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Blaming the Victim: Effects of Victim and Respondent Characteristics on Attribution of Blame to Rape Victims

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BLAMING THE VICTIM:

EFFECTS OF VICTIM AND RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS ON

ATTRIBUTION OF BLAME TO RAPE VICTIMS

by

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ABSTRACT

BLAMING THE VICTIM:
EFFECTS OF VICTIM AND RESPONDENT CHARACTERISTICS ON ATTRIBUTION OF BLAME TO RAPE VICTIMS

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This study examines rape myths and the attribution of blame in instances of rape. This research builds upon previous studies that examined attribution of blame based the effects of gender, attitudes toward rape victims, and race. This study explores the impact of the seriousness of the attack on attributions of blame. It also examines the influence of the level of similarity between the respondent and the victim on attributions of blame. Data was obtained from 408 undergraduate respondents enrolled at a university. Respondents completed an online survey that included the Attitudes Towards Rape Victims Scale and a vignette of a hypothetical rape scenario, with questions following the vignette. This study found that respondents who scored higher on the Attitudes Towards Rape Victims Scale attributed more blame to a victim of rape. Respondent gender was a significant predictor of victim blame at the bivariate level, but not within the multivariate analysis. Whether or not the victim in the vignette had to go to the hospital as a result of the attack, the racial similarity of respondents to the victims, and the social class of the respondents did not significantly influence the attributions of blame. These findings are not consistent with prior research. A discussion of the findings and suggestions for future research are provided.

This thesis is dedicated to working hard to finish something.

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There are many people who have helped contribute to completion of this thesis. I would like to thank my thesis chair and committee members: Dr. Carmody, Dr. White, and Dr. Yang.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A woman in the United States is raped about every two minutes (Buddie and Miller 2001). Rape is more common than people suspect because many rapes aren't reported to the police. The issue of rape is important because many people place blame on the victim, rather than the perpetrator (Matlin 2008). Society teaches women to avoid being raped, rather than teaching men not to rape. While there are male victims of rape, women are more often victimized (Wakelin and Long 2003). Therefore, this study concentrates on the victimization of women, but also considers previous research that included men as survivors of rape.

Societal attitudes about rape might help explain why more rapes aren't reported to the police. Victims of rape, "are often doubly victimized, first by the assailant and later by the attitudes of other people" (Matlin 2008:433). For example, "a New York City judge recommended leniency for a man who had forcibly sodomized a woman who was retarded, because 'there was no violence here'" (Matlin 2008:437).

Research suggests that victim blaming continues to be an issue. This is especially problematic with males. Men are more likely to assign blame to rape victims, be less certain about the perpetrator's guilt, feel more negatively toward the victims, and more positively toward the perpetrators than females (Maurer and Robinson 2008). The situation is worsened by stereotypical and inaccurate beliefs about rape and sexual assault, known as rape myths. Rape myths imply that women somehow encouraged the attack by the way they behaved or their physical appearance (Clarke and Stermac 2011).

Rape myths can lead to unfair treatment and re-victimization of survivors at individual and institutional levels (Clarke and Stermac 2011).

This study examines rape myths and the attribution of blame in instances of rape. This research builds upon previous studies that examined attribution of blame based the effects of gender, attitudes toward rape victims, and race. This study explores the impact of the seriousness of the attack on attributions of blame. It also examines the influence of the level of similarity between the respondent and the victim on attributions of blame. Rape myths are also discussed as they are an important factor in attributions of blame (Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994). The current study utilizes an online survey of undergraduates at a large urban university.

The next chapter provides the theoretical perspective and the review of previous literature.

CHAPTER II

SUMMARY OF LITERATURE

This chapter provides an overview of the defensive attribution hypothesis. It also includes a review of the literature that examines rape myths and how perceived severity of the rape affects attributions of blame. Next, research examining the effects of respondent gender and respondent race are discussed. The chapter concludes with a summary of the literature and research hypotheses that guide this study.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The defensive attribution hypothesis states that there are two factors that are important when people attribute blame. The two main researchers who laid the foundation for the defensive attribution hypothesis are Walster (1966) and Shaver (1970). Walster hypothesized that as the seriousness of the consequences increased for the victim, the person that caused the harm was more likely to be attributed blame for those consequences (1966). Walster examined the proposition that the more negative the consequences of an accident are, the more others feel that the person in the accident was responsible (1966). A questionnaire given to 88 undergraduate students was designed where the hypothetical car accident had four results: only the driver suffers inconsequential damage or considerable damage, and another person suffers inconsequential damage or considerable damage as well as the driver (Walster 1966). The results revealed that the driver was attributed more blame when the consequences were severe, with the greatest amount of blame being attributed to the driver when others were also seriously injured (Walster 1966).

Shaver (1970) built on Walster's findings. Shaver conducted three experiments, designed to examine the proposition that an "observer of an accident, to preclude the possibility that he could cause such a misfortune, will attribute responsibility for its occurrence to a person potentially responsible, and will attempt to differentiate himself from that person; further, this tendency will increase with the probability of occurrence and the severity of the accident's consequences" (Shaver 1970:101). The first experiment had a sample of 44 undergraduate students, the second experiment had a sample of 34 undergraduate students, and the third experiment had a sample of 46 undergraduate students (Shaver 1970). Questionnaires were given to the participants with vignettes detailing a hypothetical car accident (Shaver 1970). The results of these experiments revealed that people attribute more responsibility to people when they perceive their personal characteristics to be different and attribute less responsibility when they perceive their personal characteristics to be similar (Shaver 1970). The experiments did not support the work of Walster (1966); attributions of responsibility did not differ significantly when controlling for severity (Shaver 1970).

Shaver stated that for the defensive attribution bias to be activated, similarity of the perceiver to the victim is required (1970). Shaver found that as similarity to the victim increased, attribution of responsibility decreased (1970). Therefore, the people who were blamed for an incident were likely to be different from the observer (Shaver 1970).

People don't want to become victims by random chance, called harm avoidance, and they want to be able to defend themselves if they end up responsible in a similar situation (Muller, Caldwell, and Hunter 1994). Moreover, people who see themselves as

similar to a person in the incident will attribute less blame to that person (Muller et al. 1994).

RAPE MYTHS

Rape myths can be defined as, "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women" (Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994:134). Rape myths serve to reduce the blame assigned to the assailant and in some cases justify the attack. Rape myths shift the blame and responsibility from the assailant to the victim (Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994). Rape myths have been categorized with three overarching themes: victim masochism, meaning the women enjoy or want it, victim precipitation, meaning they deserve it or it only happens to certain types of women, and victim fabrication, meaning that the victims are lying or exaggerating (Buddie and Miller 2002). An example of a rape myth is that only certain types of women are raped, like those with bad reputations (Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994).

Research suggests that rape myths are widespread (Buddie and Miller 2001). However, males are more likely to accept rape myths than women (Buddie and Miller 2001). It is believed that rape myth acceptance might play a part in laws and verdicts that go against rape victims (Buddie and Miller 2001).

Since rape myths are inaccurate, false beliefs, there are rapes where the circumstances of the crime contradict the myths. However, Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) argue that these challenges to rape myth beliefs are often overlooked. The issue is that rape myths are universally applied (Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994). Few women who

are raped are wearing suggestive clothing or secretly wanted it. Likewise, it is unrealistic to suggest that only certain types of women are targets for rape.

Clarke and Stermac's study showed that rape myth acceptance was associated with placing more blame on the rape victim, reduced sympathy for the victim, and increased negative affect for the victim (2011). In their study of 413 adult Canadian residents, rape myth acceptance was associated with attributing more blame to the victim, having less sympathy for the victim, and increased affect towards the perpetrator (Clarke and Stermac 2011).

Most studies examining rape myth acceptance have shown that people with a higher level of rape myth acceptance are more likely to blame the victim of rape (Eyssel and Bohner 2011). Clearly, rape myths serves to justify the attack.

EFFECTS OF THE SEVERITY OF THE CRIME

Little research has been done specifically explaining the relationship between the severity of a rape and the attributions of blame. Severity is often operationalized in terms of the presence of injury or if the victim needed medical attention as a result of the attack. Most research regarding the defensive attribution hypothesis and the severity of a crime does not focus on rape. However, Walster (1966) found that attributions of blame increased when the consequences are more severe. Shaver tested that conclusion, but the experiments could not replicate the severity-dependent attributions of blame (1970). It should be noted that Walster (1966) and Shaver (1970) used hypothetical car accidents to test attributions of blame.

EFFECTS OF PERCEIVED SIMILARITY

Some have argued that the level of similarity between the respondent and the rape victim will influence the level of blame the respondent assigns to that victim. One study that examined perceived respondent similarity was conducted by Maurer and Robinson. This study involved a sample of 652 undergraduate students from an American university in the rural southeast (Maurer and Robinson 2008). It involved perceived similarity to victims and perpetrators, with effects of attire, alcohol, and gender discussed (Maurer and Robinson 2008). The students read a vignette and were asked a series of questions (Maurer and Robinson 2008). The participants were asked to report how similar they were to the male character, how similar they were to the female character, how much the male character wanted sex, how much the female character wanted sex, and if the event described in the vignette was a rape (Maurer and Robinson 2008). The male participants perceived themselves as more similar to the male character, believed that the female character wanted sex more than female participants, and labeled the incident as rape less often than female participants (Maurer and Robinson 2008) Respondent gender did not influence the perceived similarity to the female character in the vignette (Maurer and Robinson 2008).

EFFECTS OF RESPONDENT GENDER

There is a gap in most research examining the impact of gender on attributions of blame. The defensive attribution theory might explain the differences we see between men and women. The theory states that people are more likely to empathize with others

who are similar to themselves (Shaver 1970). Men aren't similar to female rape victims. Therefore, they tend to attribute more blame to them.

Males tend to have higher levels of rape myth acceptance than women (Basow and Minieri 2001; Clarke and Lawson 2009; Clarke and Stermac 2011; Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994; Maurer and Robinson 2008; Wakelin and Long 2003). Men are more likely to blame the victim, have more negative affect for the victim, and are more likely to feel sympathetic toward the perpetrator (Clarke and Stermac 2011).

Wakelin and Long found that men held more negative attitudes toward rape victims than females did (2003). This includes attitudes towards homosexual and heterosexual rape victims. Men attributed more general victim blame, more character blame, more unconscious desire, a greater percentage of blame to victims, and less blame to the perpetrator than women (Wakelin and Long 2003). More men than women believed that the victims could have avoided what happened (Wakelin and Long 2003). In addition, men attributed more behavioral blame to the victim and believed that the victim often placed herself in similar situations (Wakelin and Long 2003). Consistent with the earlier results of the study, men attributed a lower percentage of blame to the perpetrator than women did (Wakelin and Long 2003).

A study conducted by Nagel, Matsuo, McIntyre, and Morrison (2005) examined the effects of gender, race, religion, and social class on attitudes towards victims of rape. The study used the Attitudes Towards Rape Victims Scale (ARVS). Males had significantly higher scores on the ARVS than females, indicating that they held more negative attitudes toward rape victims (Nagel et al. 2005).

Overall, men are shown to hold higher levels of rape myth acceptance (Clarke and Stermac 2011; Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994; Nagel et al. 2005; Maurer and Robinson 2008). Therefore, they are more willing to blame the victim rather than the perpetrator. This consistent finding has implications with the defensive attribution hypothesis. The males are more similar to the male perpetrator. This may lead them to attribute less blame to the attacker.

EFFECTS OF RESPONDENT RACE

The relationship between race and attribution of blame for rape is complex. Some studies have found significant relationships between participant race and perceptions of rape victims with regard to attribution of blame (Jimenez and Abreu 2003; Mori, Bernat, Glenn, Selle, and Zarate 1995). However, other studies have found that the race of the participant isn't a significant predictor of attributions of blame when other variables are controlled (Nagel et al. 2005).

Most research done on the topic of race and perceptions of rape has compared African Americans to Caucasians. There has been smaller body of research focused on other races. Latinos were shown to have less favorable attitudes towards victims of rape when compared to Caucasians (Jimenez and Abreu 2003). Asians also reported more negative attitudes towards victims of rape compared to Caucasians (Mori et al. 1995).

Nagel et al. (2005) examined the influence of gender, race, religion, and social class on attitudes towards victims of rape by using the ARVS. African Americans scored significantly higher on the ARVS, meaning they held less sympathetic views towards rape victims than Caucasians (Nagel et al. 2005). The study also included two regression

analyses to examine what factors predict the scores on the ARVS. In the first regression analysis, age, sex, and race were statistically significant in predicting the ARVS (Nagel et al. 2005). In the second regression analysis, educational level and income level significantly predicted scores on the ARVS (Nagel et al. 2005). Individuals with higher educational levels and higher income are posited to hold more sympathetic views of rape victims (Nagel et al. 2005). It is interesting to note that the predictive value of raced diminished greatly when controlling for education and income (Nagel et al. 2005). Nagel et al. (2005) conclude that education and income are more important predictors than race considering attitudes towards rape victims.

CRITIQUE OF LITERATURE

Rape myth acceptance is an issue that has been widely studied. One issue with determining rape myth acceptance is that there are multiple scales that exist to measure rape myth acceptance. The most widely used is the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, RMAS (Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994). The second most widely used is the Attitudes Toward Rape Scale, ATR, and it is frequently used for subscales (Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994).

In addition, many studies included in the literature review utilized vignettes to study attitudes towards rape victims (Basow and Minieri 2010; Clarke and Lawson 2009; Clarke and Stermac 2011; Eyssel and Bohner 2010; Jimenez and Abreu 2003; Maurer and Robinson 2008; Vrij and Firmin 2001; Wakelin and Long 2003; White and Kurpius 2002).

SUMMARY AND HYPOTHESES

Previous studies have been very conclusive in showing that males hold more negative attitudes towards victims of rape than females. Previous studies have also shown that minorities hold more negative views of victims of rape compared to Caucasians. However, the variable of race is complex. It was shown that race is not a statistically significant predictor of rape myth acceptance when controlling for education and income (Nagel et al. 2005). The defensive attribution hypothesis states that individuals will attribute less blame to individuals they are similar to (Shaver 1970). Therefore, one would expect Caucasian respondents to blame a Caucasian victim less than non-Caucasian respondents. In addition, non-Caucasian respondents will blame a non-Caucasian victim less than Caucasian respondents. This study tests the following hypotheses:

H1: Respondents will attribute more blame to the assailant if the victim needs to go to the hospital as a result of the attack

H2: Respondents will attribute more blame to the victim when she is of a different race

H3: Males will attribute more blame to the victim than females

H4: Individuals with higher scores on the ARVS will attribute more blame to the victim

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research design, instrumentation, procedures, statistical analyses, and limitations of the study.

RESEARCH DESIGN

This research is a cross-sectional study, designed to examine impact of respondent race, respondent gender, victim race, rape myth acceptance and crime seriousness on attributions of blame for rape. Convenience sampling was used. Convenience sampling is a form of non-probability sampling where respondents are chosen because they were available (Singleton and Straits 2009). Convenience sampling is fast, easy, and inexpensive (Singleton and Straits 2009). This study utilizes data from an online survey distributed to undergraduate students at Old Dominion University. A self-administered online questionnaire was chosen due to the fast turnaround and the economy of the design. The language and wording of the questionnaire is simple and easy to understand. Respondents were recruited through a list of emails given by ODU. The lists of emails were grouped and randomized by the school. Students were invited to click on a link that took them to a separate website where they could complete the survey. The survey was anonymous and approval from the University Institutional Review Board was obtained.

VARIABLES

There are several independent variables in this study. The dependent variable is the attribution of blame, which is measured via a series of questions following the

modified rape vignette based on the Clarke and Lawson (2009) study. See Table 1 for a full list of variables used in the study.

The Attitudes Towards Rape Victims Scale (ARVS) is a 25 item Likert scale used to measure attitudes towards victims of rape (Nagel et al. 2005). The ARVS was chosen over the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale because the RMA Scale measures the attitudes towards rape in general, not toward victims of rape (Nagel et al. 2005). The items on the scale were "developed with an emphasis on victim blame, significance of victim experiences, victim deservedness, and disbelief in victim stories" (Nagel et al. 2005:728). The wording is easy to understand for people of all educational backgrounds. Each question is on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, agree strongly (Ward 1988). Questions 3, 5, 7, 10, 12, 15, 19, and 22 are reverse scored. The scores can range from 0 to 100 with a higher score reflecting more negative attitudes toward rape victims (Ward 1988). The individual items in the ARVS appear in Table 2.

The independent variables include the race of the victim, the seriousness of the crime, gender of the respondents, the attitudes toward rape victims, and race of the respondents. The race of the respondents and the seriousness of the crime are dichotomous variables that are manipulated in the vignettes included in the survey. The seriousness of the crime is operationalized as if the victim needed to go to the hospital or not. The gender of the respondents is operationalized as female and male. The race of the respondents and the victim are operationalized as Caucasian and non-Caucasian.

Social class will be used as a control variable for this study. This variable was chosen based on previous studies (Nagel et al. 2005). Social class is measured by respondents' self-identification with one of the listed categories.

Table 1. Variables Included in the Study

Dependent Variable	**Codes**
Attribution of Blame	6-30
Independent Variables	
Seriousness	1=Went to hospital, 2=Did not go to hospital
ARVS	0-100
Respondent Gender	1=Female, 2=Male
Respondent Race	1=Caucasian, 2=African American, 3=Asian or Pacific Islander, 4=Hispanic, 5=Other
Victim Race	1=Caucasian, 2=Non-Caucasian
Control Variable	
Social Class	1=Upper Class, 2=Middle Class, 3=Working Class, 4=Lower Class, 5=N/A

Table 2. Attitudes Towards Rape Victims Scale

	Disagree Strongly	Disagree Mildly	Neutral	Agree Mildly	Agree Strongly
	0	1	2	3	4
1. A raped woman is a less desirable woman.					
2. The extent of the woman's resistance should be the major factor in determining if a rape has occurred.					
3. A raped woman is usually an innocent victim.					
4. Women often claim rape to protect their reputations.					
5. "Good" girls are as likely to be raped as "bad" girls.					
6. Women who have had prior sexual relationships should not complain about rape.					
7. Women do not provoke rape by their appearance or behavior.					
8. Intoxicated women are usually willing to have sex.					
9. It would do some women good to be raped.					
10. Even women who feel guilty about engaging in premarital sex are not likely to claim rape falsely.					
11. Most women secretly desire to be raped.					
12. Any female may be raped.					
13. Women who are raped while accepting rides from strangers get what they deserve.					
14. Many women invent rape stories if they learn they are pregnant.					
15. Men, not women, are responsible for rape.					
16. A woman who goes out alone at night puts herself in a position to be raped.					

Table 2. Continued

	Disagree Strongly	Disagree Mildly	Neutral	Agree Mildly	Agree Strongly
	0	1	2	3	4
17. Many women claim rape if they have consented to sexual relations but have changed their minds afterwards.					
18. Accusations of rape by bar girls, dance hostesses, and prostitutes should be viewed with suspicion.					
19. A woman should not blame herself for rape.					
20. A healthy woman can successfully resist a rape if she really tries.					
21. Many women who report rape are lying because they are angry or want revenge on the accused.					
22. Women who wear short skirts or tight blouses are not inviting rape.					
23. Women put themselves in situations in which they are likely to be sexually assaulted because they have an unconscious wish to be raped.					
24. Sexually experienced women are not really damaged by rape.					
25. In most cases when a woman was raped she deserved it.					

Note: Range: 0-100. Questions 3, 5, 7, 10, 12, 15, 19, and 22 are reverse scored.

INSTRUMENTATION

The questionnaire includes a modified vignette based on the Clarke and Lawson (2009) study. The ARVS is used as an independent variable.

The vignette has been used by Clarke and Lawson (2009) has been replicated with similar results by Clarke and Stermac (2011). Therefore, the method may be considered consistent and reliable. The ARVS has been used in 15 countries with most studies reporting Cronbach's alpha greater than .80, meaning it has good internal consistency (Nagel et al. 2005).

The survey was pre-tested with a paper copy. Pilot testing was given to 10 graduate level students at Old Dominion University. Respondents were asked to provide comments on the clarity and presentation of the questionnaire. Modifications to the survey were made on the basis of the feedback from the pre-test. The modified version of the survey was presented as an online survey. A list of 4,000 student emails was randomized, with 1,000 students getting one of the four versions of the vignette. These scenarios included four vignettes which vary based on two independent variables: seriousness (injury, no injury) and victim race (Caucasian, non-Caucasian. One questionnaire included a vignette where the victim is Caucasian and she didn't have to go to the hospital, a vignette where the victim is non-Caucasian and had to go to the hospital, a vignette where the victim is Caucasian and had to go to the hospital, and a vignette where the victim is non-Caucasian and did not have to go to the hospital. A brief description of the victim, "Jill," was provided with the victim being Caucasian or non-Caucasian, and if she had to go to the hospital or not after the incident.

PROCEDURES

The dependent variable is attribution of blame. This was measured using the six item "Attributions of Blame Scale." See Table 4 for the entire vignette questionnaire.

The vignette also measured the independent variables. See Table 3 for the vignette. The vignette was a modified version that Clarke and Lawson (2009) used. Respondents were told to pretend that they are jurors in a rape trial. Each respondent was given one of four scenarios. Following the description of the victim, there was a description of the rape involving Jill and her classmate, "Mark." A series of true-false questions followed the description to make sure the respondents understood the facts of the case.

Respondents indicated their level of agreement with statements that followed the vignettes. See Table 4 for these questions. There were four different vignettes in the study; each respondent received only one vignette. The response categories were on a 5-point Likert scale with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agree. This means that higher scores indicate more blame. The respondents made judgments regarding the following: attributions of blame toward the victim, attributions of blame toward the perpetrator, affective reactions toward the scenario, and willingness to offer assistance to the victim. Respondents were asked if they feel the perpetrator is guilty of rape and how certain they are of their judgment. Questions 2, 3 and, 6 are reverse scored.

Table 3. Vignette

Please imagine that you have been selected to be a juror in a reported rape trial. Presented below is a brief description of the victim and her account of the events that occurred on the night in question. Please read both of these paragraphs carefully. After reading them, take a few moments to fully picture this scene in your mind. Then please answer the questions that follow.

Jill recently turned 20 and is attending her second year of university. She had blonde hair and brown eyes, is of medium height, is Caucasian/non-Caucasian, and has a pleasant smile. She lives with her older sister, works part time in a clothing store, and has a cat named Pickles.

Jill and Mark were assigned to work together on a project for their psychology class. Jill invited Mark over to her apartment on Thursday night to work on their assignment because she knew that her sister would be out for the evening and they could work undisturbed. After studying for about an hour, Jill and Mark decided to take a break, and Jill put on some music. They sat down on the couch, and after a while they began to kiss and touch each other. Mark began to undress Jill, and she told him that she did not want to have intercourse with him. He continued to remove her clothes, and again she told him no. Mark ignored Jill's protests, and, using his body weight to prevent her from leaving, they had intercourse. Jill had to/did not have to go to the hospital as a result of the attack.

Please answer the following questions by circling the correct response

Jill is 20 years old	True	False
Jill is graduating this year	True	False
Jill works at a supermarket	True	False
Jill is Caucasian/non-Caucasian	True	False
Jill has blonde hair	True	False

Table 4. Attribution of Blame Scale

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. It is Jill's own fault that she is in this situation.					
2. What happened was entirely Mark's fault.					
3. I feel sorry for Jill.					
4. I am very angry with Jill.					
5. I am disgusted with Jill.					
6. As a juror, I would like to help Jill.					

Note: Range 6-30. Questions 2, 3 and, 6 are reverse scored.

STATISTICAL ANALYSES

Individual items for the ARVS were summed to produce a single score on the scale for each respondent. Scores on the ARVS range from 0 to 100, with higher scores reflecting more negative attitudes towards the victim. Then, the responses to the vignette questions were combined together to form the variable named blame. The scores on the blame variable ranged from 6 to 25. Next, all the categorical independent variables were recoded as dummy variables. The race variable was recoded as Caucasian or non-Caucasian. Social class was recoded as high and middle class as one group and then low and working class as another. A variable was created for if the victim went to the hospital or not.

A variable, named samerace, examining if the respondents were similar to the victim was created. First, dichotomous variables were created for both respondents and victims with the categories Caucasian/non-Caucasian. Then, the variable "samerace" was calculated where 0 indicates that the respondent and victim were of different races, and 1 indicates that they are of the same racial category. See Table 5 for variables included in the analyses. Once all of these variables were created, all of the data for the four surveys were combined in one dataset.

Descriptive statistics on all variables were reported. The descriptive statistics were collected for each of the four surveys, then for the entirety of the data. Then independent samples t-tests were used to examine the relationships between the dichotomous independent variables (Gender, Race, Injury, Social Class, and Samerace) and Blame. A correlation was utilized to examine the relationship between the ARVS

Sum and Blame. These analyses were used to examine the relationship between the dependent variable and each independent variable (Sweet and Grace-Martin 2012).

After performing the t-tests and correlation analysis, a multiple linear regression was employed. The purpose of this is to examine the relative strength of the relationships between the dependent and independent variables (Sweet and Grace-Martin 2012).

This chapter outlined the methodology, to include the study design and sampling used in the present study. The next chapter provides the results of the descriptive analyses, t-tests, bivariate analyses, and multiple linear regression exploring the relationship between attributions of blame for rape victims, the characteristics of the rape victims, the seriousness of the crime, and the characteristics of respondents judging the rape victims.

Table 5. Recoded Variables Used in Analyses

Dependent Variable	**Codes**
Blame	6-30
Independent Variables	
Gender	0=Male, 1=Female
Race	0=Non-Caucasian, 1=Caucasian
ARVS Sum	0-100
Injury	0=No Hospital Visit, 1=Hospital Visit
Social Class	0=Lower and Working Class, 1=Upper and Middle Class
Victim Race	0=Non-Caucasian, 1=Caucasian
Same Race	0=Not the Same Race, 1=Same Race

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

Table 6 provides descriptive statistics for the 4 distinct surveys used in this study. Group 1 is the survey where the victim was Caucasian and went to the hospital. Group 2 is the survey where the victim was Caucasian and did not go the hospital. Group 3 is the survey where the victim was non-Caucasian and went to the hospital. Group 4 is the survey where the victim was non-Caucasian and did not go the hospital.

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics of the Variables

	Group 1 (n=100)	Group 2 (n=103)	Group 3 (n=99)	Group 4 (n=106)	Total (n=408)
Gender					
Male	33.3% (33)	40.2% (41)	29.9% (29)	37.5% (39)	35.3% (142)
Female	66.7% (66)	59.8% (61)	70.1% (68)	62.5% (65)	64.7% (260)
Respondent Race					
Caucasian	68% (68)	60.8% (62)	72.2% (70)	62.5% (65)	66.1% (265)
African American	15.3% (15)	23.5% (24)	16.5% (16)	16.3% (17)	18.0% (72)
Asian or Pacific Islander	5.1% (5)	4.9% (5)	3.1% (3)	7.7% (8)	5.2% (21)
Hispanic	3.1% (3)	2.9% (3)	3.1% (3)	8.7% (9)	4.5% (18)
Other	7.1% (7)	7.8% (8)	5.2% (5)	4.8% (5)	6.2% (25)
Social Class					
Upper Class	3.0% (3)	2.9% (3)	1% (1)	6.7% (7)	3.5% (14)
Middle Class	57.6% (57)	78.4% (80)	56.7% (55)	56.2% (59)	62.3% (251)
Working Class	34.3% (34)	17.6% (18)	39.2% (38)	29.5% (31)	30% (121)
Lower Class	4.0% (4)	1.0% (1)	3.1% (3)	6.7% (7)	3.7% (15)
N/A	1.0% (1)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	1.0% (1)	.5% (2)
Attitudes Towards Rape Victims Scale					
Mean	23.39	22.94	22.14	24.7	23.36
Median	22	21	21	26	22
Mode	22	12[1]	12[1]	11[1]	12
Attributions of Blame					
Mean	13.9	9.76	9.57	9.96	10.24
Median	14	9	8	9	10
Mode	14	6	6	6	6

Note [1]: Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.

RESULTS OF ANALYSES

Hypothesis I states that respondents will attribute more blame to the assailant if the victim needs to go to the hospital as a result of the attack. An independent samples t-test was conducted for the dummy coded independent variable stating if the victim went to the hospital and the dependent variable of attributions of blame. The results were not statistically significant. Therefore the first hypothesis was not supported. See Table 7 for the full results.

Hypothesis II concerns the respondents' observed similarity to the victim and the attributions of blame. Hypothesis II states that respondents will blame a victim more when the victim is a different race. The independent samples t-test revealed no significant difference between the groups. Hypothesis II was not supported. See Table 9 for the full results.

The third hypothesis proposed that males will attribute more blame to the victims than females. An independent samples t-test was conducted comparing the means of males and females with regards to attributions of blame. The results were significant. Males attributed more blame to the victims than females. See Table 8 for the full analysis. Hypothesis III was supported.

The fourth and final hypothesis posited that individuals who scored higher on the ARVS, meaning they have more negative attitudes towards rape victims, would attribute more blame to victims than those with lower ARVS scores. Both of these variables are continuous, so a bivariate correlation was conducted. The relationship was statistically significant. The relationship was positive with a value of .494. This means that as one

value increases, the other value increases as well. See Table 10 for the full correlation. Hypothesis IV was supported.

Independent samples t-tests were also conducted for the dichotomized variable of social class. The results were not statistically significant. See Table 11 for the full results. Finally, a multiple linear regression was conducted for all independent variables and the dependent variable. The only independent variable that had a significant relationship with the dependent variable was the score on the ARVS.

See Table 12 for the full regression results. The combination of the independent variables explains about 25% of the variation of the dependent variable. The ANOVA portion of the multiple linear regression has a significance of .000, meaning that the model applied can statistically significantly predict the outcome variable. Looking at the coefficients portion of the multiple linear regression shows which independent variables are the strongest indicators of blame. The only variable that is statistically significant is the score on the ARVS. While gender was significant with a 90% confidence interval with the independent samples t-test, it is not significant in the multiple linear regression.

The next chapter will discuss the findings using the literature as a guide and provide suggestions for future research.

Table 7. Independent Samples T-Test for Injury and Attributions of Blame

	Victim Went to Hospital	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Attributions of Blame	No Hospital Visit	159	9.87	3.755	0.298
	Hospital Visit	104	10.82	4.463	0.438

	Levene's Test for Equal Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal Variances Assumed	3.769	.053	-1.859	261	.064	-.949	.511	-1.955	.056
Equal Variances Not Assumed			-1.793	193.447	.074	-.949	.529	-1.993	.095

Table 8. Independent Samples T-Test for Gender and Attributions of Blame

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Attributions of Blame	Male	83	11.14	4.141	0.455
	Female	178	9.75	3.906	0.293

	Levene's Test for Equal Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal Variances Assumed	.284	.595	2.629	259	.009*	1.392	.529	.349	2.434
Equal Variances Not Assumed			2.575	152.04	.011	1.392	.541	.324	2.460

*. Relationship is significant at the .10 level.

Table 9. Independent Samples T-Test for Racial Similarity and Attributions of Blame

	Similar	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Attributions of Blame	Not the Same Race	148	9.90	4.074	.335
	Same Race	112	10.52	3.867	.365

	Levene's Test for Equal Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal Variances Assumed	.082	.774	-1.240	258	.216	-.619	.499	-1.602	.364
Equal Variances Not Assumed			-1.249	245.159	.213	-.619	.496	-1.595	.357

Table 10. Bivariate Correlation for ARVS score and Attributions of Blame

		Attributions of Blame	Attitudes Towards Rape Victims
Attributions of Blame	Pearson Correlation	1	.494**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0
	N	263	240
Attitudes Towards Rape Victims	Pearson Correlation	.494**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	1
	N	240	298

**. Relationship is significant at the .01 level.

Table 11. Independent Samples T-Test for Social Class and Attributions of Blame

	Social Class	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Attributions of Blame	Lower & Working	91	10.20	4.468	.468
	Upper & Middle	171	10.20	3.776	.289

	Levene's Test for Equal Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal Variances Assumed	2.772	.097	-.013	260	.990	-.007	.523	-1.036	1.023
Equal Variances Not Assumed			-.012	159.246	.990	-.007	.550	-1.094	1.080

Table 12. Multiple Linear Regression

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.506[a]	.256	.236	3.517

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attitudes towards rape victims, Victim Went to Hospital, Respondent Similar to Assailant, Social Class , Caucasian or Non-Caucasian Respondent, Gender.

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	980.855	6	163.476	13.215	.000[b]
	Residual	2857.636	231	12.371		
	Total	3838.492	237			

a. Dependent Variable: Attributions of Blame.

b. Predictors: (Constant), Attitudes towards rape victims, Victim Went to Hospital, Respondent Similar to Assailant, Social Class , Caucasian or Non-Caucasian Respondent, Gender.

Table 12. Continued

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	95.0% Confidence Interval for B	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1	(Constant)	6.441	.908		7.092	.000**	4.651	8.230
	Gender	-.029	.532	-.003	-.054	.957	-1.078	1.020
	Caucasian or Non-Caucasian Respondent	-.486	.518	-.055	-.938	.349	-1.508	.535
	Victim Went to Hospital	.913	.474	.111	1.928	.055	-.020	1.846
	Social Class	-.336	.486	-.040	-.692	.490	-1.293	.621
	Respondent Similar to Assailant	.497	.471	.061	1.054	.293	-.432	1.426
	Attitudes towards rape victims	.157	.020	.486	7.991	.000**	.118	.195

a. Dependent Variable: Attributions of Blame.

**. Relationship is significant at the .01 level.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This chapter concludes the research by re-examining the theory, previous literature, and hypotheses. Research from the previous literature is used to explain the results of the statistical analyses.

SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The issue of rape is important because victims are often blamed, rather than the perpetrator. Women are victimized by rape (Wakelin and Long 2003). Rape myths can lead to unfair treatment and re-victimization of survivors at individual and systematic levels (Clarke and Stermac 2011). By conducting this study, some reasoning can be applied to the attributions of blame in the instances of rape. While only one independent variable was significantly associated with attributions of blame, the study is still important. This study can provide guidance to future studies and possibly assist those researchers in avoiding the limitations faced in this research.

RESTATEMENT OF THEORERTICAL PERSPECTIVE

The theory utilized in this study was the defensive attribution hypothesis. Walster hypothesized that as the seriousness of the consequences of an action increased for the victim, the person who caused the harm was more likely to be attributed blame for those consequences (1966). Shaver's hypothesis was similar while stating that for the defensive attribution hypothesis to activate, perceived similarity to the victim is required (1970).

The results of this study did not support the defensive attribution hypothesis. Neither the respondents' similarity to the victim nor the severity of the attack were statistically significant in the multivariate analysis.

RESTATEMENT OF PREVIOUS LITERATURE

The hypotheses in this study were guided by previous literature. The effects of respondent gender have been very conclusive in showing that males hold more negative attitudes towards victims of rape than females (Basow and Minieri 2001; Clarke and Lawson 2009; Clarke and Stermac 2011; Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994; Maurer and Robinson 2008; Wakelin and Long 2003). Research has shown in some cases that minorities hold more negative attitudes towards victims of rape than Caucasians (Jimenez and Abreu 2003; Mori, Bernat, Glenn, Selle, and Zarate 1995). However, the variable of race is complex. It was shown that race is not a statistically significant predictor of rape myth acceptance when controlling for education and income (Nagel et al. 2005).

DISCUSSION

This study examined rape myths and the attribution of blame in instances of rape. The study explored the relationships between the effects of the seriousness of the attack, and respondents' racial similarity to the victim. The study utilized an online survey of undergraduates at a large urban university.

The findings from the current study are not consistent with prior research. Previous research has shown that males tend to blame rape victims more than females (Basow and Minieri 2011; Clarke and Lawson 2009; Clarke and Stermac 2011; Lonsway

and Fitzgerald 1994; Maurer and Robinson 2008; Wakelin and Long 2003). While males and females did significantly differ with regards to attributions of blame in the independent samples t-test, the gender variable was no longer significant in the multivariate analysis. A possible explanation might lie with rape myths. If a person believes that rape myths are true, that person is more likely to blame the victim (Buddie and Miller 2001; Lonsway and Fitzgerald 1994). A previous study conducted concluded that males and females did not differ in the number of rape myths they listed as personally believing (Buddie and Miller 2001). It could also be possible that the level of education a person has influences their attributions of blame. This study was conducted at a university, with all the respondents being undergraduate students. Therefore, this limits the differences that might be explained by level of education.

The defensive attribution hypothesis states that as the consequences of an action increase, the amount of blame attributed to the person who caused the harm increases as well (Shaver 1970; Walster 1966). This study hypothesized that if a rape victim needed to go to the hospital as a result of the attack, the attribution of blame on the perpetrator would increase. The results did not support this hypothesis. Shaver (1970) and Walster (1966) used a hypothetical car accident as a means of testing the defensive attribution hypothesis. It is possible that because rape is already seen as a serious act, the amount of blame attributed to the perpetrator cannot increase. This study also hypothesized that respondents would attribute more blame to the victim when she is a different race than the respondent. This hypothesis was not supported. One previous study found that the variable of race was not a significant predictor of rape myth acceptance when controlling for level of education and income (Nagel et al. 2005). The fact that this study was

conducted at a university with undergraduate respondents limits the differences that might be explained by level of education. This study included perceived social class as a control variable. Even with that variable controlled for, the variable of racial similarity to the victim was not statistically significant.

The final hypothesis of this study predicted that respondents with higher scores on the ARVS would attribute more blame to the victim. This hypothesis was supported and remained statistically significant in the multiple linear regression. Previous research has found that negative attitudes towards rape victims are positively correlated with attributing more blame to rape victims (Nagel et al. 2005).

Overall, the results combine to show that more research is necessary to explain attributions of blame to rape victims.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study had some limitations that should be addressed. The first limitation is that this data is not generalizable to the entire population. This study utilized survey responses from 408 respondents. The demographics of the respondents do not reflect the demographics of the general population. Future research should gather data from a diverse population to be able to make more accurate conclusions. Another limitation is the sample size. The sample size for this study was adequate, but larger sample sizes allow for more accurate analyses. Another limitation was the response rate. There was a low response rate to the questionnaire.

Perhaps the largest limitation was not including more variables. This study had a time constraint and was not able to include other relevant variables such as age of

respondent, political party affiliation, and more. Some of these variables do not coincide with the defensive attribution hypothesis. Reality is complex and it is entirely possible that more than one type of theory/hypothesis can explain attributions of blame for rape victims.

Further research is necessary to try and explain the relationship between attributions of blame and the characteristics of victims and respondents.

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Endnotes

Note [1]: Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown.

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