

University of Nevada, Reno

**Normalizing Violence Against Women: What Motivates People to Justify the
Gender System?**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Social Psychology

by

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THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

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Abstract

It is possible that rape, and reactions to these victims, act to reinforce the gender system. The gender system is a network of practices meant to (1) differentiate men and women as two distinct categories and (2) organize and justify social inequalities based on these differences. People tend to react negatively if someone or something threatens an existing system. One way in which people justify a system is through victim blame – people tend to blame the victim for her fate. People might also justify the system by exonerating the perpetrator – by giving the perpetrator a lesser punishment, people can reaffirm that the system is fair and just. The purpose of this mock juror experiment was to understand what factors motivate people to justify the gender system by blaming the victim and exonerating the perpetrator in affirmative consent cases (i.e., an alleged rape in which the victim claims consent was not affirmatively given). Participants read a vignette about an affirmative consent case at a University and acted as committee members determining the guilt and punishment of the perpetrator.

According to system justification, both advantaged and disadvantaged groups are motivated to justify the status quo; anyone or anything that threatens the status quo is viewed negatively by society. System justification was manipulated such that participants read a news article specifying that affirmative consent is a danger to the gender system; in the control condition, participants read that affirmative consent does not threaten the gender system. Two potential motivations to defend the gender system include rape myth cues and defensive attributions. In order to manipulate rape myth cues, participants were given information about what the victim was wearing: a mini-skirt, halter top, and high heels (rape myth cue), or jeans, sneakers, and a sweater (control condition). Defensive

attributions was manipulated such that participants read about either a cisgender or transgender victim.

This dissertation also assessed whether certain individual difference characteristics (e.g., attitudes toward transgender people and legal authoritarianism) affected victim blame and perpetrator punishment. This study employed a 2 (system justification: threatening or not) by 2 (rape myth cue: information about what victim was wearing vs no information) by 2 (victim gender: cisgender or transgender) by 2 (participant gender: male vs female) between subjects factorial design.

Results indicated that there was no significant main effect of system justification on either dependent variable. There was, however, a significant main effect of rape myth cues on victim blame and perpetrator punishment such that participants reading that the victim was wearing revealing clothing engaged in more victim blame, and less perpetrator punishment, than participants in the control condition. With regards to defensive attributions, there was no significant interaction between participant gender and victim gender. With regards to individual difference measures, system justification and legal authoritarianism interacted to affect both perpetrator punishment and victim blame.

Based on the results, it is likely that rape myth cues are a motivation to defend the gender system. Defensive attributions, however, are likely not a motivation to defend the gender system, and thus are not a part of system justification; instead, it is possible that defensive attributions are a part of something known as group justification. Results further indicate that system justification is a motivation to defend the gender system, but only for certain people (e.g., people high in legal authoritarianism).

Keywords: system justification, rape myth acceptance, defensive attributions, transgender

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, family, and friends who have provided so much support throughout these last six years. I could not have done this without your constant guidance, reassurance, and love. Thank you all!

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Someone once told me that no one gets through graduate school alone; indeed, it is not something a person can do without the help of other people. As I was writing my dissertation, I knew those words were true. I have a variety of people to thank for my success and the fact that I was able to reach this point in my graduate student career.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Violence against women is an unfortunately common occurrence; indeed, it is estimated that 1 in 3 women around the world experience violence during their lifetime (World Health Organization, 2017). One of the most common ways in which women are victimized is through rape or sexual assault (CDC, 2013). The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) estimates that roughly 1 in 6 American women has experienced sexual assault during her lifetime (RAINN, 2018a).

It is possible that rape, and reactions to rape victims, act to reinforce the gender system. According to scholars, the gender system is a network of practices meant to (1) differentiate men and women as two distinct categories and (2) organize, and justify, social inequalities based on these differences (see Ridgeway & Correll, 2004 for a discussion). One critical component of the gender system is cultural beliefs: beliefs that distinguish characteristics of men and women and their expected behaviors (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). These beliefs, in turn, have led to systematic inequality between the genders (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). For instance, within the world of business, women are often in low status positions (e.g., secretary; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). Moreover, women are often seen as supportive or submissive, whereas men are seen as being more assertive and aggressive (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999).

People tend to react negatively when someone, or something, threatens an existing system (such as the gender system; Blasi & Jost, 2006; Jost & Banaji, 1994). In order to justify, or defend, the system that is under threat, people often engage in victim blaming behaviors – they blame the victim for her fate (Kay, Jost, & Young, 2005). It is equally likely that people might justify the system by exonerating the perpetrator – by

giving the perpetrator a lesser sentence; people can reaffirm that the system is fair and just. Thus, the purpose of this dissertation is to understand what factors motivate people to justify the gender system by blaming the victim and exonerating the perpetrator in affirmative consent cases. This study will utilize system justification as its guiding theory.

According to system justification theory, people in both advantaged and disadvantaged groups are often motivated to justify or defend the status quo (Blasi & Jost, 2006; Jost & Banaji, 1994). One piece of legislation that might threaten the gender system is affirmative consent legislation. Affirmative consent legislation changes the discourse around consent from “no means no” to “yes means yes” (de León & Jackson, 2015). This type of legislation now requires conscious, voluntary, and affirmative consent throughout all stages of a sexual encounter, thereby removing ambiguity from the scenario (de León & Jackson, 2015). There has been concern from the general public that this type of legislation threatens traditional gender norms regarding sex (e.g., it threatens the notion that males are the sexual initiators in society; Little, 2005). Because affirmative consent has the potential to challenge traditional gender norms regarding sex (i.e., it challenges the gender system), this study will utilize recent affirmative consent legislation as a manipulation of system justification. It is predicted that participants in the system justification condition will blame the victim more, and punish the perpetrator less, than participants in the non-justification condition. This pattern of results will confirm that gender is indeed a system that people are motivated to justify. If so, then there are likely factors that motivate people to justify the gender system. This dissertation suggests

that both rape myth acceptance and defensive attributions are two ways in which people are motivated to justify the gender system.

Rape myths are often used to justify the gender system by reaffirming the notion that men are the dominant gender (Chapleau & Oswald, 2014). In other words, rape myths can help justify a system of gender inequality by excusing and trivializing men's sexual violence toward women (Chapleau & Oswald, 2014). Consequently, this dissertation will manipulate whether or not rape myth cues (e.g., what the victim was wearing) are present. If rape myth cues are a motivation to justify the status quo, participants' ratings of victim blame and perpetrator punishment should differ based on whether participants are provided with rape myth cues. Thus, participants will be given information about what the victim was wearing: a mini-skirt, halter top, and high heels (rape myth cue condition), or jeans, sneakers, and a sweater (control condition). It is predicted that participants in the rape myth cue condition will blame the victim more, and punish the perpetrator less, than participants in the control condition. If these results do occur, this will confirm that rape myth cues motivate people to justify the gender system.

Another concept that can motivate people to justify the gender system is defensive attributions. According to defensive attributions, participants who view themselves as similar to the victim will blame the victim less for her fate (Shaver, 1970). This study will manipulate defensive attributions by manipulating the gender identity of the victim – the victim will either be transgender (i.e., the person's gender identity is different than the one they were assigned at birth) or cisgender (i.e., the person's gender identity is the same as the one they were assigned at birth). A male to female transgender victim was chosen as a comparison to the cisgender victim because transgender people threaten the

gender system – the idea that gender is dichotomous and thus there are only men and women; the perpetrator is always a cisgender male. It is predicted that there will be a main effect of victim gender on both victim blame and perpetrator punishment – participants reading about a cisgender victim will be less likely to blame the victim, and more likely to punish the perpetrator, compared to participants reading about the transgender victim.

If defensive attributions are a motivation to justify the gender system, then it is expected female participants will engage in victim blame regardless of the gender of the victim. Male participants who identify with the perpetrator will punish the perpetrator equally. In essence, female and male participants who find themselves as similar to the victim and perpetrator justify the gender system by *distancing* themselves from the person they are similar to.

If, however, defensive attributions are *not* a motivation to justify the gender system then it is possible that participants who find themselves as similar to the victim will blame the victim less (i.e., female participants who identify with the cisgender victim will blame this victim less than the transgender victim). Male participants who view themselves as similar to the perpetrator will punish the perpetrator less. In essence, female and male participants who find themselves similar to the victim and perpetrator, respectively, will not justify the gender system and will thus *not* distance themselves from the person they are similar to.

A secondary purpose of this dissertation is to understand how individual characteristics affect victim blame and perpetrator punishment. Participant gender, beliefs about rape myth acceptance, attitudes toward homosexuality, and other demographic

characteristics (e.g., race and age) will be measured in this study. Prior research has indicated that males and participants with more negative attitudes toward homosexuality have higher scores on rape myth acceptance scales than female participants and participants with more positive attitudes toward homosexuality (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2008; Davies, Gilston, & Rogers, 2012). This pattern of results could be due, in part, to the fact that men tend to accept adversarial sexual beliefs more than women (see Fonow, Richardson, & Wemmerus, 1992); adversarial sexual beliefs are an important antecedent to rape myth acceptance (Burt, 1980). Thus, it is predicted that attitudes toward homosexuality and gender will relate to rape myth acceptance and that rape myth acceptance will, in turn, relate to victim blame, and perpetrator punishment.

This dissertation focuses primarily on perpetrator punishment, and not verdict choice, because most of the literature on rape myths has focused on perpetrator punishment (see for example Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Thus, this study seeks to understand what drives punishment after a guilty verdict – what factors influence a person’s decision to give the suspect a lighter sentence versus a harsher sentence.

In conclusion, this dissertation examines whether people are motivated to justify the gender system in the United States. Based on system justification theory, I integrate insights and methods from research on rape myth acceptance and defensive attributions to investigate to what extent people blame rape victims and dispense punishment on perpetrators.

Chapter 2 examines the prevalence of rape against women. The chapter discusses how often rape occurs, the types of perpetrators most likely to offend against women, and the most common types of rape (i.e., acquaintance). Chapter 3 provides an overview of

the gender system. It offers a discussion of what the gender system entails (i.e., the belief that there are only two genders) and reasons why people might be motivated to justify and defend the system.

Chapter 4 outlines system justification theory. It offers a brief definition and history of the term. It further examines how transgender people can be considered a threat to system justification, as well as the particular system transgender people most threaten (i.e., the gender system). It further discusses recent affirmative consent legislation and how this legislation has begun to change the narrative of consent, thereby potentially threatening the gender system.

Chapter 5 provides an overview of rape myths. It offers a brief definition and history of the term and discusses how rape myths are a construct of system justification. Finally, this chapter provides an explanation of how rape myths will influence victim blame and perpetrator punishment.

Chapter 6 discusses defensive attribution theory. This chapter offers a brief definition and history of the term. It further examines how defensive attributions might relate to system justification. The chapter concludes by hypothesizing how defensive attributions will relate to victim blame and perpetrator punishment.

Chapter 7 discusses individual difference measures that will be examined in this dissertation. For instance, it outlines the variables most likely to impact rape myth acceptance (e.g., attitudes toward LGBTQ people and participant gender). It also provides hypotheses on how individual characteristics such as race, age, and views of the criminal justice system will affect victim blame and perpetrator punishment.

Chapter 8 provides an overview of the dissertation. Chapter 9 discusses the pilot study that was conducted to ensure all materials were appropriate; Chapter 10 outlines the methods: participants, necessary sample size, the procedure, and the measures that will be utilized. Chapter 11 summarizes the proposed analyses, Chapter 12 provides a discussion of the limitations and future directions of this research, and Chapter 13 offers a brief conclusion to the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Violence Against Women

This chapter will provide an overview of the prevalence of rape against women. It will discuss the most common perpetrators (e.g., men) and types of rape (e.g., stranger) in order to explain why the vignettes used in this dissertation specify (1) the perpetrator was male and (2) the victim and perpetrator know one another.

Rape Against Women

Violence against women is an unfortunately common occurrence; it is estimated that 1 in 3 women around the world experience violence during their lifetime (World Health Organization, 2017). One of the most common ways in which women are victimized is through rape or sexual assault (CDC, 2013). The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) estimates that roughly 1 in 6 American women has experienced sexual assault during her lifetime (RAINN, 2018a). The numbers are even more discouraging for women who identify as lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (CDC, 2013). The Office for Victims of Crime (2014) estimates that roughly 50% of people who identify as transgender (or 1 in 2 transgender people) will experience rape during their lifetime. More broadly, if the woman identifies as bisexual, she has a higher likelihood of being raped during her lifetime (i.e., lifetime prevalence) by any perpetrator (both male and female) compared to lesbian and heterosexual women (CDC, 2013). For example, 46.1% of bisexual women, 13.1% of lesbians, and 17.4% of heterosexual women are likely to be raped during their lifetime by either a man or a woman (OVC, 2014).

Perpetrators of Rape

Many different types of people commit rape against women. The majority of bisexual and heterosexual women report having only male perpetrators (CDC, 2013).

With regards to transgendered people, perpetrators can include police officers and health care professionals, among others (OVC, 2014). Of those transgender people who are willing to report their victimization, roughly 15% report being assaulted while in police custody and 10% report being assaulted by health care professionals (OVC, 2014).

In general, men are the most likely to commit rape (Black et al., 2011).

Furthermore, roughly 25% of rapists are between the ages of 21 and 29, and 57% identify as White (RAINN, 2018b). With regards to weapons used during the commission of the rape, 2 out of 3 rapists use personal weapons such as hands or feet during their attack (RAINN, 2018b). Consequently, this dissertation will specify that perpetrator is a 21 year old White male attending college. The vignette will further specify that force was used, but will not specify that a weapon was present.

Types of Rape Committed

Women are often instructed to be aware of their surroundings and take precautions (i.e., do not walk alone, especially at night) to protect themselves. The assumption behind these warnings is that rape is likely to be committed by a stranger. Indeed, within American culture there is a pre-conceived notion that rape is perpetrated by strangers to the victim (Schmiedt & Roth, 2015). The reality, however, is that victims are much more likely to be sexually assaulted by someone they know (RAINN, 2018b). Recent statistics indicate that roughly 45% of rapes are committed by an acquaintance of the victim; 25% of rapes are committed by a current or former spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend (RAINN, 2018b). Considering this information, the perpetrator in this dissertation will be an acquaintance of the victim. The perpetrator will not be a current or

former partner of the victim, but rather someone that the victim knows from the university they attend.

Summary

In conclusion, women are at an increased risk of victimization, especially rape or sexual assault (CDC, 2013). The most common types of perpetrators of sexual assault against women are men (Black et al., 2011) who identify as White and are known to the victim (RAINN, 2018b). Furthermore, roughly 25% of rapists are between the ages of 21 and 29 (RAINN, 2018b). Thus, this dissertation will specify that the victim and perpetrator know one another, and that the perpetrator is a 21 year old White male.

Rape is often viewed as an abuse of power – men do not rape for sex, but instead commit this violent act in order to establish dominance over their victims (Minnesota State University, 2019). Thus, rape can be used as a way to justify the gender system in which we live. The next chapter offers a discussion of the gender system – what it is and what it means for men and women.

Chapter 3: The Gender System

This chapter will discuss the gender system in American society. The chapter will outline what constitutes the gender system in America (e.g., a focus in differentiating men and women), why people are attached to the system, and will conclude with a discussion of gender panic and gender naturalization work.

The Gender System and American Society

Gender is a complex network set up to categorize people as either male or female (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). This network, known as the gender system, identifies men and women as two distinct categories (i.e., they are seen as being polar opposites; Lucal, 1999; see Ridgeway & Correll, 2004 for a discussion). Within society, people subscribe to either a biology-based determination or identity-based determination of gender (Westbrook & Schilt, 2014). According to the biology-based determination, gender is innate and unchangeable; it is impossible to move from male to female or vice versa – a woman cannot become a man and a man cannot become a woman (Westbrook & Schilt, 2014). For instance, even if a man has undergone sex reassignment surgery to have female genitalia, or changed her identity documents (e.g., driver's license and birth certificate) to align with her gender identity, this person is always chromosomally male. Thus, if a person is physically female, but biologically male, people who adhere to a biology-based determination of gender would identify that person as male.

With regards to identity-based determination, people are recognized as belonging to one gender *only if* their identity claim is viewed as legitimate (Westbrook & Schilt, 2014). In other words, a male-to-female transgender person will only be considered female if she is seen as “female passing.” If other people can identify the transgender

individual as female based on hair, make-up, clothing, or other identifiers, only then will people view the person as female.

Regardless of which determination a person subscribes to, the assumption is that people are male until evidence is presented otherwise (Lucal, 1999). Thus, a woman must “do gender” by behaving, or dressing, in ways that reaffirm her gender identity (e.g., by having long hair or wearing make-up; Myhre, 1995; Westbrook & Schilt, 2014). This need to distinguish oneself from male often leads to the “othering” of women (Lucal, 1999). By othering women, or insinuating that they are different from “normal” (i.e., male), women are often devalued (Lucal, 1999).

This devaluation of women, or those who do not otherwise identify as “male”, highlights the second reason the gender system exists: to organize, and justify, social inequalities based on gender differences stemming from cultural beliefs about gender (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Cultural beliefs are beliefs that distinguish characteristics of men and women and their expected behaviors (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). These beliefs about gender, at least within Western societies, often exist along two dimensions: agency and communion (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Wood & Eagly, 2010). Essentially, men are thought to be agentic (i.e., masterful, assertive, dominant, and competitive), whereas women are thought to be more communal (i.e., friendly, unselfish, emotionally expressive, and concerned about others wellbeing; Wood & Eagly, 2010). Western cultures also describe men as being muscular and strong, whereas women are pretty and petite (Wood & Eagly, 2010).

Cultural beliefs not only encompass views about agency and communion, as well as physical characteristics, but also include opinions about intelligence (Wood & Eagly,

2010). For instance, women are described as being more creative and better with verbal communication; men, on the other hand, are regarded as being more analytical and better with quantitative skills (Wood & Eagly, 2010).

While these cultural beliefs are useful in that they help distinguish appropriate behaviors and characteristics for men and women, they can lead to systematic inequality between the genders (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). For instance, because women are often viewed as communal and of lower status than men, women in the world of business are often in low status positions (e.g., secretary; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). Moreover, women are often seen as supportive or submissive, whereas men are viewed as more assertive and aggressive (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). These beliefs, in turn, can potentially excuse men's sexual violence against women. Because men are viewed as assertive and aggressive, sexual violence against women could be regarded as men abiding by their gender norms. Furthermore, because men are perceived as having high status, sexual violence against women can be disregarded because the violence did not affect a high status person but rather a low status person. Despite the inequality present because of the gender system, people often find this system very appealing.

The Appeal of the Gender System

Gender is often considered to be a background identity (i.e., it influences the way people act in social contexts, but people are rarely aware of this occurrence; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Even though people are often unaware of the impact gender has on their behavior, the gender system, or the system that dictates appropriate behavior for men and women, can be found very appealing by society. The reasons for this appeal vary widely. First, gender is a significant definer of our personal selves and others (Ridgeway &

Correll, 2004). The gender system dictates how people should dress, look, and behave (Myhre, 1995; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; Westbrook & Schilt, 2014; Wood & Eagly, 2010). By defining this information, the gender system acts as a contract between ourselves and others thereby providing expectations on the appearance and behaviors of someone of a similar or opposite gender. For instance, a woman can expect another woman to have long hair, wear make-up, and to have a soft or rounded body (e.g., breasts); a woman can further expect a man to be tall, have short hair, and have a more lean or muscular body. With regards to behaviors, a woman can expect another woman to be communal (e.g., friendly and caring) and can expect a man to be more agentic (e.g., assertive or dominant). These specified behaviors, and looks, make interaction with others easier as a set script is already in place. Thus, the information provided by the gender system can not only help people classify someone as either male or female, but also understand the behaviors that are expected of another person during an interaction.

The second reason the gender system is appealing is that it is both simple and easy to understand (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). The system only takes into account two genders (male and female) and does not recognize other potential genders (e.g., transgender, agender, gender non-conforming). This simplicity of having only two genders removes any uncertainty or ambiguity from interaction – a person knows that the other person they are dealing with will be either male or female and that certain behaviors are expected from someone identifying as male or female. If someone does not behave according to their ascribed gender (e.g., a woman does not act as submissive), people can experience a phenomenon known as gender panic.

Gender Panic

People tend to react negatively when someone, or something, threatens an existing system (such as the gender system; Blasi & Jost, 2006; Jost & Banaji, 1994). Gender panic is a reaction to a threat to the gender system by trying to reassert, or justify, the male-female gender binary (Westbrook & Schilt, 2014). This reassertion of the gender binary, known as “gender naturalization work”, often helps to quell the panic people experience because of a threat to the gender system (Westbrook & Schilt, 2014).

One of the most notable forms of gender naturalization work in recent years are policies designed to police transgender rights (Westbrook & Schilt, 2014). Because transgender people can be considered threats to the gender system (i.e., they challenge the assumption there are only two genders), people experience gender panic and engage in gender naturalization work to reduce this panic (Westbrook & Schilt, 2014). For instance, in 2006 the state of New York proposed a bill that would remove the requirement of sex reassignment surgery to change gender identification on certain government documents (e.g., birth certificate) as long as the person was over the age of 18, had documentation from medical professionals indicating the gender change would be permanent, and had lived as their desired gender for two or more years (Westbrook & Schilt, 2014). The public had an intensely negative reaction to this bill – many worried how this legislation would affect access to gender-segregated spaces (e.g., bathrooms; Currah & Moore, 2009). Because of this negative reaction, the bill was amended thereby requiring transgender people to provide proof of sex reassignment surgery in order to change government documents (Westbrook & Schilt, 2014). This new legislation reduced gender panic, and was an effective form of gender naturalization work, because it reaffirmed that there are distinct differences between men and women (e.g., genitalia; Westbrook &

Schilt, 2014). Gender naturalization work can come in many different forms other than public policies or laws; the next chapter discusses some of these other forms of gender naturalization work in the context of system justification.

Summary

In conclusion, the gender system within American society categorizes men and women as polar opposites but also justifies, and normalizes, violence against women (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). When the gender system is under attack, people often experience gender panic which, in turn, leads them to engage in gender naturalization work. It is possible that both victim blame and perpetrator punishment serve as gender naturalization work – they serve to justify and protect the gender system from threats. Thus, this dissertation focuses on these two concepts. Because a motivation to justify or defend the gender system is critical, the next chapter discusses system justification theory.

Chapter 4: System Justification

This chapter will discuss the overarching theory for this dissertation: system justification. The chapter will outline system justification theory (e.g., the tenants behind the theory) and reactions to victims based on system justification. The chapter will conclude with a discussion of modern day threats to the gender system and how these can activate system justification motives.

Definition and History

Within society, people are often motivated to view existing social and economic arrangements as fair and just, even if those arrangements are disadvantageous to them (Blasi & Jost, 2006). This motivation to view existing social, economic, and political arrangements as fair and just is known as system justification (Blasi & Jost, 2006; Jost & Banaji, 1994). Threats to these existing arrangements (often called systems or status quos) are viewed negatively by society (Blasi & Jost, 2006; Jost & Banaji, 1994). For instance, people who threaten the gender system (e.g., transgender people) are often devalued or belittled by society.

It is important to note that system justification can be both an *outcome* and a *motivation*. Research assessing how system justification is an outcome often include system justification measures as dependent variables. In one study, researchers examined how benevolent sexism and complementary gender stereotypes affected a measure of gender system justification (Jost & Kay, 2005). The activation of gender stereotypes (e.g., women are more considerate than men) led to greater endorsement of gender system justification (Jost & Kay, 2005).

System justification as a *motivation* to justify the status quo has also been extensively studied in the literature. When a system is threatened, criticized, or challenged, people experience an increase in system justification motivation (i.e., they experience an increased need to justify, or defend, the system under attack; Blasi & Jost, 2006). Threats or challenges to a system (such as the gender system) can come in many forms. For instance, a threat to the legitimacy of a social system can motivate people to justify that system (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). Other threats might include challenges to the existing arrangement of a social system (e.g., transgender people challenge the assumption that there are only two genders).

It is not just situational threats or challenges to a system that can activate system justification motivations. Dispositional antecedents also induce system justification motivations. Dispositional antecedents can include a person's need to manage uncertainty and threat; intolerance of ambiguity; and need for order, structure, and closure (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). If a person feels threatened by social change, or has an intolerance of ambiguity, then he is likely to be motivated to justify the status quo, or system, as it currently stands (i.e., a system justification motivation has been activated).

People often view themselves as being a part of multiple, sometimes overlapping, systems and thus might endorse multiple systems simultaneously (Blasi & Jost, 2006). Which system takes precedent depends on dispositional and situational factors. If a system invokes strong commitment to certain values, it is likely that someone will be motivated justify that system over another if both are under attack (Blasi & Jost, 2006). For instance, perhaps a person supports two different systems: (1) that heterosexuality is the only acceptable sexual orientation, and (2) that wealth comes to those who are hard

workers. Furthermore, assume that the system regarding heterosexuality invokes strong commitment to certain values, whereas the system about wealth does not invoke strong values. If both of these systems are simultaneously under attack, the person likely will be motivated to justify the system about sexual orientation because it invokes strong commitment to certain values. Essentially, people tend to be motivated to justify systems that have personal meaning to them or that involve their values.

Furthermore, the systems, or status quos, that are endorsed often change (Blasi & Jost, 2006). For instance, the status quo within American society regarding sexual orientation has been heteronormativity (the notion that only heterosexuality is acceptable). In recent years, however, this has begun to change. People are becoming more accepting of different sexual orientations; even court decisions (e.g., the Supreme Court decision to legalize gay marriage) have legitimized other sexual orientations. Based on the changing status quo, discrimination against certain minority groups might no longer be considered acceptable (Blasi & Jost, 2006). Because overt prejudice is unacceptable, people might not appear to engage in system justifying motives when measured via explicit measures (Jost, Banaji, & Nosek, 2004). Rather, implicit measures might be more appropriate in these instances; people might still engage in system justifying motives, they just cannot express those motives openly (Blasi & Jost, 2006; Jost et al., 2004). Thus, system justification can be measured in various ways, and the researcher must be cognizant of which approach might be best.

While people often engage in system justification, other types of justification exist. More specifically, people might also engage in ego or group justification (Blasi & Jost, 2006). According to ego justification, people are often motivated to justify, bolster,

and rationalize self-interests. People often view themselves as better than other people (Messick, Bloom, Boldizar, & Samuelson, 1985). For instance, Messick et al. (1985) asked participants to list either fair or unfair things that they or others had done. Participants consistently associated themselves with fair acts and others with unfair acts (Messick et al., 1985). This consistent need to view oneself as fair is a prime example of ego justification or the need to bolster self-interests (i.e., the perception of oneself as a good person).

Ego justification motives can, and do, outweigh system justification motives when certain issues are made salient. For instance, someone whose self-esteem has been threatened might engage in ego-justifying motives, but not engage in system justifying motives (Blasi & Jost, 2006). By threatening someone's self-esteem, the researcher has effectively threatened the person's self-interest. Because the threat is made salient to the ego, and not necessarily a particular system, this person will engage in ego justification rather than system justification.

With regards to *group* justification, people are motivated to view one's own group favorably (i.e., they are motivated to justify, bolster, and rationalize interests of the ingroup; Jost & Burgess, 2000). One example of group justification is ingroup favoritism effects (Brewer, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). People often tend to favor, and act more positively toward, those they consider part of their ingroup (Brewer, 1999). If a threat is to a person's group, rather than to a specific system, then it can be predicted that the person will engage in group justification rather than system justification. This dissertation will test whether defensive attributions are a part of system justification or group justification (this is discussed more in Chapter 6).

In conclusion, system justification is the desire to maintain the status quo and believe that existing social arrangements are fair and just (Blasi & Jost, 2006). People are often a part of multiple, overlapping status quos and these status quos often change over time. The status quos that are justified depend on people's values, situational factors, and dispositional factors. Furthermore, people do not always engage in system justifying motives. Engaging in system-justification depends on situational and dispositional antecedents (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). However, when a person does engage in system justification, there are a variety of ways that he might react to a victim of a crime, as discussed next.

System Justification, Gender Naturalization Work, and Reactions in Rape Cases

System justification theory posits that there are two different ways a person can react to a victim of a crime (Blasi & Jost, 2006; Kay et al., 2005). The first, known as victim compensation, is when the victim is compensated or looked favorably upon despite the negative outcome of her victimization (Kay et al., 2005). The second is known as victim blame. In this instance, the victim is blamed for her misfortune and considered responsible for the crime that befell her (Kay et al., 2005). Because rape victims are unlikely to be compensated for their attack (these cases rarely go to trial, and even then perpetrators are rarely found guilty), this dissertation focuses on victim blame.

As discussed in Chapter 3, when gender panic exists, people often engage in gender naturalization work to quell the panic. It is possible that victim blame is a form of gender naturalization work – a way to reaffirm the gender system is fair and just. The gender system often excuses, and justifies, violence against women as normal (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004); thus, there is a perception that rape is normal and women should not

confront their rapists or try to have them prosecuted. When a woman does engage in this behavior, she might be perceived as threatening the gender system (i.e., that women are weak and submissive). This threat might, in turn, motivate people to engage in gender naturalization work to reduce any panic that arises because of the victim's actions. By engaging in this gender naturalization work (i.e., blaming the victim) people are effectively justifying, or defending, the gender system. In other words, in order to reaffirm the gender system (e.g., that women are weak, submissive, and low status, and that men are aggressive, assertive, and high status), people blame the victim in rape cases.

While system justification posits that people will react one of two ways to a victim (i.e., compensation or blame; Blasi & Jost, 2006; Kay et al., 2005), the theory has yet to posit how people might react to the perpetrator of a crime (e.g., exoneration or punishment). Just as victim blame is a form of gender naturalization work, and an outcome of system justification motives, so too might perpetrator punishment. Because there is the perception that rape is normal and women should not confront their rapists or try to have them prosecuted, people might reaffirm the gender system by exonerating the perpetrator in rape cases. Essentially, when the gender system is threatened, people engage in gender naturalization work (in this instance exoneration of the perpetrator) to reduce this panic; by engaging in this gender naturalization work, people are effectively justifying, or defending, the gender system (i.e., reaffirming that women are weak, submissive, and low status, and that men are aggressive, assertive, and high status).

Because victim blame and perpetrator punishment are both forms of gender naturalization work, it is possible that these variables might be correlated with one another. For instance, it is possible that victim blame and perpetrator punishment are

negatively correlated – as victim blame increases the likelihood of punishing the perpetrator decreases. In order to understand the relationship between these variables the following research question is being posed: do victim blame and perpetrator punishment negatively correlate with one another?

In conclusion, victim blame and perpetrator punishment are likely forms of gender naturalization work which allow people to justify, or defend, the gender system. In order for this to occur, however, certain threats to the gender system must be present.

System Justification and Threats to the Gender System

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the gender system is something that people find appealing. The system is simple and easy to understand, and indicates the behaviors that people can expect when they interact with others; when this system is threatened people often experience gender panic. According to system justification, when a system is criticized, challenged, or threatened a system justification motivation is activated (i.e., a motivation to defend, or justify, the system in question; Blasi & Jost, 2006). Furthermore, people tend to be motivated to justify systems that have personal meaning to them or that involve their values (Blasi & Jost, 2006). Consequently, if the gender system is under attack, people are likely to be motivated to justify the system because it has personal meaning to them (i.e., it helps dictate behaviors, appearances, and social interactions). Thus, any threat to the gender system, which thereby creates gender panic, will activate the system justification motivation – in this instance, the motivation to defend, or justify, the gender system via gender naturalization work such as victim blame and perpetrator punishment. Two specific threats to the gender system can activate the system

justification motivation; these threats include transgender people and affirmative consent legislation.

Transgender people. Within American society, the gender system views gender as a binary construct: a person is either masculine or feminine (Bilodeau, 2005). Other gender identities, such as transgender, non-binary, or agender are either overlooked or considered non-existent. Indeed, transgender people can be considered threats to the biology-based determination of gender. If gender is a biological construct (i.e., you are either biologically male or female and cannot switch genders), then transgender people are a threat because they challenge this assumption. By switching between masculine and feminine, transgender people tend to blur the lines between gender identities (thus potentially making their identity ambiguous).

The notion that transgender people can have an ambiguous gender identity further threatens the gender system by overcomplicating the system. People tend to appreciate the gender system because it is simple and easy to understand while also providing expectations about behaviors in social contexts (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). The addition of a third gender to the gender system potentially means that other genders might be included within the system (e.g., agender or gender non-conforming). The addition of other genders, to what is now only a two-gender system, complicates matters. For instance, there are set expectations about behaviors and appearances for men and women (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). The addition of transgender people to the gender system no longer provides these set expectations – people might now be unsure of how to interact in social situations because set behaviors and appearances have not been determined for those who identify as transgender. Indeed, many people prefer structure, order, and

predictability and are thus deeply uncomfortable with ambiguity (see Dechesne & Kruglanski, 2004 for a discussion). Consequently, the ambiguity presented by transgender people can threaten the gender system thereby activating system justification motivations.

The activation of this system justification motivation, in response to the gender panic people might experience because of transgender people, can potentially lead to gender naturalization work (i.e., victim blame and perpetrator punishment). Within this dissertation, the gender of the victim will be manipulated so that she is either cisgender or transgender (male to female). It is predicted that participants will be more likely to blame the transgender victim than the cisgender victim; participants will also be more likely to exonerate the perpetrator who targeted the transgender victim versus the cisgender victim. This manipulation motivates people to justify the gender system – because transgender people threaten the gender system, people will be motivated to justify the gender system in the only way they can: by blaming the victim and exonerating the perpetrator.

There is, however, another critical reason this manipulation has been included in this dissertation. By having a cisgender and transgender victim, it is possible to understand whether defensive attributions are a motivation to justify the status quo (i.e., it is part of system justification), or whether defensive attributions are a part of group justification. If defensive attributions is a motivation to justify the status quo, then there should be no differences in blame ratings between the cisgender and transgender victims; if, however, defensive attributions are not part of system justification, then differences are expected in blame ratings between the cisgender and transgender victims.

Affirmative consent laws. Within American society, numerous laws have been imposed to punish those who are found guilty of committing sexual assault. Traditional forms of these laws have focused on “no means no,” thereby indicating that if the woman did not say “no” during the encounter, or otherwise indicate she did not want the sexual encounter to occur, the encounter was consensual (Grinberg, 2014). These traditional “no means no” laws have been criticized for putting the burden of proof on the victim to prove she was raped; in other words, the woman had to prove to the court that she either said “no” or otherwise indicated that she did not want the sexual encounter to occur (Grinberg, 2014). Many have argued that this is an undue burden on the victim, and instead the accused rapist should prove that he received continuing consent throughout the sexual encounter (Grinberg, 2014). This view has created a new form of legislation (mostly seen on college campuses) in which the discourse is changed from “no means no” to “yes means yes.” These new laws, called affirmative consent laws, switch the burden of proof from the victim to the perpetrator; the perpetrator must now prove that he received continuing and enthusiastic consent throughout the experience (Grinberg, 2014; Jozkowski, 2015).

It is possible that affirmative consent legislation threatens the gender system. The gender system often situates men as the dominant gender (Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). Based on this notion of men as the dominant gender, sexual scripts have been created that situate men as the sexual aggressors (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013; Little, 2005). Often referred to as traditional sexual scripts, these scripts describe sex as something men want and something women concede to (Jozkowski & Peterson, 2013; Little, 2005). Indeed, research has supported this sentiment such that men are more likely

to be the receivers in sexual encounters (i.e., they *receive* oral sex), whereas women are the performers in sexual encounters (i.e., they *perform* oral sex; Jozkowski & Satinsky, 2013). Moreover, many people believe women are expected to play hard to get and to initially refuse a man's sexual advances (Little, 2005). This assumption that women initially refuse a sexual advance has many worried that encounters that once were considered consensual might now be considered nonconsensual because ongoing consent was not achieved (Grinberg, 2014).

It is also possible that affirmative consent threatens the traditional gender norms for women and sexuality – that women are virginal or do not want to talk about sex. Women are often encouraged to not talk about sex because it is taboo. Because affirmative consent requires clear, verbal consent at every stage of the sexual encounter, women might feel uncomfortable with this type of legislation. Affirmative consent can, potentially, make things awkward for women – women are now expected to openly express their sexual desires which goes against the gender stereotype that they concede to sexual encounters. In other words, because of affirmative consent women might be the sexual initiators more frequently than gender stereotypes would deem acceptable.

Thus, there is concern that affirmative consent legislation can challenge and threaten the gender system – that men are the dominant gender and the ones to initiate sexual encounters and that women, the more fragile gender, initially play hard to get before consenting to the encounter (Little, 2005). Some researchers, however, say that this legislation does not necessarily change the system (men are still the aggressors, or initiators, in sexual encounters), but rather it simply gives women more power in the encounter (Little, 2005). More specifically, the argument is that women now have more

autonomy and authority over the sexual encounter than they previously did. Thus, women are now active participants in the sexual process rather than being passive gatekeepers (Little, 2005).

Because of these contrasting viewpoints, this dissertation will manipulate whether or not affirmative consent is seen as threatening the gender system. In the non-threatening condition, participants will read a news article about how affirmative consent does not challenge the gender status quo; men are still the aggressors and women are still the gatekeepers to sex (i.e., the traditional sexual script is still intact). In the system threatening condition, participants will read a news article describing how affirmative consent legislation threatens the gender status quo by empowering women in sexual encounters. In this scenario, the participants will be told that men are not able to be sexual initiators and that the natural progression of sexual encounters is threatened. This scenario will further discuss how this legislation is making women more forthcoming in their sexual desires, something that goes against the gender system. This manipulation is meant to offer a direct test of whether the gender system is something that people are motivated to justify. By threatening the system, system justification motives should become apparent. Consequently, participants in the system threatening condition will blame the victim more than participants in the non-threatening condition; participants in the system threatening condition will also be less likely to punish the perpetrator than participants in the non-threatening condition. If the gender system is something that people are motivated to justify, then there are likely other factors that motivate people to justify the gender system. This dissertation suggests that both rape myth acceptance and defensive

attributions are two other ways in which people are motivated to justify the gender system.

Summary

In conclusion, both advantaged and disadvantaged groups are motivated to justify the status quo and anyone, or anything, that threatens the status quo is viewed negatively by society (Blasi & Jost, 2006; Jost & Banaji, 1994). Transgender people are often considered a threat to the gender system by challenging the assumption that a person can only be the gender (masculine or feminine) one is assigned at birth. Because these people challenge the status quo, it is critical to understand reactions to these victims in rape cases – especially in cases that can also challenge the gender system, specifically affirmative consent cases. This dissertation will manipulate whether affirmative consent represents a challenge to the gender system or not. This manipulation will allow researchers to understand whether the gender system is something people are motivated to justify. If so, other factors likely motivate people to justify the gender system; one such factor is rape myth acceptance (discussed next).

Chapter 5: Rape Myths

Rape myths are engrained in United States culture and serve to justify certain practices (e.g., derogating a victim of rape; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). When a system is threatened, people experience an increase in system justification motivations (Blasi & Jost, 2006); it is likely that rape myths serve as a motivation to justify the gender system. If rape myths are a motivation to justify the gender system, then participants should engage in gender naturalization work (i.e., victim blame and exoneration of the perpetrator) to reaffirm that the system is fair and just. This chapter will discuss rape myths, their relationship to system justification, and how this will, in turn, impact victim blame and perpetrator punishment.

Rape Myths and System Justification

As discussed in Chapter 4, system justification, the concept that people bolster and justify the status quo, can be both an *outcome* and a *motivation*. There is considerable evidence that rape myths relate to system justification (Chapleau & Oswald, 2013; Chapleau & Oswald, 2014; Hafer & Choma, 2009). For instance, a measure of gender system justification (i.e., how much someone endorses the gender system) correlated positively with rape myths (Chapleau & Oswald, 2014). In another study, researchers manipulated both the rape scenario and whether the perpetrator was of a higher, lower, or equal status to the victim; they then measured rape myth acceptance and opposition to equality (Chapleau & Oswald, 2013). Men and women who are high in opposition to equality, compared to those low in opposition to equality, frequently use rape myths as a way of protecting high status men (Chapleau & Oswald, 2013). Thus, rape myths serve as

a way to protect the status quo that men's (*especially high status men's*) sexual violence against women is normal.

Many of these studies have assessed rape myths as an individual difference variable (e.g., through a rape myth acceptance scale). Few, if any, of these studies have contextually manipulated rape myths (herein called rape myth cues) to determine if these cues motivate people to justify the gender system via victim blame and perpetrator punishment. It is possible that while individual difference scales of rape myths are related to system justification in that they serve as a way to reaffirm or justify the status quo that sexual violence is normal, the real value of rape myths is that, when contextually elicited, they act as a *motivation* to justify the gender system.

Prior research has indicated that cues about rape myths (i.e., the victim was wearing revealing clothing) lead to more victim blame than cues that do not elicit rape myths (i.e., the victim was not wearing revealing clothing; Schult & Schneider, 1991). Based on this information, this dissertation will manipulate what the victim was wearing. More specifically, participants will read that the victim was either wearing revealing clothing (e.g., halter top, miniskirt, and high heels; rape myth cue condition) or non-revealing clothing (e.g., jeans, sweater, and tennis shoes; control condition). If rape myth cues are a system justification motivation (i.e., they motivate people to justify the gender system), results should be similar to those found when the system is under threat (i.e., when participants are told that affirmative consent threatens the gender system). Thus, participants in the rape myth cue condition will blame the victim more, and exonerate the perpetrator, compared to participants in the control condition.

Rape myth cues, rape myth acceptance, and victim blame. Much of the research on rape myths has focused primarily on how individual difference measures of rape myths (herein called rape myth acceptance) or situational factors (rape myth cues) influence outcomes variables (e.g., victim blame) separately (see Frese, Moya, & Megías, 2004 for a review). For instance, research consistently demonstrates that rape myth cues such as victim resistance or what the victim was wearing relate to victim blame, but there is also evidence that rape myth acceptance (i.e., how much someone accepts rape myths as fact) is an important factor in assessing victim blame (Frese et al., 2004). Some authors have argued that rape myth cues and variables like rape myth acceptance cannot explain reaction to rape victims alone – instead, it is the interaction between these two variables that best explains reactions to rape victims (Frese et al., 2004; Krahe, 1988).

For instance, Frese et al. (2004) provided participants with three different vignettes each describing the type of rape committed (i.e., stranger, acquaintance, or marital). Within each of these scenarios, participants were provided with information about the attack – in the acquaintance vignette, participants read about what the victim was wearing and that she had been drinking; in the stranger condition, participants read that the victim had been threatened with a knife; in the marital condition, participants were told the victim had been forced by her drunk husband to have intercourse. Participants high in rape myth acceptance attributed more responsibility to the victim than did participants low in rape myth acceptance; this was qualified by a significant interaction between rape myth acceptance and the rape cue. More specifically, participants who were high in rape myth acceptance, and read the stranger or acquaintance vignettes, rated victims as more responsible for their attack than participants

low in rape myth acceptance (Frese et al., 2004). Based on this literature, it is predicted that participants high in rape myth acceptance will be more likely to blame the victim than participants low in rape myth acceptance.

In this dissertation, the description of what the victim was wearing (i.e., the rape myth cue) will act as a motivation to justify the gender system – by reading that the victim is wearing revealing clothing, the participant will blame the victim more for her fate therefore reinforcing, and normalizing, a system of gender inequality. Based on the above literature, this motivation is only likely to occur if participants are high on rape myth acceptance. Thus, a two way-interaction is proposed between rape myth cue and rape myth acceptance – the rape myth cue will lead to more victim blame, but this effect will be stronger for participants who are high in rape myth acceptance than participants low in rape myth acceptance. Participants who are low on rape myth acceptance will likely not be motivated to justify the gender system and thus will engage in less victim blame. This two-way interaction demonstrates that while the rape myth cue (i.e., what the victim is wearing) is likely to be a motivation to justify the gender system via victim blame, it might only be a motivation for certain people. More specifically, the rape myth cue might be a motivation for people high in rape myth acceptance but not people low in rape myth acceptance.

It is possible, however, that participants who are low in rape myth acceptance can be motivated to justify the gender system. Research suggests that when a system is under threat, people are motivated to defend the system (Blasi & Jost, 2006). The rape myth cue might not act as enough of a motivation for participants low in rape myth acceptance to justify the gender system via victim blame. However, if these participants are provided

with multiple motivations (i.e., the rape myth cue and a more explicit threat to the gender system), they might now be motivated to justify the gender system via victim blame.

Thus, it is predicted that there will be a three-way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation, rape myth acceptance, and the system justification manipulation.

As previously mentioned, it is predicted that participants in the rape myth cue condition (reading that the victim was wearing revealing clothing), who are high on rape myth acceptance, will blame the victim more than participants low in rape myth acceptance. This two-way interaction will be qualified by a three-way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation, rape myth acceptance, and the system justification manipulation. More specifically, participants in the rape myth cue condition, who are high on rape myth acceptance, will blame the victim more than participants low in rape myth acceptance. When the system threatening manipulation and the rape myth cue manipulations are present participants will have the highest victim blame ratings, regardless of whether they are high or low on rape myth acceptance. When the system threatening manipulation and rape myth cue manipulation are absent, participants will have the lowest victim blame ratings, regardless of whether they are high or low on rape myth acceptance.

Rape myth cues, rape myth acceptance, and punishment. No research that the author is aware of has examined the relationship between system justification and perpetrator punishment. However, just as victim blame is one avenue for a person to justify the gender system, it is also possible that perpetrator punishment is another avenue through which people justify the gender system. Furthermore, there appears to be no research examining the relationship between system justification, rape myths, and

perpetrator punishment. Because rape myths are related to system justification (Chapleau & Oswald, 2013; Chapleau & Oswald, 2014; Hafer & Choma, 2009; Kay & Jost, 2003; Stahl, Eek, & Kazemi, 2010), and because there is an expected three-way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation, system threatening manipulation, and rape myth acceptance predicting victim blame, it is possible that these constructs also interact to affect perpetrator punishment.

People high in rape myth acceptance attribute less guilt to the perpetrator depending on how much information was presented to participants (Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler, & Viki, 2009). When participants are presented with evidence that clearly points to the innocence or guilt of the perpetrator (as opposed to being presented with ambiguous evidence), participants rely less heavily on rape myths when making their decisions (Bohner et al., 2009). Rape myths play a critical role only when the evidence presented is ambiguous (i.e., when there is no clear evidence to point to the perpetrator's guilt or innocence; Bohner et al., 2009).

In order to create ambiguity within scenarios, researchers often add in case irrelevant information to vignettes. This irrelevant information does impact perpetrator punishment, but only when participants are high in rape myth acceptance. More specifically, participants in one study read both relevant and irrelevant information about the case (Eyssel & Bohner, 2008 as cited in Bohner et al., 2009). The authors hypothesized that the effects of rape myth acceptance (RMA) on judgment of perpetrator guilt increase the more case irrelevant information was presented; the results supported this notion. Participants high in RMA thought the perpetrator was less guilty than participants low in RMA; this effect was more pronounced when high levels of irrelevant

information was provided (Eyssel & Bohner, 2008 as cited in Bohner et al., 2009). Moreover, higher levels of rape myth acceptance have been associated with shorter sentences for the perpetrator (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Thus, this study attempted to use an ambiguous scenario so that rape myths might be more likely to impact decisions of perpetrator punishment.

Based on this literature, it is predicted that participants high on rape myth acceptance will be less likely to punish the perpetrator than participants low in rape myth acceptance. Furthermore, it is entirely possible that rape myth cues (or motivations to justify the gender system) affect perpetrator punishment on their own; it is hypothesized that participants in the rape myth cue condition will punish the perpetrator less than participants in the control condition. However, just as rape myth cues might only be a motivation for certain people to justify the gender system via blame the victim, it is likely that these cues are also only a motivation for certain people to justify the gender system via exoneration of the perpetrator. Consequently, it is predicted that there will be a two-way interaction between rape myth cue and rape myth acceptance. Participants in the rape myth cue condition will punish the perpetrator less than participants in the control condition; this effect will be strongest for participants who are high on rape myth acceptance.

Furthermore, just as participants low in rape myth acceptance might be motivated to justify the gender system via victim blame, it is equally as likely these participants can be motivated to justify the gender system via perpetrator punishment. With regard to the two-way interaction, participants in the rape myth cue condition (reading that the victim was wearing revealing clothing), who are high on rape myth acceptance, will punish the

perpetrator less than participants low in rape myth acceptance. This will be qualified by a three-way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation, rape myth acceptance, and the system threatening manipulation. More specifically, participants in the rape myth cue condition (reading that the victim was wearing revealing clothing), who are high on rape myth acceptance, will punish the perpetrator less than participants low in rape myth acceptance. When the system threatening manipulation and rape myth cue manipulations are present participants will have the lowest perpetrator punishment ratings, regardless of whether they are high or low on rape myth acceptance. When the system threatening manipulation and rape myth cue condition are both absent, participants will have the highest perpetrator punishment ratings, regardless of whether they are high or low on rape myth acceptance.

Summary

There is considerable evidence that rape myths relate to system justification (Chapleau & Oswald, 2013; Chapleau & Oswald, 2014; Hafer & Choma, 2009; Kay & Jost, 2003; Stahl, Eek, & Kazemi, 2010). Rape myths help justify a system of gender inequality by blaming women for their victimization thereby excusing and trivializing men's sexual violence toward women (Chapleau & Oswald, 2014). However, most of this research has focused on rape myths as an individual difference variable (i.e., rape myth acceptance). Few, if any, of these studies have tried to contextually elicit rape myths (called rape myth cues) to determine if these cues motivate people to justify the gender system via victim blame and perpetrator punishment. Because of this, participants will read about rape myth cues (e.g., the victim was or was not wearing revealing clothing). These cues should motivate participants to justify the gender system by

blaming the victim and exonerating the perpetrator. If these main effects occur, they will be similar to the results of the more explicit manipulation of system justification. This will, in turn, demonstrate that rape myth cues are indeed a part of a system justification motivation – they are a motivation to justify the gender system.

It is possible, however, that these cues are only a motivation to justify the gender system for some people; more specifically, people high in rape myth acceptance. Thus, it is possible that participants in the rape myth cue condition will blame the victim more, and punish the perpetrator less, than participants in the control condition; this effect will be strongest for participants who are high in rape myth acceptance.

While participants low in rape myth acceptance might not be motivated to justify the gender system with only rape myth cues present, it is possible that multiple motivations (i.e., rape myth cues and an explicit threat to the gender system) can prompt these participants to engage in victim blame and perpetrator punishment. Thus, it is predicted that there will be a three-way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation, system threatening manipulation, and rape myth acceptance. Participants in the rape myth cue condition and the system threatening condition will be more likely to blame the victim and exonerate the perpetrator regardless of their levels of rape myth acceptance. When the system threatening manipulation and rape myth cue condition are absent, participants will have the lowest victim blame ratings and highest perpetrator punishment ratings regardless of rape myth acceptance. Thus, this three way interaction would demonstrate that, assuming enough motivations are provided, people who were otherwise unmotivated to justify the gender system can be prompted to justify the gender system via victim blame and perpetrator punishment.

Just as prior research has not examined how rape myth cues might be a system justification motivation, prior research has also not examined how defensive attributions might be a system justification motivation (i.e., a motivation to justify the gender system). The next chapter will define defensive attributions, and the potential relationship between defensive attributions and system justification.

Chapter 6: Defensive Attributions

Just as rape myths might be a motivation to justify the gender system via gender naturalization work (i.e., victim blame and perpetrator punishment), so too might defensive attributions. This chapter begins by offering a definition and history of defensive attributions and moves on to discuss the relationship between defensive attributions, system justification, and group justification. The chapter concludes with an examination of how defensive attributions might affect victim blame and perpetrator punishment.

Definition and History

People often feel threatened by the notion that a horrible fate could befall them. When people witness negative events occurring to another person, they are likely to engage in defensive mechanisms that reduce negative arousal or feelings of fear (Shaver, 1970). This concept, known as defensive attributions, requires a perceiver to view themselves as having situational and personal similarity with a victim.

Situational similarity is defined as the belief that a person could find themselves in a similar situation as the victim; *personal* similarity is defined as observers perceiving themselves as having similar characteristics to the victim (e.g., being of a similar race, gender, or sexual orientation; Shaver, 1970). Situational similarity is needed to arouse defensive attributions (Shaver, 1970). Once this has been achieved, personal similarity will determine the direction of bias (Shaver, 1970). Because women are often warned about protecting themselves against rape, a woman can perceive situational similarity between herself and a rape victim (i.e., she can see herself in a similar situation as the victim). Even though there is situational similarity, if the woman does not perceive

herself as personally similar to the victim then she will be more likely to engage in defensive attributions. If the woman does perceive herself as personally similar to the victim, she will be less likely to engage in defensive attributions. Because rape is a constant concern for women, it is expected that female participants in this dissertation will already experience situational similarity with the victim. To ensure personal similarity, victim gender is manipulated so that participants either read about a cisgender victim or a transgender female victim. Furthermore, personal similarity will be assessed by asking participants if they view themselves as similar to the victim on a variety of characteristics (e.g., gender and age).

Inducing similarity between participants and the victim can come in many forms. Some researchers use gender as a similarity stimulus (i.e., they manipulate the gender of the victim; Burt & DeMello, 2002) whereas others use age (i.e., they manipulate the age of the victim; Shaver, 1970). There have been significant results when similarity is based on personal characteristics (e.g., race, gender, or sexual orientation; Grubb & Harrower, 2008). Most of the manipulations of defensive attributions have focused on gender manipulations (e.g., the victim is either male or female; Grubb & Harrower, 2008). Some studies have recently begun to manipulate the sexual orientation of the victim (Davies & Hudson, 2011; Davies & McCartney, 2003). However, there have been limited studies that have manipulated the gender identity of the victim other than male and female. One study that the author is aware of manipulated whether the victim was transgender or not (Davies & Hudson, 2011). Because gender manipulations invoke defensive attributions, it is important to understand whether other manipulations of gender, above and beyond just masculine and feminine, also invoke defensive attributions. Thus, this dissertation will

manipulate whether the victim identifies as transgender or cisgender and will sample exclusively from cisgender people.

Defensive Attributions and System Justification

Research has generally focused on how rape myths are related to system justification (Blasi & Jost, 2006; Chapleau & Oswald, 2013). There is, however, no research that the author is aware of relating defensive attributions to system justification. It is possible that defensive attributions act as a motivation to justify the gender system via victim blame and perpetrator punishment (i.e., they are a system justification motivation).

Within American society, people view gender as a binary construct – a person is either male or female (Bilodeau, 2005). This simplistic view of gender does not allow for the expression of other gender identities; if another gender identity is expressed (e.g., transgender or agender) then these identities are viewed as threats to the gender system. Because transgender people are viewed as a threat to the gender system, and threats to a system often invoke a system justification motivation (see Chapter 3), they were chosen as the comparison group to a cisgender victim. If defensive attributions are a motivation to defend the gender system, then female participants are expected to justify the system via victim blame (because they identify with the victim). As was previously predicted in Chapter 4, there will be a main effect of the victim gender manipulation on victim blame. Participants will blame the cisgender victim less than the transgender victim. With defensive attributions added to the model, it is now expected that there will be an interaction between victim gender and participant gender. If defensive attributions are a motivation to justify the gender system, female participants, who view themselves as

more similar to the cisgender victim, will engage in victim blaming regardless of the gender of the victim. In other words, female participants *distance* themselves from a similar victim and thus engage in victim blame regardless of the gender identity of the victim. Male participants, who do not view themselves as similar to the victim, will blame the transgender victim more than the cisgender victim. Because the cisgender victim does not threaten the gender system (i.e., she does not threaten the idea that there are only two genders), male participants will be less motivated to defend the gender system via victim blame when the victim is cisgender. The transgender victim, however, does threaten the gender system and, consequently, male participants will justify the gender system by blaming this victim more for her fate.

If defensive attributions are a motivation to defend the gender system for male participants, then these participants are expected to justify the system via perpetrator punishment (because they identify with the perpetrator). As was previously predicted in Chapter 4, there will be a main effect of the victim gender manipulation on perpetrator punishment. Participants will punish the perpetrator less when the victim is cisgender compared to transgender. With defensive attributions added to the model, it is now expected that there will be an interaction between victim gender and participant gender. If defensive attributions are a motivation to justify the gender system, male participants, who view themselves as more similar to the perpetrator, will be harsher with the perpetrator regardless of the gender of the victim. In other words, regardless of whether the perpetrator targeted a cisgender or transgender victim, male participants should punish the perpetrator equally. Thus, just as female participants are expected to distance themselves from a similar victim, male participants should also *distance* themselves from

a similar other and engage in perpetrator punishment regardless of the gender identity of the victim. For female participants, who do not view themselves as similar to the perpetrator, it is hypothesized that they will punish the perpetrator who targeted the cisgender victim and be lenient with the perpetrator who targeted the transgender victim. Because the cisgender victim does not threaten the gender system, female participants will be less motivated to defend the gender system when the victim is cisgender. The transgender victim does, however, threaten the gender system and thus female participants will be lenient with this perpetrator in order to reaffirm the gender system (i.e., that there are only two genders).

In conclusion, if defensive attributions are a motivation to defend the gender system via victim blame and perpetrator punishment, then both male and female participants will distance themselves from a similar other by engaging in more perpetrator punishment and victim blame, respectively, regardless of the identity of the victim. It is possible, however, that defensive attributions are not a motivation to defend the gender system, but are instead a motivation to view one's ingroup favorably.

Defensive Attributions and Group Justification

If defensive attributions are not a motivation to defend the gender system, and are not related to system justification, then they are a motivation to defend one's ingroup favorably and thus are a part of group justification. According to group justification, people are motivated to justify, bolster, and rationalize the interests or esteem of one's own group. In other words, people are motivated to view one's own ingroup favorably (Jost & Burgess, 2000). One such example of group justification is ingroup favoritism in

which people act more positively toward, and favor, those they consider part of their ingroup (Brewer, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Defensive attributions predicts that participants who view themselves as similar to the victim are less likely to engage in victim blaming behaviors (Shaver, 1970). By being less likely to blame a similar victim compared to a dissimilar victim, it can be argued that people are motivated to view the similar victim favorably compared to the dissimilar victim. Davies and Hudson (2011) and Davies and McCartney (2003) manipulated the sexual orientation and gender identity of the victim of a crime. When participants viewed themselves as similar to the victim based on sexual orientation, participants were less likely to blame the similar victim and more likely to blame the non-similar victim (Davies & Hudson, 2011; Davies & McCartney, 2003). In Shaver's (1970) study on defensive attributions, perceived similarity between the stimulus person and participant lead to more victim blaming.

Based on this literature, if defensive attributions are a part of group justification, then participants will be motivated to view similar others more favorably (e.g., less blame or less punishment). Thus, it is predicted that there will be an interaction between the victim gender manipulation and participant gender for victim blame. More specifically, it is predicted that female participants who identify with the cisgender victim will blame this victim less than the transgender victim. By blaming the cisgender victim less than the transgender victim, female participants are demonstrating *leniency*, and indeed favoritism, toward a similar other. This leniency, or desire to view a similar other favorably, demonstrates that defensive attributions are a motivation to justify or defend

the ingroup (i.e., are a group justification motivation). Male participants will blame the transgender victim more than the cisgender victim.

There will also be an interaction between the victim gender manipulation and participant gender for perpetrator punishment. With regards to male participants, it is hypothesized that male participants who view themselves as similar to the perpetrator will punish the perpetrator less regardless of victim type. In other words, male participants will punish the perpetrator less regardless of whether the victim is transgender or cisgender. By not engaging in perpetrator punishment male participants are demonstrating *leniency*, and indeed favoritism, toward a similar other. Just as for women, this leniency, or desire to view a similar other favorably, demonstrates that, for men, defensive attributions are a motivation to justify or defend the ingroup (i.e., are a group justification motivation). Female participants, on the other hand, will punish the perpetrator who targeted the cisgender victim more than the perpetrator who targeted the transgender victim.

Summary

People often feel threatened by the notion that a horrible fate could befall them. In order to reduce negative arousal or feelings of fear, people engage in defensive attributions. Defensive attributions require a perceiver to view themselves as having situational and personal similarity with a victim (Shaver, 1970). Because rape is a constant concern for women, it is expected that female participants in this dissertation will already experience situational similarity with the victim. Personal similarity will be obtained through manipulating the victim gender as either cisgender or transgender.

Because no research to date has examined whether defensive attributions are a motivation to justify the gender system, and thus are related to system justification, this dissertation seeks to remedy this lack of information. If defensive attributions are a motivation to justify the gender system via victim blame and perpetrator punishment then a certain set of results are expected. More specifically, it is expected that female participants will blame the victim equally regardless of victim gender; male participants will punish the perpetrator equally regardless of victim gender.

If, however, defensive attributions are a motivation to view one's ingroup favorably, and thus relate to group justification, then the results will be different. More specifically, female participants will blame the cisgender victim less than the transgender victim; male participants will be less likely to punish the perpetrator regardless of the gender identity of the victim. The next chapter discusses the secondary purpose of this dissertation: understanding how certain individual difference variables are likely to affect victim blame and perpetrator punishment.

Chapter 7: Individual Differences

A secondary purpose of this dissertation is to test how certain individual difference variables affect victim blame and perpetrator punishment. Characteristics such as gender, attitudes, toward homosexuality, and rape myth acceptance, among others, are important constructs in predicting victim blame and perpetrator punishment. Despite their importance, research has yet to come to conclusive results about how some of these individual difference variables affect perceptions of victim and perpetrators (see Nagel, Matsuo, McIntyre, & Morrison, 2005 for a discussion). This chapter offers (1) a brief overview of each of the individual difference variables to be used within the dissertation and (2) predictions on how they will influence victim blame and perpetrator punishment.

Female Rape Myth Acceptance

While this dissertation is primarily focused on whether or not rape myths serve as a justification to defend the status quo, it is also important to understand how scores on a rape myth acceptance scale also affects victim blame and perpetrator punishment. As previously noted, not everyone accepts rape myths equally (Aosved & Long, 2006; Kopper, 1996; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). Rape myths often differ based on cultural groups, time periods, and the researcher's population of interest (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Moreover, people's definitions of what constitutes rape impacts acceptance of rape myths (the less stereotypical the rape, the less likely a person is to endorse rape myths; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). A variety of factors such as sexism, ageism, classism, religious intolerance, racism, and homophobia all significantly predict rape myth acceptance (RMA) (Aosved & Long, 2006). This dissertation will focus on participant gender and attitudes toward homosexuality because they are important

constructs for system justification and defensive attributions.

Gender. There is strong evidence that men are more accepting of rape myths than women (Chapleau et al., 2008). A meta-analysis conducted by Suarez and Gadalla (2010) examined 37 studies, 25 articles, and 12 dissertations in an attempt to understand how certain variables, such as participant gender, influenced rape myth acceptance. Of the demographic variables examined, gender had the strongest relationship with rape myth acceptance with an effect size of 0.58 (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). Results demonstrated that men accepted rape myths more often than did women (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010), and this relationship holds regardless whether the myth is that “she asked for it”, “it was not really rape”, “she wanted it”, or others (Davies et al., 2012). Thus, a mediation is expected between participant gender, female rape myth acceptance, and the dependent variables. More specifically, it is predicted that male participants will have higher rape myth acceptance and more victim blame than participants; it is further predicted that male participants will have higher rape myth acceptance and be less likely to punish the perpetrator than female participants.

Attitudes toward homosexuality, bisexuality, and transgendered people.

Homophobia is an important predictor of rape myths: a meta-analysis conducted in 2010 indicated that homophobia had a significant, but moderate, relationship with RMA (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). In other words, higher endorsement of homophobia was associated with more acceptance of rape myths (Davies et al., 2012; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). Little research has addressed whether attitudes toward transgendered people impact acceptance of rape myths. Instead, the research has focused on attitudes toward lesbians and gays, or homophobia more generally (see Suarez & Gadalla, 2010).

Attitudes toward transgendered people tend to be correlated with, and more negative than, attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals (Norton & Herek, 2013). Thus, it is reasonable to assume that negative attitudes toward these people would be associated with rape myth acceptance.

Application to victim blame. People high in RMA blame the victim more when victim and perpetrator know one another (e.g., in cases of date or acquaintance rape) than when they are strangers (Bohner et al., 2009). The relationship between rape myth acceptance and victim blame might also be reciprocal. Indeed, just as rape myth acceptance predicts victim blame, victim blame also predicts rape myth acceptance (Davies et al., 2012). For the purpose of this dissertation, it is predicted that rape myth acceptance will impact victim blame, but the alternative model (that victim blame predicts rape myth acceptance) will also be tested to determine which model is more appropriate. Based on the prior literature, it can be predicted that individual characteristics such as gender and attitudes toward transgendered people will impact rape myth acceptance. Rape myth acceptance will in turn impact victim blame directly such that higher rape myth acceptance is associated with more victim blame.

Application to perpetrator punishment. Research has demonstrated that rape myth acceptance can directly affect perpetrator sentences – participants with higher levels of rape myth acceptance often give shorter sentences to a perpetrator compared to participants low in rape myth acceptance (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). When rape vignettes are ambiguous (i.e., there is no clear evidence to support one conclusion over the other), however, perpetrators often receive different punishments depending, in part, on participant levels of rape myth acceptance (Eyssel & Bohner, 2008 as cited in Bohner

et al., 2009). For instance, when more case irrelevant information is presented to participants (often done in order to create an ambiguous scenario), participants high in rape myth acceptance believe that a perpetrator is less guilty of a crime than participants low in rape myth acceptance (Eyssel & Bohner, 2008 as cited in Bohner et al., 2009).

Based on the prior literature, it can be predicted that individual characteristics such as gender and attitudes toward transgendered people will relate to rape myth acceptance. Rape myth acceptance will in turn relate to perpetrator punishment directly such that higher rape myth acceptance is associated with less perpetrator punishment. It is likely that participants who are high in rape myth acceptance do not believe the perpetrator deserves to be punished for the crime because the victim is to blame.

Male Rape Myth Acceptance

Within the literature, the primary focus on rape myths has been on female rape myths; however, there are also myths about male rape (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2008). Female rape myths tend to focus on themes such as: she (the victim) was asking for it, it was not really rape, she wanted it, she lied, he (the perpetrator) did not mean to (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Male rape myths are less researched, but some myths include: men who are sexually assaulted are gay, men are incapable of functioning sexually unless they are aroused, men cannot be forced to have sex against their will, and men are less affected by rape than are women (Chapleau et al., 2008).

The victim within this dissertation is specified as either being cisgender (i.e., born female and identifies as female) or transgender male-to-female (i.e., born male but identifies as female). People tend to have very negative reactions toward transgender people (Norton & Herek, 2013). Furthermore, many people might believe that

transgender people exist. If someone subscribes to the biology-based determination of gender (as described in Chapter 3), then they believe that gender is innate and unchangeable; they further believe that a person is always chromosomally male or female (Wesbtrook & Schilt, 2014). Thus, if a person is physically female, but biologically male, people who adhere to a biology-based determination of gender would identify that person as male. In this case of the transgender victim in this study, a person who adheres to a biology-based determination of gender will view this male-to-female transgender person as being inherently male *not* female. Thus, it is possible that participants might subscribe to both male *and* female rape myths. In other words, it could be that participants not only use these female rape myths to make their decisions, but also use male rape myths to make their decision. Because of this, this dissertation proposes the following research question: does male rape myth acceptance affect victim blame and perpetrator punishment?

Race

Prior research focusing on how race affects attitudes toward rape victims has consistently demonstrated that the race of the participant does matter (see Nagel et al., 2005). One study compared White and Latinos and their attitudes toward rape victims; results indicated that White participants had more favorable attitudes toward rape victims than did the Latino participants (Jimenez & Abreu, 2003). Furthermore, Asian American participants have more negative attitudes toward rape victims than do White participants (Lee & Cheung, 1991). Thus, it is predicted that minority participants will blame the victim more, and punish the perpetrator less, than participants.

Age

Age is also an important predictor of attitudes toward rape victims. More specifically, older participants tend to have more negative attitudes toward rape victims than do younger participants (Nagel et al., 2005). Moreover, older people tend to have more negative attitudes toward transgender people (King, Winter, & Webster, 2009; Landén, & Innala, 2000). Thus, it is predicted that older participants will blame the victim more, and punish the perpetrator less, than younger participants. There will also be an interaction between age and victim gender. Older participants who read about the transgender victim will blame the victim more, and punish the perpetrator less, than younger participants; this difference will be non-significant for the cisgender victim.

Legal Attitudes

Jurors are often biased in their decision making (Boehm, 1968). In order to understand how attitudes toward the legal system influenced decision making, the legal attitudes scale was created (Boehm, 1968). The legal attitudes scale has three subscales: authoritarian scale, anti-authoritarian scale, and equalitarian scale (Boehm, 1968). The authoritarian scale measures right wing philosophy and punitiveness and is thus associated with a tendency to convict. The anti-authoritarian scale measures left-wing ideology and implies that society is to blame for criminal acts; thus, this scale is associated with a tendency to be lenient. The equalitarian scale endorses traditional, and non-extreme, liberal viewpoints and was believed to be unassociated conviction (Boehm, 1968).

In one study assessing how legal attitudes influences and verdict choices, participants read a scenario in which the vignette clearly indicated the defendant's guilt or innocence (Boehm, 1968). When the scenario depicted the defendant's innocence,

results indicated that subjects who were more likely to convict were those who were high on the authoritarianism subscale (Boehm, 1968). Other studies have replicated these findings. For instance, participants in one study listened to recorded simulations of two murder cases (Juror, 1971). In both cases, participants who scored high on the authoritarianism subscale were more likely to convict the defendant.

Based on this information, it is predicted that participants who are high on authoritarianism, as measured by the Revised Legal Attitudes Questionnaire (Kravitz, Cutler, & Brock, 1993), will be more likely to punish the perpetrator than participants who are more equalitarian or anti-authoritarian. Because no research that the author is aware of has been conducted examining the relationship between legal attitudes and victim blame, this dissertation offers the following research question: are legal attitudes, or authoritarianism, related to victim blame?

Summary

In conclusion, a variety of individual difference variables will be measured within this dissertation. Participant gender, race, age, attitudes toward transgender people, and legal attitudes will be measured within this dissertation. Based on prior research, it is expected that men, and participants with more negative attitudes toward transgender people, will have higher rape myth acceptance and thus more victim blame and less perpetrator punishment.

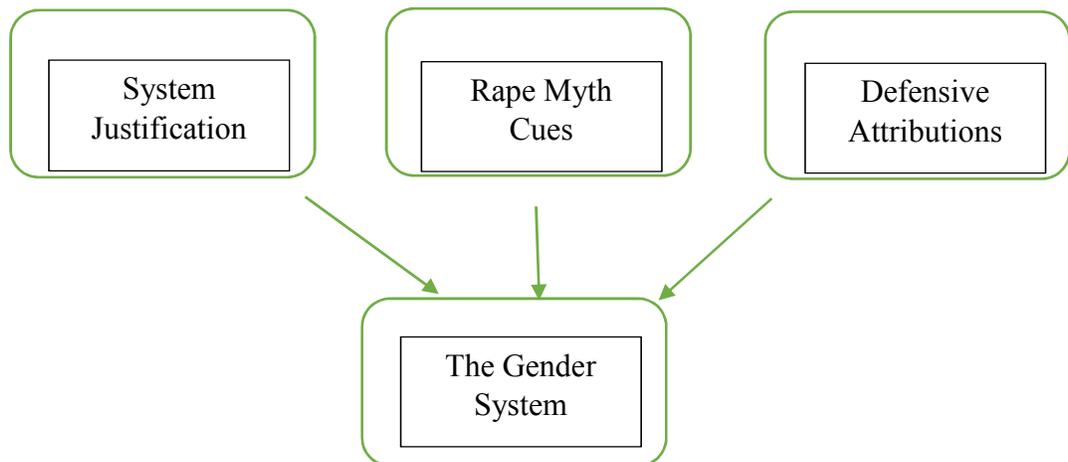
With regards to race and age, minority and older participants will be more likely to blame the victim and exonerate the perpetrator compared to White and younger participants. Furthermore, participants with more authoritarian attitudes toward the legal system will be more likely to punish the perpetrator than participants with more

equalitarian or anti-authoritarian attitudes; this relationship, however, is unclear with regards to victim blame. The next chapter provides an overview of the dissertation.

Chapter 8: Overview

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to determine whether system justification, rape myth cues, and defensive attributions are motivations to defend the gender system via victim blame and perpetrator punishment. A conceptual model of this relationship is presented below in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Dissertation.



To test whether these constructs are motivations to defend the gender system, an experiment will be conducted. This will be a 2 (Rape myth cue: information about what victim was wearing vs no information) by 2 (System Justification: present vs absent) by 2 (Defensive attribution manipulation: cisgender victim vs transgender victim) by 2 (participant gender) between subjects factorial design. Attitudes toward transgender people will also be measured. The hypotheses are organized by theory, as follows:

System Justification

Main effects. There will be a main effect of the victim gender manipulation on victim blame. Participants will blame the transgender victim more than the cisgender victim (hypothesis 1). There will also be a main effect of the gender manipulation on

perpetrator punishment. Participants will punish the perpetrator more when he targeted a cisgender victim than transgender victim (hypothesis 2).

There will be a main effect of the system justification manipulation on victim blame. Participants in the system threatening condition will blame the victim more than participants in the non-threatening condition (hypothesis 3). There will be a main effect of the system justification manipulation on perpetrator punishment. Participants in the system threatening condition will punish the perpetrator less than participants in the non-threatening condition (hypothesis 4).

Research question. Are victim blame and perpetrator punishment negatively correlated (research question 1)?

Rape Myth Cue Manipulation

Main effects. There will be a main effect of the rape myth cue manipulation on victim blame – participants reading that the victim wore revealing clothing will blame the victim more than participants reading that the victim was not wearing revealing clothing (hypothesis 5). There will also be a main effect of rape myth acceptance on victim blame. Participants high in rape myth acceptance will blame the victim more than participants low in rape myth acceptance (hypothesis 6).

With regards to perpetrator punishment, there will be a main effect of the rape myth cue manipulation on perpetrator punishment – participants reading that the victim wore revealing clothing will punish the perpetrator less than participants reading that the victim was not wearing revealing clothing (hypothesis 7). There will also be a main effect of rape myth acceptance on perpetrator punishment. Participants high in rape myth

acceptance will punish the perpetrator less than participants low in rape myth acceptance (hypothesis 8).

Two way interaction. It is predicted that there will be a two-way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation and rape myth acceptance scale on victim blame. Participants reading that the victim wore revealing clothing will blame the victim more than participants reading that the victim did not wear revealing clothing – this effect will be highest for participants high in rape myth acceptance (hypothesis 9). This should occur because people who are low in RMA should not be as motivated to justify the gender system.

There will be a two-way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation and rape myth acceptance scale on perpetrator punishment. Participants reading that the victim wore revealing clothing will punish the perpetrator less than participants reading that the victim did not wear revealing clothing (hypothesis 10). This should occur because people who are low in RMA should not be as motivated to justify the gender system.

Three-way interaction. There will be a main effect of the rape myth cue manipulation on victim blame – participants reading that the victim wore revealing clothing will blame the victim more than participants reading that the victim was not wearing revealing clothing. This will be qualified by a two-way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation and rape myth acceptance. More specifically, participants in the rape myth cue condition, who are high on rape myth acceptance, will blame the victim more than participants low in rape myth acceptance. This will be qualified by a three way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation, rape myth acceptance

scale, and the system justification manipulation on victim blame. When the system justification manipulation and rape myth cue manipulations are both present all participants will have the highest victim blame ratings, regardless of whether they are low or high on rape myth acceptance. When the system threatening manipulation and rape myth cue manipulation are absent, participants will have the lowest victim blame ratings, regardless of whether they are low or high on rape myth acceptance (hypothesis 11).

There will be a main effect of the rape myth cue manipulation on perpetrator punishment – participants reading that the victim wore revealing clothing will punish the perpetrator less than participants reading that the victim was not wearing revealing clothing. This will be qualified by a two-way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation and rape myth acceptance. It is predicted that participants in the rape myth cue condition, who are high on rape myth acceptance, will punish the perpetrator less more than participants low in rape myth acceptance. This will be qualified by a three-way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation, rape myth acceptance scale, and the system justification manipulation on perpetrator punishment. When the system justification manipulation and rape myth cue manipulations are present participants will be the least likely to punish the perpetrator, regardless of whether they are high or low on rape myth acceptance. When the system threatening manipulation and rape myth cue condition are both absent, participants will have the highest perpetrator punishment ratings, regardless of whether they are high or low on rape myth acceptance (hypothesis 12).

Defensive Attributions

Two-way interaction. There will be a two-way interaction between victim gender and participant gender on victim blame. If defensive attributions are part of system justification, female participants, who view themselves as more similar to the cisgender victim, will engage in more victim blaming regardless of the gender of the victim; male participants will blame the transgender victim more than the cisgender victim (hypothesis 13). If defensive attributions are not a part of system justification, then they are likely a part of group justification. If so, female participants, who identify with the cisgender victim, will blame the cisgender victim less than the transgender victim. Male participants, on the other hand, will blame the transgender victim more than the cisgender victim (hypothesis 14). Thus, hypotheses 13 and 14 are competing hypotheses.

There will be a two-way interaction between victim gender and participant gender on perpetrator punishment. If defensive attributions is part of system justification, male participants, who view themselves as more similar to the perpetrator, will be harsher with the perpetrator regardless of the gender of the victim; female participants will punish the perpetrator who targeted the cisgender victim more than the transgender victim (hypothesis 15). If defensive attributions are not a part of system justification, they are likely a part of group justification. If so, male participants, who view themselves as similar to the perpetrator, will blame the perpetrator less regardless of victim type. Female participants, on the other hand, will punish the perpetrator who targeted the cisgender victim more than the perpetrator who targeted the transgender victim (hypothesis 16).

Individual Differences

Main effects. Male participants, and participants with more negative attitudes toward transgender people, will be more likely to blame the victim than female participants and participants with more positive attitudes toward transgender people (hypotheses 17 and 18). With regards to perpetrator punishment, there will be a main effect of participant gender and attitudes toward transgender people such that male participants and participants with more negative attitudes toward transgender people will be less likely to punish the perpetrator (hypotheses 19 and 20).

There will be a main effect of participant race on victim blame and perpetrator punishment. Minority participants will blame the victim more, and punish the perpetrator less, than White participants (hypotheses 21 and 22). There will also be a main effect of age: older participants will blame the victim more, and punish the perpetrator less, than younger participants (hypotheses 23 and 24).

There will be a main effect of authoritarianism on perpetrator punishment. Participants who are high on authoritarianism, as measured by the Revised Legal Attitudes Questionnaire (Kravitz et al., 1993), will be more likely to punish the perpetrator than participants who are more equalitarian or anti-authoritarian (hypothesis 25).

Two-way interaction. There will be an interaction between age and victim gender. Older participants who read about the transgender victim will blame the victim more, and punish the perpetrator less, than younger participants; this difference will be non-significant for the cisgender victim (hypotheses 26 and 27).

Mediation. It is predicted that the relationship between participant gender and victim blame will be mediated by rape myth acceptance. Male participants will have

higher rape myth acceptance and more victim blame than female participants (hypothesis 28). It is also predicted that participants with more negative attitudes toward transgender people will have higher rape myth acceptance and more victim blame than participants with more positive attitudes toward transgender people (hypothesis 29).

It is predicted that the relationship between participant gender and perpetrator punishment will be mediated by rape myth acceptance. Male participants will have higher rape myth acceptance, and thus punish the perpetrator less than female participants (hypothesis 30). The relationship between attitudes toward transgender people and perpetrator punishment will be mediated by rape myth acceptance. Participants with more negative attitudes toward transgender people will have higher rape myth acceptance and thus punish the perpetrator less than participants with more positive attitudes (hypothesis 31).

Research question. Does male rape myth acceptance affect victim blame and perpetrator punishment (research question 2)? Are legal attitudes, or authoritarianism, related to victim blame? (research question 3)?

Summary

To test all relevant hypotheses an experiment will be conducted. More specifically, this will be a 2 (RMA: information about what victim was wearing vs no information) by 2 (System Justification: present vs absent) by 2 (Defensive attribution manipulation: cisgender victim vs transgender victim) by 2 (participant gender) between subjects factorial design. Various individual differences will also be measured including, but not limited to, attitudes toward transgender people, participant race, and participant

age. A series of main effects, interactions, and mediations are predicted. The next chapter discusses the pilot study conducted for this dissertation.

Chapter 9: Pilot Study

The goal of the pilot study was to ensure that all manipulations (e.g., the system justification, rape myth acceptance, and defensive attribution manipulations) work. In other words, the goal was to ensure that all participants could correctly identify what they read in the vignettes and that the rape myth cue manipulation leads to differences in rape myth acceptance scores.

Participants

This study recruited participants via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (M-Turk); participants were paid \$1 for participating in the study. M-Turk is an online platform in which researchers can monetarily compensate community members for participating in a study. M-Turk workers are often considered representative of the general adult population of the United States (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). A preliminary power analysis suggested that a sample size of 50 was sufficient to detect a large effect size with a power of power of $d = .95$.

Procedure

Participants read two vignettes. Participants were told they must read the first vignette carefully, as their answers to questions based on this vignette will determine if they are eligible to participate in the study. The vignette discussed affirmative consent legislation and manipulated whether or not this legislation threatens the gender system (e.g., by saying that males are still the sexual aggressors or not; see Appendix B). After reading the vignette, participants answered manipulation check questions (see Appendix M).

Once participants completed the manipulation check questions, they were told they qualify to continue in the study and then read the second vignette (see Appendix C). The second vignette discussed an affirmative consent case at a University and participants acted as committee members determining the guilt and punishment of the perpetrator. This vignette manipulated what the victim was wearing and the gender of the victim (transgender or cisgender). After reading this information, participants answered more manipulation check questions (e.g., “What was Andrea’s gender identity?”), perceived similarity to the victim and perpetrator (Appendix D), a female rape myth acceptance measure (Appendix F), as well as a gender system justification measure (Appendix G).

Results and Discussion

To test whether system justification manipulation did manipulate gender system justification, a General Linear Model (GLM) was conducted. Results indicated that the system justification manipulation did not manipulate gender system justification ($F(1, 75) = .91, p = .34, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$). The means, however, were trending in the expected direction with participants in the threat condition ($M = 3.60, SD = 1.28$) demonstrating higher scores on the gender system justification scale than participants in the non-threatening condition ($M = 3.30, SD = .97$). Because the results were not significant, the system justification vignettes were updated. In the second pilot, the system justification vignettes described in more detail how affirmative consent legislation threatens the gender system (i.e., by discussing how this legislation changes gender roles by dictating what behaviors are considered appropriate for men and women).

The second pilot study indicated that, contrary to predictions, participants in the threatening condition ($M = 3.21$, $SD = .96$) scored significantly lower on the gender system justification scale than participants in the non-threatening condition ($M = 3.98$, $SD = .97$), ($F(1, 29) = 4.27$, $p = .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .13$). Because participants answered a variety of scales and questions about gender, it was hypothesized that participants in the threat condition picked up on the manipulation about threats to the gender system and overcompensated in their answers so as not to appear biased. Because the system justification manipulation did have a main effect on variables relevant to system justification (i.e., scores on the rape myth acceptance scale; ($F(1, 38) = 13.88$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .27$)), with participants in the threat condition ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.00$) displaying higher rape myth acceptance scores than participants in the non-threatening condition ($M = 2.00$, $SD = .38$), it was determined that participant likely overcompensated on their answers and the system justification manipulation did not need further change.

To determine if the rape myth cue manipulation worked, a GLM was conducted¹. Results indicated that the rape myth cue manipulation did not significantly affect scores on the rape myth acceptance scale ($F(1, 38) = .79$, $p = .38$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$). The means, however, were trending in the expected direction – participants in the rape myth cue condition ($M = 2.31$, $SD = .71$) had higher scores on the rape myth acceptance scale than did participants in the rape myth cue control condition ($M = 2.17$, $SD = .81$). Because the means were trending in the expected direction, the rape myth acceptance manipulation

¹ Statistics from the second pilot study are reported for the defensive attributions and rape myth cue manipulation checks. Data regarding these variables was lost from the first pilot study and thus only statistics from the second pilot study are reported.

was strengthened (i.e., participants read what the victim was wearing twice instead of once).

To ensure that the defensive attributions manipulation was successful, a GLM was conducted. There was a main effect of participant gender on perceptions of similarity to the victim based on victim gender ($F(1, 29) = 32.59, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .53$). Female participants ($M = 3.11, SD = 2.19$) perceived themselves as more similar to the victim based on victim gender than did male participants ($M = 5.46, SD = .81$). There was also a significant interaction between participant gender and gender identity of the victim on perceived similarity to the victim based on victim gender ($F(1, 29) = 22.34, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .44$). More specifically, female participants rated themselves as more similar to the cisgender victim ($M = 1.17, SE = .39$) compared to the transgender victim ($M = 4.91, SE = .37$); this interaction was not significant for men – men did not rate themselves as similar to the victim regardless of victim gender.

There was also a significant main effect of participant gender on perceptions of similarity to the perpetrator based on perpetrator gender ($F(1, 29) = 182.59, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .86$). More specifically, men ($M = 1.62, SD = .90$) rated themselves as more similar to the perpetrator based on perpetrator gender than did female participants ($M = 5.72, SD = .75$). Based on these results, the gender manipulation of the victim was not modified from the initial proposal.

Summary

In conclusion, the pilot tests did appear to provide at least some evidence that all manipulations (e.g., the system justification, rape myth acceptance, and defensive attribution manipulations) worked. When appropriate, the manipulations were

strengthened (e.g., by having participants read what the victim was wearing twice instead of once). The next chapter discusses the various methods used in this dissertation.

Chapter 10: Method

Participants

After removing participants who were not from the United States or did not complete the entire study ($n = 47$) the final sample consisted of 979 participants (55.2% female; $M_{\text{age}} = 37.32$ years, $SD = 12.48$). With regards to the sexual orientation of the sample, 88.3% identified as heterosexual. The sample was predominantly Caucasian (70.3%); roughly 9.6% of participants identified as African American, 1.9% identified as Native American, 7.7% identified as Asian, 4.0% identified as Hispanic, 6.2% identified as multi-racial, and .3% identified as “other.” Roughly 37.2% of the sample received a college degree (e.g., BA or BS); 24.4% had some college, 16% had a graduate degree, 10.1% had an associates degree, 1.2% had a high school diploma, and 1% had “other.” Participants further identified as either Democrat (40.8%), Independent (24.9%), or Republican (22.1%). With regards to religious affiliation, participants primarily identified as Catholic (17.9%), believe in God but no affiliation (16.9%), and Agnostic (16.3%). To ensure that the sample consisted of only cisgender participants, any participant that marked his or her gender identity as something other than male or female (e.g., transgender, gender fluid, or other) was removed from future analyses ($n = 15$).

Prior to data collection, power analyses were to determine the necessary sample size for this study. Analyses revealed that a sample size of 776 is sufficient to detect a small effect ($f^2 = .02$) with a power of .90 and a significant level of $\alpha = .05$. In order to account for possible attrition, the sample size was increased so that it equaled 1,000. A small effect size was chosen as research on transgender rape is rare and thus is difficult to use prior literature to determine an effect size. By choosing a small effect size, the

researchers are able to detect an effect if one is present. All participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (M-Turk).

Procedure

Participants read a brief overview of the study and indicated if they agree to participate. For a cover story, participants were told that they would read a news article and answer questions about it; their answers on the questions (i.e., the manipulation check questions) would determine if they were eligible to participate in the rest of the study (see Appendix B). Regardless of their answers to the manipulation check questions, participants were told they were eligible to participate in the second part of the study; participants who failed the manipulation check questions had their data removed from final analyses (see Chapter 12 for more information on this). The news article participants read about discussed affirmative consent legislation; the vignette was structured so that it either threatened the gender status quo (e.g., it empowers women in sexual encounters), or did not threaten the gender status quo (e.g., men are still sexual aggressors). After reading the news article, participants answered manipulation check questions about the article.

Once participants answered the manipulation check questions (see Appendix M) about the article, they were told they qualified to continue in the study. Participants were then told they would act as committee members in an affirmative consent case at a university. They read one vignette about a rape in which the female victim identified as transgender (male to female) or cisgender; the perpetrator was always specified as male and cisgender. Participants read a vignette (Appendix C) about the alleged rape in which some information was manipulated. In one scenario, participants read information about

the way the victim was dressed and in another scenario participants were not be given this information. This information acted as the manipulation of rape myth acceptance.

After reading this information, participants answered a series of questions pertaining to system justification, male and female rape myth acceptance, attitudes toward transgendered people, legal authoritarianism, and demographic questions (e.g., gender, age, and sexual orientation). Once participants completed the survey, they were thanked, de-briefed, and told they would be awarded their M-Turk payment within 3 days.

Measures

News article vignettes. The news article vignettes were between 600 and 650 words and discussed affirmative consent. Participants were told they must read the vignette carefully, as their answers to questions based on this vignette will determine if they are eligible to participate in the study; the use of this news vignette was a cover story for the system justification manipulation. In one article, participants were told that affirmative consent was bad legislation because it threatened the natural progression of sexual encounters. Specifically, it discussed how men are typically the aggressors in sexual encounters, and that this legislation was aimed at curbing widespread misbehavior on the part of men; it was intended to empower women against men. This was the system threatening condition because it threatened the traditional gender norm of men being sexual aggressors.

In the other article, participants were told that affirmative consent was good legislation because it gave women more power over their consent. More specifically, it discussed how men are the aggressor in sexual encounters, and that this legislation did

not change this. What this legislation did, however, was allow women more control over their consent and the narrative of the encounter. This was the system non-threatening condition because it did not threaten the traditional gender norm of men being sexual aggressors – instead, it reinforced it. See Appendix B for the full vignettes.

Affirmative consent vignettes. The vignettes were between 300 and 500 words and indicated that the victim was a transgender or cisgender woman. All participants were told that the perpetrator was a man regardless of the victim type (e.g., “Mark is a 21 year old man”). The vignette specified that the victim and perpetrator knew each other (e.g., they were in a class together).

In order to manipulate rape myth acceptance, participants were given information about the victim’s clothing. For instance, in one condition participants were told the victim was wearing revealing clothing; in the control condition participants were told the victim was wearing non-revealing clothing.

The vignette described the events that occurred. For instance, it specified where the victim was attacked and that the victim knew her attacker. Moreover, the vignette specified that the victim accused Mark of raping her. The vignettes are described in Appendix C.

Perceived similarity questions. Participants answered questions regarding their perceived similarity to both the victim and the perpetrator (see Appendix D for these questions). Questions were on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). Participants indicated how much they believed themselves to be similar to the victim based on characteristics such as gender. This information was used in the pilot study to ensure that female victims rated themselves as more similar to the

cisgender victim than the transgender victim and that male participants rated themselves as more similar to the perpetrator than did female victims.

Due to the nature of the questions, participants were not given a mid-point (e.g., neither agree nor disagree). Inclusion of mid-points increases the likelihood that participants choose this answer rather than answering honestly, especially if the questions are of a sensitive nature (Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2014). Asking whether participants believed that they were similar to a perpetrator or victim of rape is likely to be somewhat sensitive in nature; by not including a mid-point, participants should have answered the questions more truthfully.

Attitudes toward transgendered individuals. The Attitudes toward Transgendered Individuals (ATTI) scale (Walch, Ngamake, Francisco, Stitt, & Shingler, 2012) measured attitudes toward transgendered individuals. The scale is 20 items long and is measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). Participants answered questions such as “It would be beneficial to society to recognize transgenderism as normal.” See Appendix E for the full ATTI scale.

Male and female rape myth acceptance. The Illinois Rape Myths Scale-Short Form (IRMS; Payne et al., 1999) assessed participants’ acceptance of female rape myths. This was on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). Participants answered questions such as “Although most women wouldn’t admit it, they generally like being physically forced to have sex.” See Appendix F for items on this scale.

The Male Rape Myth Scale (MRMS; Melanson, 1999) assessed participants’ acceptance of male rape myths. This was on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1

(Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). Participants answered questions such as “A man who has been raped has lost his manhood.” See Appendix G for items on this scale.

System justification. A measure of gender system justification (Jost & Kay, 2005) assessed endorsement of system justification (see Appendix H). This was on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). Participants answered such questions as “In general, relations between men and women are fair.” This was used in the pilot study to ensure that the system justification manipulation affected participants in the expected directions (i.e., that participants in the threatening condition were higher in gender system justification than participants in the non-threatening condition).

Legal Attitudes. Legal attitudes were measured via the Revised Legal Attitudes Questionnaire (Kravitz et al., 1993). The scale was designed to measure authoritarian legal attitudes and has a total of 23 items on a 6-point scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). Participants answered such items as “Too many obviously guilty persons escape punishment because of legal technicalities.” See Appendix I for the full legal attitudes scale.

Victim blame. Five questions, based on questions asked by Sleath and Bull (2010), assessed victim blame on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Not at All) to 5 (Completely/Totally). For the purpose of this study, the questions were slightly modified (e.g., changing the victim’s name) and a sixth item was added asking how much the victim could have prevented the attack from happening. Participants answered questions such as “How much do you blame Andrea for what happened?” and “How much do you

consider the incident to be Andrea's fault?". See Appendix J for the full victim blame scale.

Perpetrator punishment. Participants indicated the punishment the perpetrator deserved (e.g., suspension) on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (Definitely deserves the punishment) to 6 (Definitely does not deserve the punishment). See Appendix K for the full perpetrator guilt and punishment questions.

Demographics. Participants answered a series of questions about their demographic characteristics (see Appendix L). For instance, participants indicated their sexual orientation, gender (male, female, transgender male to female, transgender female to male, and gender fluid), religious affiliation, political affiliation, race and ethnicity, and age. Participants indicated whether they were ever a victim of rape, whether they know someone who was a victim of rape, and whether they ever served on a jury prosecuting someone who was accused of rape. The information about whether participants have been victims of rape, or know someone who was a victim of rape, are critical. It is possible that people who have experienced a sexual assault, or know someone who has experienced a sexual assault, will be less likely to blame the victim, and more likely to punish the perpetrator, than participants who have not experienced a sexual assault or do not know someone who has experienced a sexual assault. Thus, this information was used as control variables for the analyses.

Manipulation checks. Participants answered questions about what they read in the vignettes. For instance, participants answered the question "What was the victim wearing?" The first three questions in Appendix M pertain to the news article vignette; the last two questions pertain to the affirmative consent vignette.

Chapter 11: Examining Dataset

Characteristics of Dataset

Data were initially inspected visually via histograms and scatterplots. Victim blame and perpetrator punishment, the two dependent variables, were positively and negatively skewed, respectively. The two dependent variables were also significantly, and negatively, correlated with one another, $r(979) = -.52, p < .01$ (thereby answering research question 1 in the affirmative). Thus, as victim blame decreased perpetrator punishment increased. The continuous independent variables (e.g., ATTI, legal attitudes, female and male rape myth acceptance) were normally distributed. Correlations between continuous independent variables were also assessed. Many of the continuous independent variables were correlated with one another (see Table 1); table 1 also provides information about the correlations between demographic information used within analyses and independent variables. Furthermore, because participants were told that they must complete a certain number of items to receive payment for engaging in the study, missing data was less than 5% for all variables; thus, imputations were not necessary to correct for missing data.

Table 1. Correlations Between Demographics and Independent Variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Female RMA	-								
2. Male RMA	.83*	-							
3. Legal Attitudes	.13*	.20*	-						
4. ATTI	.53*	.58*	.34*	-					
5. Participant gender	.26*	.27*	-.13*	.18*	-				
6. Participant sexual orientation	-.02	.06	.15*	.17*	.11	-			
7. Participant race	.07*	.11*	-.03	.05	.01	.03	-		
8. Victim of sexual assault	.14*	.19*	.07*	.11*	.23*	.17*	.05	-	
9. Participant age	-.03	.03	.02	.08*	-.10*	.16*	-.20*	.04	-

* $p < .05$

Frequencies were also conducted to determine how many participants were in each experimental condition; this was done to ensure equal cell sizes between conditions. With regards to the system justification manipulation, 49.5% of participants ($n = 485$) read that affirmative consent did not threaten the gender system and 50.5% of participants ($n = 494$) read that affirmative consent did threaten the gender system. With regards to the rape myth cue manipulation, 50.7% of participants ($n = 496$) read that the victim wore non-revealing clothing whereas 49.3% of participants ($n = 483$) read that the victim wore revealing clothing. There was also an even split with regards to the victim gender manipulation; more specifically, 50.2% of participants ($n = 491$) read that the victim was cisgender whereas 49.8% of participants ($n = 488$) read that the victim was transgender.

The data was also cleaned to remove any participant who did not provide complete data (e.g., started the study but stopped halfway through), was identified as having completed the study outside of the United States (i.e., their latitude and longitude indicated they were in a different country), or who took the study multiple times. A total of 1,026 responses were initially collected; after applying these criteria, the final sample size was $n = 979$.

Scale Creation

Participant scores on scales were calculated by adding all relevant variables and then dividing by the number of items in the scale. Items were reverse coded as necessary. Furthermore, participants must have answered a majority of the items of a scale (i.e., they must have skipped no more than 2 items) to be included in the final mean score. This conservative technique was used to make certain that only participants who fully engaged with each scale were included thereby ensuring the scales are an accurate reflection of participant attitudes and viewpoints.

Attitudes toward transgendered individuals. Reliability analyses for the Attitudes Toward Transgender Individuals (ATTI) scale indicated high internal consistency between items ($\alpha = .97$). Participant responses were averaged to create one ATTI score. Higher numbers indicate more negative attitudes toward transgender people.

Male and female rape myth acceptance. Reliability analyses for the female rape myth acceptance scale indicated high internal consistency between items ($\alpha = .93$). Participant responses were averaged to create one female rape myth acceptance score. Higher numbers indicate more acceptance of female rape myths.

With regards to male rape myth acceptance, reliability analyses also indicate high internal consistency between items ($\alpha = .96$). Participant responses were averaged to create one male rape myth acceptance score. Higher numbers indicate more acceptance of male rape myths.

Legal Attitudes. Reliability analyses for the legal attitudes scale indicated high internal consistency between items ($\alpha = .78$). Participant responses were averaged to create one legal attitudes score. Higher numbers indicate more authoritarian legal attitudes.

Victim blame. Reliability analyses for the victim blame scale indicated high internal consistency between items ($\alpha = .87$). Participant responses were averaged to create one victim blame score. Higher numbers indicate more victim blame.

Perpetrator punishment. Because perpetrator punishment was only one item, no scale was created.

Assessment of Assumptions

Because of the experimental nature of this study, a General Linear Model (GLM) was conducted to ensure that the manipulations did not impact the continuous independent variables within the study. Results indicated that the experimental manipulations did not affect any of the continuous predictors (all $ps > .05$). Thus, it was determined that the use of the continuous variables was appropriate and that the effect of these variables on the dependent variables would not be due to the experimental manipulations.

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation of Continuous Variables.

	Mean	Standard Deviation
Female rape myth acceptance	2.35	.82
Male rape myth acceptance	2.23	1.03
Legal Attitudes	3.29	.61
ATTI	2.40	1.23
Victim blame	2.00	.91
Perpetrator punishment	4.81	1.37

As previously mentioned, the dependent variables (victim blame and perpetrator punishment) were skewed – participants did not want to blame the victim, but did want to punish the perpetrator (table 2 above provides an overview of the means and standard deviations for all continuous variables). Thus, the dependent variables were binned in order to determine if this could improve normality in the final models. This technique did not improve the normality in the final models – the residuals of the final models looked similar regardless of whether the dependent variables had been binned or not. Furthermore, a series of robust analyses using Generalized Linear Models were conducted to determine if this affected the residuals of the models. Again, residuals were similar between the robust and non-robust models. Because these techniques did not improve the residuals, it was determined that no transformations were necessary and that the models were a good fit for the data.

Chapter 12: Results

The primary purpose of this dissertation is to understand what factors motivate people to justify the gender system by blaming the victim and exonerating the perpetrator in affirmative consent cases; a secondary purpose of this dissertation is to understand how individual characteristics affect victim blame and perpetrator punishment. General Linear Models (GLMs) and mediation analyses (run via PROCESS; Hayes, 2017) were conducted to examine whether the system justification, rape myth cue, defensive attributions, and individual difference hypotheses were supported.

Two GLMs, one with victim blame as a dependent variable and one with perpetrator punishment as a dependent variable, were conducted to examine all main effect and interaction hypotheses; these models included all categorical and continuous independent variables. Because of the correlation between the continuous predictors, as discussed in Chapter 11, separate models were not run for these continuous variables. Instead, interaction effects for continuous variables were included in the model to account for the relationship between these variables (i.e., parallel moderators were run). Race of participant, sexual orientation of participant, whether the participant had been a victim of sexual assault or knew someone who was a victim of sexual assault were included as control variables in the final models. With regards to mediation analyses, control variables (e.g., sexual orientation of participant) were included when appropriate. Furthermore, alternative models were examined to determine which model was a better fit for the data.

Of the 979 participants who completed the study, some were removed from final analyses for one of three reasons: (1) he or she took less than 5 minutes or more than 70

minutes to complete the study, (2) he or she did not adequately answer manipulation check questions, or (3) he or she did not include information about their age. It was expected that the study would take between 45 and 60 minutes to complete. The specific cutoffs of 5 minutes and 70 minutes were chosen in relation to this expected time. Prior studies have demonstrated that respondents who are inattentive while participating in a study have poorer quality data than respondents who were attentive while participating in a study (see Maniaci & Rogge, 2014). Based on this information, 70 minutes was chosen as the upper boundary because of concerns that the experimental manipulations would no longer be effective at influencing participant decisions and that participants would no longer be paying attention to the study. Five minutes was chosen as the lower boundary because it was believed that participants would not be able to finish the study in under 5 minutes; other studies have also removed data with fast completion times (see Crowder & Kimmelmeier, 2018; Kugler, Cooper, & Nosek, 2010). With regards to the time criterion, a total of 37 participants were removed from final analyses for taking less than five minutes ($n = 16$) or more than 70 minutes ($n = 21$) to complete the study. A total of 14 people did not include information about their age.

Participants answered three manipulation check questions about the system justification and two manipulation check questions about the affirmative consent vignettes. A number of participants failed at least one manipulation check question. The use of a more stringent criterion (i.e., only participants who correctly answered all manipulation check questions were included in final analyses) greatly reduced the sample size and power of the study. In order to assure adequate power, a less stringent criterion was used to remove participants who failed manipulation check questions. More

specifically, participants who incorrectly answered all manipulation check questions on one or more domain (i.e., system justification or affirmative consent) were removed from final analyses. For example, a participant who incorrectly answered all three of the system justification manipulation check questions was removed from final analyses, regardless of his answers to the affirmative consent manipulation check questions. This criterion removed 16 people from final analyses. After applying this criterion, the final sample size for all analyses was $n = 883$.

System Justification

A General Linear Model (GLM) was conducted to determine how system justification affects victim blame and perpetrator punishment. As discussed in Chapter 3, transgender people are theorized to be threats to the gender system because they subvert the traditional gender binary (i.e., a person can either be male or female but not both, and certainly cannot switch between genders). Due to this, it was hypothesized that transgender victims would be blamed more for their assault than cisgender victims. This hypothesis (hypothesis 1) was not supported; more specifically, participants did not differentiate based on victim gender and instead blamed victims equally ($F(1, 825) = .25, p = .62, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .00$). It was further predicted that, because transgender people are a threat to the gender system, participants who read about a transgender victim would be less likely to punish the perpetrator than participants who read about a cisgender victim. This hypothesis (hypothesis 2) was also not supported – participants who read about a transgender victim were not less likely to punish the perpetrator compared to participants who read about a cisgender victim ($F(1, 825) = .06, p = .81, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .00$).

With regards to the system justification manipulations, it was predicted that threatening the gender system via affirmative consent legislation would lead to more victim blame (hypothesis 3) and less perpetrator punishment (hypothesis 4) compared to not threatening the gender system. Unfortunately, hypothesis 3 was not supported - participants did not blame the victim differently regardless of whether they were in the system threatening or non-threatening condition ($F(1, 825) = 2.72, p = .09, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .00$). Hypothesis 4 was also not supported, such that participants in the system threatening condition did not punish the perpetrator less than participants in the non-threatening condition ($F(1, 825) = 2.67, p = .10, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .00$). Table 3 outlines the effects of the experimental manipulations on both dependent variables.

Rape Myth Cue

A primary purpose of this dissertation is to examine what factors act as motivations to defend the gender system. It was hypothesized that rape myth cues (e.g., what the victim is wearing) could motivate participants to defend the gender system by blaming the victim and exonerating the perpetrator. Consequently, what the participant was wearing was manipulated such that the victim was wearing revealing (rape myth cue condition) or non-revealing (control condition) clothing. A GLM was conducted as outlined above (i.e., controlling for race, sexual orientation, victim status; including all continuous independent variables to control for the correlations between them) to determine whether rape myth cues affected victim blame and perpetrator punishment. Results indicated that rape myth cues do, in fact, affect victim blame and perpetrator punishment. More specifically, participants who read that the victim wore revealing clothing blamed the victim more than participants who read that the victim wore non-

revealing clothing ($F(1, 825) = 19.38, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .02$); participants who read that the victim wore revealing clothing punished the perpetrator less than participants who read the victim wore non-revealing clothing ($F(1, 825) = 9.36, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$). Thus, both hypotheses 5 (rape myth cue will affect victim blame) and 7 (rape myth cue will affect perpetrator punishment) were supported.

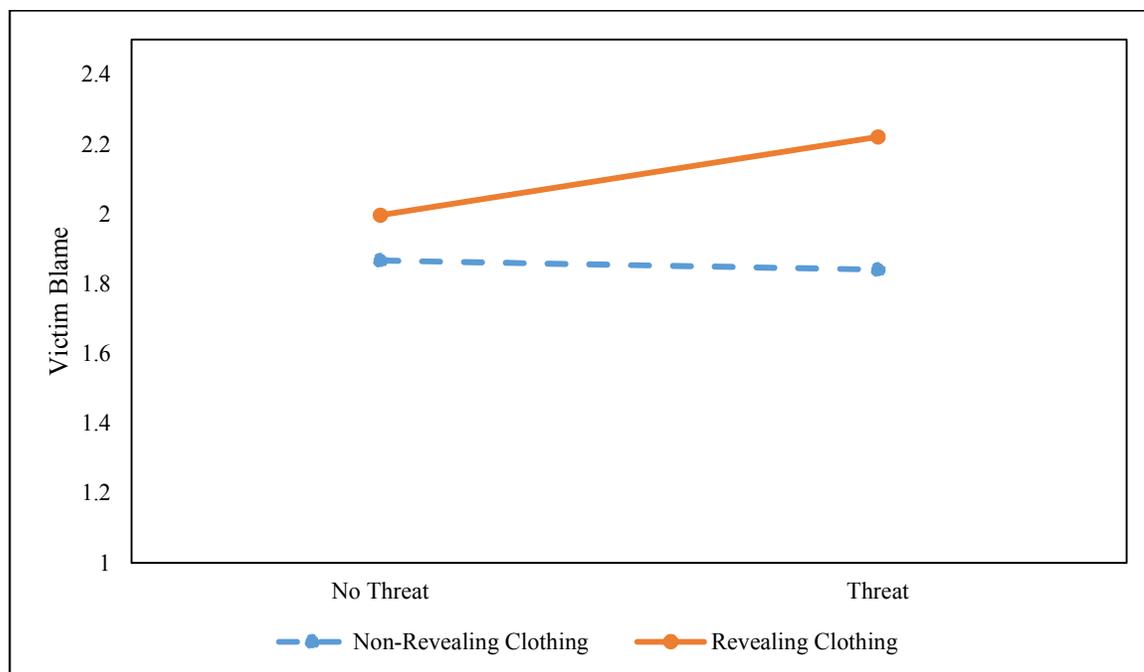
While rape myth cues were hypothesized to be important predictors of victim blame and perpetrator punishment, and were thereby expected to be a motivation to defend the gender system, it was also hypothesized that this relationship might depend upon participant acceptance of female rape myths. Rape myth acceptance is an important variable in understanding reactions to rape victims; however, authors have also argued that rape myth cues and variables such as rape myth acceptance cannot explain reactions to rape victims alone – rather, it is the interaction between these two variables that best explains reactions to rape victims (Frese et al., 2004; Krahe, 1988). Thus, it was hypothesized that, not only would there be a main effect of female rape myth acceptance on victim blame and perpetrator punishment (hypotheses 6 and 8, respectively), but that there would be an interaction between rape myth cues and female rape myth acceptance on victim blame and perpetrator punishment (hypotheses 9 and 10, respectively). It was also predicted that there would be a three-way interaction between system justification, rape myth cues, and female rape myth acceptance on victim blame and perpetrator punishment (hypotheses 11 and 12, respectively).

While there was a main effect of female rape myth acceptance on both victim blame and perpetrator punishment, there was also a main effect of participant gender on female rape myth acceptance (this is discussed in more detail in the individual difference

section below). Furthermore, when female rape myth acceptance was added into the model, none of the expected two-way or three-way interactions were significant (all p s > .05) thereby indicating that hypotheses 9 through 12 were not supported. Because none of the expected interactions were significant, and because female rape myth acceptance was predicted by another variable and thus more suited to mediation analyses, female rape myth acceptance was removed from the final two GLM models.

Unexpected effects. While running the GLM models, however, some unexpected interaction effects did take place. As depicted in Figure 2 below, there was an interaction between the system justification and rape myth cue manipulations ($F(1, 825) = 4.53, p = .03, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .00$). While a three-way interaction was predicted between the system justification manipulation, rape myth cue manipulation, and female rape myth acceptance was predicted, a two-way interaction between the system justification and rape myth cue manipulations was not. An examination of the estimated marginal means indicated that victim clothing did not matter when participants were in the system non-threatening condition (i.e., they read that the gender system was not under threat; $p = .11$). When participants were in the system threatening condition, however, victim clothing did matter. More specifically, participants who read that the victim wore revealing clothing ($M = 2.21, SE = .055$) were more likely to blame the victim than participants who read the victim wore non-revealing clothing ($M = 1.84, SE = .057$). This interaction did not occur for perpetrator punishment ($F(1, 825) = .36, p = .55, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .00$).

Figure 2. Two-way interaction between system justification and rape myth cue manipulations.



Defensive Attributions

People often engage in defensive attributions to assuage fears that negative fates could befall them. They feel threatened by the notion that a horrible fate could befall them. It was hypothesized that defensive attributions could be a motivation to defend the gender system via victim blame or perpetrator punishment, and thus be a construct of system justification. More specifically, it was hypothesized that female participants will blame the victim equally regardless of victim gender; male participants will punish the perpetrator equally regardless of victim gender (hypotheses 13 and 15, respectively). If, however, defensive attributions are a motivation to view one's ingroup favorably, and thus relate to group justification, then the results were expected to be different. More specifically, it was hypothesized that female participants would blame the cisgender

victim less than the transgender victim; male participants will be less likely to punish the perpetrator regardless of the gender identity of the victim (hypotheses 14 and 16, respectively). Unfortunately, these results did not materialize. With regards to victim blame, the interaction between participant gender and victim gender was non-significant ($F(1, 825) = .04, p = .85, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .00$); the interaction between participant gender and victim gender was also non-significant for perpetrator punishment ($F(1, 825) = 1.58, p = .21, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .00$).

Table 3. Effects of Experimental Manipulations on Dependent Variables.

Variable	Victim Blame		Perpetrator Punishment	
	<i>F</i>	Partial η^2	<i>F</i>	Partial η^2
Victim Gender	.25	.00	.06	.00
System Justification Manipulation	2.72	.00	2.66	.00
Rape Myth Cue Manipulation	19.38*	.02	9.36*	.01
Rape Myth Cue X System Justification	4.53**	.01	.36	.00
Participant Gender X Victim Gender	.04	.00	1.58	.00

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .05$

Individual Differences

A secondary purpose of this dissertation was to understand how individual differences (e.g., age, race, legal attitudes) relate to victim blame and perpetrator punishment in affirmative consent cases. This section discusses the results from various analyses about how individual differences relate to the dependent variables.

Race. Based on prior research demonstrating that minority participants have more negative views of rape victims than White participants (see Jimenez & Abreu, 2003; Lee & Cheung, 1991; Nagel et al., 2005) it was predicted that minority participants would be more likely to blame the victim, and less likely to punish the perpetrator, compared to White participants (hypotheses 21 and 22, respectively). GLM analyses, conducted as described earlier in this chapter, indicate that race did not play a significant role in predicting victim blame and perpetrator punishment; indeed, there did not appear to be differences between minority participants and White participants (all $ps > .05$).

Age. Age is also an important predictor of attitudes toward rape victims such that older participants tend to have more negative attitudes toward rape victims than do younger participants (Nagel et al., 2005). Older people also tend to have more negative attitudes toward transgender people (King, Winter, & Webster, 2009; Landén, & Innala, 2000). Consequently, it was predicted that older participants will blame the victim more, and punish the perpetrator less, than younger participants (hypotheses 23 and 24, respectively) and that there would be an interaction between age and victim gender such that older participants who read about the transgender victim will blame the victim more, and punish the perpetrator less, than younger participants; this difference will be non-significant for the cisgender victim (hypotheses 26 and 27 respectively). Results from the victim blame GLM indicate that age was not a predictor of victim blame – older participants did not blame the victim more than younger participants ($F(1, 825) = .00, p = .99$, partial $\eta^2 = .00$). Furthermore, the interaction between age and victim gender on victim blame was also non-significant ($F(1, 825) = .71, p = .40$, partial $\eta^2 = .00$). With regards to perpetrator punishment, age was also not a significant predictor – older

participants did not punish the perpetrator less than younger participants ($F(1, 825) = 1.27, p = .26, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .00$); the interaction between age and victim gender was also non-significant for perpetrator punishment ($F(1, 825) = .36, p = .55, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .00$).

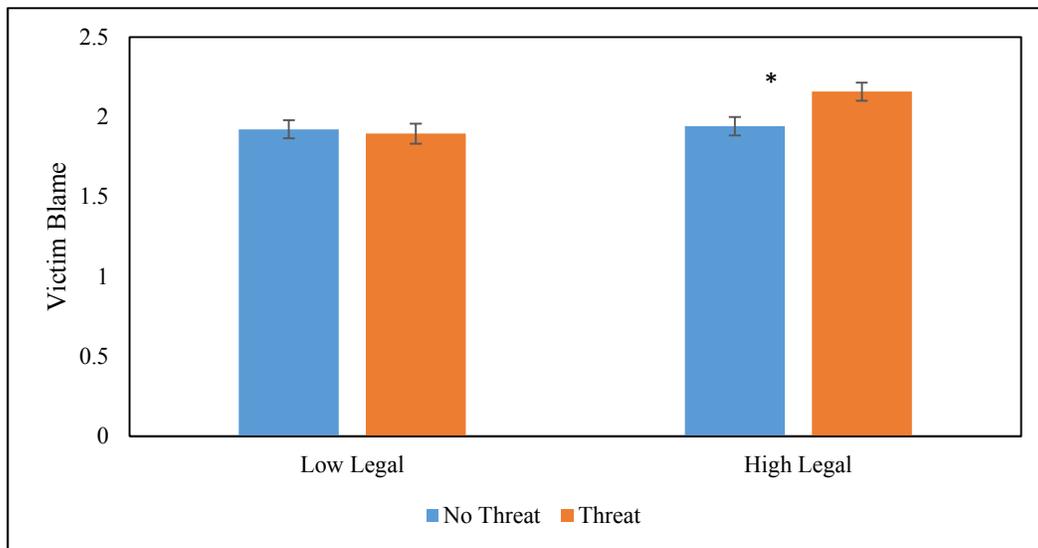
Legal attitudes. Legal attitudes, also known as legal authoritarianism, measures right wing philosophy and punitiveness and is associated with a tendency to convict (Boehm, 1968). Based on this information it was hypothesized that participants who are high on authoritarianism, as measured by the Revised Legal Attitudes Questionnaire (Kravitz, Cutler, & Brock, 1993), will be more likely to punish the perpetrator than participants who are low on authoritarianism (hypothesis 25). Because no research that the author is aware of has been conducted examining the relationship between legal attitudes and victim blame, this dissertation questioned whether legal attitudes, or authoritarianism, is related to victim blame (research question 3).

Contrary to hypothesis 25, results indicate that legal attitudes do not affect perpetrator punishment ($F(1, 825) = 2.35, p = .13, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .00$). As for research question 3, legal attitudes do, in fact, have an effect on victim blame ($F(1, 825) = 5.52, p = .02, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$). More specifically, participants who are higher on authoritarianism, do indeed, blame the victim more than participants who are low on authoritarianism.

While hypothesis 25 was not confirmed, a number of unexpected results did occur. More specifically, an interaction occurred between the system justification manipulation and legal attitudes ($F(1, 825) = 4.25, p = .04, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$); see figure 3 below. More specifically, the system justification manipulation did not appear to affect participants differently when they were low on legal authoritarianism (-1 SD). When

participants were high on legal authoritarianism (+1 *SD*), however, the system justification manipulation did affect them differently – participants who were high on legal authoritarianism and read that the system was under threat ($M = 2.16, SE = 0.05$) were more likely to blame the victim than participants who were high on legal authoritarianism and read that the system was not under threat ($M = 1.94, SE = 0.06$). Note that in the figure, an asterisk denotes a significant difference between conditions (this occurs for all future interactions, too).

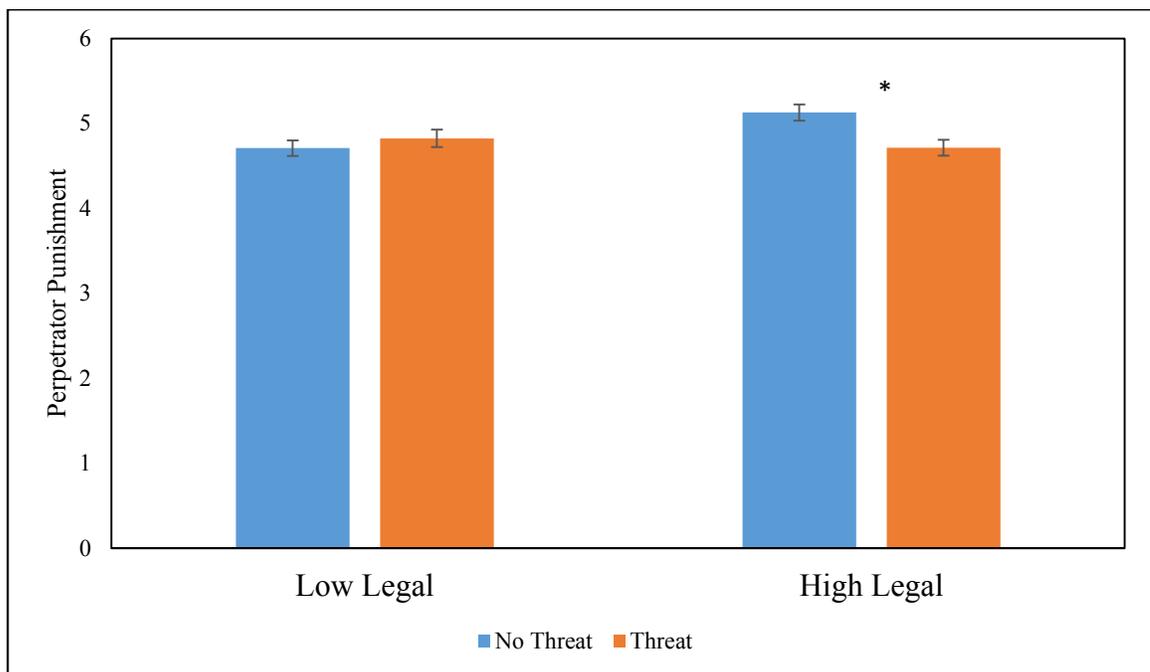
Figure 3. Two-way Interaction Between System Justification Manipulation and Legal Attitudes on Victim Blame.



This two-way interaction between system justification and legal attitudes also occurred for perpetrator punishment ($F(1, 825) = 7.34, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$); see figure 4 below. More specifically, the system justification manipulation did not appear to affect participants differently when they were low on legal authoritarianism (-1 *SD*). When participants were high on legal authoritarianism (+1 *SD*), however, the system

justification manipulation did affect them differently – participants who were high on legal authoritarianism and read that the system was under threat ($M = 4.71$, $SE = 0.09$) were less likely to punish the perpetrator than participants who were high on legal authoritarianism and read that the system was not under threat ($M = 5.13$, $SE = 0.10$).

Figure 4. Two-way Interaction Between System Justification Manipulation and Legal Attitudes on Perpetrator Punishment.



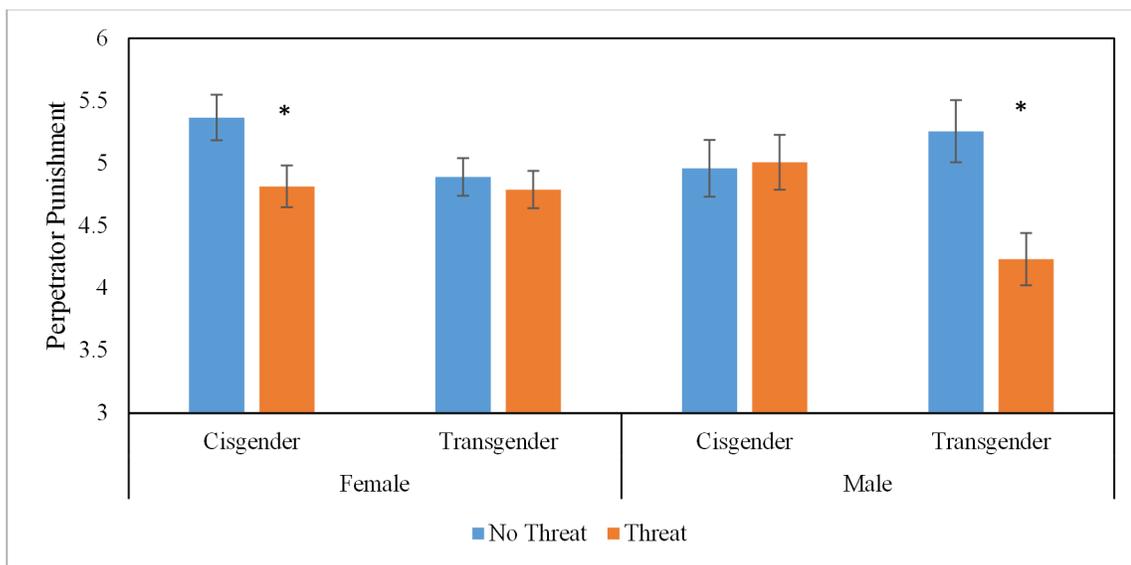
There was also an unexpected four-way interaction between the system justification manipulation, victim gender manipulation, participant gender, and legal attitudes on perpetrator punishment ($F(1, 825) = 7.94$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$); see Figures 5 and 6 below. More specifically, female participants who are high in legal authoritarianism ($+1 SD$) and read that the gender system was under threat ($M = 4.84$, $SE = 0.16$) are less likely to punish a perpetrator who targeted a cisgender victim than are female participants high on legal authoritarianism and read that the gender system was

not under threat ($M = 5.39$, $SE = 0.18$). Female participants who are high in legal authoritarianism and read that the gender system was under threat did not differ in their punishment of a perpetrator who targeted a transgender victim compared to female participants high on legal authoritarianism who read that the gender system was not under threat.

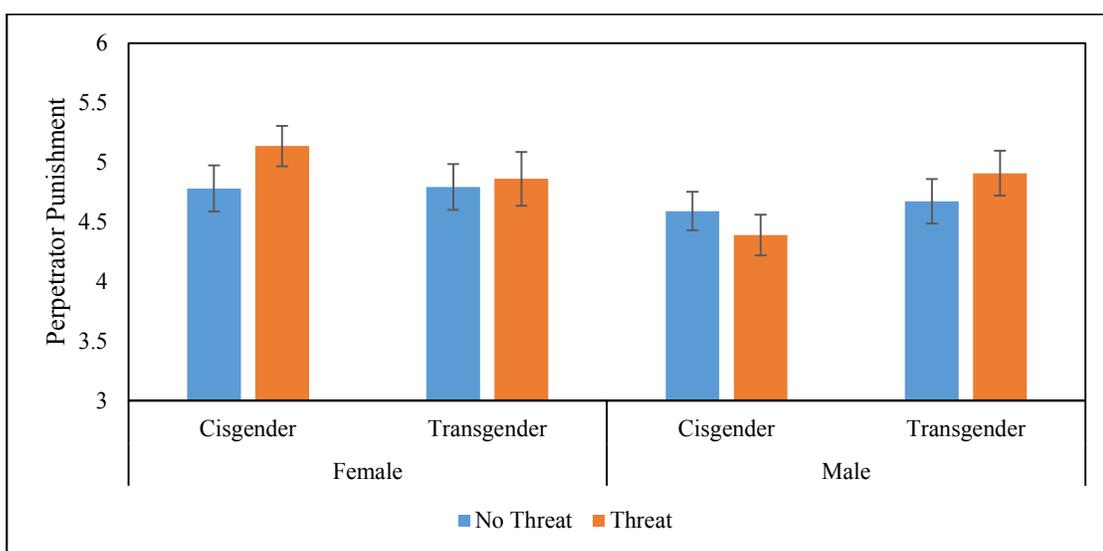
With regards to male participants, those who are high in legal authoritarianism ($+1 SD$) and read that the gender system was under threat did not differ in their punishment of a perpetrator who targeted a cisgender victim compared to male participants high on legal authoritarianism who read that the gender system was not under threat. When the victim is transgender, however, differences do emerge in perpetrator punishment for men. More specifically, men who are high in legal authoritarianism and read that the gender system was under threat ($M = 4.23$, $SE = 0.21$) were less likely to punish a perpetrator targeting a transgender victim than male participants high in legal authoritarianism who read that the gender system was not under threat ($M = 5.26$, $SE = 0.25$).

Figure 6, depicted below, illustrates this four-way interaction between the system justification manipulation, victim gender manipulation, participant gender, and legal authoritarianism when participants are at low levels of legal authoritarianism ($-1 SD$). As demonstrated in the figure, female participants who are low in legal authoritarianism do not differ in perpetrator punishment regardless of the gender of the victim or whether or not the system was threatened. Male participants low in legal authoritarianism also do not differ in their punishment of the perpetrator regardless of the gender of the victim or whether or not the system was threatened.

*Figure 5. Four-way Interaction Between System Justification Manipulation, Victim Gender Manipulation, Participant Gender, for Participants **High in Legal** Authoritarianism on Perpetrator Punishment.*



*Figure 6. Four-way Interaction Between System Justification Manipulation, Victim Gender Manipulation, Participant Gender, and Participants **Low in Legal** Authoritarianism on Perpetrator Punishment.*



Another way of understanding, or interpreting, this interaction is by assessing the simple slopes for authoritarianism generally (i.e., not based on high or low authoritarianism; see Table 4 below). As evidenced by the simple slopes, male participants who are in the system threatening condition are much less likely to punish a perpetrator who targeted a transgender victim than cisgender victim (indeed the effect goes from a -0.54 when the victim is transgender to a 0.61 when the victim is cisgender). Female participants in the system threatening condition, on the other hand, are less likely to punish the perpetrator regardless of whether the victim is transgender or cisgender (the effect is -0.32 for the cisgender victim and -0.14 for the transgender victim).

Table 4. Simple Slopes of Four-way Interaction.

Gender	System Manipulation	<i>b</i>
Female Participant		
<i>Cisgender Victim</i>	No Threat	0.48
	Threat	-0.32
<i>Transgender Victim</i>	No Threat	0.1
	Threat	-0.14
Male Participant		
<i>Cisgender Victim</i>	No Threat	0.34
	Threat	0.61
<i>Transgender Victim</i>	No Threat	0.47
	Threat	-0.54

When examining the simple slopes in the system non-threatening condition, female participants are more likely to punish a perpetrator targeting a cisgender victim (0.48) versus a perpetrator targeting a transgender victim (0.1); male participants do not demonstrate much of a difference in their desire to punish the perpetrator in the system non-threatening condition (the effect is 0.34 when the victim is cisgender and 0.47 when the victim is transgender).

Attitudes toward transgender individuals. It was predicted that attitudes toward transgender individuals would affect both victim blame and perpetrator punishment; more specifically, it was hypothesized that participants with more negative attitudes toward transgender individuals (measured via the Attitudes Toward Transgender Individuals (ATTI) scale) would be more likely to blame the victim and exonerate the perpetrator compared to participants with more positive attitudes toward transgender individuals (hypotheses 18 and 20, respectively). It was further hypothesized, however, that this relationship would be mediated by female rape myth acceptance - participants with more negative attitudes toward transgender people will have higher rape myth acceptance and be more likely to blame the victim and exonerate the perpetrator than participants with more positive attitudes toward transgender people (hypotheses 29 and 31, respectively).

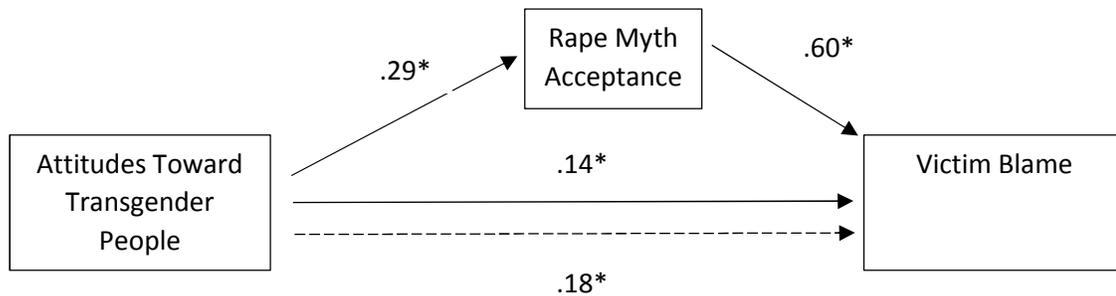
Multiple mediation analyses were conducted to understand the effects of ATTI and female rape myth acceptance on both victim blame and perpetrator punishment. The first mediation analysis included ATTI as the independent variable, female rape myth acceptance as the mediator, and victim blame as the outcome variable. Participant race, sexual orientation, victim status (i.e., whether the participant was a victim of sexual

assault or knew someone that was a victim of sexual assault), age, and gender were controlled for during analyses.

Results indicated that there was a direct effect of ATTI on victim blame such that participants high on ATTI were more likely to blame the victim ($b = .14$, $t(874) = 6.03$, $p < .01$) thereby supporting hypothesis 18; ATTI was also a significant predictor of female rape myth acceptance – participants high on ATTI also had more acceptance of female rape myths ($b = .29$, $t(874) = 16.45$, $p < .01$). Rape myth acceptance was also a predictor of victim blame such that participants higher on female rape myth acceptance were more likely to blame the victim than participants low on female rape myth acceptance ($b = .60$, $t(874) = 15.84$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, female rape myth acceptance mediated the relationship between ATTI and victim blame as evidenced by the confidence intervals for the indirect effect ($b = .18$, $CI_{95\%} = .15, .21$) thereby supporting hypothesis 29; see figure 7 below.

Alternate models were tested to ensure that the current mediation model was the best fit for the data. For instance, a moderated mediation model was conducted to determine if the effect of ATTI on victim blame via female rape myth acceptance only occurred when the victim was transgender. Results indicated that this model was not a good fit, as all p values were greater than .05 and all 95% Confidence Intervals passed between 0.

Figure 7. Mediation of ATTI, Female Rape Myth Acceptance, and Victim Blame.



Note. * indicates $p < .05$.

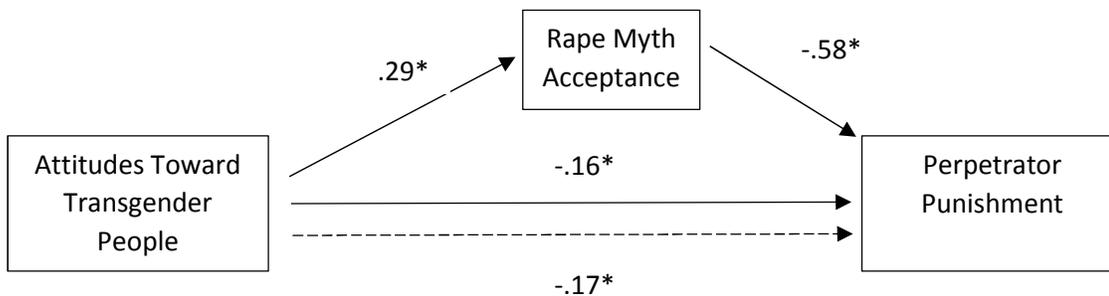
A second mediation analysis included ATTI as the independent variable, female rape myth acceptance as the mediator, and perpetrator punishment as the outcome variable. Participant race, sexual orientation, victim status (i.e., whether the participant was a victim of sexual assault or knew someone that was a victim of sexual assault), age, and gender were controlled for during analyses.

Results indicated that there was a direct effect of ATTI on perpetrator punishment such that participants high on ATTI were less likely to punish the perpetrator ($b = -.16$, $t(874) = -4.10$, $p < .01$) thereby supporting hypothesis 20; ATTI was also a significant predictor of female rape myth acceptance in this model – participants high on ATTI also had more acceptance of female rape myths ($b = .29$, $t(874) = 16.45$, $p < .01$). Rape myth acceptance was also a predictor of perpetrator punishment such that participants higher on female rape myth acceptance were less likely to punish the perpetrator than participants low on female rape myth acceptance ($b = -.58$, $t(874) = -8.69$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, female rape myth acceptance mediated the relationship between ATTI and

perpetrator punishment as evidenced by the confidence intervals for the indirect effect ($b = -.17$, $CI_{95\%} = -.24, -.09$) thereby supporting hypothesis 31; see figure 8 below.

As with the first mediation model for ATTI, female rape myth acceptance, and victim blame, alternative models were tested to ensure that this mediation between ATTI, female rape myth acceptance, and perpetrator punishment was the best fit for the data. For instance, a moderated mediation model was conducted to determine if the effect of ATTI on perpetrator punishment via female rape myth acceptance only occurred when the victim was transgender. Results indicated that this model was not a good fit as all p values were greater than .05 and all 95% Confidence Intervals passed between 0.

Figure 8. Mediation of ATTI, Female Rape Myth Acceptance, and Perpetrator Punishment.



Note. * indicates $p < .05$.

There were also a number of unexpected results. For instance, there was an unexpected four-way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation, victim gender manipulation, participant gender, and Attitudes Toward Transgender Individuals (ATTI) on victim blame ($F(1, 825) = 4.23$, $p = .04$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$); see figures 9 and 10 below which break the interaction down by high and low ATTI individuals, respectively.

Significant differences existed between male and female participants. More specifically, female participants high in ATTI (+1 *SD*) who read that a cisgender victim was wearing non-revealing clothing ($M = 1.88, SE = 0.11$) were less likely to blame that cisgender victim than male participants high in ATTI who read that the cisgender victim was wearing non-revealing clothing ($M = 2.28, SE = 0.12$). There was also a significant difference between male and female participants who read about a transgender victim wearing revealing clothing. Female participants high in ATTI who read that a transgender victim was wearing revealing clothing ($M = 2.34, SE = .13$) were less likely to blame that transgender victim than male participants high in ATTI who read that the transgender victim was wearing revealing clothing ($M = 2.76, SE = 0.10$). There were no other significant differences between male and female participants; see figure 9 below.

With regards to participants who scored low in ATTI (-1 *SD*), there were differences between male and female participants. More specifically, female participants low in ATTI who read that a cisgender victim was wearing revealing clothing ($M = 1.57, SE = 0.10$) were less likely to blame that cisgender victim than male participants low in ATTI who read that cisgender the victim was wearing revealing clothing ($M = 1.92, SE = 0.13$); no other differences between male and female participants were significant (see figure 10 below).

Figure 9. Four-way Interaction Between Rape Myth Cue Manipulation, Victim Gender Manipulation, Participant Gender, and Participants **High in ATTI on Victim Blame**.

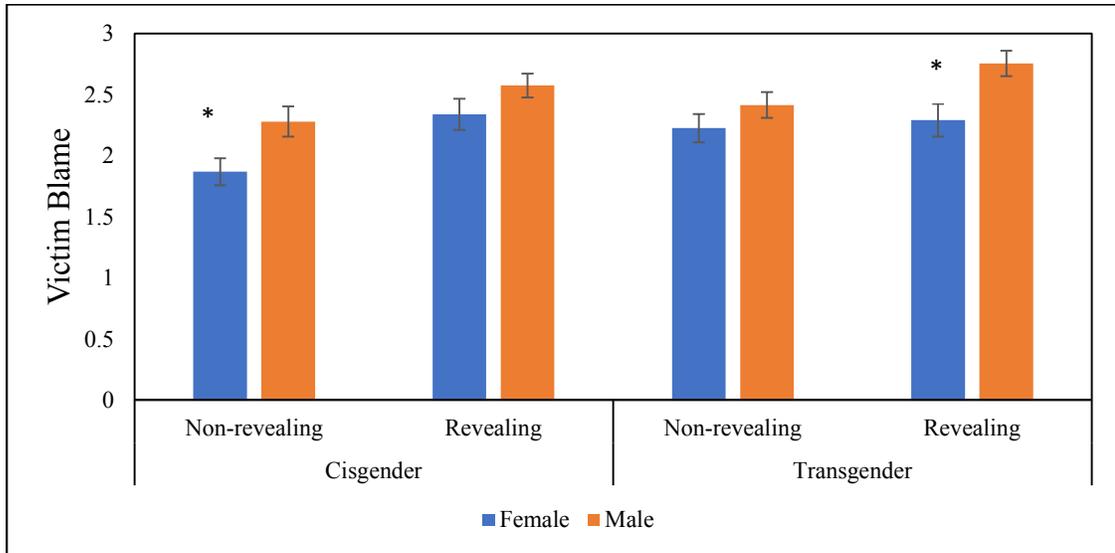
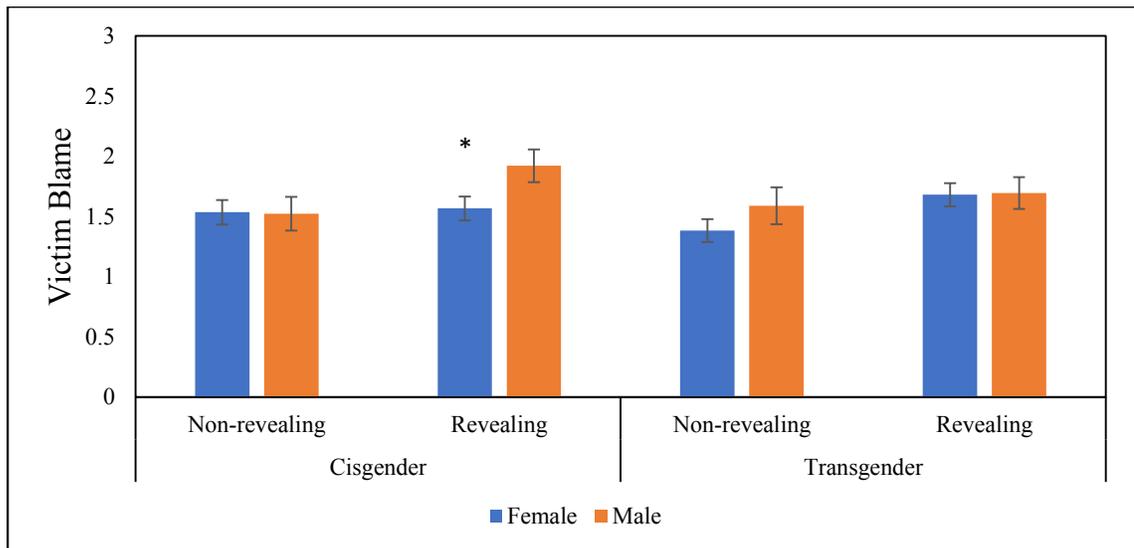


Figure 10. Four-way Interaction Between Rape Myth Cue Manipulation, Victim Gender Manipulation, Participant Gender, and Participants **Low in ATTI on Victim Blame**.



An unexpected four-way interaction also appeared between the rape myth cue manipulation, victim gender manipulation, system justification manipulation, and ATTI on perpetrator punishment ($F(1, 825) = 5.61, p = .02, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .01$); see figures 11 and 12 below which break the interaction down by high and low ATTI individuals, respectively.

With regards to participants who scored high in ATTI (+1 *SD*), the only significant differences to emerge were for participants reading about a transgender victim who wore revealing clothing. More specifically, participants high in ATTI who read about a transgender victim wearing revealing clothing and who also read that the gender system was under threat ($M = 3.83, SE = 0.20$) were less likely to punish the perpetrator than participants high in ATTI who read about a transgender victim wearing revealing clothing and who also read that the gender system was not under threat ($M = 4.42, SE = 0.19$); no other differences were significant see figure 11 below.

With regards to participants who scored low in ATTI (-1 *SD*), the only significant differences to emerge were for participants reading about a transgender victim who wore non-revealing clothing. More specifically, participants low in ATTI who read about a transgender victim wearing non-revealing clothing and who also read that the gender system was under threat ($M = 5.15, SE = 0.21$) were less likely to punish the perpetrator than participants low in ATTI who read about a transgender victim wearing non-revealing clothing and who also read that the gender system was not under threat ($M = 5.72, SE = 0.21$); see figure 12 below.

Figure 11. Four-way Interaction Between Rape Myth Cue Manipulation, Victim Gender Manipulation, System Justification Manipulation, and Participants **High in ATTI on Perpetrator Punishment.**

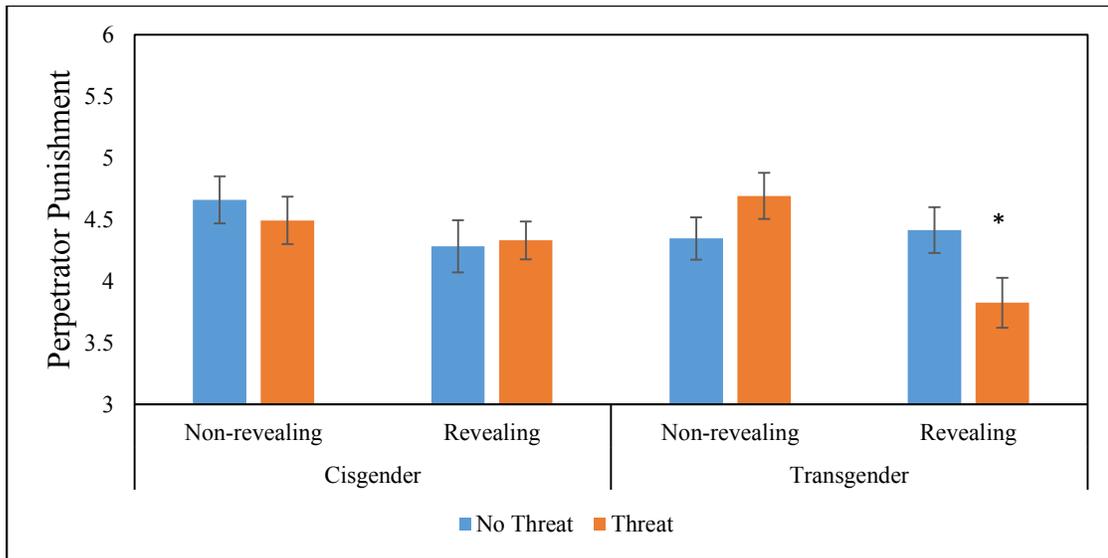
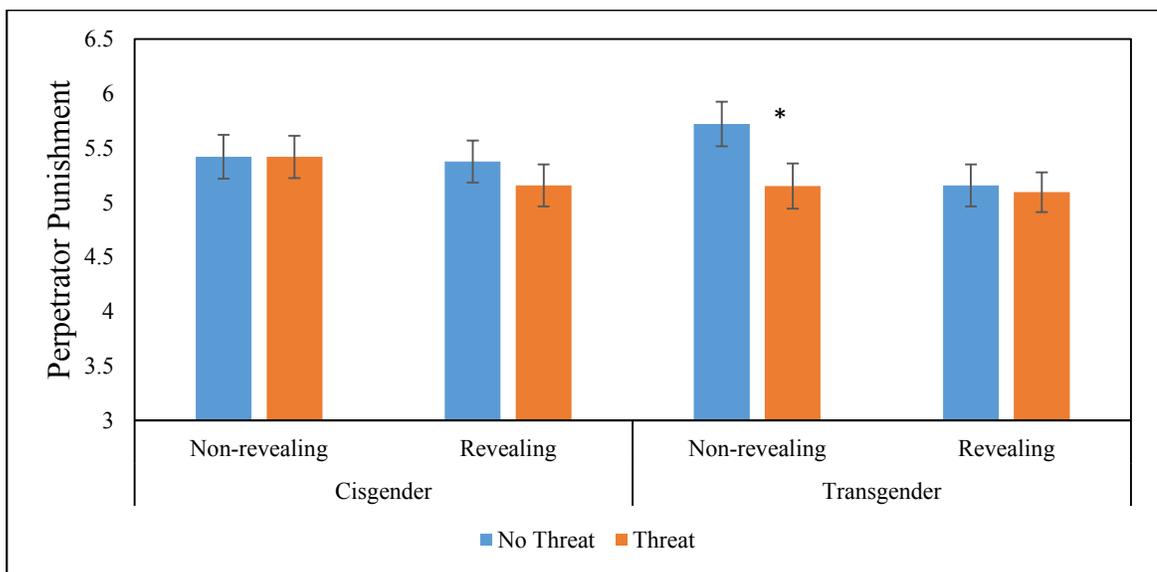


Figure 12. Four-way Interaction Between Rape Myth Cue Manipulation, Victim Gender Manipulation, System Justification Manipulation, and Participants **Low in ATTI on Perpetrator Punishment.**



Participant gender. With regards to participant gender, it was hypothesized that male participants would be more likely to blame the victim, and less likely to punish the perpetrator, compared to female participants (hypotheses 17 and 19, respectively). It was further hypothesized that these relationships would be mediated by female rape myth acceptance. More specifically, male participants would have higher levels of female rape myth acceptance and thus be more likely to blame the victim, and less likely to punish the perpetrator compared to female participants (hypotheses 28 and 30, respectively).

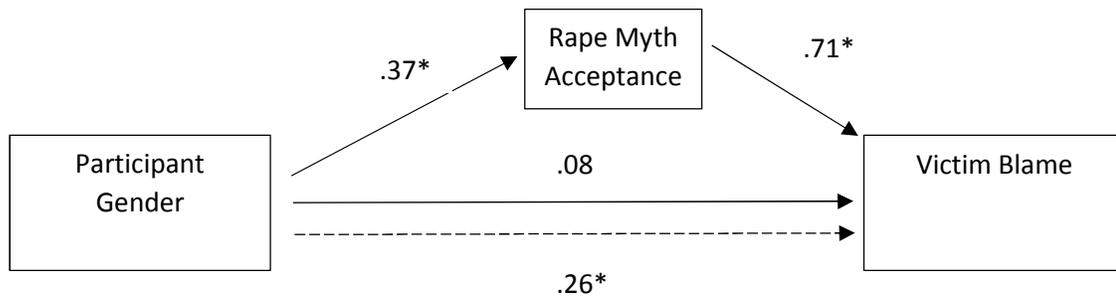
Multiple mediation analyses were conducted to understand the effects of participant gender and female rape myth acceptance on both victim blame and perpetrator punishment. The first mediation analysis included participant gender as the independent variable, female rape myth acceptance as the mediator, and victim blame as the outcome variable. Participant race, sexual orientation, victim status (i.e., whether the participant was a victim of sexual assault or knew someone that was a victim of sexual assault), and age were controlled for during analyses.

Results indicated that there was a direct effect of participant gender on female rape myth acceptance – male participants had more acceptance of female rape myths ($b = .37, t(892) = 7.33, p < .01$). Rape myth acceptance was also a predictor of victim blame such that participants higher on female rape myth acceptance were more likely to blame the victim than participants low on female rape myth acceptance ($b = .71, t(892) = 21.38, p < .01$). Interestingly, the mediation analysis including female rape myth acceptance indicated that there was no direct effect of participant gender on victim blame ($b = .08, t(892) = 1.51, p = .13$). However, when female RMA is not controlled for there are direct effects of participant gender on victim blame. The inclusion of participant gender in the

GLM for victim blame demonstrated a main effect such that male participants were more likely to blame the victim than female participants ($F(1, 825) = 15.74, p < .01, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .02$). This lends credence to the notion that female rape myth acceptance is an important mediator between participant gender and victim blame – the main effect of victim blame is removed when female rape myth acceptance is added into the model. Indeed, female rape myth acceptance mediated the relationship between participant gender and victim blame as evidenced by the confidence intervals for the indirect effect ($b = .26, \text{CI}_{95\%} = .19, .34$); see figure 13 below for the mediation figure.

Alternate models were tested to ensure that the current mediation model was the best fit for the data. For instance, the placement of female rape myth acceptance and victim blame were switched in the model so that female rape myth acceptance became the dependent variable and victim blame became the mediator. Results indicated that this model was a good fit for the data. The indirect effect of participant gender on rape myth acceptance via victim blame was smaller in this model compared to the first model in which female rape myth acceptance was the mediator. Based on this information, it was determined that the model in which victim blame is the dependent variable and female rape myth acceptance is the mediator was the best fit for the data.

Figure 13. Mediation Between Participant Gender, Female Rape Myth Acceptance, and Victim Blame.



Note. * indicates $p < .05$.

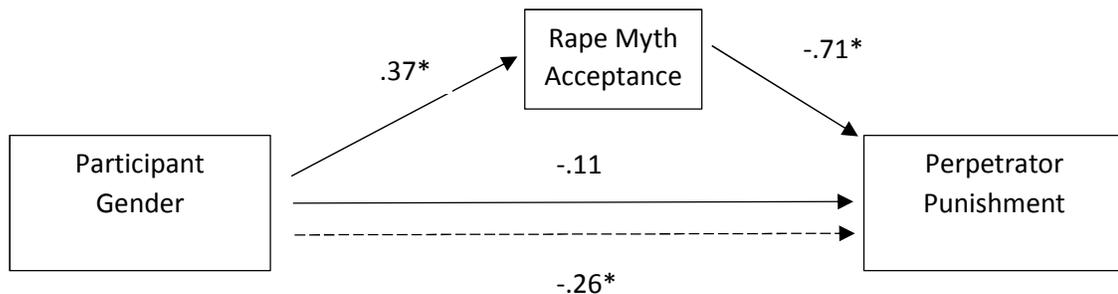
A second mediation analysis included participant gender as the independent variable, female rape myth acceptance as the mediator, and perpetrator punishment as the outcome variable. Participant race, sexual orientation, victim status (i.e., whether the participant was a victim of sexual assault or knew someone that was a victim of sexual assault), and age were controlled for during analyses.

Results indicated that there was a direct effect of participant gender on female rape myth acceptance – male participants had more acceptance of female rape myths ($b = .37$, $t(892) = 7.33$, $p < .01$). Rape myth acceptance was also a predictor of perpetrator punishment such that participants higher on female rape myth acceptance were less likely to punish the perpetrator than participants low on female rape myth acceptance ($b = -.71$, $t(892) = -12.21$, $p < .01$). Interestingly, the mediation analysis including female rape myth acceptance indicated that there was no direct effect of participant gender on perpetrator punishment ($b = -.11$, $t(892) = -12.21$, $p = .23$). There was, however, an

indirect effect from participant gender to perpetrator punishment via rape myth acceptance ($b = -.26$, $CI_{95\%} = -.35, -.19$); see figure 14 below for the mediation figure.

Alternate models were tested to ensure that the current mediation model was the best fit for the data. For instance, the placement of female rape myth acceptance and perpetrator punishment were switched in the model so that female rape myth acceptance became the dependent variable and perpetrator punishment became the mediator. Results indicated that this model was a good fit for the data. The indirect effect of participant gender on rape myth acceptance perpetrator punishment blame was smaller in this model compared to the first model where female rape myth acceptance was the mediator. Based on this information, it was determined that the model in which perpetrator punishment is the dependent variable and female rape myth acceptance is the mediator was the best fit for the data.

Figure 14. Mediation Between Participant Gender, Female Rape Myth Acceptance, and Perpetrator Punishment.



Note. * indicates $p < .05$.

Male rape myth acceptance. A research question (research question 2) was posed to understand the relationship between male rape myth acceptance and victim

blame and perpetrator punishment. Because the victim was transgender in some scenarios, it was questioned whether myths about male rape would also impact the dependent variables. Two brief exploratory GLMs (one for victim blame and one for perpetrator punishment) were conducted; both analyses controlled for participant age, race, sexual orientation, and victim status (i.e., whether the participant was a victim of a sexual assault or knew someone who was a victim). Results indicated that male rape myth acceptance was a predictor of both victim blame $F(1, 899) = 336.27, p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .27$) and perpetrator punishment ($F(1, 899) = 124.51, p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .12$) such that participants higher in male rape myth acceptance were more likely to blame the victim, and less likely to punish the perpetrator, compared to participants low in rape myth acceptance.

Chapter 13: Discussion

Violence against women, especially in the form of sexual assault, is an unfortunately common occurrence in society (CDC, 2013; RAINN, 2018a; World Health Organization, 2017). It is possible that rape, and reactions to rape victims, act to reinforce the gender system – a network of practices meant to (1) differentiate men and women as two distinct categories and (2) organize, and justify, social inequalities based on these differences (see Ridgeway & Correll, 2004 for a discussion). Because people tend to react negatively when there is a threat to an existing system (e.g., the gender system; Blasi & Jost, 2006; Jost & Banaji, 1994), people often engage in victim blaming behaviors to justify the system under threat (Kay et al., 2005). It is also possible that exonerating the perpetrator is a way people justify the system – by giving the perpetrator a lesser sentence, people can reaffirm that the system is fair and just. Thus, the primary purpose of this dissertation was to understand what factors motivate people to justify the gender system by blaming the victim and exonerating the perpetrator in affirmative consent cases.

Along with assessing the relationships between system justification and victim blame and perpetrator punishment, this dissertation also examined how individual characteristics affected these dependent variables. For instance, prior research has indicated that males and participants with more negative attitudes toward homosexuality have higher scores on rape myth acceptance scales than female participants and participants with more positive attitudes toward homosexuality (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2008; Davies, Gilston, & Rogers, 2012). Thus, the secondary purpose of this

dissertation was to understand how individual characteristics affect victim blame and perpetrator punishment.

System Justification

It was hypothesized that threatening the gender system via affirmative consent legislation (i.e., the system justification manipulation) would motivate participants to blame the victim and exonerate the perpetrator in an affirmative consent case. Thus, participants who read that affirmative consent does threaten the gender system (system threatening condition) would be more likely to blame the victim and exonerate the perpetrator compared to participants who did not read that affirmative consent threatens the gender system (system non-threatening condition); these hypotheses (hypotheses 3 and 4) were not supported.

According to system justification theory, people in both advantaged and disadvantaged groups are motivated to justify the status quo (Blasi & Jost, 2006; Jost & Banaji, 1994). Affirmative consent was used to manipulate system justification because it was believed this piece of legislation might naturally threaten the gender system. More specifically, because affirmative consent legislation changes the discourse around consent from “no means no” to “yes means yes” (de León & Jackson, 2015), there has been concern from the general public that this type of legislation threatens traditional gender norms regarding sex (e.g., it threatens the notion that males are the sexual initiators in society; Little, 2005). While the means were trending in the right direction such that participants in the system threatening condition were more likely to blame the victim and less likely to punish the perpetrator compared to participants in the system non-

threatening condition, there were no main effects of the system justification manipulation on either of the dependent variables.

Although there was no main effect of the system justification manipulation on either dependent variable, this manipulation did play an important role in various interactions, as discussed later in this chapter. It is possible that there was no main effect because participants were overcompensating in their answers. A study by Miller, Maskaly, Green, and Peoples (2011) demonstrated that jurors were less likely to convict certain defendants compared to other defendants. More specifically, pre-deliberation, jurors were more likely to convict the Muslim defendant; after having engaged in deliberation and justify their verdicts, participants were the least likely to convict the Muslim defendant. The authors speculate that this change in verdict could be due to overcompensation – participants overcompensated in their decisions to convict in order to appear less biased (Miller et al., 2011).

It is also possible that a phenomenon known as the backfire effect occurred. Psychology and law research has often demonstrated a backfire effect such that when people are told to ignore information, they often use that information more heavily in decision making processes; people who are given strong messages to ignore inadmissible evidence are also more likely to use this information when making decisions (see Cook, Arndt, & Lieberman, 2004 for a discussion). Thus, strong messages to behave or act in certain ways can often drive people to behave in the opposite way. Given this information, it is possible that the backfire effect occurred in this dissertation. It is possible that this study was too obvious in its intent to elicit negative reactions toward transgender victims. Because participants read a variety of information about gender

(e.g., the system justification manipulation was about affirmative consent; the affirmative consent case also described the victim's gender), it could be that participants understood the purpose of the study and did not respond in ways they normally would have.

A more probable explanation of the fact that there was no main effect is that the manipulation was not strong enough. The manipulation might not have been strong enough to directly affect the dependent variables; it was strong enough, however, to indirectly affect them via various moderations discussed later in this chapter. Thus, system justification was still a motivation to defend the gender system, but other motivations were necessary for this to occur.

It was further hypothesized that, because transgender people threaten the gender system, participants reading about a transgender victim would blame the victim more and punish the perpetrator less than participants reading about a cisgender victim. These hypotheses (hypotheses 1 and 2) were also not supported. It is possible that there was no main effect of this manipulation on either dependent variable because participants were aware of what was being asked of them (i.e., to be biased against a transgender victim). These results could indicate that transgender people are within the normative window (Crandall, Ferguson, & Bahns, 2013). The normative window of prejudice states that groups fall into three categories: true lows, unsuppressed, and normative window. If a group falls within the true lows category then prejudice against that group is deemed unacceptable; if a group falls within the unsuppressed group then prejudice against that group is deemed acceptable. However, if a group falls within the normative window, then prejudice against that group is ambiguous – sometimes prejudice is acceptable and other times it is deemed unacceptable (Crandall et al., 2013).

It is possible that transgender people fall within the normative window because bias against transgender people is still acceptable in certain scenarios. For instance, bias against transgender people was apparent when President Trump proposed banning transgender people from engaging in military service (de Vogue & Cohen, 2019). There have also been pushes for transgender equality, most notably when a federal judge ruled that a transgender student could use the bathroom that aligned with his identity (Stevens, 2018). This mixed messages regarding bias against transgender people could have made participants more cognizant of biases toward transgender people and their status within the normative window. This awareness could have led participants to compensate in their answers – because of an increased awareness of bias toward transgender people, participants realized there were expectations that they would (1) blame a transgender victim more than a cisgender victim, and (2) punish a perpetrator targeting a transgender victim less than a perpetrator targeting a cisgender victim. Consequently, participants might have given in to social desirability forces and adjusted their answers to appear less biased.

The gender of the victim did, however, play an important role in various interactions, as discussed later in this chapter. Thus, despite no main effect of this manipulation on the dependent variables, this manipulation did play an important role in predicting victim blame and perpetrator punishment.

Rape Myth Acceptance

Rape myths can help justify a system of gender inequality by excusing and trivializing men's sexual violence toward women (Chapleau & Oswald, 2014).

Consequently, this dissertation manipulated whether or not rape myth cues (e.g., what the

victim was wearing) were present. Thus, participants were given information about what the victim was wearing: a mini-skirt, halter top, and high heels (rape myth cue condition), or jeans, sneakers, and a sweater (control condition). It was hypothesized that participants in the rape myth cue condition (i.e., the victim was wearing a mini-skirt, halter top, and high heels) would blame the victim more, and punish the perpetrator less, than participants in the control condition (i.e., the victim was wearing jeans, sneakers, and a sweater); these hypotheses (hypotheses 5 and 7) were supported. It was further hypothesized that there would be a main effect of female rape myth acceptance on both victim blame and perpetrator punishment. These hypotheses (hypotheses 6 and 8) were also supported.

Based on prior literature (e.g., Frese et al., 2004; Krahe, 1988) it was hypothesized that there would be a two-way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation and female rape myth acceptance on victim blame and perpetrator punishment (hypotheses 9 and 10, respectively). It was further hypothesized that, if rape myth cues are a motivation to defend the gender system, there might be a three-way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation, system justification manipulation, and female rape myth acceptance on victim blame and perpetrator punishment (hypotheses 11 and 12). Unfortunately, none of these four hypotheses was supported. There was, however, a two-way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation and system justification manipulation on victim blame but not perpetrator punishment. More specifically, victim clothing did not matter when participants were in the system non-threatening condition; when participants were in the system threatening condition, however, participants that read that the victim wore revealing clothing were more likely

to blame the victim than participants who read the victim wore non-revealing clothing. Thus, it is the *combination* of threat and clothing that affected blame.

These results both do, and do not, support prior literature. Prior research has demonstrated that information about the victim wearing revealing clothing (i.e., rape myth cues) has often led to more victim blame than information that the victim was wearing non-revealing clothing (Schult & Schneider, 1991). The current results support this notion—especially under conditions of threat. Thus, the main effect of the rape myth cue manipulation on both victim blame and perpetrator punishment lends credence to the notion that rape myth cues are a motivation to defend the gender system. When participants read that the victim wore revealing clothing, participants were motivated to defend the gender system by blaming the victim and exonerating the perpetrator compared to when participants read the victim did not wear revealing clothing.

The unexpected two-way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation and the system justification manipulation indicates that rape myth cues are only a motivation to defend the gender system via victim blame when a threat to the gender system is present; when that threat is not present, rape myth cues do not provide a motivation to defend the gender system via victim blame. With regards to perpetrator punishment, the lack of a two-way interaction between the rape myth cue manipulation and system justification manipulation indicates that rape myth cues are a motivation to defend the gender system via perpetrator punishment regardless of whether a threat to the gender system is present or not.

What differs from the prior literature, however, is that there was no interaction between rape myth cues and female rape myth acceptance. Prior research has often

acknowledged that rape myth cues and female rape myth acceptance cannot adequately explain reactions to rape victims alone; instead, it is the interaction between these two variables that best explains reactions to rape victims (Frese et al., 2004; Krahe, 1988). Unfortunately, there was no significant interaction between these two variables in this dissertation. Some of these differences could be due to sample differences between this dissertation and prior studies. The majority of work on rape myth cues and female rape myth acceptance has utilized a student sample. It is possible that differences exist between a community sample (as used in this dissertation) and a student sample (as used in prior research).

It is further possible that this lack of interaction could be due to the current climate within the United States regarding sexual assault – there has been a variety of media attention on sexual assaults and condemnation for perpetrators who receive lenient sentences (Hayes & Bacon, 2018; Keneally, 2018; Stack, 2016). Participants in this study might be acutely aware of the current climate within the United States and thus be responding in ways that do not allow for an interaction between rape myth cues and female rape myth acceptance. At one point in American history it was acceptable to be outwardly racist toward African Americans. During this time, explicit measures of racism were effective at determining how people felt toward African Americans. As the normative window shifted, however, outward forms of racism were no longer tolerated and a new form of racism took hold (i.e., aversive racism; see Dovidio & Gaertner, 2004). With the development of aversive racism, explicit measures of racism are ineffective because aversive racists will not display any outward, intentional, signs of racism; instead, implicit measures of racism are necessary to detect the unconscious

associations aversive racists might hold. It is possible that rape myth acceptance is following a similar vein. Given recent events in the United States (e.g., the anger over the appointment of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court, as well as the backlash toward the judge who gave Brock Turner a lenient sentence), it is possible that people are becoming aware that acceptance of rape myths is no longer tolerated. In this regard, it is possible that participants are monitoring their responses so that they appear less biased. Future studies should assess this assumption, and replicate this study using more implicit measures of rape myth acceptance.

Furthermore, the lack of results confirming the hypothesized two-way and three-way interactions in this dissertation could be because female rape myth acceptance acts as a motivation to defend the gender system regardless of other information. More specifically, it is possible that female rape myth acceptance is a motivation to defend the gender system via victim blame and perpetrator punishment regardless of what the victim was wearing or whether a threat to the gender system was present or not.

Defensive Attributions

According to prior literature on defensive attributions, participants who view themselves as similar to the victim will not blame the victim for her fate (Shaver, 1970). It was hypothesized that defensive attributions might be a construct of system justification; more specifically, it was hypothesized that defensive attributions can motivate people to justify the gender system. This study manipulated defensive attributions by manipulating the gender identity of the victim (i.e., the victim was transgender or cisgender). It was hypothesized that if defensive attributions are a motivation to justify the gender system cisgender female participants would blame the

cisgender and transgender victims equally; male participants will blame the transgender victim more than the cisgender victim (hypothesis 13). Male participants will punish the perpetrator equally, regardless of the gender identity of the victim; female participants will punish the perpetrator who targeted the cisgender victim more than the perpetrator who targeted the transgender victim (hypothesis 15). In other words, participants who find themselves as similar to the victim or perpetrator justify the gender system by *distancing* themselves from the person they are similar to.

It was hypothesized that, if defensive attributions are *not* a motivation to justify the gender system, then female participants will blame the cisgender victim less than the transgender victim; male participants will blame the transgender victim more than the cisgender victim (hypothesis 14). Male participants who view themselves as similar to the perpetrator will punish the perpetrator less; female participants will punish the perpetrator who targeted the cisgender victim more than the perpetrator who targeted the transgender victim (hypothesis 16). Thus, female and male participants who find themselves similar to the victim and perpetrator will not justify the gender system and will thus *not* distance themselves from the person they are similar to.

Unfortunately, these four hypotheses were not supported – there was no significant interaction between participant gender and victim gender. The fact that there was no interaction between participant gender and victim gender does support prior studies. Indeed, studies assessing the issue of similarity between the victim and participant have sometimes provided mixed results. In Shaver's (1970) study on defensive attributions, perceived similarity between the stimulus person and participant lead to an increase in defensive attribution. Burt and DeMello (2002), however, found no

significant relationship between defensive attributions and perceived similarity. Results from the pilot study did indicate female participants rated themselves as more similar based on gender to the cisgender victim than the transgender victim; male participants also rated themselves as more similar to the perpetrator gender wise than female participants; unfortunately, these results were not replicated in the final dissertation (assessed via the interaction between participant gender and victim gender).

It is further possible that there were no significant interactions because situational similarity had not been achieved. Situational similarity is necessary for defensive attributions to occur (Shaver, 1970). It was assumed that participants could view themselves in a similar situation as the victim or defendant (female participants could view themselves in a similar situation in which they could have been sexually assaulted; male participants could view themselves in a similar situation in which they might have been accused of sexual assault). The problem, however, is that participants were a community sample recruited via MTurk and the assault occurred on a college campus. It is possible that participants could not view themselves as situationally similar to the victim or perpetrator because they are not on college campuses and are not college students. Thus, it is possible that this scenario was simply not relevant to the participants in this study. Future research is needed, however, to determine the accuracy of these claims.

The results of this dissertation seem to suggest that defensive attributions might not be a motivation for system justification. Even though hypotheses 14 and 16 were not supported, it is possible that defensive attributions are still a part of group justification – at least to an extent. According to group justification, people are motivated to view one's

own group favorably such that they are motivated to justify, bolster, and rationalize interests of the ingroup (Jost & Burgess, 2000). One example of group justification is ingroup favoritism effects (Brewer, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

It is possible that female participants viewed both the cisgender and transgender victims as part of their ingroup, but that this was not based on gender. While female participants viewed themselves as more similar based on gender to the cisgender victim than the transgender victim, at least in the pilot study, female participants might have also viewed themselves as similar to both victims on other measures (i.e., they might have viewed themselves as similar *overall* to the victim regardless of victim gender). This provides an explanation for the fact that there was a main effect of gender on victim blame with female participants blaming the victim less than male participants, but that there was no interaction between victim gender and participant gender. Women view both transgender and cisgender victims as part of their ingroup and thus did not engage in victim blame. This should be assessed via future studies to ensure that this assumption is correct. The finding that men did not blame the transgender victim more than the cisgender victim might be because men are likely to blame all victims of rape more than women, regardless of the gender of the victim.

The defensive attributions literature has primarily focused on instances of victim blame, with little to no attention that the author is aware of focusing on the relationship between defensive attributions and perpetrator punishment. While situational and personal similarity were achieved for men, both necessary antecedents for defensive attributions to occur (Shaver, 1970), it is possible that the negative fate that befell the perpetrator was not unwarranted. Indeed, some researchers argue that measuring blame

after knowing that an assault occurred could cause biases such that participants might already be attempting to distance themselves from the victim to protect themselves from being viewed similarly to rape victims (Grubb & Harrower, 2008). This notion of biases occurring because of prior knowledge about an outcome could apply to perpetrator punishment.

With regards to perpetrator punishment, participants were told that their duty was to determine the amount of punishment the perpetrator should receive given that a prior committee had found Mark guilty of raping the victim. It is possible that this request led participants to believe that Mark was deserving of his fate – he was already found guilty and thus worthy of punishment (a plausible concept because this variable was heavily skewed such that participant primarily wanted to punish the perpetrator). This could, in turn, have led male participants to not engage in less perpetrator punishment than female participants; all participants punished the perpetrator because he had already been found guilty. Thus, participants were already biased to answer in one particular way and participant gender differences would not have occurred in punishment decisions. The possibility of this bias in participant answers makes it difficult to determine if defensive attributions are a system justification or group justification motivation for men. Future research should ask participants to both determine the guilt of the perpetrator and how much punishment the perpetrator deserves. Such research could provide better insights into whether defensive attributions are a system justification or group justification motivation for men.

Individual Differences

A secondary purpose of this dissertation was to understand how certain individual difference variables (e.g., race, age, participant gender, and legal authoritarianism) affected perpetrator punishment and victim blame in this dissertation. This section offers a discussion of the findings pertaining to these individual difference variables.

Race and age. It was hypothesized that minority participants would blame the victim more, and punish the perpetrator less, than White participants (hypotheses 21 and 22, respectively). Unfortunately, neither of these hypotheses was supported. These results are contrary to prior literature suggesting that minority participants have more negative perceptions of rape victims than do White participants (Jimenez & Abreu, 2003; Lee & Cheung, 1991; Nagel et al., 2005). It is possible that race differences did not emerge in this dissertation due to the fact that the majority of the participants identified as White (70.3%). The lack of racial diversity in this sample could make it difficult to detect if White participants were less likely to engage in victim blame, and more likely to engage in perpetrator punishment, than minority participants.

It was further hypothesized that participant age would play an important role in determining victim blame and perpetrator punishment. More specifically, it was hypothesized that older participants would blame the victim more, and punish the perpetrator less, than younger participants (hypotheses 23 and 24, respectively). There would also be an interaction between age and victim gender. Older participants who read about the transgender victim would blame the victim more, and punish the perpetrator less, than younger participants; this difference will be non-significant for the cisgender victim (hypothesis 26). Unfortunately, none of these hypotheses were supported. This contradicts prior literature demonstrating that older participants tend to have more

negative attitudes toward rape victims than do younger participants (Nagel et al., 2005). One reason for this lack of finding could be that prior research (e.g., Nagel et al., 2005) studied *attitudes* toward rape victims whereas this study examines *victim blame*. While it is reasonable to expect that negative attitudes and victim blame are related (the more negative attitudes you hold about a rape victim the more likely you are to blame them) it is possible that these constructs are different enough to elicit different responses from participants. It is also possible that differences might emerge if two different samples are utilized. The mean age for this sample was 37 years old thereby indicating an older sample compared to studies utilizing college age students. If a community sample was compared to a student sample, it is possible that age differences might emerge with regards to victim blame and perpetrator punishment.

Legal attitudes. Because jurors are often biased in their decision making (Boehm, 1968; Harley, 2007; Mitchell, Haw, Pfeifer, & Meissner, 2005), it was hypothesized that participants who have more authoritarian views of the legal system, as measured by the Revised Legal Attitudes Questionnaire (Kravitz et al., 1993), will be more likely to punish the perpetrator than participants who have more equalitarian or anti-authoritarian views of the legal system (hypothesis 25). Because no research that the author is aware of has been conducted examining the relationship between legal attitudes and victim blame, this dissertation offered the following research question: are legal attitudes, or authoritarianism, related to victim blame (research question 3)?

Unfortunately, hypothesis 25 was not supported which contradicts prior research (see Boehm, 1968). One prior study assessing how legal attitudes influences verdict choices demonstrated that, when the scenario depicted the defendant's innocence,

participants who were more likely to convict were those who were high on legal authoritarianism (Boehm, 1968). With regards to this dissertation, this result was not replicated – legal authoritarianism did not have a direct effect on perpetrator punishment. While it is expected that conviction and perpetrator punishment are related constructs, it could be that they are different enough constructs and that is why this dissertation did not find a main effect of legal authoritarianism on perpetrator punishment; future research should test this assumption. There is, however, some evidence that legal attitudes might have an effect on perpetrator punishment in the case of affirmative consent, but that this depends on whether the gender system is threatened or not.

There was a significant two-way interaction between the system justification manipulation and legal attitudes on perpetrator punishment. Participants who are low on legal authoritarianism did not appear to be affected by the system justification manipulation; participants high on legal authoritarianism were affected by the system justification manipulation. More specifically, participants high on legal authoritarianism who read that the gender system was under threat were less likely to punish the perpetrator compared to participants high in legal authoritarianism who read that the gender system was not under threat. These results appear to indicate that system justification is a motivation to defend the gender system, but only for some participants. More specifically, system justification acts as a motivation to defend the gender system only for those who are high in legal authoritarianism.

There was also an unexpected four-way interaction between legal authoritarianism, participant gender, victim gender, and system justification on perpetrator punishment. Female participants who were high in legal authoritarianism and

read that the system was under threat were less likely to punish a perpetrator who targeted a cisgender victim than female participants high on legal authoritarianism and read that the gender system was not under threat; this relationship also holds true when the victim is transgender. With regards to male participants, those who are high in legal authoritarianism and read that the gender system was under threat did not differ in their punishment of a perpetrator who targeted a cisgender victim compared to male participants high on legal authoritarianism who read that the gender system was not under threat. When the victim is transgender, however, male participants who are high in legal authoritarianism and read that the gender system was under threat were less likely to punish the perpetrator than male participants high in legal authoritarianism who read that the gender system was not under threat. When participants are low in legal authoritarianism, this interaction is non-significant.

Another way to view this four-way interaction is to assess the simple slopes. The simple slopes indicated that male participants in the system threatening condition are less likely to punish a perpetrator who targeted a transgender victim than cisgender victim; female participants in the system threatening condition are less likely to punish the perpetrator regardless of whether the victim is transgender or cisgender. The simple slopes in the system non-threatening condition indicated that female participants are more likely to punish a perpetrator targeting a cisgender victim versus a transgender victim; male participants do not demonstrate a difference in their desire to punish the perpetrator.

These two-way and four-way interactions between system justification and legal authoritarianism suggest that system justification is a motivation to defend the gender system via victim blame and perpetrator punishment, but only for participants high in

legal authoritarianism. Prior research has demonstrated that participants who are high in legal authoritarianism express more endorsement of aggravators and less endorsement on nonstatutory mitigators; they also tend to be more conviction prone (see Butler & Morgan, 2007). It is possible, however, that people high in legal authoritarianism actually do endorse mitigators, but only certain kinds. Mitigators are factors or scenarios used to reduce the severity of a crime and, in death penalty cases, are used to argue for life sentences (Butler & Morgan, 2007). Mitigators are not limited by statute in the same way that aggravating factors are and thus a variety of mitigating circumstances can be used in a trial to argue for life sentences rather than the death penalty (Butler & Morgan, 2007). While there are no formal mitigators or aggravators in non-death penalty cases, it is possible that jurors use mitigating and aggravating factors to make their decisions. If this is the case, it is possible that threatening the gender system acts as a mitigating factor in affirmative consent scenarios (or that participants at least view it as a mitigating factor). If this is true, this could explain why participants high in legal authoritarianism were less likely to punish the perpetrator when the gender system was under threat and why these effects did not occur for participants low in legal authoritarianism. A threat to the gender system is a mitigating circumstance motivating people to defend the gender system by not punishing the perpetrator for his crime. The use of this mitigating circumstance only works, however, for people who are high in legal authoritarianism; a threat to the gender system is not considered a mitigating circumstance warranting less perpetrator punishment for participants low in legal authoritarianism.

The four-way interaction added another layer of complexity to the idea that participants high in legal authoritarianism are less likely to punish the perpetrator – it

added in the issue of victim gender and participant gender. As in the two-way interaction, the four-way interaction demonstrates that participants high in legal authoritarianism were less likely to punish the perpetrator when the system was under threat than when it was not under threat. Interestingly, male participants high in legal authoritarianism and reading about a cisgender victim were the only group to not be threatened by the system justification manipulation; indeed, male participants in this scenario punished the perpetrator equally regardless of whether the system justification manipulation was present. For female participants high in legal authoritarianism, the system threat condition lead to less perpetrator punishment than the system non-threatening condition when the victim was transgender or cisgender. This lack of similar results for males high in legal authoritarianism could suggest that transgender victims add another layer of threat to the gender system for male participants high in legal authoritarianism than they do for female participants high in legal authoritarianism. Transgender victims, however, do not add an extra threat to the gender system for male participants low in legal authoritarianism as there were no significant differences found for participants low in legal authoritarianism; future research should test this assumption, however.

As for research question 3, legal attitudes do, in fact, influence victim blame. More specifically, participants who are higher on authoritarianism blame the victim more than participants who are low on authoritarianism. Furthermore, there was a significant two-way interaction between legal attitudes and system justification. The system justification manipulation did not appear to affect participants differently when they were low on legal authoritarianism. When participants were high on legal authoritarianism, however, the system justification manipulation did affect them differently – participants

who were high on legal authoritarianism and read that the system was under threat were more likely to blame the victim than participants who were high on legal authoritarianism and read that the system was not under threat. These results again support the notion that system justification is a motivation to defend the gender system, but only for some participants. More specifically, system justification acts as a motivation to defend the gender system via victim blame but only for those who are high in legal authoritarianism.

It was previously argued that threats to the gender system could act as mitigators in decisions of perpetrator punishment, given the two-way interaction between legal authoritarianism and the system justification manipulation on perpetrator punishment. This two-way interaction between legal authoritarianism and the system justification manipulation on victim blame could indicate that threats to the gender system *also* act as aggravators. In other words, threats to the gender system motivate people differently depending on the situation. In situations concerning perpetrator punishment, threats to the gender system motivate people to be lenient and engage in less perpetrator punishment (i.e., it acts as a mitigator). In situations concerning victim blame, threats to the gender system motivate people to be harsher in their viewpoints and blame the victim (i.e., it acts as an aggravator).

It is also possible that the interactions found in this dissertation can be explained by the various personality traits associated with authoritarianism. A meta-analysis conducted by Sibley & Duckitt (2008) demonstrated that right-wing authoritarianism was negative correlated with openness to experience and positively correlated with prejudice. Authoritarians have also been classified as submissive to authority and aggressive to people considered “unconventional” (e.g., those who are deviants or outsiders;

Altemeyer, 1981); studies have also demonstrated that authoritarianism is correlated with anti-gay attitudes (Butler, 2000). These concepts map onto certain dispositional antecedents of system justification motivations: need to manage uncertainty and threat; intolerance of ambiguity; and need for order, structure, and closure (Jost & Hunyady, 2005). A study conducted by Feldman and Stenner (1997) demonstrated that threat and authoritarianism are related. The authors found that there was a significant interaction between authoritarianism and threat and argued that societal threats activate authoritarian dispositions (Feldman & Stenner, 1997). A study conducted by Lavine, Lodge, Polichak, and Taber (2002) demonstrated that the effects of authoritarianism depend on whether threat was present or not; more specifically, the authors manipulated whether participants read threatening or non-threatening words. Results indicated that participants high in authoritarianism were more sensitive to the threatening words than were participants low in authoritarianism (Lavine et al., 2002).

This dissertation supports the notion that authoritarianism and threats (or system justification) can work together to influence participant decision making. Threats to the gender system might force open mindedness (i.e., people have to be accepting of various different genders); threats to the gender system might also be a threat to the rules and structure authoritarians enjoy (i.e., it threatens the rules that there are only two genders: male and female). In this sense, participants who are high in legal authoritarianism and faced with a threat to the gender system would behave as seen: they engage in more victim blame and less perpetrator punishment than participants high in legal authoritarianism and faced with no threat the gender system. By engaging in this behavior, people high in authoritarianism have restored the natural order – they have

reaffirmed the gender system by blaming the victim and exonerating the perpetrator. In this sense, this study has added to the literature on legal authoritarianism by demonstrating that people who are high on legal authoritarianism are especially susceptible to threats to the gender system and are thus motivated to defend the gender system via victim blame and exoneration of the perpetrator.

It is important to note, however, that the two two-way interactions and one four-way interaction found were not hypothesized. While these results are interesting and can add to the literature on legal authoritarianism, they must be taken with caution. Future studies should replicate the findings of this dissertation to ensure that the relationship between legal authoritarianism and system justification demonstrated in these results are robust effects and not flukes.

Attitudes toward transgender individuals. It was hypothesized that attitudes toward transgender individuals would have a direct effect on both victim blame and perpetrator punishment (hypotheses 18 and 20, respectively); both of these hypotheses were supported. Participants with more negative attitudes toward transgender people were more likely to blame the victim and less likely to punish the perpetrator compared to participants with more positive attitudes.

Furthermore, these relationships were mediated by female rape myth acceptance (in support of hypotheses 29 and 31). Prior literature has indicated that homophobia is an important predictor of rape myths (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). In other words, higher endorsement of homophobia was associated with more acceptance of rape myths (Davies et al., 2012; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). The results of this dissertation support this notion – participants who had more negative attitudes toward transgender people had higher

acceptance of female rape myths and were, consequently, more likely to blame the victim and less likely to punish the perpetrator.

It was possible that this relationship between attitudes toward transgender people and female rape myth acceptance on victim blame and perpetrator punishment would have only held when participants read about a transgender victim versus a cisgender victim. Interestingly, these results did not occur. As long as participants held negative attitudes toward transgender people, victim blame and perpetrator exoneration were likely to occur. Thus, the inclusion of a transgender victim was not necessary for negative attitudes to play a role – these negative attitudes affected the dependent variables regardless of whether a transgender victim was present or not.

Negative attitudes toward transgender people have been demonstrated to be associated with endorsement of binary gender concepts, authoritarianism, conservatism, and anti-egalitarianism (Norton & Herek, 2013). Conservatism is often a construct associated with perceptions of rape victims (i.e., people holding conservative views are often more punitive toward rape victims; Anderson, Cooper, & Okamura, 1997); it has also been associated with victim blame specifically (see Lambert & Raichle, 2000 for a discussion). Furthermore, as demonstrated in this dissertation, authoritarianism (at least legal authoritarianism) is also related to victim blame. These results, coupled with the prior literature on attitudes toward transgender people, appear to indicate that people high in ATTI are general “blamers” – their general bias against transgender people is part of a larger constellation of traits that make them blame all victims.

Participant gender. It was hypothesized that participant gender would have a direct effect on both victim blame and perpetrator punishment (hypotheses 17 and 19,

respectively) and that this relationship would be mediated by female rape myth acceptance (hypotheses 28 and 30, respectively). Most of these hypotheses were supported; only hypothesis 19 was not supported – male participants were not less likely to punish the perpetrator less than female participants.

Overall, male participants were more likely to endorse female rape myths than female participants – something that confirms prior literature (see Chapleau et al., 2008; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). This higher endorsement of female rape myths led to more victim blame and less perpetrator punishment.

These results are interesting because they demonstrate that, while victim blame and perpetrator punishment might be related to each other (they are significantly, and negatively, correlated such that higher blame means less punishment), they are not driven by the same factors. Instead, participant gender appears to only matter for victim blame whereby men blame the victim more than women. Participant gender does not, however, impact perpetrator punishment directly. Instead, it appears as though other factors play an important role when determining punishment. When considering issues of blame, participant gender and female rape myth acceptance should both be taken into account as they each had main effects on blame, but there was also a mediation (men blamed the victim more than women but this was mediated by rape myth acceptance). When considering issues of punishment, participant gender might not be such a driving force; instead, the focus should be placed on female rape myth acceptance and the effect participant gender has on this.

Furthermore, it is possible that participant gender only affects perpetrator punishment in certain settings. For instance, it is possible that participant gender affects

perpetrator punishment in traditional court settings, but not in affirmative consent cases specifically. Future research should test this assumption, however.

Male rape myth acceptance. While male rape myths are less researched than female rape myths, these myths are no less damaging to male rape victims. Some myths about male rape include: men who are sexually assaulted are gay, men are incapable of functioning sexually unless they are aroused, men cannot be forced to have sex against their will, and men are less affected by rape than are women (Chapleau et al., 2008).

Because the victim within this dissertation was specified as either being cisgender (i.e., born female and identifies as female) or transgender male-to-female (i.e., born male but identifies as female) a research question (research question 3) was posed to understand the relationship between male rape myth acceptance and victim blame and perpetrator punishment. It is possible that participants subscribe to both male *and* female rape myths because one of the victims in this dissertation is specified as being a transgender female and the other victim is specified as being a cisgender female.

Results indicated that male rape myth acceptance was a significant predictor of victim blame and perpetrator punishment. Because female rape myth acceptance was also a significant predictor of victim blame and perpetrator punishment, this supports the notion that participants use both forms of rape myths when making decisions about victim blame and perpetrator punishment. It is possible that participants used both male and female rape myths to inform their decisions because some of them subscribe to the biology-based determination of gender. More specifically, a person subscribing to the biology-based determination of gender believe that gender is innate and unchangeable and that a person is always chromosomally male or female (Wesbtrook & Schilt, 2014).

Thus, people adhering to a biology-based determination of gender would identify a transgender person as whatever gender the person is chromosomally (e.g., a transgender female is technically male because she has XY chromosomes). Thus, male rape myths would be an important predictor because some of the participants view the transgender victim as inherently male; female rape myths would also be important because some participants would view the cisgender victim as inherently female (because she has XX chromosomes). Consequently, it can be argued that both male and female rape myths are important determinations of victim blame and perpetrator punishment; future research is needed to determine *why* this occurs, however.

Implications for Psychology

The system justification literature has often examined whether certain constructs (e.g., rape myth cues) are part of system justification. Even so, no system justification literature that the author is aware of has examined whether defensive attributions are a part of system justification; this dissertation sought to remedy this lack of information and thus expands the literature on system justification theory. The results indicated that there was not a significant interaction between participant gender and victim gender thereby suggesting that defensive attributions are not a part of system justification but might instead be part of group justification. Future research is needed, however, to further test this claim and assure its accuracy.

Another implication is that system justification might work more for certain people. Based on the two-way interaction between system justification and legal attitudes, it is possible that system justification works more for people who are high in legal authoritarianism. There is also the possibility that system justification works more

for people who have more negative attitudes toward transgender people. Thus, it is necessary for psychology to continue to test these assumptions and determine whether these variables are a part of system justification.

This dissertation also has implications for the use of age and race in sexual assault studies. This dissertation did not find a main effect of participant race or age on either victim blame or perpetrator punishment. Prior literature has indicated that minority participants and older participants have more negative views of rape victims than do White participants and younger participants (Jimenez & Abreu, 2003; Lee & Cheung, 1991; Nagel et al., 2005). It was assumed that, because prior literature has indicated that these participants have more negative views of rape victims, they would also be more likely to blame the victim in affirmative consent scenarios. There was, however, no relationship between race and age on victim blame. Thus, it is possible that victim blame and attitudes toward rape victims are not similar constructs. To be sure, it is likely they are positive correlated (as negative attitudes toward rape victims increases so too does victim blame). However, it is equally possible that, while these constructs are related, they are not affected by the same variables. Thus, while attitudes toward rape victims are affected by participant gender and race, victim blame is affected by other variables (e.g., what the victim was wearing).

Another implication of this dissertation pertains to the understanding of legal authoritarianism and its relationship to perpetrator punishment. Prior literature has demonstrated that participants high in legal authoritarianism are more conviction prone than participants low in legal authoritarianism (Boehm, 1968; Butler & Morgan, 2007). Based on this information it was assumed that participants who were high in legal

authoritarianism would be more likely to punish the perpetrator than participants low in legal authoritarianism. These results, however, did not occur. Consequently, it is possible that while conviction and perpetrator punishment are related constructs, they are different enough to not be affected by the same variables. Thus, the psychological literature should attempt to tease out the more nuanced differences between victim blame and attitudes toward victims, as well as the differences between conviction and perpetrator punishment.

Implications for Law

Based on these results, attorneys should be very careful about introducing certain information into a sexual assault case. For instance, information about what the victim was wearing affected both victim blame and perpetrator punishment. While information about what the victim was wearing is not necessarily relevant to the case (i.e., it does not prove whether or not the perpetrator committed the assault) it can bias jurors against the victim. Thus, defense attorneys should attempt to introduce this information during the hearing because it would be beneficial to their case; prosecuting attorneys, however, should attempt to block this information from entering the court because it would not be beneficial to their case.

Judges, on the other hand, should be made aware of the biasing impact information about what the victim was wearing has on jurors. This could occur through routine continuing education training; these trainings could expose judges to the most recent psychology and law literature and discuss how certain findings pertain to the cases judges oversee. Because information about victim clothing can have a biasing impact on juror decision making, it is critical that judges are made aware of this information so that

they can make determinations about the appropriateness of allowing this evidence into the trial. Continuing education training for judges should also consider training on intersectionality and sensitivity as it pertains to gender and sexual orientation. Classes should engage judges in discussions about discrimination and prejudice toward gender and sexual orientation minorities, and ways to be aware of their own biases toward these groups. Judges should further become aware that multiple minority statuses (e.g., being a transgender woman of color) can lead additional to biases and prejudices that might not be readily apparent. For instance, a transgender woman of color might face more biases and prejudice due to her status as a gender and racial minority compared to a transgender white woman who is a gender minority, but not a racial minority.

Furthermore, attorneys should be aware of participant stances on certain topics (i.e., whether they have authoritarian legal attitudes or have negative attitudes toward transgender people). Participant attitudes toward transgender people did have a negative affect on perpetrator punishment and victim blame; legal authoritarianism had a direct effect on victim blame and interacted with a variety of factors to affect perpetrator punishment. If possible, attorneys should consider asking questions pertaining to legal authoritarianism and attitudes toward transgender people (assuming the victim identifies as transgender) during the *voir dire* process. These questions can help attorneys determine which jurors to strike from the jury. Prosecuting attorneys should consider striking anyone who holds negative attitudes toward transgender people or those who are high on legal authoritarianism; defense attorneys, on the other hand, should consider keeping jurors who hold negative attitudes toward transgender people or those who are high on legal authoritarianism. In the same vein, attorneys should consider the use of jury

consulting firms to understand sentiment about the case or whether the general public would convict the defendant. These surveys could include information about legal authoritarianism and attitudes toward transgender people and give attorneys an idea of what the jury pool might look like before questioning begins. This could inform what questions are asked and whether attorneys should be concerned with issues of legal authoritarianism or attitudes toward transgender people.

Attorneys should also be aware of the gender composition of the jury and whether the jury members identify with the victim or perpetrator. If jurors identify with the victim, it is likely that the jury will have more sympathy for the victim and consequently be more likely to punish the perpetrator; if jurors identify with the perpetrator, it is possible they will have less sympathy for the victim and consequently not punish the perpetrator. Thus, a primarily female jury, who would be expected to potentially identify with the victim, would be advantageous for the prosecuting attorney. A primarily male jury, who would be expected to potentially identify with the perpetrator, would be advantageous for the defense attorney. Granted, it is not a guarantee that jurors will identify with someone based solely on the person's gender (e.g., it is not a guarantee that female jurors will identify with a female victim); this dissertation did not find a significant interaction between participant gender and victim gender on either dependent variable. Because of this, special care should be taken to understand exactly how jurors identify with the victim or perpetrator (i.e., whether situational similarity and personal similarity have been achieved). Attorneys could ask questions during *voir dire* to determine whether potential jurors find themselves as situationally and personally similar to the victim; attorneys could also utilize jury consulting firms to determine whether the general public from

which the jury will be selected find themselves as situationally and personally similar to the victim or perpetrator.

Furthermore, attorneys should assess if similarity is based on more than one construct (e.g., gender, age, and sexual orientation). If similarity is only based on gender it is possible that this similarity will not invoke certain reactions (e.g., victim blame or perpetrator punishment). If, however, jurors find themselves as similar to a person based on multiple other factors (e.g., sexual orientation, age, and gender) then these added similarity measures might invoke certain responses. Thus, the more jurors find themselves to be similar to a victim or perpetrator based on multiple factors, the more likely certain outcomes are to occur (e.g., victim blame or perpetrator punishment).

The psychology and law literature has often examined one important problem with regards to *voir dire* – namely, jurors are either able to hide their biases through the process. Indeed, jurors are often asked whether they would be able to put aside their biases or opinions and assume the defendant is innocent until proven guilty (Hamilton & Zephyrhawke, 2015). This is problematic for two reasons: (1) jurors might give into pressure and underestimate their biases so as to appear like a good person (i.e., they lie about their biases) (Hamilton & Zephyrhawke, 2015), and (2) jurors might not even be aware of any biases they currently hold that are relevant to the specific case at hand (i.e., they might have a number of implicit biases) (see Lee, 2015 for a discussion of how to use *voir dire* to combat implicit racial bias).

Given this dissertation demonstrates that certain factors are motivations to defend the gender system via victim blame and perpetrator punishment, it has implications for the use of *voir dire* by legal professionals. More specifically, judges and attorneys should

be aware that *voir dire* during an affirmative consent case might drive people to hide their biases toward gender minorities (e.g., transgender people). People might also not even be aware of any biases they hold toward gender minorities; in this instance, jurors might not even realize they find transgender people to be a threat to the gender system, and thus defend the gender system via victim blame and perpetrator exoneration. Consequently, attorneys should be careful of the questions they ask during the *voir dire* process in an affirmative consent case to (1) not pressure jurors into falsely claiming they can put aside their biases, and (2) ensure that jurors begin to think about any implicit biases they might hold toward gender minorities.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that it lacks consequentiality. The use of simulations in decision making research is important: psychologists are not ethically able to harm participants; instead, they often provide participants with simulated studies meant to reenact real life scenarios (see Bornstein & McCabe, 2005 for a discussion). Even though researchers attempt to make the simulations as real as possible, these scenarios often lack real world consequences (i.e., they lack consequentiality; Bornstein & McCabe, 2005). Participants in this study were asked to determine (1) how much they blamed the victim and (2) how much punishment the perpetrator should receive. Participants were fully aware, however, that this was a simulated study and that a real person was not going to potentially be expelled based on their decisions. It is possible that participant decisions might have been different if they had been asked to make their decisions in a real-life scenario (i.e., they were put in a committee and asked to decide the fate of the perpetrator). It could be that participants would have been less likely to punish

the perpetrator if they had engaged in this study in a real-life setting with real world consequences.

Another limitation of this research is that the gender identity of the victim was openly known to participants. It is unlikely that people involved in making decisions in affirmative consent cases would be privileged to this information. If this information was made known to the participants, it would be because the victim in the case made it known himself or herself. Thus, it is possible that the gender identity of the victim plays less of a role in decision making than this study would lead people to believe.

A third limitation to this study is that it does not examine perceptions of female-to-male transgender people, only male-to-female. It is possible that female-to-male transgender people might experience equal, or greater, bias against them than male-to-female transgender people. While male rape is an understudied issue, it is believed that roughly 5% to 20% of all rape is male rape (this would include heterosexual, bisexual, and gay men; Burt & DeMello, 2002). Despite experiencing rape, men are relatively hesitant to report their assaults. People generally acknowledge that male rape occurs in institutional settings (e.g., prison), but are hesitant to acknowledge that male rape can occur in non-institutional settings (e.g., on college campuses; Mitchell, Hirschman, & Nagayama Hall, 1999). Furthermore, male victims find it difficult to establish credibility and often are treated without sympathy (Burt & DeMello, 2002). These issues might lead participants to have more negative perceptions of female-to-male transgender victims, something that this study is unable to determine.

Another limitation of this study is that it did not assess whether participants adhered to an identity-based or biology-based determination of gender. It is possible that

certain effects of this dissertation (e.g., the effect of attitudes toward transgender people) could be subsumed under this identity- or biology-based determination of gender. Perhaps those who have a more biology-based determination of gender have more negative attitudes toward transgender people compared to those with a more identity-based determination of gender; this would lead to more victim blame and less perpetrator punishment. Thus, while attitudes toward transgender people are important it is possible that another construct, such as whether or not a person adheres to a biology-based determination of gender, has greater impact on victim blame and perpetrator punishment when the victim is transgender.

Because rape is a concern for women, it was assumed that situational similarity would be achieved in this dissertation. Unfortunately, situational similarity was not measured and this is a limitation of this dissertation. Perhaps situational similarity was not achieved as expected because the assault occurred in a college setting – a setting participants in this study were not a part of. It is possible participants did not view themselves as having situational similarity to the victim thereby making it impossible for defensive attributions to occur at all. This could explain why there was no significant interaction between participant gender and victim gender on the dependent variables.

Finally, due to the fact that both of the dependent variables were heavily skewed such that participants did not want to blame the victim, but did want to punish the perpetrator, social desirability is a possible concern. It is possible that participants were acting in socially desirable ways (e.g., not blaming the victim in certain situations) in order to not appear biased. Unfortunately, a measure of social desirability was not included in the study and thus this assumption cannot be tested.

Future Directions

Future research should attempt to address some of the limitations presented above. First, future research should extend this research into court settings; more specifically, future research should see whether findings are similar, or dissimilar, when presented as a jury decision-making study. Participants in this study came to individual decisions and it is possible that results might differ if participants were asked to come to these decisions as a group. Research has indicated that group deliberation might help reduce biased decision making (see Devine, Clayton, Dunford, Seying, & Pryce, 2001). Kaplan and Miller (1978) manipulated the behavior of attorneys so that attorney behavior was considered annoying to jurors (e.g., the defense attorney prolonged the case because of repetitive questions and obnoxious asides to the audience). Initial verdicts indicated there was some bias in decision making. In other words, jurors voted in favor of the less annoying attorney. This biased decision making was reduced, however, after deliberation (Kaplan & Miller, 1978). Based on this prior research, it is possible that the results presented in this dissertation might have been different if participants had engaged in group deliberation. Thus, future studies should include a deliberation component.

Future research should also manipulate the type of rape committed (i.e., stranger, acquaintance, or date/marital rape). Participants can have differing reactions toward victims when reading about strangers versus acquaintance rape (see Grubb & Harrower, 2008 for a review). The research on this is conflicting, however, with some evidence for people blaming the victim more in stranger rape versus acquaintance rape scenarios (see Grubb & Harrower, 2008 for a review). Other research has demonstrated that more blame

is placed on victims of acquaintance rape than stranger rape (see Grubb & Harrower, 2008 for a review).

These conflicting results have been attributed to variables such as benevolent sexism, participant gender, and prior sexual victimization. For instance, differences between stranger and acquaintance rape for victim blame depend, in part, on benevolent and hostile sexism (Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003). After reading an acquaintance rape scenario, but not a stranger rape scenario, participants who were higher in benevolent sexism were more likely to blame the victim than participants lower in benevolent sexism (Abrams et al., 2003). Hostile sexism did not impact victim blame (Abrams et al., 2003). Thus, not only should future research compare stranger, acquaintance, and date/marital rape, but it should also account for variables such as benevolent sexism.

Future research should also determine how gender identity plays a role in these cases when the participant is the one to divulge this information. As mentioned in the limitations section, it is unlikely that participants in affirmative consent cases will have information about the gender identity of the victim. Thus, future research should attempt to determine if participant self-disclosure of their gender identity influences decision making in these cases.

It is also important that future research either measure situational similarity in the study itself or in a pilot study to determine if this criterion has been reached. It should not be assumed that situational similarity has been achieved, especially when the vignette is depicting a setting in which participants might not be a part of on a regular basis (e.g.,

depicting a rape on a college campus and using a community sample who is most likely not in college).

Other forms of similarity should also be considered in future studies. While this study used gender as a form of personal similarity, it is possible that other factors are better measures of similarity. More specifically, research should move away from similarity measured in the form of identifiable categories (e.g., gender or sexual orientation). Instead, defensive attributions research should seek to understand whether other constructs that are not easily identifiable are better measures of similarity. For instance, future research could examine whether religion; attitudes toward the legal system; attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people; or attitudes related to gender roles are viable personal similarity measures.

Another area for future research is replicating many of the findings made within this dissertation. For instance, future research should be conducted to determine the exact relationship between defensive attributions, system justification, and group justification. While this dissertation posits that defensive attributions is a part of group justification, more research is needed to ascertain the accuracy of that assumption. Furthermore, future research should attempt to examine the relationship between system justification and the other continuous predictors in this dissertation (e.g., female rape myth acceptance, legal attitudes, and attitudes toward transgender individuals).

There is also a need for future research to understand the relationship between system justification and legal authoritarianism. It was posited in this chapter that threats to the gender system might act as mitigating circumstances in affirmative consent scenarios and that these mitigating circumstances only drive decision making for

participants high in legal authoritarianism and not those low in legal authoritarianism. It is essential that future research either confirm, or dispute, this hypothesized relationship. Experimental studies could use similar manipulations to those used within this dissertation, but include questions asking participants what information was most important in informing their decisions. Mixed methods studies could also be conducted in which participants are given the opportunity to write about what information was most critical in informing their decisions – this would allow researchers to create themes about why participants came to the decisions that they did; this qualitative analysis could reveal that participants were using the system justification information even though it was not a part of the case that they read.

These results should also be replicated using male transgender victims. As previously mentioned in the limitations section, male rape is often underreported (Mitchell et al., 199) and it is hypothesized that 5% to 20% of all rape is male rape (Burt & DeMello, 2002). It is possible that the results found within this dissertation would differ greatly if the victim is a transgender male. More specifically, it is possible that participants will blame a transgender male victim more than they will a transgender female victim regardless of other factors (e.g., victim clothing). These studies could also more thoroughly examine the relationship between male and female rape myth acceptance as it pertains to transgender victims. It is possible that participants view transgender victims as the gender they were assigned at birth (e.g., they view a male-to-female transgender victim as male instead of female); this could have implications for whether participants rely more heavily on male or female rape myths when making decisions pertaining to victim blame and perpetrator punishment. This dissertation

assessed whether male rape myths were a predictor of victim blame and perpetrator punishment and found that they were, but it is impossible to tell based on the design of this study whether participants relied more heavily on one form of rape myths than another and whether or not this was driven by the fact that the victim was transgender; future research should correct for this limitation.

Along with replicating this study using transgender male victims, future studies should use a more intersectional approach to both the victim and perpetrator. More specifically, future studies should manipulate various features of the victim and perpetrator such as gender, race, and sexual orientation. Prior research has indicated that minority men (e.g., Black or Hispanic men) who target White victims are often treated more harshly by the legal system than White men who target White victims; moreover, men who target minority women are often treated more leniently (see O'Neal, Beckman, & Spohn 2019 for a discussion). Research has not, however, determined how multiple minority categorizations affect reactions to these victims (e.g., via victim blame or perpetrator punishment). It is possible that a victim who has multiple minority identities (i.e., is a racial and sexual orientation minority) will be blamed the most, and the perpetrator punished the least, compared to when the victim does not have a minority identity (i.e., is not a racial or sexual orientation minority).

Future research should also test the relationship between authoritarianism and victim or perpetrator minority status. Authoritarianism has been shown to be negatively correlated with openness to experience and positively correlated with prejudice (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008); authoritarians are also aggressive to people considered “unconventional” (e.g., deviants; Altemeyer, 1981). In this instance, if a victim holds multiple minority

statuses, people who are high on authoritarianism might blame them less than people who are low on authoritarianism; a perpetrator who holds multiple minority statuses might be punished more.

Chapter 14: Conclusion

Violence against women, especially rape or sexual assault, is an unfortunately common occurrence (CDC, 2013; World Health Organization, 2017). This study is novel in its attempt to understand whether certain principles (such as defensive attributions) are motivations to defend the gender system. Because threats to the status quo, and people who threaten the status quo, are often viewed negatively by society (Blasi & Jost, 2006), victim blame and perpetrator punishment were chosen as the dependent variables for this study. It is critical to understand what motivates people maintain the gender system by blaming victims and exonerating perpetrators in rape cases; understanding this information can potentially promote policies and programs that reduce victim blame and lead to appropriate punishment for perpetrators.

Results indicated that certain motivations to justify the gender system do exist. More specifically, rape myth cues and legal attitudes both appear to be motivations to defend the gender system via victim blame and perpetrator punishment in cases of affirmative consent. Unfortunately, defensive attributions were not a system justification motivation; based on the lack of interaction between participant gender and victim gender on victim blame or perpetrator punishment, defensive attributions instead are likely to be a group-justification motivation (i.e., a motivation to view ones ingroup favorably). Results also indicated that certain individual differences (e.g., attitudes toward transgender individuals and participant gender) are important determinants of victim blame and perpetrator punishment and that these differences sometimes have additive effects (i.e., there are interactions between attitudes toward transgender individuals and participant gender, among other variables).

Taken in total these results indicate that, when certain motivations are present, victim blame and perpetrator punishment can indeed be ways to defend the gender system and normalize violence against women. These results further indicate that attorneys should be cognizant of (1) what information is presented to jurors during sexual assault cases and (2) whether this information potentially threatens the gender system. Indeed, motivations to defend the gender system (e.g., what the victim is wearing), participant gender, and attitudes toward transgender individuals all have the potential to impact the outcome of a sexual assault case. Attorneys and judges should be cognizant of how this information can bias juror decision making either in favor of the prosecution or defense.

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Appendix A: Information Sheet

University of Nevada, Reno
Information Sheet

Title: Affirmative Consent Decision-Making Study

Investigators: Monica Miller, J.D., Ph.D. (mkmiller@unr.edu), (775) 784-6021; Alicia DeVault (adevault@unr.edu), (623) 680 – 6456; University of Nevada, Reno

Protocol Number: 1204079-1

Version Date: 6/15/18

Introduction

You are being invited to participate in a brief research study. Before you agree to begin this study, read this form carefully. It explains why we are doing the study; and the procedures, risks, discomforts, benefits and precautions involved.

You do not have to be in this study. Your participation is voluntary. If you do not agree to participate, you will receive the education you would have received if the study was not taking place.

Why are we doing this study?

The purpose of this research study is to gather information about decision making in affirmative consent situations. Specifically, we are examining how people make decisions after reading about an affirmative consent case.

You will be compensated for your participation according to the guidelines on the sign up page. You will also learn a little bit about how psychological research is conducted. You will also contribute to a body of research that will possibly benefit policy makers, community members and social scientists.

Why are we asking you to be in this study?

We are looking for people who are at least 18 years of age. Approximately 1,000 people will participate in this study.

What will you be asked to do if you agree to be in the study?

If you choose to participate, you will be asked to read a vignette about an affirmative consent case. You will also be asked to complete a series of questions about your decisions and personal beliefs about affirmative consent. Questions about demographic information (e.g., age, gender) will also be asked. The study will last approximately 45 minutes. You will be paid \$2 for your participation in this study.

What if you agree to be in the study now, but change your mind later?

This study is considered to be minimal risk of harm. This means the risks of your participation in this research are similar in type or intensity to what you encounter during your daily activities. You may experience feeling discomfort for a period of time during and after your participation in this study. We don't expect those feelings to last. However, you may discontinue your participation at any point during the study if you feel a personally unacceptable amount of distress or discomfort.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may stop at any time. You may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. However, **you may skip no more than 23 questions of the survey to receive credit!**

Who will know that you are in in this study and who will have access to the information we collect about you?

This survey is completely *confidential*. You will not be personally identified in any reports that may result from this study. Only the investigator, research assistants, and the UNR Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board will have access to the data.

Qualtrics servers record and collect incoming IP addresses for system administration and record keeping. These data are analyzed only in total; no connection is made between individual survey responses and IP addresses. Qualtrics may also use cookies to recognize visitors and provide personalized content or track their progress through surveys; grant unimpeded access to the website; and track usage behavior and compile data for website improvement purposes. If you are using a personal computer and wish to remove the cookies, obtain instructions for deleting cookies from the help menu or contact your Internet provider. If you are using a computer in a public domain, to limit access to your survey responses, close the Internet browser immediately after completing the survey.

Who can you contact if you have questions about the study?

You may ask questions about the research at any time by emailing Alicia DeVault at adevault@unr.edu or Monica Miller at mkmiller@unr.edu.

Who can you contact if you want to discuss a problem or complaint about the research or ask about your rights as a research participant?

You may ask about your rights as a research participant. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about this research, you may report them (anonymously if you so choose) by calling the University of Nevada, Reno Research Integrity Office at 775.327.2368.

By checking the box below, you acknowledge that you have read and agree with the information presented on this informed consent page.

Yes, I agree with the information on the informed consent page

___ No, I do not agree with the information on the informed consent page or do not wish to complete the study

Appendix B: System Justification Vignette

Instructions: Please read the following news article carefully. You will be asked to answer a series of questions on the news article once you have finished reading it. You must answer the following questions correctly in order to qualify to continue on in the study. You will receive .50 cents for your participation in the first part of this study. If you qualify for the second part of this study, you will receive another .50 cents for your participation.

System Threatening Condition

In recent years, universities have been attempting to change the discussion about rape from “no means no” to “yes means yes.” In this process, they have begun to enact affirmative consent legislation. Affirmative consent requires a continuing and enthusiastic consent throughout every step of a sexual encounter. While universities have been the frontrunners in advocating for this type of legislation, both federal and state governments have considered adopting this legislation for everyone, even those who are no longer in college. Thus, affirmative consent would affect everyone – every citizen would have to get continuous consent regardless of their relationship status (e.g., single, in a relationship, or married). This legislation might sound promising, but in reality has several pitfalls.

First, this legislation threatens romance and spontaneity. Having to continuously receive consent at every step of the sexual encounter, even for minor behaviors, is tiresome and awkward – having to ask for permission to touch or kiss someone is not exactly sexy.

Second, this legislation threatens the normal progression of a sexual encounter. In American society, sex is male dominated – men tend to be the go-getters when it comes to sex. They are the ones who initiate the contact and try to get women to agree. This legislation prevents this from happening. Rather than being the sexual initiators, men might become more concerned or worried about initiating an encounter for fear that something that used to be considered consensual might not be considered consensual based on these new affirmative consent rules. For instance, a woman might have nodded her head, or even helped move sex along (e.g., by taking his clothes off). Because affirmative consent requires a clear verbal “yes”, these actions which were previously considered consent are now not. Thus, the ambiguity around this legislation is dangerous – it can prevent men from engaging in sexual encounters for fear of being labeled a rapist.

Moreover, this legislation can harm female sexuality. Women are often the gatekeepers to sex; they are the ones deciding whether or not a sexual encounter will occur. Affirmative consent legislation might make it difficult for women to agree to sex. Many women don’t always feel comfortable talking about sex and might fear being considered rude for saying “no.” Instead, many women believe that it is enough that they did not say

no or make any motions to stop the encounter. This pressure to verbalize their desires might stop a sexual encounter from happening.

In conclusion, this legislation is a threat to romance, spontaneity, and sexual encounters generally. But more importantly, this legislation changes gender roles by dictating what behaviors are considered appropriate for men and women. Research has demonstrated that men are more agentic (i.e., they are more dominant and commanding) and women are more communal (i.e., they are more expressive and friendly). Thus, men and women naturally engage in certain behaviors that are normal for their gender and this legislation attempts to prevent men and women from engaging in those natural behaviors. Rather than allowing men to be assertive, it dictates that men should be more timid and meek. Furthermore, rather than allowing women to be friendly by not being rude in their refusal to have sex, it dictates that women should be more assertive and dominant. Thus, men are told to act like women and women are told to act like men. This legislation not only makes things awkward during an encounter, but men and women feel more pressure to behave differently than they normally would. Consequently, this legislation changes the very process of having sex as it has historically been done and the normal behaviors men and women engage in. While sexual consent is an issue that should be addressed, especially considering recent events such as the Me Too movement, there has to be a better way to address consent than changing the gender roles of men and women.

System Non-Threatening Condition

In recent years, universities have been attempting to change the discussion about rape from “no means no” to “yes means yes.” In this process, they have begun to enact affirmative consent legislation. Affirmative consent requires a continuing and enthusiastic consent throughout every step of a sexual encounter. While universities have been the frontrunners in advocating for this type of legislation, both federal and state governments have considered adopting this legislation for everyone, even those who are no longer in college. Thus, affirmative consent would affect everyone – every citizen would have to get continuous consent regardless of their relationship status (e.g., single, in a relationship, or married). Despite concerns that the legislation can affect romance and spontaneity, this legislation is actually beneficial for both men and women.

Many people who disagree with this legislation often cite the fact that asking for consent at every step of a sexual encounter can be “awkward” or a put-off. But consent can be sexy, as long as it is done correctly. Couples often ask their partners what they like; asking if they want to actually engage in that behavior is essentially the same. Indeed, consent can simply be an extension of dirty talk in the bedroom.

This legislation is also beneficial for men in other ways. Now, men can be more confident because they will get a clear “yes” rather than ambiguous behaviors, and rest assured that if she says yes, they will not be labeled a rapist. Again, nothing has changed except men have more clarity now than before. Indeed, men get to be the initiator for sex,

just as he did before, but now he gets to be the initiator multiple times – and hear “yes” multiple times.

This legislation is also beneficial for women. Women might not always feel comfortable verbalizing their desires or say no for fear of being rude. This legislation puts the onus on men to ask if what they are doing is acceptable, thereby taking pressure off of women. Now, women only need to give a verbal “yes or no” and are still considered friendly regardless of their answer. No long conversations are necessary; one word will do.

In conclusion, this legislation is not a threat to romance, spontaneity, and sexual encounters generally – the enactment of this legislation has not changed consent all that much. More importantly, this legislation does not change gender roles by dictating that men and women behave differently than they normally would. Research has demonstrated that men are more agentic (i.e., they are more dominant and commanding) and women are more communal (i.e., they are more expressive and friendly). Men and women naturally engage in certain behaviors that are normal for their gender and this legislation allows men and women to continue to engage in those natural behaviors. This legislation allows men to be agentic because they ask for permission (i.e., they are dominant); it further allows women to be communal because they are able to say no to sex without being considered rude (i.e., they still get to be friendly). Thus, men are still able to act like men and women are still able to act like women – there is no pressure to behave differently than they normally would. Consequently, this legislation changes nothing about process of having sex as it has historically been done and the normal behaviors men and women engage in. Moreover, this legislation is an excellent way to address recent concerns about sexual consent especially considering recent events such as the Me Too movement. This legislation demonstrates that there is a desire to ensure everyone engages in consensual sex and that all parties are safe throughout the sexual encounter. Even better that this legislation does this without challenging, or changing, what behaviors are normal for men and women.

Appendix C: Affirmative Consent Vignette

Transgender, RMA Manipulation Present, BJW Manipulation Present

Note: Bolded sections are the gender identification manipulation; underlined sections are the rape myth acceptance manipulation.

Instructions: You will act as a committee member on an affirmative consent case in which a female student is accusing a male student of rape. Please read the following information carefully.

On the night of October 15th, 2017, a police report was filed accusing Mark, a 21 year old junior at Nevada State University, of raping Andrea, also a 21 year old junior at Nevada State University. The victims clothing (a mini-skirt, halter top, and high-heels) and a rape kit were collected to test for DNA; the tests were inconclusive.

Mark and Andrea share certain classes together at Nevada State University, and have some friends in common. The night of the alleged assault, Mark and Andrea were attending a party at one of the local fraternities. Witnesses reported that Mark and Andrea hung out at the party discussing the class they share, the university, and other common interests. Witnesses also report that Andrea had dressed up for the party. **Andrea has recently become more open to her classmates about the fact that she is transgender – although she was born physically a male, she recently had sex-reassignment surgery to become a woman.** Witnesses report that Andrea was wearing a mini-skirt, halter top, and high-heels; witnesses further report that Andrea had a history of wearing this type of clothing to parties. After the party, Mark offered to walk Andrea back to her apartment next to campus.

Once back at Andrea's apartment, Andrea claims that Mark would not accept a "good-night" from her, and instead forced her apartment door open and began to make unwanted sexual advances. When Andrea refused, Andrea claims that Mark began to use force and ultimately raped her. Mark denies these allegations, stating that the encounter was consensual. He states that Andrea invited him inside of her apartment and began kissing him. When Mark asked for consent, she granted it.

Because of the allegations against him, Mark has recently begun to act in a hostile manner toward Andrea during class. Andrea is deeply uncomfortable in the class and has recently stopped attending the lectures. Because of this, her grades are dropping and she is in danger of failing the class.

Appendix D: Perceived Similarity Questions

Please answer the following questions:

Overall, how similar or dissimilar are you to Andrea?

- Very Similar
- Somewhat Similar
- Slightly Similar
- Slightly Dissimilar
- Somewhat Dissimilar
- Very Dissimilar

How similar or dissimilar are you to Andrea based on her gender?

- Very Similar
- Somewhat Similar
- Slightly Similar
- Slightly Dissimilar
- Somewhat Dissimilar
- Very Dissimilar

How similar or dissimilar are you to Andrea based on her age?

- Very Similar
- Somewhat Similar
- Slightly Similar
- Slightly Dissimilar
- Somewhat Dissimilar
- Very Dissimilar

Overall, how similar or dissimilar are you to Mark?

- Very Similar
- Somewhat Similar
- Slightly Similar
- Slightly Dissimilar
- Somewhat Dissimilar
- Very Dissimilar

How similar or dissimilar are you to Mark based on his gender?

- Very Similar
- Somewhat Similar
- Slightly Similar
- Slightly Dissimilar
- Somewhat Dissimilar
- Very Dissimilar

How similar or dissimilar are you to Mark based on his age?

- Very Similar
- Somewhat Similar
- Slightly Similar
- Slightly Dissimilar
- Somewhat Dissimilar
- Very Dissimilar

Appendix E: Attitudes Toward Transgender Individuals (ATTI) Scale

Instructions: **Please choose the answer that best indicates how you feel.**

1 – Strongly disagree

2 – Disagree

3 – Somewhat disagree

4 – Somewhat agree

5 – Agree

6 – Strongly agree

1. It would be beneficial to society to recognize transgenderism as normal.*
2. Transgender individuals should not be allowed to work with children.
3. Transgenderism is immoral.
4. All transgender bars should be closed down.
5. Transgender individuals are a viable part of our society.*
6. Transgenderism is a sin.
7. Transgenderism endangers the institution of the family.
8. Transgender individuals should be accepted completely into our society.*
9. Transgender individuals should be barred from the teaching profession.
10. There should be no restrictions on transgenderism.*
11. I avoid transgender individuals whenever possible.
12. I would feel comfortable working closely with a transgender individual.*
13. I would enjoy attending social functions at which transgender individuals were present.*
14. I would feel comfortable if I learned that my neighbor was a transgender individual.*
15. Transgender individuals should not be allowed to cross dress in public.
16. I would like to have friends who are transgender individuals.*
17. I would feel comfortable if I learned that my best friend was a transgender individual.*
18. I would feel uncomfortable if a close family member became romantically involved with a transgender individual.
19. Transgender individuals are really just closeted gays.
20. Romantic partners of transgender individuals should seek psychological treatment.

*indicates reverse coding

Appendix F: Female Rape Myth Acceptance

Instructions: **Please choose the answer that best indicates how you feel.**

1 – Strongly disagree

2 – Disagree

3 – Somewhat disagree

4 – Somewhat agree

5 – Agree

6 – Strongly agree

1. If a woman is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of control.
2. Although most women wouldn't admit it, they generally find being physically forced into sex a real "turn-on."
3. If a woman is willing to "make out" with a guy, then it's no big deal if he goes a little further and has sex.
4. Many women secretly desire to be raped.
5. Most rapists are not caught by the police.
6. If a woman doesn't physically fight back, you can't really say that it was rape.
7. Men from nice middle-class homes almost never rape.
8. Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at men.
9. All women should have access to self-defense classes.
10. It is usually only women who dress suggestively that are raped.
11. If the rapist doesn't have a weapon, you really can't call it a rape.
12. Rape is unlikely to happen in the woman's own familiar neighborhood.
13. Women tend to exaggerate how much rape affects them.
14. A lot of women lead a man on and then they cry rape.
15. It is preferable that a female police officer conduct the questioning when a woman reports a rape.
16. A woman who "teases" men deserves anything that might happen.
17. When women are raped, it's often because the way they said "no" was ambiguous.
18. Men don't usually intend to force sex on a woman, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away.
19. A woman who dresses in skimpy clothes should not be surprised if a man tries to force her to have sex.
20. Rape happens when a man's sex drive gets out of control.

Appendix G: Male Rape Myth Acceptance

Instructions: **Please choose the answer that best indicates how you feel.**

1 – Strongly disagree

2 – Disagree

3 –Somewhat disagree

4 – Somewhat agree

5 – Agree

6 – Strongly agree

1. It is a terrible experience for a man to be raped by a woman.*
2. The extent of a man's resistance should be a major factor in determining if he was raped.
3. Any healthy man can successfully resist a rapist if he really wants to.
4. If a man obtained an erection while being raped it probably means that he started to enjoy it.
5. A man can enjoy sex even if it is being forced upon him.
6. Most men who are raped by a woman are very upset by the incident.*
7. Many men claim rape if they have consented to homosexual relations but have changed their minds afterwards.
8. Most men who are raped by a woman are somewhat to blame for not escaping or fighting off the woman.
9. If a man engages in necking and petting and he lets things get out of hand, it is his own fault if his partner forces sex on him.
10. Male rape is usually committed by homosexuals.
11. Most men who are raped by a man are somewhat to blame for not escaping or fighting off the man.
12. A man who has been raped has lost his manhood.
13. Most men who are raped by a woman are somewhat to blame for not being more careful.
14. If a man told me that he had been raped by another man, I would suspect that he is homosexual.
15. Most men who have been raped have a history of promiscuity.
16. No self-respecting man would admit to being raped.
17. Women who rape men are sexually frustrated individuals.
18. A man who allows himself to be raped by another man is probably homosexual.
19. Most men would *not* enjoy being raped by a woman.*
20. Men who parade around nude in a locker room are asking for trouble.

21. Male rape is more serious when the victim is heterosexual than when the victim is homosexual.
22. I would have a hard time believing a man who told me that he was raped by a woman.

*indicates reverse coding

Appendix H: System Justification

Instructions: **Please choose the answer that best indicates how you feel.**

- 1 – Strongly disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 3 – Somewhat disagree
- 4 – Somewhat agree
- 5 – Agree
- 6 – Strongly agree

1. In general, relations between men and women are fair.
2. The division of labor in families generally operates as it should.
3. Gender roles need to be radically restructured.*
4. For women, the United States is the best country in the world to live in.
5. Most policies relating to gender and the sexual division of labor serve the greater good.
6. Everyone (male or female) has a fair shot at wealth and happiness.
7. Sexism in society is getting worse every year.*
8. Society is set up so that men and women usually get what they deserve.

* = recoded

Appendix I: Legal Attitudes

Instructions: **Please choose the answer that best indicates how you feel.**

1 – Strongly disagree

2 – Disagree

3 – Somewhat disagree

4 – Somewhat agree

5 – Agree

6 – Strongly agree

1. Unfair treatment of underprivileged groups and classes is the chief cause of crime.*
2. Too many obviously guilty persons escape punishment because of legal technicalities.
3. Evidence illegally obtained should be admissible in court if such evidence is the only way of obtaining a conviction.
4. Search warrants should clearly specify the person or things to be seized.*
5. No one should be convicted of a crime on the basis of circumstantial evidence, no matter how strong such evidence is.*
6. There is no need in a criminal case for the accused to prove his innocence beyond a reasonable doubt.*
7. Any person who resists arrest commits a crime.
8. When determining a person's guilt or innocence, the existence of a prior arrest record should not be considered.*
9. Wiretapping by anyone and for any reason should be completely illegal.*
10. Defendants in a criminal case should be required to take the witness stand.
11. All too often, minority group members do not get fair trials.*
12. Because of the oppression and persecution minority group members suffer, they deserve leniency and special treatment in the courts.*
13. Citizens need to be protected against excess police power as well as against criminals.*
14. It is better for society that several guilty men be freed than one innocent one wrongfully imprisoned.*
15. Accused persons should be required to take lie-detector tests.
16. When there is a "hung" jury in a criminal case, the defendant should always be freed and the indictment dismissed.*
17. A society with true freedom and equality for *all* would have very little crime.*
18. It is moral and ethical for a lawyer to represent a defendant in a criminal case even when he believes his client is guilty.*
19. Police should be allowed to arrest and question suspicious looking persons to determine whether they have been up to something illegal.
20. The law coddles criminals to the detriment of society.

21. The freedom of society is endangered as much by overzealous law enforcement as by the acts of individual criminals.*
22. In the long run, liberty is more important than order.*
23. Upstanding citizens have nothing to fear from the police

*indicates revers coding

Appendix J: Victim Blame

Instructions: **Please choose the answer that best indicates how you feel.**

1 – Not at all

2 – Slightly

3 – Somewhat

4 – Moderately

5 – Completely/Totally

1. How much do you blame Andrea for what happened?
2. In your opinion, did Andrea communicate that she did not agree to sexual intercourse?*
3. How much do you consider the incident to be Andrea's fault?
4. To what extent do you consider Andrea's claim of rape to be credible?*
5. Overall, to what extent was Andrea responsible for what happened?
6. How much could Andrea have prevented this?

*indicates reverse coding

Appendix K: Perpetrator Punishment

Instructions: **A prior committee has found Mark guilty, and your job is to assume he is guilty and determine his punishment. Please indicate the extent to which Mark deserves the most severe punishment.**

1 – Least University allows.

2 –

3 –

4 –

5 –

6 – Most University allows.

Appendix L: Demographics

What is your age?

What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Transgender (Male to Female)
- Transgender (Female to Male)
- Gender fluid

Other (please specify)

What is your race/ethnicity (select all that apply)?

- Black/African-American
- Native American
- Asian
- White/Caucasian
- Hispanic/Latino

Other (please specify)

What is your highest level of education completed?

- High School
- Associates Degree
- Some College
- College Degree (B.A./B.S.)

- Graduate Degree (ex: Ph.D./J.D.)
Other (please specify)

Have you, or someone you know, ever been the victim of sexual assault?

- Yes
 No

If yes, who committed the assault?

- Souse/Partner
 Boyfriend/Girlfriend
 Friend/Acquaintance
 Stranger

Other (please specify)

Have you ever served on a jury prosecuting someone for sexual assault?

- Yes
 No

What is your religious affiliation?

- Catholic
 Eastern Orthodox: please specify in box below(e.g., Greek orthodox)
 Protestant: please specify in box below(e.g., Baptist, Methodist)
 Jewish: please specify in box below(e.g., orthodox, reformed)
 Hindu
 Buddhist
 Muslim
 Mormon

- Atheist
- Agnostic
- I believe in God, but do not have a particular religious affiliation.
- Other (please specify)

What is your political affiliation?

- No affiliation
- Republican
- Democrat
- Independent
- Other

What is your sexual orientation (select all that apply)?

- Straight
- Gay
- Lesbian
- Bisexual
- Other (please specify)

Appendix M: Manipulation Check Questions

News Article questions:

According to the affirmative consent news story, affirmative consent threatens romance and spontaneity?

- Yes
- No

According to the affirmative consent news story, men:

- Can be more confident in initiating an encounter because they will get a clear “yes.”
- Might become more concerned or worried about initiating an encounter.
- Both of the above.
- None of the above.

According to the affirmative consent news story, women:

- Might feel more uncomfortable agreeing to sex.
- Might feel more comfortable agreeing to sex.
- Both of the above.
- None of the above.

Affirmative Consent vignette questions:

What was Andrea’s gender identity?

- Transgender
- Cisgender (non-transgender)
- Gender fluid
- Other (please specify):

What information was provided about Andrea?

- That she was wearing a mini-skirt, halter top, and high heels.
- That she was wearing jeans, a sweater, and sneakers.
- That she had been drinking.
- All of the above.
- None of the above.

Appendix N: Table for Three-Way Interaction

Table 5. *Three-way interaction between rape myth acceptance, rape myth cue manipulation, and system justification manipulation on victim blame*

	System Justification Condition	Non-System Justification Condition
Rape Myth Acceptance Condition		
RMA Low	VB+	VB –
RMA High	VB+	VB +
Control Condition		
RMA Low	VB –	VB –
RMA High	VB+	VB –

Note. VB+ indicates high victim blame, VB- indicates low victim blame.

Appendix O: Hypothesis Table

Table 6. *Hypothesis Support for System Justification*

Number	Hypothesis	Type	Outcome:
1	Participants will blame the transgender victim more than the cisgender victim.	Main effect	Not supported
2	Participants will punish the perpetrator more when he targeted a cisgender victim than transgender victim.	Main effect	Not supported
3	Participants in the system threatening condition will blame the victim more than participants in the non-threatening condition.	Main effect	Not supported
4	Participants in the system threatening condition will punish the perpetrator less than participants in the non-threatening justifying condition.	Main effect	Not supported

Appendix O: Hypothesis Table cont.

Table 7. *Hypothesis Support for Rape Myth Cue Manipulation.*

Number	Hypothesis	Type	Outcome:
5	Participants reading that the victim wore revealing clothing will blame the victim more than participants reading that the victim was not wearing revealing clothing.	Main effect	Supported
6	Participants who are high in rape myth acceptance will blame the victim more than participants low in rape myth acceptance.	Main effect	Supported
7	Participants reading that the victim wore revealing clothing will punish the perpetrator less than participants reading that the victim was not wearing revealing clothing.	Main effect	Supported
8	Participants high in rape myth acceptance will punish the perpetrator less than participants low in rape myth acceptance.	Main effect	Supported
9	Participants reading that the victim wore revealing clothing will blame the victim more than participants reading that the victim did not wear revealing clothing – this effect will be highest for participants high in rape myth acceptance.	Two-way interaction	Not supported
10	Participants reading that the victim wore revealing clothing will punish the perpetrator less than participants reading that the victim did not wear revealing clothing – this effect will be highest for participants high in rape myth acceptance.	Two-way interaction	Not supported
11	Participants in the invitation to justify condition, who are high on rape myth acceptance, will blame the victim more than participants low in rape myth acceptance. When the system justification manipulation is present participants will blame the victim equally, regardless of rape myth acceptance.	Three-way interaction	Not supported
12	Participants in the invitation to justify condition, who are high on rape myth acceptance, will punish the perpetrator less than participants low in rape myth acceptance. When the system justification manipulation is present participants will punish the perpetrator equally, regardless of rape myth acceptance.	Three-way interaction	Not supported

Appendix O: Hypothesis Table cont.

Table 8. *Hypothesis Support for Defensive Attributions.*

Number	Hypothesis	Type	Outcome:
13	If defensive attributions are part of system justification, female participants, who view themselves as more similar to the cisgender victim, will engage in more victim blaming regardless of the gender of the victim; male participants will blame the transgender victim more than the cisgender victim.	Two-way interaction	Not supported
14	If defensive attributions are a part of group justification, female participants, who identify with the cisgender victim, will blame the cisgender victim less than the transgender victim. Male participants, on the other hand, will blame the transgender victim more than the cisgender victim.	Two-way interaction	Not supported
15	If defensive attributions are part of system justification, male participants, who view themselves as more similar to the perpetrator, will be harsher with the perpetrator regardless of the gender of the victim; female participants will punish the perpetrator who targeted the cisgender victim more than the transgender victim.	Two-way interaction	Not supported
16	If defensive attributions are part of group justification, male participants, who view themselves as similar to the perpetrator, will blame the perpetrator less regardless of victim type. Female participants, on the other hand, will punish the perpetrator who targeted the cisgender victim more than the perpetrator who targeted the transgender victim.	Two-way interaction	Not supported

Appendix O: Hypothesis Table cont.

Table 9. *Hypothesis Support for Individual Differences.*

Number	Hypothesis	Type	Outcome:
17	Men will be more likely to blame the victim than women.	Main effect	Supported
18	Participants with more negative attitudes toward transgender people will be more likely to blame the victim than participants with more positive attitudes toward transgender victims.	Main effect	Supported
19	Men will be less likely to punish the perpetrator than women.	Main effect	Not supported
20	Participants with more negative attitudes toward transgender people will be less likely to punish the perpetrator than participants with more positive attitudes toward transgender victims.	Main effect	Supported
21	Minority participants will blame the victim more than White participants.	Main effect	Not supported
22	Minority participants will punish the perpetrator less than White participants.	Main effect	Not supported
23	Older participants will blame the victim more than younger participants.	Main effect	Not supported
24	Older participants will punish the perpetrator less than younger participants.	Main effect	Not supported
25	Participants higher on authoritarianism will punish the perpetrator more than participants low in authoritarianism.	Main effect	Not supported
26	Older participants in the transgender victim condition will blame the victim more than younger participants; this difference will be non-significant for the cisgender victim.	Two-way interaction	Not supported
27	Older participants in the transgender victim condition will punish the perpetrator less than younger participants; this difference will be non-significant for the cisgender victim.	Two-way interaction	Not supported
28	Men will have higher rape myth acceptance and more victim blame than women.	Mediation	Supported
29	Participants with more negative attitudes toward transgender people will have higher rape myth acceptance and more victim blame than participants with more positive attitudes toward transgender people.	Mediation	Supported
30	Men will have higher rape myth acceptance, and thus punish the perpetrator less than women.	Mediation	Supported
31	Participants with more negative attitudes toward transgender people will have higher rape myth acceptance and thus punish the perpetrator less than participants with more positive attitudes.	Mediation	Supported