehlenhard and colleagues (2017) present important evidence, they only include the experiences of cisgender women. Cisgender is a term that applies to those whose affirmed gender identity corresponds with their sex assigned at birth, and the term transgender is used to encompass individuals whose gender identity does not coincide with their assigned sex at birth (APA, 2015). For the purposes of this study the term “woman” or “women” will be used to include the experiences of both transwomen and ciswomen. When cisgender women are the only women included in the discussion of sexual violence; the experiences of transgender women go unacknowledged. This is especially concerning when transfeminine individuals are at the highest risk of sexual violence victimization compared to every other subgroup within the U.S. (Matsuzaka & Koch, 2019). Matsuzaka and colleagues (2019) estimate that anywhere from 50% to 69% of transfeminine individuals experience some form of sexual violence. Widely accepted misconceptions about contributors of sexual violence, as well as socially acceptable behavior have created a culture where excusal of these acts is normative. Cultural norms that excuse interpersonal violence, adverse beliefs about sexuality, and strict perceptions of traditional gender roles, all inform misunderstanding of the contributors to rape (Burt, 1980). These cultural norms about what should be considered acceptable sexual behavior become ingrained as sexual scripts, which consequently influence perceptions of rape (Ryan, 2011). In Ryan’s (2011) article examining the influence of inaccurate sexual scripts on perceptions of rape, scripts centered on the “enraged stranger” or the “seductive victim” both deflected blame from actual perpetrators, while



imparting blame on women for either provoking assaults or ineffectively preventing rape. Similar tropes are evident in previously held perceptions of rapist. The inability of men to control their hostility, and most rapist being “mentally ill” were some prevailing assumptions about the causes of rape by a community college sample in 1997 (Cowan & Quinton, 1997). Over two decades later similar misconceptions about contributors to rape continue to thrive; especially for emerging adults. The effects of these misunderstandings regarding acceptable sexual behavior and misconceptions about the contributors of rape are evident in current rates of victimization. Overall, women between the ages of 18-24 are at an elevated risk of sexual violence (Tadros, Sharon, Hoffman & Davidov, 2018). Sexual violence occurs more often to emerging adult women who are not students. However, women who are not college students are also more likely to file reports on rape or sexual assault (NCVW, 2014).

Sexual Violence in Academia

On university campuses, rates of sexual violence are particularly elevated for incoming students during their first semester. The Bureau of Justice Statistic’s National Crime Victimization Survey (NCVW) found that on average 31,300 instances of rape or sexual violence among cisgender women enrolled in college occurred annually (BJS, 2014). Twenty-five percent of transwomen, who were enrolled in college, also reported experiencing some form of sexual violence (Hutton, 2016). These numbers are particularly alarming when considering only approximately 20% of sexual violence are subsequently reported (Brenner, 2018; BJS, 2014). While current rates of reporting are low, several universities have made attempts to encourage reporting through the provision of resources. Most programs that respond to sexual violence in university settings have been created in compliance with the Title IX amendment of 1972. In years following the establishment of this amendment, sex discrimination has been expanded to

also include sexual violence (AAUW, 2019). In 2011, a letter to colleagues provided guidelines to resolving sexual violence offenses on universities (DOE, 2011). Many of the new guidelines mentioned in this letter include ensuring the safety of the complainant by guaranteeing that the accused will not remain in close proximity (DOE, 2011). This comprehensive letter suggested numerous methods to protect the complainants and prevent future incidences of sexual violence in academic settings.

In response to these efforts to address the epidemic of sexual violence in academia, there have been some dissenting views of the impartiality of the 2011 “Letter to colleagues”. The guidelines made in the 2011 letter, highlighting various ways to manage sexual violence incidents, was officially rescinded by the current Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, in 2017. In response to the mixed reviews regarding the recension of the 2011 letter, the current administration assured that the decision to rescind was not in an effort to reduce current rights to survivors, but to ensure due process for the accused perpetrators of such violence (Muehlenhard, Peterson, Humphreys & Jozkowski, 2017). While no harm may have been intended when deciding to rescind the previous standards, these changes may further dissuade reporting. Particularly, these changes encourage perceptions that survivors of sexual violence will receive less support and fewer protections compared to previous years (Rothe & Collins, 2019; Butler, Lee & Fisher, 2019). This concern is not unfounded due to misconceptions regarding the realities of sexual violence, that have historically benefitted perpetrators over survivors (Holland, 2019). These misunderstandings are primarily centered on a lack of knowledge of the actual contributors of sexual violence and are commonly informed by distorted perceptions of why these offenses occur (Vonderhaar & Carmody, 2015).

Just World Theory



A frequently believed excuse for why some survivors are sexually assaulted, is that the assault is some form of retribution for previous behavior (Hayes, Lorenz & Bell, 2013). This coincides with the just world hypothesis or just world theory, where there is a need to believe that the world is a just place and adversity only happens to those who are somehow deserving (Lerner & Miller, 1978). The concept of just world beliefs was first introduced by Lerner in 1965 and was later expanded on in the late seventies (Lerner, 1965). Just world theory suggests that these beliefs are in response to the fear of one's own mortality in an unsafe world (Lerner, 1997). When the perceived safety of the world is threatened, those who have a greater endorsement of just world beliefs may suggest an explanation, that blames the adversity on some previous transgression (Kleinke & Meyer, 1990). In an attempt to make sense of instances where the world no longer appears to remain a just place, those who have faced violence have been blamed to reconcile this dissonance (Sullivan, Ong, La Macchia & Louis, 2016). This is usually displayed through suggestions of a survivor somehow provoking an assault. Those who endorse more just world beliefs would find it easier to rationalize that rape is a deviant act, that must be in response to deviant sexual behavior or ineffective adherence sexist norms (Stubbs-Richardson, Rader & Cosby, 2018).

Just world beliefs have also been used to make sense of the injustices faced by those who are marginalized in society. Racial and gender minorities are often blamed more than those who perpetrate violence against them (Beierlein, Werner, Preiser & Wermuth, 2011). A previous study exploring the contributors to victim blaming attitudes found that those who expressed anti-transgender prejudice were more likely to endorse just world beliefs and victim blaming attitudes (Thomas, Amburgery & Ellis, 2016). This connection between just world beliefs and the justification of social inequity is usually self-serving. Perceptions of justice for others are usually



strict and unforgiving compared to more forgiving views of one's own experiences (Sutton & Douglas, 2005). The overlapping feature connecting just world beliefs to these various types of discrimination, is the tendency to blame those on the receiving end of an injustice.

Just world beliefs and the attribution of blame to rape survivors has been extensively supported by previous literature (Culda, Opre & Dobrin, 2018). Individuals who are more likely to adopt just world beliefs tend to blame survivors of sexual violence more than perpetrators on average (Stromwall, Alfredsson & Landstrom, 2013). This finding may be due to the recurring theme of just world beliefs where blame can be imparted on victims of tragedy, due to justifications of them being responsible for their fate. These beliefs can provide a form of solace for those who fear for their safety or can't comprehend a world where unwarranted acts of violence occur. Nevertheless, this faulty reasoning does nothing to prevent future incidences of sexual violence occurring. Implying that something as abhorrent as rape could be a form of moral retribution can further dissuade survivors from reporting. Assertions of rape being somehow excusable, encourage a culture that promotes inaccurate reasoning for contributors to sexual violence.

Rape Myths

False reasoning for the realities and contributors to rape are typically referred to as rape myths. Rape myths can be broadly defined as attitudes and beliefs that justify sexual aggression; most often against women by men (Burt, 1980). Rape myth acceptance is characterized by the attempt to justify an instance of sexual violence by misusing unrelated factors (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). Factors such as a survivor's attire or sexual history are often cited as justification of an assault or used to minimize the severity or legitimacy of the assault (Littleton & Dodd, 2016). The concept of rape myths was formally introduced in the 1970's, when widely

accepted myths related to rape were initially being challenged by scholars. Schwendinger & Schwendinger were among the first to dispute these false narratives. In their (1974) publication, they dismantled commonly used excuses for rape, such as the belief that rape could be easily avoided by women “who don’t really want it” (Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1974). These false beliefs were dispelled through a detailed analysis of the common assumptions that often result in the justification of rape. Most notably, the “asking for it” or “uncontrollable passion” myths both contain the underlying assumption of consent being either unnecessary or impossible. Perceptions of survivors as provocateurs or the belief that men are biologically driven to rape, absolve perpetrators from responsibility while suggesting that rape is inevitable (Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1974).

These myths, similar to most commonly held myths in society, function to explain and justify current norms. There are different interpretations of the emergence of rape myths and why they continue to be used to justify rape. In Lonsway and Fitzgerald’s (1994) review, the need for individuals and larger communities to protect themselves from confronting the reality of sexual violence is listed as a reason for the existence of these myths. This reasoning would be in accordance with those who have a greater need to believe in a just world (Culda, Opre & Dobrin, 2018). Injustice and unprovoked violence alter perceptions of safety, which could in turn result in the conception of false narratives where survivors would be held responsible. Endorsement of rape myths don’t only result in excusatory attitudes toward perpetrators. Acceptance of rape myths delegitimize the experiences of survivors, which discourages reporting to law enforcement (Du Mont, Miller & Myhr, 2003). After reviewing the information gathered by nurses and physicians for 300 patients that had been sexually assaulted, Du Mont and colleagues (2003) found that women whose assaults were more in line with stereotypical conceptualization of rape

were more likely to report to the police. Women with visible bruises, who were assaulted by a stranger, with weapons, or with physical force fit the commonly held standard of a “real rape victim”. This finding expands on the issue of low reporting, especially due to the fact that acquaintances are more likely to be perpetrators instead of a stranger (BJS, 1997).

The continued endorsement of false beliefs, as well as the ongoing study of rape myth acceptance has led to the development of measures to better assess this construct. The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale IRMAS expanded the understanding of rape myth acceptance to assess recurring false beliefs. The measure included prevailing false beliefs, such as the idea that women somehow put themselves at risk for rape, men rape due to a lack of sexual restraint, or that women fabricate instances of rape for some type of gain or due to regret (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). More current studies have also added constructs to create a more comprehensive evaluation of notions reflected in rape myths (Stoll, Lilly & Pinter, 2017). Stoll and colleagues (2017) created the Rape Myths Acceptance Questionnaire to assess the classism, racism, sexism, and homophobia ingrained in false beliefs about rape in general. Beliefs like, White women’s enhanced likelihood of rape by men of color, are included to evaluate the social biases present in rape myths. A common unifying theme described in several of these myths is the attribution of blame to anyone or any factor but the perpetrator. A major concern of rape myth acceptance is that it may consequently influence perceptions of survivors, and whether or not perpetrators will be held responsible.

Blame Attribution and Secondary Victimization

Those who maintain more fictitious beliefs about the causes and contributors of rape, are more likely to inaccurately assess a situation depicting a rape (Perilloux, Duntley & Buss, 2014). This can be seen in attempts to critique actions or behaviors of a survivor, in an attempt to justify

an assault. Rape continues to be a specific case where certain actions of survivors are considered to be just as condemning as the actions of perpetrators. The inclination to blame survivors often stems from the tendency to empathize with male perpetrators, over survivors (Bongiorno et al., 2020). There are some gender differences in blame attribution attitudes, which may be a result of the position of privilege held by men compared to women in America. For instance, men tend to attribute blame to rape survivors more often than women, especially when they hold more just world beliefs (Russell & Hand, 2017). This has been most notable in recent events where the impact of public sexual violence cases on the perpetrator, have occasionally outweighed support for survivors (Jackson, 2018). The narrative of the dishonest or vengeful victim, committed to destroying the reputation or success of male perpetrators continues to be a commonly believed fallacy (NSVRC, 2012). More accurately, less than 10 percent of reported sexual assault cases are false (Weiser, 2017).

Both the scarcity of false reports and high endorsement of rape myths demonstrate that survivors are often not regarded with appropriate urgency when disclosing. Secondary victimization is the experience of invalidation, or the tendency to insinuate that a survivor is totally or partially responsible for their own assault (Campbell & Raja, 1999). Inaccurate notions of culpability being somewhat shared with survivors further deters from reporting sexual violence, while also imparting blame on irrelevant factors. Irrelevant factors can range from what a survivor was wearing to their sexual history. When the moral character of a survivor comes into question, they are often considered to be at least partially accountable (Whatley, 1996).

Respectability

The circumstances where culpability comes into question can be heavily dependent on perceptions of a survivor's actions and behaviors (Luginbuhl & Mullin, 1981). When survivor's

“respectability” come into question, it is most often in relation to their sexual autonomy.

Respectability can be used to discredit survivors when they have not abstained from sex, have had multiple sexual partners, or refuse to coincide with sexist norms (Goicolea, Torres, Edin & Öhman, 2012). Historically, factors such as whether or not a woman was married, divorced, sexually active, or a virgin have all been cited as rationale for why blame is attributed to the survivor instead of the perpetrator (Jones & Aronson, 1973). It is critical that perceptions of survivor respectability are not endorsed. Interpreting irrelevant factors about a survivor’s sexuality or relationship status as reasoning for an assault is not only a misattribution of blame but can also lead to further trauma experienced by the survivor. Perceived survivor respectability can also influence how individuals with marginalized identities are viewed in instances of sexual violence, when compared to their historically privileged counterparts. Anti-LGBT prejudice can often manifest itself through derogatory remarks and physical violence, which lesbian and transgender women have cited as potential indicators of future incidences of sexual assault (Meyer, 2012). Specifically, trans folk have reported high perceived risk of encountering physical and sexual violence, as well as previous subjection to physical and sexual violence (Ellis, Bailey & McNeil, 2016). Previous works have also supported the notion that those who hold higher levels of homophobic beliefs, are more likely to blame survivors of rape and sexual assault who are gay or bisexual (Wakelin & Long, 2003; Doherty & Anderson, 2004). These circumstances tend to have the underlying factor of prejudices rooted in sexuality or gender identity informing views of sexual minorities being sexually opportunistic or available, and thus lacking in moral character.

Similarly, racial prejudice has also impacted victim blame due to assumptions made about survivors of respectability. In a previous study, examining the contributing factors to a

survivor being blamed for rape, researchers found that White women with low respectability were blamed for the assault with more frequency than Black women with high respectability (Dupius & Clay, 2013). This finding addresses the need for understanding the impact of respectability. Especially after taking into account the fact that Black women are usually believed to be more responsible for incidents of rape in comparison to White women (Leung & Williams, 2019). Acknowledging the repercussions of refusing to conform to notions of respectable sexuality for women can provide insight on the cases when distinct biases influence perceptions of culpability. Furthermore, understanding how the combined social identities encompassed by survivors of sexual violence, can provide further insight on the cases where blame is in response to these biases.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is a framework that acknowledges that multiple marginal identities can coexist within an individual, which often results in a multifaceted experience of discrimination, (Crenshaw, 1989). This theory was initially created to explain the unique combined gender and racial discrimination faced by African American women within the United States. Historically, stereotypical images related to the sexual objectification of African American women have been used to justify instances of sexual violence, while also attributing blame to notions of the inherent promiscuity of survivors (Donovan, 2007). The Jezebel stereotype was often used to depict enslaved African women as hypersexual and immoral, thus excusing sexual victimization of African descended women by European men (Donovan & Williams, 2002). Even in the post-Civil war era, African American women who were emancipated were ignored by larger judicial systems due to the prevailing views of them as depraved and promiscuous (Sommerville, 1995). The Jezebel stereotype demonstrates the specific intersectional bias directed toward African

American women. Historically, this stereotype has resulted in the secondary victimization of African American women who are survivors of sexual violence (Brown, White-Johnson & Griffin-Fennell, 2013). The effects of pejorative views of African American women's sexual availability is overt in a study that examined the likelihood of fellow students to intervene in a scenario depicting rape. When the hypothetical victim/survivor of rape was depicted as an African American woman, White women reported that they would be less likely to intervene and more likely to assume "victim pleasure", compared to the racially ambiguous victim/survivor condition (Katz, Merrilees, Hoxmeier & Motisi, 2017). This study demonstrates some of the real-world implications faced by African American women, by virtue of the race, gender, and the specific discrimination.

While intersectionality theory was initially developed to understand and catalogue the experiences of African American women, it has been expanded to include additional intersecting identities (Warner & Shields, 2013). While this study maintains that it will be framed within an intersectional context, like previous works will be an expansion on Crenshaw's original conception. Specifically, the intersections between perceived respectability, race, and a more inclusive conceptualization of gender identity that recognizes both cisgender and transgender women will also be evaluated. Examination of the influence of gender on perceptions of rape has previously provided insight on the likelihood of blame being attributed to survivors of sexual violence. A study examining the link between a more inclusive conceptualization of gender identity and rape myth acceptance, found that cisgender men were more likely to endorse rape myths and attribute blame to a woman (Diamond-Welch, Marin Hellwege, & Mann, 2018). Findings such as these highlight the importance of expanding existing conceptions of intersectionality beyond an understanding of gender being synonymous to sex assigned at birth.



This can partially be accomplished through examining the influence of gender on rape myth acceptance and perceived culpability, instead of simply relying on genetic sex. Transwomen of color experience an additional form of discrimination than their cisgender and White counterparts. Compared to their White counterparts, more than half of Black (53%) and multiracial (59%) transwomen have experienced some form of sexual violence (NSVRC, 2019). The addition of racial discrimination paired with the structural, economic, and social extensions of transphobia place transwomen of color at an even more elevated risk for sexual violence (Griffin, 2016). These combined experiences also place transwomen at a greater risk for secondary victimization, due to the potential for misgendering, additional ostracization, or insufficient resources that have been tailored primarily for cisgender women (Seelman, 2015). The myth of transwoman intent on misleading cisgender men into sexual relationships, is also used as a form of defense for sexual violence. The importance of understanding the influence of combined identities is also apparent when observing how the intersection of race and gender impact perceptions of sexual violence. Due to recurrent stereotypes that characterize African American men and women as inherently hypersexual, the gender and racial identity of survivors and perpetrators can influence how incidents of sexual violence are perceived. African American men were deemed to be inherent sexual aggressors that endangered the safety of White women during the antebellum era in the American south (Sommerville, 1995). Due to the long-held perception that White women would never willingly engage in any sexual contact with African American men, even consensual sexual contact between White women and African American men were considered interracial rape. This allowed for the perception of the violent or sexually unrestrained African Americans to continue. A recent article observing the impact of racism on rape culture and victim culpability found that not only were African American men and women

considered to be hypersexual by the majority of participants, but survivors were also held more culpable for the assault when the perpetrator was Black due to perceptions of Black men's inability to display sexual restraint (Miller, 2019). Awareness of various identities and experiences inherent to survivors and perpetrators may enhance understanding of the different ways in which sexual violence cases are perceived, and consequently how blame is later attributed.

Purpose

While the relationship between rape myth acceptance and perceptions of survivor responsibility has been supported, there has been little examination of the biases toward certain intersecting identities. Similarly, when scenarios of rape myths have been varied in previous research, variations have not included additional social identities (i.e., race, respectability, and gender identity) that have continued to predict opinions regarding culpability. The current study aimed to explore how perceptions of women with varying gender identities (i.e., transgender, cisgender) racial identities (i.e., Black, White), and respectability (ex. "has openly shared with friends that she intends to remain a virgin until she is married" or "has openly shared with friends that she has had many sexual experiences") effect perceptions of responsibility in a scenario depicting an act of sexual violence. Using a 2x2x2 factorial design, the individual and combined effects of each variable on survivor or perpetrator culpability were evaluated. (H1): A main effect for race was hypothesized, with the Black survivor condition being expected to be held more responsible, than the White survivor condition. Perpetrators were also expected to be held less responsible when the survivor was Black.

(H2): A main effect for respectability was also expected, predicting that the survivor condition with less perceived respectability would be held more responsible for the assault. Perpetrators were expected to be held less responsible when survivor respectability was low.

(H3): Finally, a main effect for gender identity was predicted to be found, with transgender survivors being held more responsible for the assault than cisgender survivors.

Perpetrators were expected to be held less responsible when survivors were transgender women.

(H4): An interaction effect for race when paired with respectability was hypothesized.

Specifically, it was predicted that Black survivors with lower perceived respectability would be held more responsible than White survivors with higher perceived respectability. Perpetrators were expected to be held less responsible when survivors were Black with low respectability.

(H5): An interaction effect for race paired with gender identity was also hypothesized. Black transgender survivors were predicted to be held more responsible than both their Black and White cisgender counterparts, as well as White transgender survivors. Perpetrators were expected to be held less responsible when survivors are Black and transgender women.

(H6): An interaction effect for gender identity and respectability was also expected. It was predicted that cisgender survivors with higher perceived respectability, would be held less responsible for the assault than their transgender counter parts with lower respectability.

Perpetrators were expected to be held less responsible when survivors had low respectability and were transgender women.

(H7): Ultimately, a three-way interaction where survivors within the Black, transgender, and low respectability condition were expected to be held the most responsible for the assault.

Perpetrators were predicted to be held least responsible for the assault, when the survivors were Black transgender women, with lower perceived respectability.



Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from Amazon's online marketplace, or Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and the university's SONA system. MTurk and SONA identification numbers were delinked from the data before it was prepped for analysis. The only exclusion criteria in place, was that participants must be 18 years of age or older, have access to the internet, and able to read and respond in English. According to a G power analysis, this study needed at least 525 participants, to have an effect size of .20. For their participation, individuals were given their incentive of \$1.50 credited to their Amazon account, or 1 SONA credit. Demographic information (e.g., location, age, race) was collected for demographic and data cleaning purposes.

Procedure

After receiving approval from the university's Institutional Review Board (IRB), the study was made available for participation. Participants were allotted 1 hour to complete the study. They registered for this study through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk) or the university's SONA system, and were only given access to the study after consenting for participation. Participants were then directed to the online study, administered via the survey website Qualtrics. Participants were asked to read one of eight potential vignettes and respond to the following measure assessing the perception of a sexually coercive event. Additional related measures were also included to assess relevant constructs and biases that were discussed within the vignette. Finally, they were debriefed and presented with national sexual violence resources (National Domestic Violence Hotline, National Sexual Assault Hotline, and LGBTQ Partner Abuse and Sexual Assault Helpline). Upon completion participants were granted their incentive of either 1 SONA credit or \$1.50 for Amazon workers.

Materials

One of eight vignettes containing a scenario depicting an instance of sexual violence were randomly assigned to each participant. Every scenario included two students at a party that had never met, one being the perpetrator who follows the student upstairs and subsequently assaults her. The race (i.e. “African American” or “White American”) of the survivor was varied throughout the vignettes, as well as the perceived respectability (i.e. “has openly shared with friends that she intends to remain a virgin until she is married” or “has openly shared with friends that she has had many sexual experiences” and the gender identity (i.e. “cisgender” or “transgender”) of the survivor.

Measures

Two items from an adapted version of **The Perceptions of Coercion and Ascribed Responsibility Questionnaire** (PCARQ) (Tamborra, Dutton, & Terry, 2014) were used to assess responsibility for the assault. “Rachel/Latisha is more responsible for the sex” assessed survivor responsibility, and “Asher is more responsible for the sex” assessed perpetrator responsibility. Both items were presented in a 5-point Likert scale format, ranging from 1 Strongly Agree to 5 Strongly Disagree. The observed Cronbach’s alpha of the questionnaire was .78. Lower scores were indicative of more responsibility being attributed to either the survivor or the perpetrator.

The **Rape Myth Acceptance Questionnaire** (RMAQ) (Stoll, Lilley, & Pinter, 2017), will be used to assess the participant’s endorsement of false beliefs associated with rape. The RMAQ contains 28 items, and responses are presented in a 5-point Likert scale format ranging from 1-Strongly disagree to 5-Strongly agree. The RMAQ is a reliable measure, with Cronbach’s alpha being .98. Participants rated their endorsement of rape myths such as, “Women tend to

exaggerate how much rape affects them.” and “White women who date men of color are more likely to be raped.” Lower scores are indicative of greater rape myth acceptance.

The **Just World Beliefs Scale** (JWBS) (Vonderhaar & Carmody, 2015) assessed the degree to which participant’s rationalize acts of injustice, in favor of assigning blame to the victim. The JWBS contains 15 items, responses are presented in a 6-point Likert scale format ranging from 1-Strongly disagree to 6-Strongly agree. The JWBS has a reliable Cronbach’s alpha of .87. The endorsement of “just world beliefs” contained items such as, “Generally people deserve what they get in the world,” and “Through our actions, we can prevent bad things happening to us.” Higher scores are indicative of a greater belief in a “just world”.

Finally, a demographic questionnaire was presented to collect information such as participant’s age, race, socioeconomic status, gender identity, and whether they were or knew a survivor of rape or sexual assault for descriptive purposes. Upon completion of the demographic questionnaire all participants were provided with national resources, in the case that any discomfort arose after participation.

Results

Participants

The sample contained 933 participants consisting of Amazon Mechanical Turk workers and students within the university’s psychology SONA system. The average age of respondents was 30 years old ($SD = 12.38$). Most participants described their gender identity as women (52.2%), with slightly the remaining majority describing their gender identity as men (44%). The remaining participants either described their gender identity as gender fluid, genderqueer, agender, or trans (2%). Due to the lack of representation of gender expansive identities, sex

assigned at birth will be used to assess perceptions based on gender socialization experiences.

While sex assigned at birth does not encompass the current lived experiences of many gender identities; the majority of the sample were cisgender, and their affirmed gender was in accordance with their assigned sex. Racially, the majority of the sample were of White/European descent (62.4%), followed by Black/African Americans accounting for (17.8%) of the sample. A majority of participants resided in the Southern region of the U.S. (56.3%). While (38%) of the sample reported being forced to engage in a sexual act that they did not want to occur, only (29%) of participants reported being a survivor of rape or sexual assault. Also, (54%) of participants reported knowing a survivor of rape or sexual assault.

Descriptive Statistics

Participants were randomly assigned one of eight vignettes, where race, gender identity, and respectability were varied. There were ($n = 137$) participants who received the first condition (White, cisgender, high respectability), ($n = 100$) who completed the second condition (White, cisgender, low respectability), ($n = 127$) that completed the third condition (White, transgender, high respectability), ($n = 115$) that completed the fourth condition (White, transgender, low respectability), ($n = 128$) that completed the fifth condition (Black, cisgender, high respectability), ($n = 117$) that completed the sixth condition (Black, cisgender, low respectability), ($n = 128$) within the seventh condition (Black, transgender, high respectability), and ($n = 114$) within the eighth condition (Black, transgender, low respectability). Across all conditions, perpetrators ($M = 2.06$, $SD = 1.15$) were rated as more responsible than survivors ($M = 3.29$, $SD = 1.41$). Participants were also found to have moderate endorsement of just world beliefs ($M = 62.75$, $SD = 11.08$), and rape myth acceptance ($M = 77.58$, $SD = 30.32$).

Preliminary Analyses

All data were screened for potential bots, “lazy responders”, and participants who did not complete a sufficient portion of the measures, through SPSS syntax. No bots were present in the data, and three lazy responders were identified. After removing those responses from analyses, the final sample size included 933 participants. Data was then analyzed using SPSS version 27. Nearly all assumptions of univariate and multivariate normality were met. The Box’s M test for homogeneity of the variance-covariance matrices across design cells was not significant, Box-M = 15.45, $F(21, 2820656.89) = .730, p = .806$, providing multivariate support for the homogeneity of variance assumption. The Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant ($p < .001$), meaning that the correlations among the DVs were sufficiently large. The residual sums of squares and cross products matrix suggests that after controlling for just world beliefs and rape myth acceptance, both DVs maintained acceptable correlation coefficients ($r = -.09$). Additionally, the Levene’s tests for perpetrator responsibility was significant, providing only partial univariate support for the homogeneity of variance assumption. Given that the Box’s M test did provide multivariate support, these findings suggest that Pillai’s trace should be used as a more conservative estimate of the F -statistic.

Bivariate correlations were conducted to compare demographic information, predictors, and the outcome items. There was a significant positive association between perceptions of survivor responsibility and being a survivor of rape ($r = .07, p = .027$). Also, there was a negative association between knowledge of a survivor of rape or sexual assault ($r = -.26, p < .001$) and ratings of survivor responsibility. When participants knew a survivor, they rated the hypothetical survivor as less responsible for the assault. In line with this finding, significant associations were also present between perpetrator responsibility and whether the participant knew a survivor, ($r = .14, p < .001$). Those who knew a survivor of rape or sexual assault rated perpetrators as more

responsible compared to those who did not know a survivor. Survivors of rape or sexual assault had greater rape myth acceptance, ($r = -.19$, $p < .001$). Expected associations between knowing a survivor and rape myth acceptance were found. Those who knew a survivor of rape or sexual assault accepted fewer rape myths, ($r = .23$, $p < .001$), endorsed fewer just world beliefs ($r = .13$, $p < .001$), and were also currently enrolled in college ($r = .43$, $p < .001$). As expected, individuals that accepted more rape myths also endorsed more just world beliefs, ($r = .65$, $p < .001$).

MANCOVA main effects and interactions

A multiple analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) was conducted to assess the effect of survivor race, gender identity, and respectability on responsibility attributed to a survivor of sexual violence or the perpetrator of the assault, after controlling for rape myth acceptance and just world beliefs. The MANCOVA revealed a statistically significant multivariate effect for all covariates, just world beliefs, Pillai's Trace = .044, $F(2,925) = 21.42$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .044$, rape myth acceptance Pillai's Trace = .324, $F(2, 925) = 221.20$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .324$. (H1): A main effect for race was hypothesized. Specifically, the Black survivors were expected to be held more responsible than White survivors, and perpetrators were expected to be held less responsible when survivors were Black. There was no significant main effect for race observed, Pillai's Trace = .002, $F(2,925) = .89$, $p = .413$, $\eta^2 = .002$. Separate univariate tests also revealed no significant effects of the race conditions on survivor responsibility, $F(1,926) = 1.15$, $p = .284$, $\eta^2 = .001$, and perpetrator responsibility $F(1,926) = .78$, $p = .379$, $\eta^2 = .001$ (H2): A main effect for respectability was also expected. The survivor condition with less perceived respectability was predicted to be held more responsible for the assault, and perpetrators were expected to be held less responsible when respectability was low. There were no significant main effects for respectability Pillai's Trace = .001, $F(2,925) = .47$, $p = .628$, $\eta^2 = .001$. Univariate tests also

revealed no significant effects of the respectability condition on survivor responsibility $F(1,926) = .29, p = .589, \eta^2 = .000$, and perpetrator responsibility $F(1,926) = .71, p = .399, \eta^2 = .001$. (H3): Finally, a main effect for gender identity was predicted to be found. Transgender survivors were expected to be held more responsible for the assault than cisgender survivors, and perpetrators were expected to be held less responsible when survivors were transgender. There were also no significant main effects for gender identity Pillai's Trace = .002, $F(2,925) = 1.01, p = .365, \eta^2 = .002$. Additionally, univariate tests revealed no significant effects of the gender identity condition on survivor responsibility $F(1,926) = .77, p = .380, \eta^2 = .001$ and perpetrator responsibility $F(1,926) = 1.08, p = .300, \eta^2 = .001$.

(H4): An interaction effect for race when paired with respectability was hypothesized. Specifically, it was predicted that Black survivors with lower perceived respectability would be held more responsible than White survivors with higher perceived respectability, and perpetrators were expected to be held less responsible when survivors were Black and transgender. There were no interaction effects for race when paired with respectability, Pillai's Trace = .002, $F(2,925) = .76, p = .467, \eta^2 = .002$. (H5): An interaction effect for race paired with gender identity was also hypothesized. Black transgender survivors were predicted to be held more responsible than both their Black and White cisgender counterparts, as well as White transgender survivors. There was no significant interaction effect for race when paired with gender identity, Pillai's Trace = .001, $F(2,925) = .37, p = .690, \eta^2 = .001$. (H6): An interaction effect for gender identity and respectability was also expected. It was predicted that cisgender survivors with higher perceived respectability, would be held less responsible for the assault than their transgender counter parts with lower respectability. There were no significant interaction effects observed for gender identity when paired with respectability, Pillai's Trace = .001,

$F(2,925) = .64, p = .527, \eta^2 = .001$. (H7): Ultimately, a three-way interaction where survivors within the Black, transgender, and low respectability condition were expected to be held the most responsible for the assault. The three-way interaction was not significant Pillai's Trace = .000, $F(2,925) = .11, p = .898, \eta^2 = .000$. The MANCOVA revealed no statistically significant individual effects for race, gender identity, or respectability when evaluating survivor and perpetrator responsibility. Similarly, the interaction terms were also not significant. Ultimately, the hypothesized 2x2x2 factorial design, assessing the combined effect of race, gender identity, and respectability on perceived responsibility for an assault was not supported.

Additional Analyses

To further explore additional factors that may influence perceptions of survivor and perpetrator responsibility, another MANCOVA was conducted. The Box's M test for homogeneity of the variance-covariance matrices across design cells was significant, Box-M = 284.95, $F(189, 52315.21) = 1.39, p < .001$, neglecting to provide multivariate support for the homogeneity of variance assumption. Levene's tests for perpetrator responsibility and survivor responsibility were significant. These findings suggest that Pillai's trace should be used as a more conservative estimate of the F-statistic. The overall sample did not include enough gender diversity for comparisons of gender identity to be made. While more expansive gender identity categories would have been preferred, that would still require conceptualizing gender within another dichotomy. To evaluate potential differences between gender socialization experiences within a society that is largely patriarchal, sex assigned at birth was evaluated for the following analyses. The following MANCOVA assessed the effect of sex assigned at birth, stage of adulthood, knowledge of a survivor, and vignette condition on responsibility attributed to the survivor and the perpetrator. After controlling for rape myth acceptance, just world beliefs,

statistically significant multivariate effect for all covariates were found, just world beliefs, Pillai's Trace = .050, $F(2,795) = 21.13$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .050$, and rape myth acceptance Pillai's Trace = .227, $F(2, 795) = 116.73$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .227$. There was no significant main effect for vignette condition, when observing Pillai's Trace, Pillai's Trace = .013, $F(14,1592) = .76$, $p = .717$, $\eta^2 = .007$. There was a significant main effect for knowledge of a survivor. This finding suggests that whether or not participants know a survivor of rape or sexual assault can influence how they attribute blame in instances of sexual violence, Pillai's Trace = .022, $F(2, 795) = 8.82$, $p < .001$ $\eta^2 = .022$. Similarly, there was a significant main of effect stage of adulthood, when observing the responses of emerging adults to other adults, Pillai's Trace = .034, $F(2,795) = 13.96$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .034$. There was no significant main effect for sex assigned at birth, Pillai's Trace = .004, $F(2,795) = 1.41$, $p = .245$, $\eta^2 = .004$.

There were also a few significant interaction effects found, when observing the influence on responsibility attributed to the survivor and perpetrator. When condition was paired with sex assigned at birth, a significant two-way interaction was found, Pillai's Trace = .041, $F(14, 1592) = 2.39$, $p = .003$, $\eta^2 = .025$. Specifically, in conditions 1, 3,5, and 8 there were significant sex differences in how responsibility was attributed to the survivor. In condition 1 "White, Cis, High resp." participants that were assigned male at birth held the survivor more responsible ($M = 3.06$), than participants who were assigned female at birth ($M = 3.39$). (Figure 1). In condition 3 "White, Trans., High resp." male respondents rated the survivor as more responsible ($M = 2.79$) than female respondents ($M = 3.26$). Those assigned male at birth, also rated the survivor as more responsible in both instances where respectability was perceived as low for the Black survivor condition. Specifically, in condition 5 "Black, Cis. Low resp." those assigned male at birth rated the survivor as more responsible ($M = 3.21$) compared to those who were assigned



female at birth ($M = 3.29$). Also, in condition 8 “Black, Trans., Low resp.” those assigned male at birth rated the survivor as more responsible ($M = 3.11$) than those assigned female at birth ($M = 3.43$).

Additionally, when observing the influence of sex and condition on perpetrator responsibility, conditions 2,5,7, and 8 had significant mean differences (Figure 2.). In condition 2 “White, Cis., low resp.” female respondents held the perpetrator more responsible ($M = 1.80$) than male respondents ($M = 2.47$). Similar findings were present in condition 5 “Black, Cis., Low resp.”, with those assigned female at birth also attributing more blame to the perpetrator ($M = 1.85$) than those who were assigned male ($M = 2.35$). In condition 7 “Black, Trans., High resp.” female respondents held the perpetrator more responsible ($M = 1.78$) than male respondents ($M = 2.19$). Interestingly, in condition 8 male respondents attributed more blame to the perpetrator ($M = 1.84$) than female respondents ($M = 2.33$). The key difference from conditions 7 and 8 is that the survivor has less perceived respectability in the latter condition. Also, when knowledge of a survivor and stage of adulthood were compared, an additional interaction effect was found, Pillai’s Trace = .008, $F(2,795) = 3.22$, $p = .041$, $\eta^2 = .008$. Participants that were emerging adults, who knew a survivor of sexual assault, held perpetrators more responsible than their older adulthood counterparts (Figure 3).

Surprisingly, the two-way interactions assessing the combined effect of vignette condition with knowledge of a survivor, Pillai’s Trace = .017, $F(14,1592) = .95$, $p = .507$, $\eta^2 = .008$, stage of adulthood with condition, Pillai’s Trace = .014, $F(14,1592) = .78$, $p = .696$, $\eta^2 = .007$, and the two-way interaction between knowledge of a survivor and sex assigned at birth, Pillai’s Trace = .002, $F(2,795) = .81$, $p = .444$, $\eta^2 = .002$ were not statistically significant. There was also a significant interaction effect between stage of adulthood and sex assigned at birth,



Pillai's Trace = .011, $F(2,795) = 4.34$, $p = .013$, $\eta^2 = .011$. When participants were in the 18-29 emerging adulthood stage, there were sex differences in how responsibility was attributed to survivors. Female participants held survivors less responsible than their male counterparts. There were not significant sex differences when observing older adult's perception of survivor responsibility (Figure 4). There was only one significant three-way interaction found between sex assigned at birth, knowledge of a survivor, and stage of adulthood, Pillai's Trace = .013, $F(2,795) = 5.05$, $p = .007$, $\eta^2 = .013$. For emerging adults, there were no significant differences in perceptions of responsibility of the perpetrator after observing sex assigned at birth, when they knew a survivor (Figure 5). However, when emerging adults did not know a survivor, female participants held the perpetrator significantly more responsible than their male counterparts. When older adults knew a survivor of sexual assault, those assigned female at birth held perpetrators more responsible than their male counterparts. Interestingly, the opposite was true for older adults that did not know a survivor. Male participants rated the perpetrator more responsible for the assault than female participants, when they did not know a survivor. The three-way interaction of sex assigned at birth, vignette condition, and knowledge of a survivor was not significant when observing Pillai's Trace = .021, $F(14,1592) = .913$, $p = 1.20$, $\eta^2 = .010$. Neither was the three-way interactions assessing vignette condition, stage of adulthood, and sex assigned at birth, Pillai's Trace = .019, $F(14,1592) = 1.10$, $p = .355$, $\eta^2 = .010$. Finally, the four-way interaction assessing all IV's (i.e., condition, sex, stage of adulthood, knowledge of a survivor was not statistically significant, Pillai's Trace = .016, $F(14, 1592) = .91$, $p = .550$, $\eta^2 = .008$.

Discussion



The present study aimed to assess whether differing social identities (i.e., race, gender identity, and respectability) had an effect on perceived responsibility of survivors and perpetrators within 8 vignettes depicting an incident of sexual violence. Differences in the attribution of responsibility to survivors and perpetrators were predicted to be influenced based on race (i.e., Black or White), respectability (i.e. High or Low) and gender identity (i.e. Transgender or Cisgender). While no such effects on responsibility were observed, these results may indicate that the manipulations to identity were not successful in predicting differences in responsibility attributed to a survivor or perpetrator in an online sample of adults. The current findings are not in accordance with previous work where, there are often trends of victim blaming among survivors with more marginalized identities. When race has been varied in previous studies, there has also been consistent evidence of the disparity faced by Black survivors when compared to White survivors (Katz, Merrilees, Hoxmeier & Motisi, 2017). The racial descriptions of the perpetrator and survivor were not explicitly provided in this study. The names assigned to the characters were selected after a pilot study was conducted to evaluate whether the intended race of the characters could be assumed by their names. This pilot was only conducted among a convenience sample of college students and may not have been reflective of the perceptions of the general public. The lack of expected racial main effects may be a result of some misclassifications of the race of the survivor and/or perpetrator.

Also, the manipulation of gender identity was explicitly stated by the inclusion of the sentence “Asher is aware that Rachel/Latisha is a transgender woman”. The overt nature of this particular manipulation may have impacted participant responses. When compared to cisgender women, transgender women are more often subjected to and considered responsible for incidents of sexual violence (Valentine et al., 2017). Our findings were not consistent with previous



literature, reflecting that the influence of transphobic biases on perceived survivor responsibility may need to be assessed with the use of more covert methods. The overt description of the survivor being a transgender woman may have sparked a socially desirable response, as to not appear transphobic. If the survivor's gender identity was depicted less explicitly, or an additional implicit measure of transphobia was included, the manipulation may have yielded results that are in line with previous research. Specifically, in Wang-Jones et. al, (2017), assessment of explicit and implicit measures of transphobia, participants that reported favorable opinions toward trans individuals in an explicit measure scored higher on social desirability measures, while there were no correlations between social desirability and the implicit measure of transphobia.

Also, the respectability condition's stating that Rachel/Latisha "has openly shared with friends that she has had many sexual experiences" may or may not have invoked perceptions of lower respectability. In previous studies where perceptions of respectability have been investigated, researchers have often alluded to the stereotypical "party girl" who is known to be sexually active or the "sweet girl" who is viewed as less sexually active. Specifically, in Dupuis & Clay's (2013) article assessing the effect of victim respectability on perceptions of responsibility in a mock rape case, the "sweet girl" and "party girl" dichotomy was used to invoke perceptions of higher or lower respectability. The current study wanted to avoid unintentionally leading participants by using labels that may have communicated moral judgements. To ensure that any views regarding the respectability of the survivor would be completely generated by the participants, labeling the survivors as either "good girls" or girls with a reputation of "sleeping around" was avoided. This decision resulted in the adaptation of the original measure where such qualifiers were used (Tamborra, Dutton & Terry, 2014).

Further investigation is needed to ensure that notions of respectability can be accurately assessed without encouraging judgement.

Concurrent with previous research, rape myth acceptance and just world beliefs were significantly related to perceptions of responsibility (Culda, Opre & Dobrin, 2018). Current discussions centered on sexual violence may have started shifting perceptions of who is deemed responsible. In the example of the Brett Kavanaugh proceedings, it has become more apparent that in many cases of sexual violence there is a perception that both the perpetrator and survivor are victims (Pollino, 2020). As outlined in, Pollino's (2020) article evaluating media portrayals of survivors and perpetrators, the belief in a “true faceless perpetrator” is being used to further continue the inaccurate notion that only suspicious strangers are “real rapist”. These public discussions have a wide reach and have been proven time and time again to have some leaning in public opinion.

The gender disparity in perceptions of blame in sexual violence cases has been well documented (Kunst, Bailey, Prendergast & Gundersen, 2019). Kunst and colleague's (2019) include evidence of experiential factors such as, men reporting more perpetration of sexual harassment and women reporting more personal harassment experiences, that further explain our findings. Men also tend to have greater acceptance of rape myths, which also has been shown to have an impact on rape acknowledgement (Reed et. al, 2020). These recent works provide additional insight into the understanding of how survivors are perceived to be either partially or totally accountable for perpetrator's actions.

The findings from the current study suggests that certain demographic and experiential factors may provide additional insight as to how perceptions of responsibility can be challenged. Namely, knowledge of a survivor, stage of adulthood, and sex assigned at birth. It is also

apparent that certain combined perceptions of gender identity, racial identity, and respectability did in fact have some influence on how responsibility was attributed. It appears that lower perceived respectability when paired with the Black survivor condition shifted perceptions of responsibility within conditions 1 and 3 compared to conditions 5 and 8. When observing the sex differences of ratings of responsibility, those who were assigned male at birth rated the survivor as more responsible when she was Black, for both transgender and cisgender conditions when perceptions of respectability were low. This may be characteristic of the previously discussed gendered racial stereotypes rooted in the oversexualization of Black women (Gomez & Gobin, 2020). Such stereotypes are rooted in antiquated norms that have persisted since the Transatlantic slave trade. Body autonomy, reproductive freedom, and humanity were revoked for African descended people for centuries, and the residual effect of such dehumanization is evident in current perceptions of African descended people. Outdated and racist views of sexual respectability continue to fuel these perceptions of survivors being responsible when they are Black.

Similarly, views of respectability, or the misinformed perception that prior sexual experiences are in any way related to current instances of sexual violence may have impacted perceptions of the transgender survivors (Allen, 2018). In certain conditions where the survivor was a transgender woman, those assigned male at birth held the survivor significantly more responsible than those assigned female at birth. Transphobic attitudes are often cited to excuse perpetrators from responsibility “The Trans panic Defense”, while imparting blame on survivors in instances of sexual violence (Lee, 2020). In conditions 3, 5, and 8 just world beliefs could be used to provide further insight as to why those who were socialized within a masculine and patriarchal society would view a survivor as more responsible. These findings are also in line

with previous studies where anti-transgender prejudice has been found to predict victim blame attributions (Thomas, Amburgey & Ellis, 2016).

The influence of adulthood stage and knowledge of a survivor on responsibility can be partially explained by generational differences in interpretation of sexual violence. Older adults who previously experienced or witness sexual violence, may have labeled the occurrence as such due to the sexual scripts and legal norms of previous years (Ramsey-Klawsnik & Miller, 2017). The significant three-way interaction observed between stage of adulthood, sex assigned at birth, and knowledge of a survivor could be indicative of the combined norms established during certain generations, gender norms and expectations, as well as just world beliefs.

Limitations

While various methods were put in place to ensure that the data were collected and analyzed accurately, there did remain a few limitations to the study. As with any online study, there is always a possibility that responses are not thoughtfully entered (i.e., bots and “lazy responders”). To counter this, extra precautions were taken during data cleaning to minimize the presence bots included in the overall sample. Also, while Amazon’s Mechanical Turk has been deemed a suitable medium for psychological research, special attention needs to be directed to recruit samples that are more reflective of the larger society. The majority of participants resided within the southern region of the United States, and the overall sample majority identifying as White or of European descent. Most participants were also cisgender, which greatly minimizes gender diversity of the sample. In the additional analysis sex assigned at birth was used to further understand the influence of potential gender socialization experiences on responsibility attributions. Sex assigned at birth is insufficient in providing a richer understanding of individuals gender expression, gender identity, or perceived gender identity.

Also, the Perceptions of Coercion and Ascribed Responsibility Questionnaire was developed and validated with a college sample. The associated vignettes were also normed on perceptions of sexual violence before the popularization of the #Metoo movement. Within the past 3 years this movement has shifted perceptions and conversations about sexual violence. It is also notable that data were collected during the Coronavirus pandemic, elevated racial tensions, and civil unrest, as well as the months leading up to the 2020 United States presidential election. There have also been frequent attempts to revoke rights and resources of trans-individuals. The time and national climate in which data were collected may have had some impact on participant responses and involvement. Subsequent studies should compare findings reported during this time as well as in following months to assess any differences in participant perspectives or participation. These recent cultural developments may have altered the way in which the vignette's depiction of sexual violence was understood. To ensure that recent perceptions of sexual violence are understood, additional open response items should be incorporated to assess knowledge and reactions to the #MeToo movement. Moreover, initiatives that are centered on addressing and reducing the numerous ideologies that result in the blame of survivors, must also incorporate participants outside of academia. Due in part to Title IX, conversations had amongst college students regarding rape and sexual violence are almost certainly exceptionally different than the discussions had outside of academic spaces.

The questionnaire associated with the vignettes could also be improved for clarity. Within the measure assessing survivor and perpetrator responsibility, it is possible to attribute blame to both the survivor and perpetrator, and to choose not to assign blame at all. A number of participants opted to not assign blame to either individual by selecting that they "neither agreed nor disagreed" that either were responsible. There also may have been a lack of clarity due to the



order in which response options were presented. Lower scores indicated more responsibility attributed, while higher scores reflected less responsibility attributed. Lastly, to enhance clarity when assessing the outcome of survivor/perpetrator responsibility, future studies should adjust the rating of items when using the Perceptions of Coercion and Ascribed Responsibility Questionnaire responsibility measure. To ensure that participants are aware of the meaning of their selections, items should be presented so that there is less ambiguity within the scales. This will assist in ensuring that participants are responding as they intend to. Future adaptations may opt to adapt the measure so that responses are more dichotomous instead of only continuous. This will ensure that participants won't simply select that they "neither agree nor disagree" that the perpetrator or survivor is responsible.

Future Directions

The current materials in place may not be the most optimal to observe the effect of bias toward intersecting social identities perceptions of responsibility. As previously mentioned, perspectives of what is considered socially acceptable stances on sexual violence are more accessible than in previous years. When continuing to assess responsibility through the previously used quantitative methods, vignettes must be crafted to ensure that the intended identities are understood. Such vignettes must also be wary of unintentionally informing of the nature of the study, or leading participant responses. Ratings should be reverse scored to ensure clarity of choices; meaning lower scores would be indicative of less responsibility being attributed, with higher scores indicating more attribution of blame. Including the question "Who is more responsible for the sex?", with either Asher or Latisha/Rachel listed, can reduce excessive selection of the "neither agree nor disagree" response. Alternative methods should be paired or replaced when varying social identities. Stock pictures may be included to ensure that

the survivor and perpetrator race is understood. Additionally, pilot testing is needed to ensure that respectability is being accurately understood. More exploratory methods may need to be implemented to capture recent perceptions of survivors and perpetrators of sexual violence.

While the evidence presented from these vignettes yielded important findings, various alternative methods may also more accurately provide context on these perspectives. Future work should consider the implementation of a mock sexual violence case, where files containing demographic information would remain separate from the description of the assault. This may invoke more honest responses when reporting on perceptions of culpability, due to perceived objectivity in responding to a case file compared to reading vignette. To ensure that social desirability is somewhat reduced there may also need to be more strict constraints on the response time to the materials assessing perceptions of responsibility. Also, with the recent discussions of sexual violence potentially shifting the larger understanding of these events, more qualitative methodology may be more appropriate to understand more nuanced views. Interviews or focus group discussions where participants are given the opportunity to discuss their perceptions of sexual violence, and culpability without leading may provide additional understanding as to the context of when and why certain justification are made for perpetrators over survivors. Due to the notable difference in ratings compared to age, focus groups where adults of similar adult stages and gender socialization experiences may be better suited to attain more data on the content of current perceptions held about sexual violence and responsibility attributions. Such focus groups should also investigate the gendered perceptions of sexual respectability, along with cultural and racial nuances.

While the current study did observe a few intersections of identities, future studies may also consider including additional social identities, such as perpetrator race, sexuality (e.g.,



bisexual, and pansexual survivors), and more expansive descriptors of gender identity and expression (i.e., nonbinary survivors). Measures evaluating implicit biases may yield more representative data, through reducing social desirability influences on responses. Also, certain discriminatory views toward social identities remain largely unchallenged (e.g., biphobia and transphobia) or normalized, it is important for research to be up to date regarding shifts in comfort with expressing stigmatizing views.

For future quantitative analysis of these vignettes, developing a measure assessing perspectives of sexual violence for more diverse populations is necessary. Generalizing the perspective and experiences of college students can not affect the critical change that is needed to address the current misinformed views of sexual violence. Additional work to evaluate current perspectives of sexual violence, and attribution of responsibility may need to use more exploratory methods to capture these perspectives. Future studies should include assessments of participant personal beliefs regarding sexual consent, while also assessing whether those beliefs are the same when evaluating a separate case of sexual violence.

Conclusion

In summary, to better aid in the understanding and prevention of incidences of sexual violence; further evaluation of implicit biases is needed to ensure that social desirability does not impact responses. Future work should continue evaluating the instances where survivors are subjected to secondary victimization through assumptions of partial or total responsibility for sexual violence. Moreover, initiatives that are centered on addressing and reducing the numerous ideologies that result in the blame of survivors, must also incorporate participants outside of academia that are not only emerging adults. Initiatives that only inform such a small portion of the larger society, cannot provide the systemic as well as interpersonal change that is required to

ensure that survivors are protected, believed, and provided all necessary services. It is also imperative that perpetrators are held accountable. Current narratives where perpetrators are viewed as victims to unfounded attacks, may be informing why responsibility is often seen as shared between both survivors and perpetrators. Individuals must perceive their selves as efficacious when understanding what constitutes sexual consent and the numerous behaviors that increase societal acceptance of sexual violence. Without a genuine understanding of the influences of both implicit and overt societal views of survivor and perpetrator responsibility, interventions may not encompass all that is necessary to combat harmful views related to rape and sexual violence. Additional efforts are needed to upend the pervasive sexual norms that excuse sexual violence. Ensuring that society can become a place where no one will have to live in fear of being subjected to sexual violence, and in the event that they are, they will be met with empathy and resources to address their trauma.

Table 1.
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Rape Myth Acceptance	—									
2. Just World Beliefs	0.65***	—								
3. Survivor Responsibility	-0.70***	-0.52	—							
4. Perpetrator Responsibility	0.20***	0.01***	-0.18***	—						
5. Are you a survivor of rape	-0.19***	-0.14***	0.12***	-0.08**	—					
6. Has anyone ever forced you....	-0.20***	-0.15***	0.12***	-0.07**	0.64***	—				
7. Do you know a survivor?	0.23***	0.13***	-0.26***	0.14***	0.33***	0.26***	—			
8. Age	0.45***	0.35***	-0.40***	0.22***	-0.16***	-0.17***	0.17***	—		
9. Sex	-0.23***	-0.18***	0.21***	-0.12***	-0.01	-0.04	-0.14***	-0.25***	—	
10. College Enrollment	0.32***	0.21***	-0.34***	-0.18***	0.15***	0.43***	0.44***	-0.19***	—	
Mean		77.58	62.75	3.29	2.06	3.06	3.29	3.06	3.06	30.56
SD		30.32	11.08	1.45	1.15	1.45	1.45	1.45	1.45	12.38

Note: Sex 1 = Male, 2 = Female, 3 = Intersex. College Enrollment: 1 = Yes, 2 = No. Do you know a survivor: 1 = Yes, 2 = No. Are you a survivor: 1 = Yes, 2 = No. Has anyone ever forced you...: 1 = Yes, 2 = No. ** $p < .05$, *** $p < .001$

Table 2.

Multivariate results of MANCOVA predicting responsibility from social identities and covariates

	Pillai's Trace	df	F	η^2
<i>Main effect</i>				
Race	.002	2,925	0.89	.002
Respectability	.001	2,925	0.47	.001
Gender identity	.002	2,925	1.01	.002
<i>Covariates</i>				
Rape myth acceptance	.129	2,925	221.20***	.324
Just world beliefs	.044	2,925	21.42***	.044
<i>Interaction effects</i>				
Race x Respectability	.002	2,925	0.76	.002
Race x Gender identity	.001	2,925	0.37	.001
Gender identity x Respectability	.001	2,925	1.64	.001
Race x Respectability x Gender identity	.000	2,925	0.11	.000

Note. *** p < .001, ** p <.01, (a lack of asterisks reflects no significant findings)

Table 3.

Multivariate results of MANCOVA predicting responsibility from condition and demographic information.

	Pillai's Trace	η^2	F	η^2
<i>Main effect</i>				
Condition	.013	14,1592	0.76	.007
Knowledge of survivor	.022	2,795	8.82***	.022
Adulthood stage	.034	2,795	13.96***	.034
Sex	.004	2,795	1.41	.004
<i>Covariates</i>				
Rape myth acceptance	.227	2,795	116.73***	.227
Just world beliefs	.050	2,795	21.13***	.050
<i>Interaction effects</i>				
Condition x Knowledge of survivor	.017	14,1592	0.95	.008
Condition x Adulthood stage	.014	14,1592	0.78	.007
Condition x Sex	.041	14,1592	2.39**	.021
Knowledge of survivor x Stage of adulthood	.008	2,795	3.22*	.008
Knowledge of survivor x Sex	.002	2,795	.81	.002
Adulthood stage x Sex	.011	2,795	4.34**	.011
Condition x Adulthood stage x Knowledge of survivor	.025	14,1592	1.46	.013
Condition x Knowledge of survivor x Sex	.021	14,1592	1.20	.010
Condition x Adulthood stage x Sex	.019	14,1592	1.10	.010
Knowledge of survivor x Adulthood stage x Sex	.013	2,795	5.05**	.013
Condition x Knowledge of survivor x Adulthood stage x sex	.016	14,1592	0.91	.008

Note. *** p < .001, ** p < .01, * p < .05 (a lack of asterisks reflects no significant findings)

Figure 1. Two- way interactions of Assigned Sex and Condition, for survivor responsibility.

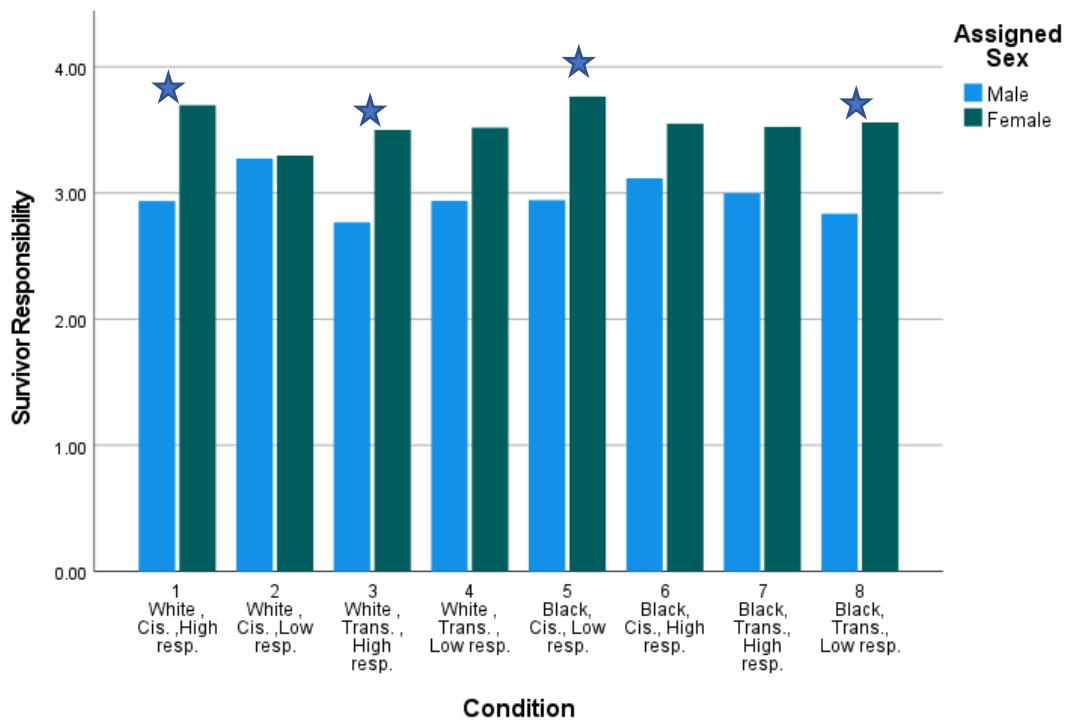
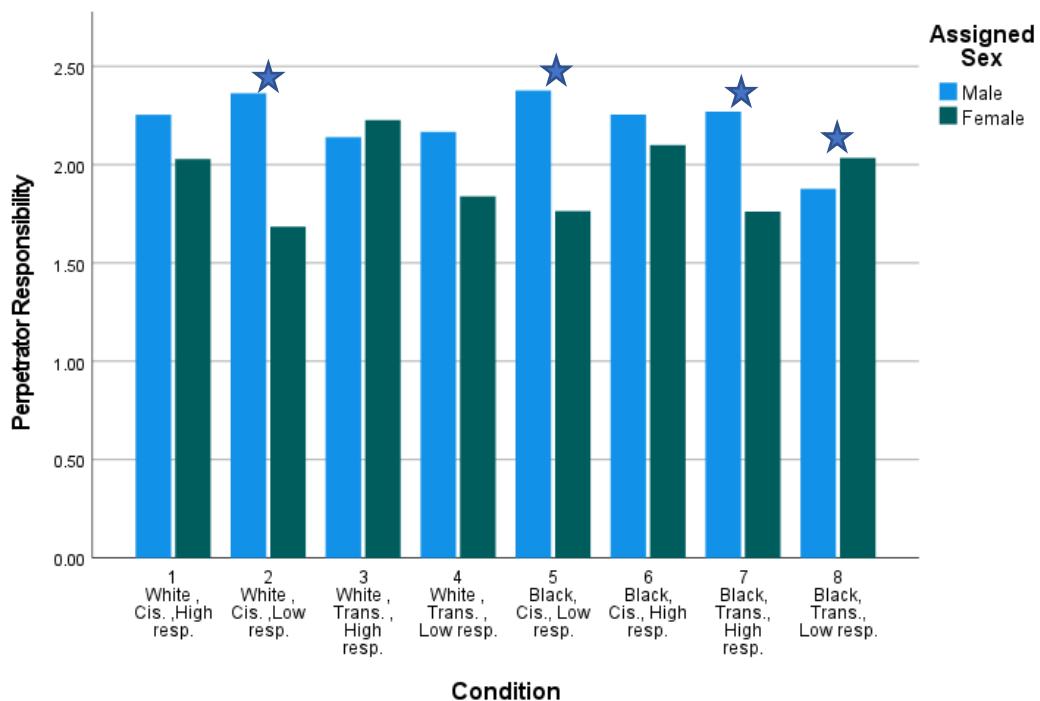


Figure 2. Two- way interactions of Assigned Sex and Condition, for perpetrator responsibility.



Note. (significant interactions are starred)

Figure 3. Two-way interaction of adulthood stage and knowledge of a survivor, for perpetrator responsibility.

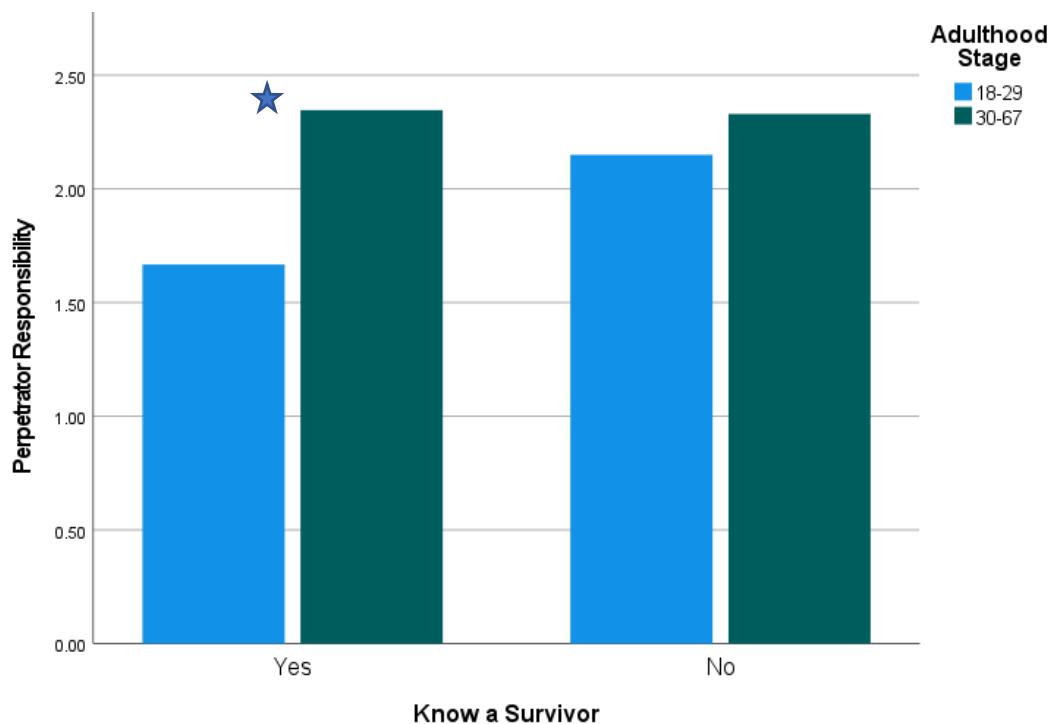
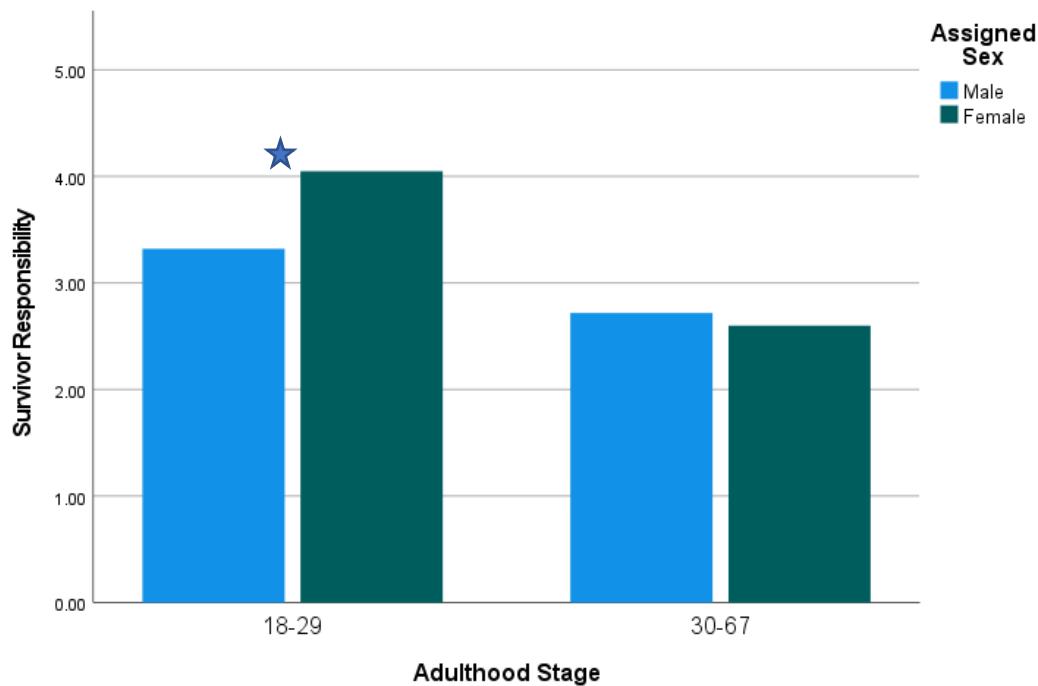
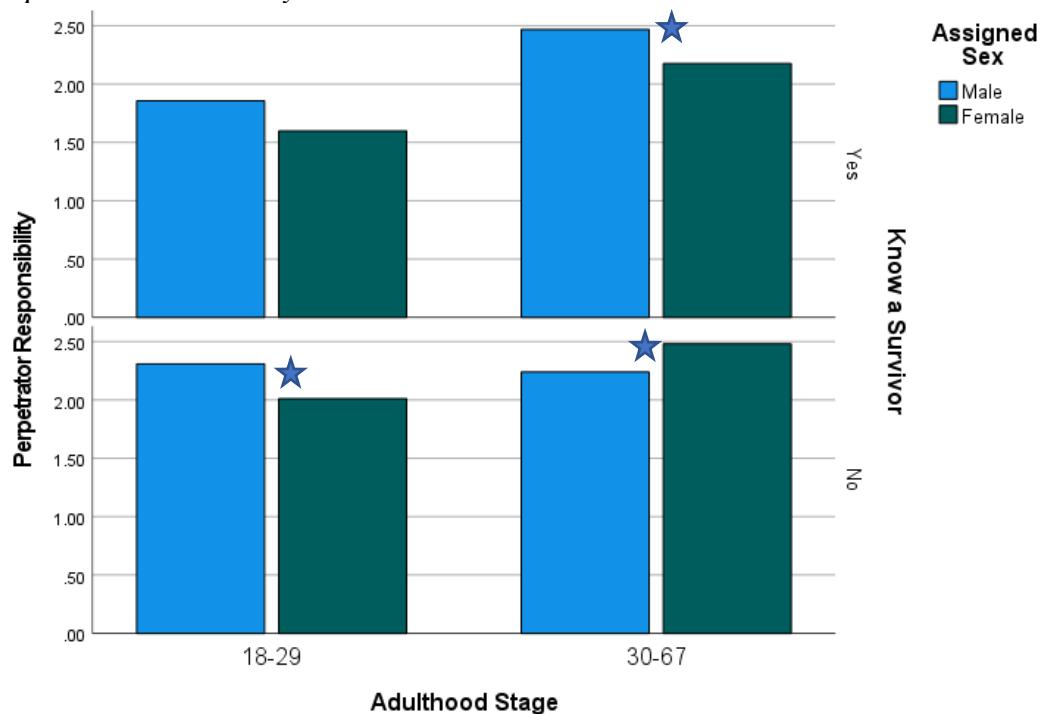


Figure 4. Two-way interaction of assigned sex and adulthood stage for survivor responsibility.



Note. (significant interactions are starred)

Figure 5. Three-way interaction of sex, adulthood stage, and knowledge of a survivor on perpetrator responsibility.



Note. (significant interactions are starred)

References

- Alaggia, R., & Wang, S. (2020). "I never told anyone until the #metoo movement": What can we learn from sexual abuse and sexual assault disclosures made through social media? *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 103. DOI: 10.1016/j.chabu.2019.104312
- Allen, A. (2018). Rape messaging. *Fordham Law Review*, 87(3), 1033-1084.
- Ali, R. (2011). Dear colleague letter. *Office of the Assistant Secretary*.
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201104.pdf>
- Alinia, M. (2015). On Black feminist thought: Thinking oppression and resistance through intersectional paradigm. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 38(13), 2334-2340.
- American Psychological Association. (2015). Guidelines for psychological practice with transgender and gender nonconforming people. *American Psychologist*, 70(9), 832-864. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039906>
- Anderson, G. D., Overby, R. (2020). The impact of rape myths and current events on the well-being of sexual violence survivors. *Violence Against Women*. DOI: 10.1177/1077801220937782
- Anderson, J. R., Holland, E., Heldreth, C., & Johnson, S. P. (2018). Revisiting the Jezebel stereotype: The impact of target race on sexual objectification. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 42(4), 461-476.
- Beierlein, C., Werner, C. S., Preiser, S., & Wermuth, S. (2011). Are just-world beliefs compatible with justifying inequality? Collective political efficacy as a moderator. *Social Justice Research*, 24(3), 278. DOI: 10.1007/s11211-011-0139-2

- Bieneck, S., & Krahé, B. (2011). Blaming the victim and exonerating the perpetrator in cases of rape and robbery: Is there a double standard? *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 26(9), 1785–1797. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260510372945>
- Bongiorno, R., Langbroek, C., Bain, P. G., Ting, M., & Ryan, M. K. (2020). Why women are blamed for being sexually harassed: The effects of empathy for female victims and male perpetrators. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 44(1), 11-27.
- Brenner, H. (2018). title ix conundrum: Are campus visitors protected from sexual assault. *Iowa Law Review*, 104(1), 93-138.
- Brown, D. L., White-Johnson, R. L., & Griffin-Fennell, F. D. (2013). Breaking the chains: Examining the endorsement of modern Jezebel images and racial-ethnic esteem among African American women. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 15(5), 525-539.
- Burt, M. R. (1980). Cultural myths and supports for rape. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 38(2), 217-230.
- Butler, L. C., Lee, H., & Fisher, B. S. (2019). Less safe in the ivory tower: Campus sexual assault policy in the Trump administration. *Victims & Offenders*, 14(8), 979-996. DOI: 10.1080/15564886.2019.1671289
- Camus, C. (2019). Dissecting the# MeToo Movement: A Powerful Call to Action or a Futile Fuss?. *Women Leading Change: Case Studies on Women, Gender, and Feminism*, 4(1).
- Campbell, R., & Raja, S. (1999). Secondary victimization of rape victims: Insights from mental health professionals who treat survivors of violence. *Violence and Victims*, 14(3), 261-275.
- Campbell, R., Wasco, S. M., Ahrens, C. E., Sefl, T., & Barnes, H. E. (2001). Preventing the "second rape": Rape survivor's experiences with community service providers. *Journal of*



Interpersonal Violence, 16(12), 1239-1259.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/088626001016012002>

Campbell, R. (2005). What really happened? A validation study of rape survivors' help-seeking experiences with the legal and medical systems. *Violence and Victims*, 20(1), 55-68.

Cowan, G. and Quinton, W.J. (1997). Cognitive style and attitudinal correlates of the perceived causes of rape scale. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21(2), 227-245.
doi:[10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00110.x](https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00110.x)

Crenshaw, K. (1989). Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory and antiracist politics. *u. Chi. Legal f.*, 139.

Crome, S. A., & McCabe, M. P. (2001). Adult rape scripting within a victimological perspective. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 6(4), 395-413.

Culda, G. L., Opre, A. N., & Dobrin, A. D. (2018). Victim blaming by women and men who believe the world is a just place. *Cognition, Brain, Behavior*, 22(2), 99-110. DOI: 10.24193/cbb.2018.22.07

Deggans, J. (2018). Gendered inequalities in the workplace revisited: Masculinist dominance, institutionalized sexism, and assaultive behavior in the #MeToo era. *Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice*, 10(2), 43-49. DOI: 10.22381/CRLSJ10220182

Department of Justice's Office on Violence Against Women. (2019). *Sexual assault*.

<https://www.justice.gov/ovw/sexual-assault>

Diamond-Welch, B., Hellwege, J. M. & Mann, O. (2018). Blame avoidance and transgender individuals' attributions about rape unpacking gendered assumptions in defensive

attribution research. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, DOI:

10.1177/0886260518792241

Doherty, K., & Anderson, I. (2004). Making sense of male rape: Constructions of gender, sexuality and experience of rape victims. *Journal of Community & Applied Social Psychology, 14*(2), 85-103.

Donovan, R., & Williams, M. (2002). Living at the intersection: The effects of racism and sexism on Black rape survivors. *Women & Therapy, 25*(3-4), 95-105.

Donovan, R. A. (2007). To blame or not to blame: Influences of target race and observer sex on rape blame attribution. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 22*(6), 722-736.

Du Mont, J., Miller, K. L., & Myhr, T. L. (2003). The role of “real rape” and “real victim” stereotypes in the police reporting practices of sexually assaulted women. *Violence Against Women, 9*(4), 466-486. DOI: 10.1177/1077801202250960

Dupuis, E. C., & Clay, J. A. (2013). The role of race and respectability in attributions of responsibility for acquaintance rape. *Violence and Victims, 28*(6), 1085-1096.

Ellis, S. J., Bailey, L., & McNeil, J. (2016). Transphobic victimization and perceptions of future risk: A large-scale study of the experiences of trans people in the UK. *Psychology & Sexuality, 7*(3), 211-224.

Gartner, R. E., & Sterzing, P. R. (2016). Gender microaggressions as a gateway to sexual harassment and sexual assault: Expanding the conceptualization of youth sexual violence. *Affilia, 31*(4), 491-503.

Gómez, J.M., & Gobin, R. L. (2020). Black women and girls & #MeToo: Rape, cultural betrayal, & healing. *Sex Roles, 82*(1-2), 1-12.

doi:<http://dx.doi.org.proxy.library.vcu.edu/10.1007/s11199-019-01040-0>

- Goicolea, I., Torres, M. S., Edin, K., & Öhman, A. (2012). When sex is hardly about mutual pleasure: dominant and resistant discourses on sexuality and its consequences for young people's sexual health. *International Journal of Sexual Health*, 24(4), 303-317.
- Gravelin, C. R., Biernat, M., & Bucher, C. E. (2019). Blaming the victim of acquaintance rape: Individual, situational, and sociocultural factors. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 2422.
- Griffin, M. J. (2016). Intersecting intersectionalities and the failure of the law to protect transgender women of color in the United States. *Tulane Journal of Law and Sexuality: Review of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the Law*, 25, 123-144.
- Hayes, R. M., Lorenz, K., & Bell, K. A. (2013). Victim blaming others: Rape myth acceptance and the just world belief. *Feminist Criminology*, 8(3), 202-220. DOI: 10.1177/1557085113484788
- Holland, K. J. (2019, May 9). Correlates of College Women's Intentions to Use Formal Campus Supports for Sexual Assault. *Psychology of Violence*. Advance online publication.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/vio0000240>
- Hutton, A. (2016). Sexual violence against transgender college students. *Campus action against sexual assault: Needs, policies, procedures, and training programs*, 140-144.
- Jackson, D. L. (2018). "Me Too": Espistemic injustice and the struggle for recognition. *Feminist Philosophy Quarterly*, 4(4).
- Jones, C., & Aronson, E. (1973). Attribution of fault to a rape victim as a function of respectability of the victim. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 26(3), 415.
- Jozkowski, K. N., & Wiersma-Mosley, J. D. (2017). The Greek system: How gender inequality and class privilege perpetuate rape culture. *Family Relations*, 66(1), 89-103. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12229>

- Kanamori, Y., Cornelius-White, J. H. D., Pegors, T. K., Daniel, T., & Hulgus, J. (2017). Development and validation of the Transgender Attitudes and Beliefs Scale. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 46(5), 1503-1515. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10508-016-0840-1>.
- Katz, J., Moore, J. A., & Tkachuk, S. (2007). Verbal sexual coercion and perceived victim responsibility: Mediating effects of perceived control. *Sex Roles*, 57(3-4), 235-247.
- Katz, J., Merrilees, C., Hoxmeier, J. C., & Motisi, M. (2017). White female bystanders' responses to a black woman at risk for incapacitated sexual assault. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 41(2), 273-285.
- Kleinke, C. L., & Meyer, C. (1990). Evaluation of rape victim by men and women with high and low belief in a just world. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 14(3), 343-353.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1990.tb00024.x>
- Lee, C. (2020). The trans panic defense revisited. *American Criminal Law Review*, 57(4), 1411-1498.
- Lerner, M. J. (1965). Evaluation of performance as a function of performer's reward and attractiveness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1(4), 355–360.
<https://doi.org/10.1037/h0021806>
- Lerner, M. J. (1997). What does the belief in a just world protect us from: The dread of death or the fear of understanding suffering? *Psychological Inquiry*, 8(1), 29-32. DOI: 10.1207/s15327965pli0801_5
- Lerner, M. J., & Miller, D. T. (1978). Just world research and the attribution process: Looking back and ahead. *Psychological Bulletin*, 85(5), 1030.

- Leung, R., & Williams, R. (2019). #MeToo and intersectionality: An examination of the #MeToo movement through the R. Kelly scandal. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 43(4), 349-371.
- Lewis, K. R., Robillard, A., Billings, D., & White, K. (2019). Differential perceptions of a hypothetical sexual assault survivor based on race and ethnicity: Exploring victim responsibility, trauma, and need for social support. *Journal of American College Health*, 67(4), 308-317.
- Littleton, H. L., & Dodd, J. C. (2016). Violent Attacks and Damaged Victims. *Violence Against Women*, 22(14), 1725–1747. doi: 10.1177/1077801216631438
- Lonsway, K. A., & Fitzgerald, L. F. (1994). Rape myths: In review. *Psychology of women quarterly*, 18(2), 133-164.
- Lonsway, K. A., & Fitzgerald, L. F. (1995). Attitudinal antecedents of rape myth acceptance: A theoretical and empirical reexamination. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 68(4), 704.
- Luginbuhl, J., & Mullin, C. (1981). Rape and responsibility: How and how much is the victim blamed? *Sex Roles*, 7(5), 547-559.
- Matsuzaka, S., & Koch, D. E. (2019). Trans Feminine Sexual Violence Experiences: The Intersection of Transphobia and Misogyny. *Affilia*, 34(1), 28–47.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0886109918790929>
- Meyer, D. (2012). An Intersectional Analysis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) People's Evaluations of Anti-Queer Violence. *Gender & Society*, 26(6), 849–873. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243212461299>

- Miller, A. K. (2019). "Should Have Known Better than to Fraternize with a Black Man": Structural Racism Intersects Rape Culture to Intensify Attributions of Acquaintance Rape Victim Culpability. *Sex Roles*, 81(7-8), 428-438.
- Mitchell, K. (2013). Love in action: Noting similarities between lynching then and anti-LGBT violence now. *Callaloo* 36(3), 688-717. DOI: 10.1353/cal.2013.0167
- Monroe, S. (2006). Dear colleague letter, *Department of Education*.
- Muehlenhard, C. L., Peterson, Z. D., Humphreys, T. P., & Jozkowski, K. N. (2017) Evaluating the one-in-five statistic: women's risk of sexual assault while in college, *The Journal of Sex Research*, 54:4-5, 549-576, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2017.1295014>
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00224499.2017.1295014>
- Patterson, D. (2011). The linkage between secondary victimization by law enforcement and rape case outcomes. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 26(2), 328-347.
- Patton, L.D., (2014) Preserving respectability or blatant disrespect? A critical discourse analysis of the morehouse appropriate attire policy and implications for intersectional approaches to examining campus policies, *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 27:6, 724-746, DOI: 10.1080/09518398.2014.901576
- Perilloux, C., Duntley, J. D., & Buss, D. M. (2014). Blame attribution in sexual victimization. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 63, 81-86.
- Phipps, A. (2009). Rape and respectability: Ideas about sexual violence and social class. *Sociology*, 43(4), 667-683.
- Reilly, M. E., Lott, B., Caldwell, D., & Deluca, L. (1992). Tolerance for sexual harassment related to self-reported sexual victimization. *Gender & Society*, 6(1), 122–138. doi: 10.1177/089124392006001008

- Ringel, C. (1997) *Criminal Victimization 1996: Changes 1995-96 with Trends 1993-96*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv96.pdf>
- Rothe, D. L., & Collins, V. E. (2019). Turning back the clock? Violence against women and the Trump administration. *Victims & Offenders*, 14(8), 965-978. DOI: 10.1080/15564886.2019.1671284
- Russell, K. J., & Hand, C. J. (2017). Rape myth acceptance, victim blame attribution and Just World Beliefs: A rapid evidence assessment. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 37, 153-160.
- Ryan, K. M. (2011). The relationship between rape myths and sexual scripts: The social construction of rape. *Sex roles*, 65(11-12), 774-782. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-011-0033-2>
- Scheim, A. I., & Bauer, G. R. (2019). The Intersectional Discrimination Index: Development and validation of measures of self-reported enacted and anticipated discrimination for intercategorical analysis. *Social Science & Medicine*, 226, 225-235.
- Schwendinger, J. R., & Schwendinger, H. (1974). Rape myths: In legal, theoretical, and everyday practice. *Crime and Social Justice*, (1), 18-26
- Seelman, K. L. (2015). Unequal treatment of transgender individuals in domestic violence and rape crisis programs. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 41(3), 307-325.
- Shaw, J., Campbell, R., Cain, D., & Feeney, H. (2017). Beyond surveys and scales: How rape myths manifest in sexual assault police records. *Psychology of Violence*, 7(4), 602-614. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/vio0000072>
- Sommerville, D. M. (1995). The rape myth in the old South reconsidered. *The Journal of Southern History*, 61(3), 481-518.

- Sinozich, S. & Langton, L. (2014). Rape and sexual assault victimization among college-age females, 1995–2013. *The Bureau of Justice Statistics of the U.S. Department of Justice*.
- Stoll, L. C., Lilley, T. G., & Pinter, K. (2017). Rape Myths Acceptance Questionnaire [Database record]. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/t59811-000>
- Strömwall, L. A., Alfredsson, H., & Landström, S. (2013). Blame attributions and rape: Effects of belief in a just world and relationship level. *Legal and Criminological Psychology*, 18(2), 254-261. DOI: 10.1111/j.2044-8333.2012.02044.x
- Sullivan, A. C., Ong, A. C., La Macchia, S. T., & Louis, W. R. (2016). The impact of unpunished hate crimes: When derogating the victim extends into derogating the group. *Social Justice Research*, 29(3), 310-330. DOI: 10.1007/s11211-016-0266-x
- Sutton, R. M., & Douglas, K. M. (2005). Justice for all, or just for me? More evidence of the importance of the self-other distinction in just-world beliefs. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 39(3), 637-645. DOI: 10.1016/j.paid.2005.02.010
- Tadros, A., Sharon, M. J., Hoffman, S. M., & Davidov, D. M. (2018). Emergency department visits for sexual assault by emerging adults: Is alcohol a factor? *The Western Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 19(5), 797–802. <https://doi.org/10.5811/westjem.2018.6.38219>
- Tamborra, T. L., Dutton, L. B., & Terry, K. J. (2014). Verbally coerced sex: Does she have to say ‘no’? *International Review of Victimology*, 20(2), 227-241. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0269758014521740>
- Thomas, D. M., Amburgey, J., & Ellis, L. (2016). Anti-transgender prejudice mediates the association of just world beliefs and victim blame attribution. *International Journal of Transgenderism*, 17(3-4), 176-184. DOI: 10.1080/15532739.2016.1232627.

Truman, J.L. & Langton, L., (2014). *Criminal Victimization, 2013 (Revised)*. Bureau of Justice Statistics. <https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv13.pdf>

Vonderhaar, R. L., & Carmody, D. C. (2015) There are no “innocent victims” the influence of just world beliefs and prior victimization on rape myth acceptance. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 30(10), 1615-1632. DOI: 10.1177/0886260514549196

Wakelin, A., & Long, K. (2003). Effects of Victim Gender and Sexuality on Attributions of Blame to Rape Victims. *Sex Roles*, 49(9), 477-487.

Wang-Jones, T. “Tie” S., Alhassoon, O. M., Hattrup, K., Ferdman, B. M., & Lowman, R. L. (2017). Development of gender identity implicit association tests to assess attitudes toward transmen and transwomen. *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 4(2), 169–183. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.vcu.edu/10.1037/sgd0000218.supp>

Warner, L. R., & Shields, S. A. (2013). The intersections of sexuality, gender, and race: Identity research at the crossroads. *Sex Roles*, 68(11-12), 803-810.

Weiser, D. A. (2017). Confronting myths about sexual assault: A feminist analysis of the false report literature. *Family Relations*, 66(1), 46-60.

Whatley, M. A. (1996). Victim characteristics influencing attributions of responsibility to rape victims: A meta-analysis. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 1(2), 81-95

Appendix A

[Vignettes]

1. Rachel and Asher are at a party at Rachel's friend's house. (1A) Asher and Rachel have never met before tonight. (2A) Rachel comes from an upper-class family and has openly shared with friends that she intends to remain a virgin until she is married. Rachel and Asher are introduced, and they begin to talk and dance. Rachel is flirting and dancing with Asher. After about a half an hour Rachel says, "Sorry I cannot spend more time with you, because I have a school assignment that is due tomorrow." Rachel gives Asher her number, says good-night and asks Asher to call her tomorrow. Rachel goes upstairs to her friend's bedroom to work on the assignment. Asher follows Rachel. Asher knocks on the door and Rachel opens the door. Asher says he did not get a good-night kiss. Asher steps forward and kisses Rachel. Rachel kisses Asher back. As they kiss for about 30 seconds, Asher closes the door behind him. Rachel stops kissing Asher and says, "I really have to get my work done, let's talk tomorrow." Asher says, "OK, but just one more kiss." As he is saying this Asher takes Rachel by the hand and sits on the bed. Rachel kisses Asher for a few seconds and then says, "OK I should really get some work done now." Asher then leans Rachel back and continues to kiss Rachel. Asher then begins to pull up Rachel's skirt. Rachel says that they should take a break. Asher says, "Come on, you know you want me as much as I want you. Everyone knows you want me; the whole party saw you all over me." Asher begins kissing Rachel again. Rachel says nothing and continues to lie on the bed. Asher then takes his pants down and has sex with Rachel.
2. Rachel and Asher are at a party at Rachel's friend's house. (1A) Asher and Rachel have never met before tonight. (2C) Rachel comes from an upper-class family and has openly shared with friends that she has had many sexual experiences. Rachel and Asher are introduced, and they begin to talk and dance. Rachel is flirting and dancing with Asher. After about a half an hour Rachel says, "Sorry I cannot spend more time with you, because I have a school assignment that is due tomorrow." Rachel gives Asher her number, says good-night and asks Asher to call her tomorrow. Rachel goes upstairs to her friend's bedroom to work on the assignment. Asher follows Rachel. Asher knocks on the door and Rachel opens the door. Asher says he did not get a good-night kiss. Asher steps forward and kisses Rachel. Rachel kisses Asher back. As they kiss for about 30 seconds, Asher closes the door behind him. Rachel stops kissing Asher and says, "I really have to get my work done, let's talk tomorrow." Asher says, "OK, but just one more kiss." As he is saying this Asher takes Rachel by the hand and sits on the bed. Rachel kisses Asher for a few seconds and then says, "OK I should really get some work done now." Asher then leans Rachel back and continues to kiss Rachel. Asher then begins to pull up Rachel's skirt. Rachel says that they should take a break. Asher says, "Come on, you know you want me as much as I want you. Everyone knows you want me; the whole party saw you

all over me.” Asher begins kissing Rachel again. Rachel says nothing and continues to lie on the bed. Asher then takes his pants down and has sex with Rachel.

3. Rachel and Asher are at a party at Rachel’s friend’s house. (2A) Rachel comes from a lower-class family and has openly shared with friends that she intends to remain a virgin until she is married. Rachel and Asher are introduced, and they begin to talk and dance. Rachel is flirting and dancing with Asher. After about a half an hour Rachel says, “Sorry I cannot spend more time with you, because I have a school assignment that is due tomorrow.” Rachel gives Asher her number, says good-night and asks Asher to call her tomorrow. Rachel goes upstairs to her friend’s bedroom to work on the assignment. Asher follows Rachel. Asher knocks on the door and Rachel opens the door. Asher says he did not get a good-night kiss. Asher steps forward and kisses Rachel. Rachel kisses Asher back. As they kiss for about 30 seconds, Asher closes the door behind him. Rachel stops kissing Asher and says, “I really have to get my work done, let’s talk tomorrow.” Asher says, “OK, but just one more kiss.” As he is saying this Asher takes Rachel by the hand and sits on the bed. Rachel kisses Asher for a few seconds and then says, “OK I should really get some work done now.” Asher then leans Rachel back and continues to kiss Rachel. Asher then begins to pull up Rachel’s skirt. Rachel says that they should take a break. Asher says, “Come on, you know you want me as much as I want you. Everyone knows you want me; the whole party saw you all over me.” Asher begins kissing Rachel again. Rachel says nothing and continues to lie on the bed. Asher then takes his pants down and has sex with Rachel.
4. Rachel and Asher are at a party at Rachel’s friend’s house. (2C) Rachel comes from a lower-class family and has openly shared with friends that she has had many sexual experiences. Rachel is flirting and dancing with Asher. After about a half an hour Rachel says, “Sorry I cannot spend more time with you, because I have a school assignment that is due tomorrow.” Rachel gives Asher her number, says good-night and asks Asher to call her tomorrow. Rachel goes upstairs to her friend’s bedroom to work on the assignment. Asher follows Rachel. Asher knocks on the door and Rachel opens the door. Asher says he did not get a good-night kiss. Asher steps forward and kisses Rachel. Rachel kisses Asher back. As they kiss for about 30 seconds, Asher closes the door behind him. Rachel stops kissing Asher and says, “I really have to get my work done, let’s talk tomorrow.” Asher says, “OK, but just one more kiss.” As he is saying this Asher takes Rachel by the hand and sits on the bed. Rachel kisses Asher for a few seconds and then says, “OK I should really get some work done now.” Asher then leans Rachel back and continues to kiss Rachel. Asher then begins to pull up Rachel’s skirt. Rachel says that they should take a break. Asher says, “Come on, you know you want me as much as I want you. Everyone knows you want me; the whole party saw you all over me.” Asher begins kissing Rachel again. Rachel says nothing and continues to lie on the bed. Asher then takes his pants down and has sex with Rachel.
5. Rachel and Asher are at a party at Rachel’s friend’s house. (1B) Asher and Rachel have never met before tonight, and Asher is aware that Rachel is a transgender woman. (2A) Rachel comes from an upper-class family and has openly shared with friends that she intends to remain a virgin until she is married. Rachel and Asher are introduced, and they

begin to talk and dance. Rachel is flirting and dancing with Asher. After about a half an hour Rachel says, “Sorry I cannot spend more time with you, because I have a school assignment that is due tomorrow.” Rachel gives Asher her number, says good-night and asks Asher to call her tomorrow. Rachel goes upstairs to her friend’s bedroom to work on the assignment. Asher follows Rachel. Asher knocks on the door and Rachel opens the door. Asher says he did not get a good-night kiss. Asher steps forward and kisses Rachel. Rachel kisses Asher back. As they kiss for about 30 seconds, Asher closes the door behind him. Rachel stops kissing Asher and says, “I really have to get my work done, let’s talk tomorrow.” Asher says, “OK, but just one more kiss.” As he is saying this Asher takes Rachel by the hand and sits on the bed. Rachel kisses Asher for a few seconds and then says, “OK I should really get some work done now.” Asher then leans Rachel back and continues to kiss Rachel. Asher then begins to pull up Rachel’s skirt. Rachel says that they should take a break. Asher says, “Come on, you know you want me as much as I want you. Everyone knows you want me; the whole party saw you all over me.” Asher begins kissing Rachel again. Rachel says nothing and continues to lie on the bed. Asher then takes his pants down and has sex with Rachel.

6. Rachel and Asher are at a party at Rachel’s friend’s house. (1B) Asher and Rachel have never met before tonight, and Asher is aware that Rachel is a transgender woman. (2B) Rachel comes from a lower-class family and has openly shared with friends that she has had many sexual experiences. Rachel and Asher are introduced, and they begin to talk and dance. Rachel is flirting and dancing with Asher. After about a half an hour Rachel says, “Sorry I cannot spend more time with you, because I have a school assignment that is due tomorrow.” Rachel gives Asher her number, says good-night and asks Asher to call her tomorrow. Rachel goes upstairs to her friend’s bedroom to work on the assignment. Asher follows Rachel. Asher knocks on the door and Rachel opens the door. Asher says he did not get a good-night kiss. Asher steps forward and kisses Rachel. Rachel kisses Asher back. As they kiss for about 30 seconds, Asher closes the door behind him. Rachel stops kissing Asher and says, “I really have to get my work done, let’s talk tomorrow.” Asher says, “OK, but just one more kiss.” As he is saying this Asher takes Rachel by the hand and sits on the bed. Rachel kisses Asher for a few seconds and then says, “OK I should really get some work done now.” Asher then leans Rachel back and continues to kiss Rachel. Asher then begins to pull up Rachel’s skirt. Rachel says that they should take a break. Asher says, “Come on, you know you want me as much as I want you. Everyone knows you want me; the whole party saw you all over me.” Asher begins kissing Rachel again. Rachel says nothing and continues to lie on the bed. Asher then takes his pants down and has sex with Rachel.
7. Rachel and Asher are at a party at Rachel’s friend’s house. (1B) Asher and Rachel have never met before tonight, and Asher is aware that Rachel is a transgender woman. (2C) Rachel comes from an upper-class family and has openly shared with friends that she has had many sexual experiences. Rachel and Asher are introduced, and they begin to talk and dance. Rachel is flirting and dancing with Asher. After about a half an hour Rachel says, “Sorry I cannot spend more time with you, because I have a school assignment that is due tomorrow.” Rachel gives Asher her number, says good-night and asks Asher to call her tomorrow. Rachel goes upstairs to her friend’s bedroom to work on the assignment.

Asher follows Rachel. Asher knocks on the door and Rachel opens the door. Asher says he did not get a good-night kiss. Asher steps forward and kisses Rachel. Rachel kisses Asher back. As they kiss for about 30 seconds, Asher closes the door behind him. Rachel stops kissing Asher and says, "I really have to get my work done, let's talk tomorrow." Asher says, "OK, but just one more kiss." As he is saying this Asher takes Rachel by the hand and sits on the bed. Rachel kisses Asher for a few seconds and then says, "OK I should really get some work done now." Asher then leans Rachel back and continues to kiss Rachel. Asher then begins to pull up Rachel's skirt. Rachel says that they should take a break. Asher says, "Come on, you know you want me as much as I want you. Everyone knows you want me; the whole party saw you all over me." Asher begins kissing Rachel again. Rachel says nothing and continues to lie on the bed. Asher then takes his pants down and has sex with Rachel.

8. Rachel and Asher are at a party at Rachel's friend's house. (1B) Asher and Rachel have never met before tonight, and Asher is aware that Rachel is a transgender woman. (2D) Rachel comes from a lower-class family and has openly shared with friends that she intends to remain a virgin until she is married. Rachel and Asher are introduced, and they begin to talk and dance. Rachel is flirting and dancing with Asher. After about a half an hour Rachel says, "Sorry I cannot spend more time with you, because I have a school assignment that is due tomorrow." Rachel gives Asher her number, says good-night and asks Asher to call her tomorrow. Rachel goes upstairs to her friend's bedroom to work on the assignment. Asher follows Rachel. Asher knocks on the door and Rachel opens the door. Asher says he did not get a good-night kiss. Asher steps forward and kisses Rachel. Rachel kisses Asher back. As they kiss for about 30 seconds, Asher closes the door behind him. Rachel stops kissing Asher and says, "I really have to get my work done, let's talk tomorrow." Asher says 'OK, but just one more kiss.' As he is saying this Asher takes Rachel by the hand and sits on the bed. Rachel kisses Asher for a few seconds and then says, "OK I should really get some work done now." Asher then leans Rachel back and continues to kiss Rachel. Asher then begins to pull up Rachel's skirt. Rachel says that they should take a break. Asher says, "Come on, you know you want me as much as I want you. Everyone knows you want me; the whole party saw you all over me." Asher begins kissing Rachel again. Rachel says nothing and continues to lie on the bed. Asher then takes his pants down and has sex with Rachel.

[ADAPTED] Perceptions of Coercion and Ascribed Responsibility Questionnaire

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree				Strongly Disagree

1. Rachel/Latisha is more responsible for the sex.
2. Asher is more responsible for the sex than Rachel/Latisha.

Appendix B

Rape Myths Acceptance Questionnaire

1

2

3

4

5

Strongly
Agree

Agree

Neither
Agree nor
Disagree

Disagree

Strongly
Disagree

Items:

1. Rape does not occur in lesbian relationships.
2. Rapists are usually "criminal types."
3. Rape usually occurs in inner city urban areas.
4. Many so-called rape victims are actually women who had sex and "changed their minds" afterwards.
5. Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at men.
6. When men get raped, the victims are almost always gay.
7. Rape is most traumatic for girls from upper-class neighborhoods.
8. Men from middle-class homes almost never rape.
9. A woman who goes to the home or apartment of a man on the first date is implying that she wants to have sex.
10. Women of color are more likely than White women to be raped because they tend to have more sexual partners.
11. White women who date men of color are more likely to be raped.
12. A woman who dresses in skimpy clothes should not be surprised if a man tries to force her to have sex.
13. Lesbian women who dress in masculine clothing are rarely raped.
14. If a woman chooses to take the train at night, she is putting herself at risk of being raped.
15. Students who live in bad neighborhoods are more likely to be raped.
16. When a man is very sexually aroused, he may not even realize that a woman is resisting.
17. Although most women would not admit it, they generally find being physically forced into sex a real "turn-on."
18. A gay man who ejaculates during a sexual encounter cannot be considered a rape victim during the same encounter.
19. Upper class people have more control over their sexual urges.
20. White women are more likely than women of color to fantasize about being raped.
21. Prostitutes cannot be raped.
22. Rape is not as big a problem as some feminists would like people to think.
23. Being raped is not as bad as being mugged and beaten.
24. If a woman claims to have been raped but has no bruises or scrapes, she probably should not be taken too seriously.
25. The police catch most rapists.
26. If the rapist does not have a weapon, you really cannot call it a rape.
27. Women tend to exaggerate how much rape affects them.
28. Since the women's rights movement, rape is no longer that big of an issue.

Scoring: Summing the scale points across items resulted in an index that ranged from 28-140.

Appendix C

Just World Belief Scale (JWB)

1	2	3	4	5	6
Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree		

Items:

1. Misfortune is least likely to strike worthy, decent people.
2. Bad events are distributed to people at random.
3. The course of our lives is largely determined by chance.
4. Generally people deserve what they get in the world.
5. People's misfortunes result from mistakes they have made.
6. I usually behave in ways that are likely to maximize good results for me.
7. People will experience good fortune if they themselves are good.
8. Life is too full of uncertainties that are determined by chance.
9. I almost always make an effort to prevent bad things from happening to me.
10. By and large, good people get what they deserve in the world.
11. Through our actions, we can prevent bad things happening to us.
12. I take the actions necessary to protect myself against misfortune.
13. In general, my life is most a gamble.
14. I usually behave so as to bring about the greatest good for me.
15. When bad things happen, it is typically because people have not taken the necessary actions to protect themselves.

Scoring: The summative scale scores range from 15 to 90, with higher scores reflecting stronger adherence to just world beliefs.