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Increased Rape Victims Scale Attitudes After Relational Rejection:  
The Roles of Entitlement and Shame

by

Lilah Clevey

Dissertation

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Clinical Psychology

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### Abstract

This project examined whether social or romantic rejection impacted participants' endorsement of victim blaming beliefs toward sexual assault survivors. Participants were randomly assigned to read one of five vignettes, including a woman romantically rejecting a man, socially rejecting him, romantically accepting him, socially accepting him, or a neutral control story. After reading the vignette, participants were administered a scale assessing their endorsement of beliefs that blame survivors of sexual assault for their assault. It was hypothesized that cisgender men that read vignettes about being rejected by a woman would endorse significantly more victim blaming beliefs and that participants' own levels of trait shame would moderate their levels of victim blaming. If an effect was found, it was hypothesized that participants' level of entitlement would mediate the results. It was additionally hypothesized that endorsement of victim blaming beliefs would correlate with both just world beliefs and traditional masculinity. Participants were administered a number of additional measures that were used in exploratory analyses, including participants' level of aggression, impulsiveness, sexism, narcissism, state shame, guilt, and relationship history. The final sample included 141 college-aged cisgender males. Victim blaming did not significantly differ by vignette condition. Across the full sample, victim blaming was significantly correlated with just world beliefs, traditional masculinity, trait shame, aggression, entitlement, ambivalent sexism, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and narcissism.

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### **Increased Rape Victims Scale Attitudes Following Relational Rejection**

I'd been given stacks of reasons to blame myself for an act of violence committed by another. I had blamed my flirting for his subsequent felony. My college taught me: my rape was my shame. Everyone I'd trusted asked only what I might have done to let it happen. In my gut, I'd always believed I'd caused it. I finally questioned it. (Matis, 2015, p. 352)

In the above quote, Matis (2015), a writer and sexual assault survivor, describes her all too common experience following her own sexual assault: grappling with others' suggestions that she was to blame for its occurrence. The tendency of some individuals to blame the behavior or characteristics of sexual assault survivors for their assaults has many negative consequences for targets of assault and society as a whole (R. Campbell, 2008). To start, individuals who encounter blaming statements from medical or legal persons after being sexual assaulted may experience increased feelings of powerlessness and guilt (R. Campbell, 2005, 2006) and experience more symptoms of posttraumatic stress (R. Campbell et al., 1999; R. Campbell, Wasco, Ahrens, Sefl, & Barnes, 2001). Furthermore, awareness of critical, blaming statements made by legal personnel toward sexual assault survivors may cause the survivors to cease their efforts to prosecute their attacker, keeping violent offenders from being prosecuted for their crimes and potentially putting future targets of an attack at risk (R. Campbell, 2008; Ståhl, Eek, & Kazemi, 2010). In fact, a large-scale study with a nationally representative sample found 24.7% of rape survivors cited "fear of being treated hostilely by the police" as a reason they did not report their assault (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000, p. 24). Current theories addressing victim blaming, such as the just world approach, suggest that individuals blame the behavior and characteristics of the target of an attack as a way to distance themselves from the target and help

themselves maintain the belief that such an attack could not happen to them (Dalbert, 2009; Hafer & Bègue, 2005; Lerner & Miller, 1978). Yet available theories have not explored whether antecedent events, such as negative reactions due to rejection, increases the propensity to victim blame, and whether such blame extends outward toward other members of a group who has done the rejection. For example, if a man experienced a painful rejection from a woman (e.g., romantic, professional, or some significant spurning), he might be inclined to subsequently generalize this negative experience to all women in his life. Consequently, when he hears about a woman who experiences some form of assault, this man might be primed to blame such a woman for her circumstances. Support for this theory can be gleaned from the research literature on social exclusion. This area of inquiry has demonstrated that being excluded can impact the way people react toward those who reject them; in fact, in some instances, rejection has been found to cause those who experience such marginalization to act aggressively toward the rejecter (Twenge, Baumeister, Tice, & Stucke, 2001). Additional research has shown that many individuals who are rejected hold onto the aggressive urges even if they do not explicitly aggress (Williams, 2001). Furthermore, other research suggests that the urge to retaliate may generalize to an entire group the transgressor belongs to (Lickel, Miller, Strenstrom, Denson, & Schmader, 2006), such as feeling disdain for an entire racial group after a negative experience with just one member from that group. Taken together, this project explored the impact social rejection and resultant desired retribution may have as mechanisms leading to increased victim blaming toward an out-group that had rejected the target.

Importantly, both men and women experience and perpetrate sexual assault, and sexual assault can and does occur between pairs of men and pairs of women (Baumeister, Catanese, & Wallace, 2002). Furthermore, when sexually assaulted, men can be just as likely to be blamed for

their assault as women (Felson & Palmore, 2018). Nevertheless, estimates show 9 out of 10 rape survivors in the United States are female (Planty, Langton, Krebs, Berzofsky, & Smiley-McDonald, 2016) and men are more likely to commit sexual assault (Black et al., 2011; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), with an average of 99 out of every 100 convicted rapists in the United States being male (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2012; Greenfeld, 1997). As a result of this skew in gender, I focused on attributions some men have of women that may promote mind-sets that contribute to victim blaming. Specifically, I explored if a subset of men who experience social rejection from a woman were more likely to attribute blame of sexual assault toward female assault survivors because they desire or feel the need for retribution and thus see women as deserving of blame. For some individuals, higher levels of shame after rejection may increase aggressive urges, and shame was therefore explored as a potential moderator. In addition, feeling entitled to women's support was explored as a potential mediator that connected experiencing rejection from a woman to feeling like women deserve attacks that come to them.

### **Terminology**

Prior to discussing this research, it is necessary to discuss the preference for the language used here. Although many well-meaning researchers have examined victim blaming to better understand why targets of assault are sometimes blamed for their attack (Niemi, 2017), the connotation of the term victim has caused it to be rejected by many assault survivors (Leisenring, 2006). For example, being called a victim can evoke cultural connotations of a person being damaged or powerless (Best, 1997), making it an unappealing label for some individuals attempting to regain their sense of self-efficacy and power after an attack. Some individuals prefer the label of survivor for its more positive connotations of strength and agency (Dunn, 2004). Yet, neither term is without its downsides. For example, the strength associated with the

term survivor can inadvertently imply the individual had more agency than they actually did to prevent an attack (Dunn, 2004). Furthermore, some women feel that the term victim better encapsulates the abuse they endured (Leisenring, 2006). As a result, it is imperative that every individual that lives through an assault be given the right to choose which label feels right for them. For the purposes of this paper, I use survivor or target throughout due to their more positive or neutral connotations. I emphasize that my use of the term survivor does not and should not imply that an individual is to blame for their attack or could have done more to prevent it. In addition, in order to be consistent with the literature, I use the term victim blaming when discussing the phenomenon of blaming targets of an attack for their assault (Niemi, 2017).

### **Incels: A Concerning Subgroup**

The need to study men spurned by women and its resultant attitudinal consequences sprouts from the emergence of an online subculture called Incels, short for Involuntary Celibates (Beauchamp, 2018; Dewey, 2015). This group, primarily made up of white, heterosexual, cisgender men posting in forums such as Reddit, 4chan, and Incel.me, was formed based on the members' shared experiences, or lack of sexual experiences, with women (Ohlheiser, 2018). Incels often bond over their perceived inadequacy, feeling that they are unable to obtain sexual partners because of attributes they perceive as outside their control, such as how physically attractive they are or physical handicaps, proclaiming that women today are only interested in traditionally attractive men (Dewey, 2015). Other discussions focus more critically on women's role in perpetuating involuntary celibacy, which Beauchamp (2018) describes as "an elaborate sociopolitical explanation for their sexual failures, one that centers on the idea that women are shallow, vicious, and only attracted to hyper-muscular men."

Members self-affiliated with incel groups are responsible for a number of violent murders in North America over the past few years. One notable example is Elliot Rodger, a 22-year-old man who went on a shooting spree in Santa Barbara, California, in 2014, killing six and injuring 14 (Beauchamp, 2018). Rodger explained his actions prior to his shooting spree in a chilling video and written manifesto, stating the violent act was his “retaliation against women as a group for refusing to provide him with the sex he is owed” (Beauchamp, 2018). Since his attack, Rodger has become somewhat of a hero in online, mostly anonymous incel communities, with users applauding him for what they perceive as “retaliation against women like those they feel rejected by” (Taub, 2018). In fact Chris Harper-Mercer, another suspected incel, praised Rodger in a written manifesto before bringing a gun to an Oregon Community College, killing nine and injuring seven (Dewey, 2015; Anderson, 2017). Another man, Alek Minassian, took to Facebook to swear his allegiance to the “Incel Rebellion” before driving a van down a busy street in Toronto, killing 10 people (Beauchamp, 2018; Taub, 2018). Minassian also wrote a Facebook post praising Rodger before the attack (Ohlheiser, 2018). Before killing 17 and injuring 17 others at a high school in Parkland, California, Nikolas Cruz also lauded Rodger, posting online that “Elliot Rodger will not be forgotten” (Collins & Zadrozny, 2018). Another shooter targeting a high school used the pseudonym “Elliot Rodger” on multiple online forums before killing two people and then himself in Aztec, New Mexico (Hankes & Amend, 2018). Lastly, Scott Beierle created YouTube videos expressing anger and violent sentiments toward women, mentioning Rodgers in one of these videos, before killing two women and injuring four in a yoga studio in Tallahassee, Florida (North, 2018). A quick google search of women murdered by men they romantically rejected pulls other heart-wrenching stories, yet those listed here are notable for

their association with the incel community and their projection of violence toward multiple others instead of just one romantic interest.

Of note, not all self-described incels are violent, and some reject associations with violent displays and purposefully try to dissociate their online communities from atrocities such as Rodger's attack (Dewey, 2015). What's more, many self-identified incels struggle with depression (Sutton, 2001) and may in actuality be more likely to harm themselves than others (Dewey, 2015; Gambarotto, 2018). Yet the link between all incels is the feeling that not being able to obtain a female sexual partner is frustrating and largely out of their control (Dewey, 2015). Rejection, of course, is quite painful, and there is no need to pathologize normal responses to it. Yet when rejection and loneliness lead to disdain of an out-group (i.e., women) and violence, it is important to examine what may be causing such extreme reactions for this subset of rejected men. To explore this, it is relevant to ask, why does the inability to obtain a sexual partner lead to aggression in some men? One reason may have to do with the symbolic importance society has put on men's ability to obtain a sexual partner. Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford, and Weaver (2008) suggest that manhood, when compared to womanhood, is a status earned and sustained through social milestones. As such, if a man is not able to secure a sexual partner, his manhood may feel threatened. Moreover, Bosson, Vandello, Burnaford, Weaver, and Wasti (2009) suggest that physical aggression is actually part of men's cultural script for how they are supposed to deal with a threat to their gender status. In their study, they demonstrated that an act of aggression following a threat to their gender status actually decreased men's anxiety related cognitions, suggesting that aggression can restore some men's security with their gender status after it is threatened. Taken together, some men attempt to calm anxiety related to threats to their manhood by acting violently, possibly explaining the draw to violent discourse



seen by many incels. Other research has shown that threats to a male's identity increases his likelihood of sexually harassing a female partner in an experiment (Maass, Cadinu, Guarnieri, & Grasselli, 2003). What is particularly interesting about Maass et al.'s (2003) experiment is that men felt greater identification with their in-group (i.e., men) after harassing, suggesting some men may be gaining a sense of belonging from participating in online derogation of women with other incels. For this project, I explored this line of inquiry further to better understand the limits of rejection on attitudes toward women and potential ways these attitudes manifest (i.e., victim blaming beliefs).

### **Sexual Assault: Prevalence, Impact, Prosecution, and Rape Myths**

Although the emergence of self-identified incels may be a more recent phenomenon, violence against women is nothing new in our society, and it is not an uncommon event. Large-scale studies with nationally representative samples have shown that nearly one in five women in the United States experience completed rape (Black et al., 2011; Brener, McMahon, Warren, & Douglas, 1999) or attempted rape in their lifetime (Fisher et al., 2000; Smith et al., 2018). Furthermore, rape can impact the mental health and quality of life for survivors of sexual assault and their loved ones. Multiple studies have shown that experiencing rape significantly increases risk for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, anxiety disorders, substance abuse, suicidal ideation, disordered eating, sexual dysfunction, and revictimization (Basile et al., 2006; Fergusson, Swain-Campbell, & Horwood, 2002; Mgoqi-Mbalo, Zhang, & Ntuli, 2017; Sarkar & Sarkar, 2005). Given this detrimental impact, it is important for efforts to be made to decrease sexual assault, including creating reliable consequences for perpetrators of sexual assault. Yet, a variety of factors can get in the way of perpetrators actually serving time in jail for sexual assaults. After consolidating and examining an array of sources ranging from estimates of sexual

assault reporting to outcomes in the criminal justice system, Lonsway and Archambault (2012) estimate that out of every 100 forcible rapes, 5 to 20 of them will be reported to the police, 0.4 to 5.4 result in prosecution of the perpetrator, 0.2 to 5.2 result in a conviction, and only 0.2 to 2.9 will result in a felony conviction. They estimate that this funneling process results in only 0.1 to 1.9 out of every 100 perpetrators of forcible rape actually serving prison or jail time.

The lack of reliable consequences for perpetrators of sexual assault inevitably leads to the question that if sexual assault is so prevalent and results in such negative impacts for many survivors, why are assailants escaping legal repercussions? As an answer, some researchers suggest that a variety of rape myths (i.e., myths about rape) may lead observers to not see rape as the serious offense that it is. Broadly, rape myths include elements of perpetrator absolution, victim blaming, and rationalization or minimization of sexual violence (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999), and unsurprisingly, endorsement of more rape myths is associated with increased victim blaming (Russell & Hand, 2017). Some rape myths inflate the perception of false claims, such as the rape myth from the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale stating “many so-called rape victims are actually women who had sex and changed their minds afterwards” (Payne et al., 1999, p. 49). Other myths may not suggest women are lying about their assaults but instead imply that women could have done more to keep from being raped, such as the item from the Attitudes Toward Rape Victims Scale that states “A healthy woman can successfully resist a rapist if she really tries” (Ward, 1988, p. 135). It is not difficult to imagine why holding beliefs like this may lead jury members to feel the defendant in a sexual assault case is not completely at fault or deserves a relatively lighter sentence. In fact, a study by Krahe, Temkin, Bieneck, and Berger (2008) found observers’ increased endorsement of rape myths was associated with shorter sentencing recommendations for perpetrators. Furthermore, rape myth acceptance may also

impact police behavior. Venema (2016) interviewed 174 first-respondent police officers and found rape myth acceptance predicted officers' behavioral intentions surrounding how vigorously they would respond to the case, such as calling a detective or arresting the suspect. In sum, it is imperative that we as a society better understand cognitive processes that may be getting in the way of proper prosecution of perpetrators of sexual assault so we can work to reduce endorsements of these beliefs and control for them when possible. A more in-depth examination of victim blaming beliefs and past theories on what perpetuates them is explored in the following sections.

### **Why Do People Victim Blame?**

In most cases, sexual assault involves two parties: the perpetrator or perpetrators who commit the act and the target who is the recipient of the assault. Although the actions of perpetrators alone cause these events to occur, research has repeatedly demonstrated that some observers will place blame on the recipient of rape (Bieneck & Krahe, 2011; Catellani, Alberici, & Milesi, 2004; Jones & Aronson, 1973; Krahe, Temkin, & Bieneck, 2007; McCaul, Veltum, Boyechko, & Crawford, 1990). Some rape myths and beliefs that perpetuate blaming sexual assault survivors include believing survivors sometimes deserved to be attacked because of their behavior, or beliefs implying the survivor wanted, asked for, or even enjoyed the assault (Koss et al., 1994). Believing the assault was provoked may in turn have consequences for how observers feel and act toward the target of the attack, as individuals may feel less sympathy toward a survivor if they believe they provoked the attack (Bradley, 2015).

On occasion, blaming can be overt, and many women do encounter remarks suggesting they are partially to blame for a sexual assault from others that they turn to for help after the assault (R. Campbell, 2008). For example, a woman may be asked what they were wearing at the

time of the assault, and studies have shown women can be judged as more culpable for an assault if they were wearing “suggestive” clothing or a short skirt (Edmonds & Cahoon, 1986; Kanekar & Kolsawalla, 1980; Maurer & Robinson, 2008; Whatley, 2005; Workman & Freeburg, 1999; Yarmey, 1985), although not all studies find a difference in blaming based on target’s dress (Johnson 1995; Johnson & Lee, 2000). Yet assault is performed by the perpetrator by their own will, and therefore, their actions are the true catalyst of an attack. So why do some humans endorse beliefs that partially or fully blame the actions of the survivor of an attack? Some of the theories addressing blaming are explored in the sections below; starting with characteristics of individuals who have been shown to be more likely to participate in victim blaming, including gender differences in victim blaming, endorsement of traditional gender roles, and feelings of entitlement, followed by a discussion of just world beliefs, vicarious retribution theories, and the roles of aggression and shame.

**Traditional gender roles and entitlement.** Past theories surrounding the reasons behind victim blaming have generally been gender neutral, despite research showing that, on average, cisgender men are more likely to place blame on rape survivors than women (Caron & Carter, 1997; Emmers-Sommer, Triplett, Pauley, Hanzal, & Rhea, 2005; George & Martínez, 2002; Kanekar & Kolsawalla, 1980; Pollard, 1992; Schulze & Koon-Magnin, 2017; Whatley, 2005; Workman & Freeburg, 1999) or transgender men (Diamond-Welch, Hellwege, & Mann, 2018). Moreover, a study by Niemi and Young (2016) found participants were more likely to blame a survivor’s behavior as a reason for an attack if the participant held “binding values” (i.e., valuing loyalty, obedience to authority, and purity), suggesting a participant’s value-set may predict their likelihood to victim blame. Although both men and women in Niemi and Young’s (2016) sample

were more likely to victim blame if they held binding values, men were generally more likely to hold these values.

In addition, individuals who accept and endorse more traditional gender role stereotypes surrounding masculinity and femininity have been shown to be more likely to place a greater portion of the blame on women who are raped (Acock & Ireland, 1983; Coller & Resick, 1987; Simonson & Subich, 1999; Whatley, 2005), and endorse rape myths (Burt, 1980; Costin, 1985; Costin & Schwarz, 1987; Davies, Gilston, & Rogers, 2012; Hall, Howard, & Boezio, 1986; Walfield, 2018). The results of another study indicated that men higher in benevolent sexism, but not hostile sexism, may place greater blame on the survivor in acquaintance rape (Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003), again suggesting that some men who believe in traditional gender roles may be more likely to endorse victim blaming beliefs. Of note, one study found men, compared to women, are generally more likely to blame victims for a variety of crimes, including direct blame for rape, homicide, and robbery (Felson & Palmore, 2018). The aforementioned research surrounding sexual assault specifically suggests that some men who endorse more traditional gender roles are more likely than men who do not endorse traditional roles to endorse victim blaming. These same men, resultantly, believe that men should uphold their own traditional gender role, suggesting that some men who endorse being more traditionally masculine will have an increased propensity to victim blame sexual assault survivors.

Other research has examined this further, exploring entitlement as a mediator between increased masculinity and the tendency to victim blame (Hill & Fischer, 2001). A study by Hill and Fischer gathered 100 males' levels of general masculine entitlement (e.g., men feeling entitled to have their needs met by women) and sexual entitlement (e.g., women should oblige to

men's sexual needs), along with their levels of traditional masculinity and endorsement of sexual assault victim blaming beliefs. To assess participants' endorsement of victim blaming beliefs, participants were administered the Date Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Truman Tokar, & Fischer, 1996). In addition, participants read vignettes depicting the date rape of a woman by a man and then responded to four questions surrounding the level of responsibility of each partner for the occurrence of the rape (Hill & Fischer, 2001). Their results indicated that higher levels of entitlement mediated the relationship between masculinity and victim blaming, with higher levels of masculinity predicting general masculine entitlement, which in turn predicted sexual entitlement, which predicted participants' victim blaming of sexual assault survivors (Hill & Fischer, 2001). This aligns with a study by Bouffard (2010) finding male college students' level of entitlement to be correlated with gender-stereotyped attitudes and rape-supportive attitudes, along with self-reported sexual aggression and self-control. For the purposes of the current project, entitlement is a key component that may explain why a man may be more likely to victim blame after being rejected by a woman. That is, being rejected goes against the man's expected entitlement to the woman's affection, and this transgression may be perceived as warranting retribution.

Examining entitlement as a mediator in the current project is consistent with a commonly cited explanation for victim blaming, the just world approach (Dalbert, 2009). That is, a woman not acting in a way that gives a man some form of support (which he believes he innately deserves) may lead some men to believe that she deserves, or even caused, whatever negative events befall on her. A more detailed description of the theory of the just world approach and ways in which the theory could explain some of the mechanisms behind the reasoning that individuals may have deserved an attack are explored in the following section.

**Belief in a just world.** The just world approach theorizes that individuals are more likely to victim blame if they believe humans live in a just world in which people generally get what they deserve (Dalbert, 2009; Hafer & Bègue, 2005; Lerner & Miller, 1978). That is, if something bad happens to an individual, it is because they possess a negative characteristic or have performed an action making them deserving of punishment. By blaming the victim's behavior or characteristics for an attack, individuals are able to distance themselves from the target of an attack and rationalize that a similar attack could not happen to them if they just act a certain way (Hafer, 2000), possibly allowing the observers to feel safer in their daily life (Furnham, 2003). Research surrounding the just world approach has found that individuals are more likely to blame another's actions for a rape if they consider the person to be socially respectable (Jones & Aronson, 1973), suggesting that if an observer is unable to say that the person deserved the attack based on their innate characteristics, the individual can at least say the target put themselves in harm's way.

In addition, a sexual assault survivor that acted in a stereotype-inconsistent manner may also account for just world attributions leading to increased victim blaming, as their lack of adherence to stereotypes may generally downgrade the survivor's character to an observer or may be seen as the survivor choosing to display a behavior that put them in harm's way. Meta-analytic efforts have shown that individuals provide more negative evaluations of women when they act in stereotypically masculine ways, such as being verbally assertive (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992), and more current research shows women receive more negative evaluations when they exhibit less stereotypically feminine facial features (Lick & Johnson, 2014). When examining violence against women, Bradley (2015) suggests that chivalry norms protecting women from male imposed violence may only exist to the extent that women also adhere to

traditional gender roles, such as being passive or submissive. This also aligns with more dated research showing that women are blamed more for their rape if they work in more traditionally male occupations (Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Marecek & Pascale, 1975). Luginbuhl and Mullin (1981) also found women to be blamed more for rape if they worked a less traditionally “respectable” job, such as a topless dancer compared to a social worker. As previously mentioned, women wearing scantier clothing, as opposed to being traditionally covered up, may also receive more blame for their assaults (Edmonds & Cahoon, 1986; Kanekar & Kolsawalla, 1980; Maurer & Robinson, 2008; Whatley, 2005; Workman & Freeburg, 1999; Yarmey, 1985). In addition, one study found that women who broke traditional gender scripts for dating and paid for a portion of a date reported experiencing more sexual aggression, sometimes including attempts to force intercourse, compared with women who let the man pay for the entire date (Korman & Leslie, 1982).

Furthermore, romantic involvement between the perpetrator and survivor may alter expectations of behavior and resultant level of victim blaming. For example, the stereotyped expectation that a woman will be sexually available to romantic partners may partially account for marital rape not being illegal in the United States in all 50 states until 1993 (Martin, Taft, & Resick, 2007). Romantic involvement with a perpetrator, such as being married or dating, has been shown to increase blame for the target of sexual assault and decrease blame for the perpetrator (Cowan, 2000; Gölge et al., 2003), although this effect has not been consistently demonstrated (Russell & Hand, 2017). The findings of one study suggested the target and assailant may not necessarily still have to be romantically involved to derive this effect, as Krahe et al. (2007) found participants placed more blame on targets of assault if the assailant was an ex-romantic partner (as compared to acquaintance or stranger rape). The latter example is



particularly salient, because in the current study I examined the impact of a man's romantic interest with and without a woman's explicit current interest.

Taken together, there is support that violating stereotyped expectations of feminine behavior may lead to increased victim blaming. Branscombe and Weir (1992) took this research further and examined how these perceptions may impact the decision making of jury members. In their study, they presented participants with vignettes describing sexual assaults with varying degree of resistance from the survivor. Participants in the study were instructed to act as a member of a jury deciding the sentence of a male defendant that had been accused of rape. Prior to their decision, participants read an account of the rape with varying levels of resistance during the attack. Some participants read that the survivor had provided low verbal resistance (e.g., stating "please let me go"), some read the survivor had provided high verbal resistance (e.g., screaming, swearing), some read the survivor performed low physical resistance (e.g., freezing and remaining still), and finally, some read the survivor performed high physical resistance (e.g., kicking and struggling throughout the attack). Those descriptions were also crossed with the types of resistance (e.g., both high verbal and physical; one high, one low; both low). It was conceptualized that the low resistance condition displayed more stereotype-consistent behaviors for women, including being submissive, passive, and weak (Bradley, 2015; Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Deaux & Lewis, 1984). In contrast, the high resistance vignettes demonstrated stereotype-inconsistent behaviors for women and the researchers proposed this would lead participants to have increased attributional processing leading them to subsequently penalize the woman more in the high fight vignettes (Branscombe & Weir, 1992). Moreover, it was reasoned that just world attributions might be used to maintain such stereotypic thinking because survivors who put up a great deal of resistance (high verbal,

high physical) and are still raped could be seen as violating participants' expectations for justice in the world. Overall, the results of Branscombe and Weir's (1992) study matched their hypothesis, and assailants that encountered low resistance actually received longer sentences than those who continued their attack in the face of high resistance. In other words, it is possible that women fighting back did not match with their expected stereotype of submission, which may have led the jurors to fear for their own safety and subsequently downgrade the woman's worth, leading them to feel that the attacker did not receive as harsh a punishment. The retribution for their stereotype inconsistent behavior was exhibited by providing less harsh punishments for their attacker. Of note, earlier studies examining resistance found less consistent effects. For example, a study by Scroggs (1976) also found that increased resistance decreased the length of suggestions for sentencing time for female participants yet found the opposite decision for male participants. An additional study was unable to identify a clear effect of resistance on sentencing time (Yarmey, 1985), suggesting additional factors are sometimes at play during these decisions.

The current project combined and expanded on theories surrounding belief in a just world and retribution for stereotype-inconsistent behavior. For a man who feels entitled to women's support, female rejection violates the way they believe a woman is supposed to act, including stereotyped expectations of obedience and sexual access (DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1993). This violation may be the action that leads some men to believe that in a just world, that woman is now deserving of an attack. Yet, entitled expectations do not fully explain why rejection would lead a man to blame women in general for sexual assaults. That is, these theories do not explain why a rejection from one woman would lead to the endorsement of broad victim blaming beliefs against other female sexual assault survivors. To account for this, vicarious retribution theory

explains how a transgression from one group member can lead to individuals wanting to obtain revenge on the entire group (Lickel et al., 2006; see below).

**Getting even: Out-groups and vicarious retribution.** Humans have a tendency to identify themselves with certain groups and identify others with different characteristics as being part of a group different than their own (Tajfel, 1981). Some categorization is conscious and effortful, such as considering oneself a fan of a certain sports team. In contrast, other groupings are habitual and automatic, such as categorizing others by their gender (Rudman & Glick, 2008). In fact, starting in childhood, gender is a primary way individuals categorize themselves and others (Harper & Shoeman, 2003; Kunda, 1999; Schneider, 2004). Of course, identifying with a specific gender can lead to a sense of connection with other members of that group, and research has suggested that observers are often more sympathetic toward members of their own in-group (Dovidio et al., 1997; Levine, Cassidy, Brazier, & Reicher, 2002). Yet putting individuals into categories may also negatively impact the way a person interacts with individuals outside their gender group, particularly when that person holds traditional views surrounding gender roles. For example, men who hold traditional attitudes about gender role scripts are more likely to rate women as comparatively less competent than men, even when women hold equivalent qualifications to those men (Abel & Meltzer, 2007; Eagly & Mladinic, 1994; Frieze et al., 2003). Furthermore, some theorists have suggested that individuals may attribute negative behavior exhibited by a member of a different group as reflective of that person's innate characteristics, while attribution of the same behavior when exhibited by an in-group member would be more likely to include recognition of the context that could have caused the behavior (see Pettigrew, 2001). Although theory outweighs empirical evidence in this latter domain, some earlier studies have demonstrated this effect (Duncan, 1976; Taylor & Jaggi, 1974; Wang & McKillip, 1978).

As such, it is possible that some men will attribute a woman's romantic rejection to more attributional variables, such as her being a woman who consciously leads-on men, rather than to context, such as her being in a monogamous relationship, contributing to rationalizations for revenge.

Of interest to this project, some researchers have suggested that retaliation for harm is not always aimed directly toward the person who caused the initial harm (Lickel et al., 2006; Strenstrom, Lickel, Denson, & Miller, 2008). This process called vicarious retribution occurs when individuals retaliate against members of a perceived out-group as a result of harm on the perceived in-group at the hands of a member of the out-group (Lickel et al., 2006). Collective blame occurs in which the entire out-group is blamed for the transgression instead of the specific individual who committed the act (Strenstrom et al., 2008). For example, a study by Strenstrom and colleagues (2008) identified that participants were more likely to have an urge to harm a self-identified out-group after recalling a time when a member of that out-group harmed a member of the participant's in-group. Their findings suggest learning that the in-group has been harmed, even if the individual themselves has not been harmed, may lead to the urge for revenge toward the entire out-group. A common historical example of this phenomena is seen when citizens of one country feel anger toward citizens in another country due to past wars between the two countries, despite not all individuals in each country being directly involved in committing the actions of war (Lickel et al., 2006). Although these interactions may play out between individuals in various groups, such as race, religion, or political affiliation, the current project focused on the grouping of gender.

One study examined gender groupings more specifically by measuring male participants' sexual arousal while listening to audiotaped descriptions of a man raping a woman versus

descriptions of consensual sex after male participants had either been insulted by a female confederate or had not received an insult (Yates, Barbaree, & Marshall, 1984). Their results showed that men who had not been insulted displayed significantly less arousal during descriptions of rape than descriptions of consensual sex. In contrast, men who had been insulted by the female confederate displayed similar levels of arousal during the rape and consensual sex descriptions. The authors suggested some potential explanations for this effect, including that the anger elicited by the insult may have disrupted participants ability to discriminate between consensual sex and rape, or that participants' anger increased the power of violence and cues of nonconsent to elicit sexual arousal (Yates et al., 1984). I offer an additional interpretation based on vicarious retribution theory in which the anger toward the initial woman who insulted the participant translated to some men experiencing satisfaction seeing another woman be harmed due to an increased urge to harm the out-group (i.e., women).

**Rejection as justification to retaliate.** Outside of insults, a variety of actions against a person can lead them to feel the urge for revenge, including social rejection. A meta-analysis by Blackhart, Nelson, Knowles, and Baumeister (2010) found social exclusion to reliably induce negative affect for participants across more than 190 studies. In fact, research has shown that social rejection increases blood pressure (Stroud, Tanofsky-Kraff, Wilfley, & Salovey, 2000) and activates the same parts of the brain as physical pain (Eisenberger, Lieberman & Williams, 2003). Moreover, research has shown that social rejection can lead to an increase in aggressive behavior and a decrease in impulse control for the person being rejected (Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Twenge, 2005; Twenge et al., 2001). That is, social rejection is perceived as harmful by the rejected individual and can result in similar aggressive responses as would a physical attack. To explain the path from experiencing ostracism to performing aggression,

Williams (2007) proposes a model in which the pain of social exclusion leads some individuals to experience a threat to their own existence and efficacy. In response to this threat, individuals may try to fortify these needs (i.e., the need to feel efficacious and have their existence recognized), or may resort to controlling and/or antisocial behaviors in order to regain their sense of control/efficacy and attract the attention of others (Williams, 2007). As such, individuals attempt to form bonds with others after being rejected. If there is no opportunity to bond, individuals might instead attempt to lash out or attack others who have, or have not, made them feel excluded.

Of note, the perception of social rejection to romantic requests may be particularly heightened for some men after interacting with a woman because some studies have shown that men are generally more likely than women to interpret an ambiguous interaction as a woman expressing interest and giving consent (Humphreys, 2007; Johnson, 1995). As a result, some men may be perceiving that women are interested in romantic or sexual relationships when they are not. They therefore may be making relational requests assuming feelings are reciprocated and are resultantly caught more off guard after the rejection, possibly resulting in more aggravation. Although North American social norms generally dictate it is not appropriate for men to be violent with women (Dutton & Nicholls, 2005; Felson, 2000; Felson & Feld, 2009; Harris, 1991), violence resulting from a provocation may be seen as more acceptable (Bradley, 2015; Brown & Tedeschi, 1976). Therefore, perceiving a rejection as a surprise threat may, consciously or not, sanction retaliations against female rejecters. In fact, a study by Kanin (1985) found a portion of men in their sample admitted that rape is sometimes justified. Specifically, Kanin interviewed 71 self-disclosed rapists along with 227 men that denied committing rape and found 86% of the self-disclosed rapists and 19% of the men who denied raping believed rape is

justified “under certain conditions,” particularly conditions in which the woman is a “teaser,” economically exploitative, or “loose” (p. 212). This study suggests some men will feel a rape is justifiable if a woman reportedly teased or lead-on another man.

**Shame.** Other theories suggest shame is the catalyst leading to aggression after rejection. Shame can be conceptualized as a painful, complex emotion that can arise from global negative evaluations about oneself and beliefs about the way others perceive the self (Cook, 1991; Lewis, 1992; Vikan, Hassel, Rugset, Johansen, & Moen, 2010), and can arise when people fail to meet perceived societal standards (Thompkins & Rando, 2003), such as fulfilling expectations related to their gender role. In fact, a study by Thompkins and Rando (2003) found college men experiencing more gender role conflict, including feeling restricted by the expectations of rigid gender roles, reported experiencing significantly more shame. For example, some men may feel shameful after public crying due to traditional views of masculinity suggesting men should not show their sadness (O’Neil, 2015). Another example may be the heteronormative expectation that men need to have sex with women, resulting in some men feeling shame if they are unable to secure a female sexual partner. Multiple authors have explored the relationship shame has with anger and have suggested that anger and aggression may be used as a way to cope with feelings of shame (Elison, Garofalo, & Velotti, 2014; Lewis, 1992; Miller, 1985; Scheff & Retzinger, 1991). When social rejection elicits shame, painful emotional experiences associated with shame, including humiliation and embarrassment (Cook, 1996; Elison et al., 2014; Scheff, 1988) may lead to unfocused anger or rage (Scheff, 1987; Tangney, Wagner, Fletcher, & Gramzow, 1992). In fact, a study by Thomaes, Stegge, Olthof, Bushman, and Nezlek (2011) demonstrated increased shame was associated with increased rage as early as young adolescence (i.e., age 10-13 years old). Furthermore, a study by Tangney et al. (1992) indicated that

individuals more prone to experience shame also experienced more anger, resentment, and a tendency to blame others for external events. This latter example further suggests that individuals prone to shame may evaluate external events more negatively after a rejection, such as blaming sociopolitical forces or modern women's attitudes for why they were rejected. As such, it is possible that aggressive responses displayed by the incel population may in part be a response to shame resulting from failure to obtain a sexual partner, making shame a particularly interesting variable that I measured in the current project.

### **Bringing It All Together: The Current Study**

In this project, I examined whether social rejection increased an aggressive urge in men for revenge due to the pain caused by the imagined rejection. For some men, the attribution that revenge is deserved may be heightened due to stereotyped expectations that women are to acquiesce to relational requests. In addition, this urge may take the form of vicarious retribution, in which the urge for revenge applies to women in general, instead of solely to the woman who did the rejecting. For the current project, it was theorized that this urge for revenge would take the form of endorsing victim blaming beliefs toward female sexual assault survivors (i.e., these endorsements reflect an increased belief that women deserve to be harmed), with higher levels of entitlement mediating this effect. I also measured levels of shame for all participants to better understand the emotional experience occurring for some men after imagining rejection and this potential moderating effect.

In addition, I explored the potential associations with greater identification with the stereotypical aspects of ones' gender and victim blaming. As mentioned previously, research has shown that individuals who endorse more traditional gender roles are more likely to place a greater portion of the blame for rape on the woman who was raped (Lambert & Raichle, 2000;



Simonson & Subich, 1999; Whatley, 2005), and I therefore tested to see if this effect is consistent with my sample. Following a much researched path of inquiry (Furnham, 2003), I also measured and sought to confirm that individuals higher in just world beliefs endorsed more victim blaming beliefs. As exploratory analyses, I also assessed participants' levels of self-rated aggression, impulse control, sexism, narcissism, and experiences with women in order to examine potential links between these measures and increased victim blaming beliefs of women after a woman rejects a man.

### **Pilot Study**

The experimental procedures for the main effect of this study were pilot tested in the winter of 2019. Male participants read randomized vignettes depicting a man either being romantically rejected, romantically accepted, socially rejected, or socially accepted by a woman, or read a control vignette in which a man buys a backpack. After reading one of the essays, participants provided responses to Ward's (1988) Attitudes toward Rape Victim Scale (ARVS) to assess their endorsement of victim blaming beliefs. Scores on the ARVS were compared across the five vignette groups, including the romantic rejection ( $n = 10, M = 29.90, SD = 13.12$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 9, M = 24.33, SD = 11.59$ ), social rejection ( $n = 8, M = 18.38, SD = 8.90$ ), social acceptance ( $n = 8, M = 16.88, SD = 6.73$ ), and control condition ( $n = 10, M = 22.00, SD = 12.33$ ). Post-hoc, focused comparisons indicated that the romantic rejection vignette produced significantly more victim blaming endorsements than the social rejection,  $t(16) = 2.12, p < .05$ , and social acceptance vignettes,  $t(16) = 2.54, p < .05$ . I additionally found that individuals who read a romantic-based vignette (acceptance or rejection) endorsed significantly more victim blaming than those who read a social-based vignette,  $t(33) = 2.70, p < .05$ . Although individuals who read about romantic rejection endorsed on average more victim blaming beliefs

than those who read about romantic acceptance, this difference was not statistically significant. Nevertheless, the sample size for the pilot was smaller than desired considering there were five randomized conditions ( $N = 45$ ) and tests for mediation and moderation were not conducted. As a result, the current project used a larger sample size ( $N = 120-150$ ) to confirm or refute the significant findings from the pilot study and to test whether mediation or moderation effects may exist. An entitlement measure, The Psychological Entitlement Scale (K. Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004), showed a significant correlation with victim blaming beliefs in the pilot study,  $r(43) = .42, p < .01$ , confirming the desire to explore entitlement as a mediator in the current project.

### **Hypotheses**

I tested the following hypotheses concerning factors influencing victim blaming of sexual assault survivors. Hypothesis 1 (H1a, H1b, and H1c) pertained to potential differential impacts the vignettes would have on participants' endorsements of victim blaming beliefs. I hypothesized that individuals who read the romantic rejection vignette would endorse significantly more victim blaming beliefs compared with individuals who read the romantic acceptance vignette, with higher scores on the ARVS (Ward, 1988) indicating increased victim blaming (H1a). I also hypothesized that individuals who read the social rejection vignette would endorse significantly more victim blaming beliefs compared with individuals who read the social acceptance vignette (H1b). In addition, I hypothesized that individuals who read the romantic rejection vignette would endorse more victim blaming beliefs compared with individuals who read the social rejection vignette (H1c).

For Hypothesis 2, I explored whether feeling higher levels of entitlement caused by priming romantic rejection would lead to higher victim blaming attributions as a result of feeling more entitled in that moment. I hypothesized that feeling higher levels of entitlement would mediate the relationship between reading the romantic rejection vignette and increased victim blaming as measured by the Psychological Entitlement Scale (K. Campbell et al., 2004).

For Hypothesis 3, I explored the role shame may play for some individuals after thinking about rejection and whether it may lead to more aggressive responses manifesting as higher victim blaming. I hypothesized that having higher trait shame would be a significant moderator between reading either rejection vignette and increased victim blaming as measured by The Shame Inventory (Rizvi, 2010). I theorized that individuals more susceptible to shame would in turn have stronger effects from imagining rejection.

Finally, because prior research has shown that individuals higher in just world beliefs and traditional masculine beliefs are also higher in victim blaming beliefs, I hypothesized (Hypothesis 4) that participants who scored higher in each of these domains would endorse significantly more victim blaming beliefs as measured by correlations between victim blaming and the Procedural and Distributive Just World Scale (Lucas, Alexander, Firestone, & LeBreton, 2007), as well as victim blaming and the Traditional Masculinity-Femininity Scale (Kachel, Steffens, & Niedlich, 2016).

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants for this study were cisgender men recruited from Eastern Michigan University (EMU). All participants were asked to supply their age, gender identity (to ensure I obtained the intended population), sexual orientation, and how they heard about the study. Participants were able to find the link to the study on Sona using their EMU credentials and could use participation for extra credit when allowed by their professors. In order to reach more students, I also petitioned the IRB for approval to obtain a random sample of student emails from EMU's Institutional Research office (see Appendix A), and I sent mass recruitment emails to 1,000 male students offering incentives for participation (i.e., they could be entered into a drawing containing four \$25.00 gift cards to Amazon). For students interested in obtaining extra credit or interested in being entered in the drawing, they had the option at the end of the study to provide their full name and email on a webpage separate from and not connected to their responses to the study measures.

### **Procedure**

All questionnaires, vignettes, and measures for the study were available on Qualtrics for participants to complete online. After participants consented to participate in the study, they were randomly assigned to one of five groups, with each group reading a different vignette (i.e., they either read a story about a man being romantically rejected by a woman; a story about a man being socially rejected by a woman; a story about a man being romantically accepted by a woman; a story about a man being socially accepted by a woman; or a control condition story about a man who buys a backpack; see Appendix B). In each vignette, they were instructed to imagine themselves as the man in the story. These vignettes were created for this project, tested

in a pilot study, and were found to effectively induce significantly different responses on the dependent variable of the current study. Previous studies have also successfully used vignettes to induce negative feelings related to social rejection (Allen, Horne, & Trinder, 1996; Craighead, Kimball, & Rehak, 1979; Vandavelde & Miyahara, 2005). After participants read their assigned vignette, they were administered multiple self-report measures to be used in exploratory analyses surrounding correlations and interactions between the vignettes, other study measures, and victim blaming.

### Measures

**The Attitudes Toward Rape Victims Scale (ARVS).** Participants were administered the ARVS to assess their level of victim blaming after reading their assigned vignette (Ward, 1988). This scale examines beliefs and attitudes toward female sexual assault survivors with a particular emphasis on victim blaming, including the perceptions of the credibility, deservingness, denigration, and trivialization of rape survivors (Ward, 1988). The 25-item self-report measure assesses individuals' attitudes toward rape survivors by having them endorse how much they agree with statements on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 0 (*disagree strongly*) to 4 (*agree strongly*). Example items include: "In most cases when a woman was raped she deserved it" and reversed scored items such as "a raped woman is usually an innocent victim." After accounting for reverse scored items, participants' responses are summed to an overall total score. Higher scores on this measure indicate more victim blaming endorsements and less favorable attitudes toward sexual assault survivors (Ward, 1988). Ward found this scale to have good construct validity and good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .83-.86$ ). Lee and Cheung (1991) found slightly lower internal consistency with the ARVS ( $\alpha = .75$ ) and adequate but smaller convergent validity.

**Qualitative explanations.** After participants complete the ARVS, they were shown their responses to the specific items of “it would do some women good to be raped” and “a woman should not blame herself for rape” and were asked to explain their responses to these items. Participants that read the rejection vignettes were also asked “why do you believe the woman in the story rejected him?” These explanations were coded as a function of explanations of vengeance, of self-concern, for the number of negative and positive word indications, for the number of emotion-laden words, and for the total number of words used. For the item “A woman should not blame herself for rape,” the explanation was also coded for whether or not it referred to alcohol use, a woman being in a dangerous place, or what the woman was wearing. These codes were judged by raters who were blind to the participant’s randomized condition and the study hypotheses. The raters also tallied the total words used for each category of explanation listed here. See Appendix C for a copy of the qualitative coding scheme.

**Retribution questions.** As a measure of retribution to gauge whether participants did have an urge to harm the out-group (i.e., women) after reading the vignettes, participants were asked to respond to two questions assessing their level of agreement with the following statements: “After the event, I wanted to retaliate against the specific woman for what she did” and “After the event, I wanted to retaliate against all women for what happened.” Given that there was no mention of a woman in the control condition, these questions were only asked of the participants that read the acceptance or rejection vignettes. Although psychometric properties are not available for these questions, they are modeled off of items used by Strenstrom et al. (2008) in their study assessing vicarious retribution. Participants chose their response from a 9-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 9 (*strongly agree*). Higher agreement on the former question indicates an increased urge to retaliate against the rejecter,

while higher agreement on the latter question indicates higher urge to obtain vicarious retribution.

**Mood assessment.** To better understand the potential emotional impact of each vignette on participants, participants were administered the Brief Mood Introspection Scale (BMIS; Mayer & Gaschke, 2013; see Appendix D). The scale uses 16-items to measure the degree to which participants currently feel a number of common emotional states, such as feeling happy, sad, or nervous. Specifically, participants rate the degree they currently feel each emotion on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*definitely do not feel*) to 4 (*definitely feel*). The scale is scored by summing the participants' responses to specific items while reverse scoring others in order to obtain four mood dimensions: pleasant-unpleasant, arousal-calm, positive-tired, and negative-relaxed (Mayer, 2018). Different specified items are summed to obtain each scale. Higher scores on each scale indicate more pleasant, aroused, positive, and negative moods, respectively. The scale has demonstrated good factorial validity along with adequate to good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .76-.83$ ; Mayer & Gaschke, 1988).

**The Shame Inventory.** As this work was exploring whether higher levels of trait shame could lead to increased aggression following rejection which in turn could lead to attributions that those who they feel aggression toward deserve an attack, a measure of trait shame was included. Participants were administered an abbreviated version of The Shame Inventory in order to assess their general tendencies in terms of trait shame (Rizvi, 2010). The first three items of the scale that are used for the current project pertain to participants overall global feelings of shame and ask them to identify how often they feel shame on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*always*), the intensity or severity of the shame they typically experience on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (*none*) to 4 (*extreme*), and the extent shame negatively impacts their



life on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (*no effect*) to 4 (*extreme effect*). Their responses were summed to create a total trait shame score, with higher scores indicating higher levels of shame. The remaining 50 items measure participants current state shame and were not used for this project for multiple reasons. First, The Shame Inventory was not given in its entirety because it did not make sense to measure state shame prior to participants reading the vignettes, yet this project aimed to measure trait shame prior to participants' assignments to vignette conditions. State shame is measured at a later point in the study, but The State Shame and Guilt Scale (Marschall, Saftner, & Tangney, 1994) was used instead given its shorter length, along with our ability to give the entire scale and therefore keep it as it was intended and tested upon. Furthermore, the abbreviated version of The Shame Inventory scale was chosen over other trait shame scales due to its shorter length and accessibility to researchers. Given that The Shame Inventory was not designed and has not been tested with this abbreviated version, results surrounding the association or interaction of trait shame with other study measures should be interpreted with caution. As a full scale, Rizvi (2010) found The Shame Inventory to have good convergent validity and discriminant validity from measures of guilt. She also found it to have good predictive validity, good test-retest reliability over a one-week period, and good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

**Psychological Entitlement Scale.** The Psychological Entitlement Scale was used to assess participants' beliefs that they deserve more than others to explore whether feeling more entitled after reading the rejection vignettes could lead to a heightened desire for retribution (K. Campbell et al., 2004). The nine items on the entitlement scale are measured by having participants rate their level of agreement with each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strong disagreement*) to 7 (*strong agreement*). Example items include: "Things should

go my way” and “I honestly feel I’m just more deserving than others.” After accounting for some reverse scored items, participants’ responses are summed to one total score, with higher scores indicating higher psychological entitlement. This measure has demonstrated good construct validity, good test-retest reliability over a 2-month period, and good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .83-.87$ ; K. Campbell et al., 2004).

**Procedural and Distributive Just World Scale.** To measure participants’ endorsement of just world beliefs in order to examine whether it correlated with victim blaming, participants completed Lucas et al.’s (2007) Procedural and Distributive Just World Scale. The scale consists of 8 items and is measured by having participants rate how much they agree with statements such as “people usually receive the outcomes that they deserve” and “I feel that people generally earn the rewards and punishments that they get in this world.” Responses are provided on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Participants’ responses to each item are summed to create two subscale scores each consisting of four items, with higher scores on both subscales indicating more belief in a just world. The subscales include a procedural justice subscale, which examines how fair participants believe decision making processes are, and a distributive justice subscale, which examines how fair participants believe outcomes and allocation of resources are in the world (Lucas et al., 2007). Lucas et al. found the scale to have good convergent and discriminant validity along with good internal consistency for both procedural justice items ( $\alpha = .89-.92$ ) and distributive justice items ( $\alpha = .88-.92$ ).

**Traditional Masculinity-Femininity Scale.** All participants were also administered the Traditional Masculinity-Femininity scale (TMF), a brief scale designed to assess facets of how traditionally masculine or feminine participants perceive themselves to be (Kachel et al., 2016), in order to examine whether traditional masculinity correlated with victim blaming. On the TMF,

participants respond to six questions about their self-perceptions on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*very masculine*) to 7 (*very feminine*). Example items include “traditionally, my behavior would be regarded as...” and “traditionally, my attitudes and beliefs would be regarded as...” Participants’ responses are averaged to produce an overall score between 1 and 7, with lower scores indicating higher masculinity and higher scores indicating higher femininity (Kachel et al., 2016). Kachel et al. (2016) found this scale to have good convergent validity, high test-retest reliability over a 1-year period, and good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

**Aggression Questionnaire.** As this work was looking at retribution toward others, and that blaming survivors of sexual assault could be seen as acts of violence or aggression, a measure of aggression was included. Participants completed Buss and Perry’s (1992) Aggression Questionnaire to better understand participants’ levels of aggression, hostility, and anger (see Appendix E). On the scale, participants are asked to rate how characteristic each of the 29 items are of them on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*extremely uncharacteristic of me*) to 7 (*extremely characteristic of me*). Example items include “I have become so mad that I have broken things” and “I flare up quickly but get over it quickly.” Participants’ responses are summed to create an overall aggression score. Specific items are also summed to create a score for each of the scale’s four subscales, including physical aggression, verbal aggression, hostility, and anger (Buss & Perry, 1992). On all subscales, higher scores indicate higher levels of aggression.

Each of the Aggression Questionnaire’s subscales, including physical aggression, verbal aggression, hostility, and anger, have demonstrated adequate to good internal consistency at Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .75-.85$ ,  $\alpha = .70-.72$ ,  $\alpha = .77-.82$ ,  $\alpha = .80-.83$ , respectively (Harris, 1997). Buss and Perry (1992) found strong evidence for the construct validity of their physical aggression items, while the evidence of construct validity for the verbal aggression, hostility, and anger

items were more modest. Harris (1997) also found the Aggression Questionnaire to have construct validity as well as moderately high to high test-retest reliability over 7- months.

**Abbreviated Impulsiveness Scale.** Participants then completed the Abbreviated Impulsiveness Scale (ABIS; Coutlee, Politzer, Hoyle, & Huettel, 2014) to explore whether level of impulsivity would impact other study measures. This 13-item scale is an abbreviated version of the widely used Barratt's Impulsiveness Scale (Patton, Stanford, & Barratt, 1995) and was constructed using confirmatory factor analysis to improve the validity and reliability of the items from the original scale. In practice, the scale examines motor, non-planning, and attentional impulsivity by having participants rate their self-perceptions of themselves and their actions on a 4-point scale ranging from 1 (*rarely/never*) to 4 (*almost always/always*). Example items include: "I say things without thinking" and "I act on the spur of the moment." A score is obtained for each subscale (i.e., motor, non-planning, and attentional impulsivity) by reverse scoring some specified items and averaging responses to specific items for each subscale (Coutlee et al., 2014). Lower average scores indicate higher impulsivity. The ABIS has demonstrated adequate to good internal consistency ( $\alpha = .70-.88$ ) and good external validity (Coutlee et al., 2014).

**Ambivalent Sexism Inventory.** The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) was used to assess participants' levels of benevolent and hostile sexism and explore how they may be related to victim blaming (Glick & Fiske, 1996). This 22-item scale is measured by having participants rate their level of agreement with each item on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 6 (*agree strongly*). Example items include "Women seek to gain power by getting control over men" and "Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste." After accounting for some reverse scored items, participants' responses can be summed to a total score of ambivalent sexism, or subscale scores of hostile or

benevolent sexism, with higher scores indicating higher levels of sexism. This measure has demonstrated good convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity, along with adequate to good internal consistency for the total ambivalent sexism scale ( $\alpha = .83-.92$ ), the hostile sexism subscale ( $\alpha = .80-.92$ ), and the benevolent sexism subscale ( $\alpha = .73-.85$ ; Glick & Fiske, 1996).

**Narcissistic Personality Inventory.** The Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-16) was used to assess participants' level of narcissism and explore how it may be related to victim blaming in this sample (Ames, Rose, & Anderson, 2006). This 16-item scale is measured by having participants choose pairs of statements and choose which one best describes their feelings and beliefs and about themselves. Example items include "I like to be the center of attention" versus "I prefer to blend in with the crowd." Participants' responses on items associated with narcissism are summed to create an overall narcissism score, with higher scores indicating higher levels of narcissism. This scale was created by using select items from the larger NPI-40 (Raskin & Terry, 1988) and has demonstrated good convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity, along with adequate reliability ( $\alpha = .69-.78$ ). Although the NPI-40 has shown better reliability across its 40 items ( $\alpha = .83-.84$ ; Ames et al., 2006), the NPI-16 was chosen for this study due to its shorter length in consideration of the number of responses participants are already being asked to provide.

**State Shame and Guilt Scale.** The State Shame and Guilt Scale was used to assess participants' current level of state shame to explore how state shame may have impacted participants' responses surrounding victim blaming after reading their assigned vignette (Marschall et al., 1994). This 10-item scale is measured by having participants rate how well different statements describe how they are feeling in that moment on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not feeling this way at all*) to 5 (*feeling this way very strongly*). Example items include:

“I feel humiliated, disgraced” and “I want to sink into the floor and disappear.” Participants’ responses are summed for select items to create an overall guilt score and an overall state shame score, with higher scores indicating higher guilt or shame. In college samples, this measure has demonstrated good convergent validity, predictive validity, test-retest reliability, and internal consistence ( $\alpha = .82-.89$ ; as cited in Cavalera, Pepe, Zurloni, Diana, & Realdon, 2017).

**Romantic relationship questions.** Additional analyses were conducted to explore whether participants’ past experiences with women may moderate results. At the end of the study, participants were asked to report their current relationship status, how many “serious” or “casual” romantic relationships they have been in, and whether they have experienced a complicated or “bad” breakup (see Appendix F).

### **Data Analysis**

All statistical analyses were performed using IBM SPSS. To address Hypotheses 1a–c, planned contrasts were performed across the randomly assigned groups to examine differences in victim blaming endorsements as measured by their scores on the ARVS (Ward, 1988). These contrasts included comparisons of those reading the following vignettes: romantic rejection versus romantic acceptance, social rejection versus social acceptance, and romantic rejection versus social rejection. To address Hypothesis 2, I planned to use regression techniques to test whether level of entitlement as measured by the Psychological Entitlement Scale (K. Campbell et al., 2004) mediates the relationships between reading about romantic rejection and higher victim blaming beliefs. To address Hypothesis 3, I planned to use regression techniques test whether level of shame as measured by The Shame Inventory (Rizvi, 2010) moderates the relationship between reading either rejection vignette and endorsement of victim blaming beliefs. To address Hypothesis 4, I examined whether higher levels of just world beliefs as measured by the Procedural and Distributive Just World Scale (Lucas et al., 2007) and higher levels of traditional masculinity as measured by the TMF scale (Kachel et al., 2016) significantly correlated with higher levels of victim blaming.

Focused contrasts were also performed to explore the relationship between participants' qualitative explanations and vignette condition to better understand the impact of each vignette and to see if participants in some conditions discussed more vengeance, self-concern, negativity, positivity, emotionally-laden content, or use more words to explain their positions as judged by word counts. Separate analyses were conducted for each of the three qualitative questions.

Lastly, exploratory analyses were conducted using correlations and multiple regression to better understand potential relationships between participants' responses on other study

measures, personal history, and demographics. In addition to the measures administered that related directly to the hypotheses, tests for correlations between measures were performed on participants' level of aggression as measured by the Aggression Questionnaire (Buss & Perry, 1992), level of impulsivity as measured by the ABIS (Coutlee et al., 2014), level ambivalent sexism as measured by the ASI (Glick & Fiske, 1996), level of narcissistic personality traits as measured by the NPI-16 (Ames et al., 2006), level of state shame and guilt as measured by the State Shame and Guilt Scale (Marschall et al., 1994), past experiences with women, relationship status, and sexual orientation. When significant correlations between a scale and victim blaming were found, linear regression was used to test for interactions between that measure and vignette condition on subsequent victim blaming. These tests for interactions examined each vignette condition individually compared with the control condition.

Of note, sexual orientation was included as a potential moderator in particular to examine differences between individuals who read the romantic rejection vignette that identify as being romantically or sexually interested in women versus those who are not. It was theorized that those individuals who are romantically or sexually interested in women would be more likely to endorse more victim blaming after reading the romantic rejection vignette than those who are not due to greater identification with the man in the vignette.



## Results

Data collection took place between September 12<sup>th</sup> through December 19<sup>th</sup> of 2019. A total of 268 participants took part in the study. Out of that pool, 141 participants fit the demographic specifications of this project (i.e., identified themselves as cisgender males). The responses of the remaining participants were not included in any analyses because they were not hypothesized as matching key assumptions. Correlations between each measure administered and the dependent variable (victim blaming) can be seen in Table 1. Correlations between all of the measures administered can be seen in the correlation matrix in Table 2. Given the results of Hypothesis 1, it is assumed that the correlations between study measures were not impacted by the study manipulation.

### Sample Characteristics

Out of 141 participants who identified themselves as cisgender males, only 129 completed enough scales to be used in data analyses. Out of this sample, participants' ages ranged from 18 through 47, with 85.1% being between the age of 18 and 28 ( $n = 133$ ), with 7.7% ( $n = 11$ ) of participants not providing their age. Within the sample, 68.1% of these participants initially learned about the study via EMU's Sona System ( $n = 96$ ), 20.6% found out about it from an email ( $n = 29$ ), 0.7% found out about it from a flyer on campus ( $n = 1$ ), and 10.6% did not provide an answer to this item ( $n = 15$ ). In terms of socioeconomic class, 9.2% identified as lower class ( $n = 13$ ), 20.6% as lower middle ( $n = 29$ ), 41.1% as middle ( $n = 58$ ), 17.7% as upper middle ( $n = 25$ ), while 11.3% did not provide an answer ( $n = 16$ ).

In terms of the racial demographics of the sample, 61% of participants identified themselves as White ( $n = 86$ ), 17% as Black or African American ( $n = 24$ ), 2.8% as Asian ( $n = 4$ ), 0.7% as American Indian or Alaskan Native ( $n = 1$ ), 1.4% as Hispanic or Latino ( $n = 2$ ), 6.3%

of participants identified that their race was not one of the listed options ( $n = 9$ ), and 10.6% of the participants did not provide a response to the item asking their race ( $n = 15$ ). In terms of sexual orientation, 80.1% identified themselves as heterosexual ( $n = 113$ ), 7.1% as homosexual ( $n = 10$ ), 0% as bisexual, and 2.1% indicated their sexual orientation was not a listed option ( $n = 3$ ). On the following item, these three individuals described their sexual orientations as either “asexual,” “asexual-demisexual,” or “queer.” Again, 10.6% of participants did not provide an answer to the question about sexual orientation ( $n = 15$ ). College majors across the sample varied greatly, with more than 50 different majors represented in the sample. The highest representation from a major came from psychology majors ( $n = 19$ ) followed by social work ( $n = 6$ ).

### **Hypotheses**

**Hypothesis 1.** The initial hypotheses (H1a, H1b, and H1c) pertained to potential differential impacts the vignettes could have on participants’ endorsements of victim blaming beliefs as measured by the ARVS (Ward, 1988). Scores on the ARVS can range from 0 to 100, with 0 being the least victim blaming beliefs endorsed and 100 being the most. Averaged across the participants, level of victim blaming was generally low ( $N = 129$ ,  $M = 20.71$ ,  $SD = 12.49$ ). Although low, this is similar to the average from the pilot study ( $N = 45$ ,  $M = 22.67$ ,  $SD = 11.51$ ) as well as Ward’s (1988) initial finding validating the scale with college students attending the University of Arizona ( $N = 572$ ,  $M = 24.53$ ,  $SD = 13.17$ ).

Scores were compared across the five vignette conditions, including the social acceptance ( $n = 25$ ,  $M = 20.72$ ,  $SD = 12.07$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 25$ ,  $M = 22.40$ ,  $SD = 12.89$ ), social rejection ( $n = 27$ ,  $M = 18.96$ ,  $SD = 10.95$ ), romantic rejection ( $n = 22$ ,  $M = 19.73$ ,  $SD = 13.02$ ), and control condition ( $n = 30$ ,  $M = 21.60$ ,  $SD = 13.91$ ). Despite initial differences found in the pilot study, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed no significant differences

between any vignette conditions on victim blaming,  $F(4, 124) = 0.31, p = .87$ , rejecting this project's first hypothesis. As such, an omnibus test of differences was ineffective at detecting any potential differences between the five conditions. Reasons for these null findings compared with the pilot study data are explored in discussion section. Sample sizes, mean scores, and standard deviations of scores on the ARVS by vignette condition in this study, as well as from the pilot study, can be seen in Table 3.

**Hypothesis 1a.** I hypothesized that individuals who read the romantic rejection vignette would endorse significantly more victim blaming beliefs compared with individuals who read the romantic acceptance vignette. This comparison revealed no significant difference between participants in the romantic acceptance and romantic rejection vignette conditions on their endorsement of victim blaming beliefs,  $t(45) = -0.71, p = .48$ , rejecting Hypothesis 1a.

**Hypothesis 1b.** I hypothesized that individuals who read the social rejection vignette would endorse significantly more victim blaming beliefs compared with individuals who read the social acceptance vignette. This comparison revealed no significant difference between participants in the social acceptance and social rejection vignette conditions on their endorsement of victim blaming beliefs,  $t(50) = -0.55, p = .72$ , rejecting Hypothesis 1b.

**Hypothesis 1c.** I hypothesized that individuals who read the romantic rejection vignette would endorse significantly more victim blaming beliefs compared with individuals who read the social rejection vignette. This comparison revealed no significant difference between participants in the romantic rejection and social rejection vignette conditions on their endorsement of victim blaming beliefs,  $t(47) = 0.22, p = .82$ , rejecting Hypothesis 1c.

**Hypothesis 2.** I hypothesized that higher levels of entitlement would mediate the relationship between reading the romantic rejection vignette (as compared to the control

vignette) and increased victim blaming as measured by the Psychological Entitlement Scale (K. Campbell et al., 2004). Any test of mediation between the romantic rejection vignette and victim blaming beliefs was not possible due to the null effect of the vignette on increasing victim blaming beliefs, therefore rejecting this project's second hypothesis. Exploratory findings surrounding the entitlement scale, including a significant correlation between higher victim blaming and higher levels of entitlement, are explored in the additional analyses section.

**Hypothesis 3.** I hypothesized that higher shame would be a significant moderator between reading either rejection vignette vs. the acceptance vignettes and increased victim blaming as measured by an abbreviated version of The Shame Inventory (Rizvi, 2010). Results of linear regression did not reveal a significant interaction between reading about rejection versus acceptance and trait shame on victim blaming,  $b = -0.36$ ,  $t(99) = -1.68$ ,  $p = .10$ , rejecting the third hypothesis. Further results surrounding trait shame, including the properties of the abbreviated version of The Shame Inventory and a significant correlation with victim blaming, are explored in the additional analyses section.

**Hypothesis 4.** I hypothesized that participants who scored higher in just world beliefs and traditional masculinity would endorse significantly more victim blaming beliefs as measured by the Procedural and Distributive Just World Scale (Lucas, Alexander, Firestone, & LeBreton, 2007) and the Traditional Masculinity-Femininity Scale (Kachel, Steffens, & Niedlich, 2016). Results indicated a small, albeit significant positive correlation between procedural just world beliefs and victim blaming,  $r(127) = .22$ ,  $p < .05$ , and distributive belief in a just world and victim blaming,  $r(127) = .22$ ,  $p < .05$ , indicating higher belief in a just world was correlated with increased victim blaming for our sample. A significant moderate positive correlation was also found between higher traditional masculinity and victim blaming,  $r(127) = .35$ ,  $p < .001$ . As a

result, this project's fourth hypothesis was confirmed. Further analyses on each scale are explored in the additional analyses section.

### **Additional Analyses**

**Qualitative explanations.** All qualitative responses, including the two items asking why participants selected certain answers to victim blaming questions along with asking why the man in the vignette was rejected, were coded twice by research assistants trained on the relevant coding scheme. Twenty percent of the responses coded by each research assistant were randomly selected and coded by the head researcher on this study to assess reliability and obtain a kappa coefficient, a statistic measuring agreement between coders and the associated reliability of each coder's work (Cohen, 1960). All kappa coefficients were obtained using IBM SPSS. The research assistants and the primary coder were required to reach a kappa statistic above 0.8 agreement for the coded qualitative data to be considered reliable and added to the final analysis, with kappa values above 0.8 indicating almost perfect agreement between coders (Landis & Koch, 1977; Cohen, 1960). Kappa coefficients between the project head and three research assistants were deemed acceptable with Kappa values ranging between 0.92–.96, 0.88–0.96, and 0.88–0.95 for each research assistant respectively. When disagreements between codes arose between coders, they were reviewed by the project head, with the project head's decision on the code superseding research assistant's codes.

The analysis of the results revealed only one difference by vignette condition on the items coded for. Of note, no participants included explanations of vengeance (e.g., "women deserve sexual assault as revenge their behavior) or self-concern (e.g., "I feel this way because of what women have done to me") in their responses. Total number of words used across the three items ranged from 1 to 163 ( $M = 28.98$ ,  $SD = 23.56$ ). Number of positive words used ranged from 0 to

7 ( $M = 0.42$ ,  $SD = 0.78$ ), number of negative words used ranged from 0 to 6 ( $M = 0.80$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ), and number of emotion laden words ranged from 0 to 3 ( $M = 0.07$ ,  $SD = 0.32$ ). Examples of common, unique, and interesting responses to the qualitative questions are explored in the discussion section.

Univariate comparisons were performed across the vignette conditions for the item “It would do some women good to be raped.” No significant differences were found on number of words used,  $F(4, 120) = 1.66$ ,  $p = .16$ , between the romantic rejection ( $n = 18$ ,  $M = 34.56$ ,  $SD = 27.51$ ), social rejection ( $n = 27$ ,  $M = 24.89$ ,  $SD = 26.42$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 24$ ,  $M = 25.25$ ,  $SD = 15.58$ ), social acceptance ( $n = 25$ ,  $M = 25.40$ ,  $SD = 18.03$ ), and control conditions ( $n = 31$ ,  $M = 19.13$ ,  $SD = 12.54$ ). No significant differences were found for number of negative words used,  $F(4, 120) = 1.31$ ,  $p = .27$ , between the romantic rejection ( $n = 18$ ,  $M = 1.44$ ,  $SD = 1.62$ ), social rejection ( $n = 27$ ,  $M = 1.41$ ,  $SD = 1.55$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 24$ ,  $M = 0.71$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ), social acceptance ( $n = 25$ ,  $M = 1.40$ ,  $SD = 1.41$ ), and control conditions ( $n = 31$ ,  $M = 1.19$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ). No significant differences were found for number of positive words used,  $F(4, 120) = 0.48$ ,  $p = .75$ , between the romantic rejection ( $n = 18$ ,  $M = 0.83$ ,  $SD = 1.69$ ), social rejection ( $n = 27$ ,  $M = 0.56$ ,  $SD = 0.75$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 24$ ,  $M = 0.87$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ), social acceptance ( $n = 25$ ,  $M = 0.76$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ), and control conditions ( $n = 31$ ,  $M = 0.65$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ). Similarly, no significant differences were found for number of emotion laden words used,  $F(4, 120) = 0.49$ ,  $p = .75$ , between the romantic rejection ( $n = 18$ ,  $M = 0.17$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ), social rejection ( $n = 27$ ,  $M = 0.04$ ,  $SD = 0.19$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 24$ ,  $M = 0.04$ ,  $SD = 0.20$ ), social acceptance ( $n = 25$ ,  $M = 0.04$ ,  $SD = 0.20$ ), and control conditions ( $n = 31$ ,  $M = 0.10$ ,  $SD = 0.40$ ).

Univariate comparisons were also performed across the vignette conditions for the item “A woman should not blame herself for rape.” Again, no significant differences were found between the vignettes on number of words used,  $F(4, 119) = 1.92, p = .11$ , between the romantic rejection ( $n = 18, M = 45.00, SD = 42.20$ ), social rejection ( $n = 26, M = 28.62, SD = 17.80$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 24, M = 32.71, SD = 23.90$ ), social acceptance ( $n = 25, M = 31.64, SD = 23.86$ ), and control conditions ( $n = 31, M = 24.61, SD = 20.54$ ). No significant differences were found for number of negative words used,  $F(4, 119) = 1.99, p = .10$ , between the romantic rejection ( $n = 18, M = 0.72, SD = 1.02$ ), social rejection ( $n = 26, M = 0.50, SD = 0.86$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 24, M = 0.21, SD = 0.51$ ), social acceptance ( $n = 25, M = 0.76, SD = 1.13$ ), and control conditions ( $n = 31, M = 0.32, SD = 0.60$ ). No significant differences were found for number of positive words used,  $F(4, 118) = 0.58, p = .68$ , between the romantic rejection ( $n = 18, M = 0.06, SD = 0.24$ ), social rejection ( $n = 25, M = 0.12, SD = 0.44$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 24, M = 0.21, SD = 0.51$ ), social acceptance ( $n = 25, M = 0.12, SD = 0.44$ ), and control conditions ( $n = 31, M = 0.06, SD = 0.25$ ). No significant differences were found for number of emotion laden words used,  $F(4, 119) = 0.31, p = .87$ , between the romantic rejection ( $n = 18, M = 0.00, SD = 0.00$ ), social rejection ( $n = 26, M = 0.08, SD = 0.27$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 24, M = 0.04, SD = 0.20$ ), social acceptance ( $n = 25, M = 0.08, SD = 0.28$ ), and control conditions ( $n = 31, M = 0.06, SD = 0.40$ ).

For the item “A woman should not blame herself for rape,” coders also recorded whether or not the participant mentioned women’s attire, being in a dangerous place, or alcohol in their responses. No significant differences were found on how often attire was mentioned,  $F(4, 119) = 2.18, p = .08$ , across the romantic rejection ( $n = 18, M = 1.78, SD = 0.43$ ), social rejection ( $n = 26, M = 1.96, SD = 0.20$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 24, M = 1.75, SD = 0.44$ ), social acceptance

( $n = 25$ ,  $M = 1.92$ ,  $SD = 0.28$ ), and control conditions ( $n = 31$ ,  $M = 1.94$ ,  $SD = 0.25$ ). No significant differences were found on how often being in a dangerous place was mentioned,  $F(4, 119) = 2.67$ ,  $p = .04$ , across the romantic rejection ( $n = 18$ ,  $M = 1.89$ ,  $SD = 0.32$ ), social rejection ( $n = 26$ ,  $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = 0.00$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 24$ ,  $M = 1.87$ ,  $SD = 0.34$ ), social acceptance ( $n = 25$ ,  $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = 0.00$ ), and control conditions ( $n = 31$ ,  $M = 2.00$ ,  $SD = 0.00$ ). Lastly, no significant differences were found on how often alcohol was mentioned,  $F(4, 119) = 0.21$ ,  $p = .93$ , across the romantic rejection ( $n = 18$ ,  $M = 1.94$ ,  $SD = 0.24$ ), social rejection ( $n = 26$ ,  $M = 1.96$ ,  $SD = 0.20$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 24$ ,  $M = 1.92$ ,  $SD = 0.28$ ), social acceptance ( $n = 25$ ,  $M = 1.92$ ,  $SD = 0.28$ ), and control conditions ( $n = 31$ ,  $M = 1.90$ ,  $SD = 0.30$ ). Across all five vignette conditions, women's attire was mentioned the most as a reason people blame women for sexual assault ( $n = 15$ ), followed by alcohol use ( $n = 9$ ), and being in a dangerous location ( $n = 6$ ).

Focused contrasts were performed by vignette condition for the item "Why do you believe the woman in the story rejected him?" Only individuals in the romantic rejection and social rejection vignette groups were asked this question, so comparisons on this item are only between two groups. Individuals who read about social rejection used significantly more negative words ( $n = 26$ ,  $M = 0.81$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) than individuals who read about romantic rejection ( $n = 19$ ,  $M = 0.11$ ,  $SD = 0.46$ ),  $t(43) = 2.55$ ,  $p < .05$ . No significant differences were found between the romantic rejection ( $n = 19$ ,  $M = 0.37$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ) and social rejection ( $n = 26$ ,  $M = 0.46$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ) conditions on number of positive words used,  $t(43) = 0.41$ ,  $p = .69$ . No significant differences were found between the romantic rejection ( $n = 19$ ,  $M = 0.21$ ,  $SD = 0.42$ ) and social rejection ( $n = 26$ ,  $M = 0.08$ ,  $SD = 0.27$ ) conditions on number of emotion laden words,  $t(43) = -1.38$ ,  $p = .20$ . Finally, no significant differences were found between the romantic



rejection ( $n = 19, M = 32.95, SD = 24.32$ ) and social rejection ( $n = 26, M = 33.54, SD = 23.58$ ) conditions on the total number of words used,  $t(43) = 0.08, p = .94$ .

**Retribution questions.** Participants who read either of the acceptance or rejection vignettes (excluding the control group) endorsed how much they had an urge to harm the woman in the story and how much they had an urge to harm women in general after reading their assigned vignette. Participants' responses could range from 1 to 9, with a response of 1 representing the least urge to retaliate and a score of 9 representing the highest urge to retaliate. Across the sample, urge to retaliate against the specific woman in the story was generally low ( $n = 98, M = 2.07, SD = 1.77$ ), as was urge to retaliate against women in general ( $n = 98, M = 1.51, SD = 1.10$ ).

When examining level of urge to harm the specific woman in the story, a significant difference emerged between participants' level of desire to harm the woman,  $F(3, 94) = 3.60, p < .05$ , across the four vignettes that included a female character, including the social acceptance ( $n = 25, M = 1.52, SD = 1.12$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 25, M = 1.84, SD = 1.34$ ), social rejection ( $n = 27, M = 2.96, SD = 2.49$ ), and romantic rejection conditions ( $n = 21, M = 1.86, SD = 1.39$ ). Specifically, focused contrasts revealed a significant difference between individuals in the social rejection versus social acceptance vignette,  $t(50) = 2.66, p < .05$ , with individuals reading about social rejection having a significantly greater urge to harm the woman in the story than those that read about social acceptance. Significant differences were not found in direct comparisons between any of the other vignette conditions on this item.

When examining the urge to harm women in general after reading one of the four vignettes including a female character, no significant differences were found,  $F(3, 94) = 1.12, p = .35$ , across the social acceptance ( $n = 25, M = 1.56, SD = 1.23$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 25,$

$M = 1.56, SD = 1.12$ ), social rejection ( $n = 27, M = 1.70, SD = 1.30$ ), and romantic rejection conditions ( $n = 21, M = 1.14, SD = 0.36$ ), suggesting the vignettes did not induce urge to harm the outgroup or that this item did not accurately capture this urge.

A small to moderate correlation was found across the four conditions between higher endorsements of wanting to harm the woman in the story and victim blaming,  $r(96) = .23, p < .05$ . As such, men who were higher in victim blaming expressed greater desire to harm the woman in the vignettes. Additionally, a moderate correlation was found between higher endorsements of wanting to harm all women and victim blaming,  $r(96) = .36, p < .001$ , meaning men who were higher in victim blaming expressed greater desire to harm women in general. These results align with the theory that victim blaming may sometimes be a manifestation of having an urge to harm the out-group.

**Mood assessment.** The BMIS (Mayer & Gaschke, 2013) was given to all participants to assess current mood and potential impacts of each vignette on participants' moods. The scale uses combinations of 16 measured emotions of participants' current status across four separate mood dimensions, including pleasant-unpleasant, arousal-calm, positive-tired, and negative-relaxed (Mayer, 2018). A list of the average scores by vignette condition on each mood dimension can be seen in Table 4.

Across the sample, participants' moods were generally balanced between pleasant and unpleasant emotions ( $N = 128, M = 2.64, SD = 0.46$ ) with a score of 1 representing feeling completely unpleasant while a 4 represents feeling completely pleasant. Scores were compared across the five vignette conditions, including the social acceptance ( $n = 25, M = 2.72, SD = 0.47$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 25, M = 2.63, SD = 0.48$ ), social rejection ( $n = 27, M = 2.72, SD = 0.50$ ), romantic rejection ( $n = 21, M = 2.54, SD = 0.41$ ), and control condition ( $n = 30, M =$

2.60,  $SD = 0.44$ ). Results indicated no significant differences on the pleasant-unpleasant mood dimension by vignette condition,  $F(4, 123) = 0.70, p = .59$ , suggesting the vignettes did not alter participants' feelings related to a pleasant-unpleasant mood.

When examining the arousal-calm dimension, results indicated participants' moods were generally balanced between aroused and calm with a slight calm skew ( $N = 128, M = 2.29, SD = 0.33$ ), with a score of 1 representing completely calm and a 4 representing completely aroused. Scores were compared across the five vignette conditions, including the social acceptance ( $n = 25, M = 2.21, SD = 0.41$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 25, M = 2.38, SD = 0.28$ ), social rejection ( $n = 27, M = 2.23, SD = 0.38$ ), romantic rejection ( $n = 21, M = 2.35, SD = 0.31$ ), and control condition ( $n = 30, M = 2.31, SD = 0.26$ ). Results indicated no significant differences on the arousal-calm mood dimension by vignette condition,  $F(4, 123) = 1.20, p = 0.32$ , suggesting the vignettes did not alter participants' feelings related to a being aroused versus calm.

When examining the positive-tired dimension, results indicated that participants' moods were generally balanced between positive and tired ( $N = 128, M = 2.43, SD = 0.48$ ), with a score of 1 representing tired and a 4 representing positive. Scores were compared across the five vignette conditions, including the social acceptance ( $n = 25, M = 2.43, SD = 0.56$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 25, M = 2.48, SD = 0.46$ ), social rejection ( $n = 27, M = 2.48, SD = 0.52$ ), romantic rejection ( $n = 21, M = 2.35, SD = 0.49$ ), and control condition ( $n = 30, M = 2.40, SD = 0.39$ ). Results indicated no significant differences on the positive-tired mood dimension by vignette condition,  $F(4, 123) = 0.36, p = .84$ , suggesting the vignettes did not alter participants' feelings related to a being positive versus tired.

Finally, when examining the negative-relaxed dimension, the results indicated participants' moods were generally balanced between negative and relaxed with a slight relaxed

skew ( $N = 128$ ,  $M = 2.16$ ,  $SD = .62$ ). Scores were compared across the five vignette conditions, including the social acceptance ( $n = 25$ ,  $M = 1.97$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 25$ ,  $M = 2.31$ ,  $SD = 0.61$ ), social rejection ( $n = 27$ ,  $M = 2.01$ ,  $SD = 0.67$ ), romantic rejection ( $n = 21$ ,  $M = 2.32$ ,  $SD = 0.50$ ), and control condition ( $n = 30$ ,  $M = 2.20$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ). Results indicated no significant differences on the negative-relaxed mood dimension by vignette condition,  $F(4, 123) = 1.81$ ,  $p = .13$ , suggesting the vignettes did not alter participants' mood state related to a being negative versus relaxed.

**The Shame Inventory.** The potential relationships between trait shame and other study measures was examined using an abbreviated version of Rizvi's (2010) Shame Inventory. Given that this scale has not yet been tested in this abbreviated form, analysis was run to ensure a unidimensional construct was being captured by the three items. Adequate reliability across the abbreviated scale was established ( $\alpha = .73$ ). Factor loadings for the three items ranged from 0.62 to 0.70, suggesting the three items did adequately capture the intended construct (i.e., trait shame). Furthermore, responses to the scale measuring state shame were significantly correlated with responses on the abbreviated Shame Inventory,  $r(103) = .53$ ,  $p < .001$ . This correlation would be expected with a trait shame measure, as individuals higher in trait shame are more likely to be experiencing shame at any given moment, including while participating in the study.

Scores on this abbreviated measure could range from 0 to 12, with 0 being the lowest level of trait shame and 12 being the most. Averaged across the participants, level of trait shame appeared generally low ( $N = 132$ ,  $M = 4.73$ ,  $SD = 2.25$ ). Across the full sample, there was a small negative correlation between trait shame and victim blaming,  $r(127) = -.20$ ,  $p < .05$ , indicating those lower in trait shame endorsed more victim blaming, while those higher in trait shame endorsed less. As stated above, linear regression did not reveal a significant interaction

between reading about rejection versus acceptance and trait shame on victim blaming,  $b = -0.36$ ,  $t(99) = -1.68$ ,  $p = .10$ . Nevertheless, when comparing the vignette conditions with the control group, one significant interaction was found between vignette condition and trait shame on victim blaming. Compared to the control group, participants that read the romantic rejection vignette endorsed significantly more victim blaming when they were lower in trait shame, while individuals higher in trait shame endorsed less victim blaming after romantic rejection was primed,  $b = -0.69$ ,  $t(50) = -2.63$ ,  $p = .01$ . Significant interactions impacting victim blaming were not found between trait shame and the other vignettes compared with the control group ( $ps = ns$ ).

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between trait shame and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between trait shame and traditional masculinity,  $r(130) = -.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ; ambivalent sexism,  $r(124) = -.21$ ,  $p < .05$ ; hostile sexism,  $r(124) = -.19$ ,  $p < .05$ ; belief in a procedurally just world,  $r(130) = -.24$ ,  $p < .01$ ; belief in a distributively just world,  $r(130) = -.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ; hostility,  $r(108) = .28$ ,  $p < .01$ ; guilt,  $r(103) = .47$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and narcissism,  $r(125) = -.18$ ,  $p < .05$ .

**Psychological Entitlement Scale.** The potential relationships between entitlement and other study measures were examined using K. Campbell et al.'s (2004) Psychological Entitlement Scale. Scores could range between 9 and 63, with higher scores representing more entitlement (K. Campbell et al., 2004). The average score for entitlement for the current sample was generally low ( $N = 127$ ,  $M = 27.28$ ,  $SD = 9.89$ ). Across the full sample, a significant small correlation was found between higher entitlement and victim blaming,  $r(125) = .23$ ,  $p < .01$ . Linear regression revealed one significant interaction between level of entitlement and vignette condition compared to controls on victim blaming. Compared to the control group, participants that read the romantic acceptance vignette endorsed significantly more victim blaming when they

were higher in entitlement, while those lower in entitlement endorsed less victim blaming after romantic acceptance was primed,  $b = 0.74$ ,  $t(49) = 2.31$ ,  $p < .05$ . No interactions were found between entitlement and the other three vignettes compared with controls on victim blaming ( $ps = ns$ ).

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between entitlement and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between entitlement and narcissism,  $r(125) = .38$ ,  $p < .001$ ; state shame,  $r(103) = -.21$ ,  $p < .05$ ; ambivalent sexism,  $r(124) = .22$ ,  $p < .05$ ; hostile sexism,  $r(124) = .20$ ,  $p < .05$ ; and belief in a procedurally just world,  $r(125) = .20$ ,  $p < .05$ .

**Procedural and Distributive Just World Scale.** The potential relationships between just world beliefs and other study measures were examined using Lucas et al.'s (2007) Procedural and Distributive Just World Scale. Responses on the entire scale are summed to produce two subscale scores, a procedural justice subscale and a distributive justice subscale, each comprising of four items. Scores on both subscales can range between 4 and 28, with higher scores indicating more belief in a just world (Lucas et al., 2007).

**Procedural justice.** On average, participants in the current sample had a slightly below average level of belief that the decision making processes in the world are fair and just ( $N = 133$ ,  $M = 14.75$ ,  $SD = 5.32$ ). As indicated above, a significant small correlation was shown between procedural belief in a just world and victim blaming  $r(127) = .22$ ,  $p < .05$ . Linear regression revealed no significant interactions between belief in a procedurally just world and any of the vignette conditions compared with the control group on victim blaming ( $ps = ns$ ).

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between belief in a procedurally just world and the other scales administered. Significant

correlations were found between belief and a procedurally just world and belief in a distributively just world,  $r(131) = .61, p < .001$ ; entitlement  $r(125) = .20, p < .05$ ; ambivalent sexism,  $r(124) = .24, p < .01$ ; hostile sexism,  $r(124) = .19, p < .05$ ; benevolent sexism,  $r(124) = .20, p < .05$ ; trait shame,  $r(130) = -.24, p < .01$ ; and hostility,  $r(108) = -.19, p < .05$ .

***Distributive justice.*** On average, participants in the current sample had a generally average level of belief that outcomes and resource allocation in the world are fair and just ( $N = 133, M = 16.53, SD = 5.21$ ). As indicated above, a significant small correlation was shown between distributive belief in a just world and victim blaming,  $r(127) = .22, p < .05$ . Linear regression revealed no significant interactions between belief in a distributively just world and any of the vignette conditions compared with the control group on victim blaming ( $ps = ns$ ).

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between belief in a distributively just world and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between belief and a distributively just world and belief in a procedurally just world,  $r(131) = .61, p < .001$ ; ambivalent sexism,  $r(124) = .33, p < .001$ ; hostile sexism,  $r(124) = .28, p < .01$ ; benevolent sexism,  $r(124) = .28, p < .01$ ; and trait shame,  $r(130) = -.31, p < .001$ .

**Traditional Masculinity-Femininity Scale.** The potential relationships between levels of traditional masculinity and other study measures were examined using Kachel et al.'s (2016) TMF scale. Responses on the entire scale are averaged to produce one overall score. Scores can range between 1 and 7, with lower scores indicating more traditional masculinity, higher scores representing less masculinity and more traditional femininity, and scores of 4 representing androgyny (Kachel et al., 2016). The average score for the cisgender males in the current sample represented slightly more masculine characteristics than feminine or androgynous ( $N = 132, M =$

2.54,  $SD = 0.96$ ). As indicated above, a significant small to moderate correlation was found between higher masculinity and victim blaming  $r(127) = .35, p < .001$ . Linear regression revealed no significant interactions between level of traditional masculinity and any of the vignette conditions compared with the control group on victim blaming ( $ps = ns$ ).

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between traditional masculinity and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between traditional masculinity and non-planning impulsivity,  $r(124) = .18, p < .05$ ; ambivalent sexism,  $r(124) = .42, p < .001$ ; hostile sexism,  $r(124) = .35, p < .001$ ; benevolent sexism,  $r(124) = .35, p < .001$ ; narcissism,  $r(125) = .32, p < .001$ ; and trait shame,  $r(131) = -.33, p < .001$ .

**Aggression Questionnaire.** The potential relationships between aggression and other study measures were examined using Buss and Perry's (1992) Aggression Questionnaire. Responses on the entire scale are aggregated to produce one overall aggression score. Specific items are also summed together to create subscale scores, including physical aggression, verbal aggression, hostility, and anger.

Participants' overall aggression score could range between 29 and 203, with 29 being the lowest possible aggression and 203 being the highest (Buss & Perry, 1992). For participants in the current study, overall aggression was not particularly high ( $N = 110, M = 78.43, SD = 21.40$ ). Across the full sample, there was a small significant correlation between higher aggression scores and victim blaming,  $r(108) = .20, p < .05$ . Linear regression revealed two significant interactions between overall aggression and vignette condition compared with the control group on victim blaming. Compared to the control group, participants lower in overall aggression endorsed more victim blaming after reading both the social rejection,  $b = -0.91, t(45) = -2.16$ ,



$p < .05.$ , and romantic rejection vignettes  $b = -1.17$ ,  $t(39) = -2.86$ ,  $p < .01$ , while individuals higher in overall aggression endorsed less victim blaming after rejection was primed. No interactions were found between overall aggression and the other two vignettes compared with controls on victim blaming ( $ps = ns$ ).

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between overall aggression and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between overall aggression and physical aggression,  $r(108) = .71$ ,  $p < .001$ ; verbal aggression,  $r(108) = .52$ ,  $p < .001$ ; anger,  $r(108) = .75$ ,  $p < .001$ ; hostility,  $r(108) = .73$ ,  $p < .001$ ; guilt,  $r(94) = .37$ ,  $p < .001$ ; state shame,  $r(94) = .40$ ,  $p < .001$ ; attentional impulsivity,  $r(108) = -.32$ ,  $p < .01$ ; motor impulsivity,  $r(108) = -.26$ ,  $p < .01$ ; ambivalent sexism,  $r(108) = .34$ ,  $p < .001$ ; hostile sexism,  $r(108) = .35$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and benevolent sexism,  $r(108) = .20$ ,  $p < .05$ .

**Physical aggression.** Participants' score on the physical aggression subscale could range between 9 and 63, with 63 being the highest amount of physical aggression and 9 being the lowest (Buss & Perry, 1992). The average score on the physical aggression subscale was not particularly high for the current sample ( $N = 110$ ,  $M = 24.39$ ,  $SD = 8.87$ ). A small to moderate significant correlation between higher physical aggression scores and victim blaming was found,  $r(108) = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ . Linear regression revealed one significant interaction between physical aggression and vignette condition compared to controls on victim blaming. Compared to the control group, participants that read the social rejection vignette endorsed significantly more victim blaming when they were lower in physical aggression, while individuals higher in physical aggression endorsed less victim blaming after social rejection was primed,  $b = -0.72$ ,  $t(45) = -2.21$ ,  $p < .05$ . No interactions were found between physical aggression and the other three vignette conditions compared with controls on victim blaming ( $ps = ns$ ).

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between physical aggression and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between physical aggression and overall aggression,  $r(108) = .71, p < .001$ ; anger,  $r(108) = .39, p < .001$ ; hostility,  $r(108) = .29, p < .01$ ; guilt,  $r(94) = .23, p < .05$ ; state shame,  $r(94) = .26, p = .01$ ; ambivalent sexism,  $r(108) = .36, p < .001$ ; hostile sexism,  $r(108) = .38, p < .001$ ; and benevolent sexism,  $r(108) = .22, p < .05$ .

**Verbal aggression.** Participants' score on the verbal aggression subscale could range between 5 and 35, with 35 being the highest amount of verbal aggression while 5 is the lowest (Buss & Perry, 1992). Scores on the verbal aggression subscale were not particularly high ( $N = 110, M = 16.83, SD = 5.76$ ). No significant correlation was found between verbal aggression and victim blaming,  $r(108) = -.04, p = .67$ . Given the lack of association between this scale and victim blaming, no interaction effects by vignette condition were explored.

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between verbal aggression and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between verbal aggression and overall aggression,  $r(108) = .52, p < .001$ , and anger,  $r(108) = .39, p < .001$ .

**Anger.** Participants' score on the anger subscale could range between 7 and 49, with 49 being the highest amount of anger while 7 is the lowest (Buss & Perry, 1992). For the current sample, anger was relatively low ( $N = 110, M = 16.13, SD = 6.63$ ). No significant correlation was found between anger and victim blaming,  $r(108) = .09, p = .33$ . Given the lack of association between this scale and victim blaming, no interaction effects by vignette condition were explored.

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between anger and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between anger and overall aggression,  $r(108) = .75, p < .001$ ; physical aggression,  $r(108) = .39, p < .001$ ; verbal aggression,  $r(108) = .39, p < .001$ ; hostility,  $r(108) = .38, p < .001$ ; guilt,  $r(94) = .26, p = .01$ ; state shame,  $r(94) = .25, p < .05$ ; attentional impulsivity,  $r(108) = -.31, p < .01$ ; and motor impulsivity,  $r(108) = -.31, p < .01$ .

**Hostility.** Participants' score on the hostility subscale could range between 8 and 56, with 56 being the highest amount of hostility while 8 is the lowest (Buss & Perry, 1992). Across the participants, hostility was relatively low ( $N = 110, M = 21.09, SD = 9.80$ ). No significant correlation was found between hostility and victim blaming,  $r(108) = .16, p = .10$ . Given the lack of association between this scale and victim blaming, no interaction effects by vignette condition were explored.

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between hostility and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between hostility and overall aggression,  $r(108) = .73, p < .001$ ; physical aggression,  $r(108) = .29, p < .01$ ; anger,  $r(108) = .38, p < .001$ ; guilt,  $r(94) = .40, p < .001$ ; state shame,  $r(94) = .46, p < .001$ ; attentional impulsivity,  $r(108) = -.28, p < .01$ ; ambivalent sexism,  $r(108) = .27, p < .01$ ; hostile sexism,  $r(108) = .24, p < .05$ ; benevolent sexism,  $r(108) = .22, p < .05$ ; belief in a procedurally just world,  $r(108) = -.19, p < .05$ ; and trait shame,  $r(108) = .28, p < .01$ .

**Abbreviated Impulsiveness Scale.** The potential relationship between impulsivity and other study measures was explored using the ABIS (Coutlee, et al., 2014). This scale does not produce a unidimensional impulsiveness score across all of its items but instead produces three separate subscales measuring different types of impulsivity: attentional, motor, and non-planning

impulsivity. On all three subscales, low scores of 1 represent the most impulsivity, while scores of 4 represent being the least impulsive.

**Motor impulsivity.** Across the full sample, results indicated that the participants were slightly more controlled than impulsive in terms of their motor impulsivity ( $N = 126$ ,  $M = 2.99$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ). No significant correlations were found between victim blaming and motor impulsivity,  $r(124) = -.13$ ,  $p = .16$ . Given the lack of association between this scale and victim blaming, no interaction effects by vignette condition were explored.

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between motor impulsivity and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between motor impulsivity and attentional impulsivity,  $r(124) = .53$ ,  $p < .001$ ; non-planning impulsivity,  $r(124) = .41$ ,  $p < .001$ ; overall aggression,  $r(108) = -.26$ ,  $p < .01$ ; anger,  $r(108) = -.31$ ,  $p < .01$ ; guilt,  $r(102) = -.21$ ,  $p < .05$ ; and state shame,  $r(102) = -.26$ ,  $p < .01$ .

**Attentional impulsivity.** Across the full sample, results indicated that the participants were slightly more controlled than impulsive in terms of their attentional impulsivity ( $N = 126$ ,  $M = 2.93$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ). No significant correlations were found between victim blaming and attentional impulsivity,  $r(124) = -.01$ ,  $p = .91$ . Given the lack of association between this scale and victim blaming, no interaction effects by vignette condition were explored.

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between attentional impulsivity and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between attentional impulsivity and motor impulsivity,  $r(124) = .53$ ,  $p < .001$ ; non-planning impulsivity,  $r(124) = .50$ ,  $p < .001$ ; overall aggression,  $r(108) = -.32$ ,  $p < .01$ ; anger,  $r(108) = -.31$ ,  $p < .01$ ; hostility,  $r(108) = -.28$ ,  $p < .01$ ; guilt,  $r(102) = -.26$ ,  $p < .01$ ; and state shame,  $r(102) = -.30$ ,  $p < .01$ .

**Non-planning impulsivity.** Across the full sample, results indicated that the participants were slightly more controlled than impulsive in terms of their non-planning impulsivity ( $N = 126$ ,  $M = 2.84$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ). No significant correlations were found between victim blaming and non-planning impulsivity,  $r(124) = -.05$ ,  $p = .60$ . Given the lack of association between this scale and victim blaming, no interaction effects by vignette condition were explored.

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between non-planning impulsivity and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between non-planning impulsivity and attentional impulsivity,  $r(124) = .50$ ,  $p < .001$ ; motor impulsivity,  $r(124) = .41$ ,  $p < .001$ ; traditional masculinity,  $r(124) = .18$ ,  $p < .05$ ; guilt,  $r(102) = -.24$ ,  $p < .05$ ; and state shame,  $r(102) = -.33$ ,  $p = .001$ .

**Ambivalent Sexism Inventory.** The potential relationships between sexism and other study measures were examined using Glick and Fiske's (1996) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory. This scale produces an overall unidimensional score for ambivalent sexism, along with subscale scores for benevolent and hostile sexism. Scores on the full scale and each subscale can range between 1 and 6. Scores of 6 represent the highest level of sexism, while scores of 1 represent the lowest. Across the participants, level of ambivalent sexism was generally average ( $N = 126$ ,  $M = 3.38$ ,  $SD = 0.81$ ). There was a large significant correlation between higher ambivalent sexism scores and victim blaming  $r(124) = .70$ ,  $p < .001$ . Linear regression revealed one significant interaction between ambivalent sexism and vignette condition compared with controls on victim blaming. Compared to the control group, participants that read the social acceptance vignette endorsed significantly less victim blaming when they were higher in ambivalent sexism, while individuals lower in ambivalent sexism endorsed more victim blaming after social acceptance was primed,  $b = -0.86$ ,  $t(51) = -2.45$ ,  $p < .05$ . No interactions were found between

ambivalent sexism and the other three vignettes compared with controls on victim blaming ( $ps = ns$ ).

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between ambivalent sexism and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between ambivalent sexism and hostile sexism,  $r(124) = .87, p < .001$ ; benevolent sexism,  $r(124) = .80, p < .001$ ; belief in a procedurally just world,  $r(124) = .24, p < .01$ ; belief in a distributively just word,  $r(124) = .33, p < .001$ ; entitlement,  $r(124) = .22, p < .05$ ; narcissism,  $r(124) = .26, p < .01$ ; trait shame,  $r(124) = -.21, p < .05$ ; overall aggression,  $r(108) = .34, p < .001$ ; physical aggression,  $r(108) = .36, p < .001$ ; hostility,  $r(108) = .27, p < .01$ ; and traditional masculinity,  $r(124) = .42, p < .001$ .

**Hostile sexism.** Across the participants, level of hostile sexism was generally average ( $N = 126, M = 3.58, SD = 1.07$ ). A large significant correlation between higher hostile sexism scores and more victim blaming was found,  $r(124) = .76, p < .001$ . Linear regression revealed no significant interactions between hostile sexism and any of the vignette conditions compared with controls on victim blaming ( $ps = ns$ ).

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between hostile sexism and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between hostile sexism and ambivalent sexism,  $r(124) = .87, p < .001$ ; benevolent sexism,  $r(124) = .40, p < .001$ ; belief in a procedurally just world,  $r(124) = .19, p < .05$ ; belief in a distributively just word,  $r(124) = .28, p < .01$ ; entitlement,  $r(124) = .20, p < .05$ ; trait shame,  $r(124) = -.19, p < .05$ ; overall aggression,  $r(108) = .35, p < .001$ ; physical aggression,  $r(108) = .38, p < .001$ ; hostility,  $r(108) = .24, p < .05$ ; traditional masculinity,  $r(124) = .35, p < .001$ ; and narcissism,  $r(124) = .25, p < .01$ .

**Benevolent sexism.** Across the participants, level of benevolent sexism was generally average ( $N = 126$ ,  $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ). A moderate significant correlation was found between higher benevolent sexism and more victim blaming,  $r(124) = .37$ ,  $p < .001$ . Linear regression revealed no significant interactions between benevolent sexism and any of the vignette conditions compared with controls on victim blaming ( $ps = ns$ ).

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between benevolent sexism and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between benevolent sexism and ambivalent sexism,  $r(124) = .80$ ,  $p < .001$ ; hostile sexism,  $r(124) = .40$ ,  $p < .001$ ; overall aggression,  $r(108) = .20$ ,  $p < .05$ ; physical aggression,  $r(108) = .22$ ,  $p < .05$ ; hostility,  $r(108) = .22$ ,  $p < .05$ ; traditional masculinity,  $r(124) = .35$ ,  $p < .001$ ; belief in a procedurally just world,  $r(124) = .20$ ,  $p < .05$ ; and belief in a distributively just world,  $r(124) = .28$ ,  $p < .01$ .

**Narcissistic Personality Inventory.** The potential relationships between narcissism and other study measures were examined using Ames et al.'s (2006) NPI-16. This scale produces an overall unidimensional score measuring the presence of narcissistic personality traits. Scores can range from 0 to 1, with 0 being the lowest amount of narcissism and 1 being the most. For participants in the current sample, level of narcissistic personality traits was generally low, ( $N = 127$ ,  $M = 0.25$ ,  $SD = 0.17$ ). Across the full sample, a small significant correlation was found between narcissism and victim blaming,  $r(125) = .23$ ,  $p < .01$ . Linear regression revealed no significant interactions between narcissism and any of the vignette conditions compared with controls on victim blaming ( $ps = ns$ ).

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between narcissism and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found

between narcissism and entitlement,  $r(125) = .38, p < .001$ ; ambivalent sexism,  $r(124) = .26, p < .01$ ; hostile sexism,  $r(124) = .25, p < .01$ ; trait shame,  $r(125) = -.18, p < .05$ ; and traditional masculinity,  $r(125) = .32, p < .001$ .

**State Shame and Guilt Scale.** The potential relationships between participants' current state shame and other study measures were measured using Marschall et al.'s (1994) State Shame and Guilt Scale. Answers on this scale sum to two different subscales, a state shame subscale and a guilt subscale. On both subscales, scores can range from 5 to 25, with 25 being the most guilt or shame and 5 being the least.

**State shame.** Across the participants, level of current state shame was quite low ( $N = 105, M = 8.54, SD = 4.51$ ). Mean level of state shame did not significantly differ across the vignette conditions,  $F(4, 100) = 1.11, p = .36$ , including the social acceptance ( $n = 21, M = 8.71, SD = 4.39$ ), romantic acceptance ( $n = 21, M = 8.86, SD = 4.92$ ), social rejection ( $n = 24, M = 7.79, SD = 4.10$ ), romantic rejection ( $n = 18, M = 7.28, SD = 3.43$ ), and control conditions ( $n = 21, M = 10.00, SD = 5.34$ ), suggesting the vignettes were not effective in inducing shame. Across the full sample, no significant correlations were found between current state shame and victim blaming,  $r(103) = -.06, p = .57$ . Given the lack of association between this scale and victim blaming, no interaction effects by vignette condition were explored.

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between state shame and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between state shame and guilt,  $r(103) = .87, p < .001$ ; attentional impulsivity,  $r(102) = -.30, p < .01$ ; motor impulsivity,  $r(102) = -.26, p < .01$ ; non-planning impulsivity,  $r(102) = -.33, p = .001$ ; entitlement  $r(103) = -.21, p < .05$ ; trait shame,  $r(103) = .53, p < .001$ ; overall aggression,  $r(94)$



= .40,  $p < .001$ ; physical aggression,  $r(94) = .26$ ,  $p = .01$ ; anger,  $r(94) = .25$ ,  $p < .05$ ; and hostility,  $r(94) = .46$ ,  $p < .001$ .

**Guilt.** Level of guilt was quite low across the sample ( $N = 105$ ,  $M = 8.27$ ,  $SD = 4.11$ ). No significant correlation was found between guilt and victim blaming,  $r(103) = -.03$ ,  $p = .74$ . Given the lack of association between this scale and victim blaming, no interaction effects by vignette condition were explored.

Additional analyses were conducted using the full sample to examine associations between guilt and the other scales administered. Significant correlations were found between guilt and state shame,  $r(103) = .87$ ,  $p < .001$ ; attentional impulsivity,  $r(102) = -.26$ ,  $p < .01$ ; motor impulsivity,  $r(102) = -.21$ ,  $p < .05$ ; non-planning impulsivity,  $r(102) = -.24$ ,  $p < .05$ ; trait shame,  $r(103) = .47$ ,  $p < .001$ ; overall aggression,  $r(94) = .37$ ,  $p < .001$ ; physical aggression,  $r(94) = .23$ ,  $p < .05$ ; anger,  $r(94) = .26$ ,  $p = .01$ ; and hostility,  $r(94) = .40$ ,  $p < .001$ .

**Romantic relationship questions.** Across the participants, 76 identified themselves as single, 35 identified as dating, 6 as married, and 9 as living with a partner. No significant differences were found on victim blaming based on relationship status,  $F(3, 122) = 1.15$ ,  $p = .33$ , across participants who identified as single ( $M = 22.08$ ,  $SD = 13.48$ ), dating ( $M = 18.94$ ,  $SD = 11.01$ ), married ( $M = 18.17$ ,  $SD = 6.55$ ), or living with a partner ( $M = 15.56$ ,  $SD = 9.41$ ). Within the sample, 72 participants identified that they had experienced a bad or complicated break-up before, while 54 identified that they had not. No significant differences were found on victim blaming by whether the participant had experienced a complicated break-up ( $M = 20.63$ ,  $SD = 11.81$ ) or not ( $M = 20.46$ ,  $SD = 13.24$ ),  $t(124) = 0.07$ ,  $p = .94$ . Number of serious relationships was not significantly correlated with victim blaming,  $r(124) = .02$ ,  $p = .87$ , nor was number of “casual” relationship and victim blaming,  $r(122) = .03$ ,  $p = .75$ . No significant interactions were

found between vignette condition compared with controls and relationship status, having a bad/complicated break-up, number of past serious relationship, or number of past casual relationships on subsequent victim blaming ( $ps = ns$ ).

**Sexual orientation.** It was theorized that sexual orientation may moderate the relationship between reading about romantic rejection and victim blaming because cisgender males that are romantically interested in women may more easily be able to identify with the man in the romantic rejection story. Only 10 participants indicated their sexual orientation was homosexual, making comparisons between sexual orientations that can be attracted to women (i.e., heterosexual, bisexual, and pansexual) and homosexual participants limited. Nevertheless, linear regression revealed no significant interactions between people with self-identified sexual orientations that are versus are not interested in woman and reading about romantic rejection on subsequent victim blaming ( $p = .62$ ).

## Discussion

### Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3

Results of the current study did not confirm initial findings from the pilot study indicating significantly different results on endorsement of victim blaming between different vignette conditions. The reason for these differing results may be attributed to the differences in sample size, as the effects found in the pilot may have been driven by outliers in the smaller sample ( $N = 45$ ). This suggestion is supported by the lack of significant findings examining differences in current mood by vignette condition, suggesting the vignettes did not effectively alter participants' general feelings.

In addition, differences between the pilot study findings and the current study may also be attributed to differing implementation of study measures. In the pilot study, participants immediately read the vignette after consenting to the procedures, followed directly by the ARVS (Ward, 1988). In contrast, the current study asked participants to provide responses to three separate scales prior to reading the vignettes and taking the ARVS, including our trait shame measure, an assessment of their just world beliefs, and an assessment of their self-perceived masculinity/femininity. It is possible that priming these concepts induced feelings that made participants prone to providing answers on the ARVS that they deemed more socially acceptable, making responses to the ARVS susceptible to more social desirability bias than was present for the pilot study (Krumpal, 2013). Nevertheless, responses to current study measures suggest that priming romantic rejection, romantic acceptance, social rejection, or social acceptance from a woman has no broad impact on victim blaming of female sexual assault survivors.

Furthermore, the lack of significant differences by vignette condition on victim blaming made testing entitlement as a mediator not possible. In addition, no significant effect was found

when examining whether trait shame may moderate the relationship between reading about rejection versus acceptance and increased victim blaming. This lack of significant finding was likely driven by the lack of significant differences on victim blaming across the vignette conditions. Of note, a significant interaction was found between trait shame and vignette condition when comparing the vignette conditions to the control group instead of both rejection vignettes versus the acceptance vignettes. A discussion of this interaction is explored below under the Trait Shame heading.

#### **Hypothesis 4**

The results of Hypothesis 4 showed significant correlations between victim blaming and just world beliefs along with victim blaming and higher traditional masculinity. This confirms past research finding individuals that endorse beliefs related to traditional masculinity also hold more victim blaming beliefs (Acock & Ireland, 1983; Burt, 1980; Costin, 1985; Costin & Schwarz, 1987; Davies, Gilston, & Rogers, 2012; Hall, Howard, & Boezio, 1986; Simonson & Subich, 1999; Walfield, 2018; Whatley, 2005).

The current study was unique in that it examined two types of belief in a just world, both procedural justice and distributive justice (Lucas et al., 2007). The results suggest that both belief in the fairness of decision processes as well as the fairness of outcomes are correlated with victim blaming. Past research on just world beliefs and blame of rape survivors has not always been consistent (Furnham, 2003), so the current findings confirm what some studies have found between the relationship of just world beliefs and victim blame (Foley & Pigott, 2000; Kleinke & Meyer, 1990) while refuting others (Lambert & Raichle, 2000). Of note, the relationship between higher victim blaming and just world beliefs only held for the men in Kleinke and Meyer's

(1990) sample and not the women, possibly aligning with why my all male sample also showed significant correlations.

### **Additional Findings**

**Qualitative responses.** Reading the qualitative responses provided by participants highlighted many interesting trends in thought surrounding sexual assault survivors. To start, the majority of responses were direct in asserting that rape is never deserved and the perpetrator alone is at fault for it occurring. Some examples include “The rapist is always to blame. Simple as that. We should never blame the victim”; “Rape implies that there was a lack of consent. The woman is no longer in control and she can’t be blamed for something she did not wish upon herself”; and “Rape is a crime against a human being. No one would benefit from a being [*sic*] personally violated against their will. Rape is a control tool against women.” Some participants overtly stated that being a bad person does not warrant rape, writing statements such as “Regardless of how a woman acts or dresses, no human being on earth deserves to be raped. If she is a bad person or committed to a crime [*sic*], there are other legal punishments for this,” and “No person deserves the emotional and/or physical trauma associated with rape regardless of past behavior or transgressions.”

Answers to who is to blame for sexual assault highlighted some trends in subtle blame, particularly around women’s responsibility to keep themselves safe. Some examples of these subtly blaming statements include “Sometimes woman [*sic*] do things that can bring evil desires upon some men like dressing provocatively”; “Some females put their selfs [*sic*] into these situations”; “If you put yourself in a position where you are not capable of critical thinking, where your judgement [*sic*] is lapsed or altered, and where your speech or communication is diminished, you are putting yourself in a position of danger more so than times of sobriety”; “I

believe that she should not blame herself for rape, because it is likely that she made clear attempts to put a stop to it when the act was going too far more or less. However, she may very well have put herself in that position whether it be knowingly or unknowingly”; and “Depending on how the raped woman in question was conducting herself with other members of the population, or based on the articles of clothing she was wearing (or possibly not wearing), she could potentially put herself in a situation in which say may be more susceptible to being sexually assaulted. However, this is not to say she's completely responsible for any potential assault, but there are risks that could be considered with how she acts, what she's wearing, who she's with, and other factors to keep in mind.”

In contrast, some participants addressed common reasons people blame survivors so they could overtly state that those reasons are not valid. Examples include “Someone may argue, depending on the circumstance, that a woman ‘put herself in that situation,’ by, for example, being intoxicated. This is understandable, but no one is ‘asking’ for rape. Rape is performed without consent, and if a woman did not consent, then she should not have to blame herself”; “It is never the victim's fault for a rape. That is like blaming a store owner for being robbed. I understand that if you leave the house at night, alone and dressed provocatively that your odds of being chosen are higher. But it is the assailant that is to blame for everything they are the ones with a sickness or a problem that is driving them to do this to the victim”; “Sex with consent takes two people. Rape takes one person forcing onto another. Their [*sic*] is no choice if you are forced into it. Since there was no choice the blame does not fall onto them. Yeah they made a choice to be in the area or the situation but they did not ask to be raped and should not be blamed for it”; and simply “Many rape victims blame themselves. I believe that it is not their fault, women should be able to dress or act however they want to.”

For the individuals that read one of the two rejection vignettes, responses supplied on why the woman rejected the man in the story also illuminated some interesting trends. Some participants tried to be understanding of the woman's perspective. Examples include "Just because you are friends with someone and enjoy their company does not mean that they have a sexual/romantic attraction you [*sic*] the other person. The woman in the story probably felt a similar way and only liked the man in a platonic way and not in a romantic/sexual way"; "Maybe she just didn't want anybody else to be with her and her friends"; and "I think there could be a variety of reasons that Emily rejected (me? lol) the boy in the story. Even though she gave some signs of 'friendliness' like smiling and doing work together, she may have never wanted the relationship to escalate beyond 'friendship.'"

In contrast, some participants applied negative evaluations to the woman who rejected the man. For example, one participant stated, "The woman must have rejected the man in this story due to his appearance and reputation. Obviously, the girl and her group of friends are snotty and stuck up towards new people. She believed that her and her friends were better than the man." Others stated, "She's a bully? Insecure [*sic*], low self-esteem, didn't want to be seen as friendly hanging out with the new kid" and "I think she was just being a jerk. That's how I perceived it immediately. She thought she was hot shit or something and thought it'd look cool and boost her ego if she embarrassed this guy in front of people."

Other participants suggested potential characteristics for both the woman and man, stating, "The man must have not seemed 'cool' enough in her opinion to associate herself with" or "She was polite to him and saw him as a good study source for the class. At the end of the day she was probably more popular than him. He was probably a bit unpopular and more a book student than an athlete."

Of note, only one participant thought outside heteronormative expectations and suggested that the woman may not be romantically interested in men, stating, “Could be any number of reasons, not interested in him in that way, not interested in relationships at that time, not straight, asexual, aromantic, etc.”

**Trait Shame.** When examining potential interactions between trait shame and vignette condition compared with controls, the results demonstrated a surprising result different than initially expected. Although it was posited that higher trait shame could lead to more aggressive responses and subsequent victim blaming in the face of rejection, the results of this study actually showed individuals higher in trait shame victim blamed less after reading about romantic rejection compared with reading a neutral story, while individuals lower in trait shame victim blamed more after reading the romantic rejection vignette. Due to the counterintuitive nature of these findings, it is possible that these are spurious results that would not hold up to replication, particularly because the properties of the abbreviated version of the scale used to measure trait shame in this study have not been fully tested. Alternatively, it is possible that individuals higher in shame became more inward focused after rejection, while those with less shame blamed others more than themselves leading to more aggressive attributions toward others instead of themselves. Further research is needed to parse apart the validity of this suggestion.

In addition, it possible that some individuals in the sample higher in shame were also survivors of sexual abuse themselves. Both children that experience sexual abuse (Feiring & Lewis, 1996) and adults that have experienced sexual assault (Vidal & Petrak, 2007; Weiss, 2010) may be more likely than the general population to feel high levels of shame. It is possible that some of the individuals higher in shame better understood the potential negative impacts of victim blaming and/or had a more accurate understanding of survivors’ role in the sequence of



events leading to sexual assault. As a result, individuals with a first-hand understanding of how romantic rejection does not warrant sexual assault may be less likely to blame other survivors.

**Entitlement.** This study found a significant correlation between higher entitlement and more victim blaming. Additionally, an interaction was discovered between entitlement and the romantic acceptance vignette compared with controls in which individuals higher in entitlement endorsed more victim blaming after reading about romantic acceptance, while those lower in entitlement endorsed less victim blaming after priming romantic acceptance. This finding does not match up with the theoretical foundation of this study suggesting some individuals may have an urge for revenge and rationalize women being the target of sexual assault if women do not act submissive and acquiesce to romantic requests, and in fact suggests the opposite. It is possible that men higher in entitlement would feel more entitled to sexual access if a woman agrees to a date and therefore would perceive women who do not consent to sex after accepting a date as an offense deserving retribution. This theory aligns with research showing participants place more blame on the survivor of a sexual assault when she has a relationship with the assailant (i.e., romantic or friendship) compared to when her assailant is a stranger (Frese, Moya, & Megias, 2004), suggesting consenting to a relationship may lead them to assume further sexual consent was implied. Imagining a woman consenting to a date may also lead a person to endorse rape myths suggesting that women put themselves in harms way. Nevertheless, more research is needed to better understand the mechanisms leading a cisgender man higher in entitlement to blame survivors of sexual assault after a woman agreeing to a date is primed.

**Aggression.** Analysis of participants' aggression scores highlighted some interesting, albeit counterintuitive findings. To start, the significant correlations between victim blaming and overall aggression, as well as physical aggression and victim blaming, suggest an interesting

potential connection that has not yet been documented in the literature. Given the correlation was larger for physical aggression than overall aggression, and overall aggression included an aggregate of participants' responses to the physical aggression items along with the other three aggression subscales that did not correlate with victim blaming (i.e., verbal aggression, anger, and hostility), it is likely the significant correlation for overall aggression was driven by the larger correlation with physical aggression. Although the connection between physical aggression and victim blaming is unclear given the lack of empirical inquiry in this area, it is possible that the physical aggression subscale tapped into aspects of traditional masculinity. That is, physical violence is part of the gender script for those higher in traditional masculinity as a way to assert dominance over others (American Psychological Association, 2018). We have seen in other work and in the results from this dissertation that higher traditional masculinity is correlated with victim blaming, so the results showing higher physical aggression correlating with victim blaming therefore may come from tapping into parts of that same population. It also highlights that individuals higher in non-physical aggression, such as verbal aggression, heightened anger, or hostility, likely have no significant tendency over the greater population to place blame on survivors of sexual assault.

The direction of the interactions between some of the levels of aggression and vignette condition on subsequent victim blaming was surprising and difficult to explain, suggesting these interactions may quite possibly be spurious results. Nevertheless, the current study found that compared to the control group, (a) individuals lower in overall aggression endorsed more victim blaming after romantic rejection was primed, while those higher in aggression endorsed less, and (b) individuals lower in physical aggression endorsed more victim blaming after reading about social rejection, while those higher in physical aggression endorsed less. Given the lack of

research exploring a connection such as this, it is unclear why for this sample, higher levels of these different forms of aggression may have contributed to less blaming of survivors of sexual assault after reading about different forms of rejection.

**Ambivalent, Benevolent, and Hostile Sexism.** In the current sample, being higher in ambivalent sexism, along with being higher in both hostile and benevolent sexism, correlated with endorsing more victim blaming beliefs. This contradicts past research showing less consistent effects for correlations between victim blaming and hostile versus benevolent sexism. For example, Abrams et al. (2003) found across two studies examining college student perceptions that hostile sexism was not correlated with victim blaming in acquaintance rape situations, while benevolent sexism was. In contrast, a study by Canto, Perles, and Martín (2014) examining college student perceptions in Spain did not find benevolent sexism to be significantly correlated with rape myth acceptance for males in their sample, while hostile sexism was. Another study examining college students by Glick and Fiske (1997) demonstrated that only hostile sexism, and not benevolent sexism, was correlated with rape myth acceptance. The correlation found in the current project was much larger for hostile sexism versus benevolent sexism, further suggesting the relationships between hostile versus benevolent sexism with victim blaming or rape myth acceptance are unique. Theories suggesting why benevolent sexism is related to placing more blame on female survivors of sexual assault versus male perpetrators suggest that those higher in benevolent sexism may believe female survivors must have acted in a way deemed inappropriate for a “lady” and therefore do not deserve any protection or deference (Abrams et al., 2003; Bradley, 2015). In addition, benevolent sexist attitudes often promote the idea that men are inherently chivalrous toward women and therefore would not attack a woman unless rightfully responding to provocation (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell,

2007). In terms of hostile sexism, some researchers suggest that individuals higher in hostile sexist attitudes may be motivated to rationalize their own hostile tendencies by endorsing beliefs that women deserve the aggression that befalls them (Abrams et al., 2003). Given the significant correlations between victim blaming and both types of sexism in the current study, all of these factors may be have been at play.

In addition, one interaction was found between sexism and vignette condition on subsequent victim blaming. Compared with the control group, individuals higher in ambivalent sexism endorsed less victim blaming after reading the social acceptance vignette, while those lower in ambivalent sexism endorsed more victim blaming when social acceptance was primed. These results coincide with the theory that individuals higher in sexist beliefs believe women deserve less respect and protection if they act inappropriately (Abrams et al., 2003; Bradley, 2015), and alternatively deserve respect and even special treatment when acting how they are expected to. That is, when the woman in the vignette acted in a way that is likely deemed appropriate (i.e., she was kind and accepting to a male's request), beliefs that women deserve harm that comes to them decreased.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Given the differences between the pilot study and current study on victim blaming after reading the different vignettes, it would have been beneficial to keep the study design more similar between the two studies in order ensure the effect did not disappear due to social desirability bias resulting from the concepts primed in participants minds after responding to the initial three study measures. Furthermore, the lack of significant results on the mood measure suggest the vignettes did not effectively impact participants current feelings. In order to completely parse out whether rejection can lead to increased victim blaming, these conditions

should effectively replicate feelings of rejection. As a result, this study would have benefited from more immersive, possibly in person enactments in which the participants could truly feel they were being rejected.

This study was also limited by its sample. All participants were enrolled in college, limiting generalizability to the greater population. A study by Gracia and Tomás (2014) analyzing over 1,000 individuals in Spain found less educated individuals were more likely to blame female survivors of domestic abuse for the abuse they endure, suggesting college educated individuals may already be less likely to victim blame than those without a college education. Furthermore, individuals majoring in psychology and social work were overrepresented in the current sample, further compromising generalizability. Future studies should strive for more diverse majors and levels of educational attainment in their sample.

Lastly, scant research exists on factors leading to incel ideologies and affiliation. Given that the current project shows that imagining a singular rejection by a woman to a man does not have a strong enough impact to induce the idea that women deserve violence against them, it is likely that influences leading to incel identification and related negative beliefs about women result from more cumulative experiences. As such, further research is needed to better understand what experiences and attributes push a person to identifying with the abhorrent sentiments of incel groups, along with what factors lead to the tipping point of violent retaliation.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the results of this study suggest there is no difference in priming romantic rejection, romantic acceptance, social rejection, or social acceptance of a woman toward a man on subsequent victim blaming of female sexual assault survivors. Nevertheless, interactions were found between some vignette conditions compared to controls and trait shame, entitlement, aggression, impulsivity, and ambivalent sexism on subsequent victim blaming. Furthermore, significant correlations between victim blaming and multiple other constructs were found, including just world beliefs, traditional masculinity, trait shame, aggression, entitlement, ambivalent sexism, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and narcissism. In sum, it does not appear simple priming of romantic or social acceptance/rejection alone impacts victim blaming for the average cisgender male, yet it may have an impact for cisgender males with traits making them more prone to blame survivors of sexual assault for the egregious attack they experienced. Exploring conditions that increase blaming of survivors is imperative to ensuring they do not impact police efforts to pursue sexual assault claims or legal decisions surrounding sentencing of perpetrators. Furthermore, as a society we need to be aware of biases that impact our own responses to claims of sexual assault so we can ensure that we respond to our own community members' reports of sexual assault with compassion, kindness, and no hint of blame.

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Table 1

*Correlations with Victim Blaming*

Construct	Pearson's <i>r</i>
Retribution: Woman in Story	.23*
Retribution: All Women	.36**
Trait Shame	-.20*
Entitlement	.23**
Belief in a Procedurally Just World	.22*
Belief in a Distributively Just World	.22*
Traditional Masculinity/Femininity	.35**
Overall Aggression	.20*
Physical Aggression	.27**
Verbal Aggression	-.04
Anger	.09
Hostility	.16
Motor Impulsivity	-.13
Attentional Impulsivity	-.01
Non-Planning Impulsivity	-.05
Ambivalent Sexism	.70**
Hostile Sexism	.76**
Benevolent Sexism	.37**
Narcissism	.23**
State Shame	-.06
Guilt	-.03
Number of Past Serious Romantic Relationships	.02
Number of Past "Casual" Romantic Relationships	.03

*Note.* \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$



Table 2

*Correlation Matrix Showing Pearson's r Across All Measures*

Construct	Victim Blaming	Trait Shame	Entitlement	Belief in a Procedurally Just World	Belief in a Distributively Just World	Traditional Masculinity/ Femininity	Overall Aggression
Victim Blaming		-.20*	.23**	.22*	.22*	.35**	.20*
Trait Shame	-.20*		-.08	-.24**	-.31**	-.33**	.19
Entitlement	.23**	-.08		.20*	.15	.09	.02
Belief in a Procedurally Just World	.22*	-.24**	.20*		.61**	.11	-.16
Belief in a Distributively Just World	.22*	-.31**	.15	.61**		.11	-.03
Traditional Masculinity/ Femininity	.35**	-.33**	.09	-.11	-.11		-.05
Overall Aggression	.20*	.19	.02	-.16	-.03	-.05	
Physical Aggression	.27**	.06	-.05	-.18	-.11	.08	.71**
Verbal Aggression	-.04	-.01	.01	-.02	.04	-.16	.52**
Anger	.09	.11	.10	.01	.08	-.07	.75**
Hostility	.16	.28**	.01	-.19*	-.04	-.05	.73**
Motor Impulsivity	-.13	-.12	.00	.05	.01	-.03	-.26**
Attentional Impulsivity	-.01	-.06	.05	.01	-.09	.08	.32**
Non-Planning Impulsivity	-.05	-.11	.05	.12	.00	.18*	-.15
Ambivalent Sexism	.37**	-.21*	.22*	.24**	.33**	.42**	.34**
Hostile Sexism	.37**	-.19*	.20*	.19*	.28**	.35**	.35**
Benevolent Sexism	.37**	-.15	.16	.20*	.28**	.35**	.20*
Narcissism	.23**	-.18*	.38**	.14	.04	.32**	.05
State Shame	-.06	.53**	-.21*	-.11	.01	-.17	.40**
Guilt	-.03	.47**	-.09	-.07	.06	-.06	.37**

Note. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Table 2 cont.

*Correlation Matrix Showing Pearson's r Across All Measures*

Construct	Physical Aggression	Verbal Aggression	Anger	Hostility	Motor Impulsivity	Attentional Impulsivity	Non-Planning Impulsivity
Victim Blaming	.27**	-.04	.09	.16	-.13	-.01	-.05
Trait Shame	.06	-.01	.11	.28**	-.12	-.06	-.11
Entitlement	-.05	.01	.10	.01	.00	.05	.05
Belief in a Procedurally Just World	-.18	-.02	.01	-.19*	.05	.01	.12
Belief in a Distributively Just World	-.11	.04	.08	-.04	.01	-.09	.00
Traditional Masculinity/Femininity	.08	-.16	-.07	-.05	-.03	.08	.18*
Overall Aggression	.71**	.52**	.75**	.73**	-.26**	-.32**	-.15
Physical Aggression		.15	.39**	.29**	-.16	-.13	-.09
Verbal Aggression	.15		.39**	.15	-.15	-.17	-.05
Anger	.39**	.39**		.38**	-.31**	-.31**	-.11
Hostility	.29**	.15	.38**		-.11	-.28**	-.13
Motor Impulsivity	-.16	-.15	-.31**	-.11		.53**	.41**
Attentional Impulsivity	-.13	-.17	-.31**	-.28**	.53**		.50**
Non-Planning Impulsivity	-.09	-.05	-.11	-.13	.41**	.50**	
Ambivalent Sexism	.36**	.02	.17	.27**	-.12	-.11	.07
Hostile Sexism	.38**	.11	.18	.24*	-.10	-.08	.00
Benevolent Sexism	.22*	-.09	.10	.22*	-.10	-.10	.13
Narcissism	.10	.02	.11	-.07	-.04	.07	.11
State Shame	.26**	.00	.25*	.46**	-.26**	-.30**	-.33**
Guilt	.23*	.05	.26**	.40**	-.21*	-.26**	-.24

Note. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Table 2 cont.

*Correlation Matrix Showing Pearson's r Across All Measures*

Construct	Ambivalent Sexism	Hostile Sexism	Benevolent Sexism	Narcissism	State Shame	Guilt
Victim Blaming	.70**	.76**	.37**	.23**	-.06	-.03
Trait Shame	-.21*	-.19*	-.15	-.18*	.53**	.47**
Entitlement	.22*	.20*	.16	.38**	-.21*	-.09
Belief in a Procedurally Just World	.24**	.19*	.20*	.14	-.11	-.07
Belief in a Distributively Just World	.33**	.28**	.28**	.04	.01	.06
Traditional Masculinity/ Femininity	.42**	.35**	.35**	.32**	-.17	-.06
Overall Aggression	.34**	.35**	.20*	.05	.40**	.37**
Physical Aggression	.36**	.38**	.22*	.10	.26**	.23*
Verbal Aggression	.02	.11	-.09	.02	.00	.05
Anger	.17	.18	.10	.11	.25*	.26**
Hostility	.27**	.24*	.22*	-.07	.46**	.40**
Motor Impulsivity	-.12	-.10	-.10	-.04	-.26**	-.21*
Attentional Impulsivity	-.11	-.08	-.10	.07	-.30**	-.26**
Non-Planning Impulsivity	.07	.00	.13	.11	-.33**	-.24*
Ambivalent Sexism		.87**	.80**	.26**	.09	.16
Hostile Sexism	.87**		.40**	.25**	.08	.11
Benevolent Sexism	.80**	.40**		.17	.06	.17
Narcissism	.26**	.25**	.17		-.11	-.05
State Shame	.09	.08	.06	-.11		.87**
Guilt	.16	.11	.17	-.05	.87**	

Note. \* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$

Table 3

*Scores on Attitudes Toward Rape Victims Scale by Vignette Condition*

Vignette Condition	Current Study			Pilot Study		
	Number of Participants (n)	Mean Score	Standard Deviation	Number of Participants (n)	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Control Group	30	21.60	13.91	10	22.00	12.33
Social Acceptance	25	20.72	12.07	8	16.88	6.73
Romantic Acceptance	25	22.40	12.89	9	24.33	11.59
Social Rejection	27	18.96	10.95	8	18.38	8.90
Romantic Rejection	22	19.73	13.02	10	29.90	13.12

Table 4

*Scores on Brief Mood Introspection Scale by Vignette Condition*

Vignette Condition	Number of Participants (n)	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Pleasant-Unpleasant Mood Dimension			
Control Group	30	2.60	0.44
Social Acceptance	25	2.72	0.47
Romantic Acceptance	25	2.63	0.48
Social Rejection	27	2.72	0.50
Romantic Rejection	21	2.54	0.41
Arousal-Calm Mood Dimension			
Control Group	30	2.31	0.26
Social Acceptance	25	2.21	0.41
Romantic Acceptance	25	2.38	0.28
Social Rejection	27	2.23	0.38
Romantic Rejection	21	2.35	0.31
Positive-Tired Mood Dimension			
Control Group	30	2.38	0.39
Social Acceptance	25	2.43	0.56
Romantic Acceptance	25	2.48	0.46
Social Rejection	27	2.48	0.52
Romantic Rejection	21	2.35	0.49
Negative-Relaxed Mood Dimension			
Control Group	30	2.20	0.62
Social Acceptance	25	1.97	0.61
Romantic Acceptance	25	2.31	0.61
Social Rejection	27	2.01	0.67
Romantic Rejection	21	2.32	0.50

APPENDICES

## Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter

Aug 23, 2019 2:47 PM EDT

Lilah Clevey

Psychology, Users loaded with unmatched Organization affiliation.

Re: Expedited Review - Initial - UHSRC-FY19-20-17 Increased Rape Victims Scale Attitudes after Relational Rejection: The Roles of Entitlement and Shame

Dear Lilah Clevey:

The Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee has rendered the decision below for Increased Rape Victims Scale Attitudes after Relational Rejection: The Roles of Entitlement and Shame . You are approved to conduct your research.

Decision: Approved

Selected Category: 7. Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including, but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior) or research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies.

Findings: You must use stamped copies of your recruitment and consent forms.

To access your stamped documents, follow these steps: 1. Open up the Dashboard; 2. Scroll down to the Approved Studies box; 3. Click on your study ID link; 4. Click on "Attachments" in the bottom box next to "Key Contacts"; 5. Click on the three dots next to the attachment filename; 6. Select Download.

Renewals: This approval will not expire. Once you have completed data collection and all data are de-identified, please submit a Closure form.

Modifications: All changes to this study must be approved prior to implementation. If you plan to make any changes, submit a modification request application in Cayuse IRB for review and approval. You may not implement your changes until you receive a modification approval letter.

Problems: All deviations from the approved protocol, unanticipated problems, adverse events, subject complaints, or other problems that may affect risk to human subjects *or* alter their willingness to participate must be reported to the UHSRC. Complete the incident report application in Cayuse IRB.

Please contact [human.subjects@emich.edu](mailto:human.subjects@emich.edu) with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee

## Appendix B: Vignettes

### **Vignette A: Romantic Rejection**

You have sat behind Emily in math all year and have developed strong feelings for her. You really want to ask her out but have felt too nervous. You've gotten closer over the year and have started comparing your math homework everyday before class. Emily is always smiling and makes you feel like she really enjoys talking with you. On the last day of class, you finally muster up the courage to ask her on a date. You approach her after class and tap her on the shoulder. She turns around smiling and you muster up the courage to ask "would you like to go out to lunch sometime, just us?" Emily immediately laughs, loud enough so that some other kids in the room turn around to watch. "What, like date?" she asks. You feel your stomach drop and immediately regret asking her, but you can't turn back now. "Yeah, like a date" you respond. She smiles and says, "aw, no," and walks out of the room.

### **Vignette B: Social Rejection**

You've just started at a new school and are eager to make friends. You had a lot of friends at your old school but knew them all since you were a kid, and you haven't ever had to make friends with strangers before. During lunch you scan the room for a group of students you think you could fit in with. You see a girl that looks a lot like one of your friends from home sitting with a few other students so you decide to approach her and ask if you can join them. You walk up, a little nervous, and ask "would you mind if I join you?" The girl looks up at you and then back at her friends and starts to laugh. She looks back at you with a mean look and states "we would mind, go sit somewhere else" and turns her back to you. You feel your stomach drop and immediately regret asking her.

### **Vignette A: Romantic Acceptance**

You have sat behind Emily in math all year and have developed strong feelings for her. You really want to ask her out but have felt too nervous. You've gotten closer over the year and have started comparing your math homework everyday before class. Emily is always smiling and makes you feel like she really enjoys talking with you. On the last day of class, you finally muster up the courage to ask her on a date. You approach her after class and tap her on the shoulder. She turns around smiling and you muster up the courage to ask "would you like to go out to lunch sometime, just us?" She immediately smiles a warm, friendly smile and a few other kids in the class start to watch. "You mean, like date?" she asks. You begin to feel excited and so happy you asked her. "Yeah, like a date" you respond. She smiles and says, "yeah, I'd like that." You immediately feel so relieved and overjoyed.

### **Vignette B: Social Acceptance**

You've just started at a new school and are eager to make friends. You had a lot of friends at your old school but knew them all since you were a kid, and you haven't ever had to make friends with strangers before. During lunch you scan the room for a group of students you think you could fit in with. You see a girl that looks a lot like one of your friends from home sitting



with a few other students so you decide to approach her and ask if you can join them. You walk up, a little nervous, and ask “would you mind if I join you?” The girl looks up at you and then back at her friends. She turns back to you with a warm smile and states “we don’t mind at all, take a seat.” You casually sat down. You feel so relieved you asked and excited to start making new friends.

### **Vignette C: Control Group**

You have had the same backpack for about 5 years and have taken it on various excursions. You liked that it had a lot of pockets and was pretty big for an average backpack. You also liked that it was your favorite color. But, the zipper has started to get stuck every time you use it and the fabric at the bottom has started to become thin. As a result, you know it’s time for you to get a new one. You go to the store hoping to get a new backpack that doesn’t cost too much and looks like your old one. You walk to the back of the store where they keep the backpacks. You look around for about five minutes and find what you are looking for in the back left corner of the store, next to the bicycles. You walk back up to the front of the store and wait in line for about two minutes and then pay for the backpack using cash. After paying, you make your way home.

Appendix C: Qualitative Coding Scheme for Responses to Select Items

Directions:

- Coders are blind to the participant’s randomized condition and the study hypotheses.
- Each participant will receive three sets of codes
- If participant did not answer any questions in a coding group, code specific “item #” as 99 and skip to next coding group (this is different than coding 0 for code group 1)

For all participants, indicate:

Participant #	
Vignette Condition (Specify 2-6)	

1. Coding for item numbers 167-168

Item:	Examples:	Code:
Question Group Code #	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always put 1 for this item when coding this portion (1 means coding for items 167 &amp; 168)</li> </ul>	1
Specific Question Item #	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 167</li> <li>• 168</li> <li>• If the participant was in vignette condition 4, 5, or 6, code it 0 (indicating they were not presented with this item)</li> </ul>	Specify number (if in vignette condition 4, 5, or 6, code as 0, skip to the next code set)
Explanation of vengeance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women deserve assault because they do/did X</li> <li>• Women deserve assault as revenge for something else they’ve done</li> </ul>	0: Not about vengeance 1: Yes, about vengeance
Self-Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any references to self</li> </ul>	0: No references to self-concern 1: References to self-concern are present
Number of negative words indications		Provide specific #
Number of positive words indications		Provide specific #
Number of emotion-laden words	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angry</li> </ul>	Provide specific #

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sad</li> <li>• Excited</li> <li>• Infuriated</li> <li>• Frustrated</li> </ul>	
Write out specific emotion-laden words that the participant used		Write out words:
Total number of words used		Provide specific #

2. Coding for item numbers 156, 158, 159, 160, & 161

Item:	Examples:	Code:
Question Group Code #	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always put 2 for this item when coding this portion (2 means coding for items 156, 158, 159, 160, &amp; 161)</li> </ul>	
Specific Question Item #	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 156 (Disagree Strongly)</li> <li>• 158 (Disagree Mildly)</li> <li>• 159 (Neutral)</li> <li>• 160 (Agree Mildly)</li> <li>• 161 (Agree Strongly)</li> </ul>	Specify number
Explanation of vengeance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women deserve assault because they do/did X</li> <li>• Women deserve assault as revenge for something else they've done</li> </ul>	0: Not about vengeance 1: Yes, about vengeance
Self-Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any references to self</li> </ul>	0: No references to self-concern 1: References to self-concern are present
Number of negative words indications		Provide specific #
Number of positive words indications		Provide specific #
Number of emotion-laden words	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angry</li> <li>• Sad</li> <li>• Excited</li> <li>• Infuriated</li> <li>• Frustrated</li> </ul>	Provide specific #
Write out specific emotion-laden words that the participant used		Write out words:
Total number of words used		Provide specific #

3. Coding for item numbers 162, 163, 164, 165, & 166

Item:	Examples:	Code:
Question Group Code #	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always put 3 for this item when coding this portion (3 means coding for items 162, 163, 164, 165, &amp; 166)</li> </ul>	3
Specific Question Item #	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 162 (Disagree Strongly)</li> <li>• 163 (Disagree Mildly)</li> <li>• 164 (Neutral)</li> <li>• 165 (Agree Mildly)</li> <li>• 166 (Agree Strongly)</li> </ul>	Specify number
Explanation of vengeance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women deserve assault because they do/did X</li> <li>• Women deserve assault as revenge for something else they've done</li> </ul>	0: Not about vengeance 1: Yes, about vengeance
Self-Concern	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any references to self</li> </ul>	0: No references to self-concern 1: References to self-concern are present
Number of negative words indications		Provide specific #
Number of positive words indications		Provide specific #
Number of emotion-laden words	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Angry</li> <li>• Sad</li> <li>• Excited</li> <li>• Infuriated</li> <li>• Frustrated</li> </ul>	Provide specific #
Write out specific emotion-laden words that the participant used		Write out words:
Total number of words used		Provide specific #
Mentions what women wear/how they dress		1: Yes, mentions it 2: No, does not
Mentions being in a dangerous place		1: Yes, mentions it 2: No, does not
Mentions alcohol		1: Yes, mentions it 2: No, does not

Appendix D: Brief Mood Introspection Scale

INSTRUCTIONS: Circle the response on the scale below that indicates how well each adjective or phrase describes your present mood.

(definitely do not feel) (do not feel) (slightly feel) (definitely feel)

1                      2                      3                      4

Lively    1   2   3   4

Happy    1   2   3   4

Sad        1   2   3   4

Tired     1   2   3   4

Caring    1   2   3   4

Content   1   2   3   4

Gloomy   1   2   3   4

Jittery    1   2   3   4

Drowsy   1   2   3   4

Grouchy  1   2   3   4

Peppy    1   2   3   4

Nervous  1   2   3   4

Calm     1   2   3   4

Loving    1   2   3   4

Fed Up    1   2   3   4

Active    1   2   3   4

## Appendix E: Aggression Questionnaire

Please rate each of the following items in terms of how characteristic they are of you. Use the following scale for answering these items:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
<b>extremely uncharacteristic of me</b>					<b>Extremely characteristic of me</b>		

- 1) Once in a while I can't control the urge to strike another person.
- 2) Given enough provocation, I may hit another person.
- 3) If somebody hits me, I hit back.
- 4) I get into fights a little more than the average person.
- 5) If I have to resort to violence to protect my rights, I will.
- 6) There are people who pushed me so far that we came to blows.
- 7) I can think of no good reason for ever hitting a person.
- 8) I have threatened people I know.
- 9) I have become so mad that I have broken things.
- 10) I tell my friends openly when I disagree with them.
- 11) I often find myself disagreeing with people.
- 12) When people annoy me, I may tell them what I think of them.
- 13) I can't help getting into arguments when people disagree with me.
- 14) My friends say that I'm somewhat argumentative.
- 15) I flare up quickly but get over it quickly.
- 16) When frustrated, I let my irritation show.
- 17) I sometimes feel like a powder keg ready to explode.
- 18) I am an even-tempered person.
- 19) Some of my friends think I'm a hothead.
- 20) Sometimes I fly off the handle for no good reason.
- 21) I have trouble controlling my temper.
- 22) I am sometimes eaten up with jealousy.
- 23) At times I feel I have gotten a raw deal out of life.
- 24) Other people always seem to get the breaks.
- 25) I wonder why sometimes I feel so bitter about things.
- 26) I know that "friends" talk about me behind my back.
- 27) I am suspicious of overly friendly strangers.
- 28) I sometimes feel that people are laughing at me behind me back.
- 29) When people are especially nice, I wonder what they want.

## Appendix F: Romantic Relationship Questions

What is your current relationship status?

- a) Single
- b) Dating
- c) Living with partner
- d) Married

How many romantic relationships have you been in that you would describe as being a “serious” relationship?

Provide Number:

How many romantic relationships have you been in that you would describe as being a “casual” or not that serious?

Provide Number:

Have you experienced a break-up that you would describe as bad or complicated?

Yes

No