

Acquaintance Rape: Associations between Rape Myths, Blame, and Attitudes towards Women

Claire Foster¹ and Garry Kidd²

¹Department of Community Safety
Queensland, Australia

²Department of Psychology
James Cook University
Cairns, Queensland, Australia
Email: [garry.kidd {at} jcu.edu.au](mailto:garry.kidd@jcu.edu.au)

ABSTRACT – *This Australian study examined how acceptance of rape myths and gender-role beliefs was associated with blame in an acquaintance rape scenario. Associations between emotional responses of anger and sympathy, and supportive behavioral responses of friendship and institutional support, were also investigated. A group of undergraduate university students (N = 242) completed an online survey in which they read an acquaintance rape scenario from either the victim's or perpetrator's point of view, or both points of view. Participants completed measures of attributions of controllability, responsibility and blame (derived from Shaver's decision-stage model of blame), emotional and behavioral responses, rape myth acceptance (RMA) and attitudes towards women (ATW). Independent t-test results show that males scored significantly higher on RMA and ATW than did females. There were no significant gender differences in blame attributions to the victim or the perpetrator although higher RMA scores and less liberal attitudes towards women (ATW) were associated with more supportive responses to the perpetrator, and less supportive responses to the victim. Additionally, although not consistent with Shaver's model, it was found that constructs of controllability, responsibility and blame were not entirely distinct. The limitations and the implications of these findings, as well as directions for future research, are discussed.*

Keywords – rape, acquaintance rape, rape myths, attitudes, blame

1. INTRODUCTION

Victims of rape, when compared to other crime victims, are frequently assigned blame and responsibility for the event.^{1,2} Despite thirty years of research and attempts to change negative perceptions of rape victims within forensic and social contexts,^{3,4} victim blaming continues unabated.⁵ A study in the US in 2000 found, for example, that women who were raped were victimized an average of 2.9 times in the following 12 months.⁶ Victim blaming can itself contribute to events such as under-reporting of the crime,⁷ promotion of lenient sentencing,^{8,9,10} reduction of perpetrator culpability,^{8,10} intensification of psychological repercussions of rape, and impedance of victim recovery.^{11,12,13} Moreover, victims of acquaintance rape are blamed more than stranger rape victims, while perpetrators are blamed less in cases of acquaintance rape than stranger rape.^{2,10,14,15,16,17,18} Perpetrator blame, while receiving less attention,¹⁰ is important in forensic contexts as judge and juror verdicts are ultimately based on perpetrator culpability.¹⁹ Moreover, feminist theorists such as Anderson^{3,20} suggest that offering research participants the opportunity to only attribute blame to the victim, and not the perpetrator, reinforces victim blaming tendencies. Thus, this study investigated responses to perpetrators and victims on identical measures, using an example of female acquaintance rape by a male.

A rape described as “a type of sexual assault where the victim and the offender are in, or have been in, some form of personal social relationship”¹⁷ is frequently termed *acquaintance, date or relationship rape*. The social relationship can range from passing acquaintance or first date, to established relationship. Our study uses the term *acquaintance rape* to describe such events. Alternatively, *stranger rape*, refers to rape where the perpetrator is not known to the victim.²¹ Notably, in Australia in 2005, 78.2% of female victims of sexual assault knew the perpetrator.²² As stranger rape and acquaintance rape incite different responses, it can be argued that they should be investigated as conceptually distinct acts.^{21,24} Australian statistics show that it is more likely for the perpetrator of a sexual assault to be an acquaintance rather than a stranger, and it is more likely for women to be victims of sexual assault than men,²² hence this study focused on female acquaintance rape by a male perpetrator.

When considering attributions of blame in acquaintance rape it is important to clearly define constructs and terms.³ Some studies of acquaintance rape judgments have used similar terms interchangeably,³ although terms such as fault, guilt, blame, responsibility and cause have been shown to be conceptually distinct constructs.^{2,3,25,26} The consequence of studies conflating and shifting between terms leads to questions of whether the results of similar studies can be compared²⁷ and possible misrepresentation of associations between judgments and emotional and behavioral responses.²⁸ In this study we have adopted Shaver's conceptualization of blame.²⁹ Shaver's model, arguably the most comprehensive blame attribution theory available,^{30,31} holds that blame is preceded by controllability and responsibility. Moreover, blame is attributed based on personal values, what the observer believes the agent should have done, and after consideration of excuses or justifications.²⁸ This perspective accentuates the importance of individual characteristics such as personal motivations and attitudes.

The literature concerning blame in acquaintance rape frequently focuses on two particular attitudes: rape myth acceptance and gender-role beliefs.²³ Rape myths are stereotypical and prejudiced beliefs about the act of rape, rape victims and rape perpetrators.³² Examples of rape myths include "women deserve rape because of inappropriate behavior" and "rape does not cause harm". Beliefs such as these bolster negative attitudes toward rape victims and assist the perpetrators of rape to transfer blame to the victim. Additionally, they perpetuate the belief that only certain types of women are raped.³³ Thus, the concept of rape myth acceptance (RMA) is useful in understanding how people behave and respond to perpetrators and victims of rape.⁷ While a number of studies report that RMA is an effective predictor of victim blame,^{7,23,34} the findings for perpetrator blaming are less consistent. Some research has found higher levels of RMA associated with lower levels of perpetrator blame,^{34,2} while other studies have found no predictive association at all.^{7,10}

Gender-role beliefs also have been found to predict blame in acquaintance rape²³ and often coincide with acceptance of rape myths.^{2,13,33} Typically, in Western cultures traditional gender-role beliefs can involve negative attitudes towards women and their social and traditional gender roles,³⁵ and the holders of such beliefs may support the view that men have the prerogative to initiate sexual activity and to utilise force.³⁶ Furthermore, in some cultures more so than in others, women have been stereotyped as guardians of sexuality, making them more responsible than men for sexual morality.³⁷ This attitude serves to shift the focus from the perpetrator's behavior and intentions to the victim's behavior in a rape event.¹⁹ More conservative and less liberal views on gender-roles have been found to predict higher levels of RMA^{13,35,38} and victim blame in acquaintance rape.^{23,38} Perpetrator blame, while less studied,²³ also has been predicted by gender-role attitudes, and more traditional views have been found to predict lower attributions of perpetrator blame in some studies^{2,19,23} although not in others.³⁸

Our study aimed to further explore associations between blame, gender, RMA and attitudes towards women (ATW). Furthermore, we sought to examine how RMA and attitudes towards women interact with emotional responses of anger and sympathy, and supportive behavioral responses. It was hypothesized that: (i) males would attribute more blame to a rape victim and less blame to a perpetrator, than would females; (ii) males would have higher RMA scores and less liberal attitudes towards women; (iii) RMA and ATW scores would be positively associated with victim blame, and negatively associated with perpetrator blame; (iv) RMA and ATW scores would be positively associated with perpetrator sympathy and negatively associated with victim sympathy; (v) RMA and ATW scores would be negatively associated with perpetrator anger and positively associated with victim anger; (vi) there would be positive associations between responses of sympathy and supportive behaviour, for both perpetrators and victims; and (vii) there would be negative associations between responses of anger and supportive behaviour, for both perpetrators and victims. Also, we sought to examine the broader question of whether controllability, responsibility and blame are discrete constructs, depending on victim or perpetrator status.

2. METHOD

2.1 Participants

The participants were 242 undergraduate Australian university students (167 females and 78 males). Age of participants was categorised as follows: 18-24 (127 *F*, 56 *M*); 25-30 (19 *F*, 9 *M*); 31-35 (6 *F*, 2 *M*); 36-40 (3 *F*, 0 *M*); and 40+ (12 *F*, 8 *M*).

2.2 Procedure

Ethics approval was obtained from the James Cook University Human Research Ethics Committee and undergraduate students participated in exchange for credits. Participants were randomly assigned within gender to one of three vignettes and responded to measures of attributions of controllability, responsibility and blame; behavioral and emotional responses; rape myths acceptance; and attitudes towards women. An a priori power analysis indicated that a sample size of 237 participants was required to have 95% power for detecting a moderate sized effect ($r > .3$), when employing a .001 criterion of statistical significance.

2.3 Measures

Means, standard deviations, number of items, item end points and Cronbach's alpha for all measures are shown in Table 1. Three scenario conditions described an instance of acquaintance rape. Scenario One described the rape from the victim's perspective (Angela), Scenario Two described the rape from the perpetrator's point of view (Samuel) and Scenario Three combined these two. The vignettes were based on those reported by Johnson and Lee³⁹ but with minor contextual changes to make them more relevant to Australian university students. The vignettes were purposefully lacking in detail in order to replicate the generally incomplete accounts of rape available to the public^{21,24,40} and to limit the confounding effects of situational variables such as intoxication, clothing and socioeconomic details.^{25,41,42}

Table 1: Cronbach's alpha, means, standard deviations and item end points for all measures

Measure	Items	End	α^*	M	SD
		Points			
Perpetrator Controllability	4	1-7	.73	22.77	4.01
Perpetrator Responsibility	4	1-7	.78	20.19	5.21
Perpetrator Blame	4	1-7	.88	20.18	5.72
Victim Controllability	4	1-7	.74	16.74	4.56
Victim Responsibility	4	1-7	.84	12.85	5.40
Victim Blame	4	1-7	.85	11.21	5.25
Perpetrator Anger	4	1-7	.88	18.19	5.41
Perpetrator Sympathy	3	1-7	.85	10.19	4.30
Victim Anger	4	1-7	.87	12.03	5.40
Victim Sympathy	3	1-7	.91	15.36	4.29
Perpetrator Support	2	1-7	.66	7.35	2.75
Victim Support	2	1-7	.57	9.90	2.43
IRMA-SF	20	1-5	.89	46.60	11.55
AWS-S	22	1-5	.91	45.97	12.36

*Cronbach's alpha

Controllability, responsibility and blame were each measured with two negative and two positive statements. The questions were adapted from Mantler's²⁸ attribution measure and were found to have adequate reliability (see Table 1). These attribution items were randomly ordered in the questionnaire. Both victim and perpetrator were evaluated on identical measures using a 7-point Likert-type scale with response options ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*). A principal components analysis with oblimin rotation was used to examine the independence of the constructs.

The items measuring behavioral and emotional responses were adapted from the measure reported by Mantler.²⁸ Behavioral responses included one item measuring social distancing (*I could become close friends with Angela/Samuel*) and one item on support for institutional help (*Angela deserves support as a victim of rape/ Samuel deserves support to defend the allegations*). The emotional items measured anger (*anger, annoyance, irritation and resentment*) and sympathy (*sympathy, compassion, feel sorry for*). Two items for each emotion were negatively worded. This measure used a 7-point Likert-type scale with response options ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*).

General rape myth acceptance was measured with the 20-item Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance - Short Form (IRMA-SF).⁴³ This measure has been shown to have strong internal reliability and is arguably the most psychometrically robust rape myth scale presently in use.⁴⁴ Higher scores demonstrate stronger acceptance of rape myths. Attitudes towards women was estimated using the *Simplified Version of the Attitude Towards Women Scale (AWS-S)*. The AWS-S has been reported to have strong internal validity ($\alpha = .84$) and adequate construct validity.⁴⁵ Lower scores indicate more traditional and less liberal sex role attitudes.

3. RESULTS

Mean scores for each scenario group on all measures are shown in Table 2. Independent samples *t* tests were used to compare gender differences in rape myth acceptance (RMA), attitudes towards women (ATW), victim blame and perpetrator blame. The *t* tests were statistically significant for RMA and ATW. Male participants ($M = 49.51$, $SD =$

10.72) reported significantly higher RMA than did female participants ($M = 45.30$, $SD = 11.70$), $t(240) = 2.65$, $p < .05$, two-tailed, $d = 1.35$. Male participants ($M = 50.56$, $SD = 13.95$) also expressed significantly more traditional attitudes towards women than did females ($M = 42.69$, $SD = 11.40$), $t(240) = 4.63$, $p < .001$, two-tailed, $d = .64$. There were no significant differences between males and females in attributions of blame to either the victim or the perpetrator.

Table 2: Mean Scores on all Measures for Scenario Groups

Measures	Scenario 1				Scenario 2				Scenario 3			
	M (n = 24)		F (n = 60)		M (n = 25)		F (n = 46)		M (n = 26)		F (n = 61)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Perpetrator Controllability	24.58	3.56	25.03	3.68	21.32	4.08	21.11	17.13	21.62	4.43	22.16	3.85
Perpetrator Responsibility	22.21	4.46	24.25	3.96	15.24	4.81	17.13	4.32	19.08	4.46	20.20	4.30
Perpetrator Blame	23.5	4.84	24.38	4.17	14.80	4.43	15.57	4.44	19.84	5.01	20.56	4.63
Victim Controllability	15.79	3.97	14.23	4.91	20.12	4.37	18.96	3.00	17.50	4.35	16.21	3.99
Victim Responsibility	10.88	4.49	9.92	6.02	15.68	4.80	15.89	3.53	13.35	4.81	12.85	4.96
Victim Blame	8.88	4.42	8.87	5.40	14.64	4.16	13.96	4.38	11.12	4.51	10.98	5.13
Perpetrator Anger	19.79	3.68	21.57	5.12	15.72	5.31	14.50	4.93	17.77	4.11	18.21	4.96
Perpetrator Sympathy	9.04	3.83	7.55	4.09	12.8	4.06	13.11	3.44	11.00	3.31	9.64	3.83
Victim Anger	9.83	5.46	9.65	5.36	15.28	5.26	14.13	4.88	12.62	4.67	12.08	4.90
Victim Sympathy	17.33	3.31	18.22	3.40	11.56	4.51	12.30	3.57	15.65	3.37	15.51	3.59
Perpetrator Helping	7.29	2.77	5.28	2.46	8.84	2.66	9.28	1.85	7.54	2.42	7.25	2.38
Victim Helping	11.25	1.98	11.12	1.67	8.16	2.58	8.22	2.28	10.38	2.00	9.95	2.36
IRMA-SF	47.83	10.71	44.51	12.17	51.08	10.11	44.39	10.75	49.54	11.47	46.75	11.95
AWS-S	51.5	14.30	40.82	11.38	49.7	15.04	43.50	11.19	50.81	12.98	43.92	11.52

Prior to conducting Pearson correlations, assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity were assessed and deviations from normality required the application of Spearman’s rho to measure associations between variables. The victim and perpetrator results are shown respectively in Tables 3 and 4. Notably, RMA had a strong positive correlation with victim blame and a moderate negative association with perpetrator blame. Similarly, ATW also had a strong positive correlation with victim blame and a moderate negative relationship with perpetrator blame. Victim sympathy was moderately and negatively associated with RMA and ATW. Perpetrator sympathy had weak negative associations with RMA and ATW. Victim anger was strongly positively correlated with RMA and, although somewhat more weakly, with ATW. Perpetrator anger had moderate negative correlations with both RMA and ATW, and victim support was strongly and positively associated with victim sympathy but conversely related to victim anger. Perpetrator support was strongly and positively correlated with perpetrator sympathy although negatively correlated with victim anger.

Table 3: Spearman’s rho Correlations between RMA, ATW and Victim Variables

	RMA	ATW	Blame	Sympathy	Anger	Support
RMA	-					
ATW	.67**	-				
Blame	.67**	.51**	-			
Sympathy	-.49**	-.37**	-.73**	-		
Anger	.60**	.48**	.76**	-.67**	-	
Support	-.45**	-.38**	-.70**	.74**	-.65**	-

** $p < .001$

Table 4: Spearman’s rho Correlations between RMA, ATW and Perpetrator Variables

	RMA	ATW	Blame	Sympathy	Anger	Support
RMA	-					
ATW	.67**	-				
Blame	-.43**	-.31**	-			
Sympathy	.28**	.26**	-.68**	-		
Anger	-.35**	-.32**	.65**	-.70**	-	
Support	.24**	.16*	-.66**	.71**	-.63**	-

** $p < .001$

To address our broader question of whether controllability, responsibility and blame are discrete constructs depending on victim or perpetrator status, the underlying structure of the items assessing attributions of controllability, responsibility and blame, was examined using Principal components analysis (PCA). For attributions to the victim,

assumptions associated with the application of PCA were addressed and deemed acceptable. Bartlett's test of sphericity ($p < .0001$) indicated the presence of significant correlations among variables, and examination of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy suggested that the data were factorable (KMO = .93). All items had communality values greater than 0.3. Two factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0 accounted for approximately 64.67% of the variance in the questionnaire data. The factors were rotated to an oblimin solution. Nine items loaded on Factor 1 and three items loaded on Factor 2 (see Table 5). The nine items loading on Factor 1 include blame and responsibility items, and one controllability item. Three controllability items loaded on Factor 2. Based on the loadings, Factor 1 was labelled *Blame and Responsibility* and Factor 2 was labelled *Controllability*.

Table 5: PCA Rotated Factor Loadings for Victim Attribution Scale

Items	Factor	
	1 ^a	2 ^b
It was something that Angela did that caused the incident	.83	
Angela is accountable for the incident	.86	
Angela is responsible for the incident	.87	
It is Angela's own fault that she was raped	.85	
Angela is to blame for the incident	.87	
The incident is not a result of Angela's own carelessness	.63	
Angela should not be held personally liable for the incident	.78	
Angela does not deserve what happened to her	.76	
Angela should not feel guilt for the incident	.73	
Angela's actions were under her personal control		.75
Angela could not have prevented the incident		.83
Angela had no control over the cause of the incident		.75
Eigenvalues	6.6	1.16
% Variance explained	55.03	9.64

^a Blame and Responsibility

^b Controllability

For the PCA analysis of attributions to the perpetrator, Bartlett's test of sphericity indicated significant correlations among variables ($p < .0001$) and communality scores were higher than 0.3 for all items. Two factors with eigenvalues greater than unity accounted for 66.16% of the variance and were rotated to an oblimin solution. Nine items loaded on Factor 1 and three items loaded on Factor 2 (see Table 6). Blame and responsibility items loaded on Factor 1 together with one controllability item. Three controllability items loaded on Factor 2. Based on these loadings Factor 1 was labelled *Blame and Responsibility* and Factor 2 was labelled *Controllability*.

Table 6: PCA Rotated Factor Loadings for Perpetrator Attribution Scale

Items	Factor	
	1 ^a	2 ^b
It was something that Samuel did that caused the incident	.84	
The incident is not a result of Samuel's own carelessness	.52	
Samuel should not be held personally liable for the incident	.85	
Samuel does not deserve what happened to him	.74	
Samuel should not feel guilt for the incident	.84	
Samuel is accountable for the incident	.77	
Samuel is responsible for the incident	.85	
It's Samuel's own fault that Angela was raped	.83	
Samuel is to blame for the incident	.89	
Samuel's actions were under his personal control		.76
Samuel could not have prevented the incident		.76
Samuel had no control over the cause of the incident		.76
Eigenvalues	6.61	1.33
% Variance explained	55.11	11.05

^a Blame and Responsibility

^b Controllability

4. DISCUSSION

The primary aim of the present study was to investigate associations of rape myth acceptance (RMA) and attitudes towards women (ATW), with blame and emotional and behavioral responses. It has been argued that acceptance of rape myths affects how rape victims are perceived and treated, and promotes a rape-supportive culture.⁴⁶ Regrettably, it seems that rape myths and negative perceptions of rape victims still continue, despite decades of research and education initiatives.^{5,20} Initially, we examined gender differences in attributions of blame, and RMA and ATW scores. Our first hypothesis (i) was not supported as there was no significant difference between males and females in attributions of either perpetrator or victim blame. While this finding has been reported in some previous studies of victim and perpetrator blame,^{7,13,19} other researchers have found gender differences in the attributions of victim blame^{10,36} and perpetrator blame.^{10,12} These studies found that males blamed the perpetrator less and the victim more, than did females. However, our opposing findings do support the argument that an individual's attitude, rather than gender, may be the main determinant of blame.⁴⁰ Furthermore, our second hypothesis (ii) was supported as males were more accepting of rape myths and held less liberal and more conservative attitudes towards women, than did the studied females. This is consistent with some previous findings^{13,34} but not others.⁷ These findings suggest that perpetrator blame also is influenced by attitudes more than by gender.

Hypotheses (iii) and (iv) were also supported. Both RMA and ATW were significantly and positively correlated with victim blame and negatively correlated with perpetrator blame. Previous research has found a similar association between RMA and perpetrator blame^{2,34} and between more traditional gender-role beliefs and perpetrator blame.^{7,10} More traditional gender-role beliefs in Australia and in similar social contexts typically emphasise women's sexual morality and tend to correspond with strong acceptance of rape myths.^{2,13,33} Applied to forensic contexts, differing attitudes contribute to divergent evaluations of rape, especially in cases of acquaintance rape.^{4,34} Whereas court decisions generally are concerned with perpetrator culpability, individual attitudes remain influential determinants of legal outcomes.¹⁹

Hypotheses (v) and (vi) were supported. RMA and ATW scores were significantly and positively correlated with perpetrator sympathy, and negatively correlated with victim sympathy. Victim anger was also positively correlated with RMA and ATW, although in the case of perpetrator anger the correlations of myths acceptance and attitudes towards

women were negative. There is a limited volume of research regarding how gender-role beliefs and RMA impact emotional responses to victims, and less research still on responses to perpetrators. However, Earnshaw and colleagues¹³ reported a significant but moderate positive correlation between attitudes towards feminism and anger towards the rape, among both male and female participants. Additionally, they reported a significant moderate negative correlation between RMA and pity for the victim among female participants only. Findings such as these are important insofar as rape victims may be more likely to disclose to friends and family rather than to formal agencies, and how people emotionally respond to victims could affect their ability to support them.¹¹ Additionally, feelings of anger towards the victim can lead to responses such as blame and doubt, patronizing attitudes, avoidance of the topic, withdrawing from the victim, sexual problems, commitment problems and overprotection of the victim.¹¹ Moreover, it has been argued that anger increases the need to blame and promotes hostility towards the cause of anger,³³ and in forensic contexts anger has been found to impact on decisions in criminal cases.³³

Furthermore, our findings with regard to the emotional responses to victims and perpetrators are important for several reasons. In general, positive social reactions to victims of acquaintance rape may have benefits but negative social reactions are likely to adversely impact victim recovery by exacerbating psychological distress. Additionally, lack of empathy towards victims may be an important factor in predicting sexually aggressive behaviour. With regard to anger, although individuals may perceive rape as a threat to an individual's freedoms and rights and respond angrily to a rape scenario, anger may be associated with prosocial behavioural responses of interpersonal helping toward the victim. It has been suggested that anger is most likely to occur when an act harms a person, taking into consideration the observer's personal attitudes regarding rights, responsibility and consent/intent,³² and anger may influence judgements by serving to increase the need to blame.

Our final hypothesis also was supported. As predicted, there were positive correlations between responses of sympathy and supportive behaviors, and negative correlations between responses of anger and supportive behavior. Other researchers have found significant but weak positive correlations between pity and victim helping behaviors among female participants.¹³ Similarly, McMahon⁴⁴ found that RMA was negatively correlated with willingness to intervene as a bystander, and higher levels of RMA have been associated with reduced likelihood of helping a rape victim.¹³ Notably, acceptance of rape myths and more conservative gender-role beliefs have been found to positively correlate with social distance towards victims of sexual assault.⁵

The broader question of whether controllability, responsibility and blame are discrete constructs received only partial support. Although controllability was found to be distinct, responsibility and blame loaded on one common factor in both victim and perpetrator simple structures. While these constructs have not been previously investigated in relation to acquaintance rape, this underlying structure is not consistent with Shaver's decision-stage model.¹ Seemingly, however, attributions of blame may be more, less, or equal to attributions of responsibility, depending on the situation and perceived severity of the consequences.²⁸ Investigating conceptual differences of fault and blame in acquaintance rape, Anderson and Bissell³ reported that participant, perpetrator and victim gender affected perpetrator fault and blame, but not victim fault and blame. They concluded that fault and blame were conceptually distinct when attributed to the perpetrator, although the results of our study suggest that the blame attribution process for both victims and perpetrators may be similar.

In general, our findings add weight to concerns about the prevalent and far-reaching influence rape myth acceptance and gender-role beliefs appear to have on both victims and perpetrators of acquaintance rape. Working on changing those attitudes which perpetuate victim blaming and modifying negative behavioral and emotional responses could improve victim recovery, as well as increase the likelihood of reporting.⁵ Additionally, it is likely that more positive emotional and behavioral responses to perpetrators may improve the outcomes of sexual offender treatment interventions by reducing feelings of alienation.⁵

The limitations of our study include the disproportionate number of female participants and restriction of participation to a university student population. Consequently, gender imbalance taken together with more liberal attitudes typically associated with student populations may have served to suppress scores on acceptance of rape myths and attitudes towards women (see also^{2,7,36}). Moreover, it is possible that self-reported RMA could be influenced by socially desirable responding. However, Horvarth and Brown³³ observe that sexual aggression myths may be more subtle today and conceptualised in the form of denial of discrimination against women and lack of support for women's needs. While the results of this study can only be generalized with confidence to a similar student population, we note that females aged 16-25 are the most at risk of sexual assault in Australia,²² and males aged 16-25 are most likely to perpetrate a sexual assault.²² A final limitation is the absence of counterbalancing, although similar studies have found no order effects.^{34,48} In terms of directions for future research it is worthwhile to consider how positive emotional and behavioral responses to perpetrators predict offending proclivity. Additionally, particularly within the context of acquaintance rape, it seems beneficial to encourage investigation of conceptual differences between controllability, blame and responsibility, and associated implications for theories modelling blame attribution. Ideally, the increasingly large volume of contemporary empirical studies pointing to changing attitudes associated with rationalizing rape and promoting negative perceptions of victims should be a critical focus in interventions seeking to prevent sexual violence.

5. REFERENCES

1. Shaver KG. *The Attribution of Blame: Causality, Responsibility, and Blameworthiness*. New York: Springer-Verlag; 1985.
2. Rye B J, Greatrix SA, Enright, CS. The Case of the Guilty Victim: The Effects of Gender of Victim and Gender of Perpetrator on Attributions of Blame and Responsibility. *Sex Roles*, 2006; 54(9):639-649. doi: 10.1007/s11199-006-9034-y
3. Anderson I, Bissell H. Blame and fault attributions in sexual violence: are these distinct? *J Aggress Confl Peace Res*. 2011;3(4):222-229. doi: 10.1108/17596591111187747
4. Lonsway KA, Fitzgerald LF. Rape Myths In Review. *Psychol Women Quart*. 1994;18(2):133-164. doi: 10.1111/j.1471-6402.1994.tb00448.x
5. Schechory M, Idisis Y. Rape Myths and Social Distance Toward Sex Offenders and Victims among Therapists and Students. *Sex Roles*. 2006;54(9):651-658. doi: 10.1007/s11199-006-9031-1
6. Tjaden P, Thoennes N. Prevalence and consequences of male-to-female and female-to-male intimate partner violence as measured by the National Violence Against Women Survey. *Violence Against Wom*. 2000;6(2):142-161. doi: 10.1177/10778010022181769
7. Frese B, Moya M, Megias J L. Social Perception of Rape : How Rape Myth Acceptance Modulates the Influence of Situational Factors. *J Interpers Violence*. 2004;19(2):143-161.
8. Gerber G L, Cronin J M, Steigman H J. Attributions of Blame in Sexual Assault to Perpetrators and Victims of Both Genders. *J Appl Soc Psychol*. 2004;34(10):2149-2165. doi: 10.1111/j.1559-1816.2004.tb02694.x
9. Hafer C L, Bégue L. Experimental research on just-world theory: Problems, developments, and future challenges. *Psychol Bull*. 2005;131: 128–167. doi:10.1037/00332909.131.1.128
10. Sleath E, Bull R. Comparing Rape Victim and Perpetrator Blaming in a Police Officer Sample: Differences Between Police Officers With and Without Special Training. *Crim Justice Behav*. (2012);39(5):646-655. doi: 10.1177/0886260509340534
11. Ahrens C E, Campbell R. Assisting Rape Victims as They Recover From Rape: The Impact on Friends. *J Interpers Violence*. (2000);15(9):959-986. doi: 10.1177/088626000015009004
12. Brown AL, Testa M. Social Influences on Judgments of Rape Victims: The Role of the Negative and Positive Social Reactions of Others. *Sex Roles*. (2008);58(7-8):490-500. doi: 10.1007/s11199-007-9353-7
13. Earnshaw VA, Pitpitan EV, Chaudoir SR. Intended Responses to Rape as Functions of Attitudes, Attributions of Fault, and Emotions. *Sex Roles*. (2011);64(5-6):382-393. doi: 10.1007/s11199-010-9920-1
14. Gölge ZB, Yavuz MF, Müderrisoğlu S, Yavuz MS. Turkish University Students' Attitudes Toward Rape. *Sex Roles*. (2003);49(11/12):653-661. doi: 10.1023/B:SERS.0000003135.30077.a4
15. Graycar R, Morgan J. *The Hidden Gender of Law*. Annandale NSW: Federation; 1990.
16. Koss MP. Rape: Scope, impact, interventions, and public policy responses. *Am Psychol*. 1993;48(10):1062-1069. doi: [10.1037/0003-066X.48.10.1062](https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.48.10.1062)
17. Russo L. Date Rape: A Hidden Crime. *Australian Institute of Criminology*. 157:1-6; 2000.
18. Shapiro BL, Schwarz JC. Date Rape Its Relationship to Trauma Symptoms and Sexual Self-Esteem. *J Interpers Violence*. 1997;12(3): 407-419. doi: 10.1177/088626097012003006
19. Viki G, Tendayi, Abrams D, Masser B. Evaluating Stranger and Acquaintance Rape: The Role of Benevolent Sexism in Perpetrator Blame and Recommended Sentence Length. *Law Human Behav*. 2004;28(3):295-303. doi: 10.1023/B:LAHU.0000029140.72880.69
20. Anderson I, Doherty K. *Accounting for rape: Psychology, feminism and discourse analysis in the study of sexual violence*. New York: Routledge; 2007.
21. Bell ST, Kuriloff PJ, Lottes I. Understanding Attributions of Blame in Stranger Rape and Date Rape Situations: An Examination of Gender, Race, Identification, and Students' Social Perceptions of Rape Victims. *J Appl Soc Psychol*. 1994;24(19):1719-1734. doi: 10.1111/j.1559-1816.1994.tb01571.x
22. Australian Bureau of Statistics. *Personal Safety, Australia, 2005 (no. 4906.0); 2006*. Available from <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/4906.0>
23. Sleath E, Bull, R. Male rape victim and perpetrator blaming. *J Interpers Viol*. 2010;25(6):969-988. doi: 10.1177/0886260509340534
24. Grubb AP, Harrower J. Understanding Attribution of Blame in Cases of Rape: An Analysis of Participant Gender, Type of Rape and Perceived Similarity to the Victim. *J Sex Aggress*. 2009;15(1):63-81.
25. Critchlow B. The Blame in the Bottle: Attributions about Drunken Behavior. *Pers Soc Psychol Bull*. 1985;11(3):258-274. doi: 10.1177/0146167285113003
26. Krulewitz J E, Nash J E. Effects of rape victim resistance, assault outcome, and sex of observer on attributions about rape. *J Pers*. 1979; 47(4):557-574. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6494.1979.tb00209.x
27. Shaver KG, Drown D. On causality, responsibility, and self-blame: A theoretical note. *J Pers Soc Psychol*. 1986;50(4):697-702. doi: 10.1037/00223514.50.4.697
28. Mantler J, Schellenberg EG, Page JS. Attributions for Serious Illness: Are Controllability, Responsibility, and Blame Different Constructs? *Can J Beh Sci*. 2003;35(2):142-152. doi: 10.1037/h0087196

29. Alicke MD. Culpable control and the psychology of blame. *Psychol Bull.* 2000;126(4):556-574. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.126.4.556
30. Lagnado DA, Channon S. Judgments of cause and blame: the effects of intentionality and foreseeability. *Cognition.* 2008;108(3):754-770. doi: 10.1016/j.cognition.2008.06.009
31. Burt MR. Cultural myths and supports for rape. *J Pers Soc Psychol.* 1980;38(2):217-230. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.38.2.217
32. Horvath M, Brown J. *Rape: Challenging Contemporary Thinking.* Hoboken: Taylor and Francis; 2013.
33. Hammond EM, Berry MA, Rodriguez DN. The influence of rape myth acceptance, sexual attitudes, and belief in a just world on attributions of responsibility in a date rape scenario. *Legal Criminol Psych.* 2011;16(2):242-252.
34. Aosved AC, Long PJ. Co-occurrence of Rape Myth Acceptance, Sexism, Racism, Homophobia, Ageism, Classism, and Religious Intolerance. *Sex Roles.* 2006;55(7): 481-492. doi: 10.1007/s11199-006-9101-4
35. De Judicibus M, McCabe MP. Blaming the Target of Sexual Harassment: Impact of Gender Role, Sexist Attitudes, and Work Role. *Sex Roles.* 2001;44(7):401-417. doi: 10.1023/A:1011926027920
36. Abrams D, Viki GT, Masser B, Bohner G. Perceptions of stranger and acquaintance rape: the role of benevolent and hostile sexism in victim blame and rape proclivity. *J Pers Soc Psychol.* 2003;84(1):111-125. doi: 10.1037/0022-3514.84.1.111
37. Simonson K, Subich LM. Rape Perceptions as a Function of Gender-Role Traditionalism and Victim-Perpetrator Association. *Sex Roles.* 1999;40(7):617-634. doi: 10.1023/A:1018844231555
38. Johnson KK, Lee MY. Effects of Clothing and Behavior on Perceptions Concerning an Alleged Date Rape. *Fam Consum Sci Res J.* 2000;28(3): 332-357.
39. Anderson I, Lyons A. The Effect of Victims' Social Support on Attributions of Blame in Female and Male Rape. *J Appl Soc Psychol.* 2005;35(7):1400-1417. doi: 10.1111/j.1559-1816.2005.tb02176.x
40. Black KA, Gold DJ. Gender differences and socioeconomic status biases in judgments about blame in date rape scenarios. *Violence and Victims.* 2008;23(1): 115-128. doi: 10.1891/0886-6708.23.1.115
41. Maurer TW, Robinson DW. Effects of Attire, Alcohol, and Gender on Perceptions of Date Rape. *Sex Roles.* 2008;58(5):423-434. doi: 10.1007/s11199-007-9343-9
42. Payne DL, Lonsway KA, Fitzgerald LF. Rape Myth Acceptance: Exploration of Its Structure and Its Measurement Using the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. *J Res Pers.* 1999;33(1):27-68. doi: 10.1006/jrpe.1998.2238
43. McMahon S. Rape myth beliefs and bystander attitudes among incoming college students. *J Am Coll Health.* 2011;59(1):3-11. doi: 10.1080/07448481.2010.483715
44. Nelson MC. Reliability, validity, and cross-cultural comparisons for the simplified Attitudes Toward Women scale. *Sex Roles.* 1988;18(5-6):289-296. doi: 10.1007/BF00288291
45. Grubb A, Turner E. Attribution of Blame in Rape Cases: A Review of the Impact of Rape Myth Acceptance, Gender Role Conformity and Substance Use on Victim Blaming. 2012;17(5):443-452. *Agress Viol Behav.*
46. Pollard P. Judgements about Victims and Attackers in Depicted Rapes: A Review. 1992;31(4):307-327.