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Catharine Sciolla

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Attitude Change Intervention for Victim Blaming of Sexual Assault

by

Catharine Sciolla

Senior Honors Psychology Research

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Psychology Department
University of Richmond
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Advisor: Dr. Laura Knouse

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Catharine Sciolla

Dr. Laura Knouse, Faculty Advisor

University of Richmond

Correspondence concerning this paper should be addressed to Catharine Sciolla and Dr. Laura Knouse. University of Richmond, Richmond, VA.
Contact: catharine.sciolla@richmond.edu lknouse@richmond.edu

Dedication

This research is dedicated to all of the victims and survivors of sexual violence.
To all the people who were asked "What were you wearing?" before anything else.
To all the people who were not believed.
To all the people who were abandoned, left alone to piece themselves back together.
You are not alone, and this research is for you.

"i remember also
what he was wearing
that night
even though
it's true
that no one
has ever asked"

What I was Wearing, Mary Simmerling

Abstract

This research explores the possibility of an Attitude Change based intervention for victim blaming following and surrounding incidents of sexual assault and sexual violence. The study aimed at creating an intervention to successfully decrease and minimize victim blaming attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and tendencies through a combination of internalization strategies, self-reference effects, and empirically supported attitude change methods. There were 149 participants who completed the study. Participants were tasked to complete a series questionnaires measuring Hostile sexism, Benevolent sexism, Just World Bias, Robbery Victim Blame, then complete the intervention, a brief educational reading and a self-generated response to a fictional rape scenario, or the control, a writing response regarding the Center for Disease Control's Sexual Violence pamphlet, and lastly the Victim Blame Scale. Results initially suggested a marginally significant effect of the intervention, but this is likely accounted for by a difference in hostile sexism across groups that occurred despite randomization. Further research is required, but this study created the path for a successful intervention to reduce victim blaming post sexual assault.

Attitude Change Intervention for Victim Blaming of Sexual Assault

Research shows that one in four to one in five women experience sexual assault while in college (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000). Roughly one in thirty three men experience sexual violence in their lives, and college aged men are five times more likely to experience sexual assault than non-college men (RAINN, 2016). Furthermore, research suggests that over sixty percent of those who identify as gay or lesbian experience sexual harassment (Westat et al., 2015). More than half of rape victims do not report their assault, and this is possible due to fear of victim blaming behaviors (Westat et al., 2015).While these statistics are staggering, it is very likely that even more people experience sexual violence than studies have reported, due to hesitations in reporting to officials, lack of support, stereotype threat, difference in socioeconomic standing, profession, and victim blaming behaviors, which act as roadblocks for victims seeking guidance and help following their assault (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Dworkin, Melon, Bystrynski & Allen, 2017; Mgoqi-Mbalo & Zhang, 2017; Sprankle, Bloomquist, Butcher, Gleason & Schaefer, 2017; Wilson, Miller, Leheney, Ballman, & Scarpa; 2016; Yamawaki, Darby, & Queiroz, 2007).

Not only is sexual violence extremely physically dangerous for the victim (sexually transmitted diseases, unplanned pregnancy, incapacitation, physical assault, threats, etc.), but it is also emotionally and mentally dangerous. Victims of sexual violence experience high rates of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Depression, Anxiety, and Eating Disorders, as well as other mental health issues (Dworkin, Menon, Bystrynski, & Allen, 2017). Incidents of sexual assault may even have a greater damaging effect on mental health than other traumas (Dworkin, Menon, Bystrynski, & Allen, 2017). Given the recent media and societal attention surrounding

the issue of sexual violence, it has become increasingly important to capitalize on the growing

movements raising awareness for sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and all other forms

of sexual violence, and develop strategies to help decrease victim blaming attitudes in society.

The benefits of reducing victim blaming tendencies, attitudes, and behaviors are creating a safer

world for survivors, punishing perpetrators and not victims for sexual crimes, less mental and

emotional damage to the victim, and a more accepting and understanding society.

Given the research, it is clear that victim blaming attitudes infiltrate the healing process

of many survivors; therefore, this research aimed to understand a way to reduce the inappropriate

behaviors of victim blaming. Roughly ⅔ of victims tell their family or their friends about their

experience seeking social support and understanding (Yamawaki, 2007). The first person that a

victim tells is a crucial experience in the healing process.

Many studies have connected high levels of sexism to high levels of victim blaming

attitudes and behaviors (Klement, Sagarin & Lee, 2017; Wilson et al., 2017, 866; Yamawaki,

2007). The two types of sexism commonly discussed in relation to sexual assault, victim

blaming, and rape myth acceptance are Hostile sexism and Benevolent sexism. Together, these

types of sexism create "sexist ambivalence" (Wilson, Miller, Leheney, Ballman, & Scarpa, 2017,

866). Hostile sexism is a person's preconceived bias against women demonstrated through

obvious hatred towards women. Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, is the tendency to believe

that women are the weaker and lower sex as demonstrated by beliefs that women must be

cherished and protected. Both Hostile sexism and Benevolent sexism are based on the premise

that men are better than women and society should adhere to traditional gender roles and

stereotypes. Yamawaki (2007) found that high levels of Benevolent sexism correlated with high

levels of victim blaming in situations of acquaintance rape (date rape) but not in situations of

stranger rape. The findings of Wilson et. al (2017) would suggest that this is because stranger

rape scenarios have high rape myth script adherence. If a rape situation varies from conventional

schemas of rape (rape myths), as is the case for acquaintance rape, the victims are more likely to

experience victim blaming behaviors and attitudes, including self-blame (Wilson et al., 2017).

Furthermore, Yamawaki found that high levels of gender role traditionality was associated with

high levels of victim blaming tendencies as well as excusing the rapist and minimizing the rape

incident. In a 2007 study, Yamawaki, Darby, and Queiroz additionally found a significant

relationship between Hostile sexism (measured in this study as Hostile Power Relations) and

victim blaming when the perpetrator was a powerful man, but there was no significant

relationship between the variables if the perpetrator was a powerful woman. In this study, I

examined Hostile and Benevolent sexism and their respective relationships to victim blaming

tendencies, attitudes, and beliefs because the literature already suggests important correlations

between sexism, gender, and sexual orientation with victim blaming.

Another set of attitudes that may correlate with victim blaming tendencies is Just World

Bias. Just World Bias is the basic notion that people get what they deserve because of something

one has done in the past and that the world is inherently fair. Therefore, good things happen to

good people and bad things happen to bad people. The Just World Bias scale, created by Lucas,

Zhdanova, and Alexander (2011), was included in this present research because I believed that

Just World Bias would positively correlate with Victim Blaming and might affect the strength of

the effects of interventions to reduce it.

In order to develop an intervention to decrease victim blaming attitudes, research must first test whether or not an empirically supported attitude change tactic will decrease victim blaming in the short term. A classic study in the field of attitude change is Higgins and Rholes (1977) "Saying is Believing" study. The study suggests that it is more effective to have participants argue for a position in their own words, therefore personalizing the message. The study examined whether or not, given ambiguous or unambiguous information about a person, knowing whether or not said person was well liked, influenced the participant's likelihood of remembering the person was affected. Higgins and Rholes (1977) found that participants who wrote a message were influenced by the perception of the person they thought would be receiving the message and that the participant then believed that the original prompt contained more positive language, if they had shifted their description to be positive based on the condition. By writing from a specific perspective, participants are more likely to remember the original stimulus in a certain light.

Another related study conducted in 2015 by Canning and Harackiewicz found that self-generated utility value was significantly effective in helping participants with low confidence adopt new attitudes while a directly communicated utility value message was not. Utility value is the ability of a person to contribute to the success of their personal goals or another person's goals. In their 2015 study, "Teach It, Don't Preach It," the authors compared two utility value intervention styles. In Study 2 of their investigation, the researchers examined if a combination of directly communicated utility value and self-generated utility value was an effective intervention method in regards increasing perceptions of utility value, confidence, interest, and performance. They found that a combination of both self-generated and directly

communicated utility value was effective in changing attitudes, especially for participants with low confidence. Therefore, in the present research, I created an intervention that would also utilize both direct and self-generated messaging. The first part of my intervention, the educational section, is a directly communicated message and the second part of the intervention requests that participants self-generate their own arguments against victim blaming.

Aronson, Fried and Good (2002) attempted to create a lasting attitude change intervention to increase growth mindset of intelligence, particularly in African American students, that incorporated "Saying is Believing" as well. Participants in the experimental growth mindset condition were tasked to write letters to 7th graders struggling to stay motivated in school and convince them that they could overcome their challenges and that intelligence was like a continuously growing muscle. After three sessions that included this and other intervention components, participants demonstrated attitude change which correlated with an improved academic performance. This study serves as evidence for the possibility of creating a lasting attitude change intervention incorporating self-generated content (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002).

The notion of a dissonance intervention in which participants generated counter attitudinal arguments to actively counteract negative beliefs is a key component in the study "The Body Project" in which participants actively counteracted negative thoughts regarding their body and physique in order to overcome the thin ideal (Stice, Shaw, Burton, & Wade, 2005). In this study, the researchers asked participants to write short essays regarding the negative effects of the thin-ideal and its damaging costs. Participants were given a homework assignment to write another one page essay detailing positive aspects of their body while looking in a full length

mirror. There was a second session in which participants had to complete a role play with facilitators to utilize their counter attitudinal arguments. In the third session, participants had to discuss future obstacles and pressure to conform to the thin-ideal. The researchers found a significant effect of the dissonance condition and a significant decrease in internalization of the thin-ideal, eating disorder symptoms, and body dissatisfaction. This effect was significant at a 6 month and 12 month posttest.

The overarching research question for my study is: will an evidence-based attitude change strategy based on "Saying is Believing" have an effect on reducing victim blaming attitudes of sexual assault compared to traditional educational messaging? This pilot study examined whether a brief anti-victim blaming intervention had an effect on victim blaming compared to the Center for Disease Control's educational pamphlet on sexual violence. I have been unable to locate any studies that have attempted to use specific attitude change techniques to decrease levels of victim blaming. As far as I can tell, this would be a novel concept for the field. I also analyzed the relationship between victim blaming outcome and additional attitude variables as moderators in order to better understand effects of the intervention. The main moderator variable examined was sexism as measured by the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske 1996). I also analyzed the moderators of gender identity, age, sexual orientation, just world bias, and general victim blaming tendencies for effects on the outcome.

Method

Participants

The study tested 149 participants recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk. 188 people gave consent with 39 people dropping out of the study creating a 79.3% completion rate for this

study. Of the 149 participants who completed the study, 66 self-identified as female (44.3%) and

83 self-identified as male (55.7%). There were no participants who self-identified as gender

non-conforming, non-binary, or transgender. There were 127 participants who identified as

heterosexual (85.2%), 10 participants who identified as homosexual (6.7%), 11 participants who

identified as bisexual (7.4%), and 1 participant who identified as pansexual (0.7%). Additional

participant demographics appear in Tables 1 through 3.

Race, Self-Identified

European/Caucasian American	Black/African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Native American	Other
114 (76.5%)	21 (14.1%)	12 (8.1%)	4 (2.7%)	2(1.3%)

Table 1. Self Identified Race.
*16 participants recorded that they were Hispanic/Latino accounting for 10.7 % of the participant demographic.
**Percentage adds up to more than 100% as participants were allowed to select more than one identifying race.

Age, Self-Identified

18-25 years old	25-30 years old	30-40 years old	40-50 years old	50-65 years old
22 (14.8%)	38 (25.5%)	66 (44.3%)	14 (9.4%)	9 (6%)

Table 2. Self Identified Age in Years

Education Level, Self-Identified

No High School Diploma	High School Diploma	Some College (including current college students)	Associates/ Technical Degree	Bachelor's (undergraduate) Degree	Master's Degree	Doctoral, Medical, or Law Degree
0 (0%)	14 (9.4%)	35 (23.5%)	28 (18.8%)	59 (39.6%)	12 (8.1%)	1 (0.7%)

Table 3. Self Identified Education Level

In order to be qualified for the study, participants had to be 18 years of age or older and

have a rating of 95% or more approved prior work on Amazon Mechanical Turk. Participants

received $3.00 compensation for their participation in the research, delivered to them through

Amazon Mechanical Turk.

Measures

   Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996). The ASI is a 22 item

self-report scale designed to measure levels of Hostile and Benevolent sexism. Participants are

asked to respond to questions about the relationships between men and women in today's society

and respond on an 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree).

Evidence of this scale's reliability and validity comes from a study by Peter Glick and Susan T.

Fiske conducted in 1996 and published by the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology.*

This inventory shows a participant's tendencies to agree or disagree with sexists assertions.

Questions include "Women should be cherished and protected by men" and "A good woman

should be set on a pedestal by her man." In the current sample, internal consistency for the

overall scale was excellent (Cronbach's α = .94). In this study, I analyzed the participants mean

score on the questions which indicated Hostile sexism and the questions that indicated

Benevolent sexism in order to assess whether or not one type of sexism was associated with

more victim blaming tendencies and attitudes.

   Just World Bias Scale (Lucas, Zhdanova, & Alexander, 2011). The Just World Bias

scale is a 8 item self-report scale designed to measure a participant's perception on fairness.

Participants are asked to rate how much they agree or disagree on a statement regarding

perception of fairness in respect to others and respond on an 7-point Likert scale ranging from 0

(Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree). In the current sample, internal consistency for the

overall scale was excellent (Cronbach's α = .97). In this study, Just World Bias was analyzed as a

potential moderating variable for victim blaming.

Victim Blaming Scale (VBS; Loughnan, Pina, Vasquez, & Puvia, 2013). The VBS is a 5 item self-report scale designed to measure victim blaming tendencies, attitudes, and beliefs. Participants are asked to read a hypothetical sexual assault scenario rate their opinions of blame, careless behavior, justification and responsibility, and then respond on an 7-point scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much so). In the current sample, internal consistency for the overall scale was excellent (Cronbach's α = .94).

Robbery Victim Blaming Scale (Robbery VBS). I designed the Robbery VBS for this study as a 4 item self-report scale designed to measure a participant's general level of victim blaming tendencies, not specific to incidents of sexual assault but to general crimes, such as robbery. Participants were tasked to read a short vignette involving a fictional robbery scenario in which a young woman named Sarah left her apartment door open and was robbed by a man named Fred. Then, participants reported how much they blamed Sarah for the robbery and their perception of Sarah's character on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (Not at all) to 7 (Very much so). This scale assesses who should be held responsible for the event and reveals levels of victim blaming in participants. In the current sample, internal consistency for the overall scale was good (Cronbach's α = .86). In this study, the Robbery Victim Blame Scale was used to understand whether or not participants had a tendency to victim blame in situations not limited to sexual assault. This scale was analyzed in the same manner as Loughnan, Pina, Vasquez, and Puvia's (2015) Victim Blame Scale with higher average scores indicating higher victim blaming tendencies.

Intervention

The intervention I created for the study appears in the Appendix. The intervention is a brief writing intervention designed to use the self-reference effect and internalization strategies in order to reduce victim blaming tendencies, attitudes, and beliefs. Participants were asked to read a brief paragraph describing the negative effects of victim blaming tendencies and behaviors on victims of sexual violence. The participants are then asked to read a hypothetical scenario and imagine that it applied to their closest female friend. In the story, the friend revealed to them the story of her assault and her self-blaming beliefs. Participants were then tasked to write a two to four paragraph response to their friend using the information they learned in the educational section of the intervention as well as details from the scenario in order to explain to the victim why she should not blame herself for the attack.

Procedure

This study was approved by the University of Richmond Institutional Review Board. All participants were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk. Participants had to have completed at least 100 MTurk studies and earned a participant rating of at least 95% in order to be able to access the survey. Data was collected across 9 hours on Monday, March 5, 2018. In the description of the study, participants were provided with necessary information about the sensitive nature of the content in this study. Participants were told that this survey would contain fictional scenarios describing sexual assault and that it may be upsetting to some participants. When reading the consent form, participants were provided with national resources (National Institute of Mental Health, National Alliance on Mental Illness, National Sexual Abuse Hotline,

and National RAINN Hotline). After reading the consent form, participants then gave their informed consent and acknowledged that they were 18 years of age or older.

Participants then filled reported demographics including age, gender, and sexual orientation. Both gender and sexual orientation were recorded in an open text box so that participants could self-identify as they viewed themselves in order to be as inclusive and respectful as possible. All responses were coded by the researcher and cross checked by the supervisor. Race was collected through a multiple choice question of European/Caucasian American, Black/African American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, or other. Participants were then asked whether or not they identified as Hispanic or Latino. Lastly for demographic data collection, participants were asked to select their level of education ranging from "No high school diploma" to "Doctoral, Medical, or Law degree."

The first self-report measure of the study was the Ambivalent Sexism Invention (Glick and Fiske, 1996). Secondly, participants completed the Just World Bias Scale. Next, participants completed the Robbery Victim Blame Scale which I modeled off of the Victim Blaming Scale created by Loughnan, Pina, Vasquez, and Puvia (2013).

At this point in the study, participants were randomly assigned to either receive the control condition or the experimental intervention condition. If exposed to the control condition (see Appendix), participants were presented with the Center for Disease Control's education pamphlet on Sexual Violence from 2012 and asked to read it. Participants had to spend at least 60 seconds on the page with the pamphlet before the button appeared that would allow them to move on to the writing section. Participants were then asked to summarize what they had just read in 2-4 paragraphs for someone who was not able to read it.

The participants in the experimental condition were presented with the first phase of the intervention which was the educational paragraph on the negative effects of Victim Blaming (see Appendix). Participants had to wait at least 30 seconds before the button appeared to continue to the second phase of the intervention. In the second phase of the intervention, participants were tasked to imagine that their closest female friend was sexually assaulted and believes that it was her (the victim's) fault. Participants were given a fictional stereotypical, heterosexual, rape scenario, which they read with the button to proceed appearing after 60 seconds. Afterwards, they were told to write 2-4 paragraphs to their closest female friend explaining to her that it was not her fault that she was sexually assaulted using the information the participant had read in phase one and phase two of the intervention. In the writing portion of the study for both the control and the intervention conditions, participants were required to write at least one sentence (roughly fifty characters) minimum to continue to the next part of the study.

Following either the control or experimental condition, participants completed the Victim Blame Scale (Loughnan, Pina, Vasquez, and Puvia, 2013). Participants were then presented with the debriefing statement thanking them for their participation in the study, the code to receive their compensation from Amazon Mechanical Turk, and another presentation of the national resources for mental illness and sexual assault.

Plan of Analysis

I completed the main analyses of the study according to the pre-registered plan on aspredicted.com. After cleaning and organizing the data, I conducted a one-way ANOVA comparing the control and experimental groups. The dependent variable was the participant's score on Victim Blame Scale. Additionally, I tested possible moderator variables of this

relationship (age, sexual orientation, education level, gender, sexism, Just World Bias and robbery victim blaming score) using the SPSS PROCESS macro (Model 1).

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics for all scales and correlations between sexism (Hostile and Benevolent), Just World Bias, Robbery victim blaming, and victim blaming appear in Table 4. Chronbach's alpha (internal consistency) for each scale also appears in Table 4 on the diagonal. An α of 0.9 or above is considered excellent, an α of 0.8 or above is considered good, an α of 0.7 or above is acceptable, and α that are below 0.7 are considered, questionable, poor, and unacceptable. The Chronbach's alphas in this study were all good to excellent.

Table 4. Correlations and Alphas

	N	M	SD	ASI Hostile Sexism	ASI Benevolent Sexism	Just World Bias	Robbery Victim Blame	Victim Blame Scale
ASI Hostile Sexism	149	2.60	1.25	α=0.94				
ASI Benevolent Sexism	149	2.87	1.12	.36**	α=0.90			
Just World Bias	149	4.39	1.54	0.07	.28**	α = .97		
Robbery Victim Blame	149	4.08	1.50	.37**	.34**	.25**	α = .86	
Victim Blame Scale	149	2.01	1.38	.44**	.19*	0.07	.38**	α = .94

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Note: Values on the diagonal are Cronbach's α for each scale.

Randomization Check

I tested whether the intervention and control groups differed on gender, Hostile sexism, Benevolent sexism, Just World Bias, and robbery victim blaming. There were no statistically significant differences on any of the variables except for Hostile Sexism, $F(1,148) = 3.85$, $p = 0.04$. The control group had significantly greater Hostile sexism ($M=2.89$, $SD=1.36$) than the intervention group ($M=2.36$, $SD=1.10$, $d=0.41$). Thus, Hostile sexism was considered as a possible confounding variable in the analyses.

Effects of Intervention

The mean score on the VBS for the control group ($M = 2.25$, $SD=1.45$) was higher than the mean score on the VBS for the intervention group ($M=1.81$, $SD=1.25$); however, the difference was not statistically significant ($F(1,148)=3.85$, $p=0.052$, $d=0.32$). Because of evidence of skewness for the Victim Blaming Scale, I also conducted a non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test, which yielded similar results ($p=0.06$). Because of the between group differences in Hostile Sexism, I decided to examine whether differences in Hostile Sexism could account for the condition effect. In a moderator analysis, Hostile Sexism was significantly positively associated with Victim Blaming outcome score ($B=0.47$, $t=5.46$, $p<0.01$) and when Hostile Sexism was included in the model, the intervention condition was no longer marginally statistically significant as a predictor of Victim Blaming outcome score ($B= -0.20$, $t= -0.98$, $p=0.33$). In addition, the Hostile Sexism by intervention interaction was not statistically significant ($p=0.91$).

Additional Potential Moderators

I tested additional potential moderating variables of the relationship between intervention condition and victim blaming, including Benevolent sexism, Just World Bias, Robbery Victim Blaming score, age, gender, sexual orientation, race, and level of education using the SPSS PROCESS macro (Model 1). There were no significant interaction effects for any of the moderators. However, there was a main effect of Hostile sexism, Benevolent sexism, and Robbery Victim Blame score on the Victim Blame Scale (see Table 4). In addition, there was a trend toward men *(M=2.23, SD=1.49)* endorsed greater victim blaming than women *(M=1.74, SD=1.19)*, *(B=0.46, t=1.41, p=0.16)*.

Discussion

I hypothesized that participants who completed the attitude change intervention modeled off of "Saying is Believing" would demonstrate a lower score for victim blaming than the participants who read the Center for Disease Control's educational pamphlet on Sexual Violence. The results were in the hypothesized direction; however, the difference between the two groups was not significant and is likely due to a randomization failure resulting in a difference in Hostile sexism between groups, and not because of my intervention. The variable of Hostile sexism is confounded with treatment condition; however, the results are still in the hypothesized direction. The difference between the control group and the intervention groups in victim blaming appears to be a result of the fact that participants in the control condition scored higher on the ASI Hostile Sexism scale. Randomization was not successful on making the groups equivalent on Hostile sexism, and therefore, this experiment resulted in an inconclusive outcome requiring

further exploration and research.

      There were no significant interaction effects for any potential moderators; however, there were main effects of gender, Hostile sexism, Benevolent sexism, and Robbery Victim Blaming on the Victim Blaming Scale. These results, including gender, are consistent with previous research and replicate the data already published. These results are not surprising as they replicated previous research (Klement, Sagarin, & Lee, 2017; Sprankle, Bloomquist, Butcher, Gleason, & Schaefer; Wilson, Miller, Leheney, Ballman, & Scarpa, 2016; Yamawaki, Darby, & Queiroz, 2007).

      While in this study I did not find a statistically significant effect of a brief, one session, 25 minute, computerized attitude change intervention, the lack of interaction effects suggests that, if further explored and researched, this intervention might be effective for a variety of people. Unfortunately, due to the scope of my study, I was unable to have multiple intervention sessions like the previous successful studies on attitude change interventions (Aronson, Fried, Good, 2002; Stice, Shaw, Burton, & Wade, 2005). An in person study with multiple intervention sessions might have been much more effective and have resulted in a statistically significant result. The unfortunate randomization failure complicates the interpretation of my study, but if I could continue research on this subject, an effective, impactful, and enduring attitude change intervention could be created and published. If I were able to pursue further research exploring the possibility of a longer term study, this type of intervention may become an effective learning tool for colleges, universities, and high schools and maintain a lasting effect to decrease victim blaming after incidents of sexual violence. The hope of my study was to demonstrate that this topic deserves more attention, dedication, and research because of the number of people this

effects on a daily basis across the globe.

Limitations

A major limitation to this study was a result of the failure of randomization to create

groups equivalent in Hostile sexism. Fortunately, I measured this and other factors that could

influence Victim Blaming, and thus I was able to identify Hostile sexism as a confounding

variable in this study. Another possible limitation to this study is the scope of the research. The

research was conducted in a period of less than a year, and was limited by the amount of funding

available. The study was also only available to participants in the United States of America, so I

recognize the limited generalizability of the participant pool. Due to the sensitive nature of the

content, the University of Richmond IRB required a warning stating that this study would be

dealing with incidents of sexual assault, sexual violence, and rape, and therefore the likelihood of

social desirability bias is very high in this study. Lastly, I was unable to collect a Victim Blaming

measure pre-intervention because there is only one version of this scale. Given the chance to

conduct a Victim Blame Scale measure both pre-intervention or control and post-intervention or

control, I would be able to more powerfully measure any decrease in victim blaming tendencies

and my proposed intervention because I would be able to see if the intervention decreased victim

blaming behaviors. If I had been able to test Victim Blaming tendencies, attitudes, and behaviors

both before the intervention or control conditions and afterwards, this study would have gained

more insight into the effectiveness of the intervention in changing attitudes.

Future Directions

While the results of this study were inconclusive, this research topic is still incredibly

important to continue to pursue. There are many possible directions to take this study in further research. It would be interesting to compare the effect of Hostile sexism in both cases of victim blaming, the rape scenario and the robbery scenario, by gender. Are Hostile sexists more likely to blame the victim if she is a woman no matter the crime committed? These scenarios could be administered to a larger sample in a four different conditions (male perpetrated rape, male perpetrated robbery, female perpetrated rape, and female perpetrated robbery) across people who demonstrate high levels of Hostile sexism and people who demonstrate low levels of Hostile sexism. Furthermore, with continued research, a successful intervention workbook could be created to build off of "Saying is Believing" more by having participants physically write their counter attitudinal beliefs through multiple sessions and multiple potential rape scenarios. By lengthening the workshop or intervention, facilitators could include non-traditional rape scenarios, such as relationships rape scenarios, LGBTQ+ rape scenarios, and female perpetrated rape, in addition to the traditional schemas of stranger rape and acquaintance (date) rape, to provide the most comprehensive and informative intervention possible.

The rates of sexual violence in this country and, specifically, on college campuses, are staggering and unacceptable. Society's natural tendency to blame the victim and not punish the perpetrator following incidents of sexual violence is very damaging to the victim's healing process and mental and physical health. An intervention using internalization strategies and the self-reference effect should continue to be researched and created. With further research, an intervention process to reduce victim blaming in society and in specific scenarios could be created. This would contribute drastically to the 1 in 4 women, 1 in 33 men, and 60% of gay or lesbian people who experience sexual violence.

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Appendix:

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory Glick & Fiske (1996)

Below is a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement using the following scale: 0 = disagree strongly; 1 = disagree somewhat; 2 = disagree slightly; 3 = agree slightly; 4 = agree somewhat; 5 = agree strongly.

B(1) 1. No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman.

H 2. Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality."

B(P)* 3. In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men.

H 4. Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.

H 5. Women are too easily offended.

B(I)* 6. People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex.

H* 7. Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men.

B(G) 8. Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess.

B(P) 9. Women should be cherished and protected by men.

H 10. Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them.

H 11. Women seek to gain power by getting control over men.

B(I) 12. Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.

B(1)* 13. Men are complete without women.

H 14. Women exaggerate problems they have at work.

H 15. Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash.

H 16. When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against.

B(P) 17. A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.

H* 18. There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances.□

19. Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.□

20. Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives

21. Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men.

22. Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.

The ASI may be used as an overall measure of sexism, with Hostile and Benevolent components equally weighted, by simply averaging the score for all items after reversing the items listed below. The two ASI subscales (Hostile Sexism and Benevolent Sexism) may also be calculated separately. For correlational research, purer measures of HS and BS can be obtained by using partial correlations (so that the effects of the correlation between the scales is removed).

Reverse the following items (0 = 5, 1 = 4, 2 = 3, 3 = 2, 4 = 1, 5 = 0): 3, 6,7, 13, 18,21.

Hostile Sexism Score = average of the following items: 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 21.

Benevolent Sexism Score = average of the following items: 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 17, 19, 20, 22.

Just World Bias Scale - Lucas, T., Zhdanova, L., & Alexander, S (2011).

The following questions pertain to fairness. In this set of questions we are interested in your perceptions of fairness with respect to OTHERS. Please mark your level of agreement using the 7-point scale.1 Strongly Disagree, 7 Strongly Agree.

1. I feel that people generally earn the rewards and punishments that they get in this world.

2. People usually receive the outcomes that they deserve.

3. People generally deserve the things that they are accorded.

4. I feel that people usually receive the outcomes that they are due.

5. People usually use fair procedures in dealing with others.

6. I feel that people generally use methods that are fair in their evaluations of others.

7. Regardless of the specific outcomes they receive, people are subjected to fair procedures.

8. People are generally subjected to processes that are fair.

Scoring: Four lower order subscales may be calculated. Distributive Justice for Others

(DJ-Others) is the sum or average of the first four items from the justice for others scale, while Procedural Justice for Others (PJ-Others) is the sum or average of the last four items from the self justice scale.

Robbery Victim Blaming Scale
Sarah, a 22-year-old, living on her own for the first time in Los Angeles, left her apartment to go to run some errands Saturday morning. Sarah was in a hurry because she had to go to the grocery store and then to an appointment and was running behind schedule. Sarah had overslept because she was up late the night before hanging out with her friends at a bar around the corner. She grabbed her purse and keys, and ran out the door. Sarah thought that she shut the locked door behind her, but in her rush, the door did not lock. While Sarah was gone…. "Fred" began to wander up and down the hallways of the apartment building, trying to open different doors while he went. Fred was stumbling and it was clear that he was very intoxicated. When he got to Sarah's apartment, Fred tried to open the door and was successful. He walked into Sarah's apartment and saw her laptop on the table. He picked up her laptop, walked into her bedroom and saw her jewelry on her bedside table. Fred gathered all the jewelry he could see and put the laptop and jewelry in his backpack. He then went and unplugged the TV and carried it out of the apartment. When she returned from running her errands that afternoon, Sarah found that her TV, laptop, and jewelry had been stolen from her apartment.

Questions (answered on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much so)).

1. To what extent did Sarah act carelessly?

2. To what extent was Sarah's behavior responsible for the loss of her TV, laptop, and jewelry?

3. Even though you do not know much about Sarah in this scenario, to what extent do you feel her character was responsible for the loss of her TV, laptop, and jewelry?

4. Taking into account both Sarah's behavior and character, how responsible was she for the loss of her TV, laptop, and jewelry?

Control Condition: Center for Disease Control's Sexual Violence Pamphlet (2012)

Please read the following educational packet very careful. Please write 2-4 paragraphs summarizing what you read for someone who was not able to read it.

Sexual Violence[1]

Facts at a Glance   2012

Adults

In a nationally representative survey of adults:[1]

- Nearly 1 in 5 (18.3%) women and 1 in 71 men (1.4%) reported experiencing rape at some time in their lives.

- Approximately 1 in 20 women and men (5.6% and 5.3%, respectively) experienced sexual violence other than rape, such as being made to penetrate someone else, sexual coercion, unwanted sexual contact, or non-contact unwanted sexual experiences, in the 12 months prior to the survey.

- 4.8% of men reported they were made to penetrate someone else at some time in their lives.

- 13% of women and 6% of men reported they experienced sexual coercion at some time in their lives.

College Age

- In a nationally representative survey of adults, 37.4% of female rape victims were first raped between ages 18-24.[1]

- In a study of undergraduate women, 19% experienced attempted or completed sexual assault since entering college.[2]

Children and Youth

In a nationally representative survey:[1]

- 42.2% of female rape victims were first raped before age 18.

- 29.9% of female rape victims were first raped between the ages of 11-17.

- 12.3% female rape victims and 27.8% of male rape victims were first raped when they were age 10 or younger.

A 2011 survey of high school students found that 11.8% of girls and 4.5% of boys from grades 9-12 reported that they were forced to have sexual intercourse at some time in their lives.[3]

Perpetrators

In a nationally representative survey:[1]

- Among female rape victims, perpetrators were reported to be intimate partners (51.1%), family members (12.5%), acquaintances (40.8%) and strangers (13.8%).

- Among male rape victims, perpetrators were reported to be acquaintances (52.4%) and strangers (15.1%).

- Among male victims who were made to penetrate someone else, perpetrators were reported to be intimate partners (44.8%), acquaintances (44.7%) and strangers (8.2%).

Health Disparities

- Among high school students, 12.5% of American Indian/Alaska Natives, 10.5% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students, 8.6% of black students, 8.2% of Hispanic students, 7.4% of white students, and 13.5% of multiple-race students reported that they were forced to have sexual intercourse at some time in their lives.[3]

- Among adult women surveyed in 2010, 26.9% of American Indian/Alaska Natives, 22% of non-Hispanic blacks, 18.8% of non-Hispanic whites, 14.6% of Hispanics, and 35.5% of women of multiple races experienced an attempted or a completed rape at some time in their lives.[1]

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control
Division of Violence Prevention

CDC

Sexual Violence Facts at a Glance

Non-fatal Injuries, Medical Treatment, and Health conditions

- Among sexual violence victims raped since their 18th birthday, 31.5% of women and 16.1% of men reported a physical injury as a result of a rape. 36.2% of injured female victims received medical treatment.[4]

- During 2004-2006, an estimated 105,187 females and 6,526 males aged 10-24 years received medical care in U.S. emergency departments as a result of nonfatal injuries sustained from a sexual assault.[5]

- Based on 2005 data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), for both women and men, links were found between history of nonconsensual sex and high cholesterol, stroke and heart disease; female victims of nonconsensual sex were more likely to report heart attack and heart disease compared to non-victims.[6]

- Rape results in about 32,000 pregnancies each year.[7]

- Among female victims of partner violence who filed a protective order, 68% reported they were raped by their intimate partner and 20% reported a rape-related pregnancy.[8]

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Attitude Change Intervention for Victim Blaming of Sexual Assault (Sciolla and Knouse, 2018).

Studies show that victims of sexual violence experience high rates of many mental health issues, in addition to physical health issues, following their assault. In particular, victims of sexual violence tend to suffer from self-blame/self-victimization, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Clinical Depression, Anxiety, and Eating Disorders. All of these negative effects are increased by the level of victim blaming the victim receives from society and, in particular, the people with whom the victim shares their story. For their mental and emotional healing, it is incredibly important that a victim does not experience self blame or victim blaming. Victim Blaming behaviors such as "why" questions only increase the level of self blame and internalization. By not believing a victim, one significantly decreases the likelihood that the victim will tell their story again and seek professional help. Victim Blaming tendencies and behaviors discourage victims from coming forward, seeking help, reporting, and healing. The lack of support felt by victims who receive Victim Blaming behaviors can significantly increase the chances of those victims developing mental health issues following their assault. Not only is supporting, believing, and listening to the victim when they share their story critical, but it is also vital to remind the victim that there is no excuse for sexual violence. All sexual relationships need to be consensual and respectful.

Imagine that your closest female friend has experienced an unwanted sexual encounter. She was not harmed physically and is not in danger. She comes to you the following day, visibly distressed, and explains to you what happened the night before. Your friend tells you that she was out drinking with some of her co-workers when she locked eyes with an old childhood friend across the bar. They began talking and catching up about each other's family. Your friend told you that he kept getting closer to her and touching her hips. Every time your friend tried to move back, he grabbed her tighter, so she stood still while they talked closely. He bought her drink after drink, although she doesn't remember how many she had, or what she had to drink this evening. Her co-workers wanted to leave, but he reassured them that he would make sure your friend got home safely. Your friend nodded and said it was okay for them to leave. Your friend tells you that she was having a lovely conversation with her old family friend, and they ended up laughing and kissing at the bar until closing time. When the bar closed down, he offered to walk her back to her apartment, which was just around the corner. She said okay and thank you. When they got back to her apartment, they made plans to meet up for dinner the coming week, and she leaned in for a kiss goodnight. He kissed her back very aggressively. He proceeded to force her inside to her apartment and continue to kiss her as he lay her down on her couch. She tried to push him away twice, but he was much stronger than her and forced her down on the couch. He firmly grabbed her breasts and took off her clothes. He then had sex with her. Your friend explains this to you and tells you that she feels as though it was her fault this happened. She tells you she was excited to see her old childhood friend and that she drank too much that night. She says should could have told him to stop grabbing her at the bar, went home with her friends, not kissed him or not accepted the drinks he bought her.

Please write an imaginary letter to your closest female friend telling her that this unwanted sexual experience was not her fault, despite her protests that she did something wrong. Use the knowledge that you were given in this story and the information about victim blaming you read prior to this section to write. Write approximately 2-4 paragraphs.

Victim Blaming Scale - Loughnan, Pina, Vasquez, and Puvia (2013) Laura, then a 21-year-old, was a student at a local university in Los Angeles. She is of average height, slim build, and is considered quite attractive. She plays sports for a college team and works in a local restaurant. Laura was at a friend's party when she met ''Mike.'' They were both a similar age and had hit it off when they discovered that they both had an interest in sport. They had chatted throughout the party and Laura had commented to her friend that she thought Mike was ''really nice.'' Mike was of average height and build and had dark hair. At the end of the party, Laura and Mike exchanged telephone numbers and then both went home separately. Laura did not hear from Mike for a few days, but then on a Friday she received a phone call from Mike asking her out on a date the next evening. Laura eagerly accepted and Mike arranged to pick Laura up at 7 p.m. on the Saturday night. The next day, Mike arrived to pick Laura up and they drove to the cinema where they watched a film they had both wanted to see. After the film, Mike suggested that they go for a drink in a nearby pub and that he would drop her home afterwards. They sat and chatted in the pub for about an hour and when it was closing time, Mike suggested that they go back to his house for a coffee and promised that he would drive Laura home afterwards. Laura readily agreed and Mike drove them to his house. When they got there, Mike and Laura sat on the sofa and started watching television. Mike then began kissing Laura and touching her breasts. To begin with Laura kissed back, until Mike started kissing her harder and groping her breasts so that they hurt. At this point, Laura asked Mike to stop and that she wanted to leave, but Mike became angry. He then pinned her arms down and got on top of her. Laura asked Mike to stop, but he yanked down her trousers and underwear and proceeded to have sex with her. When he had finished, Mike stood up and went into the kitchen and Laura ran out of the house.

Participants answered on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much so).

1. To what extent did Laura act carelessly?

2. To what extent did Laura lead Mike on?

3. To what extent was Laura's behavior responsible for her sexual encounter with Mike?

4. Even though you do not know much about Laura in this scenario, to what extent do you feel her character was responsible for the sexual encounter with Mike?

5. Taking into account both Laura's behavior and character, how responsible was she for the sexual encounter with Mike?