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Rape Victim Responsibility

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BARRY UNIVERSITY

RAPE VICTIM RESPONSIBILITY

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the combined effect of rape myth acceptance and rape empathy on rape attribution of responsibility in cases of rape. There were 130 participants (15 male, 106 female; the remaining 9 did not indicate gender) ranging in age from 18 years to 82 years ($M = 26.82$, $SD = 12.86$). Participants were from a variety of ethnic backgrounds; 28 identified as African American, 29 identified as Caucasian, 23 identified as Hispanic, 15 identified as Afro-Caribbean, 1 identified as Asian, 26 identified themselves as Other, and 8 participants did not indicate ethnicity. Additionally undergraduate participants include: 25 freshmen, 24 sophomores, 17 juniors, and 25 seniors. Seven participants indicated that they were graduate students, 3 identified as post graduate, 14 identified as not in school, and 6 indicated other. The remaining 9 did not indicate anything. The study required participants to access an online survey (psychsurveys.org) where they were asked to read a short vignette depicting a stranger rape scenario. After reading the vignette, the participants were then asked to respond four measures; the Attitudes Towards Rape Scale (ATR), the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA) Revised, the Rape Victim Empathy Scale (RES-V), and the Rape Perpetrator Scale (RES-P). A brief demographic questionnaire was included for descriptive purposes only. Items in the demographic questionnaire included; age, gender, ethnicity, and academic year level. A bivariate correlation of three factors (TotalATR, TotalIRMA, TotalRESV) was conducted to ensure that there was indeed a relationship between the factors; results suggested that they were. A multiple regression was conducted to see if rape myth acceptance and rape empathy predicted rape attribution of responsibility (who is blamed in cases of rape). It was found that rape myth acceptance

and rape empathy accounted for a significant amount of variance in the attribution of responsibility in cases of rape ($F(2, 127) = 39.66, p < .001, R^2 = .38, R^2_{\text{Adjusted}} = .38$).

This means that rape myth acceptance and rape empathy, specifically empathy for the victim, significantly impact the way that individuals perceive instances of rape beyond the point of mere coincidence. This resulted in participants attributing less blame to the victim. The analysis also showed that rape myth acceptance significantly predicted attribution of responsibility for rape cases ($\beta = .38, t(127) = 7.11, p < .001$).

Additionally, analysis indicated that rape empathy significantly predicted attribution of responsibility for instances of rape ($\beta = .16, t(127) = 2.15, p < .05$).

Introduction

Imagine being sexually assaulted and after going through the trauma of reporting it, you are then blamed for what happened to you. This is the nightmare that many sexual assault victims face when their cases go to trial. This is more so for females than males, because males are even less likely than females to report a sexual assault for various reasons include humiliation and fear of ridicule. In addition to having to relive their assault in front of a courtroom full of people, many whom they do not know, they are then bombarded with accusations that they are to blame for what happened. For this reason, sexual assault and rape (term not used in every jurisdiction/state) are underreported.

It is estimated that, somewhere between 12.7 percent and 24 percent of females in the United States have been the victim of rape. About 62 percent of victims are assaulted by someone they knew; possibly including a friend, acquaintance, intimate friend, or family member. Contrary to popular belief, only about one-third of rape victims are assaulted by a stranger (Salter, 2003). Further statistics show that 44 percent of sexual assault victims are under the age of 18 and 80 percent are under age 30. On average, every two minutes someone in the United States is sexually assaulted. In 2007 alone, there were 248,300 victims of sexual assault. Although such numbers are staggering, because of underreporting and various other factors, only 1 in 16 rapists will ever spend a day in jail. (RAINN).

The purpose of this paper is to examine the attribution of responsibility to the victim in regards to sexual assault. It will present a historical overview of perceptions of women and rape, as well as rape laws enacted that reflect society's views of the

attribution of responsibility. It will also consider how this perception of women has changed over time resulting in changes in the law. Additionally, it will provide a review of the literature that shows how society attributes responsibility, in many cases, to the victim for various factors (that will be discussed) as opposed to the perpetrator of the assault.

A review of the literature will show that historically society has often placed blame on the victim in cases of rape as opposed to the perpetrator. This is due, in part, to rape myths. Rape myths are those false perceptions that are held that suggests that a victim solicited the attack in some way. Some examples of rape myths are; that when a women is dressed proactively, she is asking to be raped; when a women does not actively (physically) resist, she therefore gives consent and has not been raped; or when she is intoxicated, she consents to sexual activity but later claims rape because of regret or embarrassment. These specific rape myths illustrate three of the main factors; victim dress, resistance, and intoxication, that play a major role in the attribution of responsibility of sexual assault being placed on the victim rather than the perpetrator. Lastly, this paper will address the implications that rape myth acceptance and rape empathy have on potential jurors and the lawyers that are responsible to prosecute and defend these rape cases. Ultimately, the aim of this paper is to determine the current level of rape myth acceptance or if a change in society's perception of rape and rape victims may be occurring.

Historical Overview

For much of US history, according to Barkan (2009), women were considered “second-class citizens in the eyes of the law” (p.209). For many years, despite reforms,

the law served to reinforce this perception of women. Until very recently, women were considered the subordinate gender and were subjected to the views and opinions of a male dominated society. Essentially, there was a very drastic difference between the ideals that American lawmakers saw as equality for all citizens, and the reality of the inequality of females. Taub and Schneider (1993) summed up the laws' role in supporting this gender bias by saying:

The Anglo-American legal tradition purports to value equality, by which it means, at a minimum, equal application of the law to all persons. Nevertheless, throughout this country's history, women have been denied the most basic rights of citizenship, allowed only limited participation in the marketplace, and otherwise denied access to power, dignity, and respect. Women have instead been largely occupied with providing the personal and household services necessary to sustain family life.... (p. 9)

Laws that pertain to domestic violence and rape are constantly the source of controversy in regards to the topic of gender inequality. These laws, historically, made it legal for husbands to rape and beat their wives, thus contributing to women's perceived social subordination, as well as criminal victimization (Barkan, 2009). In years past, it was a common belief, that a woman who was not promiscuous had a more credible claim of rape, as it was thought that she was less likely to have solicited or acted in such a way that warranted the attack. Conversely, a women who was promiscuous, which included those women who were not virgins (outside of marriage), was believed to have consented to the advances of the perpetrator and claimed rape later in order to avoid any repercussions. Anderson (2002) suggested that, "Embedded within rape law, therefore, was an informal, though powerful, normative command that women maintain an ideal of sexual abstinence in order to obtain legal protection" (p. 55).

Despite the fact that rape has a very long history, it was not until the 1960s that it began to catch the public's attention. However, it was not until the 1990s that the issue came to the forefront of the nation's issues as a result of criticisms of the rape reform movement in which women's rights advocates, feminist organizations, and a number of other critics sought to increase sensitivity and fairness for victims of rape as opposed to the rampant victim blaming that was attached to the treatment in cases of rape in the past. The move to critically analyze rape and bring attention to the issue was to change the perception of the victims. That is, see rape victims as actual victims whose autonomy and dignity had been violated, instead of willing participants who had solicited the attack. Critics sought to increase sensitivity and fairness for victims of rape as opposed to the rampant victim blaming that was attached to the treatment in cases of rape in the past (Caringella, 2006). Victims of rape have been handed down a variety of punishments as a result of the views and opinions towards females that have been the basis of laws that punished them. This ill treatment and insensitivity towards rape victims led to much of the attribution of responsibility for the rape being placed on the female victim instead of the male perpetrator.

Rape shield laws were introduced in the 1970s and it was believed that they would be beneficial to rape trials. Federal Rule of Evidence 412 states, "The following evidence is not admissible in a civil or criminal proceeding involving alleged sexual misconduct: evidence offered to prove that a victim engaged in other sexual behavior; or evidence offered to prove a victim's sexual predisposition" (Federal Rules of Evidence). It was also believed that, by prohibiting the introduction of a rape victim's reputation or sexual history, the stigma that had prevented successful prosecution and increased

underreporting by victims would in turn decrease. Initially, this law was supported and had been adopted by most states, as well as the federal government. However, over time opinions became divided, with opponents believing that the laws and their effects only served to deny defendants a fair trial. Ironically, these arguments came despite the fact that women too have faced and continue to face opposition in rape prosecutions.

Another law that worked against female rape victims was the Civil Statute of Limitations Act of 1989. This was federal or state law that restricted the time within which legal proceedings may be brought against an individual. This means that rape victims must report the attack within a certain amount of time in order for the perpetrator to be indicted and brought to trial. If they report the crime after the Statute of Limitations has passed the perpetrator can no longer be brought up on charges and thus, could not be convicted. With rape being the most underreported crime in America, the Statute of Limitations only serves to aid the perpetrator in “getting away” with rape.

Although these laws were enacted with good intent, they were full of loopholes. As such, there were ways for the defense to introduce the victim’s sexual history. Federal Rule 412 stated exceptions in which normally inadmissible evidence is allowed to be introduced. These exceptions stated:

The court may admit the following evidence in a criminal case: evidence of specific instances of a victim’s sexual behavior, if offered to prove that someone other than the defendant was the source of semen, injury, or other physical evidence; evidence of specific instances of a victim’s behavior with respect to the person accused of the sexual misconduct, if offered by the defendant to prove consent or if offered by the prosecutor; and evidence whose exclusion would violate the defendant’s constitutional rights.

As it stands, these laws not only further demeaned female victims of rape; they reinforced the historical ideology that females are subservient, and emphasized the notion that the gender hierarchy and the “normalization” of female subordination is “right”.

Not only have women victimized during the attack, they are again victimized by the justice system. Unlike almost every other violent crime, the burden of proof is placed on the victim and the prosecution. The validity and reliability of their claim and subsequent statements, both to the police and the court, are challenged. During the trial, the focus is on the victim and what she did to cause the attack rather than the defendant for violating not only the women as a person, but also her dignity. This view in turn provided the basis for which the laws were created. If society views women as second-class and subservient, then the laws enacted would reflect the same view.

Borgida and White (1978) aimed to examine the effect and the extent of the effect that legal reforms have on the perception of a rape victim as well as the conviction rate of a videotaped consent defense rape trial (Borgida & White, 1978). It was suggested by the authors, that these reforms; such as rape shield laws and the Privacy Protection for Rape Victims Act of 1978, serve a dual purpose. The first of which was to prevent “irrelevant, prejudicial testimony” from being presented and thus, heard by the jury (Borgida & White, 1978, p. 340). The second was that, as a result of the inadmissibility of the victims prior sexual history, the victim is less like to be “subjected to humiliating cross-examination” during the court proceeding (Borgida & White, 1978, p. 340). This prevented the victim from seemingly being put on trial along with their perpetrator. The Privacy Protection for Rape Victims Act was created to “Amend the Federal Rules of Evidence to prohibit in cases of rape the introduction of reputation or opinion evidence of

a person's past sexual behavior" (Library of Congress) It further requires that a hearing occur in chambers to determine the admissibility before it is allowed in open court for a jury to hear. According to the authors, President Carter, who signed the Privacy Protection for Rape Victims Act, stated that the act would "end the public degradation of rape victims and, by protecting victims from humiliation, encourage the reporting of rape" (Borgida & White, 1978, p. 340).

Prior to these reforms, a woman's prior sexual history was allowed into evidence based on the assumption that a woman's credibility as a witness was associated with her sexual history (Borgida and White, 1978). Thus, it was believed that her "unchaste character" would decrease her credibility as a prosecuting witness. However, a woman's sexual history was not admissible in any other kind of trial in which a woman served as a witness. Additionally, sexual history was used as a way to show or imply the likelihood of consent in the particular case (Borgida & White, 1978). It was believed that if a woman consented to sexual advances in the past, then it was more likely that she consented to the sexual 'encounter' in question as opposed to a woman who is chaste. Borgida and White (1978) concluded that:

The admission of prior sexual history evidence in a rape case may enhance the sexual likelihood that jurors attribute personal responsibility to the victim for the sexual assault. Knowledge that the victim had an active sexual history may be regarded as a pattern of low distinctiveness and high consistency information from which jurors make personal rather than situational attributions for the sexual assault. Persons' attributions would involve the belief that a woman who has consented to sexual advances in the past is the type of woman who would be more likely to consent to the act in issue. As a result, jurors may be more likely to scrutinize the victim's character and to place the victim on trial as much as the accused. (p. 342)

Similarly, Clay-Warner and Burt (2005) examined whether or not rapes that were committed after reforms were more inclined to be reported to police as opposed to rapes that were committed before reforms. Additionally, they also looked at whether the gap between simple and aggravated rape had narrowed (Clay-Warner & Burt, 2005). The authors conceptualized their definition of aggravated rape based on Estrich (1987), which describes it as, “an assault in which the victim and assailant are unknown to each other, there are multiple assailants, or violence is explicit, as evidenced by use of weapons and victim injury” (Clay-Warner & Burt, 2005; Estrich, 1987; Kalvin & Zeisel, 1966). Conversely, in simple rape these factors are not present. Legally, there is no separation between the two; however, evidence suggests that the two have been viewed separately by the public, as well as treated differently by the courts (Clay-Warner & Burt, 2005). With the introduction of reforms such as rape shield laws, whose intent was to reduce the distinction between aggravated rape and simple rape, Clay-Warner and Burt (2005) investigated whether they have had a significant impact on reducing underreporting.

The authors analyzed data from the National Violence Against Women (NVAW) Survey. The NVWA Survey is national survey conducted via telephone and is jointly supported by the National Institute of Justice (Clay-Warner & Burt, 2005, 161). One of the goals of this survey was to, “determine lifetime prevalence rates of violent victimizations including sexual assault, physical assault, stalking, and intimate partner violence” (Clay-Warner & Burt, 2005). They looked specifically at incidents of completed and attempted rape perpetrated by men against women. Rape was conceptualized in the same way that was stated in the beginning of this paper: forced vaginal, anal, or oral penetration. Attempted rape was conceptualized as the attempted

forced penetration. Additionally, only incidents involving victims aged 16 years and older were included in the analyses.

Analysis indicated that 15% of the victimizations were reported to police. This included instances where the victim filed the report and friends or relatives of the victim filed the report. To examine whether the instances of reporting had increased since rape law reforms, the authors separated the data into two groups; the early reform period (1975-1989) and the modern reform period (1990-1996). The survey indicated that during the early reform period 424 incidents occurred, while in the modern reform period 189 incidents occurred. Of the total number of assaults that took place 342 (42%) were categorized as aggravated. It was concluded that ultimately, there had been an increase in the overall probability of a rape being reported. Additionally, as with previous research, aggravated assaults had a higher likelihood of being reported than instances of simple rape (Clay- Warner & Burt, 2005, 173).

Pino and Meier (1999) compared the reporting behaviors of males and females. The data used in this study came from participants of the National Crime and Victimization Survey (NCVS) National Sample Rape Subset for the years 1979 -1987. The data included information from 897 rape victims, 81 of these victims were men. Descriptive statistics indicated that the majority of the victims were Caucasian, young, and unmarried. Additionally, they also indicated that both male and female victims are similar in terms of social background which includes race, age, education and income. Although rape can happen to people from all walks of life, it seems that poor and unmarried individuals are more inclined to be victims of rape and sexual assault than their married counterparts from the middle and upper classes.

The authors found “interesting differences (and similarities) by the sex of the victim with regards to the characteristics of the rape situation itself” (Pino & Meier, 1999). The data suggested that both males and females are more likely to be raped by a white assailant (66%) and more likely to be raped when in urban areas (93%). They are also both likely to be injured during the rape (80%) and require medical attention (50%). Males are more likely to be raped during the day, by more than one assailant, by a stranger, in a public area, and when a weapon is present when compared to female victims. This report also suggested that females were one and a half times more likely to report their rape to police. Additionally, this finding was significant at the .05 level. Fifty-four percent of female victims reported to police compared to 42% of male victims. This confirmed the authors’ hypothesis that males were more inclined, when compared to females, to underreport the rape.

It was also found that rape was twice as likely to be reported if the assailant was a stranger and almost five times more likely to be reported if something was stolen during the rape (Pino & Meier, 1999). Similarly, it was found that rape was more likely to be reported when a weapon was present during the rape. Furthermore, it was found that rape was more likely to be reported when the victim perceived the crime as serious. However, males and females perception of seriousness differ. In regards to females, perceptions of seriousness included if the assailant was a stranger, if something was stolen, and if they were injured and required medical attention. Conversely, males’ perception of seriousness included only if there was physical bodily harm. The authors’ suggest that this is because males were able to demonstrate that they could not protect themselves. In these cases, they believed that the police are less likely to inquire about their sexual

orientation or courage. On the other hand, female victims are more likely to report when the crime “more closely fits the classic rape situation (Pino & Meier, 1999).

Current Rape Laws

As it currently stands, legally, there is no definitive or comprehensive definition of rape. This is because definitions vary across states, and in some jurisdictions the term “rape” is not even used. Some states have replaced rape with the term “sexual assault” in criminal codes and statutes (Bartol & Bartol, 2008). However, these are not the only two terms used. An example of this is, Florida Statute which uses the term “sexual battery”. According to this statute, sexual battery means “oral, anal, or vaginal penetration by, or union with, the sexual organ of another or the anal or vaginal penetration of another by any other object; however, sexual battery does not include an act done for a bona fide medical purpose” [Section 794.011h] (Unknown, 2014). The use of these variations is because they are expansive terms, and as such encompass a wide range of action. They do, however, recognize that an individual has been victimized in a sexual nature (Feldman, 2010, 94). Nevertheless, for the purposes of this paper the term rape refers to “the forced penetration of the vagina, anus, or mouth” (Feldman, 2010, 94). Additionally, rape shield laws are still in use currently and can be divided into four categories based on the manner and degree to which they admit evidence of a woman’s sexual history.

Rape and Attribution of Responsibility

One of the consequences of society’s view of women and rape laws is the development of rape myths as to who is responsible when a rape occurs. Along with three major rape myths that were mentioned in the introduction of this paper; victim

dress, resistance, and intoxication, there are other factors that have historically shown influence the attribution of responsibility in cases of rape. This section will examine the historical and current research on those rape myths.

Marital Status

Jones and Aronson (1973) conducted a study to “investigate the perceived culpability of the victim of a crime as a function of his social status” (p. 415).

Hypotheses were based on the notion that individuals attribute more responsibility to a victim the more respectable that they are. They hypothesized a number of things in this study but for this section the focus is the marital status of the victim. It was hypothesized that; (1) If the victim is married or a virgin, subjects would attribute less responsibility to her than if she were a divorcee, (2) Participants would consider an actual rape to be more severe than an attempted rape, and therefore they would have a greater need to “justify” or explain the crime when it was completed than when merely attempted” (Jones & Aronson, 1973).

Participants were 234 male and female undergraduate students at the University of Texas. Results revealed that the victim was attributed more responsibility when she was a divorcee than when she was married or a virgin. Additionally, the defendant received a longer prison sentence for an actual rape than for an attempted rape. A mean prison sentence of 16.17 years was assigned to the defendant of an actual rape and a mean prison sentence of 10.40 years was assigned to the defendant of an attempted rape. A mean prison sentence of 15.03 years was assigned to the defendant of an assault against a married woman, a mean prison sentence of 13.70 years was assigned to the defendant of an assault against a virgin, and a mean prison sentence of 11.13 years was

assigned to the defendant of an assault against a divorcee. The authors suggested that the victims in this case were blamed due to the assumption that people like to believe in a “just world”. That is people get what they deserve for one of two reasons; they are intrinsically good (or evil); thus, the individual’s character warrant the outcome (in the case rape); or because of the way that an individual behaves results in a good or bad outcome (Jones & Aronson, 1973). Based on this principle, if the participants were unable to justify the rape based on the character of the victim, by default, they had to attribute the responsibility based on some behavior that she displayed.

Stranger versus Acquaintance Rape

The purpose of Tetreault and Barnett’s (1987) study was to investigate both males’ and females’ reactions to a woman who presumably had been raped by either a stranger or an acquaintance. The relevance of this study is that it addresses the issue of acquaintance rape whereas earlier work mostly focused on stranger rape.

The hypotheses in this study were that (1) females would attribute less responsibility than males to the victim in a stranger rape than in an acquaintance rape, (2) females would be more certain than males that a rape had occurred in a stranger rape than in an acquaintance rape, (3) females would consider the stranger rape more serious than the acquaintance rape. Participants were 80 undergraduate students, 40 males and 40 females. They were enrolled in general psychology classes. The variables in this study were victim responsibility, certainty, and seriousness with an interaction between the sex of the participant (male, female) and type of rape (stranger, acquaintance). Participants completed a questionnaire evaluating their reactions to the rape and the rape victim. Participants rated, on 7-point scale, (a) how responsible was the victim for what

happened to her, (b) how certain they were that the assailant had committed an act of rape, and (c) the seriousness of the event.

The results showed that female participants attributed less responsibility to the victim of a stranger rape. They also showed that females were more certain a rape had occurred in the stranger rape than in the acquaintance rape. Females also seemed to view stranger rape as more serious than acquaintance rape (Tetreault & Barnett, 1987).

Sexual Connotativeness and Nonverbal Behaviors

A study by Kowalski (1992) examined the effects of the sexual connotativeness (suggestion) of a woman's nonverbal behaviors and her reaction to a man's sexual advances on participants' perception of her. This study also examined how perceptions differed between men and women. This study was divided into two experiments. However, for the purposes of this paper, only the second experiment will be discussed. In the second experiment (experiment 2) the variables only included the target's [female confederate whose non-verbal behaviors and perceived sexual connotativeness was observed by the participants; 'victim'] nonverbal behaviors. Participants for experiment 2 were 45 male and 45 female undergraduates.

These results suggest that when the victim's nonverbal behavior (behaviors that may be sexually suggestable; kissing, closeness, touching) increased in sexual connotation the more it was believed that she desired sex. Again, men perceived the victim as wanting sex more than women. With regards to perception of foreseeability, participants perceived that the victim was more likely to be able to foresee the attack when her nonverbal behaviors were high in sexual connotation than if they were moderate or low (Kowalski, 1992).

Race

Varelas and Foley (1998) examined the effects of race (Black or White) of the victim, perpetrator, and observer on attribution of responsibility interracial and intraracial in date rape. This study looked at whether or not participants would attribute greater responsibility to the perpetrator when the victim was the same race as the participants and the perpetrator was a different race (e.g., White participant/White victim/Black perpetrator and vice versa). It was hypothesized that White participants would attribute more responsibility than Black participants to a Black perpetrator whose victim was a White woman; likewise, Black participants would attribute more responsibility than their White counterparts to a White perpetrator who victimized a Black women. Essentially, participants would attribute more blame to the perpetrator whose victim was the same race as them (e.g., Black participants would attribute more blame to the perpetrator whose victim was Black, White participants would attribute more blame to the perpetrator whose victim was White).

Participants were 144 undergraduate students enrolled in psychology courses at a mid-sized university and a mid-sized community college in the same southeastern city of the United States. Ninety-five of the participants were female and 49 were male. They ranged in age from 19 – 58 years with a mean age of 29.5 years. Ninety-six of the participants were White, 30 were Black, 8 were Asian, and 10 classified themselves as Other. As Black and White ethnicities were the highest represented, the other ethnic categories were removed leaving 126 participants that were included in the analysis.

The results found that White participants were more likely than Black participants to think (a) that the perpetrator was responsible, (b) that the incident was

rape, (c) that the victim was not responsible, and (d) that the victim's actions did not contribute to the incident. The results also showed that White participants attributed less responsibility to a White woman raped by a Black man than to a Black woman raped by a White man. Conversely, Black participants attributed more responsibility to a Black woman raped by a White man than if she were raped by a Black man (Varelas & Foley, 1998).

Male Victims, Sexual Orientation, and Pleasure

Mitchell, Hirschman, and Nagayama (1999) analyzed attributions of victim responsibility based on pleasure and trauma in male rape victims. There were two main purposes in this study; to examine the relationship between the sexual orientation of a male rape victim and participants' attributions of the victim's responsibility, pleasure, and trauma associated with the assault. Additionally, this study also examined the differences between male and female participants in their attribution of responsibility. Participants included 181 males and 215 were females ranging in age from 16 to 21 years with a mean age of 18.9. The authors hypothesized that male rape victims described as homosexual would be attributed more responsibility for being assaulted and would be rated as experiencing greater pleasure and less trauma than their heterosexual counterparts (Mitchell et. al, 1999). They further considered that male participants' would attribute more responsibility, greater pleasure, and less trauma to the victim than female participants (Mitchell et. al, 1999).

Results seem to indicate that male rape victims, like female rape victims, were held partly responsible for the assault. In addition, homosexual victims were attributed as being more responsible for the assault than the heterosexual victim. Male participants

attributed more responsibility than their female counterparts. The author suggested that this may be because many college students have negative attitudes towards homosexuals and as such, are indifferent to the problems of homosexuals (Mitchell et al, 1999).

Perpetrator Motivation

Damon, Kohleberger, and Hirschman (2008) examined participants' perceptions of victim and offender responsibility in sexual assault and if those perceptions were influenced by the knowledge of the motivation of the offender. They also examined the relationship between victim gender and participant gender with offender motivation. Participants were 171 undergraduate students from a small Northeastern college; 58 were male and 113 were females ranging in age from 18 to 48 years with a mean age of 20.

The primary hypothesis of this study was that participants, who were exposed to the violence-motivated assailant scenario, would attribute more responsibility to the assailant; thus, attribute less responsibility to the victim than the participants who were exposed to the sex-motivated assailant. With respect to participant gender, it was hypothesized that female participants would attribute more responsibility to the assailant, and attribute less responsibility to the victim, than the male participants. Victim gender was included; however, it was only for exploratory reasons.

The results indicated that participants who were exposed to the violent-motivated offender attributed less blame to the victim than the victims that were exposed to the sex-motivated offender. With respects to the participant gender, male participants attributed more blame to the victim than the female participants.

Dress and Attractiveness

Yarmey (1985) examined the perception of attribution of victim responsibility in older and younger adult participants. The study investigated the influence of six factors on the participants' attribution of responsibility towards female rape victims and the assailant. However, for this section, only the factor of dress (for the victim as well as the perpetrator) will be reviewed. Participants included 192 young males and 192 females ranging in age from 18 to 29 years with a mean age of 19.7. They were randomly selected from introductory psychology courses. An equal number of older males and females ranging in age from 50 to 74 years with a mean age of 58.2 were recruited from recreational social centers and service organizations. (Yarmey, 1985)

In a series of vignettes, the victim was portrayed as either provocatively or demurely dressed, and the perpetrator was portrayed as either well-dressed or poorly dressed. "It was expected that older subjects would perceive both the victim and the assailant as more responsible for the crime" (Yarmey, 1985, 329) Additionally, it was predicted that the provocatively dressed victim would be attributed more responsibility for the rape; thus, decreasing the responsibility placed on the perpetrator.

Results showed that the demure victim was perceived as less responsible for the assault than the provocative victim. It was also found that younger participants perceived the victim as more responsible if she resisted a well-dressed assailant than a poorly dressed assailant. Overall, females attributed less blame to the demure victim when she was assaulted by a poorly dressed assailant. Conversely, male participants attributed the same magnitude of responsibility to the victim despite the way she was dressed. Both the young and the older participants attributed the same magnitude of responsibility to the provocatively dressed victim regardless of the demeanor of the assailant.

Vrij and Firmin (2001) examined possible beneficial effects of good looks of victims' and defendants' in an alleged rape case. It has long been observed that it is beneficial to be good-looking. The question that was posed in this experiment was, "Does good-looking also help in judicial context, that is, are handsome defendants and victims in alleged rape cases assessed more favorably compared with their less attractive counterparts?" (Vrij & Firmin, 2001).

Participants were 80 college students (40 males and 40 females) with a mean age of 21 years. The authors assessed participant perception of the physical attractiveness of the victim and the defendant. The dependent variables were; honesty of the women, responsibility of the women for the event, and strength of evidence. Results revealed that it is indeed beneficial to be attractive in regards to the victim. The results of this study suggested that victims who were physically attractive were perceived a more credible and as such, attributed less responsibility for the rape than a physically unattractive victim. Furthermore, the evidence against the perpetrator was perceived as stronger when the victim was attractive.

Deitz, Littman, and Bentley (1984) investigated the effect of a rape victim's physical attractiveness in addition to their resistance to the rape had on the observer's attribution of responsibility for the crime (resistance to be discussed in *Resistance* section). According to the authors, the significance of addressing this problem is that the judicial system weighs the level of resistance that an individual uses highly when attributing responsibility for the attack. Additionally, a victim's physical attractiveness has been found to influence that attribution. Participants in this study were 190 undergraduate students (97 female and 93 male) enrolled in introductory psychology

courses at Colorado State University. All the participants received credit toward a course requirement in exchange for their participation in the study.

The authors hypothesized that participants' would "express more positive feelings toward, and greater identification with, the attractive victim than the unattractive victim" (Deitz, Littman, & Bentley, 1984). Results revealed that participants identified more with the victim who was physically attracted and expressed more positive feelings about her than for the victim who was unattractive. They also found a statistically significant interaction between attractiveness and victim resistance in regards to the attribution of responsibility for the perpetrator. This result suggested that participants were more certain that the perpetrator was to blame for the rape in the case of an attractive victim who resisted than in the case where the victim was unattractive, despite resistance being used against the perpetrator.

Stovell and Bacheller (2012) examined the effects of victim and perpetrator dress on the attribution of responsibility in a stranger rape scenario. It was hypothesized that participants would attribute less responsibility to a well-dressed perpetrator. Additionally, it was predicted that participants was attribute more responsibility to a provocatively dressed victim than one whose dress was demure. These hypotheses were based on previous research that a well-dressed male was perceived a respectable and less likely to have initiated an attack. Similarly, when a male is poorly dressed, he is perceived to have criminal intentions and therefore, more likely to initiate an attack. Likewise, a victim who is dressed in a demure fashion is perceived to be more respectable and less likely to have solicited the attention of the perpetrator. Lastly, based

on previous research, the victim who was dressed provocatively was perceived to solicit sexual attention from a perpetrator and thus, more responsible.

Participants were 166 undergraduate students (Males = 20, Females = 146) that ranged in age from 18 years to 48 years ($M = 21.82$, $SD = 4.80$). Ethnic backgrounds included: African American (31.9%), Caucasian (15.7%), Afro Caribbean (13.3%), Asian (1.2%), non-White Hispanic (18.1%), and Other (19.9%).

To assess the responsibility of the victim, participants completed the Attitudes Toward Rape Victims Scale (Ward, 1988). Analysis revealed that when the victim was dressed provocatively as opposed to demure, participants did not attribute more responsibility to her. In regards to the responsibility of the perpetrator, participants complete the Perpetrator Responsibility Scale (created by the authors). The results of this analysis were not significant, participants did not attribute less responsibility to a well-dressed perpetrator when compared to a poorly dressed one. These results suggest that the dress of the perpetrator and the victim are no longer as important as they once were when attributing responsibility for a rape.

Resistance

Krulowitz and Nash (1979) examined, in part, sexual assault as a function of the nature of victim resistance and the effect that it has on attribution of responsibility in attempted versus completed rapes. Resistance was conceptualized in three ways; low, which implied compliance; moderate, which implied screaming for help; and high, which implied screaming for help and kicking the assailant hard. Participants were 117 female and 112 male undergraduate students enrolled in psychology classes at Iowa State University.

The author hypothesized that participants' attributions about the victim's responsibility would vary according to the victim's ability to resist the assailant. More specifically, it was expected that the victim would be held more responsible for the assault when she was actually raped as opposed to an attempted rape. It was also expected that men and women would share the same perception of rape and use the same parameters in determining the nature of the event. Conversely, "women were expected to identify more with the victim and to attend to and evaluate the victim's behavior differently than men" (Krulowitz and Nash, 1979, 560).

The results suggested that overall, responsibility was higher for the assailant than the victim in all of the conditions. However, the degree of responsibility attributed to either the victim or the assailant varied based on if the assault was completed or not. The victim was attributed more responsibility for a completed rape when compared to an attempted rape. Conversely, the assailant was attributed more responsibility when the rape was not completed than when it was.

Deitz et al. (1984) also investigated the effect that resistance had on the attribution of responsibility in cases of rape. They hypothesized that male participants would differ from their female counterparts in regards to who is attributed the most blame when a victim resist her attacker. The results indicated two interactions between attractiveness and victim resistance in regards to the guilt of the defendant and the feelings toward the victim. The interaction regarding the guilt of the attacker, as previously discussed, suggested that participants were more certain that the perpetrator was to blame for the rape in the case of an attractive victim who resisted than in the case where the victim was unattractive, despite resistance being used against the perpetrator. Additionally the

interaction regarding feelings toward the victim suggested participants expressed greater positive feelings towards the victim who was attractive who exhibited some form of resistance than they did towards the victim labeled as unattractive.

Yarmey (1985) also looked at victim resistance as a factor of attribution of responsibility in cases of rape. The results indicated that young people were more inclined to attribute responsibility to the victim when she resisted a well-dressed perpetrator than when she resisted a poorly dressed perpetrator. Furthermore, the dress of the perpetrator was not a significant factor in attributing responsibility for young participants when the victim complied. Conversely, older participants attributed less responsibility than younger participants over all to victims regardless of whether or not she resisted the well-dressed or the poorly dressed perpetrator. The author suggested that victims who resist are attributed more blame because it is viewed as a “self-defeating” approach as they lack the skill and strength to efficiently resist. Therefore, if they do resist it is seen as counter-productive and as such attributed more blame for the rape.

Ong and Ward (1999) attempted to examine the effects of attitude toward women, rape schemas, and victim resistance on rape attribution of responsibility in a hypothetical rape scenario. Participants were 128 female undergraduate students from the University of Singapore. The authors hypothesized that traditional women would attribute more fault and responsibility to the victim and less to the rapist than non-traditional women. The authors felt there will be no differences between these groups when the victim did not resist the attack. Similarly, the authors felt that less fault and responsibility would be attributed to the rapist of the non-resisting victim when compared to the resisting victim (Ong & Ward, 1999).

This study suggests that a traditional woman has been socialized into believing that men are the stronger of the two sexes, and as such it is foolish for women to resist their attackers. They believed that women who do not resist and remain passive throughout the assault are seen as less likely to be injured and are judged less negatively than women who actively resist. Conversely, nontraditional women are those who have been socialized to believe that there is equality between the sexes and, therefore, believe that it is “appropriate and beneficial” for women to resist their attackers. Victims who operate consistently with this view are judged less harshly than passive, non-resisting victims. The results showed that traditional women did not attribute more fault and responsibility to the victim and less to the rapist than non-traditional women. Also, those who use sex schemas (widely held beliefs about sex) to interpret rape attributed more responsibility to the non-resisting victim than the resisting victim.

Colin, Dupius, and Brown (2009) assessed factors that influence the attribution of responsibility in an acquaintance rape in which 250 undergraduate psychology students participated. This was based on differences in victim resistance and reputation, and perpetrator reaction and reputation using a video vignette methodology. This study was comprised of two studies; however, for the purpose of this section only the relevant study will be discussed. The first study (study 1) investigated the attribution of responsibility based on victim resistance. The authors had three hypotheses; however, only two are relevant to this section. It was theorized that non-resisting victims will be attributed more blame than a victim who resists physically, verbally, or both. Secondly, it was hypothesized that the perpetrator will be attributed more responsibility when he reacts angrily and the victim resists. The second hypothesis was based on the notion that a

perpetrator who does not react, may not understand that his actions are wrong and as such will have less responsibility attributed to him. Conversely, a perpetrator who reacts angrily is perceived to have ill intent and appear to be trying to hurt the victim.

The results found that, overall, the victim was attributed less responsibility than the perpetrator. Additionally, the victim was attributed less responsibility for the rape when she verbally or physically resisted. The victim was also attributed less responsibility when she reacted verbally or physically and verbally when compared to the victim who did not resist. The authors suggested that the lack of resistance may have been perceived as a form of silent consent. Furthermore, in regards to the second hypothesis; neither victim or perpetrator responsibility was affected by the perpetrators reaction.

Stovell and Bacheller (2013) examined the effect that the use of victim resistance had on the attribution of responsibility in a hypothetical rape scenario. Based on previous research, it was hypothesized that participants would perceive a victim who resisted as less responsible for the rape when compared to a victim who did not. Furthermore, the authors predicted a gender bias; specifically, that male participants would attribute more responsibility to the victim than their female counterparts. Participants were 126 undergraduate students (males = 26, females = 99) one participant did not indicate their gender. They ranged in age from 17 to 52 with a mean age of about 22 years. The study required participants to access an online survey where they were randomly assigned to read one of two vignettes. After reading the vignette, participants then completed the Attitudes Toward Rape Victims Scale (Ward, 1988), the Perpetrator Responsibility Scale and a brief demographic questionnaire.

The results revealed that there was not a significant effect in regards to the perceived responsibility of the victim and whether or not resistance was used. This suggested to the authors that regardless of whether the victim resisted or not did not seem to effect the degree of blame placed on her.. Additionally, when it came to the attribution of responsibility in regards to the perpetrator, specifically when the victim resisted, participants were more inclined to attribute blame to him. There was also a gender difference found in that males were more inclined to blame the victim but no more so than the perpetrator.

Research on rape and the attribution of responsibility has revealed numerous factors that influence where blame is placed in situations of rape. Past findings have suggested that the way that a victim is dressed at the time of the attack has a significant impact on the level attribution placed on her. For example, if she is dressed provocatively more blame is placed on her because the perception is that she was looking to have some kind of sexual interaction. This could include harmless flirting to a sexual intercourse. Rarely was it found that most of the blame for the attack was not placed on the victim. Conversely, perpetrators have been found to have less blame placed on them. This is usually the case when the victim is dressed in a way that suggests that she wanted the attention of the man that she was attacked by. These studies suggests that despite the fact that the individual has been victimized by her attacker, various factors, most of which are irrelevant, determine whether or not she is viewed as a victim in the eyes of the law and society.

However, social changes over the past decade indicate a greater acceptance of various styles of clothing. There may have been no statistically significant difference

with regards to victim and perpetrator dress because what was once considered “provocative” dress is more a more common occurrence and as such is less likely to sway an observers opinion of the victim’s attribution in the assault.

Conversely, one trend that did remain consistent with previous studies’ results was that males were more likely to attribute more blame to the victim than female participants. One reason for this may be that since the perpetrator was male, the male observers identified with him and would want to have less blame attributed to them if they were in the same situation. Another reason for the difference in the gender effect may be that there were far less male participants than female participants. The large difference in distribution in the genders of the observers was also a limitation of this study.

Additionally, early studies that have examined the effects of resistance on the attribution of responsibility have shown that victims who resist during an attack are more likely to be blamed. This was due to the belief that resisting further enraged the perpetrator causing him to become more violent. As a result, the victim was blamed for the attack because if she had been more passive the perpetrator would have not responded the way he did. Later studies have shown that the victim is indeed just that regardless of whether or not she resists her attacker. Specifically, when a victim resist early in the attack, as opposed to later she is attributed less fault. With regards to the attribution of responsibility to a perpetrator, early studies have placed less blame on them for the same reason that the victim was blamed. When a victim would resist it would cause the perpetrator to become angrier and thus more violent in the attack. As a result, it is because of the resistance that the perpetrator acted in a violent way, thus it was not his

fault. However, as society evolves and peoples' perceptions change, modern studies indicate the perpetrator to be more responsible for the attack.

Rape Myth Acceptance

Previous studies have looked at individual factors in rape and the attribution of responsibility. However, collectively these factors have been termed "rape myths." The area of rape myths and the effect that they have had on numerous variables and interventions has been widely examined. However, definitions, terminology, and measures of rape myth acceptance still lack an "adequate theoretical and psychometric precision" (Lonsway and Fitzgerald, 1994). In their article, Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) offer a theory-based definition of rape myth acceptance, and suggest directions for future research.

"Rape Myths" was initially defined as "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists" Burt (1980). In this article, the authors point out that after Burt (1980) first defined the term "rape myths", many other researchers have proposed other definitions of the term. They noted that although the definitions share the same connotations, they significantly vary from one another. They suggested that this variation indicated that "researchers have failed to develop a thorough, theoretically based definition of rape myths, and in addition, have failed to use any definition consistently" (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 134). As a result of this inconsistency, the authors suggested that a major problem that arises is the use of a wide variety of measures of rape myth acceptance (RMA).

They further suggested that rape myths have a purpose and function, one of which is that "Rape myths are the mechanism that people use to justify dismissing an

incident of sexual assault from the category of ‘real’ rape...such beliefs deny the reality of many actual rapes” (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, p.136). They pointed out that rape myths perpetuate the “denial and trivialization” of a crime that affects an extensive cross section of females (Brownmiller, 1975; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Additionally, these crimes are justified through blame shifting. The responsibility for the crime is taken off of the perpetrator and placed on the victim, thus, protecting individuals, and society as a whole, from confronting the reality and extent of sexual assault (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

These functions of rape myth have led to what has been described as the “just world phenomenon” (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). This is, according to the authors “the predisposition to believe that the world is a just place where good things happen to good people and bad things happen only to those who deserve them” (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 137). This belief in a “just world” forces those who hold this view to search for reasons that suggest that a rape victim instigated or even deserved the assault. This leads to rape myths serving to explain why rape victims deserved what happened to them, as well as endorsing the belief in a false sense of security in that individuals with this view are somehow immune to rape (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

There is evidence to support the view that a high level of RMA exists within the general population; however, support varies among different populations. Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) cited results from several different studies to provide support for this view:

“Feild (1978a) noted that an unselected group of general citizens accepted, on average, 14 of the 32 rape myth items on his scale. Giacopassi and Dull

(1986) reported that almost 25% of their college-student sample agreed with each of the nine myths on their scale. Gilmartin-Zena (1987) found that 35%, or more of participating undergraduates agreed with 14 of 24 rape myth items” (p. 137).

The authors suggested that one can begin to assess participants’ RMA by simply offering them a scenario that depicts “an act of sexual victimization”, then request a judgment on whether or not the scenario depicts a rape. They reported that most studies that have used this procedure have found that those individuals who have greater acceptance of rape myths are less likely to label a scenario ‘rape’ even when it meets the legal criteria for sexual assault (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). They propose that this is because people with higher RMA do not correctly define rape because they are not familiar with the legal definition of said crime and as such rely on and thus place judgment based on myths that incorrectly define rape (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

In conclusion, the authors made the following recommendations; Conceptual clarity and definitional consistency; Domain articulation; Psychometric adequacy; and Theoretical power. In regards to the first recommendation, conceptual clarity and definitional consistency, that authors favor the following definition for rape myths, “attitudes and beliefs that are generally false yet widely and persistently held and that serve to deny and justify sexual aggression” (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

The purpose of Frese, Moya, and Megias (2004) was to explore the interaction between rape myth acceptance and characteristics of the rape situation on the rape perception. Participants were 182 psychology undergraduate students (91 men and 91 women) from the University of Granada, Spain, who participated in the study for extra

credits. The men ranged in age from 18 to 43 with a mean age of 21.9 while the women ranged in age from 18 to 28 with a mean age of 19.2 ($SD = 1.84$).

The results of this study indicated that people with high RMA attribute more responsibility to the victim, perceive victim trauma as less severe, and were less likely to recommend that the victim report the rape to police. Participants with high and low RMA, showed the largest differences when determining victim responsibility, intensity of trauma, and likelihood of reporting in the acquaintance rape. However, individuals with high RMA differed for those with low RMA in both the acquaintance rape and the stranger rape in regard to victim responsibility. The author concluded that even if it were assumed that student populations hold less stereotypical views of rape myths than the general population, this study's findings still show that this interaction is essential in understanding society's perception of rape.

McMahon (2010) explored the relationship between bystander attitudes and rape myths. Participants in this study consisted of 2,338 undergraduate students attending a new student orientation from a northeastern public university. Of the 2,338 participants 52% were female and 48% were male. Additionally, 36% of the respondents indicated that they had attended a rape prevention program before, and 29% reported knowing someone who had been raped.

To measure rape myth acceptance the authors used the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA) revised. This revised version includes "language for college students as well as having a specific focus on accountability for rape and victim blaming" (McMahon, 2010, p. 6). The IRMA includes 19 items scored on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree with rape myths to 5 = strongly agree). The scale includes five

subscales. To measure bystander attitudes, the Bystander Attitude Scale, Revised (BAS-R). This scale is a modified version of Banyard's Bystander Scale. The BAS-R consists of 16 statements about behaviors in which students can engage to intervene before, during, or after a sexual assault. Additionally, demographic items were collected to assess whether attitudes and behaviors about an engaged bystander were consistent between groups. These groups included; gender, status as a college athlete, intention to pledge a sorority or fraternity, knowing someone who had been sexually assaulted, receiving previous rape education. Additionally, in order to increase reliability, a question was added to the middle of the IRMA that stated, "If you are still reading this survey, please circle 2."

Several *t*-tests were conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference among groups for rape myth acceptance and bystander attitudes. Mean scores indicated a lower acceptance toward rape myth acceptance. Scores for bystander attitude suggested a willingness to intervene in most situations.

Talbot, Neill and Rankin (2010) set out to examine the following research questions: What are the differences in rape-accepting attitudes in men as compared to women?; What are the differences in rape-accepting attitudes in individuals who subscribe to more traditional or conservative gender roles as compared to individuals who subscribe to more egalitarian or liberal gender roles?; and What are the differences in rape-accepting attitudes in individuals who personally know a survivor of sexual violence as compared to those individuals who do not know a survivor of sexual violence?

Participants were 1,602 undergraduate students from a Pacific Northwest who were 18 years or older. The participants were obtained through an email request to

participate in an online survey. The authors concluded that there was a significant difference between rape-accepting attitudes of men in comparison to women.

Additionally, women were significantly less in agreement with rape-related attitudes posed in the study; however, both male and female participants were more inclined to respond with more socially desirable, anti-rape answers.

Kopper (1996) investigated the role of gender, gender role identity, rape myth acceptance, and time of initial resistance in assigning blame to the victim, perpetrator, situation, and chance following an acquaintance rape as well as the perceived degree of avoidability of the assault (Kopper, 1996). It was hypothesized that participants who held low rape myth acceptance would be less likely to blame the victim (Kopper, 1996). Furthermore, the author hypothesized that early resistance by the victim would have less blame placed on them (Kopper, 1996). The participants were 534 undergraduate students (355 women and 179 men), who were enrolled in introductory psychology courses at a large Midwestern university. They ranged in age from 16 to 39 years

Female participants obtained a lower mean rape myth acceptance score than their males counterparts. The results suggested that rape myth acceptance in addition to time of initial resistance appeared to be determining factors in the attribution of responsibility and perception of avoidability of a sexual assault for both men and women (Kopper, 1996). It was recommended to expand the participants to include individuals outside of the student population to see if these results still stand.

In addition to resistance, Ong and Ward (1999) also examined the effect that rape myths had on rape victim attribution of responsibility. They predicted that those who hold sex schemas of rape (beliefs about sex and rape) would attribute more fault and

responsibility to the victim and less to the rapist than those who hold power schemas only when the victim does not resist the attack. The results found that those who hold sex schemas of rape attributed more responsibility to the victim and less responsibility to the assailant than those who hold power schemas of rape. Also, those who use sex schemas to interpret rape attributed more responsibility to the non-resisting victim than the resisting victim.

Rape Empathy

Deitz, Tiemann Blackwell, Daley, and Bentley (1982) constructed the Rape Empathy Scale (RES), which was designed to measure the amount of empathy that a participant felt toward a rape victim and a rapist in a heterosexual rape situation. This study was comprised of two studies, both of which had their own individual purposed. The purpose of Study 2 was to “investigate the empirical, convergent, and discriminant validity of the RES.” (Dietz, Tiemann Blackwell, Daley, & Bentley, 1982)

The second study is most relevant to this paper and as such will be the only one discussed. It was hypothesized that; female subjects would obtain higher RES scores, indicating greater empathy for a rape victim, their male counterparts, and female subjects who had reported prior exposure to rape (rape victims and women who had successfully resisted rape) would obtain higher RES scores than women who had never been exposed directly to rape.

The results revealed that females showed more empathy for the rape victim than the males. As well, results showed that women who had been directly exposed to rape, whether an actual rape or an attempted rape, showed more empathy towards the victim than did the participants who had not been directly exposed.

Miller, Amacker, and King (2010) aimed to “contribute to the existing research base concerning perceiver variables that predict culpability attributions toward sexual assault victims by organizing the predictions into a causal framework and, moreover, considering the potential role of sexual victimization history of the perceiver in driving these attributions” (Miller, Amacker, & King, 2010, p. 372). Participants were 69 female undergraduate students from the psychology department at a university in the southwestern United States. They ranged in age from 18-27 with a mean age of 19.96. It was hypothesized that; perceiver sexual assault history will predict greater rape victim empathy, and this relationship will be mediated by degree of perceived similarity to a victim based upon her sexual assault history, degree of perceived similarity to a victim based upon sexual assault history will predict lesser victim culpability attributions, and this relationship will be mediated by degree of rape victim empathy, and degree of rape victim empathy will predict lesser victim culpability attributions, and this relationship will be mediated by a degree of rape endorsement (Miller, Amacker, & King, 2010, p. 376).

The results indicated that participants who have a sexual assault history had greater rape empathy as they perceived the victim to be similar to them. As a result of the similarity factor and the greater rape empathy that the participants felt, they were more inclined to attribute less responsibility to the victim.

Deitz, Littman, and Bentley (1984) also examined the effect that rape empathy has on the attribution of responsibility in rape cases. It was hypothesized that the participants’ “pretrial empathy” toward rape victims and rapists would be predictive of their perceptions of the victim and perpetrator in regards to a specific case or rape (Deitz,

Littman, & Bentley, 1984). It was further hypothesized that those participants who showed greater pretrial empathy toward rape victims would attribute less responsibility to the victim in the specific rape case and would “perceive her more positively”, as opposed to those participants who showed less pretrial empathy towards rape victims (Deitz, Littman, & Bentley, 1984). The resulted found that overall, participants had high rape empathy and accurately attributed the blame to the perpetrator.

Summary

Sexual assault and rape are hard-hitting, yet highly criticized issues that create a major cause for concern in society today. Research in the area of rape attribution has shown several things: (A) the majority of the attribution for the assault is placed on the victim, (B) society is more inclined to believe that the victim solicited the attack in some way, and (C) understanding and compassion for the victim is often times low. Research further suggest that there is a negative relationship between the perceived attribution of responsibility of the victim and society’s perception of the victim. However, when the added factor of rape empathy is included, the dynamics of this relationship may shift.

Rationale

Past research has suggested that rape myth acceptance has been a notable predictor of rape attribution. Currently however, there is still little research on the relationship between rape myth acceptance and rape attribution. Additionally, while rape empathy has also been shown to be related to rape attribution, it remains unclear as to the depth in which it may influence rape attribution beyond that of rape myth acceptance. Accordingly, the purpose of this study was to examine the combined effect of rape myth acceptance and rape empathy on rape attribution.

Hypothesis

It was hypothesized that the combination of the two independent variables, low rape myth acceptance and high rape empathy would be the best predictor of low rape attribution.

Method

Participants

For this study, undergraduate and graduate students from Barry University were recruited using flyers and email. Additionally, this study was posted on an online survey site (socialpsych.com) where it was available for the general public (those outside of the Barry University Community) to take.

There were 130 participants (15 male, 106 female; the remaining 9 did not indicate gender) who ranged in age from 18 years to 82 years ($M = 26.82$, $SD = 12.86$). Participants were from a variety of ethnic backgrounds; 28 identified as African American, 29 identified as Caucasian, 23 identified as Hispanic, 15 identified as Afro-Caribbean, 1 identified as Asian, 26 identified themselves as Other, and 8 participants did not indicate ethnicity. Additionally undergraduate participants included 25 freshmen, 24 sophomores, 17 juniors, and 25 seniors. Seven participants indicated that they were graduate students, 3 identified as post graduate, 14 identified as not in school, and 6 indicated other. The remaining 9 did not indicate anything.

Procedure

Participants were directed to an anonymous online survey-taking site (PsychSurveys.org) where they read a vignette depicting a stranger rape scenario. After which they were instructed to respond to four scales; the Attitudes Towards Rape Scale (ATR), the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA) Revised, the Rape Victim Empathy Scale (RES-V), and the Rape Perpetrator Scale (RES-P). A brief demographic questionnaire was included for descriptive purposes only. Items in the demographic questionnaire included; age, gender, ethnicity, and academic year level.

Measures

Attitudes Toward Rape Scale. The Attitudes Toward Rape Scale (ATR) was developed by Feild (1978). This test consist of 32 items to which participants are asked to respond using a 6-point Likert scale ranging from strongly agree (scored 1) to strongly disagree (scored 6). As such the total score is derived from summing the scores of the 32 items. The total score can range from 32 to 192. Some sample items include:

7. A women should be responsible for preventing her own rape

10. A raped women is a less desirable women

21. Rape is a sex crime

(See Appendix A)

Rape Myth Acceptance. The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA) Revised was developed by McMahon (2010). It is a modified version of the Rape Myth Acceptance scale developed by Burt (1980). The scale consist of 19 items scored on a 5-point Likert Scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree). Scores are derived from summing the scores of the 19 items. Total scores can range from 19 (indicates that the individual

completely disagrees with rape myths) to 95 (indicates that the individual completely agrees with rape myths) Items include:

1. *If a girl is raped when she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for what happened.*
2. *When girls go to parties wearing slutty clothes, they are asking for trouble.*
16. *If the accused "rapist" doesn't have a weapon, you really can't call it rape.*

(See Appendix B)

Rape Empathy. The Rape Empathy Scale was developed by Deitz et al (1982) and was modified by the authors for clarity and administering purposes. This scale consists of 36 items that were split into two 18-item subtests (one test depicting empathy for the rape victim; RES-V, with the other test depicting empathy for the perpetrator; RES-P).

Responses will be scored using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree 5 = strongly agree). Total scores are derived from summing the scores from each of the subtest. The highest possible score (90) on the rape victim empathy subtest will indicate extreme empathy for the rape victim, while the highest possible score (90) on the rapist empathy subtest will indicate extreme empathy for the rapist. For the purposes of this study, only scores from the RES-V will be analyzed. Items include:

6. *In a court of law, I feel that the rapist must be held accountable for his behavior during the rape.*
7. *In a court of Law, I feel that the rape victim must be held accountable for her behavior during the rape*
12. *I believe that it is impossible for a rape victim to enjoy being raped.*

13. *I believe that it is possible for a rape victim to enjoy the experience of being raped, whether she admits it or not.*

(See Appendix C)

Demographic Questionnaire. A brief demographic questionnaire will contain items requesting information about the participant's age, sex, ethnicity, academic year level (with the option of *not in school* for those who are not in university). (See Appendix D)

Results

A bivariate correlation of three factors (TotalATR, TotalIRMA, TotalRESV) was conducted to ensure that there was indeed a relationship between the factors; results suggested that they were. See Table 1 for the means, standard deviations, and correlations.

Table 1

Means, standard deviations, and correlations

Measure	Mean	SD	Correlations		
			1.	2.	3.
1. TotalATR	122.86	15.15	-		
2. TotalIRMA	40.40	13.17	-.602***	-	
3. TotalRESV	69.59	13.24	.373***	.391***	-

Note. *** $p < .001$

A multiple regression was conducted to see if rape myth acceptance and rape empathy predicted rape attribution of responsibility (who is blamed in cases of rape). The dependant variable was rape attribution, and the independent variables were rape myth acceptance and rape empathy. It was found that rape myth acceptance and rape empathy accounted for a significant amount of variance in the attribution of responsibility in cases of rape $F(2, 127) = 39.66, p < .001, R^2 = .38$. This indicated that the combination of the two independent variables accounted for 38% of the variance. It was also found that attribution of responsibility was significantly predicted by both rape myth acceptance ($\beta = .38, t(127) = 7.11, p < .001$) and rape empathy ($\beta = .16, t(127) = 2.15, p < .05$) with rape myth acceptance being the stronger predictor.

Discussion

In the current study, it was found that both rape myth acceptance and rape empathy for the victim had a significant impact on the attribution of responsibility in cases of rape. The hypothesis, that the combination of the two independent variables, low rape myth acceptance and high rape empathy will be the best predictor of low rape attribution was supported. Mean scores on the ATR were on the higher end suggesting that participants were in support of the victim and thus, attributed less blame to her. The mean scores on the IRMA were low, suggesting that overall, participants did not hold strong beliefs of rape myths. Additionally, mean scores on the RES-V were high, indicating that participants had greater empathy for the victim. As proposed in the hypothesis, the combination of these two predicted low attribution of responsibility. Furthermore, the results indicated that scores on the IRMA was the stronger predictor when compared to the RES-V, although both were statistically significant.

As both independent variables being statistically significant predictors this suggests that both rape myth acceptance and rape empathy, specifically empathy for the victim, significantly impact the way that individuals perceive victims (as well as perpetrators) in instances of rape beyond the point of mere coincidence. Furthermore, with rape myth acceptance shown to be the stronger predictor of the two independent variables, it suggests that the belief in rape myths or lack thereof has a greater impact on the attribution of responsibility in cases of rape more so than whether or not a person is empathetic towards a victim of rape.

In our male-dominated society, women have historically been viewed as subservient to men, and as such they have been treated as second-class citizens. They have been viewed as property to use or misuse at will. They were believed to lack the superior intellect of their male counterparts, and thus incapable of making decisions on important topics as well as being incapable of adding any meaningful contributions. This view of women seems to have seeped its way into the laws and regulations that govern society. Because of this skewed view, it was believed that women could not be sexually violated. With time and the help of rape law reforms and other policies, women could legally be a victim of sexual assault. However, the legality of the situation was of little impact when it came to actually attributing blame for a sexual assault. Women were viewed with skepticism, and their personal lives were scrutinized. Despite legally being a victim of a sexual assault, it was believed that the women played some part in attracting and causing the assault, and thus much of the blame was placed on her.

Past findings have suggested that the way that a victim is dressed at the time of the attack has a significant impact on the level of attribution (or blame) placed on her

(Yarmey, 1985). For example, if she is dressed provocatively more blame is placed on her because the perception is that she was looking to have some kind of sexual interaction (Kowalski, 1992). This could include harmless flirting to a sexual encounter or intercourse. Many, if not all, of the studies mentioned in this paper, found that participants placed more blame on the victim of the rape than the perpetrator. Conversely, perpetrators have been found to have less blame placed on them. This is usually the case when the victim is dressed in a way that suggests that she wanted the attention of the man that she was attacked by. These studies suggest that despite the fact that the individual has been victimized by her attacker, various factors, most of which are irrelevant, determine whether or not she is viewed as a victim in the eyes of the law and society.

Other studies that have examined the effects of resistance on the attribution of responsibility in cases of rape have shown that victims who resist during an attack are more likely to be blamed. This was due to the belief that resisting further enraged the perpetrator causing him to become more violent. As a result, the victim was blamed for the attack because if she had been more passive the perpetrator would have not responded the way that he did. Later studies like Stovell and Bacheller (2013) have shown that the victim is indeed just that, a victim, regardless of whether or not she resists her attacker. With regards to the attribution of responsibility to a perpetrator, early studies have placed less blame on them for the same reason that the victim was blamed. When a victim would resist it would cause the perpetrator to become angrier and thus more violent in the attack. As a result, it is because of the resistance, that the perpetrator acted in a violent way, thus it was not his fault.

However, as society evolves and peoples' perceptions change, modern studies such as those by Stovell and Bacheller indicate that more attribution is being placed on the perpetrator. With this shift in the perception of the victim comes greater of things like acceptance of various styles of clothing and the belief that "No" really does mean no regardless of whether any kind of physical resistance is used.

Previous studies such as Kopper (1996) and Schider, Mori and Lambert (2009) also looked at the impact that gender plays in the attribution of responsibility in cases of rape. It has previously been found that male participants are more likely to place blame on a victim when compared to their female counterparts. The authors also examined the impact of gender (for their own edification) to see if the large disparity between male and female participants would still result in a gender difference. It was found that this trend did not remain consistent in this study. Male participants in the current study did not seem to attribute more blame to the victim (compared to their female counterparts) despite having a greater belief in rape myths. In fact, overall mean scores on the ATR suggested that the female participants attributed more blame to the victim, even though they were less likely to believe rape myths, although neither was statistically significant. The cause for this inconsistency may be the large disparity between male and female participants. There were only 15 participants that identified as male, compared to the 106 that identified as female. As a result, the smaller amount of males may have held a greater weight when comparing the mean scores between both male and female participants. To see if this trend remains consistent, future studies should have a more balanced number of both genders.

An implication of this study is that it provides more recent results with regards to perception and attribution of responsibility in cases of rape; thus, it is more socially relevant. However, further research is needed using a more accurate representation of the population to confirm the results found. If the results of this study can be replicated, they can be useful in educating people who interact with both female and male sexual assault victims, such as police, lawyers, jurors, and medical professionals. Another practical implication is that this study and others like it can aid in voir dire (jury selection), as it can help to predict possible outcomes of a trial based on how the jury perceives both the victim and the perpetrator. With this information, both the prosecution and the defense can determine how to present their case.

A theoretical implication of this study is that since women are more likely to be raped than men, and as such they may have a greater sense of awareness of rape and empathize more with the victim. Female observers can identify with the female victim and may want her to get the same justice that they would expect to get if they were in that situation. They would not want to be blamed for the attack and as such do not blame the victim either. Conversely, men are believed to have a lack of awareness about rape and as a result cannot readily empathize with the victim. A limitation of the current study, as mentioned previously, was the gender disparity. Although there was a gender difference, it cannot be accurately determined if that was due to an actual difference in male and female beliefs and perceptions or simply because there was such a large difference in the number of male and female participants. Another limitation was that many of the participants were enrolled in undergraduate psychology classes. This was a limitation because they are taught to view the victim as less responsible for a rape attack. Because

of this, results may have been skewed in a more positive direction. Thus, if there had been a more accurate, real world representation of participants the results may have been different. Further research will determine whether or not this is true.

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Appendix A

Attitudes Toward Rape Scale (ATR)

1. A woman can be raped against her will.
2. The reason most rapists commit rape is for the
thrill of physical violence.
3. Rapists are "normal" men.
4. In forcible rape, the victim never causes the crime.
5. All rapists are mentally sick.
6. A charge of rape two days after the act has
occurred is probably not rape.
7. A woman should be responsible for preventing her
own rape.
8. A man who has committed rape should be given at
least 30 years in prison.
9. Women are trained by society to be rape victims.
10. A raped woman is a less desirable woman.
11. If a woman is going to be raped, she might as well
relax and enjoy it.
12. Rape provides the opportunity for many rapists to
show their manhood.
13. Most women secretly desire to be raped.
14. It would do some women some good to get raped.
15. Women provoke rape by their appearance or

behavior.

16. "Nice" women do not get raped.
17. Most charges of rape are unfounded.
18. In order to protect the male, it should be difficult to prove that a rape has occurred.
19. Rape is the expression of an uncontrollable desire for sex.
20. Rape is the worst crime that can be committed.
21. Rape is a sex crime.
22. All rape is a male exercise in power over women.
23. During a rape, a woman should do everything she can do to resist.
24. Rapists are sexually frustrated individuals.
25. In most cases when a woman was raped, she was asking for it.
26. The reason most rapists commit rape is for sex.
27. Rape of a woman by a man she knows can be defined as "a woman who changed her mind afterward."
28. A convicted rapist should be castrated.
29. A woman should feel guilty following a rape.
30. The degree of a woman's resistance should be the major factor in determining if a rape has occurred.
31. A raped woman is a responsible victim not an innocent one.

32. Rape serves as a way to put or keep in their “place”.

Appendix B

Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA) revised.

This revised version includes “language for college students as well as having a specific focus on accountability for rape and victim blaming” (McMahon, 2010).

1. If a girl is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for what happened. (SA)
2. When girls go to parties wearing slutty clothes, they are asking for trouble. (SA)
3. If a girl goes to a room alone with a guy at a party, it is her own fault if she is raped. (SA)
4. If a girl acts like a slut, eventually she is going to get into trouble. (SA)
5. When guys rape, it is usually because of their strong desire for sex. (MT)
6. Guys don't usually intend to force sex on a girl, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away. (MT)
7. Rape happens when a guy's sex drive gets out of control. (MT)
8. If a guy is drunk, he might rape someone unintentionally. (MT, SA)*
9. If both people are drunk, it can't be rape. (A)
10. It shouldn't be considered rape if a guy is drunk and didn't realize what he was doing. (A)
11. If a girl doesn't physically resist sex—even if protesting verbally—it really can't be considered rape. (NR)
12. If a girl doesn't physically fight back, you can't really say it was rape. (NR)
13. A lot of times, girls who say they were raped agreed to have sex and then regret it. (LI)
14. Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at guys. (LI)
15. Girls who say they were raped often led the guy on and then had regrets. (LI)
16. A lot of times, girls who claim they were raped just have emotional problems. (LI)

17. If the accused “rapist” doesn’t have a weapon, you really can’t call it a rape. (NR)
18. Girls who are caught cheating on their boyfriends sometimes claim that it was rape. (LI)
19. If a girl doesn’t say “no,” she can’t claim rape. (NR)

Note. Rating of these items were made on a 5-point scale (1 =strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

The abbreviations represent the subscales of the Rape Myths: SA = *She asked for it*; NR = *It wasn’t really rape*; MT = *He didn’t mean to*; A = *Alcohol*; LI =*She lied*.

Appendix C

Rape Victim Empathy Scale (RES-V)

1. I feel that the situation in which a man compels a woman to submit to sexual intercourse against her will is an unjustifiable act under any circumstances.
2. It is more important to know about the past sexual activity of the alleged rapist than the past sexual activity of the alleged rape victim in deciding the matter of guilt or innocence in a rape case.
3. In general, I feel that rape is an act that is not provoked by the rape victim.
4. I would find it easier to imagine how a rape victim might feel during an actual rape than how a rapist might feel.
5. I cannot understand why a man would use force to obtain sexual relations with a woman under any circumstances.
6. In a court of law, I feel that the rapist must be held accountable for his behavior during the rape.
7. A woman has the right to dress in a sexually attractive way whether she is really interested in having sexual relations or not.
8. I would find it easier to empathize with the shame and humiliation a rape victim might feel during a trial to prove rape than with the feelings a rapist might have during the trial.
9. If a man rapes a sexually attractive woman, his actions would not be justified by the fact that she chooses to have sexual relations with other men.
10. I don't believe that any women secretly want to be raped.

11. In deciding whether a rape has occurred or not, the burden of proof should rest with the man, who must prove that a rape has not actually occurred.
12. I believe that it is impossible for a rape victim to enjoy being raped.
13. I can really empathize with the helplessness a victim might feel during a rape if all of her attempts to resist the rape have failed.
14. After a rape has occurred, I think the woman would suffer more emotional torment in dealing with the police than the man would.
15. I feel it is possible for a man to rape a woman against her will.
16. If a rape trial were publicized in the press, I feel the rape victim would suffer more emotional trauma from the publicity than the rapist.
17. Even if a couple has had sexual intercourse before, if the man forces the woman to have sexual intercourse against her will, this should be considered rape.
18. If I were a member of a jury in a rape trial, I would be more likely to believe the woman's testimony than the man's, since it takes a lot of courage on the woman's part to accuse a man of rape.

Rape Perpetrator Empathy Scale (RES-P)

1. I feel that the situation in which a man compels a women to submit to sexual intercourse against her will is justifiable act under certain circumstances.
2. In deciding the matter of guilt or innocence in a rape case, it is more important to know about the past sexual activity of the alleged rape victim than the past sexual activity of the alleged rapist.
3. In general, I feel that rape is an act that is provoked by the rape victim.

4. I would find it easier to imagine how a rapist might feel during an actual rape than how a rape victim might feel.
5. Under certain circumstances, I can understand why a man would use force to obtain sexual relations with a woman.
6. In a court of law, I feel that the rape victim must be held accountable for her behavior during the rape.
7. When a woman dresses in a sexually attractive way, she must be willing to accept the consequences of her behavior, whatever they are, since she is signaling her interest in having sexual relations.
8. I would find it easier to empathize with the shame and humiliation a rapist might feel during a trial for rape than with the feelings a rape victim might have during the trial.
9. If a man rapes a sexually attractive woman, he would probably be justified in his actions by the fact that she chooses to have sexual relations with other men.
10. I believe that all women secretly want to be raped.
11. In deciding whether a rape has occurred or not, the burden of proof should rest with the woman, who must prove that a rape has actually occurred.
12. I believe that it is possible for a rape victim to enjoy the experience of being raped, whether she admits it or not.
13. I can really empathize with the helplessness a rapist might feel during a rape, since he's at the mercy of forces beyond his control.
14. After a rape has occurred, I think the man would suffer more emotional torment in dealing with the police than the woman would.

15. I feel it is impossible for a man to rape a woman unless she is willing.
16. If a rape trial were publicized in the press, I feel the rapist would suffer more emotional trauma from the publicity than the rape victim.
17. Once a couple has had sexual intercourse, then that issue is resolved and it is no longer possible for that man to rape that woman.
18. If I were a member of the jury in a rape trial, I would probably be more likely to believe the man's testimony than the woman's, since rape is a charge that is difficult to defend against, even if the man is innocent.