2021

Comparing Rape Myth Acceptance in Law Enforcement Officers and Non-Law Enforcement

Ava D. Ramirez-Ene
Walden University

Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

This is to certify that the doctoral dissertation by

Ava D. Ramirez-Ene

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

Review Committee
Dr. Charles Diebold, Committee Chairperson, Psychology Faculty
Dr. Aaron Pierce, Committee Member, Psychology Faculty
Dr. Scott Gfeller, University Reviewer, Psychology Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2021

Abstract

Comparing Rape Myth Acceptance in Law Enforcement Officers and Non-Law

Enforcement

by

Ava D. Ramirez-Ene

MPhil, Walden University, 2020

MA, National University, 2017

BA, National University, 2016

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

Walden University

November 2021

Abstract

Sexual assault is a crime of power and control, and despite the prevalence and severity, remains widely unreported and is met with shame, blame, and skepticism: a likely consequence of a rape culture that fosters rape myth acceptance (RMA). Law enforcement officers (LEOs) act as "gatekeepers" to the criminal justice system and, if they accept rape myths, can negatively influence sexual assault case outcomes. Social Dominance Theory posits that the male-dominated criminal justice system, has intergroup relations and shared cultural beliefs that justify and tolerate myths and behaviors fostering discrimination and skepticism towards victims of sexual violence. This study compared levels of RMA and perceptions towards victim credibility and victim responsibility between 194 LEOs and non-law enforcement (LE) utilizing the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression (AMMSA) scale and a hypothetical, but realistic vignette. A one-way ANOVA and binary logistic regression were used. Results revealed that LEOs had statistically significantly higher RMA scores than non-LE; however, variations did not differ regarding victim credibility and victim responsibility. Male participants had higher scores towards victim responsibility and females had higher scores towards victim credibility. Only AMMSA scores were predictive of LEO group membership. This research can help maintain accountability, improve interactions, and lead to the renovation and modernization of sexual assault training for the general population and LEOs. Enacting these changes may promote positive social change by helping victims feel more comfortable to report, and increase reporting rates, investigative efforts, and convictions.

Comparing Rape Myth Acceptance in Law Enforcement Officers and Non-Law

Enforcement

by

Ava D. Ramirez-Ene

MPhil, Walden University, 2020

MA, National University, 2017

BA, National University, 2016

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Forensic Psychology

Walden University

November 2021

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the victims. To anyone who has ever been neglected, assaulted, abused, or violated. To anyone who was ever been shamed, doubted, blamed, or rejected. To the victims who are stifled in fear, I want you to know that I believe you and support you. I hold space for you and your healing.

I also want to clarify, throughout this dissertation I use the term "victim." The reason for this is to recognize the severity of sexual violence and to encompass all individuals who may be currently at this stage in their journey *and* those who have overcome it. However, I understand that many victims identify now as survivors. To you, survivors, I commend your transformation, your strength, and your resilience.

This dissertation is also dedicated to women of color everywhere. Women who have been silenced, treated as less than, mistreated, or taught you were anything but perfect and powerful. As women of color we must rise in the face of adversity, utilizing the strength of our ancestors as pillars of light for our future generations. I hope this dissertation serves as encouragement and confirmation that yes, we can. We are the change. We are stronger together.

"Every woman who heals herself, helps heal all women who came before her, and all those who come after her." -Dr. Christine Northrup

Acknowledgments

My sincere gratitude to my Committee Chair, Dr. Charles "Tom" Diebold and my Second Committee Member, Dr. Aaron Pierce for their wisdom, guidance, expertise, and patience throughout my dissertation journey. Additional acknowledgement to my University Research Reviewer (URR) Member, Dr. Scott Gfeller, and my editor for form and style, Dr. Vania Bright. I am also genuinely grateful to Walden University for providing the Ph.D. in Forensic Psychology, with a specialization in Victimology program, which enabled me to begin this program while on active duty, earn a second master's degree, and ultimately to obtain my doctorate degree as a United States Marine Corps Veteran.

I would also like to thank my family and friends who supported me during this journey, your prayers, time, and love mean the world to me.

Table of Contents

<p style="text-align:center;">List of Tables</p>

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Violence against women is a universal problem affecting communities worldwide. Some of the most common forms of abuse against women are intimate partner violence (IPV) and sexual assault. Although there are male on male violent crimes, the primary victims of abuse are against women (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2018; Gervais & Eagan, 2017). Additional concerns arise surrounding the discrepancies of "case clearings" and the number of sexual assault cases that go unreported. Furthermore, cases reported to law enforcement are often withdrawn, not due to false claims, but because of discriminatory and harmful encounters with the criminal justice system, also known as secondary victimization. Secondary victimization also leads to low conviction rates (McMillan, 2018; Morabito et al., 2019; Murphy & Hine, 2019; O'Neal et al., 2019; Venema, 2016b). This chapter will provide the background, problem statement, purpose, research questions with hypotheses, theoretical framework, and other pertinent information of this research.

Background

LEOs are commonly perceived as the gateway into the criminal justice system, as they are first on the scene and the initial investigative sources. Police officers' investigations, reports, and follow through significantly influence the outcomes of the cases. More importantly, the LEOs' initial encounters with victims, their judgments of the victim, and the case characteristics further impact how they perceive and respond, which in turn increases the likelihood for biased action (Murphy & Hine, 2019; Shaw et al., 2016; Sleath & Bull, 2017). Societal influences such as rape myths and victim

stereotypes influence those in authoritative positions, both with and without specialized training, to misplace the focus of investigations from helping a victim to victim blaming (Johnson, 2017; Morabito et al., 2019).

Prior research examined police perceptions, RMA, victim characteristics, incident factors, and demographics. A majority of this research indicated that these variables ultimately influenced how the victims were treated and the amount of investigative effort given to the case (O'Neal et al., 2019; Morabito et al., 2019; Sleath & Bull, 2017). Both legal and extra-legal factors of a sexual assault case influence investigative efforts, case attrition, and the likelihood of a suspect's arrest. Although legal factors are understandably important, including the suspect identity or DNA evidence, extra-legal factors include rape myths such as perceptions of victim credibility and victim responsibility (Shaw et al., 2016; Sleath & Bull, 2017; Venema, 2016a; Venema, 2018).

Research suggests that police officers' RMA levels result from greater societal perceptions (O'Neal, 2019; Sleath & Bull, 2015; Venema, 2016). However, prior research has either focused on RMA of LEOs exclusively (Hine & Murphy, 2017), on other populations that could not be generalized, that is, undergraduate and law students (Bohner & Schapansky, 2018; Franklin & Garza, 2018; Sleath & Bull, 2015; Süssenbach, Albrecht, et al., 2017), or obtained qualitative data from victims or witnesses directly (DeCou et al., 2017; Long, 2018).

Problem Statement

RMA is the development of stereotypes or misconceptions that constitute legal and extra-legal factors about sexual assault that can negatively influence perceptions and

behaviors towards survivors of sexual violence (Hine & Murphy, 2017; Long, 2018; Murphy & Hine, 2019). RMA also has the potential to corrupt the attitudes and decisions of those in authoritative positions, such as police officers, prosecutors, and judges (Carpenter, 2017; O'Neal & Hayes, 2019; Venema, 2018; Weiser, 2017; Wentz & Keimig, 2019). Although some current studies showed the reduction of RMA in law enforcement behaviors (Mennicke et al., 2014), other recent studies continue to identify correlations between officers' RMA and case attrition, tainted case processing, minimal investigative efforts, disbelief and blame towards the victim, and marginal prosecution rates of perpetrators (Hine & Murphy, 2017; Morabito et al., 2019; Shaw et al., 2016; Shaw et al., 2017; Sleath & Bull, 2017).

Additionally, prior research identified RMA as a universal theme throughout societies that have predisposed the majority to accept false sexual assault ideologies as truth. Unsurprisingly, this societal perception also influences those in authoritative positions, such as police officers (Lehner, 2017; Murphy & Hine, 2019; Venema, 2018; Weiser, 2017). This hypothesis infers that LEOs embody rape myths as a segment of society, who, in turn, project these beliefs during their interactions with victims, either consciously or subconsciously. However, quantitative research to date lacks the analysis of RMA levels in LEOs compared to the general population, using realistic vignettes.

Comparing the results of LEOs and individuals who are not law enforcement (non-LE) is necessary to identify if officers' perceptions mirror societal perceptions regarding sexual violence or if the authoritative attitudes are fashioned and encouraged within police culture. By identifying potential variances between LEOs' responses to that

of non-LE, this research increases awareness for both populations and promotes the need for specialized training within law enforcement agencies on sexual assault and trauma. Ultimately, this research can help reduce the barriers sexual assault victims face when reporting and can increase the likelihood that they will encounter trauma-informed LEOs who handle their cases with sensitivity and the necessary investigative efforts. Additionally, victims will be able to receive more adequate support from family and friends who are a part of a more trauma-informed society.

This research is vital to identify if LEOs' RMA levels mirror society. If they do not, are they higher or lower than non-LE? Furthermore, comparing rape myth scores between these two populations can foster improved prevention strategies for law enforcement agencies and non-LE. Last, it is essential to conduct further research into RMA's origin within law enforcement organizations, specifically regarding authoritative positions, the environment, or the personality characteristics of those who choose to enter the field. Questions surrounding RMA levels are essential to increase accountability for those in positions of authority who interact with the most vulnerable populations.

Purpose of the Study

This quantitative study aimed to identify and compare RMA in LEOs and non-LE in addition to assessing perceptions of victim credibility and victim responsibility to ultimately determine if RMA is a fostered ideology of law enforcement culture or a byproduct of societal beliefs. One of the most common extra-legal factors associated with heightened levels of RMA (alcohol use) was utilized with a hypothetical, but realistic vignette. This vignette was used to determine how LEOs and non-LE perceive victim

credibility and victim responsibility differently. This vignette was used in conjunction

with an assessment scale to provide overall RMA scores of LEOs and non-LE. These

measures are essential to detect how rape myths are used by those in authoritative

positions, who are also deemed the gateways (Hohl & Stanko, 2015; LaFree, 1989) into

the criminal justice system. The lack of research comparing LEOs' and non-LE RMA

indicates the need for new research to provide insight into how and where rape myths are

perpetuated (Hine & Murphy, 2017; Morabito et al., 2019; Sleath & Bull, 2017; Venema,

2016b; Weiser, 2017).

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression (AMMSA; Gerger et

al., 2007) scale was used to measure and compare RMA between LEOs and non-LE, and

a vignette was utilized to measure their perceptions of victim credibility and victim

responsibility. The predominant question was: What are the differences in perceptions

towards rape myths and victim credibility and victim responsibility in LEOs and non-LE?

Specific research questions and hypotheses are as follows:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): To what extent do law enforcement officers' rape

myth acceptance (AMMSA score) compare to non-law enforcement scores?

H_a1: Law enforcement officers' rape myth acceptance (AMMSA score) is higher

(or lower) than those of the non-law enforcement group.

H_01: There are no differences between law enforcement officers' rape myth

acceptance (AMMSA scores) and the non-law enforcement group.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): To what extent do the vignette credibility ratings differ between law enforcement officers and the non-law enforcement group?

H_a2: There are differences between vignette credibility ratings of law enforcement officers and non-law enforcement.

H_02: There are no differences between vignette credibility ratings of law enforcement officers and non-law enforcement.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): To what extent do the vignette responsibility ratings differ between law enforcement officers and the non-law enforcement group?

H_a3: There are differences between vignette responsibility ratings of law enforcement officers and non-law enforcement.

H_03: There are no differences between vignette responsibility ratings of law enforcement officers and non-law enforcement.

Research Question 4 (RQ4): To what extent do the combined effects of AMMSA score, vignette credibility rating, and vignette responsibility rating differentiate law enforcement officers and the non-law enforcement group?

H_a3: There are differences between the combined effects of AMMSA score, vignette credibility rating, and vignette responsibility ratings of law enforcement officers and non-law enforcement.

H_04: There are no differences between the combined effects of AMMSA score, vignette credibility rating, and vignette responsibility ratings of law enforcement officers and non-law enforcement.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation for this study is the social dominance theory (SDT). SDT posits that intergroup relations thrive and maintain social hierarchies through shared cultural beliefs and legitimizing myths that provide justification and acceptance for the intergroup behaviors (Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius et al., 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). SDT explains how the criminal justice system as a primarily male-dominated institution can encourage discrimination and skepticism towards victims of sexual violence. This occurs through the shared acceptance of rape myths that also justify the prejudice behaviors and lack of investigative effort in sexual assault cases. Additionally, SDT reiterates how the power of those in authoritative positions can affect distrust and cooperation of reporting victims while also deterring future victims and maintaining control over types of victims and reports progress through the judicial system (Shaw et al., 2016).

Nature of the Study

The nature of this quantitative study was a static group comparison (Campbell & Stanley, 1963) to examine whether LEOs' RMA levels differ from individuals who are not LEOs. An anonymous questionnaire with a hypothetical sexual assault vignette was used to examine perceptions of victim credibility and victim responsibility. The same vignette was provided to both groups constructed with the same verbiage utilizing two of the most common rape myths: known/acquaintance perpetrator and alcohol use. Following the vignette, both groups answered questions regarding victim credibility and victim responsibility. Also, to obtain RMA levels, the reliable and valid AMMSA scale

was included following the vignette questions to assess and compare for less blatant rape myths and inclinations of sexual aggression (Gerger et al., 2007).

Definitions

Rape: "Penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim. Attempts or assaults to commit rape are also included; however, statutory rape and incest are excluded." (Federal Bureau of Investigation [FBI], 2013).

Rape Myths: Prejudicial, stereotypical, false, and sexist beliefs surrounding sexual violence, the victim, and the perpetrator that support sexual aggression and violence towards women [primarily], by increasing victim blame and responsibility (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980; LaFree, 1981).

Assumptions

Assumptions were significant to this study because they indicated that LEOs and non-LE hold rape myths due to a greater societal influence. Further assumptions were that the AMMSA scale would identify less blatant forms of sexual aggression to compare the two populations. Last, I assumed that using a hypothetical but realistic vignette would result in participants' accurate and honest perceptions of victim credibility and victim responsibility, despite the topic's sensitivity.

Scopes and Delimitations

The intended populations were LEOs over 18 and non-LE over 18 years old. LEOs are commonly referred to as gatekeepers to the criminal justice system or the gateways to justice due to their encounters with victims of sexual violence and their

ability to influence how sexual assault cases are investigated (Hohl & Stanko, 2015;

Kerstetter, 1990; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990; LaFree, 1989).

Thus, it was pertinent to examine levels of RMA that could influence barriers to

equal treatment and avenues to justice for sexual assault victims. Second, by comparing

the two populations, it was possible to identify additional influences of higher or lower

acceptance of rape myths due to LEOs' authoritative positions. Last, due to this study's

quantitative analytic strategy, the participants could not expand upon their responses to

the AMMSA scale or the vignette. Further qualitative examination would be needed to

provide additional insight into why participants made specific responses.

Limitations

Preliminary limitations for this research included the utilization of self-report

measures, which are subject to "social desirability response bias, fallibility of memory,

lack of insight into cognitive processes (particularly when they involve intuition), and

clarity of expression" (Dhami et al., 2018, p. 159). Additionally, the utilization of

vignettes in questionnaires lacked real-world application, in which responses may have

differed from actual behavior (Dhami et al., 2018; O'Neal, 2019; Sleath & Bull, 2017).

Regarding the non-LE participants, this study was limited to those who had computer and

internet access. A final limitation of this research was in obtaining a large enough sample

from LEOs and approval from each station's headquarters. Further barriers may have

occurred due to LEOs' and non-LE willingness to participate in this study with a

sensitive topic.

Significance of the Study

This study provided insight into RMA's in LEOs and non-LE that inhibit justice and adequate assistance for sexual assault victims. Sexual assault continues to be a global issue due to deficient reporting and conviction rates (Hine & Murphy, 2017; Westera et al., 2016). Identifying continued, ingrained, and impeding perceptions, this research can positively influence social change by raising awareness for a more trauma-informed society, and lead to the renovation and modernization of specialized sexual assault training for the general population and LEOs. Additionally, this study provided research on stereotypical sexual assault beliefs of those in authoritative positions, maintaining accountability, and improving interactions between LEOs and sexual assault victims. Last, this research can provide awareness to all of society to become more trauma informed. Law enforcement responses can improve such that sexual assault victims feel safe to come forward, ultimately improving reporting rates, investigative efforts, and convictions for a severe crime (Morabito et al., 2019; Sleath & Bull, 2017; Venema, 2016a; 2016b).

Summary and Conclusions

Chapter 1 provided an overview of this research study regarding sexual violence as a supported construct of societal perceptions. RMA has detrimental and influential potentials on all individuals. However, accountability of LEOs' is significantly scrutinized due to their authoritative positions, close interactions with victims of sexual violence, and their ability to impact the cases (Hansen et al., 2015; Henninger et al., 2019; O'Neal, 2019; Venema, 2018). Chapter 1 also included the purpose of this

research, theoretical framework, scope and delimitations, and significance of researching

the degree of RMA of LEOs and non-LE, and their perceptions of victim credibility and

victim responsibility. Chapter 2 presents an overview of the relevant literature

surrounding sexual violence and rape myths.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Sexual violence is a criminal offense that causes devastating repercussions at the individual, family, community, and societal levels. A majority of sexual assaults are against female victims by known male perpetrators (Dunn, 2015; Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Levine, 2018; Rich, 2019; Stuart et al., 2019). Sexual violence is identified by the CDC as a "serious U.S. public health concern" (C.D.C., 2018; Henninger et al., 2019). Despite the severity and traumatic effects of sexual assaults, it remains some of the most underreported criminal offenses, often as a result of unlikely convictions and maltreatment of the victims by society, their social networks, and the criminal justice system (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016; Kahn et al., 2018; Spohn & Tellis, 2019). Chapter 2 provides the literature search strategy, theoretical foundation, and prominent topics surrounding sexual violence and myths, to include sexual assault reporting, rape culture, and LEOs involvement in rape cases.

Literature Search Strategy

The literature search strategies encompassed a myriad of online queries of scholarly databases, such as SAGE Journals, ELSEVIER, The American Psychological Association, Taylor & Francis Group, EBSCO Database, ProQuest Central, SAGE, Criminal Justice Database, Psychology Database, ScienceDirect, and many others, with the inclusion of Google Scholar. Primary search terms included: *rape myth acceptance, sexual assaults*, *rape*, *law enforcement investigations or interrogations*, *sexual violence, rape myths, police officers, sexual trauma, sexual aggression, and sexual assault or sexual violence victims.* Peer-reviewed articles were utilized from 2015 until 2020, except

for a few foundational works or research that covered a lack of updated research on critical components. Dissertations with similar content were also examined to conduct an exhaustive review of the literature relating to sexual violence, LEOs, and non-LE responses.

Theoretical Foundation

SDT was developed in the early 1990s by Sidanius and Pratto to explain societal well-being by focusing on societal oppression, discrimination, and violence (Sidanius, 1993). SDT hypothesizes that social systems involve intergroups that hold caste-like hierarchies consisting of at least two major groups, the hegemonic or dominant group, and one or more subordinate groups. Sidanius et al (1994) defined the two groups as follows: "By the term 'hegemonic' or 'dominant' group, we are simply referring to a largely endogamous social group, which enjoys a disproportionately high degree of positive social value (e.g., wealth, power, prestige). By subordinate group, we mean a largely endogamous group which enjoys a disproportionately small degree of positive social value and a disproportionately high degree of negative social value (e.g., prison sentences, death sentences)" (p. 339).

Additionally, SDT posits that intergroup relations are successful and maintain social hierarchies through shared societal and cultural beliefs and legitimizing myths that support the intellectual and moral justification of certain behaviors within the group. Institutions further foster the foundation of the hierarchal relationships by either conducting hierarchy-enhancement or hierarchy-attenuation behaviors (Sidanius, 1993; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). As it applies to LEOs, police departments, the criminal justice

system, and their interactions with sexual assault victims' and their cases are institutions of control. Thus, they are labeled hierarchy-enhancing to enforce women's inequality as the primary targets of sexual violence utilizing "legitimizing myths." Legitimizing myths, according to SDT, is the discriminatory behavior against subordinate groups through the utilization of "attitudinal or ideological instruments" (Sidanius et al., 1994, p. 341).

As a hierarchy-enhancement institution, a police department expects to establish and maintain the social hierarchy amongst the groups. Thus, it is not surprising that individuals who share similar perceptions, beliefs, and behaviors are drawn to, recruited, and reinforced with the institution's underlying foundational beliefs. Contrarily, institutions that are hierarchy-attenuating would foster lower levels of social dominance and promote greater equality amongst groups. Furthermore, "not only should hierarchy attenuators be less dominance oriented than hierarchy enhancers, but less dominance oriented than members of the general public as well" (Sidanius et al., 1994, p. 343). Ultimately, law enforcement behavior and responses to sexual assault victims and cases are not only typical of police departments around the country but are parts of the entire makeup of social mechanisms that help to maintain the hierarchies among the different social standings (Sidanius et al., 1994).

Sexual Violence Defined

Legal definitions of sexual violence vary across cultures, disciplines, and jurisdictions, causing significant misunderstanding throughout the research and the criminal justice system. Further maladaptation of definitions and identification of sexual assault are constructed by individuals' attitudes, experiences, and perceptions that

ultimately influence their responses to victims (Smith et al., 2016). Changes in modern

sexual assault definitions versus conventional legal definitions continue to be an issue

(Carpenter, 2017). Although standard definitions revolve around any sexual contact or

behavior without consent, all organizations must find common ground.

For example, the FBI altered their definition of rape within the last 10 years to

include all sexes in 2011 and eliminating the term "forcible" in 2013. The FBI Uniformed

Crime Reporting (UCR) program currently abides by the definition of rape mentioned

above. The current definition now incorporates all victims, regardless of identified sex,

who could not consent, thus enhancing a more clearly defined overview of sexual assault

for victims who want to report the offense (Tin & Parker, 2016). In the following

research, the FBI UCR definition is utilized.

Victims of Sexual Violence

Sexual violence differs from other traumatic events due to the victims' "shock of

intimate betrayal of their safe social identity by fellow citizens…survivors of vehicle

accidents and the bereaved are not similarly afflicted, being usually survivors of 'hand of

god' events that are indiscriminate and "gender blind" (Muldoon et al., 2016, p. 581).

Due to the probability that the offender is someone known to the victim, at over 80 to 88

percent of cases (Flatley, 2018; Martin, 2016; Nitschke et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2017),

and is most likely male, this causes dysregulation in one's own identity, distrust in others,

and disruption of their worldview (Muldoon et al., 2016; Waterhouse et al., 2016). The

National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS) found that in 2015

43.2% of sexual assault victims experienced rape before 18, with 30.5% of those between the ages of 11 and 17 (Smith et al., 2018).

Gender Disparities

Female

According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (2016), one out of six women has been a victim of sexual violence, versus one in 10 males. Although victims can vary in sexual identity, most victims are female (Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Levine, 2018; Snipes et al., 2017; Stuart et al., 2019). However, women are more likely to report sexual violence than men (Artime et al., 2014; Wrede & Ask, 2015), but current research and statistics indicate that women are the primary victims (Snipes et al., 2017). The reasons behind female victimization are discussed in further detail in the following pages.

Male

Although a majority of victims are female, males can also be victims of sexual violence and are often less likely to be reported than females (Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Levine, 2018; Snipes et al., 2017; Spohn, 2020; Stuart et al., 2019). Additionally, male sexual assault victims are understudied, despite the awareness of and prevalence of these crimes (Artime et al., 2014). Artime and others (2014) examined male participants who experienced sexual assaults as children and as adults. Interestingly, dependent on behavioral indicators, most men did not label their experiences as "child sexual abuse" or "rape." Interestingly, childhood and adult sexual violence victims were more likely to acknowledge the abuse as a child, but not as an adult. One reason may be due to the perception that one's ability to defend themselves against a sexual attack as a child is less

likely because of their powerlessness versus an adult male who is "supposed" to be masculine and able to protect themselves (Artime et al., 2014; Waterhouse et al., 2016).

Another factor associated with child sexual abuse acknowledgment was the degree of physical force, indicating that sexual violence experienced as a child may have been ongoing with increased distress. In contrast, an adult sexual assault may have been a single incident. Ultimately, acknowledging sexual violence as a child or an adult is pertinent for males to obtain necessary support services, increasing understanding of the traumatic event while also decreasing psychological distress (Artime et al., 2014).

Marginalized Populations

Sexual violence is pervasive across cultures and demographics; however, some groups have more significant risks (Horan & Beauregard, 2018; Rich, 2019). Highly marginalized groups (homeless, substance addicts, sex workers, transgender, homosexuals, immigrants, and racial minorities) have increased chances of victimization due to lack of resources (shelter and support systems), engagement in high-risk activities, proximity to high-crime regions, prior criminal offenses or victimization, or mental health issues. Unfortunately, violence against marginalized populations is more easily "excused" because of prejudices that they are deserving or inviting such behavior (Frohmann, 1991; Horan & Beauregard, 2018; Rich, 2019). For example, domestic sex trafficking victims are perceived with a double standard that "reflect a cultural legacy that justifies the existence of prostitution markets, ignores the harms of sex trafficking for those involved and legitimizes the purchase of women by men" (Menaker & Franklin, 2015, p. 11). Additionally, prostitution is often criminalized within the United States,

which prevents victims from seeking services or reporting to prevent victim blame, disbelief, or legal repercussions (Menaker & Franklin, 2015).

Sexual Violence and Trauma

Sexual violence is a traumatic event that can cause significant emotional, psychological, physical, and personal ramifications (Dunn, 2015; Hansen et al., 2015; Rich, 2019; Santaularia et al., 2014). Amid a traumatic event, an individual may experience physiological responses such as shortness of breath, increased heart rate, dilated pupils, trembling, and others, while the primitive and instinctual brain immediately assesses for danger and attempts to identify the best course of action for survival (Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2015; Preston, 2016).

Researchers such as Muldoon and others (2016) choose to avoid the term trauma due to the understanding that it is "largely identified with a medico-psychological diagnosis of PTSD" (p. 581). Trauma should not be perceived as a pathology. "Our emphasis is not on an illness, pathology, or an otherwise abnormal state of the survivor. We emphasize understandable reactions of normal people when confronted with disempowerment and spoiled personal identity as citizens, through loss of control over their bodies due to power wielded by others through sexualized assault" (Muldoon et al., 2016, p. 581). A challenging posture that gives control and power back to the victim by removing the stigma of being "'treated' for 'their' problem—an implicit person-blame approach to survivors—but rather to re-affirm their worth as citizens, to punish offenders, to have their assault denounced by society's criminal justice system, and to have an affirmative institutional response *for* them and *against* the social fact of their sexual

assault. This institutional affirmation can be partly met by police, prosecutors, judges, and juries through due process of a survivor's sexual assault claim" (Muldoon et al., 2016, p. 582)

Fight, Flight, or Freeze

The most well-known (but not all) responses to traumatic events are fight, flight, or freeze. These primitive responses are hardwired in the brain and controlled by the amygdala (Preston, 2016), which disables the brain's frontal lobes to cause immediate action for survival that may depend on the victim, perpetrator, and type of assault. As most stereotypes surrounding sexual violence focus on the victim and their behavior, it is not surprising that statements such as, *why didn't they fight back? I would not have done that*, or *why didn't they run away?* They are made by unknowledgeable observers who expect a victim to fight back against the perpetrator or run away (flight). Perceptions like these increase blame towards the victim and reduce perpetrator culpability (Cuevas et al., 2018; Schiewe, 2019).

Freeze, or tonic immobility (Marx et al., 2008), is the most common response during a sexual assault, with 52 percent of victims reacting in this manner. Additionally, associated with the tonic immobility is the mind's ability to detach and dissociate at the time of the assault, even weeks later (Preston, 2016). *Disassociation*, or emotional shock, is a "neurochemically mediated numbing response" (Preston, 2016, p. 263), which reduces memory construction and recall, causing additional issues when interacting with law enforcement later on (Hohl & Stanko, 2015). Memory impairment can occur during a traumatic event when the encoding process is disrupted, influencing amnesia, and

constructing disjointed memories (Franklin et al., 2019). Time distortion may also occur when the victim is in a state of overpowering fear and cannot accurately perceive or recall time (Preston, 2016).

Repercussions of Sexual Violence

Trauma is perceived, experienced, and managed differently depending on the individual, despite the similarity or severity of the sexual assault (Logan et al., 2015). Variations in how the victim interprets trauma can also influence the aftermath. Sexual violence can disrupt a victim's physiological and psychological states (Dunn, 2015).

Physiological

Some physical symptoms include self-harm or suicide, sexual problems (Rich, 2019), eating or substance abuse disorders (Rich, 2019; Santaularia et al., 2014), sleep disorders or nightmares (RAINN, 2018), increased risk of revictimization (Bryan et al., 2016; Ullman et al., 2014), unintended pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases (Moylan et al., 2017), diarrhea, headaches, psychosomatic symptoms, aggravation of prior medical issues (Frieze et al., 1987), memory impairment (Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Preston, 2016; Rich, 2019), chronic pain (Dunn, 2015), and long-term health problems (Hansen et al., 2015; Santaularia et al., 2014). Santaularia and others (2014) conducted a cross-sectional study on the chronic health conditions for victims of sexual violence in Kansas. Their study identified several health risk behaviors such as excessive alcohol use, smoking, no physical activity, and obesity. Also, prevalent health issues included disability, cancer, asthma, and diabetes (Santaularia et al., 2014).

Substance Use

Prior research has shown correlations of sexual violence and utilizing alcohol or other substances to cope with the repercussions, increasing other symptoms and the possibility of future revictimization (Bryan et al., 2016; Santaularia et al., 2014). Messman-Moore and others (2015) examined college women who had experienced alcohol-related sexual assaults and discovered that drinking alcohol following an assault predicted revictimization. In turn, it became a predictor and consequence. Ultimately, an alcohol-related sexual assault can become a cyclical issue in that it increases alcohol use as a coping mechanism following the assault, while also increasing the risk of future revictimization (Messman-Moore et al., 2015; Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2015).

Ullman (2016) identified correlations between problem drinking and PTSD amongst adult sexual assault survivors; however, child sexual abuse was the prominent factor in predicting PTSD. Additionally, alcohol abuse was not directly related to PTSD symptoms. However, participants who had experienced sexual abuse as a child and adult were at increased risk for further sexual assaults, which may also influence PTSD symptoms (Bryan et al., 2016; Ullman, 2016).

Bryan and others (2016) found that sexual assault history as a child or an adult increased the association of alcohol use in women. Furthermore, alcohol use following an assault increases the risk of revictimization. Although substance use is never a justification for a sexual assault, research like this supports the notion that higher than average routine alcohol use increased the likelihood of victimization within the year. With revictimization, alcohol use increased. Although older age is a protective factor

against revictimization, prior sexual assault, and alcohol use continue to contribute to sexual violence (Bryan et al., 2016; Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2015).

Psychological

Primary psychological issues that occur following sexual violence include Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Dunn, 2015; Kline et al., 2018; Moylan, Lindhorst, & Tajima, 2017; Santaularia et al., 2014), anxiety, and depression (Moylan et al., 2017; Rich, 2019; Santaularia et al., 2014), loss self-worth/self-esteem, control, agency, and identity (Huemmer et al., 2019), withdrawal (Rich, 2019), shame (Koss et al., 2017), suicidal ideations (Rich, 2019), dissociation and maladaptive coping behaviors, and long-term mental health issues (Franklin et al., 2019).

Fischer and Wertz (1979) described it best, stating that becoming a victim of criminalization changes an individual's entire routine, sense of security, and,

> compels one, despite personal resistance, to face one's fellow as predator and oneself as prey, even though all the while anticipating consequences, planning, acting, and looking to others for assistance… Whether or not expressed immediately, the victim experiences a general inner protest, anger or rage, and a readiness for retaliation, for revenge against the violator…One begins to get back on top of the situation through considering or taking precautions against crime, usually by restricting one's range of activities so as not to fall prey again. During this process, the victim tries to understand not only how a criminal could have done and could again do such a thing, but also how he or she (the victim) may have contributed to the criminal's action (p. 149).

PTSD. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a mental health disorder that occurs due to experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. PTSD can cause flashbacks, anxiety, insomnia, night terrors, and can last for months or years, depending on severity. PTSD is one of the most common psychological effects after someone experiences trauma (Kline et al., 2018; Ullman, 2016); however, not everyone who endures a traumatic event or sexual assault will develop PTSD. Distress, anxiety, and emotional disruptions will occur immediately following the assault (Preston, 2016). A PTSD diagnosis will depend on several factors, such as the individual's prior trauma, mental health help-seeking, and obtainment of services, insurance, personal factors, and depressive symptoms (Price et al., 2014).

Research conducted by Snipes and others (2017) identified that victims of violent assaults diagnosed with PTSD range between 7 and 25 percent, but women who have experienced sexual abuse who have a lifetime prevalence of PTSD is approximately 50 percent (Nitschke et al., 2019). Additionally, they found that explicit beliefs about power and sex, "conscious beliefs that consensual sex inherently involves power" (p. 2462), influenced the severity of PTSD and other symptoms (Snipes et al., 2017).

Cognitive misfunctioning and memory impairments occur in those with PTSD on a short and long-term basis, often causing confusion and inconsistencies in recalling details of the sexual assault. It is crucial for LEOs or investigators to be cognizant of the symptoms of PTSD and trauma, as they are often misconstrued as being fabricated or deceitful (Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Preston, 2016).

Blame. Blame following sexual assault can result in monumental impacts on a victim, which is not surprising considering research has consistently identified that more blame is placed upon the victim versus the perpetrator (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016; Hockett et al., 2015). Brodsky and Hobart (1978) identified four primary models of blame, self-blame from the victim, perpetrator blame, situational blame, which includes circumstantial factors, and societal blame, such as norms, values, and beliefs within one's environment. Donde (2015) found that 52% of women who had experienced sexual violence attributed the most blame to themselves and society, and did not blame their male perpetrators. Women who voiced explicit consent engaged in more blame, disappointment, and anger against society, presumed to be a result of the importance placed on consent in many sexual assault prevention campaigns and prosecution. However, clarity of consent had an opposite effect for self-blame, presumably because the victims felt they had fully expressed their refusal of the rape, thus refuting self-blame (Donde, 2015).

Self-blame is a significant factor following a sexual assault and can vary depending on individual characteristics such as sexual abuse as a child and age. Additionally, a victim's behavior at the time of the abuse, substance use, or attempt to refuse sex can influence self-blame. Women who doubted their clarity in refusing sex or had been intoxicated engaged in more self-blame (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016; Donde, 2015), whereas older, college-educated, and women who had childhood sexual violence were less likely to self-blame. Additionally, women whose sexual abuse was classified as

"forcible rape" versus incapacitated rape were less likely to blame the perpetrator (Donde, 2015).

      Self-Blame Attributions. Peter-Hagene & Ullman (2016) utilized two types of self-blame attributions, identified by Janoff-Bulman (1979), that are commonly experienced by sexual assault victims, behavioral and characterological. *Behavioral self-blame* incorporates perceptions about situational characteristics and the victim's behavior before and during the assault. Although behavioral self-blame often occurs due to a victim doubting their behavior such as, being intoxicated or trusting the perpetrator, it can also provide the victim feelings of control by avoiding such behaviors in the future (Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2015).

      Peter-Hagene and Ullman (2016) and Relyea and Ullman (2015) found that victims of alcohol-related sexual assaults experienced more behavioral self-blame than victims of violent assaults. A possible explanation is that the victim perceived their alcohol use as contributing to sexual violence versus a physically forced victim, blaming the perpetrator versus themselves. Careful consideration is advised for victims of alcohol-related sexual assaults who may experience additional blame due to their alcohol use before the assault (Ullman et al., 2017).

      Characterological self-blame is the dispositional attributions of a person's character that can be harmful to recovery (Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2016; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2015). When victims personalize sexual violence due to their personality, they may perceive themselves as deserving of the sexual assault. Characterological self-blame

is thus interpreted as a personal and fundamental issue within the individual and lacks control (Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2016).

Sigurvinsdottir and Ullman (2015) researched characterological self-blame, behavioral self-blame, societal reactions, and substance use. Like prior research (Relyea & Ullman, 2015), characterological self-blame was an essential mediator between positive and negative social reactions and problem drinking. Participants who had experienced adverse social reactions towards their assaults also had increased characterological self-blame, leading to increased problem drinking. Contrarily, participants who received positive social reactions had lower behavioral self-blame and characterological self-blame; however, it was not related to problem drinking. Ultimately, distinguishing between both types of self-blame attributions is critical to prevent substance abuse and identify a lack of social support for the victim. Blame is a common and destructive reaction towards sexual assault victims and can reinforce their self-blame leading to further behavioral issues (Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2015). Although both behavioral self-blame and characterological self-blame can have damaging effects on a victim and their recovery, such as lack of control, decreased self-esteem, and increased stress and PTSD symptom; characterological self-blame attributions have the most substantial adverse effects (Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2016; Sigurvinsdottir & Ullman, 2015).

Ullman and others (2014) surveyed a sample of just over 1800 women sexually assaulted as adults and children in the Chicago area. The study examined coping mechanisms, self-blame, and emotion regulation as mediators of trauma histories and

symptomology, PTSD, and depression. Results showed that child sexual abuse and adult

sexual abuse influenced emotional dysregulation, which ultimately was an essential

predictor of PTSD. Additionally, child sexual assault was not related to increased

characterological self-blame, which contradicts some past research. Ullman and others

(2014) indicated the importance of understanding that despite the blame that a victim

may place upon themselves, it is more crucial for them to learn healthy coping

mechanisms to regulate emotional states with beneficial cognitive techniques (Ullman et

al., 2014).

Blame and PTSD. Blame has also been shown to influence the effects of PTSD

during treatment for victims of sexual assault. Schumm et al. (2015) and Zalta et al.

(2014) identified that reductions in self-blame perceptions might decrease sexual assault

PTSD symptoms. Additionally, Kline and others (2018) found associations between

PTSD symptoms and behavioral self-blame, in which "the direction of influence appears

to shift over time, such that behavioral self- blame predicts early symptom severity and

symptom severity predicts subsequent behavioral self-blame" (p. 12). Behavioral self-

blame is an early indicator of needed PTSD treatment. Hence, it is pertinent for all

personnel (first responders, sexual assault nurse examiners, law enforcement, and others)

to interact and assess sexual assault victims to be cognizant of behavioral self-blame in

victims (Kline et al., 2018).

Prior Assaults

Prior sexual assaults as both a child and adult increase the likelihood of

revictimization (Artime et al., 2014; Bryan et al., 2016; Miron & Orcutt, 2014; Ullman et

al., 2014). Both childhood and adulthood sexual abuse can result in psychological symptoms that cause maladaptive coping strategies and emotional dysregulation. Victims who experienced sexual violence as children and adults will require techniques to manage trauma symptomology and their emotional states (Ullman et al., 2014). Thus, Ullman (2014) stresses the importance of disrupting the revictimization cycle and trauma symptoms, such as PTSD and depression, by first examining the proximal sexual assault versus the child sexual assault to understand the victims' vulnerability.

Financial Repercussions

A commonly overlooked ramification of sexual assault is the financial costs for the individual, community, and society. Victims of sexual violence will incur substantial healthcare costs immediately following the sexual assault and long-term, such as physical, mental health, and social support services (Henninger et al., 2019). Additionally, victims may want additional security to their homes or require it for their community, such as alarms, cameras, and community groups. Victims may also decide to relocate, causing them to leave personal connections and support (Tyson, 2019). Last, victims may also require personal leave from work immediately after the assault or miss time due to appointments reducing their expected income (Koss et al., 2017).

Rape and Identity

Sexual violence is a detrimental and traumatic event that, as previously mentioned, affects the physical and mental health and abilities of the victim (Dunn, 2015; Kline et al., 2018; Rich, 2019; Ullman, 2016). Additionally, sexual violence disrupts the victims' identity, self, and agency (Huemmer et al., 2019). Huemmer and others (2019)

conducted interviews with sexual assault victims who chose not to report and discovered
that there is significant difficulty in making sense of the trauma and how it is more than
just an event, but a connected sense of self. Victims must come to terms with
renegotiating their identity, one they spent their life building (Huemmer et al., 2019).
Changing one's perception of themselves can be extremely frustrating, distressing, and
can cause withdrawing from people, places, and events they enjoyed before (Franklin et
al., 2019; Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Relyea & Ullman, 2015; Rich, 2019). Sexual assault
victims must alter their worldviews as it becomes disjointed and mistrusting (Huemmer et
al., 2019; Muldoon et al., 2016; Zweig et al., 2014).

<h3 align="center">Reporting Sexual Violence</h3>

Common misconceptions arise out of the many details, varying verbiage, and
misunderstandings to the entire process following a sexual assault. One of the most
critical clarifications regarding reporting is the differences between reporting, disclosing,
and help-seeking, and also voluntary versus involuntary disclosures, and formal versus
informal support providers. These are discussed here.

Disclosing v. Help-Seeking v. Reporting

Disclosing, help-seeking, and reporting sexual violence are terms employed
interchangeably; however, they are distinctive and vital parts of the entire process.
According to Campbell, Greeson, and others (2015), *disclosure* typically refers to a
victim telling someone about their assault, most likely an informal support provider.
Informal support providers refer to a family member, friend, significant other, and tend to

be individuals with whom the victim speaks most often (Campbell, Greeson, et al., 2015; Kirkner et al., 2017; Dworkin et al., 2016).

Often victims will disclose to a close relation to obtain emotional support or to obtain information on how to proceed (Campbell, Greeson, et al., 2015; Relyea & Ullman, 2015; Suzuki & Bonner, 2017); however, fear of that person divulging the sexual assault to others without permission of the victim is a critical factor in whether they choose to disclose at all (Dworkin et al., 2016). This type of reporting does not always entail a victim seeking professional assistance or formal avenues of reporting. Informal disclosure allows the victim to discuss their assault with anyone they feel comfortable; however, some victims' disclosure occurs due to the sexual assault circumstances others witnessed or disclosed for the victim (Campbell, Greeson, et al., 2015).

Help-seeking occurs when a victim of sexual violence informs a professional provider in order to seek tangible assistance. *Formal support providers* include law enforcement, medical staff, social workers, victim advocates. (Campbell, Greeson et al., 2015; Kirkner et al., 2017). When a victim discloses to one of these groups, they may only be seeking information about gathering tangible assistance, but decide not to pursue further options (Campbell, Greeson, et al., 2015; Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016). Some researchers have also recognized *help-attainment* as a distinct process, which identifies the victim's attempt at receiving assistance from a professional source and not receiving it, or the assistance that was received was unsupportive (Campbell, Greeson, et al., 2015).

Similar to help-seeking, *reporting* a sexual assault is most often referred to when a victim seeks law enforcement involvement to begin the criminal justice process, with

the desired goal of prosecuting the offender. Reporting to a law enforcement agency

should initiate an investigation into the sexual assault; however, with the often confusing

or inadequate services provided, this can cause negative experiences which prevent the

victim from pursuing law enforcement involvement (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016; Spencer

et al., 2018), this is discussed later on.

Voluntary v. Involuntary Disclosures

Voluntary disclosures offer the most control, empowerment, and least distressing

avenues for sexual assault victims. Voluntary disclosures only tend to be possible when

there are no witnesses except the perpetrator and the victim, and the victim is mostly

conscious. *Involuntary* disclosures can occur when a victim is incapacitated, witnesses

are involved, or someone other than the victim discloses. Although involuntary

disclosures can be helpful, it should ultimately be the victim's choice on how they want

to pursue to give them a sense of control of their situation (Campbell, Greeson et al.,

2015; Dworkin et al., 2016). Overall, victims' interactions with informal and formal

support systems are crucial as they can be tremendous influences for victims seeking and

receiving the most beneficial assistance (Starzynski, Ullman & Vasquez, 2017).

Whom They Report To

Family and Friends

The most common sexual assault disclosures are to family members or close

friendships, and these disclosures are the most instrumental for victims because they

often look to them for comfort and guidance for the next steps (Campbell, Greeson, et al.,

2015; Fohring, 2015; Kirkner et al., 2017; Relyea & Ullman, 2015; Suzuki & Bonner,

2017). The closest relationships can be extremely helpful or dismantling for sexual assault victims due to the disruption in their own identity, sense of control and safety, and their need for various types of support, while also having a significant influence upon whether a victim reports (Relyea & Ullman, 2015; Sit, 2015; Suzuki & Bonner, 2017).

Adolescent Victims. According to Campbell, Greeson, and others (2015), adolescent victims are more likely to disclose their sexual assault to a friend first, and then their parents or other adults. Although this may seem shocking, participants stated that first disclosing to a friend empowered them to make their own decision and to seek assistance from an adult before seeking medical or legal services. The participants understood that if they wanted to seek police involvement, they would need their parents' assistance. Additionally, when the adults did not force the adolescent sexual assault victims to report or seek services, the adolescent victims felt more inclined to do so. Contrarily, participants who disclosed to a friend, who then disclosed the sexual assault to adults, felt that their control and privacy were violated because they were also forced to seek medical and legal services. Ultimately, the victims' first disclosure was voluntary, but their friends' reactions influenced the entire process afterward. Adolescents must be privy to information on sexual violence if they or someone they know is a victim (Campbell, Greeson, et al., 2015).

Mental Health Professionals

A study by Starzynski and others (2017) on sexual assault victims and their experiences with mental health providers indicated that therapists or counselors are great opportunities for support and recovery. Women who had experienced positive

interactions with one or multiple mental health professionals were more likely to seek and continue therapy. Contrarily, participants who had negative experiences had a history of seeing one or more therapists and would continue to seek support until they found a helpful counselor. This group of participants, however, had severe psychological symptoms and were aware they needed a professional's help (Starzynski et al., 2017).

Not surprisingly, sexual assault victims who had negative interactions from social support services stated that these experiences were extremely harmful. In contrast, those with positive experiences indicated the ability to change their mindset and lessen self-blame. More specifically, participants mentioned that therapists who spoke directly to self-blame were perceived as more helpful. Additional factors supported by sexual assault victims regarding mental health services were the ability to trust the therapist, feel listened to, and believed. These participants encouraged other sexual assault victims to find adequate mental health services and change therapists if they had negative experiences (Starzynski et al., 2017).

According to Peter-Hagene and Ullman (2014), sexual assault victims perceive positive interactions with therapists as increasing their sense of control, and vice versa with negative experiences. Perceived control is pertinent to sexual assault survivors due to the loss of identity, safety, and power that comes with sexual violence. Control can also be a protective factor for victims against PTSD symptoms and other negative coping behaviors such as substance use. Empowering sexual assault victims to regain control can help them recover, rely on less damaging habits, and refrain from problem-drinking (Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2014).

Other Organizations

The most common remaining organizations that sexual assault victims will report to are victim centers or rape crisis centers, mental or medical health professionals, religious organizations, and law enforcement (Kirkner et al., 2017; Starzynski et al., 2017). When a victim reports to one of these organizations, as discussed above, it is most likely for help-seeking, in which they desire emotional, mental, social service, criminal justice, or legal support (Campbell, Greeson, et al., 2015; Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016). Interestingly, Suzuki and Bonner (2017) found that college students were the least trusting of LEOs than any other support services.

Why Don't Victims Report?

In 1985, Koss conducted a foundational study on "hidden rape victims" who did not report their sexual assaults to LEOs or rape crisis centers. Koss examined psychological variables to include personality, attitudinal, and situational characteristics concerning social control, victim precipitation, and situation blame. The results indicated that although personality and attitudinal variables did not cause variations between the participants, there were critical situational characteristics such as the relationship between the victim and perpetrator, the degree of violence during the assault, victim resistance, victim emotional response, and the sexual history of the victim (Koss, 1985). To date, these factors continue to influence whether or not sexual assault victims report (Ceelen et al., 2019; O'Neal, Tellis, & Spohn, 2015), to include many others that are discussed.

Secondary Rape

Sexual assault victims who choose to report their assault may endure what is known as *secondary rape*, *revictimization*, *secondary victimization*, or *tertiary victimization*. These terms are often utilized interchangeably to describe the harmful and adverse reactions victims experience such as shamed, blamed, or disbelieved depending on how many times they disclose to and receive unsupportive responses by family or friends, law enforcement, legal, medical, or religious personnel (Dunn, 2015; Jordan, 2015; Huemmer et al., 2019; Shaw et al., 2017; Venema, 2018; Venema et al., 2019).

Social Reactions After Reporting/Disclosing

Social reactions towards sexual violence are often diverse and more damaging than supportive unless the individual, formal or informal, has a clear understanding of all the factors associated with sexual assaults and trauma (DePrince et al., 2017). As previously mentioned, victim blame tends to be a typical response, in addition to many others. Relyea and Ullman (2015) researched just over 1800 women who had an unwanted sexual experience since 14 and disclosed to at least one person. Utilizing The Social Reactions Questionnaire, results indicated two diverse negative responses most received by victims, *being turned against* (78%) and *unsupportive acknowledgment* (94%).

Women who experienced being turned against were either blamed, stigmatized, or infantilized, resulting in more destructive behavior or cognitions, amplified self-blame and social withdrawal, and lessened sexual confidence. Victims who experienced unsupportive acknowledgment had increased coping strategies but higher PTSD and depression (Relyea & Ullman, 2015). Similar findings have shown that adverse social

reactions can also influence the severity of PTSD symptoms; however, contrary, positive social reactions do not necessarily prevent or lessen PTSD symptoms (Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2015).

When a sexual assault victim seeks support through formal or informal means and receives negative social reactions such as being turned against, this can result in significant psychological distress, increased social withdrawal, self-blame, and decreased sexual refusal assertiveness-a predictor of revictimization. In Peter-Hagene and Ullman's (2015) research, victims of violent assaults were more likely to seek support services and, in turn, receive more social responses, mostly acknowledgment-without-support. In contrast, victims in alcohol-related sexual violence would disclose to fewer people, thus, receiving fewer acknowledgment-without-support reactions and similar turning-against reactions. One possible reasoning behind this variation is the circumstantial factors surrounding the sexual assault of alcohol-related versus violent (Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2015).

Blame, Shame, Distrust, and Disbelief. After a sexual assault, a victim endures a myriad of physical and mental challenges that they may choose to endure alone or with the support of another (Franklin et al., 2019; Hansen et al., 2015; Huemmer et al., 2019; Preston, 2016; Rich, 2019). Unfortunately, despite the closeness of a relationship, a typical response to a victim's disclosure or reporting is often victim blame, which is a shared fear for victims (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016; DePrince et al., 2019; Hockett et al., 2016; Lynch et al., 2017; Relyea & Ullman, 2015). Research has shown that female victims are often blamed less for sexual assaults versus male sexual assault victims (Pica

et al., 2017). One study found that sometimes formal support providers who engaged in

blaming responses directed towards the substance use may still be perceived by some

victims as supportive if emotional support is also provided (Dworkin et al., 2018; Ullman

et al., 2017).

Additionally, some reactions and misconceptions about sexual assault also

increase the victims' fear, shame, and distrust in themselves and others (DePrince et al.,

2017; Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2015). Fear may result from several factors to include the

loss of their sense of self and control, their change in worldview and goodness of others

(Huemmer et al., 2019; Muldoon et al., 2016), or distrust in the government, legal, or

criminal justice system (Conroy & Scassa, 2016; Jordan 2015; Zweig et al., 2014).

Shame and distrust can result from a misconception about the victims' role in the sexual

assault, skepticism towards society and people, and negative interactions with law

enforcement that reconfirm their altered beliefs (Huemmer et al., 2019; Muldoon et al.,

2016; Suzuki & Bonner, 2017). Shame also plays a significant part in one's desire to seek

assistance, similar to the repercussions of victim blame. Shame can cause individuals to

take on the responsibility of their actions in the assault and prevent them from seeking

help and receiving adverse social reactions, such as being stigmatized (Muldoon et al.,

2016; Zweig et al., 2014).

Negative Interactions with Formal Providers. Negative interactions with

formal providers can cause significant damage to a victim's willingness to cooperate and

proceed further with support services (Campbell, Menaker, et al., 2015; Dunn, 2015;

Franklin et al., 2019). Disbelief is a typical response towards victims by LEOs trained to

interact in an interrogative manner (Franiuk et al., 2019; Hansen et al., 2015; Phipps et al., 2018; Venema, 2016b). Disbelieving a victim causes increased trauma symptomology and decreased willingness to assist cooperate, resulting in confirmation bias by LEOs who may believe the victim is lying (more to be discussed later) (Campbell, Menaker, et al., 2015; Dunn, 2015; Franklin et al., 2019; Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016). Negative experiences with formal providers who are supposed to be supportive for victims of sexual violence also adversely affect the accuracy of sexual assault report statistics, as victims are less likely to report future assaults after negative interactions (Rich, 2019)

Victim Interpretations of Social Reactions. Victims' interpretations of positive and negative social reactions may result from various reasons, such as the victim's expectations and the disclosure recipient. Dworkin and others (2018) explored the relationship and explanations of how victims interpreted social reactions. They found that social reactions identified as positive were "uncomfortable, unhelpful, and/or inconsistent with hopes/needs/expectations when the survivor was experiencing severe consequences from the assault, the survivor and responder did not have a close relationship, or there were also negative social reactions present in the interaction" (Dworkin et al., 2018, p. 106-107). Similarly, perceived adverse reactions may have felt supportive, comfortable, or met expectations (Dworkin et al., 2018).

Additional results indicated that social reaction perceptions depended on the victim's experience of more severe assault consequences. Other factors that influenced the judgment of positive versus negative was the degree of closeness between whom the victim was interacting with and the degree of victim self-blame. Dworkin and others

(2018) further identified three significant themes considered crucial to the participants of their study when disclosing their sexual assaults, (a) the consistency of the reaction with their needs, hopes, and expectations; (b) the degree of comfort felt during the reaction; and (c) the long-term impact of the reaction (p. 103).

Culture

Cultural factors can have monumental effects upon sexual assault victims, especially those from marginalized or traditional communities. Cultural traditions, beliefs, and religion can often prevent a victim from seeking medical and social support services or reporting to law enforcement due to an understanding that issues are resolved within the family, distrust in the government or agencies, or fear of deportation (Koss et al., 2017). Negative experiences with LEOs or medical personnel such as, not being taken seriously, a lack of cultural awareness, discrimination, or hostility, can cause further distrust and social isolation for immigrants and other marginalized communities (Conroy & Scassa, 2016; Zweig et al., 2014).

A national study conducted by the Bureau of Justice Statistics identified American Indian/Alaska Native women had the highest rates of sexual violence over all other ethnicities. Within the American Indian culture, there are significant social and familial repercussions following a sexual assault that prevents women from seeking support. Shame, stigmatization, and fear of retaliation are most common and are more complicated when both the perpetrator and victim are American Indians. Providers within these communities have reported a lack of understanding and acknowledgment surrounding sexual violence resulting in further disregard and unsupportive responses for

victims. Ultimately, significant distrust in any government system such as law enforcement, hospitals, and child protective services due to the long history of annihilation, abuse, and deceitfulness towards the American Indians further complicates tribunal and external agency assistance for victims (Zweig et al., 2014).

Marginalized populations include not only varying ethnicities but also those with differing sexual orientations and lower socioeconomic status (Horan & Beauregard, 2018; Rich, 2019). Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, intersex, and asexual or allied (LGBTQIA) individuals are often blamed, shamed, and stigmatized with or without a sexual assault. Members of the LGBTQIA who are also minorities may experience more severe responses from their families and become even more socially isolated, preventing help-seeking or reporting (Koss et al., 2017). Additionally, victims who have less education and are lower-income are less likely to report (Black, 1983; Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016; DePrince et al., 2019), whereas age, marital status, and sometimes ethnicity decreases the likelihood of reporting (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016).

An additional barrier for victims may endure an internalized struggle on *racial loyalty*. Racial loyalty occurs in many communities of color. A person understands the disproportionate numbers of their people within the criminal justice system or perceives unjust treatment and race incarcerations. The sense of belonging, identification with their group, and desire to support may deter sexual assault victims, if the perpetrator is of the same ethnic origin, from reporting their assault to prevent contributing to a broken system (Koss et al., 2017).

Language and Geographical Barriers. Language barriers can occur within the United States when victims of sexual violence are non-English speakers; most often, these populations include immigrants of varying ethnicities. Culturally diverse victims experience issues receiving supportive services that are culturally relevant and respectful of traditions and customs. Further issues may arise during medical examinations or procedures when relaying penitent information involving the criminal justice system, legal process, and rights as victims. Additional materials are critical to supportive services for diverse populations such as interpreters or bilingual personnel and brochures, pamphlets, or other resources in other languages besides English and Spanish. Victim privacy and rights can be compromised if a family member, staff member, or law enforcement are utilized as interpreters (Zweig et al., 2014).

Geographical barriers mainly occur in rural areas and small towns, where specially trained medical staff or SANEs are hours away. Smaller communities tend to lack the resources to fully support a sexual assault victim, which may ultimately cause a decision not to seek help and a loss of evidence for a criminal case (Zweig et al., 2014). Additionally, a victim may be unaware of the appropriate medical policies and procedures required following an assault and may go to a local clinic and experience negative interactions, preventing further incentive to report to law enforcement (Koss et al., 2017; Zweig et al., 2014).

Substance Use

Substance use before a sexual assault can cause victims to experience their destructive psychological reactions and others. Alcohol-specific social reactions (Relyea

& Ullman, 2015), has not been widely examined (Dworkin et al., 2018; Relyea &
Ullman, 2015; Ullman et al., 2017), however in cases with substance use, victim blame is
heightened (Donde, 2015; Relyea & Ullman, 2015).

A study conducted by Lorenz and Ullman (2016) on sexual assault disclosure and
alcohol use indicated that sexual assault victims have varying experiences regarding
disclosure and substance use. For example, they found that victims with more education
were more likely to disclose their alcohol use before the assault, and college students
experienced fewer adverse social reactions than non-college women. Additionally, sexual
assault victims who were significantly impaired or incapacitated during the assault were
more likely to report sexual violence and experienced social reactions that were both
positive and negative. Variations may have resulted from the victims' interpretations of
the social reactions, the impairment disclosed, and the disclosure recipients. Victims who
experienced alcohol-related sexual violence may likely have disclosed to more
individuals and received more support, whether supportive or unsupportive. Interestingly,
victims who disclosed to medical personnel or law enforcement received more negative
social reactions relating to the alcohol-related sexual assault (Lorenz & Ullman, 2016b).

Similar findings by Relyea and Ullman (2015) identified that negative reactions to
alcohol-related sexual assaults resulted in increased characterological self-blame and
stigmatization, but not PTSD symptoms or depression. Contrarily positive social
reactions assisted the victim with more emotional support. Alcohol-specific negative
social reactions can be more damaging and shameful because they involve blaming the

victim because of their alcohol use before the assault versus the victim potentially

contributing to the assault (Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2015; Relyea & Ullman, 2015).

Interconnected Networks and Social Circles

Another factor commonly considered by sexual assault victims prior to disclosing

is their relationships with those they intend to disclose to and those whom the recipient is

also connected, known as *interconnected networks*. Victims may be hesitant from telling

their friends to prevent the information from being spread as unwanted disclosures.

Additionally, interconnected networks may also be linked to the perpetrator or the

perpetrator's connections, causing additional restraint in disclosing. When the perpetrator

and the victim share mutual connections, this may result in unwanted disclosures, loss of

friendships, negative social responses, or unsupportive biases not to report to law

enforcement (Dworkin et al., 2016).

College Students

College students are a primary population who tend not to report their sexual

assaults to college officials or seek law enforcement services; however they may disclose

to close friends or family. Research indicates that college students' low reporting

numbers are estimated at one in 20 or 50 (Cantor et al. 2015; Mellins et al. 2017). One of

the most common reasons college students may not report their sexual assaults is due to

the perception that college is a monumental stage in their life where they are committed

to completing their education and accomplishing a significant milestone. Additionally,

they construct their new identity through experiences, friendships, and managing the

various aspects as a busy student. Kahn and others (2018) identified that college students

post-assault priorities included obtaining whatever support they perceived as necessary to help them recreate balance to return to "normal" and minimize damage to their social standing, circle, and identity. "Not reporting is one of the most effective ways to balance these two somewhat contradictory ends; keeping an experience ambiguous allows for social continuation rather than social rupture" (Kahn et al., 2018, p. 452)

Misunderstanding What Constitutes Sexual Assault

As previously mentioned, even researchers, organizations, non-profits, and law enforcement agencies differ in their definitions, policies, and classifications regarding sexual violence (Armstrong, Gleckman-Krut, & Johnson, 2018). Thus, when a person, who has no experience, understanding, training, or education on sexual violence, is victimized they are confused about what happened, whether it constitutes sexual assault, what steps to take, and if they even want to take further action (Conroy & Scassa, 2016; Rich, 2019). Additionally, all of the previous reasons mentioned for not reporting play huge factors in their decisions.

Defining Sexual Assault. Kahn and others (2018) showed that many participants did not label their assaults as such because of their misconceptions that their assaults had to be violent or severe attacks. Misunderstandings can often occur due to the unintended messages of sexual assault advocacy groups or society. Sexual violence is often described and labeled by rape myths (to be discussed later) that misconstrue all the personal and situational factors of what a sexual assault, victim, and perpetrator are "supposed" to be. These stereotypes then influence victims to question their behavior and factors surrounding their assaults because they do not align with incorrect notions of "real rape."

Victims who fall under marginalized groups tend to be affected by these rape myths even more (Kahn et al., 2018; Waterhouse et al., 2016).

For example, Kahn and others (2018) reported that 84-percent of men did not report because they labeled their assault as not serious and wanted to refrain from incorporating "victim" into their identity. Also, many participants believed that if they identified their attacks as sexual assault, they would also need to label the perpetrator (Kahn et al., 2018), who is often a known acquaintance (Estrich 1987; Kahn et al., 2018; LaFree 1981). After a victim labels their assault, themselves, and the perpetrator, this causes confirmation for all three groups, which could indicate pathology for a group of people, and influence a change in the relationship dynamic (Kahn et al., 2018).

Consent. Sexual violence cases often become muddied as a result of confusion surrounding consent. Since most sexual assaults involve only the victim and the perpetrator, contradictory statements are often labeled as "he said, she said" confrontations. In many cases, the perpetrator will admit that sexual activities occurred; however, it was voluntary and not forced, whereas the victim claims the opposite (Hansen et al., 2015; Hansen et al., 2019).

When sexual assault cases proceed through the criminal justice system, there are continual speculations to whether mutual consent occurred, and it is vital if the case goes to court. Stuart and others (2019) conducted research utilizing mock juries to identify offense, victim, and perpetrator stereotypes after reading rape scenarios. Results indicated that participants engaged in "step down" processing as they worked through hierarchal stereotypes surrounding sexual violence. Ultimately, individual stereotypes impacted the

levels of blame towards the victim, and that single underlying schemas (to be covered later) regarding consent influenced these perceptions (Stuart et al., 2019).

Additionally, Gray (2015) conducted a study utilizing college students in the United Kingdom to identify their understanding of what constitutes consent. Gray (2015) found that participants understood that consent was a continual process of mutual consent rather than a single word or behavior. Participants also displayed verbal and behavioral cues as examples of consent, which were not supportive of rape myths. Further indications showed that although a verbal "no" provided the most clarity, some agreed that certain perpetrators would easily ignore them and that a woman's attire or behavior should not be considered consent (Gray, 2015).

Despite the forward-thinking of these participants, some juxtapositions occurred regarding alcohol-related sexual assaults. A majority of the participants agreed that no one deserves to be a victim of sexual violence. However, the majority also perceived that women who consumed alcohol before their assault hold a degree of responsibility. Partial victim-blame and responsibility were placed upon the intoxicated victim and responsibility on the perpetrator for ensuring mutual consent; however, participants also placed the greatest responsibility upon whoever is soberer at the time of the assault. Ultimately, this research indicates that although these college students could identify what mutual consent would look and sound like, indications of victim blame seeped into their judgments for victims who were intoxicated. By placing more responsibility on the victim for being drunk and thus, vulnerable to a sexual assault, victim blame may appear to be more socially acceptable due to its indirectness (Gray, 2015).

Prior Criminal History

A prior criminal history can be an inhibiting factor for many sexual violence victims because reporting could draw attention to previous involvements with law enforcement or additional crimes that the victims believe could impede the law enforcement assistance. A marginalized group who is often reluctant to report their sexual assaults are sex workers, due to their increased risks involved in their profession, the possibility of substance use, and the perceived notion that they will be met with disbelief by law enforcement (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016; Frohmann, 1991; Smith et al., 2016).

A study by Carbone-Lopez and others (2016) with incarcerated women examined the personal, situational, and community-level factors related to their violent assaults, as victims and offenders. The participants were from Baltimore, Maryland, and Minneapolis, Minnesota. Approximately 17 percent of the Baltimore group indicated they had at least one sexual assault in the past three years, and 20 percent of the participants in Minneapolis had at least one sexual assault. However, participants with multiple assaults were more prevalent in Baltimore. Most women indicated they did not report their sexual assaults for several reasons; however in this sample, the numbers of sexually victimized offenders were as likely as female nonoffenders to report. Factors that influenced police involvement were the degree of severity of the assault, the need for medical attention, and the involvement of other crimes and the assault such as robbery, kidnapping, or use of a weapon (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016).

Victims with lower socioeconomic status are less likely to report to law enforcement (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016; DePrince et al., 2019). Interestingly, women who experienced sexual assaults with penetration were less likely to report versus attempted or other attacks, possibly due to the perceived increased shame of penetration or the belief that they should have fought off the perpetrator. Additionally, the results indicate that female offenders who were also victims of sexual violence shared similar reasons with nonoffending victims for why they did not report such as shame or self-blame. Women who engaged in illegal activities had prior criminal records or used substances had increased shame and further distrusted that law enforcement would adequately believe and help them (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016; Smith et al., 2016).

Reporting is Not the Primary Goal

A Different Perspective of Justice. Sexual assault victims endure a myriad of changes after their violations, beginning with reporting their crime, trusting the criminal justice system, and will obtain no justice, except a drawn-out process, or case attrition, which is not in their best interest or desire. Victims of sexual violence may choose not to report, and although this opposes societal expectations, it can empower victims and give them back a sense of control. Prosecuting the perpetrator may also not be a primary goal, but instead design their path towards healing and recovery (Huemmer et al., 2019; Scott, 2018)

The extensive and time-consuming process of criminal justice may cause revictimization and increase their trauma symptoms; thus, reporting should not be presumed to the best option for every victim. As mentioned above, societal reactions

have monumental impacts upon a women's decision to report. It is crucial for communities and social supports to recognize the power in the victim's choice to report or not to (DePrince et al., 2019). Going against a victim's decision not to report causes strained interactions with the criminal justice and legal system and can amplify stressful repercussions both psychologically and physically (Campbell, Greeson, et al., 2015; Koss et al., 2017).

Recommendations for Survivors

According to Kirkner and others (2017), participants recommended that victims of sexual violence disclose their assaults to someone supportive, trustworthy, and experienced sexual trauma, so they empathize with the victims without blame. Disclosing is essential, as identified by these sexual assault survivors because it prevents suppression and social withdraw. Participants also suggested that sexual violence victims seek assistance from trauma-informed or trained personnel to ensure compassionate and adequate care (Kirkner et al., 2017).

Immediately following a victim's disclosure, trained personnel can shape their reactions and, ultimately, influence the victim's comfort and understanding. Medical staff, law enforcement, victim advocates, or other formal personnel may not have the ability to shape the relationship with the victim or the impact of the sexual assault, but they can choose how to respond when a victim reaches out for help. Formal responders should be able to assess a victim's demeanor and expectations during each of their interactions and throughout the process of seeking services to then alter their reactions to meet the needs of the victim best. Trauma can cause victims to experience a range of

emotions, mental stability, and desire to interact socially; thus, it is pertinent that the providers evaluate what needs are a priority. Ensuring professional personnel are cognizant, empathetic, and perceptive on how to tailor their responses can prevent victims from having negative interactions with essential services. Training on rapport building can be offered to those who may interact with sexual assault survivors to provide valuable information on handling difficult topics in clarifying and supporting manners. Although training is recommended and can provide beneficial tools, providers need to be aware that all cases are different and uniform responses are not successful, as this can cause misunderstanding or revert to old patterns of negative responses (Dworkin et al., 2018).

Why Sexual Violence Exists?

History of Violence Against Women

Rape Law Reform

In the 1970s, women's groups attempted to reform laws about sexual violence whose outdated focus was on victim blame versus the perpetrator (Mennicke et al., 2014). These laws did not protect the victim, "but to preserve male rights to possess and subjugate women as sexual objects" (Spohn, 2020, p. 87). Additionally, these laws allowed law enforcement to use legally irrelevant information regarding the character's behavior, relationship with the offenders, and others when deciding how and if to pursue the case (Spohn, 2020). To this day, some of these rape myths or extra-legal factors (to be discussed later) are still penetrating the decisions of law enforcement, prosecutors, and

judges (Dhami et al., 2018; Hansen et al., 2019; O'Neal et al., 2015; O'Neal, 2019; Wentz & Keimig, 2019).

By seeking reform in these laws, lobbyists intended to shift the blame to the perpetrator, while also changing the perceptions of law enforcement towards victims, and ultimately, rejecting the patriarchal societal view of sexual violence (Estrich 1987; Mennicke et al., 2014; Spohn, 2020). Advocates and women's groups fought to change the perspectives and skepticism directed towards sexual assault victims by demanding legislative reform and encouraging victims to report their assaults. The mid-1980s enacted noticeable changes within and outside of the U.S., as rape law reforms were incorporated (Berger et al., 1988; Spohn, 2020; Spohn & Horney 1992), with 122 statutory changes passed in 77 countries, between 1945 and 2005 (Frank, Hardinge, & Wosick-Correa 2009).

Violence Against Women Act 1994

The Violence Against Women Act of 1994 was initially constructed in part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which was established to improve the responses and performance of LEOs and prosecution for victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking (Koss, White, & Lopez, 2017). Victim services became a top priority and were directed towards the criminal justice system, which changed from an initial focus on victim support from shelters or crisis centers (Aday, 2015). This legislation receives continued assistance from when it first was enacted till today from the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (Aday, 2015; Koss et al., 2017; Legal Momentum, 2017).

Despite the seemingly good intentions of this 1994 legislation, and the expounding earlier work by Brownmiller (1975) and Estrich (1987), the culture and perceptions towards rape continues to be one of negativity, victim blame, and a lack of action throughout the criminal justice system. Spohn (2020) reiterates that despite the decades of research, legislation change, and continual awareness brought to sexual violence, these changes "produced largely symbolic rather than instrumental changes in the processing of rape cases and in the attitudes displayed towards rape and rape victims" (p. 87). The hopes of increasing sexual assault reports and improving chances of arrest, prosecution, and conviction of offenders have widely been unimproved with continued inadequate responses surrounding sexual violence by the criminal justice system and the majority's prehistoric acceptance of rape myths by the majority (Spohn, 2020).

Rape Culture

Prior research has supported the notion that societal norms endorse a rape culture that associates violence with sexuality, and thus, normalizes various forms of sexual violence within society as acceptable. Aggressive and dominant behavior towards women is tolerated and excused, if not condoned, to foster a rape culture (Brownmiller, 1975; Herman, 1989; O'Neal, 2019; O'Neal & Hayes, 2019; Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1974). Ultimately, people ingrain such notions and norms (Swidler, 1986) and thus emphasize victims' characteristics, credibility, and responsibility surrounding the sexual assault, with little attention paid to the perpetrator (Franiuk et al., 2019; O'Neal & Hayes, 2019).

Brownmiller's (1975) seminal work, "Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape," brought universal attention to the criminality and widespread commonality of rape. Prior to, sexual violence was perceived as a rarity (Lankford, 2016), with common misunderstandings from the general population that those who commit sexual assaults are a select few, who have mental health issues, are minorities or lower class, or are sexually deviant or disturbed (Krahé, 1991; Stuart et al., 2019), despite experts within the field and research has shown societal norms foster this behavior. The refusal to acknowledge that sexual violence is more common than it is or that seemingly "normal" individuals are conducting these offenses causes significant issues for prevention and raising awareness (Brownmiller, 1975; Dunn, 2015).

Additionally, Brownmiller (1975) changed how rape was perceived as a political issue versus an individual or personal crime while identifying myths surrounding sexual violence. Furthermore, she emphasized that rape culture endorses sexual violence as a means of social control through gender role stereotypes and socialization. The construct of a patriarchal system of male dominance and female subordination is influenced and accepted as violence against women. Additionally, her work helped establish some of the first marital rape laws in the U.S. and was pivotal for feminist activism (Brownmiller, 1975; Levine, 2018).

Burt (1980) conducted her study on rape culture in America utilizing feminist theory and the prediction of attitudes on rape myths. The research utilized demographic information and personality, experience, and attitude variables to develop a RMA scale (to be covered later). Ultimately, this research provided an original attempt to identify

complex attitudes and beliefs surrounding rape in American culture, using feminist theory. Additionally, results indicated that most Americans held rape myths at this time, and the degree of acceptance was associated with other ingrained perspectives such as gender stereotyping, adversarial sexual beliefs, and overall tolerance of interpersonal violence. Most importantly, Burt recognized the difficulty in reducing RMA due to its close connection with other deep-seated beliefs and stressed the importance of endorsement of interpersonal violence as the most significant predictor of RMA. Gender stereotyping influenced women as primary targets of sexual violence, and the degree of acceptance of interpersonal violence "may be the attitudinal releaser of assaultive action" (Burt, 1980, p. 229).

Rape culture promotes and sustains sexual violence through beliefs and actions, and it becomes inherently normalized and, thus, tolerated and excused (Herman, 198; O'Neal & Hayes, 2019; Nichols, 2018). Additionally, rape culture feeds off "shame, self-blame, and self-loathing" (Huemmer et al., 2019, p. 445). Rape culture fosters the belief that women are less than, subservient objects, and their behavior and own perceptions should mirror these beliefs in their gender roles, relationships with others, and their sexuality (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980; Menaker & Franklin, 2015). The widespread endorsement and embedding of everyday sexism influence a culture of women's inequality, resulting in the normalization of sexual violence (Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Nichols, 2018). Unsurprisingly, expectations, judgments, and standards about "gender, sexuality, deceit, regret, women's bodies, and the truthfulness of women's accounts are likely to flourish in this climate of hegemonic masculinity" (McMillan, 2018, p. 19).

Power and Patriarchy

Brownmiller (1975) identified power as a motive behind sexual assaults against women, maintained by gendered sex stereotypes and roles where women are exploited, and men dominate (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980; Gravelin et al., 2019). It is crucial to understand that sexual violence is a crime of power and control, not sex (Brownmiller, 1975; Canan & Levand, 2019; Egan, 2020). Power differentials cause significant disruption within relationships, whether intimate or familial, where sexual violence is a tool for social control (Brownmiller, 1975). Thus, social control fosters gender stereotypes and become standards for the behavior of women, and any delineation from them invite sexually aggressive and accepted responses from men, causing shifts in blame on to women for any sexual violence. Ultimately, these expected norms encourage rape myths and keep women in subservient and secondary roles (Angelone et al., 2015; Brownmiller, 1975).

Gravelin and others (2019) examined levels of power versus powerlessness in both male and female participants and their perceptions towards victims of sexual assault. Participants were selected to one of three groups (high power, low power, neutral), conducted a priming assignment, and then assessed for levels of victim blaming attitudes. Varying levels occurred in most participants; however, the most interesting results showed that women who felt low in power had higher rates of victim blame. One reason for this could be that the women with low power levels found the example scenarios to be threatening, which ultimately increased their defensiveness and reversed women's common perceptions towards other female victims. Contrarily, men who had lower levels

of powerfulness reduced their levels of victim blaming. An explanation for these participants' results could be the inherent ability and tendency to relate to victims' powerlessness. Ultimately, men and women relate and respond to powerlessness in different manners (Gravelin et al., 2019).

Due to the United States' prominent rape culture, researchers have extended their examination towards victims of sexual violence and perceptions from various populations. Hockett and others (2016) conducted a meta-analysis with date parameters as early as 1887 until 2009 to examine attitudes towards sexual assault victims, involving victim, perpetrator, and crime characteristics. In support of feminist theories, results indicated that negative perceptions towards sexual violence victims strengthen hierarchal structures within a society where men govern women, and myths surrounding sexual assault are tools utilized to threaten women into submission (Hockett et al., 2016).

Additionally, a patriarchal or male-dominant social hierarchy revolves around one group's power and control over another (Angelone et al., 2015; Brownmiller, 1975). Hockett and others (2016) reference the theoretical framework of Puar and Rai (2002) who propose, "two forms of absolute (i.e., corrupted) power (p. 119)— the power to quarantine and the power to discipline (p. 135)—drive the formulation of specific, stereotypic images in the public's mind" (p. 159). Ultimately both forms of power become issues for only certain groups, such as victims of sexual violence. Additionally, these distorted perceptions of power become normalized and directed towards those marginalized groups (Hockett et al., 2016).

Gender Stereotypes

Why Do We Stereotype?

All aspects of life are influenced in some manner due to the prevalence of these norms (Nichols, 2018). Although gender stereotypes are often negative, stereotypes, in general, are a cognitive process that helps people to navigate their environment better and determine threats or safety (Süssenbach, Albrecht, et al., 2017). The brain generates categories to help identify, create memories, and interpret external factors that are encountered (Amodio 2014; Ellemers, 2018). Thus, similar items are grouped and added to a previous group as people experience similar or dislike stimuli. Each new encounter allows the brain, in fractions of a second, to recognize prior experiences as either positive, negative, or (dis)similar, and thus utilize reduced cognitive resources in the future (Gordon et al., 1988; Stuart et al., 2019).

These stereotypes can become an issue when they shape one's perception of other people or groups who do not align with the previous stereotypes (Ellemers, 2018). As a result, the brain will begin to look for information that confirms and supports its' own stereotypical beliefs and discounts the information that does not. Additionally, information that confirms one's stereotypes is hardened and perceived as fact; and when interacting with a person or group that an individual has no prior experience with, inferences and expectations are made utilizing a few characteristics of the individual to apply to the group or from the group to apply to the individual (Ellemers, 2018).

For example, Stuart and others (2019) found that utilizing the *stereotype-activation theory*, participants who perceived the perpetrators to align with an associated

stereotype of a particular criminal offense, jurors, utilized less cognitive processing of case information. Instead, they relied more heavily on the negative stereotype that is already consistent with perceptions of guilt. Whereas, when the perpetrator was counter-stereotypical of the negative stereotype, jurors utilized more cognitive resources to consider case information and situation factors concerning the behavior (Gordon et al., 1988; Stuart et al., 2019).

Men v. Women. Research has shown that men validate gender stereotypes and role expectations more than women, which results in the atypical perception that sexual violence is a natural occurrence during sexual interactions with women (Lynch et al., 2017). Ellemers (2018) conducted a thorough overview of gender stereotypes to reiterate their impact on behavior, interpretations, identity, and information recollection about others and themselves. Stereotypes can create unification and relation amongst groups while causing further divisions from other groups, based on insignificant perceptions that become exaggerated for in-groups versus out-groups and underestimated differences for in-group members (Ellemers, 2018).

In-groups v. Out-groups. Groups form due to a psychological connection that aligns with the individuals within the group. *In-groups* are those with shared beliefs, customs, religion, politics, and others. There can be many identifying features that create in-groups. *Out-groups* are those that differ from the shared connections of the in-group. The formation and differentiation of groups cause an "us versus them" that is observed in various life factors, organizations, and cultures. The construction and alignment with certain groups can influence behavior towards others either through *in-group favoritism*,

where more positive interactions and perceptions are directed towards one's in-group and neutral perceptions are directed towards the out-group.

Additionally, *out-group derogation* can cause extreme friendliness and favoritism towards the in-group, but extreme hatred, anger, or negative perceptions towards the out-group due to perceived threats or perceived intentions of undermining of the in-group. *Group polarization* can occur when a few individuals within an in-group influence extreme behavior, perceptions, or decision-making (more than what the majority would do on their own), towards the out-group (Arpin et al., 2017; Kahn, 2014; Robbins & Krueger, 2005).

Gender Roles. Gender is a primary identifying feature on a person, as both children and adults are accustomed to recognize and then categorize one's sex despite irrelevance to the situation. Ellemer (2018) states that despite fluidity in sexual identification, gender is a constant determinant in how people compare males and females, and "gender categorizations are immediately detected, are chronically salient, seem relatively fixed, and are easily polarized. This contributes to the formation and persistence of gender stereotypes and reinforces perceptions of differences between men and women" (p. 277).

Furthermore, gender stereotypes delineate between the characteristics assigned to each sex, such as male competitiveness, performance, and assertiveness, and nurturing and communality in women. These perceived characteristics influence behaviors, occupations, and roles, where men are presumed to exude confidence and engage in more risk-taking behavior, whereas women are the caretakers. Although there are physiological

differences in men and women that can influence hormonal variations that may impact

behavior, most gender stereotypes are ingrained through nurture versus nature. However,

research has shown that the most influential factors that distinguish stereotypes are

gendered roles with men as the providers and women as the caretakers (Eagly & Wood,

2013). "Social roles—over and above gender—have been found to impact hormonal

regulation, self-regulation, and social regulation, which ultimately elicit different

thoughts, feelings, and behaviors in men and women" (Ellemers, 2018, p. 278).

To avoid gender stereotypes, individuals must be cognizant of their perceptions

towards the sexes, and it is even more critical for parents. Those who engage in

stereotypical behaviors and language will most likely interact with their daughter or son

as such and exemplify these where the children begin to mimic such actions (Ellemers,

2018; Endendijk et al. 2014). Gender stereotypes are embedded in all aspects of one's life

from the types of books, toiletries, advertisements, movies, television, clothing styles,

and children's toys. Often the most common delineation between boys' and girls' items

are colors; blue is for boys, and pink is for girls (Ellemers, 2018; Fulcher & Hayes, 2018;

King et al., 2020).

Gender Stereotypes in Relationships. Gender stereotypes ultimately give way to

expectations, in which people begin to alter their standards, priorities, and needs in

intimate relationships. A woman's value is her physical appearance versus

accomplishments, whereas men's value is related to their careers and financial success

(Ellemers, 2018; Fredrickson & Roberts 1997). The significance placed upon a woman's

attractiveness devalues her competence and humanity, ultimately simplifying the ability

to perceive her as an object. Although research has shown that men and women experience similar emotions, communicating these emotions are expressed differently, where men identify more anger portraying emotional action, versus women who tend to express more sadness, portraying a lack of control (Ellemers, 2018).

Gender stereotypes reflect both men's and women's expectations of one another and influence how they perceived the opposing should behave, such as in line with the stereotypes. Women who do not conform to gender stereotypes are evaluated more negatively than if they would align with expectations. Gender stereotypes cause further disruption as the standards they evaluated against often fluctuate (Ellemers, 2018).

Media. Media is one of the most common influencers and enforcers of gender stereotypes due to the prevalence of television, movies, and social media platforms. Media depicts gender stereotypes in various ways: physique, behavior, communication, clothing, makeup, relationships, identity, and many more (Eisend, 2019; Shamilishvili, 2019). As previously mentioned, one of the most common factors is physical appearance as women are evaluated by their looks, whereas men must have masculine roles and status (Ellemers, 2018; Seabrook et al., 2019; Wright & Tokunaga, 2016).

Males are not entirely excluded from gender stereotypes regarding image (however, they are given much more liberty regarding age, gray hair, no makeup required). Media often depicts the male physique only showing the face and torso, whereas a woman's entire body is displayed. Non-verbal communication is also commonly depicted in media with open and expansive postures for men depicting power

and confidence versus women who are closed off or contracted, indicating powerlessness, lacking confidence, and submission (Ellemers, 2018).

"Boys Will Be Boys"

A common phrase utilized throughout a young boy's childhood and well into adulthood to describe the normalized behaviors of boyishness, lack of regulation, and maturity that are solely permissible to the male sex. These behaviors, mannerisms, and language are adopted through the socialization that excuses individuals due to their sex from a very young age. Young boys begin to learn what constitutes masculinity and what does not-all things feminine. Masculinity is thus associated with stereotypes, including aggression, domination, control, and competition (Artime et al., 2014; Ford, 2019; Nichols, 2018). The primary groups that embolden identification with masculine stereotypes include sports, athletic programs, gangs, motorcycle groups, fraternities, law enforcement, and the military (Martin, 2016; Nichols, 2018).

Nichols (2018) identifies this term as known in the United Kingdom as *laddism*, *laddish*, or *lad culture*, in describing "mischievous masculinities" (p. 73) and the behavior that succeeds. Laddish behavior examined as early as Francis (1999), who described it as, "A young, exclusively male, group, and the hedonistic practices popularly associated with such groups (e.g. 'having a laugh', alcohol consumption, disruptive behaviours, objectifying women, and an interest in pastimes and subjects constructed as masculine)" (p. 357). Most commonly recognized in media, marketing, and sporting events, these behaviors, jokes, comments, and language gets ignored as just banter (Nichols, 2018).

Jokes. One of the most common and perceived socially acceptable avenues for males to convey sexist ideology and perceived as the best way to relate to or fit in with other men is through banter. Humor that is utilized with negative connotations towards the female sex or with misogynistic ideas "permeates all spheres of the social world, banter is seen to be a specific form of jocular interaction, with associated styles and strategies, including interaction based upon adopting impolite, offensive and abusive language and tone" (Nichols, 2018, p. 74). When laddish or sexist behavior and comments become ignored and normalized, and men learn this is the sole avenue to belong to a group and promote masculinity, the spread of unhealthy and disrupting perceptions contributes to the already patriarchal society thus, alter beliefs towards victims of sexual violence.

Gender stereotypes and sexism are an intricate ingrained throughout the history of the United States and the world. These stereotypes lay the foundation for rape culture as expectations are impressed upon the sexes with outdated, narrow-minded, and perverse beliefs, which have long been a major contributing factor to violence against women (Ellemers, 2018). By creating expectations, standards, and avenues for power and control, the ingrained beliefs about sexes equate to inequality, removal of humanity for women and other minority groups, and the ability to normalize horrendous assaults towards certain groups (Ellemers, 2018; Nichols, 2018).

Rape Myths

What are Rape Myths?

Rape Myths were first identified in the 1970s to describe a set of biased, misconstrued, false, and sexist beliefs that support sexual violence against women and delineating characteristics of how and why sexual violence occurs (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980; Parratt & Pina, 2017; Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1974; Shaw et al., 2017). Rape myths incorrectly depict what constitutes a "real rape," what victims of sexual assault should act, look, and respond like, and place blame on the female victim, and favor the male offender (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980; Carpenter, 2017; Estrich, 1987; Franiuk et al., 2019; Frohmann, 1991; Gerger, Kley, Bohner, & Siebler, 2007; O'Neal & Hayes, 2019; Shaw et al., 2017). By blaming the victim, the reality of the structural and societal influences is ignored, and women are perceived as the inferior sex (Cowley, 2014; Shaw et al., 2017). Furthermore, rape myths "deny and justify male sexual aggression against women" (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 134), which is the primary purpose (Shaw et al., 2017).

Unfortunately, the historical context and perceptions of rape myths continue to influence legal and law enforcement responses to sexual violence (O'Neal & Hayes, 2019). Rape myths directly contribute to the lack of or low reporting, arrests, and prosecution rates in sexual assault cases (Franiuk et al., 2019). With ingrained beliefs that women are inferior and their sexual violence must adhere to certain expectations, victims will also begin to absorb these beliefs increasing their doubt on whether the sexual assault was real. Furthermore, if they do report, the degree of RMA of law enforcement may

cause revictimization and deter them from continuing with their report (Nitschke et al., 2019; Süssenbach, Albrecht, et al., 2017; Süssenbach, Eyssel, et al., 2017).

Legal v. Extra-Legal Factors

Rape myths are also categorized as *legally relevant factors* or *extra-legal or irrelevant factors* (LaFree, 1981; Tasca et al., 2013). Legal factors are those expected to influence decision-making regarding a sexual assault case. They may include forensic evidence, physical evidence, witness statements, crime seriousness, perpetrator description, victim injuries, and weapon use. (Dhami et al., 2018; Hansen et al., 2015; LaFree, 1981; Morabito et al., 2019). Extra-legal factors are irrelevant characteristics that can be biased depending on the responding LEO. However, they are often included in the report, such as victim credibility, victim character, or victim behavioral characteristics prior to the assault. Most of these extra-legal factors are grounded in rape myths that focus on the victim (Dhami et al., 2018; Hansen et al., 2019; LaFree, 1981; O'Neal et al., 2015; O'Neal, 2019; Wentz & Keimig, 2019).

Within the categories of legal v. extra-legal factors, there are three primary categories examined: *victim-related incidents*, *suspect-related incidents*, and *incident-related incidents* (Dhami et al., 2018). Victim-related incidents mainly focus on the victim's credibility, reputation, and character (Dhami et al., 2018; Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Venema, 2016a). According to Campbell, Menaker, and others (2015), Sex Crimes Investigators indicated that although victim credibility is of secondary importance to physical evidence, they admitted that physical evidence is often nonexistent or scarce; thus, the primary reliance is the victim's credibility. Additionally, Juvenile Sex Crimes

Investigators noted the importance of emotional effect, age, and details provided by the victim when reporting as components of credibility (Campbell, Menaker, et al., 2015).

Suspect-related incidents may also reflect the perpetrator's behavior and prior criminal history, with additional importance placed on status and respectability. There is also an emphasis on the perpetrators' responsibility, blame, substance use, and attractiveness or likeability (to be discussed in further detail). Last, incident-related incidents mostly include events surrounding the sexual assault such as other witnesses, location of the assault, time of day, the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator, and severity of the assault (Hansen et al., 2019; Dhami et al., 2018)

Focal Concerns Perspective. The focal concerns perspective is shown as an influential factor for LEOs, prosecution personnel, and judges. The focal concerns perspective posits that a "perceptual shorthand" is constructed to help make decisions when there is little to no information about the case. Thus, the criminal justice personnel ground their perceptions and decisions on a few primary sexual violence stereotypes associated with the offender, victim, and case characteristics, also known as extra-legal factors or rape myths (Campbell, Menaker, et al., 2015; Hawkins, 1981; O'Neal & Spohn, 2017; Spohn, White, & Tellis, 2014; Steffensmeier et al., 1998).

Most Common Rape Myths

The most commonly believed rape myths, or "*typifications*" of rape (Frohman, 1991; Kaiser et al., 2017; LaFree, 1989; O'Neal & Hayes, 2019; Venema, 2018), are extremely rare in occurrence in sexual assault cases. Despite this, they significantly

influence sexual assault victims' treatment and their case handling (Huemmer et al., 2019; Waterhouse et al., 2016). The following paragraphs will examine these.

Real, Legitimate, or Actual Rape or Rape Script

The label of "real" rape was first identified by Estrich (1987) and conveyed strict guidelines of how sexual violence occurs. Other terms given to this rape myth include: *real* (Burt, 1980; Estrich, 1987; LaFree, 1989), *legitimate* (Venema, 2016b; Venema, 2018), *counter-stereotypical* v. *stereotypical rape* (Stuart et al., 2019), or *rape myth consistent* v. *rape myth inconsistent* (Hockett et al., 2016). A common misconception of sexual violence is that a sexual assault occurs at night by a stranger (Conroy & Scassa, 2016; Estrich, 1987) who is hiding in the bushes or a surprise attack outside or an alley (Levine, 2018; Lundrigan, Dhami, & Agudelo, 2019; O'Neal, 2019). Additionally, the sexual assault involves extreme violence or results in severe injuries and the use of a weapon (Estrich, 1987; O'Neal, 2017; Kaiser et al., 2017; Lundrigan et al., 2019; Morabito et al., 2019). This description applies to little to no assaults; however, this perception is often used to pigeon hole, doubt victim credibility, or blame the victims (Cowley, 2014; Shaw et al., 2017). When a sexual assault diverges from this oversimplified and unlikely scenario, victims often find themselves comparing their sexual assaults against these rape myths and doubting whether a sexual assault occurred (Huemmer et al., 2019), resulting in fewer assaults reported. If they report, the myths influence the police, prosecution, and jury (Hohl & Stanko, 2015).

Waterhouse and others (2016) conducted a comprehensive case analysis in the U.K. for over two years, analyzing 400 sexual violence cases. The authors compared

actual cases against the most common rape myths and found that not one single case held all of the characteristics of the "real rape" stereotype; only two cases involved a weapon and were stranger perpetrators. The only factor that most commonly fit in with these sexual assault cases was that most of them occurred at night (Waterhouse et al., 2016).

"Ideal/Real/Genuine/Legitimate/Credible/Good/Worthy" Victim

Similar to the "real rape" standard is the rape myth of the "perfect victim." Although there are many terms utilized interchangeably to represent this myth the most common include: *ideal* (Venema, 2016a; Venema, 2016b; Venema, 2018), *real* (Estrich, 1987; LaFree, 1980; LaFree, 1981; Franklin & Garza, 2018; Franklin et al., 2019; Stuart et al., 2019; Venema, 2018), *genuine* (LaFree, 1989; Tasca et al., 2013; Venema, 2016a; Venema, 2016b; Venema, 2018), *legitimate* (Tasca et al., 2013; Venema, 2016a), *credible* (Brownmiller, 1975; Franiuk et al., 2019; Frohman, 1991; O'Neal et al., 2015; Venema, 2016b; Wentz & Keimig, 2019), *good* (Frohman, 1991; Hansen et al., 2019; Stuart et al., 2019), or *worthy* (Pica et al., 2017).

Previously, victims of sexual violence could be identified as a "good witness" (Holmstrom & Burgess, 1983), as they are most commonly the only cooperative witness, however, they would not be treated as a victim of crime (Campbell, Menaker, et al., 2015; Dworkin et al., 2016). The victim's testimony is often the only evidence, as the perpetrator may choose to exercise his right to remain silent (Hansen et al., 2015; Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Spohn & Tellis, 2014; St. George & Spohn, 2018; Süssenbach, Eyssel, et al., 2017).

A "genuine" or "good victim" is "someone who, through her appearance and demeanor, can convince a jury to accept her account of 'what happened.' Her testimony is 'consistent,' her behavior 'sincere,' and she cooperates in case preparation" (Frohman, 1991, p. 213). Additionally, strict behavioral standards are required to be considered an ideal victim, where they can be deemed stereotypical or counter-stereotypical (Johnson, 2017; Stuart et al., 2019). They must not have "red flags" (O'Neal, 2019) in their appearance, conduct, credibility, activity during or prior to the assault (Hohl & Stanko, 2015; LaFree, 1981; Venema, 2016a), and be perceived as a "respectable woman" (Ellemers, 2018; Hohl & Stanko, 2015). LEOs and criminal justice personnel have often utilized this rape myth of the ideal victim to guide their investigative efforts and decisions to pursue sexual assault cases (Estrich, 1987; Johnson, 2017; LaFree, 1980, LaFree, 1981; Tasca et al., 2013).

Violent Assault/Use of a Weapon

"An aggravated rape complaint is defined as an allegation of forcible rape that reportedly involved a suspect who used a weapon, multiple suspects, or collateral injury to the victim (see Estrich, 1987)" (O'Neal, 2017, p. 1026). Violent assaults and use of a weapon are another common rape myth that produces expectations of a "real rape" (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016). Estrich's (1987) early work identified that aggravated or severe assaults and use of weapons and force are taken more seriously and are more likely to illicit law enforcement responses versus "simple" rapes (O'Neal, 2019).

Between 1994 and 2010, the U.S. Department of Justice found that only about 11 percent of sexual assault cases involved using a weapon (Wentz & Keimig, 2019), which

is detrimental for sexual assault cases that do not involve a weapon. Lundrigan and others (2019) found that penetrative sexual behaviors, often associated with "use of force" perception, increased the likelihood of conviction by 108% for every penetrative act. Penetrative acts are commonly perceived to align with "real rape" expectations by indicating the degree of severity of the assault. Lundrigan and others also discovered that verbal violence was positively correlated with physical violence and the use of a weapon, which increased convictions rates by approximately 200% (2019).

One possible explanation behind why violent assaults or those that involve other criminal offenses are accepted more by law enforcement is the advantage they give police and the prosecution with evidentiary support in court (Pattavina et al., 2016). As previously mentioned, consent is often at the epicenter to determine whether a sexual assault occurred. Physical injuries from a violent assault are more likely to indicate a lack of consent (Hansen et al., 2019). However, in alcohol-related sexual assaults, the severity of injuries and use of force is lesser due to the victim's partial or total incapacitation, a commonly employed strategy by perpetrators (Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2015).

Victim-Perpetrator Relationship

Another common rape myth that increases suspicion of a sexual assault is the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator (Venema, 2018). The two most common are a stranger or a former, current, or acquaintance relationship. As previously mentioned, stranger rape is categorized as a "real rape" (Conroy & Scassa, 2016; Hansen et al., 2019; Maurer, 2016), whereas significant doubt interplays with a known

perpetrator, or acquaintance rape, despite a majority of sexual assault cases including a known offender (Flatley, 2018; Martin, 2016; Nitschke et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2017).

A sexual assault by an unknown perpetrator, or stranger rape, removes some of the uncertainty regarding consent, as most investigative efforts focus on determining who the perpetrator is (Stuart et al., 2019). Although the victim-perpetrator relationship is not differentiated in the criminal justice system, sexual assault cases with stranger perpetrators receive more attention, are treated more seriously, are more likely to proceed through the criminal justice system, resulting in a conviction, and involve more severe punishments (Lundrigan et al., 2019; Pattavina et al., 2016; Stuart et al., 2019; Tasca et al., 2013). However, Wentz and Keimig (2019) discovered that the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim had no influence on arrest or case referral decisions for sexual assault cases. Additionally, there are higher rates of acquaintance sexual assaults involving alcohol or other substances inciting additional doubt (Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2015).

Intimate Partner Sexual Assault. Although marital rape has been banned within the United States for over 20 years, domestic violence and sexual violence remain a prominent and underreported issue (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016; Kahn et al., 2018; Lankford, 2016; Spohn & Tellis, 2019). Former or current partner sexual violence is categorized as Intimate Partner Sexual Assault (IPSA). Foundational research by Estrich (1987) and LaFree (1981) found that known perpetrator sexual assaults are counter-stereotypical from the "real rape" myth, thus increase suspicions towards victim credibility (Hohl & Stanko, 2015; O'Neal & Spohn, 2017; Paratt & Pina, 2017). Sexual

violence that occurs between former or current intimate partners results in fewer reports.

Potential reasons for the lack of reporting within relationships are victims' fear of

repeated or worsening abuse within the home or misconceptions that only violent assaults

are worth reporting (Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Huemmer et al., 2019; Waterhouse et al.,

2016).

Decreased clarity for what constitutes a sexual assault is predicated by the former

or current relationship's intimacy. One reason why victims have more difficulty labeling

sexual assaults as one within an intimate relationship (Huemmer et al., 2019; Koss et al.,

1988) is due to the integration of an individual's identity and self-worth (James, 1890). A

violation of this can alter the victim's perception and relationship with themselves

(Huemmer et al., 2019). Domestic violence and IPSA result in different victimization

experiences because, more than likely, there is a hostile, controlling, and coercive

environment with repeated incidents (Logan et al., 2015; O'Neal, 2017).

Another potential reason behind the low reporting numbers and disbelief behind

IPSA is a phenomenon titled the "sanitary stereotype" by Finkelhor and Yllo (1985). The

sanitary stereotype incorporates the ignorant stereotype and misconception that domestic

violence and IPSA are trivial and private conflicts within the home (Finkelhor & Yllo,

1985; O'Neal, Tellis, & Spohn, 2015). O'Neal and others (2015) utilized qualitative data

from 47 IPSA cases collected in addition to a more extensive study, to identify the

influence of legal and extra-legal factors (to be covered later) on prosecutorial decisions.

The study results indicated that prosecutors were more likely to file charges if cases did

include other domestic violence factors. The victim was cooperative, and there were no

questions about the victim's credibility. This is substantial because, despite the low reporting rates within domestic violence situations, cases may have more of a chance reaching prosecution, whereas single incidents are less likely to receive legal and criminal justice effort (Hansen et al., 2019; Hohl & Stanko, 2015; O'Neal, Tellis, & Spohn, 2015; O'Neal, 2017).

Sexism and Relationship. Angelone and others (2015) examined blame concerning the victim and perpetrator relationship. Male participants were assessed for their degree of benevolent sexism relating to blame towards sexual assault victims and discovered that those who had higher levels of benevolent sexism had increased blame towards victims when a known offender versus a stranger perpetrates the sexual assault. Additionally, the increased blame by participants with higher levels of benevolent sexism directed towards acquaintance perpetrators resulted from perceiving the victim as behaving inappropriately, thus causing or influencing the assault. Benevolent sexist beliefs are often grounded in gender stereotypes about how women should act in relationships, and when women act outside of these expected norms, they are then blamed for any unfortunate incidents that may occur (Angelone et al., 2015; Ellemers, 2018; Franiuk et al., 2019).

Additionally, Angelone and others (2015) measured participants' proclivity to rape in relation to hostile sexism. Results indicated that participants with higher levels of hostile sexism beliefs had increased rape proclivity in acquaintance versus stranger sexual assaults. These results confirm the degree of acceptance for hostile sexist attitudes towards interpersonal violence, while also directing amplified hostile perceptions towards

women (Angelone et al., 2015; Franiuk et al., 2019; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995). This study also supports the notion that hostile sexism and rape proclivity influence the perverse belief that women want to have sex but pretend not to, or that women want sexual violence, which is consistent with adversarial beliefs regarding male and female sexual relationships (Angelone et al., 2015; Logan et al., 2015).

Thus, it is crucial for law enforcement, victim advocacy groups, or any personnel working with sexual assault victims to be cognizant of the situational factors surrounding sexual violence within a home. Since most IPSA cases include domestic violence and overly controlling environments, where many victims have a high risk of additional abuse, limited ability to seek and continue with social services, and have ingrained fear for their safety and that of their children. Often IPSA victims may miss follow-up interviews, telephone calls, or medical appointments due to denied access by the perpetrator, causing law enforcement to doubt the legitimacy of the report. Law enforcement must consider the unique circumstances, and encounters must be taken with caution and sensitivity when interacting with IPSA victims (Angelone et al., 2015; Logan et al., 2015).

Victim and Perpetrator Behavior

Victim and perpetrator behavior are incorporated within rape myths often to reduce blame upon the perpetrator and increase blame towards the victim (Angelone et al., 2015; Hockett et al., 2015). Dependent on the victim or perpetrator behavior, substance use, status, or emotional effect can significantly impact perceptions (Campbell, Menaker, et al., 2015; Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016; Huemmer et al., 2019; Wrede & Ask,

2015). More specifically, if the victims' behavior before, during, and after a sexual assault aligns with stereotypes and rape myths, less blame and doubt are directed towards them, and more towards the perpetrator. However, suppose a victim's behavior before, during, and after contradicting rape myths. In that case, they are less likely to be believed, receive support, and have a case that successfully progresses through the criminal justice system (Dhami et al., 2018; Franiuk et al., 2019).

Victim Behavior. A frequent rape myth surrounding victim behavior during a sexual assault is whether or not the victim physically and verbally resisted or fought back, and if they immediately reported to law enforcement (Bongiorno et al., 2016; Conroy & Scassa, 2016; Estrich, 1987; Hockett et al., 2016; Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Stuart et al., 2019; Venema, 2018). Additionally, a common phrase surrounding this rape myth is that "any healthy woman can successfully resist a rapist if she wanted to" (Burt, 1980, p. 22). This rape myth blames the victim for not protecting their sanctity as "sexual gatekeepers" (Stuart et al., 2019; Ullman, 2014), and ultimately creates doubt that they secretly wanted it. Victims who resist and do not get away have less blame than those who did not try at all. A woman who does fight back and gets away is perceived as valiant and untainted (Ullman, 2014). Female victims are often blamed more if they go to the perpetrators home, as they are perceived as *wanting it*, *asking for it*, or *provoking the perpetrator* (Burt, 1980; Sommer, Reynolds, & Kehn, 2016) (Sommer et al., 2016).

It is pertinent to comprehend that, as previously mentioned, a traumatic experience can cause a person to fight, flight, or freeze, with freeze being the most common in sexual assault cases. A victim's "ability" to fight a perpetrator is not

necessarily a cognitive choice, but an instinctive reaction by the body (Marx et al., 2008; Preston, 2016). Additionally, there continues to be controversy on whether women should fight back as this can also lead to more severe attacks or injuries (O'Neal & Kaiser, 2015).

O'Neal and Kaiser (2015) identified in their research the importance for women to have the decision to choose how to respond if a sexual assault occurs by providing research on sexual assault resistance strategies. Although these researchers understand that reactions can change in a moment of trauma, they believe that educating the public can provide awareness about sexual assault and create empowered individuals. The study results indicated that although some preventative strategies can be ineffective at reducing collateral injury, they can diminish the likelihood of rape completion (O'Neal & Kaiser, 2015).

Emotional Victim Effect. An additional rape myth derived from victim behavior stereotypes is the concept of the "emotional victim effect" or (EVE). Victims of sexual violence are expected to exude extreme distress, sadness, and crying (Campbell, Menaker, et al., 2015; Conroy & Scassa, 2016; Franiuk et al., 2019; Stuart et al., 2019; Wrede & Ask, 2015). Ultimately, they are stereotyped to exude more negative emotions than other crime victims (Wrede & Ask, 2015).

Nitschke and others (2019) meta-analysis on the emotional victim effect of female sexual assault victims and the influence on victim credibility found that the more distressed a victim was, was labeled as more credible than the other victim who controlled her emotions, with a moderate effect size. Results applied to both a videotaped

and written victim statement. Also, Nitschke and others (2019) considered participants'
professional groups as either prospective jurors or criminal justice personnel and found
no difference in credibility judgments for emotional versus controlled victims. This
indicates that despite a professional background with the likelihood of training and
encounters with sexual assault victims, law enforcement personnel were still influenced
by this stereotype (Campbell, Menaker, et al., 2015; Conroy & Scassa, 2016; Miller,
2018; Rachlinski & Wistrich, 2017; Nitschke et al., 2019).

Men v. Women Emotional Effect Myths. Rape myths surrounding emotional
expectations delineate between male and female victims. Wrede and Ask (2015)
examined participants' perceptions towards victims of crimes' emotional displays in
hypothetical vignettes. Overall female victims were stereotyped to display anxiety, dear,
guilt, shame, and sadness versus men who "should" display hatred and anger. These
results show that varying expectations can reflect beliefs about men versus women's
ability to cope with a traumatic event. Since anger and confidence are assumed to be
more masculine than sadness or fear, high-status attributions are often identified with
men, and thus, perceived as their ability to cope better than women. Additionally, women
who express more "masculine" emotions are identified as counter-stereotypical and less
credible, and vice versa, for men who express sadness or fear (Wrede & Ask, 2015).

Another study by Bohner and Schapansky (2018) examined differences in
participant gender on victims' emotional effects and found that women who endorsed
rape myths at high levels labeled more distressed victims as more credible. However,
women with low rape endorsement did not alter their perceptions of credibility,

dependent on victim emotional displays. Male participants did not show variations in credibility dependent on victims' emotional effect or level of rape myth endorsement (Bohner & Schapansky, 2018; Nitschke et al., 2019).

Effect of Trauma on Emotions. Trauma can have varying effects on victims of sexual violence that can often cause them to appear counter-stereotypical to rape myths surrounding victim behavior and emotions. It is crucial to identity some of these effects refute rape myths that surround emotions. Some common effects of trauma on emotion may result in a victim avoiding eye contact, being emotionally number, unresponsive, or have a flat affect, express anger, and have difficulty recalling the assault or switch topics frequently. Additionally, behavioral patterns may become disrupted, causing victims to withdraw, distrust others, and restrict their emotional displays (Bohner & Schapansky, 2018; Franklin et al., 2019; Nitschke et al., 2019).

Due to the neurobiological responses to trauma, the disjointed recollection of events before, during, and after a sexual assault can increase skepticism by LEOs. A typical "solution" by law enforcement is to interview the victim multiple times during the day or weeks following, attempting to identify the account's disparities. However, each interview can result in secondary victimization and escalate PTSD symptoms, resulting in a worsened recall of the events (Campbell, Menaker, et al., 2015; Venema et al., 2019). Despite the research that shows memory inconsistencies are a regular occurrence of the brain and should not be utilized for truth evaluation, LEOs commonly disbelieve victims who have disrupted recall of the sexual assault (Hohl & Stanko, 2015).

Victim Cooperation. Victim cooperation is also judged by the rape myths that all sexual assault victims should immediately report their attack to law enforcement, seek supportive services (Franiuk et al., 2019; Kaiser et al., 2017; Meeker, O'Neal, & Hayes, 2019), and be fully cooperative throughout the entire process (Hansen et al., 2015; O'Neal & Hayes, 2019). Due to the difficulty surrounding sexual assault and IPSA cases, often involving only the victim and perpetrator (Hansen et al., 2015; Hohl & Stanko, 2015: Spohn & Tellis, 2014; St. George & Spohn, 2018), LEOs due rely heavily upon the victims' cooperation. Prior research has shown that victim cooperation influences the outcome of a case such as an arrest and charging decisions (Hansen et al., 2015; Meeker et al., 2019; O'Neal et al., 2015; O'Neal & Spohn, 2016; O'Neal, 2017; Spohn & Tellis, 2014; Spohn & Tellis, 2019).

A victim's unwillingness to cooperate is one of the strongest predictors that influence a prosecutor's decision to file charges, which can be the ultimate cause of case attrition (to be discussed later). Research has also shown that prosecutors often reject sexual assault cases with sufficient evidence that would likely lead to conviction because of a lack of victim involvement. Ultimately, victims with sexual assaults that align with "real rape" stereotypes are more likely to report and cooperate with law enforcement, further supporting perceptions that rape myths are real and most common, while those counter-stereotypical remain unreported (Estrich, 1987; Hockett et al., 2016; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; McKimmie, Masser, et al., 2014; St. George & Spohn, 2018).

However, more importantly, before obtaining cooperation, victims must feel comfortable and trust the criminal justice system; however, they are influenced by the

initial interactions with the investigating officers. Aforementioned, there is a high likelihood that revictimization will occur during a victim's interaction with law enforcement due to officers' interrogative versus investigative nature (to be discussed later) (Carpenter, 2017; Rich, 2019; St. George & Spohn, 2018). Additionally, cooperation or full disclosure of details may be affected by the victims' behavior surrounding the sexual assault, creating fear or hesitancy for reporting (Campbell, Menaker, et al., 2015; Franklin et al., 2019; LaFree, 1981). Some behaviors include substance use, prostitution, or other criminal activity (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016; Campbell, Menaker, et al., 2015; Horan & Beauregard, 2018; Menaker & Franklin, 2015).

Victim Substance Use. Victim substance is a common avenue for supplementing rape myths surrounding victim behavior because it redirects the blame from the perpetrator to the victim (Campbell, Menaker, et al., 2015; Huemmer et al., 2019; LaFree, 1985; Maurer, 2016; Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2015; Qi et al., 2016). As previously mentioned, substance use, whether alcohol or drugs, decreases the likelihood of reporting a sexual assault because of the counter-stereotypical nature that a lack of force may have been utilized to complete the assault due to intoxication (Maurer, 2016; Peter- Hagene & Ullman, 2015).

Furthermore, substance use generates increased suspicion surrounding the victim's intentions. Common rape myths regarding substance use include: *they should have known better*, *female victims have increased sexual desire on substances and led the perpetrator on*, *they are responsible for their behavior*, and *if a woman takes risks, such*

as using substances, she should expect to be assaulted (Johnson et al., 2016; Pica et al., 2017; Ullman et al., 2017; Venema, 2018). Victim intoxication is also a common factor utilized to discontinue a sexual assault case through the criminal justice system due to disbelief surrounding consent and false allegations (Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Paratt & Pina, 2017; Venema, 2018). A change in societal perceptions, and training on victim sensitivity for law enforcement, is critical to alter how alcohol is utilized, often a tool by perpetrators to muddy the clarification surrounding consent (Smith et al., 2016; Ullman, 2014).

Perpetrator Behavior. Rape myths influence perpetrators' perceptions of sexual violence as well. For example, if a perpetrator labels a sexual assault as consensual sex and is supported by cultural norms, they will most likely have little to no fear of arrest or conviction (Maurer, 2016). Rape myths can also influence how seemingly insignificant factors can influence credibility perceptions of a perpetrator compared to the victim based on the behavior before the sexual assault.

Research by Lynch and others (2017) examined participants perceptions of the defendant (perpetrator) on credibility, blame, and guilt, dependent on their high versus low desirability (attractiveness) and the cost of the date prior to the assault ($175 v. $30), utilizing date rape trial summaries. Results showed that male participants viewed a desirable defendant as more credible when he paid for an inexpensive date. In contrast, women viewed a desirable defendant as more credible when the date was expensive but was unaffected by the inexpensive date cost. Sexual violence surrounding date stereotypes are complicated but often viewed differently depending on certain factors.

The perpetrator's behaviors, such as the cost spent on a date, often lead to misconstrued notions that some victims may be expected to have sex, and the defendant deserved to have sex, which increased blame towards the victim (Lynch et al., 2017).

As found in early research, an individual's perceived attractiveness increases participants views of favorable traits more than unattractive individuals, also commonly known as the "halo effect" (to be discussed in the following) (Franiuk et al., 2019; Lynch et al., 2017; Miller, 1970; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). Lynch and others (2017) also found that male participants perceived victims who had went out with more attractive males as wanting sex, reinforcing the rape myth that "she wanted it." Additionally, both male and female participants believed that the more attractive defendant deserved sex following the date and blamed the victim more. The perpetrator's physical appeal or status characteristics that deter blame towards the victim have been an ongoing issue observed in research and media (Koren, 2016; Lynch et al., 2017).

Perpetrator Status. Social status is a term that can be applied to a variety of individuals, dependent on the context and who is making the assessment (Pica et al., 2017), such as socioeconomic status as a result of occupation or belonging to specific organizations (Franiuk et al., 2019; Lynch et al., 2017; Pica et al., 2017). Most often, a high-status occupation perpetrator includes celebrities, professional athletes, or those who are often in the media. The "Me Too" movement, founded in 2006, which exploded in 2017 by Tarana Burke, encouraged victims everywhere to break their silence and speak up against their perpetrators. "Me Too" unearthed famous personalities as perpetrators of

sexual violence and harassment such as Bill Cosby, Harvey Weinstein, Louis C. K., and many other politicians, actors, and writers (Huemmer et al., 2019; Zacharek et al., 2017).

Celebrities or extremely wealthy perpetrators can often evade their criminal acts due to their power, monetary logistics, and status. When they are prosecuted, they are often treated with more leniency; in contrast, the victims are threatened, disbelieved, or removed from their professions. Another group of perpetrators who can often elude serious sexual violence consequences is college athletes (Koren, 2016; Lynch et al., 2017: McCray, 2015).

The infamous case of Brock Turner, who was sentenced to just six months, with three years of probation, but only ended up serving three months in jail in 2016 (Koren, 2016). Franiuk and others (2019) identified male athletes as a high-risk group for sexual violence, and elite athletes as likely to be arrested for sexual assault but not convicted (Carey et al., 2015; McCray, 2015). According to Pica et al. (2017), "the crime of sexual assault is based on the understanding of the individual, community, and ultimately, the nation. It is possible that North American cultures may also be more "forgiving" of crimes that occur in which the defendant is well known in their community, and additionally in the context of alcohol consumption (e.g., fraternity parties on University campuses)" (p. 16).

Socioeconomic Status. Additionally, rape myths of socioeconomic status (SES) of the perpetrator and the victim may also influence blame, credibility, and jury perceptions surrounding a sexual assault. Early research identified that perpetrators in higher SES were perceived as less blameworthy (Gleason & Harris, 1976; Osborne &

Rappaport, 1985). Low SES perpetrators are judged to be more likely to repeat the crime (Franiuk et al., 2019; Pica et al., 2017). Last, victims of low SES or marginalized groups are blamed more due to perceived beliefs that their high-risk lifestyle deduces responsibility (Horan & Beauregard, 2018; Rich, 2019).

Status Effects. As previously mentioned, the "Halo Effect" is often observed in high profile cases when a person has a perceived upstanding character or is judged by their attractiveness, and the halo creates a buffer for adverse trait inferences. Individuals' perceptions of an inherently good versus bad person can be skewed due to their attractiveness (Miller, 1970; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977). Additionally, Pica and others (2017) identified the "shield effect" versus the "status liability effect." The "shield effect" is when a perpetrator receives more leniency for a crime committed due to their famous or high-status, where it acts as a shield. The "status liability effect" occurs when a high-status perpetrator is treated more harshly for their criminal offenses; because of their position, these high-status perpetrators are held to higher standards, and consequences may be more severe. Both of these effects

Perpetrator Substance Use. Perpetrator substance use is a typical rape myth utilized to reduce the perpetrator's responsibility for sexual assault. Qi and others (2016) found that whether the perpetrator was intoxicated from alcohol or marijuana, less blame was directed towards them, which portrays a double standard between offenders and victims. As previously mentioned, victims who consumed substances before the assault are often blamed more for their assaults (Maurer, 2016; Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2015; Qi et al., 2016). Additionally, it should be noted that Peter-Hagene and Ullman (2015)

found that almost 40 percent of perpetrators who were categorized in the most violent groups had previously been drinking prior to the assault, and will often utilize more violence if the victim is not utilizing substances. Also, perpetrators in the most violent groups had higher rates of stranger assaults, whereas intoxicated perpetrators had the highest percentage of known-or acquaintance sexual assaults (Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2015).

Other Rape Myths

In addition to the many rape myths, there continues to be a growing list of myths and stereotypes that influence sexual violence cases. The rape myth that *most sexual assaults are false allegation*s (Venema, 2018) entails that *women often lie due to regretful sex*, *they got caught cheating*, or *adolescents who do not want their parents to find out* (Phipps et al., 2018; Levine, 2018; Smith et al., 2016). Also, recanting a sexual assault report often indicates to law enforcement that the sexual assault was a lie, despite considering how the victim was treated during the reporting process (Levine, 2018; Sleath & Bull, 2015; Smith et al., 2016). Unfortunately, these are commonly utilized by outside parties or the criminal justice system to blame the victim, forcing them to recant and drop the case (Hohl & Stanko, 2015), where most law enforcement estimates false cases to be significantly higher than they are (Rich, 2019). Interestingly, the idea of false allegations in sexual assault is almost always exclusively applied to sexual violence cases and not other criminal offenses (Rowe & Macauley, 2019).

Additional rape myths that further indicate that: *women with multiple sexual assaults cannot be trusted* (Burt, 1980; Conroy & Scassa, 2016; Sommer et al., 2016),

women want, enjoy, or deserve to be raped (Burt, 1980; O'Neal, 2019; Pica et al., 2017;

Sommer et al., 2016), *rape is just unwanted sex and not a crime* (O'Neal, 2019;

Weitzman & Mallory, 2019), *married women cannot be raped/rape cannot occur in a

marriage* (Logan et al., 2015; O'Neal, 2019), *victims are just playing hard to get* (Levine,

2018; Weitzman & Mallory, 2019), *rape is rare* or *is only committed by strangers, the

lower socioeconomic status individuals, or minorities* (Holland et al., 2020; O'Neal,

2019; Pattavina et al., 2016), *disbelieve sexual assaults with multiple assailants, and

consider them "party rapes"* (LaFree, 1981; Lundrigan et al., 2019), and *victims are

women who dress provocatively or have a long history of prior sexual experiences*

(Bernard et al., 2015; Johnson et al., 2016; LaFree, 1985; O'Neal, 2019; Stuart et al.,

2019).

These rape myths reduce sexual violence to an unrealistic stereotypical

expectation for the victim, perpetrator, and the factors surrounding the assault, which

often increase blame towards the victim (Burt, 1980; Franiuk et al., 2019). Some rape

myths also have extreme opposing standards, which make it impossible for the assault to

be "ideal," such as *sexual violence is harmless* versus *all rape is exceptionally violent* and

men cannot control their sexual urges versus *only deviant men rape* (Krahé, 1991;

O'Neal, 2019). Rape myths, although most commonly directed towards a female victim

and male perpetrator, also affect male victims and stereotype men in general.

Rape Myths Directed Towards Men

Rape myths that are specific towards men, similar to female victims, often cause

most of the blame and responsibility for male victims. Often a result of gender

stereotypes of hypermasculinity and toughness, male victims are perceived as counter-stereotypical to the "average" man (Artime et al., 2014). Men can be sexually assaulted by either a male or female perpetrator; however, the latter group is often blamed and disbelieved (Pica et al., 2017; Sommer et al., 2016). Victim blame towards male victims is derived from the rape myths that *men cannot be raped* (Groth & Burgess, 1980; Levine, 2018; Pica et al., 2017), *men should be able to fight off an attacker* (Artime et al., 2014; Paratt & Pina, 2017), *only homosexual men can be raped* (male perpetrator) (Artime et al., 2014), *men always want sex, so it is impossible to be raped by a female perpetrator* (Artime et al., 2014; Hust et al., 2017; Kahn et al., 2018; Lynch et al., 2017; Sommer et al., 2016), and *if men are sexually assaulted, there are emotional expectations of being upset versus not showing too much distress* (Artime et al., 2014).

Research by Sommer and others (2016) indicated that potential jury participants were more likely to suggest shorter sentences and less likely to convict female perpetrators. These rape myths cause additional difficulty for male sexual assault survivors' identity and sexuality. Male sexual assault victims who acknowledge their victimization may also begin to doubt their masculinity. However, sexual abuse as a child may be more acceptable due to the stereotype that children or weaker and less able to fight off the perpetrator (Artime et al., 2014). Artime and others (2014) found that physical force was a common factor for males in acknowledging their sexual assaults both as children and adults, and less likely to acknowledge if the perpetrator was female. These results show that male victims' understanding and labeling of sexual violence can depend on their age, the sex of the perpetrator, and their acceptance of rape myths

(Artime et al., 2014). Rape myths are unrealistic stereotypes that can impact how victims of sexual violence are treated and how, or if, their cases are processed through the criminal justice system. However, rape myths are only damaging if they are believed and endorsed, and to what degree this acceptance influences behavior.

Rape Myth Acceptance (RMA)

The degree in which an individual embraces rape myths can also be known as RMA and can influence judgments operating as heuristic cues within information processing. The damaging effects of rape myths are dependent on the characteristics of the victim, perpetrator, and sexual assault. More specifically, how each aligns or are counter-stereotypical with the myths and then ultimately dependent on the level of RMA in the perceiver (Angelone et al., 2015; Estrich, 1987; Hockett et al., 2016); Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; McKimmie, Masser et al., 2014. Prior research has shown that those who endorse rape myths are more likely to blame the victims, judge them as less credible (Bohner & Schapansky, 2018; Nitschke et al., 2018), and endorse trauma misconceptions (Franklin et al., 2019). Ultimately, indicating that rape myths are supported through various cognitive processes that are utilized to assist in decision-making regarding sexual assault legitimacy (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Johnson et al., 2016; Krahé, 2016; Nitschke et al., 2019).

Cognitive Functioning and RMA

Cognitive functioning can influence the acceptance of rape myths due to the brain's innate design to observe, obtain, and process information quickly. Although the brain's processing helps to better navigate the environment utilizing as little mental strain

as possible, this often means that information is so quickly absorbed and categorized that unnoticeable beliefs seep through that may influence behavior (Ferguson & Zayas, 2009; Hohl & Stanko, 2015). Although beliefs and attitudes may not directly determine one's behavior, they are "proximal determinants of behavior and constitute the evaluative information that is necessary to initiate action" (Elliott et al., 2014, p. 669).

Automatic Evaluation. Before creating schemata, *automatic evaluation* occurs as an intuitive process that is adaptable and alters behavior to reduce threats and increase rewards within one's environment. The formation of memories and conditioned learning, especially the development of fear, occurs within the amygdala and is significantly relevant to automatic evaluation as these conditions are learned. Even within a reasonably safe environment, the ability to unintentionally and rapidly evaluate what is observed in an effortless manner assists in the reduced utilization of cognitive resources (Ferguson & Zayas, 2009), also known as a *heuristic*. A heuristic is a cognitive shortcut that allows for quick decision-making or problem-solving that requires little mental effort (Dinos et al., 2015; Hohl & Stanko, 2015). This evaluative process can co-occur with other actions; however, due to this process's rapid response, prior research has shown how people will often assess stimuli or situation differently if they are given more time and attention (Ferguson & Zayas, 2009).

Schema. *Schemata* are the categorization of information into comprehended knowledge that occurs following an experience or observation. A *schema* (singular) can represent anything learned, such as people, places, things, situations, environments, or relationships the individual has with either of those (Johnson et al., 2016). Schemata are

established by observing and interacting with a stimulus and explaining behaviors,

effects, and what is being observed (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Johnson et al., 2016).

Additionally, when information is ambiguous or unidentifiable, people rely more heavily

upon schematic processing to fill in the gaps with information that supports already

stored information, despite having little to no prior experience (Bohner & Schapansky,

2018). Everyone utilizes schematic processing and cognitive heuristics, even

professionals such as police, judges, and prosecutors, to make assessments and decisions,

but are influenced by stereotypes and beliefs (Hohl & Stanko, 2015).

How RMA Influences Sexual Assault Cases

Multiple studies have shown the prevalence of RMA on varying populations, such

as potential jurors, college students, LEOs, prosecutors, and victims themselves, and the

effects of these stereotypes on real-life cases, hypothetical situations, and on case

processing. The importance of these studies identifies the degree of RMA and how they

would assess victim blame, credibility, or make decisions on a case (Hockett et al., 2016;

Nitschke et al., 2018; Waterhouse et al., 2016; Sleath & Bull, 2015).

Sleath and Bull (2015) conducted a systematic review of studies published

between 2000 and 2016 to examine LEOs' perceptions of victim blame, credibility, and

RMA. Additionally, the authors identified the impact of such beliefs upon investigations

and decision-making in sexual assault cases. Results of the compilation showed that

males blamed the victims more, with lower perceptions of credibility, and had higher

levels of RMA than females (Sleath & Bull, 2015), which supports prior research as well

(Golding et al., 2016; Hockett et al., 2016; McKimmie, Masser et al., 2014).

However, the studies that assessed LEOs showed contradictory results where some indicated they had higher rates of RMA in comparison with students, non-LE, and other female police officers (Dhami et al., 2018; Hohl & Stanko, 2015; O'Neal, 2017; Sleath & Bull, 2015). Long (2018) examined RMA and police perceptions through the inquiry of victim advocates, who reiterated the influence of victim blaming and lack of knowledge of sexual assault in the officers. Despite the varying results, identifying the level of RMA in law enforcement is crucial and can be more problematic due to their essential roles as often the first contacts with victims of sexual violence that sets the tone for the remainder of the case processing (Sleath & Bull, 2015). "The problem is not that police officers hold more pervasive rape myth-related views of victims; the issue is that the beliefs of officers—despite their position of authority—mirror those of the general public…Research examining police officer rape myth acceptance is scarce" (O'Neal, 2017, p. 1017).

Justice Gaps in Sexual Assault Cases

According to the Bureau of Justice (2017), estimates that there were 320,000 victims of sexual violence over the age of 12 in 2016, but less than 2300 will produce felony convictions (RAINN, 2018). These statistics confirm the prodigious amounts of research that, although sexual assaults are the most devastating personal crimes (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016), are the least reported crimes and have even fewer cases processed. There are several reasons supported by research for the incongruence in the prevalence of sexual violence, lack of reporting, and case attrition, known as "justice

gaps" (Franiuk et al., 2019; Nitschke et al., 2019; Meeker et al., 2019; Sleath & Bull, 2017; Venema 2016b). Some of those reasons are discussed here.

Sexual assault cases must go through several steps to hopefully result in a conviction; however, this is not the likely outcome. The most common steps include 1) the victim reporting the sexual assault to law enforcement, 2) LEOs must choose to investigate the case, and 3) charge the perpetrator. Then the prosecutor must accept and proceed with the case, after which the case continues through the court with a judge and jury, who must find the perpetrator guilty. At each point of this process, the degree of RMA, either subconsciously or consciously, comes into play with a majority of focus on the victim's credibility (Nitschke et al., 2019; St. George & Spohn, 2018).

Case Attrition

Case attrition is the process at which a case may continue through or drop out of the criminal justice system due to various reasons and at varying points of time (Carpenter, 2017; Rumney et al., 2019). A case can be dropped by either the victim, the police, or the prosecution (Hansen et al., 2015; Hohl and Stanko 2015). There are six points in sexual assault cases, as identified by Carpenter (2017) when a case is withdrawn, the first point is whether or not the victim chooses to report. Secondly, if the victim does report the two succeeding points of potential attrition occur while the case is in the hands of law enforcement. The cases are labeled as "unfounded" due to the inability to identify a crime occurred or "cleared." A fourth possibility of case attrition is whether or not the prosecutor chooses to accept the case, also known as in the FBI's National Incident Based Reporting Program (NIBRS) as "prosecutorial decline (for other

than lack of probable cause)" (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2008a; (Pattavina et al., 2016). The fifth and sixth points occur during trial proceedings. Potential acquittals may occur during the trial (fifth attrition point), followed by the sentencing phase, if the perpetrator gets no jail time (sixth attrition point) (Carpenter, 2017; Hohl and Stanko 2015; Rumney et al., 2019).

Case Clearing

A law enforcement agency's decision to clear the case occurs in two ways, *cleared by arrest* or is *cleared by exceptional means.* Cleared by arrest begins the process through the criminal justice system, leading to the prosecutor, and possibly a court trial (Carpenter, 2017; Pattavina et al., 2016). Exceptional means was first established as an acceptable classification for closing a case by the Federal Bureau of Investigations Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) program in 1929. Cleared by exception means is when the agency, for some reason, cannot make an arrest, despite knowing the perpetrator's identity and location. This may occur due to a lack of victim cooperation, jurisdiction, or perpetrator death (Carpenter, 2017; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2004; Hansen et al., 2015; Pattavina et al., 2016). Law enforcement agencies that participate in the UCR program can utilize case clearing designations; however, it is common for agencies reporting their statistics to combine both types of "cleared cases," giving the community a false impression that more sexual assault cases are solved or prosecuted (Pattavina et al., 2016).

Sexual Assault Victims Encounters with the Criminal Justice System

The criminal justice system is a confusing, often biased, and challenging to maneuver, especially for those who have little to no experience. Furthermore, a victim of crime who may experience ongoing trauma symptoms will have additional challenges throughout the process without the proper support (Conroy & Scassa, 2016; Preston, 2016; Rich, 2019; Risan et al., 2016). All criminal justice personnel must be wary of the trauma and stereotypes (rape myths) that ensue sexual violence and understand their power for case progression. Prior research has demonstrated the influence that LEOs have on sexual assault cases. All three groups are discussed here, LEOs, prosecutors, and the court personnel: juries and judges, as all play a crucial role in sexual assault case processing (Kerstetter, 1990; Spohn, White, & Tellis, 2014; Venema, 2018).

Law Enforcement Officers

LEOs are labeled as the gatekeepers of the criminal justice system or the gateways to justice (Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Kerstetter, 1990; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990; LaFree, 1989). They take the initial report, determine the credibility of the victim and the sexual assault report, and then decide the degree of investigative effort; which ultimately influences the decision to arrest, press charges, and if the case is forwarded to the prosecution (Franiuk et al., 2019; Franklin et al., 2019; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990; O'Neal & Spohn, 2017; Pattavina et al., 2016; Spohn, & Tellis, 2019; Spohn, 2020). Additionally, the degree to which officers hold sexual assault stereotypes can influence the interactions with victims and case attrition (Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990; Spohn et al., 2014; Venema, 2018).

Prior research has shown that during sexual assault case processing, the length of time a case is with law enforcement produces the highest rates of case attrition (Carpenter, 2017; Meeker et al., 2019; O'Neal & Hayes, 2019; Sleath & Bull, 2017); despite them stressing the seriousness of sexual assault (Lorenz & Maskaly, 2018). McMillan (2018) offered six typologies that influence disbelief of sexual assault cases, including (a) malicious allegations, (b) regretful encounters, (c) does not add up or partial truths, (d) mental health problems, (e) withdrawal, and (f) amnesia. Additional research indicates the importance placed on certain factors that influence case outcomes such as characterological and investigatory blame, and victims' characteristics (sex, race, age, and the number of perpetrators). These are further influenced by the police officers' beliefs and efforts (Shaw et al., 2016). Sleath and Bull (2017) conducted a systematic review from 2000 to 2016, resulting in 24 articles indicating that victim characteristics, such as emotions and substance abuse, played a significant role in officers' perceptions of victim credibility and blame.

Most likely, a victim will not choose which LEO they report to or which investigators will work their case (Spohn & Tellis, 2014). thus, if a victim is immediately met with an untrained LEO, a lack of privacy, RMA, or disbelief or distrust, LEOs may or may not be intentionally discouraging the victim from cooperating while also revictimizing them (Carpenter, 2017; Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Johnson, 2017; Kaiser et al., 2017; Mennicke et al., 2014; O'Neal, 2019; Pattavina et al., 2016; Rich, 2019; St. George & Spohn, 2018). As previously mentioned, secondary victimization is a common occurrence when sexual assault victims report or disclose the offenses, despite the

relationship, due to misconstrued understandings of sexual violence within rape culture, supported by rape myths (Venema et al., 2019).

Victims' first interactions with law enforcement are essential as they set the tone for victim cooperation (Hansen et al., 2015; Henninger et al., 2019; O'Neal, 2019). Sexual assault victims can identify these subtle messages regarding the importance of their assault and worthiness as a person through their interactions with these officers and are more likely to withdraw their report (Kaiser et al., 2017; O'Neal, 2017; Tyler, 1989). Ultimately, the withdraw and seemingly lack of cooperation from the victims in response to the negative interactions with the criminal justice system creates a "negative feedback loop" or "confirmation bias," which further influences LEOs to be skeptical, defensive, and confrontational, as victims feel pressured to respond with assumptions of what they think the officers want to hear (Rich, 2019).

Kerstetter and Van Winkle (1990) examined LEOs' beliefs and attitudes regarding sexual assault victims. They found that negative interactions will influence a victim's decision to continue with their case or withdrawal. The degree of RMA extends to the victim's willingness to cooperate and pursue the case and how the police reports are written, how the case is presented to the prosecution, and the level of investigative effort delineated to that case. Ultimately, despite LEOs' acknowledgment of their influence or level of RMA, and despite potential good intentions, they are incredibly formative in this process (Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990; Shaw et al., 2017; Spohn, White, & Tellis, 2014; Venema, 2018).

Police Culture

Just as society fosters "rape culture," different professions can endorse their own cultures that support and invite certain types of characteristics and personas, while also adopting greater societal norms such as rape myths (Kaiser et al., 2017; O'Neal, 2019). Law enforcement culture, similar to military and other first responder careers, is no different. It requires strenuous, para-military training, holds positions of authority, and the willingness to sacrifice their own lives for others. Beginning in the 1960's research on law enforcement culture (Banton 1964; Skolnick 1966; Wilson 1969; Westley 1970; Van Maanen 1974) has identified certain traits, referred to as the "blue curtain" (Westley 1970), "blue wall of silence" (Bittner 1970), or "thin blue line" (Campeau, 2015). These traits create a "brotherhood" environment of LEOs as a result of "the isolating and threatening nature of the work…as well as the constant pressure to be productive in what are often uncertain circumstances" (Campeau, 2015, p. 3).

From early on, police culture revolved around specific core characteristics such as conservative, mission-oriented, isolated, masculine, solidarity, pessimistic, impulsive, authoritative, and skeptical (Campeau, 2015; Reiner, 1985; Rich, 2019), that drive the profession and behavior of those within. Despite the changes throughout the decades of incorporating more female officers and changes to recognition and striving for equality between the sexes, law enforcement predominantly remains a male-dominated profession (Ellemers, 2018; Spencer et al., 2018). This could be a potential cue to why sexual assault victims, predominantly female, often have such difficulty and experience mistreatment by officers (predominantly male). However, it is essential to note that when examining a culture, it is crucial to assess how, when, and where cultural norms and resources are in

motion versus generalizing overarching attributes or typologies of individuals over entire groups (Campeau, 2015).

Masculinity is one of the most common stereotypes for any male-dominated organization, including athletic organizations and fraternities, who also have the highest levels of rape-supportive and sexually aggressive behavior (Franiuk et al., 2019; Martin, 2016; McCray, 2015). Similarly, law enforcement's environment provides strict guidelines, rules, and norms that govern behavior and agency protocol when interacting with non-LE. Additionally, as most law enforcement duties include arresting criminals versus supporting victims, this can result in hegemonic masculinity that fosters aggression, masculinity, and a lack of empathy (Mennicke et al., 2014; Rich, 2019; Smith et al., 2016).

Probably, the deep-seated notion that LEOs are expected to act in such a way further endorses a mindset of "us versus them" (Campeau, 2015), with a focus on interrogative behaviors versus investigative, and reliance on perceived credibility than helping sexual assault victims. Although these techniques and training are beneficial for locating and charging perpetrators, it is not successful in sexual violence cases (Lorenz & Maskaly, 2018; O'Neal, 2019).

"Police Hunch." The police hunch is a term commonly utilized to describe a "gut feeling" or perceived intuition that LEOs (prosecutors, and judges) may have regarding a case, victim, or perpetrator (Heumann et al., 2019). However, intuitive thinking most often refers to an automatic and unconscious process that uses little to no cognitive effort to make quick decisions. Basing crucial decisions on this thinking most often occurs

when there is limited information or experience with the stimuli. Thus individuals will most likely rely on ingrained stereotypes, myths, and perceptions (Dhami et al., 2018; Lorenz & Maskaly, 2018). Because of the societal immersion in rape culture, it is not unlikely that rape myths will inhibit perceptions and interpretations of the world (McMillan, 2018; O'Neal & Hayes, 2019). Thus, a LEO's utilization and reliance on a "feeling" may result in further acceptance and focus on stereotypical rape myths (Bohner & Schapansky, 2018; Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Lorenz & Maskaly, 2018).

Interrogative v. Investigative. It is necessary to examine LEOs' procedures when examining culture to identify further efforts that could be privy to change to become more victim-centered. As previously mentioned, LEOs may initially work from interrogative positions versus investigative, which may benefit other criminal offenses. However, when interacting with sexual assault victims, induce the opposite effect than officers would like (Venema, 2016a; Venema, 2016b). Interrogative techniques include lie detection, intimidation, and confrontational language (Dando et al., 2016; Venema, 2016b). LEOs who interact with sexual violence victims, similar to other crime perpetrators, are often taught to doubt, question, and interview in more abrasive manners (Franiuk et al., 2019; Phipps et al., 2018). Additionally, officers may be focused on credibility-diminishing factors such as substance use, psychosis, or perceptions of lying, similar to trauma symptoms (Campbell, Menaker, et al., 2015; Dunn, 2015; Franklin et al., 2019; Preston, 2016). Additionally, victims may be treated as witnesses to a crime separate from themselves versus an injured party (Moylan et al., 2017).

Variations in Female Law Enforcement Officers' Perceptions. Prior research on variations between male and female LEOs' endorsement of rape myths has been contradictory. Some research has indicated that women, despite law enforcement status, hold higher rates of rape myths or negative attitudes towards sexual assault victims. One reason for this is an attempt to distance themselves from the likelihood of being a victim themselves (Lorenz & Maskaly, 2018), also known as, *the just world hypothesis*.

Lerner's just world hypothesis is a cognitive bias that suggests that individuals are responsible, or to blame, for the repercussions of their actions, either positive or negative. Thus, a criminal or evil person will receive consequences, be punished, and have ill-will brought on them, while a good person is rewarded with good outcomes (Lerner & Miller, 1978). This mindsight helps people support a moral code, detach themselves from others who have negative experiences, and bring a sense of peace and safety to their everyday lives (Lerner & Miller, 1978; Nitschke et al., 2018).

Additional research identifies the significant influence of male-dominated police culture on female LEOs, where female officers may begin to acclimate to the culture and adopt higher rates of rape myths and disbelieve victims more (Lorenz & Maskaly, 2018). Contrarily, other research shows that male LEOs endorsed sexual violence stereotypes more than females and blamed the victims more; however, a few factors decreased these rates to include: years of service, higher rank, higher education levels, experience with handling sexual assault cases. Furthermore, LEOs from larger agencies endorse fewer rape myths than smaller agencies (Franklin et al., 2019; Hockett et al., 2016; Parratt & Pina, 2017).

Frustration also appears to be a typical response for LEOs when interacting with sexual assault victims, especially for female officers who may be forced to take on these cases. Due to the minority of female officers within law enforcement (Ellemers, 2018; Spencer et al., 2018), gender stereotyping may occur where female officers are expected to be more nurturing and forced to work sexual assault cases despite their unwillingness, mistreatment of victims, or degree of RMA Alderden & Ullman, 2012). Additionally, some perceptions by male officers label sexual violence cases as "not real police work"; thus, these cases may be given to female or lower-ranking officers (Rich, 2019).

Not All Bad or To Blame. It should be noted that this research understands that not all individuals that reside under the LEO category encounter victims of sexual assault; additionally, this research does not fault all LEOs or deny the ability for change if certain bias views are held. However, it does indicate that because LEOs are a subset within this society that does support rape culture, it is more than likely this profession, similar to the general population, is biased and does hold some rape myths to be true. More clearly, it is not that LEOs accept and act out more rape myths or problematic views than non-LE. It is that officers mirror what society has deemed "normal" and, thus, accepted (O'Neal & Hayes, 2019). Additionally, it does not suggest that all criminal justice personnel are intentionally ignoring legally relevant factors when deciding case progression and investigative efforts. However, it reveals the many opportunities for extra-legally irrelevant factors, or rape myths, to influence decision-making and case handling for a sexual assaults successful progression from reporting to conviction (Campeau, 2015; Franiuk et al., 2019; Meeker et al., 2019; Spohn & Tellis, 2019).

Research by Spencer and others (2018) confirms that many LEOs recognize the probability of revictimization, the injustices, and failures of the criminal justice system, and help support victims throughout the process. In attempts to provide justice, LEOs will mindfully reduce revictimization throughout their engagement with victims. Additionally, Spencer and others (2018) research demonstrated that the lack of resources that many agencies encounter with fewer officers, large caseloads, and lack of training continues to be an issue. Lipsky (1976, 1980) first identified "street-level bureaucracy," which describes how lower-level public service employees, such as police officers, are often responsible for large caseloads, function under ambiguous agency goals, and are burdened by inadequate resources (O'Neal, 2019, p. 149). These results indicate that recognition and attempts to change the process for sexual violence victims are occurring at some agencies to promote a more victim-centered approach (Spencer et al., 2018).

Prosecutors

Prosecutors are also considered to be gateways to the criminal justice system due to their ability to accept or deny cases from LEOs if they make it through to this step, as it is another common point for case attrition (O'Neal et al., 2015; St. George & Spohn, 2018). Prosecutors are also labeled as "controllers of the courthouse" (Neubauer, 1973), due to their authority to determine which cases progress to the court system (Meeker et al., 2019). Rape myths can also influence prosecutors as they base the possibility of conviction on the victim's credibility and the authenticity of the characteristics surrounding the sexual assault (Frohman, 1991; O'Neal et al., 2015; St. George & Spohn, 2018).

Prosecutors often emphasize inconsistencies in the victims' recall of events, a technique identified as "discrepant accounts" to reject cases, the delineation of a sexual assault from rape myths, and are skeptical about ulterior motives. Additionally, prosecutors favor having high convictions rates to promote their image and legal standing amongst the community, which influences the rejection of counter-stereotypical sexual assault cases. Prosecutors are well aware of stereotypes surrounding sexual violence and how juries and judges may react to these norms. So, if a case conflicts with their own "repertoire of knowledge" or incurs uncertainty and has a low likelihood of conviction (Frohman, 1991; O'Neal et al., 2015; St. George & Spohn, 2018), prosecutors are more likely reject the case, also known as "uncertainty avoidance" (Albonetti, 1986, 1987).

O'Neal and others (2015) researched the legal and extra-legal factors considered in sexual assault case processing for prosecutors in Los Angeles County. The study results showed that similar to prior research, prosecutors do attempt to avoid uncertainty in cases by only initiating charges in cases with a high likelihood of conviction. The primary legal factor most considered in their decisions were crime severity and physical evidence, with all of the cases prosecuted including a sexual assault forensic exam, eyewitnesses, physical evidence from the scene, victim, or injuries of the victim (Morabito et al., 2019; O'Neal et al., 2015). Last, all of the cases prosecuted, the sexual assault victim's behavior before the assault was not credibility damaging. Frohman further stated that "prosecutors are actively looking for 'holes' or problems that will make the victim's version of 'what happened' unbelievable or not convincing beyond a reasonable doubt" (Frohman, 1991; p. 214). Another technique commonly utilized by

prosecutors to discredit a victim's credibility or report of sexual violence is to question the victim's motives. Thus, prosecutors will question the victim regarding the assault, a prior relationship, behavior surrounding the sexual assault, consent, or any possible reason for constructing a false report (Frohman, 1991; O'Neal et al., 2015).

It is not too surprising that prosecutors' focus is primarily on victim behavior and credibility, due to their concern surrounding how the victim would present to the court and a jury. In contrast, LEOs' may focus more on corroborating evidence due to their primary goal of investigation (Darwinkel et al., 2015). Lundrigan et al. (2019) found that jury conviction rates in sexual assault cases were relatively low, which influences the prosecution to seek out cases that are more aligned with rape myths.

Law Enforcement Officers and Prosecutors' Decision-Making

A common strategy used by LEOs and prosecutors that influence case efforts and progression is "downstream orientation." Downstream orientation, originally termed to describe prosecutorial decision-making (Frohmann, 1997), has also transferred to explain law enforcement actions, in which decisions regarding the case are determined based on predictions about how the seceding groups will accept or interpret the case (Frohman, 1991; Frohmann, 1997). For example, as previously mentioned, LEOs will assess the victims' credibility, the sexual assault allegations alignment to rape myths, and whether or not the prosecutor is likely to accept the case. If the LEO perceives the case to be unlikely to be accepted, they may reduce investigative efforts or knowingly or unknowingly, discourage the victim from pursuing charges (Frohman, 1991; Frohman, 1997; O'Neal & Hayes, 2019; Pattavina et al., 2016; Spohn & Tellis, 2019).

Secondly, the prosecutions' decision to accept a case is determined using a "convictabilty standard" on the likelihood of conviction, aforementioned, and how the jury will judge the victim and their allegations. If the case is counter-stereotypical to rape myths or the victim behavior or character prior to is perceived as questionable, the prosecutor will most likely choose not to accept the case (Frohmann, 1991; O'Neal & Hayes, 2019; Spohn & Tellis, 2019; St. George & Spohn, 2018; Venema, 2018; Venema et al., 2019). Pattavina and others (2016) reiterated that the "boundaries between the police and the prosecutor are blurred with respect to sexual assault case processing and consequently many victims may be denied the opportunity for court resolution" (p. 15).

Jurors and Judges

Even if a sexual assault case is brought to and accepted by the prosecution, and taken to trial, a jury must find the perpetrator guilty, which can be extremely difficult as both judges and a panel of jurors will also hold some rape myths to be true (Gray & Horvath, 2018; Nitschke et al., 2019; Sleath & Bull, 2015; Stuart et al., 2019; Temkin et al., 2018). Prior research has identified that jurors who support rape myths were less likely to convict (Dinos et al., 2015), blamed the victim more, which may be dependent on how the juror themselves interact sexually within their own relationships, causing them to discount the victims' experiences (Sommer et al., 2016). Additionally, due to the general lack of knowledge surrounding sexual violence, trauma, and symptoms, people may rely more heavily upon rape myths or inaccurate schematic processing (Bohner & Schapansky, 2018; Lankford, 2016).

Temkin and others (2018) conducted an analysis of sexual assault case trial transcripts in England and found that the perpetrator's defense often utilizes rape myths. They found that most trials utilized five or more rape myths, with the primary focus on discrediting the victim and emphasizing the factors surrounding the sexual assault that was counter-stereotypical to rape myths. Additionally, the cases indicated contradictory actions by the prosecution, with some choosing to challenge the prosecutions' focus on the rape myths, whereas others did not. Similarly, some judges took time to address and explain rape myths to the jurors, whereas others did not. Despite legal restrictions on incorporating victims' sexual history as evidence, this was also observed as utilized by the defense. This study revealed the importance of educating prosecution personnel and judges on rape myths and their damaging effects to reduce sexual assault victims' victimization and provide protection throughout the court process (Temkin et al., 2018).

Nitschke and others (2018) support the notion of an informed criminal justice system down to the jurors. Their research examined mock jurors' understanding of a victim's capacity to consent after consuming alcohol. Results indicated that when mock jurors received additional instructions on consent, they were more inclined to rule the victim as unable to consent and rule in favor that a sexual assault occurred; however, no interaction between credibility and blame with intoxication after additional instruction (Nitschke et al., 2018). Most importantly, this study showed that just with simple, but more complete instructions, jurors might be able to make more educated decisions regarding evidence that is required by law (Levine, 2018; McKimmie, Antrobus, et al., 2014; Nitschke et al., 2018; Stuart et al., 2019).

Although judges do not directly influence if a perpetrator is found guilty, they do have the ability to monitor what is included in the arguments of the defense and the prosecution. As rape myths are utilized against the victim, judges must recognize and reject it. Most importantly, judges can determine sentence lengths once the perpetrator is convicted. Thus, judges decide based on primary factors (focal concerns) to include the offender's degree of responsibility, the ability to protect the community by removing the perpetrator, or by deterring future acts by others, logistical concerns of costs. However, judges may also be influenced by myths surrounding sexual violence, perpetrator status, or schemas that influence the perpetrator's culpability (O'Neal et al., 2015).

Abuse Excuse

Abuse excuse is a term related to sentencing that often becomes an additional factor that can cause feelings of injustice, inequality, and a lack of care towards sexual assault victims. This occurs when a sexual offender is convicted, but additional factors associated with the perpetrator result in reduced sentencing. Some factors may include a traumatic childhood, either mental, physical, sexual, or neglect (Tin & Parker, 2016), or, "Excuses like drug or alcohol addiction, battered women syndrome, pre-menstrual stress, posttraumatic syndrome, black rage, pornography exposure, XXY chromosome defense, mob mentality, rape trauma syndrome, steroid use, urban survivor syndrome" (Dershowitz, 1994, e.g., Tin & Parker, p. 42), "and rotten social background" (Delgado, 1985, e.g., Tin & Parker, p. 42).

The abuse excuse is often used by the defense to humanize the perpetrator. In most criminal cases, individuals tend to dehumanize to separate themselves from the

offender, increasing sympathy to influence the sentencing process (De Becker, 1997).

The Abuse Excuse is different from an exemption condition. The victim acknowledges

the perpetrator's prior trauma or mental health issues and does not hold them

accountable; however, the abuse excuse leads to excusing the condition versus

exemption. The abuse excuse should not be utilized to diminish the perpetrator

responsibility of the offense, because that removes the primary factor of intent to commit

the sexual offense, which was malicious, and directs the blame to the prior trauma as

though it was out of the perpetrator's control (Tin & Parker, 2016).

Summary and Conclusion

In Chapter 2, an extensive review of the literature on sexual assault, law

enforcement, and rape myths were covered to identify how any why sexual violence,

alone, is such an issue. Additionally, the influence that LEOs have on a case can set the

tone for victim cooperation, investigative efforts, and further avenues of case attrition.

Most importantly, Chapter 2 identified the need for research on LEOs' degree of RMA

compared with no non-LE to further identify the support of SDT. Chapter 3 examines the

methodology of how the research was conducted.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to conduct a comparative analysis of RMA levels between LEOs and non-LE, in addition to the assessment of both populations' perceptions of victim credibility and victim responsibility. In this study the AMMSA (Gerger et al., 2007) scale was used in addition to a hypothetical, but realistic vignette of a sexual assault incident. These assessments are essential for the study as they examined perceptions and how perceptions can be transformed into actions. In this chapter an overview is provided of the research design, methodology, instrumentation, data analysis, and ethical procedures.

Research Design and Rationale

The AMMSA scale was utilized to identify participants' RMA. The independent variable was the vignette, and the dependent variables were the participants' perceptions towards victim credibility and victim responsibility. The research design was a quantitative static group comparison (Campbell & Stanley, 1963) of RMA levels and an assessment of perceptions of victim credibility and victim responsibility by law enforcement status. Potential time constraints existed as there were some issues in acquiring enough participants to take the questionnaire, especially LEOs, in obtaining enough data to compare the two populations.

Methodology

Population

The target population included LEOs within the United States and non-LE. The target population size was at least 150, with equal numbers of LEOs and non-LE

participants. The number of participants was chosen to allow for the potential of attrition, as 128, with 64 LEOs and 64 non-LE were actually required to detect a medium-effect size.

Sampling and Procedures Sampling Procedures

Convenience sampling was utilized to obtain the appropriate number of participants; however, a stratified sampling strategy was employed. The participants were divided into groups, LEO or non-LE.

The sampling frame for LEOs (current or prior) included participants over the age of 18. An LEO was defined as belonging to a city, state, or federal department: police officer, sheriff, correctional officer, highway patrol officer, probation or parole officers, customs and border patrol, or a federal agent (DEA, ICE, FBI); military personnel were excluded. The second population was adults over the age of 18 who had not worked in law enforcement, similar to those mentioned above.

One-way ANOVA and binary logistic regression were utilized to answer the research questions. A sample size of 64 LEO participants and 64 non-LE participants was sufficient to detect a medium-size effect (eta squared =.059) of dependent variable differences with alpha =.05 and power =.80.

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

Primary data was collected utilizing an anonymous online survey containing demographic items, the AMMSA assessment, and the vignette with credibility and responsibility questions. Law enforcement departments across the United States were contacted to obtain approval for their own agency to send out initial interest emails with

information about the study and to include the invitation and link to participate. Invitations and questionnaire link were also posted on social media platforms, sent via email, and submitted to the Walden University Participant Pool to obtain non-LE participants.

Consent was provided on the first page of the online questionnaire prior to participants responding to the questions; this page provided an overview of the research and must have been agreed to in order to participate. Anonymity was ensured by utilizing the online survey's platform option to not track IP information. No identifying information was gathered through the demographic questions; this was also reiterated on the first page prior to the participants continuing.

Data was collected utilizing a third-party online survey site that retains all responses (Survey Monkey), and data was computed using IBM SPSS software. Prior to and following the completion of the survey, participants were provided with resources on sexual violence and mental health services to include hotline numbers and counseling services (Appendix B).

Instrumentation and Operationalization of Constructs

In this section the instrument used to measure RMA is described. In addition to, the presentation of the full text of the vignette and the items and response scale options used to measure perceptions of victim credibility and perceptions of victim responsibility. The demographic items are also presented that were included in the survey. The complete survey is in Appendix A.

Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression

The degree of RMA has been researched over the last 50 years; however, varying tools have been utilized. One of the initial measures was the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale by Burt (1980). Despite satisfactory levels of the reliability for Burt's measure, limitations were identified (Sleath & Bull, 2015). The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale was created by Payne et al. (1999), provides a more thorough assessment of RMA with 40 rape myth questions and five fillers (Sleath & Bull, 2015). This scale was most utilized globally; however, the limitations included the blatant and misogynist content surrounding sexual violence that could influence responses away from identifying accurate RMA levels (i.e., socially desirability; Eyssel & Bohner, 2008). An example of this is, "When women go around braless or wearing short skirts and tight tops, they are just asking for trouble" (Burt 1980, p. 223). The utilization of such verbiage skewed results due to the high disagreement (Bohner & Schapansky, 2018).

As a result, Gerger et al. (2007) identified the need for an updated measure as societal changes had resulted in adapted perceptions towards sexism, racism, sexual violence, and willingness to report. Gerger et al. (2007) developed a new self-report measure, the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression (AMMSA) scale, that measured less obvious myths associated with sexual violence and sexual aggression while utilizing less blatant verbiage (Eyssel & Bohner, 2008). Additionally, the AMMSA scale holds a Cronbach's alpha of .90 to .95 (Gerger et al., 2007). The AMMSA scale was utilized for this research.

Reliability and validity of the AMMSA was further established in various studies on German law students (Bohner & Schapansky, 2018), German residents (Süssenbach &

Bohner, 2011), German university students (Süssenbach, Albrecht, et al., 2017), and

psychology and law students in the United Kingdom (Sleath & Bull, 2015). Hine and

Murphy (2017) also applied the AMMSA scale for officers' RMA scores and their

judgments of the victim and perpetrator responsibility and case authenticity, dependent

on the victim-perpetrator relationship, victim reputation, and initial point of resistance in

the United Kingdom. In a second study (Murphy & Hine, 2018) examined the

demographic and attitudinal predictors of officers in the U.K. To obtain levels of RMA,

the reliable and valid AMMSA scale was used to assess for less discernible rape myths

and inclinations of sexual aggression. The authors' permission is given with the

utilization of the assessment as long as researchers identify the originating authors

(Appendix C; Gerger et al., 2007).

The AMMSA utilizes a Likert scale from one to seven, allowing responses from

completely disagree (1) to *completely agree* (7). The scoring for the AMMSA for all 30

items is positively-scored, indicating higher scores to indicate higher acceptance of rape

myths.

Example 1: Many women tend to misinterpret a well-meant gesture as a "sexual assault."

Example 2: When a woman starts a relationship with a man, she must be aware that the

man will assert his right to have sex.

Vignette

The vignette was constructed utilizing two of the most commonly believed rape

myths, a known perpetrator and substance use (in this research, alcohol use). Similar

content from prior research has been utilized effectively to portray sexual assault by an

acquaintance perpetrator (Bridges, 1991; Franklin & Garza, 2018; Simonson & Subich, 1999). The present research modified the vignette to analyze victim credibility and victim responsibility. The utilization of the names *Mary* and *James* were chosen due to their ranking as the most popular names over the last 100 years according to the Social Security Administration (2020), and in attempt to remove bias of ethnicity assumptions. The vignette was scored on a Likert scale with the vignette as the independent variable. The dependent variables were the participants' perceptions of victim credibility and victim responsibility. The Likert scale for the vignette was scored *completely disagree* (1) to *completely agree* (7), with higher numbers indicating higher victim blame on credibility or responsibility. The vignette reads as follows:

One-night Mary went to a house party with James, who had asked her on a date. Although Mary and James had met a few times before, this was their first time out together. At the party, James and Mary consumed alcohol, and both became intoxicated (both were of legal drinking age). Following the party, Mary and James went back to her apartment to watch television. While watching television, James put his arm around Mary's shoulder, to which she responded positively. They began to kiss...

The next day, Mary goes to the police station to report her allegation of sexual assault. However, recollection by both Mary and James differ. Mary claims James asked her whether she was interested in having sex. Mary claimed she said "No" very forcefully, however she had consented to kissing and light toughing, but James did not pay attention to her answer. He grabbed her, began to kiss her, and then lifted her skirt. He forced himself on her and completed the act of sexual intercourse. James stated that

Mary said "Yes" and they continued kissing, and sexual intercourse was consented by both of them.

Demographics

The demographic information collected included sex, age (in years), ethnicity (White, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian or Asian American, Other), the highest level of education (high school diploma/GED, Associates, Bachelors, Masters and Higher), prior sexual violence experience, participant designation as a non-LE, and years served in law enforcement (if applicable). Exact wording and response options of the demographic items are in Appendix A.

Data Analysis Plan

Preliminary Data Screening

The third-party survey site, Survey Monkey, was utilized to collect all of the data with no identifying information or IP address tracking. All data was imported into IBM SPSS version 25 or newer for analysis. Cases were examined for missing data on the key study variables of grouping variable (law enforcement officer, non-law enforcement), Vignette credibility and victim responsibility rating, and AMMSA items. Cases with missing data on the grouping variable or any of the vignette ratings were eliminated from further analysis. Cases with more than 30% missing data across the AMMSA items were eliminated from further analysis. For cases with 30% or less missing data, their individual mean across the nonmissing items were used for any missing items. Such person mean substitution is an easy solution and found to be a reliable procedure (Downey & King, 1998).

Reliability analysis for AMMSA was conducted and items were removed if negatively correlated or reliability would substantially increase. If Cronbach's alpha was less than .70, a principal factor analysis would be conducted to determine if the AMMSA is multidimensional. Following Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), mean composite scores for AMMSA (or factor scores if multidimensional) and vignette ratings were examined separately by group (i.e., law enforcement, non-law enforcement) for univariate outliers ($z > 3.29$ and discontinuous with the sample distribution) , relatively normal distribution (skewness $\leq \pm 3.0$, kurtosis $\leq \pm 10.0$; Kline, 2016), and multivariate outliers (as accessed by Mahalanobis distance).

Demographic variables—sex, age, ethnicity, years served in law enforcement, highest level of education, and prior sexual violence experience—were examined as potential covariates. Gerger et al. (2007) found inconsistent sex difference AMMSA results across the four studies they reported. If sex, or any other demographic, is found to have a small-to-medium or larger effect size (e.g., $r \geq .20$, eta squared $\geq .035$) statistically significantly related to AMMSA or vignette ratings, the analysis plan, as appropriate, would be modified to include covariate control.

Research Question 1 Analysis Plan

RQ1: To what extent do LEOs' rape myth acceptance (AMMSA score) compare to non-LE scores?

H_a1: LEOs' rape myth acceptance (AMMSA score) is higher (or lower) than those of the non-LE group.

$H_0$1: There are no differences between LEOs' rape myth acceptance (AMMSA scores) and the non-LE group.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to statistically test the null hypothesis with focus on eta squared to interpret the practical significance of group mean differences.

Research Question 2 Analysis Plan

RQ2: To what extent do the vignette credibility ratings differ between LEOs and the non-LE group?

H_a2: There are differences between vignette credibility ratings of LEOs and non-LE.

$H_0$2: There are no differences between vignette credibility ratings of LEOs and non-LE.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to statistically test the null hypothesis with focus on eta squared to interpret the practical significance of group mean differences.

Research Question 3 Analysis Plan

RQ3: To what extent do the vignette responsibility ratings differ between LEOs and the non-LE group?

H_a3: There are differences between vignette responsibility ratings of LEOs and non-LE.

$H_0$3: There are no differences between vignette responsibility ratings of LEOs and non-LE.

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to statistically test the null hypothesis with focus on eta squared to interpret the practical significance of group mean differences.

Research Question 4 Analysis Plan

RQ4: To what extent do the combined effects of AMMSA score, vignette credibility rating, and vignette responsibility rating differentiate LEOs and the non-LE group?

H_a3: There are differences between the combined effects of AMMSA score, vignette credibility rating, and vignette responsibility ratings of LEOs and non-LE.

H_04: There are no differences between the combined effects of AMMSA score, vignette credibility rating, and vignette responsibility ratings of LEOs and non-LE.

A binary logistic regression was conducted to statistically examine the combined effects to predict and explain the relationships between the responses of the two groups of participants and determine the probability of a shared characteristic.

Threats to Validity

The population researched were LEOs and non-LE throughout the United States of all demographics; thus, results were intended to be generalizable for both populations. However, it should be noted that prior research has also shown that LEOs from smaller and more rural regions tend to have higher levels of RMA versus big-city departments (Parratt & Pina, 2017). Additionally, there was potential for threats to ecological validity

due to the use of a hypothetical vignette to measure participants' perceptions of victim credibility and victim responsibility. However, the responses to the vignette may not necessarily be generalizable to behaviors applied in real-life incidents.

Threats to internal validity include selection bias, which may result in lower RMA levels in LEOs due to some training received or prior interactions with sexual violence cases, versus non-LE who may have never had interactions, training, or be knowledgeable about sexual violence prior to this research. LEOs may have also been under the impression that when being surveyed about their perceptions, they must respond to how they perceive an officer *should* react versus in reality (social desirability bias). Additionally, as with any study, there was possibility for case attrition resulting from the dropping out of participants due to several reasons, time, internet access, or the topic's sensitivity. I intended to obtain a large enough sample to conduct a reliable and valid study even though case attrition occurred.

Ethical Procedures

Before conducting any research, I completed, submitted, and obtained approval from the IRB (04-05-21-0740987). For this research, the treatment of human participants was conducted with the utmost respect and professionalism. No in-person encounters or telephone interviews were required, and the survey allowed for complete anonymity. Due to the sensitivity of sexual violence, the participants were able to stop the survey at any time. They were also provided with resources prior to answering any questions and at the end of the survey. The questionnaires responses were stored and only accessible to me on a password-protected computer.

Summary

This study intended to identify levels of RMA in LEOs and non-LE, while also obtaining their perceptions towards victim credibility and victim responsibility surrounding victim's use of alcohol prior to a potential sexual assault by a known acquaintance. After obtaining IRB approval, I distributed an online and anonymous survey to both populations through pre-approved departments' work emails, social media platforms, and survey sites. The survey included the AMMSA Scale by Gerger et al. (2007) to identify the less blatant acceptance of myths of sexual aggression, in addition to, a hypothetical, but realistic vignette that was used to assess participants' perception towards victim credibility and victim responsibility. Inferential statistics were utilized to derive meaning from the participants' responses. A one-way ANOVA and binary logistic regression were used to compare the responses between the two groups, LEOs and non-LE. Respect and professionalism were my primary goals in conducting this research. All protective measures were in place prior to and following the participants taking the survey, with the option to quit at any time, while also receiving resources on sexual violence.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this study was to compare LEOs and non-LE RMA levels, perceptions of victim credibility, and victim responsibility. This research utilized the AMMSA (Gerger et al., 2007) scale in addition to a hypothetical but realistic vignette of a sexual assault incident. The research questions and hypotheses examined group differences in perceptions towards rape myths and victim credibility and victim responsibility in LEO and non-LE?

Chapter 4 includes an overview of data collection; reliability analysis of the AMMSA; screening for normal distribution and multivariate and univariate outliers; demographics of the sample; demographic differences between the LEO and non-LE groups; descriptive statistics of AMMSA, responsibility, and credibility scores; correlations among the key study variables; screening of demographic covariates related to AMMSA, responsibility, and credibility scores; the specific research questions and hypotheses; the results of data analyses; and a summary and transition to Chapter 5.

Data Collection

Data were collected from April 6 through August 1, 2021, with 210 individuals accessing the online survey. Nonmissing response on three items was vital for the purpose of the study: (a) identifying as serving or not as an LEO, (b) vignette responsibility rating, and (c) vignette credibility rating. Missing data across these three items was calculated, and 12 individuals had missing data on 2 of the 3 items, and 4 individuals had missing data on all three items. These 16 cases were identified and eliminated from further analysis—valid $N = 194$. The AMMSA contains 30 items.

Missing data was allowed for no more than nine items. Three individuals had missing data on 10 items, three on 20 items, and eight on all 30 items. A list of these cases was generated, and 14 were removed from further analysis—valid $N = 180$. After removal of the 14 cases, four cases had missing data on one of the 30 items for which their specific mean across the other 29 items was imputed for the missing data.

AMMSA Scale Reliability

The AMMSA scale had excellent reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$) with average inter-item correlations of .28, ranging from -.08 to .72. Of the 435 pairwise correlations across the 30 items, seven had negative values that technically violates scale additivity. However, the negative correlations were near zero, and reliability could not be improved by eliminating any items, so all 30 items were retained for the AMMSA mean composite.

AMMSA Normal Distribution by Groups

Both groups had AMMSA skewness and kurtosis values indicative of a relatively normal distribution. The LEO group had skewness and kurtosis of -0.047 and -0.427, respectively, and the non-LE group had skewness and kurtosis of 0.590 and -0.114, respectively.

Multivariate and Univariate Outliers

Following Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), multivariate outliers were examined by regressing the four key variables on a random variable separately for the LEO and non-LE groups. No case in either group exceeded the Mahalanobis chi-square critical value of 18.467 ($df = 4$, alpha = .001). The AMMSA composite was converted to a z-score to

examine for univariate outliers separately for the two groups. No case exceeded the cutoff of ±3.29 standard deviations.

Demographics

Results indicated about three times as many males than females in the LEO group and six times as many females than males in the non-LE group (Table 1). The majority in the LEO group were White (not Hispanic or Latino; 86.4%), with a much smaller proportion in the non-LE group (59.6%), in which about 1 in 5 (21.9%) identified as Hispanic/Latino. The level of education between the two groups was relatively similar, with a plurality having a Master's degree or higher, 31.8% and 39.5% in the LEO and non-LE, respectively, and a majority having a Bachelor's degree or higher, 62.1% and 70.2%, respectively. The two groups were relatively similar in age distribution. Of those in the LEO group, the average number of years serving in law enforcement was 14.1 (*SD* = 9.1), ranging from 1 to 38 years (Table 2).

In Table 3, the demographics of the sample are compared to LEO population demographics (Gardiner, 2017; Zippia, 2021) and U.S. population demographics of individuals 18 years and older (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019). In the LEO sample gender was comparable to the LEO population with White (not Hispanic/Latino) overrepresented and all other ethnicities underrepresented. The LEO sample had higher levels of education than in the LEO population. For the non-LE sample compared to the U.S. population, females were overrepresented and males underrepresented, Hispanic/Latino were overrepresented and Asian/Asian Americans underrepresented. The non-LE sample had higher levels of education than the U.S. population.

Table 1

Demographics of Sample

	LEO		Non-LE		Total	
	n	%	n	%	N	%
Gender						
Female	15	22.7	96	85.0	111	62.0
Male	49	74.2	16	14.2	65	36.3
Other	2	3.0	1	0.9	3	1.7
Ethnicity						
White (not Hispanic/Latino)	57	86.4	68	59.6	125	69.4
Black/African American	5	7.6	11	9.6	16	8.9
Hispanic/Latino	1	1.5	25	21.9	26	14.4
Asian/Asian American	1	1.5	2	1.8	3	1.7
Other	2	3.0	8	7.0	10	5.6
Education						
High school/GED	14	21.2	19	16.7	33	18.3
Associate's	11	16.7	15	13.2	26	14.4
Bachelor's	20	30.3	35	30.7	55	30.6
Master's or higher	21	31.8	45	39.5	66	36.7
Have experienced sexual violence						
Yes	12	18.2	62	54.4	74	41.1
No	52	78.8	49	43.0	101	56.1
Prefer not to say	2	3.0	3	2.6	5	2.8

Table 2

Age Range of Sample

Age	*M*	*SD*	Min	Mdn	Max
LEO	39.1	9.1	26	37	62
Non-LE	37.0	11.3	19	34	68
Total	37.8	10.6	19	34	68

Table 3

Comparison of Sample Populations and Demographics

Demographic	Population LEO[a]	Sample LEO[b]	U.S. Population[b,c]	Sample Non-LE[b]
Gender				
Female	21.2	23.4	51.6	85.7
Male	78.8	76.6	48.4	14.3
Ethnicity				
White (not Hispanic/Latino)	62.4	86.4	63.1	59.6
Black/African American	14.0	7.6	12.6	9.6
Hispanic/Latino	17.5	1.5	16.4	21.9
Asian/Asian American	3.0	1.5	6.3	1.8
Other	3.1	3.0	1.5	7.0
Education				
High school/GED	48.2	21.2	51.8	16.7
Associate's	21.6	16.7	11.0	13.2
Bachelor's	24.8	30.3	23.8	30.7
Master's or higher	5.4	31.8	13.5	39.5

Note. [a] LEO gender and ethnicity from https://www.zippia.com/police-officer-jobs/demographics/; education from Gardiner (2017).

[b] Excludes the "Other" category for gender.

[c] U.S. population 18 years or older from

https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2019/demo/educational-attainment/cps-detailed-tables.html

Demographic Statistical Differences Between Groups

In a statistically significant crosstabulation analysis, $\chi^2(2, N = 179) = 68.6$, $p < .001$, Cramer's $V = .62$, the LEO group had much fewer females and many more males than proportional expected compared to the non-LE group. Ethnicity differences between groups was also statistically significant, $\chi^2(4, N = 180) = 17.8$, $p = .001$, Cramer's V =

.31. There were proportionally more White (not Hispanic/Latino) and fewer

Hispanic/Latino in the LEO group compared to the non-LE group. The non-LE group

reported having experienced sexual violence at three times greater proportion (54.4%)

than the LEO group (18.2%), which was statistically significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 180) = 22.9$, p

< .001, Cramer's V = .36. The two groups did not statistically significantly differ on the

level of education or age.

Results

AMMSA, Responsibility, & Credibility Descriptive Statistics

All three variables had relatively normal distributions with skewness and kurtosis

values within approximately ±1.00.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of AMMSA and Vignette Ratings of Responsibility and Credibility

Variable	M	SD	Mdn	Min	Max	S	K
AMMSA	2.67	0.85	2.60	1.10	4.87	0.34	-0.52
Responsibility	2.57	1.54	2.00	1.00	7.00	1.03	0.49
Credibility	5.49	1.60	6.00	1.00	7.00	-1.09	0.37

Note. S = skewness, K = kurtosis. Reliability for AMMSA as indexed by Cronbach's

alpha was .92.

Correlation Matrix of Key Variables

AMMSA was positively correlated with responsibility ratings and negatively

correlated with credibility ratings (Table 5). The AMMSA measured RMA, indicating

that the higher the myth acceptance scores, the higher rating of Mary being responsible

for her actions, and the lower the rating of her credibility. Additionally, responsibility and

credibility ratings were negatively correlated, confirming that the more a participant

thought Mary responsible, the less credible she became. The negative correlation between

LEO and AMMSA indicates the LEO group had higher myth acceptance scores. The

LEO group also had lower credibility ratings, which was directly tested as one of the

research questions. AMMSA scores were not correlated with age or level of education.

Age and level of education were positively correlated, as is often found in social science

research.

Table 5

Correlations Among Ordinal or Higher-Level Variables

Variable	AMMSA	Responsible	Credible	LEO	Age	Education
AMMSA		.487	-.418	-.282	.022	-.082
Responsible	< .001		-.552	-.062	.056	-.082
Credible	< .001	< .001		.146	-.023	.046
LEO	< .001	.410	.050		-.094	.088
Age	.771	.458	.758	.210		.275
Education	.274	.273	.537	.239	< .001	

Note. Upper diagonal contains Pearson correlation coefficients; lower diagonal contains

two-tailed *p* values.

Covariate Screening

As can be seen in the correlation matrix results, it is understood that age and

education level were not related to any of the three key variables. One-way ANOVAs

revealed ethnicity was not statistically significant for any of the three key variables, but

there were statistically significant experienced sexual violence differences on AMMSA

(Table 6). Gender and experienced sexual violence were included as covariates in all

three research question models. Additionally, ethnicity was also not statistically

significant for any of the three key variables.

Table 6

Covariate Results for AMMSA, Responsibility, and Credibility

	AMMSA[a]		Responsible[b]		Credible[c]	
Covariate	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Gender						
Female (*n* = 111)	2.50	0.87	2.39	1.46	5.77	1.39
Male (*n* = 65)	2.98	0.77	2.94	1.64	4.95	1.83
Other (*n* = 3)	2.22	0.41	1.67	1.15	6.67	0.58
Experienced sexual violence[d]						
Yes (*n* = 74)	2.46	0.82				
No (*n* = 101)	2.85	0.84				
Prefer not to say (*n* = 5)	2.15	0.94				

[a] $F(2, 176) = 7.36, p = .001, \eta^2 = .077$
[b] $F(2, 176) = 3.22, p = .042, \eta^2 = .035$
[c] $F(2, 176) = 6.44, p = .002, \eta^2 = .068$
[d] $F(2, 177) = 5.53, p = .005, \eta^2 = .059$

Research Questions and Hypotheses

The following were the specific research questions and hypotheses.

RQ1: To what extent do law enforcement officers' rape myth acceptance

(AMMSA score) compare to non-law enforcement scores?

H_a1: Law enforcement officers' rape myth acceptance (AMMSA score) is higher

(or lower) than those of the non-law enforcement group.

H_01: There are no differences between law enforcement officers' rape myth

acceptance (AMMSA scores) and the non-law enforcement group.

RQ2: To what extent do the vignette credibility ratings differ between law

enforcement officers and the non-law enforcement group?

H_a2: There are differences between vignette credibility ratings of law enforcement

officers and non-law enforcement.

$H_0$2: There are no differences between vignette credibility ratings of law

enforcement officers and non-law enforcement.

RQ3: To what extent do the vignette responsibility ratings differ between law

enforcement officers and the non-law enforcement group?

H_a3: There are differences between vignette responsibility ratings of law

enforcement officers and non-law enforcement.

$H_0$3: There are no differences between vignette responsibility ratings of law

enforcement officers and non-law enforcement.

RQ4: To what extent do the combined effects of AMMSA score, vignette

credibility rating, and vignette responsibility rating differentiate law enforcement officers

and the non-law enforcement group?

H_a3: There are differences between the combined effects of AMMSA score,

vignette credibility rating, and vignette responsibility ratings of law enforcement

officers and non-law enforcement.

$H_0$4: There are no differences between the combined effects of AMMSA score,

vignette credibility rating, and vignette responsibility ratings of law enforcement

officers and non-law enforcement.

ANOVA Results: Research Questions 1-3

In addition to males and females, gender had an "other" response option but only

three cases. Similarly, experienced sexual violence had a "prefer not to say" option with

only five cases. These were too small to be included in ANOVA, so a male-female only

designation was used for gender, and a yes-no designation was used for experienced sexual violence.

A 2 (LEO) X 2 (Gender) X 2 (Experienced sexual violence) factorial ANOVA screening was conducted for all three research questions. These included the three main effects for LEO, gender, and experienced sexual violence; three two-way interactions, LEO*gender, LEO*experienced sexual violence, and gender*experienced sexual violence; and one three-way interaction, LEO*gender*experienced sexual violence. None of the two-way or three-way interactions were statistically significant.

The models were computed for each DV in several ways, including two-way interactions only, two-way interactions without gender, two-way interactions without experienced sexual violence, and main effects only. Results indicated that in all of the models, none of the two-way interactions were statistically significant; experienced sexual violence was not significant in any of the models, including the ones with just LEO and experienced sexual violence; and gender was not significant in any of the AMMSA models. Due to an ANOVA being invalid when it includes nonsignificant two-way or three-way interactions or nonsignificant main effects except when they are of primary interest (Engqvist, 2005), based on the various screenings, the following analyses were conducted and a summary of ANOVA results are in Table 7:

RQ1: LEO only (gender was not significant and weakened the LEO effect)

RQ2: LEO and gender but without the two-way interaction

RQ3: LEO and gender but without the two-way interaction

RQ1: the LEO group ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 0.84$) had a statistically significantly higher

acceptance of modern myths about sexual aggression than the non-LE group ($M =$

2.49, $SD = 0.81$), $F(1, 178) = 15.4$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .080$.

RQ2: females ($M = 5.77$, $SD = 1.39$) rated Mary's victim credibility statistically

significantly higher than males ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.83$), $F(1, 173) = 6.6$, $p = .011$, η^2

$= .037$. The LEO and non-LE groups did not differ on ratings of victim

credibility.

RQ3: males ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.64$) rated Mary's victim responsibility statistically

significantly higher than females ($M = 2.39$, $SD = 1.46$), $F(1, 173) = 5.2$, $p = .024$,

$\eta^2 = .029$. The LEO and non-LE groups did not differ on ratings of victim

responsibility.

Table 7

ANOVA Results for Research Questions 1-3

Independent variable	AMMSA				Credible				Responsible			
	M	*SD*	*p*	η^2	*M*	*SD*	*p*	η^2	*M*	*SD*	*p*	η^2
LEO	2.99	0.84	.000	.080	5.14	1.64	.977	.000	2.72	1.45	.450	.003
Non-LE	2.49	0.81			5.65	1.57			2.52	1.60		
Female					5.77	1.39	.011	.037	2.39	1.46	.024	.029
Male					4.95	1.83			2.94	1.64		

Binary Logistic Regression Results: Research Question 4

Research Question 4 examined the prediction of LEO group membership by

AMMSA, victim responsibility, and victim credibility scores. Results indicated that only

AMMSA was statistically significant (Table 8). For a one-point increase in AMMSA

score, the odds of being in the LEO group increased by 125% (2.25 to 1 odds). The

model correctly classified 86.0% of the non-LE participants but only 31.8% of those in the LEO group for an overall correct classification percentage of 66.1% (Table 9).

Table 8

Binary Logistic Regression Results Predicting LEO

Predictors[a]	b	SE_b	p	OR	95% OR CI	
					Lower	Upper
AMMSA	0.81	0.23	< .001	2.25	1.43	3.53
Credible	-0.13	0.12	.283	0.88	0.69	1.12
Responsible	-0.21	0.14	.129	0.81	0.62	1.06
Constant	-1.50	1.09	.168	0.22		

Table 9

Correct Classification Percentage

Correct Classification Percentage			Pseudo-R^2		
LEO	Non-LE	Overall	Cox & Snell	Nagelkerke	Likelihood ratio
31.8%	86.0%	66.1%	.091	.125	.073

Note. [a] $\chi^2(3, N = 180) = 17.22, p = .001$.

Summary

As previously reviewed, Research Questions 1 through 3 examined differences between LEO and non-LE survey responses utilizing the AMMSA scale and a realistic vignette surrounding sexual assault to identify potential differences in perceptions of RMA scores, victim responsibility, and victim credibility. Research Question 1 results indicated that law enforcement had significantly higher scores for accepting modern myths about sexual violence. Research Question 2 indicated that female participants had statistically significantly higher scores than males regarding victim credibility. Research Question 3 showed that males rated Mary's victim responsibility statistically significantly

more than females. In Research Questions 2 and 3, variations between LEO and non-LE did not differ on ratings of victim credibility or victim responsibility. The final Research Question 4 attempted to predict Leo group membership by AMMSA, victim responsibility, and victim credibility scores, and in this research, only the AMMSA scores were statistically significant. This research shows differences in perceptions towards sexual violence dependent on gender and law enforcement status; these are discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This quantitative study aimed to identify and compare RMA in LEOs and non-LE and assessed both groups perceptions of victim credibility and victim responsibility to ultimately determine if RMA was a fostered ideology of law enforcement culture or a byproduct of societal beliefs. In this study, the AMMSA scale was used in addition to a realistic vignette of a sexual assault incident. These assessments were essential to examine perceptions and detect how rape myths can influence those in authoritative positions by transforming perceptions into actions within the criminal justice system (Hine & Murphy, 2017; Morabito et al., 2019; Sleath & Bull, 2017; Venema, 2016b; Weiser, 2017).

Results revealed that LEO had statistically significantly higher RMA scores than non-LE; however, variations between these two groups did not differ regarding victim credibility and victim responsibility. Male participants showed statistically significantly higher scores than females when it came to victim responsibility, whereas females had statistically higher scores than males regarding victim credibility. Last, only AMMSA scores were statistically significant and predictive of LEO group membership.

Interpretation of the Findings

Rape Myths

As discovered in the literature review (Chapter 2), rape myths were first identified and researched in the 1970s to examine how and why sexual violence occurs (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980; O'Neal & Hayes, 2019; Parratt & Pina, 2017; Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1974; Shaw et al., 2017). According to Franiuk et al.

(2019), reduced reporting rates, arrests, and prosecutions in sexual assault cases directly result from rape myths. With perceptions that women are inferior and their sexual assaults must abide by simulated false standards, rape myths continue to negatively influence victims' willingness to come forward and also increase case attrition (Nitschke et al., 2019; Süssenbach, Albrecht, et al., 2017; Süssenbach, Eyssel, et al., 2017).

This research utilized the AMMSA (Gerger et al., 2007) to identify RMA in LEOs and non-LE. The results expanded on prior research by confirming that law enforcement not only had statistically significantly higher scores than non-LE (RQ1), but AMMSA scores were predictive of participants belonging to the LEO group (RQ4). Ultimately, victims who attempt to get justice by reporting their sexual assault must first encounter rape myth accepting LEOs as gatekeepers to the criminal justice system (Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Kerstetter, 1990; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990; LaFree, 1989), who may impose such perceptions upon the victim and their case. LEOs who take the initial report determine the credibility of the victim and the sexual assault and determine the degree of investigative effort, which ultimately influences the decision to arrest, press charges, and forward the case for prosecution (Franiuk et al., 2019; Franklin et al., 2019; Kerstetter & Van Winkle, 1990; O'Neal & Spohn, 2017; Pattavina et al., 2016; Spohn, & Tellis, 2019; Spohn, 2020).

Male v. Female Perceptions

Additionally, this research reiterated the variations in male versus female perceptions towards victims. Prior studies indicated that males tend to blame victims more, have lower perceptions of credibility, and higher levels of RMA than females

(Ellemers, 2018; Golding et al., 2016; Hockett et al., 2016; Lynch et al., 2017; McKimmie, Masser, et al., 2014; Sleath & Bull, 2015). This research found that in my sample, males showed significantly higher scores toward victim responsibility in the vignette versus women, and female participants indicated higher scores towards the victim's credibility than males. These results show the disparities in how victims are perceived in society on a larger scale between the sexes. Although variations between LEO and non-LE perceptions toward victim credibility and victim responsibility did not statistically significantly differ when controlling for gender, it is important to consider that the LEO group was predominately male (74.2%) and the non-LE group was predominately female (85.0%), suggesting the gender differences on victim credibility and victim responsibility in my study were proxies for the LEO and non-LE groups and what was found with respect to males can be attributed to the LEO group and what was found with respect to females can be attributed to the non-LE group.

A potential influence was the utilization of alcohol use in the vignette, in which prior research has indicated that extra-legal factors such as emotional display, substance use, or other irrelevant characteristics can play a significant role in perceptions towards victim credibility and blame, especially for law enforcement (Sleath & Bull, 2017). Additionally, the variances between males' and females' perceptions can offer a potential indication as to why sexual assault victims who are predominantly female often face additional challenges when interacting with LEOs who are mostly male (Campeau, 2015).

Ultimately, these results reiterate the differences between male and female perceptions towards sexual assault victims, which is significant considering that law enforcement is a predominately male organization (Ellemers, 2018; Spencer et al., 2018), and sexual assault primarily occurs with male perpetrators against female victims (Dunn, 2015; Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Levine, 2018; Rich, 2019; Snipes et al., 2017; Stuart et al., 2019). Prior research described police culture as sharing the typical stereotype of masculinity, similar to other male-dominated organizations that have the highest numbers of rape myths and sexually aggressive behavior (Franiuk et al., 2019; Martin, 2016; McCray, 2015).

Social Dominance Theory

The theoretical foundation for this study was the SDT. SDT theorizes that intergroup relations maintain social hierarchies through shared cultural beliefs and legitimizing myths that justify and accept their behaviors (Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius et al., 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Law enforcement agencies are institutions whose culture revolves around masculinity, a primary mission, isolation, pessimists, authoritative positions, and skepticism (Campeau, 2015; Reiner, 1985; Rich, 2019) with predominantly male officers whose primary duties are interrogating and arresting criminals versus victim-centered or trauma-informed approaches of empathy towards victims of sexual assault (Mennicke et al., 2014; Rich, 2019; Smith et al., 2016).

Additionally, prior research has found that LEOs may develop a brotherhood mentality of "us versus them," also known as "blue curtain" (Westley 1970), "blue wall of silence" (Bittner 1970), or "thin blue line" which can understandably result from a

protective instinct when dealing with the isolation and threatening nature of their duties with perpetrators or criminals; however, this can be increasingly harmful when interacting with victims of sexual violence, and victims of other crimes (Campeau, 2015).

Thus, it is not an unlikely conclusion that these intergroup relations, shared beliefs, and legitimizing myths encourage discrimination and skepticism towards victims of sexual violence while also validating prejudiced behaviors such as victim blame and skepticism, leading to reduced investigative efforts. SDT regarding law enforcement agencies as institutions with higher levels of RMA justifies the results of Research Question 1 that revealed higher levels of RMA in LEO versus non-LE.

Last, the results indicated that males had statistically higher scores towards victim responsibility in the vignette, which adds further concern that law enforcement agencies institutions that support rape myths and that society appears to foster the male perception that victims are responsible for their sexual assault. Males who choose to enter law enforcement, or not, are seemingly unable to escape a perception that women are to blame for sexual violence. Women are more likely to say a female victim is credible, which may be why women are more likely to come forward than male victims (Artime et al., 2014; Wrede & Ask 2015), however, due to the probability of encountering a rape myth supportive officer and secondary victimization, the victim is more likely to withdraw their report, which then reinforces the LEO's beliefs that the report was false or the woman was to blame; hence, their misperceptions towards sexual violence are reinforced, further continuing the cycle (Shaw et al., 2016).

Limitations of the Study

Previously mentioned limitations included the utilization of a self-report survey allowing the opportunity for inaccurate responses due to social desirability bias, a lack of insight, or misunderstanding the content; and the use of a hypothetical but realistic vignette potentially indicating changes in survey responses to actual behavior (Dhami et al., 2018; O'Neal, 2019; Sleath & Bull, 2017). Due to the online format of the survey, this research was limited to those with computer and internet access.

To expand on the limitations mentioned earlier, there was significant difficulty in obtaining law enforcement participation due to the sensitivity of the topic, a lack of resources due to size or recent budget cuts/defunding, suspicion despite the reassurance of complete anonymity, and concern regarding how law enforcement agencies will be portrayed due to the current volatile climate, as stated by numerous departments. The sample demographics may be accepted as generalizable to a degree, as multiple agencies within each state of the United States were contacted for participation. Variations in demographics showed that more variety could be obtained, such as males for the non-LE group. However, in the LEO group, more male participants were expected due to law enforcement being a male-dominated profession. Additionally, the total number of participants was small, with some demographics not comparable to the national averages causing some discrepancies for generalizability, however future research can expand on these findings with a larger and more diverse sample.

A final limitation of note was brought to my attention by a participant following their completion of the survey. This participant commented that due to the use of the

Likert Scale throughout the survey, they found themselves not thoroughly reading through all the questions about mid-way, but instead quickly marking "completely disagree" as this seemed the most "correct" response. This is an understandable bias; however, using the AMMSA scale (which was unknown to the participants), the verbiage and word order could not be changed. This is something to be considered for future use of the AMMSA scale.

I conducted all of this research with the utmost respect and integrity possible, with no dataset alterations. Computations were performed via IBM SPSS version 25 or newer for analysis. I promised and delivered complete anonymity for the participants and utilized valid and reliable research methods and tools throughout this research process.

Recommendations

Prior and current research discovered that more studies are needed to examine why law enforcement are continually shown to have higher scores of RMA. A qualitative study examining why officers chose specific response could bring additional insight into law enforcement agencies and their culture. Research like this would be necessary because it spotlights LEOs who should have mandated training and an understanding of the trauma that can impact victims of crime. By inquiring into LEO beliefs or statements could help self-awareness and further information on why they think and behave the way they do, hopefully leading to change. This research can also be expanded on by asking officers about their specific agency and how they believe, see, or hear perceptions that support RMA to examine further how law enforcement agencies are institutions that foster stereotypes surrounding sexual violence; however, it is understood that this may be

even more difficult to obtain honest responses due to fear of retaliation and reactions getting leaked despite the reassurance of anonymity.

Last, future research could examine variations with male victims and female perpetrators as overall it is stated that research in this area is lacking, most likely due to the even smaller numbers of male victims reporting sexual violence (Artime et al., 2014; Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Levine, 2018; Snipes et al., 2017; Spohn, 2020; Stuart et al., 2019; Wrede & Ask, 2015). Additional recommendations for potential research could examine the why behind male and female participants' responses regarding the victim responsibility and victim credibility.

Implications

Social Change

In this research I aimed to bring awareness and provide education about the issues and obstacles of sexual violence myths and stereotypes in LEOs and non-LE. At the individual level, I believe that this research causes each person to reflect on their own biases and perceived stereotypes regarding sexual violence and the victims. Due to the large numbers of victims, both reported and not (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016; Kahn et al., 2018; Spohn & Tellis, 2019), it is likely that sexual violence is closer than believed, either experienced first-hand or having a family member, friend, or acquaintance who has experienced such trauma. Thus, everyone must take on a trauma-informed mindset with empathy in their words and actions.

Secondly, it is imperative that this research, and others similar to, are shared and reviewed with an open mind. Education on sexual violence is crucial to combatting crime

and understanding how stereotypes and obstacles are expected and disastrous for victims. LEOs and agencies must recognize that rape myths are held and influence their beliefs and actions. Ultimately, awareness of sexual violence can lead to the renovation, modernization, and implementation of specialized sexual assault training for law enforcement agencies and marketing or campaigning for society as a whole.

Awareness and Education

Results of this research provides information on rape myths found in LEOs and predominantly males. It is essential for individuals in authoritative positions who have control over investigations and case progression to maintain accountability while improving future interactions with victims. Ultimately more trauma-informed interactions can lead to increases in victim reporting, reductions in shared rape myths, enhanced investigative efforts, and more convictions (Morabito et al., 2019; Sleath & Bull, 2017; Venema, 2016a; 2016b). The following paragraphs detail how law enforcement agencies can improve encounters with sexual victims while further influencing positive social change.

Training Recommendations for Law Enforcement Agencies

Training criminal justice personnel on rape myths, trauma, and sexual violence can assist in the reduction of case attrition and negative interactions between law enforcement. Most research on sexual violence and rape myths encourage LEOs' training, but there are contradictory results of its success (Franklin et al., 2019; Parratt & Pina, 2017; Spohn, 2020; Venema et al., 2019; Venema, 2018). Parratt and Pina (2017) found that although officers labeled training as valuable, it is unknown whether the

training will be enough to influence behavioral changes when officers return to their regular work environment.

Additionally, Franklin and others (2019) established that training has mixed results on attitudes and behavior and was not stable over time. Contrarily, additional research showed that training on sexual violence, trauma, and rape myths can help improve interview skills or behavior; however, it is difficult to assess whether perceptions were impacted (Lorenz & Masklay, 2018; Parratt & Pina, 2017). More importantly, research endorses the notion that initial and *ongoing* training is required for all criminal justice personnel to improve the process sexual assault victims endure when attempting to obtain justice (Coker et al., 2015; Mennicke et al., 2014; Spohn, 2020; Venema et al., 2019; Venema, 2018).

Trauma-Informed and Victim-Centered Approaches. Trauma-informed and victim-centered approaches allow both officers and prosecutors to be sensitive, build rapport with the victims, gather accurate and detailed information from the victim's perspective, avoid inconsistencies, and support victim credibility to reduce case attrition (Elntib et al., 2018; Hansen et al., 2015). Trauma-informed approaches focus on the mental, physical, and emotional aspects of a traumatic event (Campbell, Menaker et al., 2015; Spohn, 2020; Temkin et al., 2018). Rapport building is significant to support victim cooperation as police officers are most likely strangers; yet, sexual assault victims are expected to divulge some of the most intimate and traumatic experiences with them (Dando et al., 2016). Additionally, interactions with sexual assault victims should demonstrate empathy, respect, and a nonjudgmental environment (Coker et al., 2015;

IACP, 2015; Kirkner et al., 2017; White et al., 2019). Training on this approach helps LEOs to recognize signs of PTSD, shame, self-blame and delayed or inconsistent reporting as the norm, which can take significant pressure off of a victim. Understanding how sexual trauma affects a person can help LEOs engage victims in supportive manners; while they obtain allies in the investigative process and incite cooperation (Conroy & Scassa, 2016; Franklin et al., 2019; Patterson & Tringali, 2015; Spohn, 2020).

Additional trauma-informed approaches include creating an environment and physical space within the agency where potential triggers are removed so that sexual assault victims can come to feel safe and empowered to make decisions, are validated, have privacy, and receive information that is clear and meets the cognitive level of the victim (IACP, 2015; Lorenz & Maskaly, 2018; Patterson & Tringali, 2015; Rich, 2019; Westera et al. 2016).

When a sexual assault victim comes into an agency to report their crime, this may be their first and only experience with the criminal justice system; thus, despite the familiarity of law enforcement who know the entire process, it is pertinent for them to demystify it for the victims, keeping them informed during the whole process (Conroy & Scassa, 2016; Rich, 2019). More specifically, to support the victim, the victim's most essential needs must be met, such as medical care, clothes, food, and allow for "time outs" during interviews to help the victim feel cared for and reduce secondary victimization (Campbell, Menaker et al., 2015; Lorenz & Maskaly, 2018; Rich, 2019; Risan et al., 2016). Kirkner and others (2017) found that sexual assault victims expressed the need for all social support service providers to engage in active and supportive

listening, demonstrate acknowledgment, belief, empathy, and recognizing cultural sensitivity.

Most importantly, victim-centered professionals must be wary of the power dynamics of service personnel and the victims, but more so the "institutional and systemic oppression affecting victims, and social stigma" associated with sexual violence (Koss et al., 2017, p. 1024). Furthermore, environments must foster the empowerment of sexual assault victims as human beings versus another statistic or oddities to be studied (Koss et al., 2017). A change in perception is required by the criminal justice system, social support services, and society as a whole, from initial perceptions that sexual assault victims must be "treated for their problem," which further incites blame on the victim, but instead are empowered as citizens within a safe community, where perpetrators are held accountable and punished by the criminal justice system (Brownmiller, 1975; Muldoon et al., 2016).

Following sexual violence, victims will need *cultural humility* and *radical listening*. "Cultural humility is an expansive process of self-reflection, breaking down of power dynamics, and committing to a mutual and ongoing learning experience…Radical listening is about overcoming personal biases to become truly attentive to the critical issues that speaker(s) are expressing" (Koss et al., 2017, p. 1024). Utilizing radical listening endorses accepting and nonjudgmental awareness of the victims' responses despite contradictions with the listener's understanding or biases (Koss et al., 2017).

Rape Myth Training. Training on rape myths, the subtle forms in which they are brought into each phase of case processing, and how they invoke deceptive perceptions

by officers, prosecution, defense, judges, and juries is vital. All criminal justice personnel should be wary of pervasive gender stereotypes and sexism that are constant in sexual violence cases. Training on report writing is also crucial for LEOs to recognize and refrain from including persuasive language (Spohn, 2020). Smith and others (2016) examined police officers on a college campus. They found that those who had received training on trauma, victim sensitivity, and substance use in sexual assaults were less likely to endorse rape myths. Specialized training for prosecutors is also necessary to counter such extra-legal factors when incorporated in the court courtroom (Temkin et al., 2018).

Interview Recommendations

Prior research has recommended that law enforcement agencies transform their interrogative-style procedures most commonly used with suspects, such as the Reid Method (Dando et al., 2016; Heydon & Powell, 2018), to victim-centered and sensitive interviews for sexual assault victims. One of the most common suggestions is recording a victim's statement to limit the number of times a victim has to recount the traumatic event to reduce secondary victimization (Conroy & Scassa, 2016). Additionally, open-ended and non-leading questions that inquire about the victim's sensory experiences (smell, thoughts, emotions) can increase victim engagement, memory recall and appear less interrogative (Campbell, Menaker et al., 2015; Darwinkel et al., 2015).

Two types of interview techniques are most commonly referenced: cognitive *Interview* (CI) and *Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview* (FETI). The cognitive interview is well researched and generally accepted for enhancing witnesses' recollection

of events (Fisher & Cutler, 1995; Fisher & Geiselman, 1992). The cognitive interview has three core elements based on the psychological processing of the mind, memory and cognition, social dynamics, and finally, communication (Dando et al., 2016). Secondly, FETI aligns with open-ended, victim-centered questions and offers specific questions such as, *what are you able to remember?* or *what was the most challenging experience for you?* (Preston, 2016; Strand, 2019).

The interviewer must be well aware of the verbal and nonverbal signs of distress, traumatic symptoms, and emotional needs during the entire process while remaining supportive and empathetic (Risan et al., 2016). Most importantly, the interviewer must understand at what level the victim is operating according to their *window of tolerance* (Risan et al., 2016; Siegel, 1999; Siegel, 2010). A window of tolerance is the state in which the individual can fluctuate and continue to function healthily and manage their emotional state and thoughts. Victims of sexual violence, or other trauma, have a limited window of tolerance, where revictimization or other difficult experiences may cause them to become sympathetic hyperaroused, causing increased fear, anxiety, intrusive memories, and unable to regulate their emotions. The opposite effect occurs when a victim is parasympathetic hypoarousal, when the victim may become numb, passive, or depressed. Thus, knowledge and recognition of such responses are crucial for all criminal justice personnel to support accurate recollection, most notably in a sensitive manner (Risan et al., 2016).

Untested Rape Kits

Training criminal justice personnel is not the only avenue in need of improvement; there is a significant backlog of untested rape kits throughout the United States, Canada, and other European countries. Law enforcement agencies must take action on untested rape kits as signs of support and belief in sexual assault victims. Rape kits should not be limited to unknown perpetrator sexual assaults, although those may take priority, but should encompass all sexually violent offenses. Research and breaking news coverage have identified large amounts of untested rape kits dating back to 2009 throughout cities within the United States. Despite multicity summits held in major cities that brought together elected officials and practitioners to help resolve this issue, the overwhelming untested rape kits are a continued problem (Campbell, Shaw et al., 2015).

Specialized Rape Teams

Specialized sexual violence task forces have been a growing development in many agencies, with research supporting the success of such teams. Hansen and others (2019) discovered that multidisciplinary response forces increased rates of prosecution, investigative efforts, evidence collection, and overall interconnected growth and spread of information within the agencies officers. Additionally, Oehme and others (2015) recommended including more female LEOs on college campuses to assist in the underreported numbers of sexual violence. To improve the response, treatment, and support given to sexual assault victim advocates, some countries have suggested female-only police stations to protect cultural norms while still providing care. In countries with

strict customs related to the separation of men and women, female victims may feel more comfortable reporting to female LEOs (Carrington et al., 2019).

SART

Sexual Assault Response Teams (SART) are specially trained multi-disciplinary service teams to provide compressive care to sexual assault victims, including LEOs, prosecution personnel, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANEs), or other medical personnel, and victim advocates. SART responses will coordinate and offer support for victims to ensure all necessary services are provided, referrals are given, and help them navigate through the process (Cole, 2018; Moylan et al., 2017). SARTs can increase collaboration between the many groups and procedures that a sexual assault victim encounters (Greeson, 2015). They help bring together all of the essential personnel to improve the victims' experiences throughout the process (Greeson et al., 2016). Despite the success of such teams demonstrating increased reporting rates, arrests, and convictions, some research has shown inconsistent findings throughout agencies (Greeson, 2015; Henninger et al., 2019). Additionally, smaller jurisdictions outside of large cities cannot have such resources and teams (Koss et al., 2017).

SANE

Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) are specially trained nurses whose patients are victims of sexual violence who require compassionate medical care while also conducting themselves as unbiased medical investigators who must collect evidence through forensic exams (Moylan et al., 2017). A forensic examination has two primary functions, the collection of forensic evidence and providing medical care. The medical

treatment is primarily for injuries and pregnancy or Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) testing.

The forensic evidence portion is utilized to supplement the criminal case through documentation of injuries, evidence of force, substance use (as means of coercion), and test for any biological evidence from the perpetrator. This information can help a sexual assault case progress through the system due to the rape myths that are commonly considered when accepting a case. Unfortunately, trained SANE nurses and specialized facilities are not available in all states throughout the U.S., which can cause some victims to receive diminished care, be revictimized by unknowledgeable personnel, or be forced to drive for hours for an adequate facility. Furthermore, the lack of resources in small or rural areas may result in higher rates or unreported cases as victims prefer not to go through the hassle (Zweig et al., 2014).

Victim Advocates

Victim advocates are commonly utilized by sexual assault victims to act as liaisons for the victim and what they need. Victim advocates are most often volunteers and may or may not work out of a rape crisis center or community services office. A victim advocate's role is not to persuade the victim to make decisions on whether to pursue criminal charges; their role is to support and empower the victim to make their own decisions, provide resources and referrals, possibly accompany them to appointments or interviews as an additional and often unpaid support system. Victim advocacy can also inspire victim cooperation throughout the criminal justice system (Cole, 2018; Moylan et al., 2017; Patterson & Tringali, 2015).

A Subset of Society

Last, I reiterate and encourage support for law enforcement around the world who do not hold rape myths as truth and provide empathetic and authentic support for victims. It is understood that not all LEOs have direct encounters with victims of sexual assault and not all are obstacles to sexual assault victims' reporting. For LEOs and non-LE, who are inflicted with bias towards sexual assault victims, understand that the fault may not be entirely theirs due to a thwarted culture, however it is critical for all people to reflect and adopt that change is mandatory. This research brings awareness to rape myths that are higher in law enforcement and males, who, as a subset of society and a male-dominated organization, maybe fostering destructive ideologies. All individuals must understand that due to their belonging to a society that promotes rape culture, it is not surprising that a majority of people, and even those in positions of authority hold such perceptions. This research is a call to action to each person to dissect their own beliefs for traces of RMA, hold themselves and their local law enforcement accountable, and dawn a trauma-informed lens.

Conclusion

Sexual assault is a crime of violence, power, and control, not a crime of sex (Brownmiller, 1975; Canan & Levand, 2019; Egan, 2020), and with women, as the primary victims, it begs the question of why and how. With high numbers of sexual assaults unreported (Center for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2018; Gervais & Eagan, 2017), with male victims reporting even less (Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Levine, 2018; Snipes et al., 2017; Spohn, 2020; Stuart et al., 2019), it is imperative to examine

the obstacles to victims coming forward to seek justice. As discovered in this research, rape myths are significant hindrances because they have a biased focus on extra-legal factors versus legal, shifting perceptions towards victim blame and responsibility leading to secondary victimization (Dunn, 2015; Jordan, 2015; Huemmer et al., 2019; Shaw et al., 2017; Venema, 2018; Venema et al., 2019). As a result, victims can experience blame, shame, disbelief, and be stigmatized dependent on who the victims disclose to and their understanding of trauma (Carbone-Lopez et al., 2016; DePrince et al., 2019; Hockett et al., 2016; Lynch et al., 2017; Relyea & Ullman, 2015).

If a victim chooses to seek action legally, it is the duty of law enforcement agencies and the criminal justice system to treat these cases with respect, empathy, and diligence. However, due to a society that supports rape culture (Brownmiller, 1975; Herman, 1989; O'Neal, 2019; O'Neal & Hayes, 2019; Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1974), it is not surprising, as this research showed, that not only do males hold higher perceptions towards victim responsibility but LEO's have higher scores of RMA. LEOs who are labeled as gateways to the criminal justice system are often the first to interact with sexual assault victims, thus having an immense influence on how the case proceeds and how the victim is treated (Franiuk et al., 2019; Franklin et al., 2019; O'Neal & Spohn, 2017; Pattavina et al., 2016; Spohn, & Tellis, 2019; Spohn, 2020).

This research confirms that sexual violence victims who choose to report their assault will most likely encounter a LEO who holds rape myths to be true. Those that disclose to male relations will probably hold the victim responsible. It is my hope and intention that this research positively influences social change by raising awareness

within society as a whole to adopt a trauma-informed lens that results in victims obtaining the appropriate care, services, and responses following disclosure or reporting. Law enforcement agencies must acknowledge their shortcomings and responsibility in being institutions that foster rape myths by establishing Sexual Assault Reaction Teams, trauma-informed approaches, and renovated and modernized sexual assault training to maintain accountability while ultimately improving reporting rates, investigative efforts, and convictions for this devastating crime (Morabito et al., 2019; Sleath & Bull, 2017; Venema, 2016a; 2016b).

References

Aday, T. (2015). The effectiveness of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in

creating system-level change. *SPNHA Review*, *11*(1), 5-24.

https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/spnhareview/vol11/iss1/3

Albonetti, C. (1986). Criminality, prosecutorial screening, and uncertainty: Toward a

theory of discretionary decision making in felony case processing. *Criminology*,

24(4), 623-644. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1986.tb01505.x

Albonetti, C. (1987). Prosecutorial discretion: The effects of uncertainty. *Law & Society*

Review, *21*(2), 291-313. https://doi.org/10.2307/3053523

Alderden, M. A., & Ullman, S. E. (2012). Gender difference or indifference? Detective

decision making in sexual assault cases. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 27*(1),

3–22. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260511416465

Amodio, D. (2014). The neuroscience of prejudice and stereotyping. *National Review*

Neuroscience, 15(10), 670–682. https://doi.org/10.1038/nrn3800

Angelone, D., Mitchell, D., & Grossi, L. (2015). Men's perceptions of an acquaintance

rape: The role of relationship length, victim resistance, and gender role attitudes.

Journal of Interpersonal Violence, *30*(13), 2278–2303.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0886260514552448

Armstrong, E. A., Gleckman-Krut, M., & Johnson, L. (2018). Silence, power, and

inequality: An intersectional approach to sexual violence. *Annual Review of*

Sociology, *44*(1), 99-122. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-soc-073117- 041410

Arpin, S. N., Froehlich, L., Lantian, A., Rudert, S. C., & Stelter, M. (2017). When "We"

or "They" exclude others: Attributing and evaluating ostracism observed in in-groups and out-groups. *Comprehensive Results in Social Psychology*, *2*(2-3), 143-165. https://doi.org/10.1080/23743603.2017.1358477

Artime, T. M., McCallum, E. B., & Peterson, Z. D. (2014). Men's acknowledgment of their sexual victimization experiences. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, *15*(3), 313-323. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0033376

Banton, M. (1964). *The Policeman in the Community*. Basic Books.

Berger, R. J., Searles, P., & Neuman, W. L. (1988). The dimensions of rape reform legislation. *Law & Society Review, 22*(2), 329–358.

Bernard, P., Loughnan, S., Marchal, C., Godart, A., & Klein, O. (2015). The exonerating effect of sexual objectification: Sexual objectification decreases rapist blame in a stranger rape context. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, *72*(11-12), 499-508. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-015-0482-0

Bittner, E. (1970). *The Functions of the Police in Modern Society*. Oenschlager.

Black, D. (1983). Crime as social control. *American Sociological Review*, *48*(1), 34-45. https://doi.org/10.2307/2095143

Bongiorno, R., McKimmie, B. M., & Masser, B. M. (2016). The selective use of rape-victim stereotypes to protect culturally similar perpetrators. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *40*(3), 398-413. https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684316631932

Bohner, G., & Schapansky, E. (2018). Law student's judgments of a rape victim's statement: The role of displays of emotion and acceptance of sexual aggression myths. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, *12*, 1-13.

https://doi.org/10.4119/UNIBI/ijcv.635

Bridges, J. S. (1991). Perceptions of Date and Stranger Rape: A Difference in Sex Role

Expectations and Rape-Supportive Beliefs. *Sex Roles*, *24*(5–6), 291–307.

https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00288303

Brodsky, S. L., & Hobart, S. C. (1978). Blame models and assailant research. *Criminal

Justice and Behavior*, *5*(4), 379-388.

https://doi.org/10.1177/009385487800500409

Brownmiller, S. 1975. *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape.* Simon and Schuster.

Bryan, A. E., Norris, J., Abdallah, D. A., Stappenbeck, C. A., Morrison, D. M., Davis, K.

C., George, W. H., Danube, C. L., & Zawacki, T. (2016). Longitudinal change in

women's sexual victimization experiences as a function of alcohol consumption

in sexual victimization history: A latent transition analysis. *Psychology of

Violence, 6*(2), 271-279. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0039411

Bureau of Justice Statistics (2017). Criminal victimization, 2016. DOJ, Publication no.

NCJ 251150. Office of Justice Programs.

https://www.bjs.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv16.pdf

Burt, M. R., (1980). Cultural myths and supports for rape. *Journal of Personality and

Social Psychology, 38*(2), 217–230. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.38.2.217

Burt, M. R. (1991). *Rape myths and acquaintance rape*. In A. Parrot & L. Bechhofer

(Eds.), *Acquaintance Rape: The Hidden Crime* (pp. 26-40). John Wiley & Sons,

Inc.

Campbell, R., Greeson, M. R., Fehler-Cabral, G., & Kennedy, A. C. (2015). Pathways to

help: Adolescent sexual assault victims' disclosure and help-seeking experiences. *Violence Against Women*, *21*(7), 824–847. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1077801215584071

Campbell, B. A., Menaker, T. A., & King, W. R. (2015). The determination of victim credibility by adult and juvenile sexual assault investigators. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *43*(1), 29–39. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2014.12.001

Campbell, R., Shaw, J., & Fehler-Cabral, G., (2015) Shelving justice: The discovery of thousands of untested rape kits in Detroit. *City & Community 14*(2), 151–166. https://doi.org/10.1111/cico.12108

Campbell, D. T., & Stanley, J. C. (1963). *Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Designs For Research*. Houghton Mifflin.

Campeau, H. (2015). "Police culture" at work: Making sense of police oversight. *The British Journal of Criminology*, *55*(4), 669–687. http://www.jstor.org/stable/43819545

Canan S. N., Levand M. A. (2019) A feminist perspective on sexual assault. In: O'Donohue W., Schewe P. (eds) *Handbook of Sexual Assault and Sexual Assault Prevention*. Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-23645-8_1

Cantor, D., Fisher, B., Chibnall, Reanne Townsend, S., Hyunshik L., Bruce, C., & Thomas, G.. (2015, September 21). *Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct*: [Research Report]. Columbia University. The American Association of Universities. https://www.upenn.edu/ir/surveys/AAU/Report%20and%20Tables%20on%20AA

U%20Campus%20Climate%20Survey.pdf

Carbone-Lopez, K., Slocum, L. A., & Kruttschnitt, C. (2016). "Police wouldn't give you

   no help" female offenders on reporting sexual assault to police. *Violence Against*

   Women, *22*(3), 366-396. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801215602345

Carey, K. B., Durney, S. E., Shepardson, R. L., & Carey, M. P. (2015). Incapacitated and

   forcible rape of college women: Prevalence across the first year. *Journal of*

   Adolescent Health, *56*(6), 678-680.

   https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2015.02.018

Carpenter, E. R. (2017). An empirical look at commander bias in sexual assault

   cases. *Berkeley Journal of Criminal Law*, *22*(1), 101-145.

Carrington, K., Sozzo, M., Puyol, M. V., Gamboa, M. P., Guala, N., Ghiberto, L., &

   Zysman, D. (2019, March 21). *The role of women's police stations in widening*

   access to justice and eliminating gender violence. [United Nations 63rd

   Commission on the Status of Women, NGO Sessions].

   https://eprints.qut.edu.au/127632/

Ceelen, M., Dorn, T., Van Huis, F. S., & Reijnders, U. J. (2019). Characteristics and

   post-decision attitudes of non-reporting sexual violence victims. *Journal of*

   Interpersonal Violence, *34*(9), 1961-1977.

   https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0886260516658756

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). *Sexual violence prevention*.

   https://www.cdc.gov/features/sexualviolence/index.html

Conroy, A., & Scassa, T. (2016). Balancing transparency and accountability with privacy

in improving the police handling of sexual assaults. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, *28*(2), 342-373. http://dx.doi.org/10.3138/cjwl.28.2.342

Coker, D., Park, S., Goldscheid, J., Neal, T., & Halstead, V. (2015). Responses from the field: Sexual assault, domestic violence, and policing. *American Civil Liberties Union*. https://www.aclu.org/issues/womens-rights/violence-against-women/responses-field?redirect=responsesfromthefield

Cole, J. (2018). Structural, organizational, and interpersonal factors influencing interprofessional collaboration on sexual assault response teams. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *33*(17), 2682-2703. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0886260516628809

Cowley, A. D. (2014). "Let's get drunk and have sex": The complex relationship of alcohol, gender, and sexual victimization. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *29*(7), 1258-1278. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260513506289

Cuevas, K. M., Balbo, J., Duval, K., & Beverly, E. A. (2018). Neurobiology of sexual assault and osteopathic considerations for trauma-informed care and practice. *Journal of the American Osteopathic Association*, *118*(2), e2-e10. https://doi.org/10.7556/jaoa.2018.018

Dando, C. J., Geiselman, R. E., MacLeod, N., & Griffiths, A. (2016). Interviewing adult witnesses and victims. In G. Oxburgh, T. Myklebust, T. Grant, & R. Milne (Eds.), *Wiley series in the psychology of crime, policing and law. Communication in investigative and legal contexts: Integrated approaches from forensic psychology, linguistics and law enforcement* (pp. 79–106). Wiley Blackwell.

Darwinkel, E., Powell, M., & Sharman, S. J. (2015). Police and prosecutors' perceptions of adult sexual assault evidence associated with case authorization and conviction. *Journal of Police Criminal Psychology*, *30*(4), 213-220. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-015-9162-9

De Becker, G. (1997). *The Gift of Fear and Other Survival Signals that Protect us from Violence.* Little, Brown.

DeCou, C. R., Cole, T. T., Lynch, S. M., Wong, M. M., & Matthews, K. C. (2017). Assault-related shame mediates the association between negative social reactions to disclosure of sexual assault and psychological distress. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, *9*(2), 166–172. https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000186

Delgado, R. (1985). Rotten social background: Should the criminal law recognize a defense of severe environmental deprivation? *Law and Inequality Journal, 3*(1), 9-90. https://scholarship.law.umn.edu/lawineq/vol3/iss1/2

DePrince, A. P., Dmitrieva, J., Gagnon, K. L., & Srinivas, T. (2017). Women's experiences of social reactions from informal and formal supports: Using a modified administration of the Social Reactions Questionnaire. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 1-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517742149

DePrince, A. P., Wright, N., Gagnon, K. L., Srinivas, T., & Labus, J. (2019). Social reactions and women's decisions to report sexual assault to law enforcement. *Violence Against Women*, *26*(5), 399-416. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801219838345

 Dershowitz, A. M. (1994). *The Abuse Excuse.* Little, Brown.

Dhami, M. K., Lundrigan, S. & Thomas, S. (2018). Police discretion in rape

cases. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, *35*, 157–169.

https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-018-9299-4

Dinos, S., Burrowes, N., Hammond, K., & Cunliffe, C. (2015). A systematic review of

juries' assessment of rape victims: Do rape myths impact on juror decision-

making? *International Journal of Law, Crime, and Justice*, *43*(1), 36-49.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcj.2014.07.001

Donde, S. D. (2015). College women's attributions of blame for experiences of sexual

assault. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. *32*(22), 3520-3538.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260515599659

Downey, R. G., & King, C. V. (1998). Missing data in Likert ratings: A comparison of

replacement methods. *Journal of General Psychology, 125*(2), 175-191.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00221309809595542

Dworkin, E., Pittenger, S., & Allen, N. (2016). Disclosing sexual assault within social

networks: A mixed-methods investigation. *American Journal of Community

Psychology*, *57*(1-2), 216-228. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12033

Dworkin, E. R., Newton, E., & Allen, N. E. (2018). Seeing roses in the thorn bush:

Sexual assault survivors' perceptions of social reactions. *Psychology of

Violence*, *8*(1), 100–109. https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000082

Dunn, D. (2015). Prevention is possible: Aligning priorities to end sexual

violence. *William Mitchell Law Review*, *41*(3), 869-885.

https://open.mitchellhamline.edu/wmlr/vol41/iss3/5

Eagly A. H., & Wood, W. (2013). The nature-nurture debates: 25 years of challenges in understanding the psychology of gender. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 8*(3), 340–357. https://doi.org/10.1177/1745691613484767

Egan S. (2020) Sexual assault as feminist knowledge. In: *Putting Feminism to Work*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-22109-6_3

Eisend, M. (2019). Gender roles. *Journal of Advertising*, *48*(1), 72-80. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2019.1566103

Ellemers, N. (2018). Gender stereotypes. *Annual Review of Psychology*, *69*(1), 275–298. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-122216-011719

Elntib, S., McPherson, P., Ioannou, M., & Addy, D. (2018). When sex is more than just sex: Evaluating police perspectives regarding the challenges in interviewing victims of sexual offences in Jamaica. *Policing and Society*, *30*(3), 255-275. https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2018.1511712

Elliott, M. A., Thomson, J. A., Robertson, K., Stephenson, C., & Wicks, J. (2013). Evidence that changes in social cognitions predict changes in self-reported driver behavior: Causal analyses of two-wave panel data. *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, *50*, 905- 916. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.aap.2012.07.017

Endendijk, J. J., Groeneveld, M. G., van der Pol, L. D., van Berkel, S. R., Hallers-Haalboom, E. T., Mesman, J., & Bakermans-Kranenburg, M. J. (2014). Boys don't play with dolls: Mothers' and fathers' gender talk during picture book reading. *Parenting: Science and Practice, 14*(3-4), 141–

161. https://doi.org/10.1080/15295192.2014.972753

Engqvist, L. (2005). The mistreatment of covariate interaction terms in linear model analyses of behavioural and evolutionary ecology studies. *Animal Behaviour, 70*(4), 967–971. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.anbehav.2005.01.016

Estrich, S. (1987). *Real Rape.* Harvard University Press.

Eyssel, F., & Bohner, G. (2008). Modern rape myths: The Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression (AMMSA) Scale. In M. A. Morrison & T. G. Morrison (Eds.), *The Psychology of Modern Prejudice*. (pp. 261-276). Nova Science Publishers.

Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2004). *Uniform Crime Reporting Handbook*. U.S. Department of Justice.

Federal Bureau of Investigation. (2013). *Rape.* https://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/ucr/crime-in-the-u.s/2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/violent-crime/rape

Federal Bureau of Investigations. (2011, December 30). *Rape definition changed.* https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2013/crime-in-the-u.s.-2013/rape-addendum/rape_addendum_final

Ferguson, M. J., & Zayas, V. (2009). Automatic evaluation. *Current Directions in Psychological Science, 18*(6), 362-366. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8721.2009.01668.x

Finkelhor, D., & Yllo, K. (1985). *License to Rape: Sexual Abuse of Wives*. Free Press.

Fischer, C. T., & Wertz, F. J. (1979). Empirical phenomenological analyses of being criminally victimized. In A. Giorgi, R. Knowles, & D. L. Smith (Eds.), *Duquesne*

Studies in Phenomenological Psychology (Vol. 3, pp. 135-158). Duquesne

University Press.

Fisher, R. P., & Cutler, B. L. (1995). Relation between consistency and accuracy of

eyewitness testimony. In G. M. Davies, S. Lloyd-Bostock, M. McMurran, & C.

Wilson (Eds.), *Psychology and Law: Advances in Research* (pp. 21–28).

DeGruyter.

Fisher, R. P., & Geiselman, R. E. (1992). *Memory-Enhancing Techniques for*

Investigative Interviewing: The Cognitive Interview. Charles C. Thomas.

Fiske, S., & Taylor, S. (1991). *Social Cognition*. Random House.

Flatley, J. (2018). Sexual offences in England and Wales: Year ending March 2017.

Office for National Statistics.

https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/

Fohring, S. (2015). An integrated model of victimization as an explanation of non-

involvement with the criminal justice system. *International Review of*

Victimology, 21(1), 45–70. https://doi.org/10.1177/0269758014547993

Ford, C. (2019). *Boys Will Be Boys: Power, Patriarchy And Toxic Masculinity*. Simon

and Schuster.

Francis, B. (1999). Lads, lasses and (new) labour: 14–16 year old students' responses to

'laddish behaviour and boys' underachievement debate. *British Journal of*

Education, 20(3), 353–371. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01425699995317

Frank, D. J., Hardinge, T., & Wosick-Correa, K. (2009). The global dimensions of rape-

law reform: A cross-national study of policy outcomes. *American Sociological*

Review, *74*(2), 272–290. https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240907400206

Franklin, C. A. & Garza, A. D. (2018). Sexual assault disclosure: The effect of victim race and perpetrator type on empathy, culpability, and service referral for survivors in a hypothetical scenario. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518759656

Franklin, C. A., Garza, A. D., Goodson, A., & Bouffard, L. A. (2019). Police perceptions of crime victim behaviors: A trend analysis exploring mandatory training and knowledge of sexual and domestic violence survivors' trauma responses. crime & delinquency, *66*(8), 1055-1086. https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128719845148

Franiuk, R., Luca, A., & Robinson, S. (2019). The effects of victim and perpetrator characteristics on ratings of guilt in a sexual assault case. *Violence Against Women*, *26*(6–7), 614–635. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801219840439

Fredrickson, B., Roberts, T. A., (1997). Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 21*(2),173–206. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00108.x

Frieze, I. H., Hymer, S., & Greenberg, M. S. (1987). Describing the crime victim: Psychological reactions to victimization. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, *18*(4), 299–315. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0735-7028.18.4.299

Frohmann, L. (1991). Discrediting victims' allegations of sexual assault: Prosecutorial accounts of case rejections. *Social Problems*, *38*(2), 213–226. https://doi.org/10.1525/sp.1991.38.2.03a00070

Frohmann, L. (1997). Convictability and discordant locales: Reproducing race, class, and

gender ideologies in prosecutorial decisionmaking. *Law & Society Review*, *31*(3),

531-555. https://doi.org/10.2307/3054045

Fulcher, M., & Hayes, A. R. (2018). Building a pink dinosaur: The effects of gendered

construction toys on girls' and boys' play. *Sex Roles*, *79*(5-6), 273-284.

https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1007/s11199-017-0806-3

Gerger, H., Kley, H., Bohner, G., & Siebler, F. (2007). The Acceptance of Modern Myths

About Sexual Aggression (AMMSA) scale: Development and validation in

German and English. Aggressive Behavior, *33*(5), 422-440.

https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20195

Gervais, S. J., & Eagan, S. (2017). Sexual objectification: The common thread

connecting myriad forms of sexual violence against women. *American Journal of

Orthopsychiatry*, *87*(3), , 226–232. https://doi.org/10.1037/ort0000257

Gleason, J. M., & Harris, V. A. (1976). Group discussion and defendant's socio-

economic status as determinants of judgments by simulated jurors. *Journal of

Applied Social Psychology*, *6*(2), 186-191. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-
1816.1976.tb01323.x

Golding, J. M., Lynch, K. R., & Wasarhaley, N. E. (2016). Impeaching rape victims in

criminal court: Does concurrent civil action hurt justice? *Journal of Interpersonal

Violence*, *31*(19), 3129-3149. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260515584342

Gordon, R. A., Bindrim, T. A., McNicholas, M. L., & Walden, T. L. (1988). Perceptions

of blue-collar and white-collar crime: The effect of defendant race on simulated

juror decisions. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, *128*(2), 191-197.

https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1988.9711362

Gravelin, C.R., Biernat, M., & Baldwin, M. (2019). The impact of power and power

blaming the victim of sexual assault. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*,

22(1), 98-115. https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430217706741

Gray, J. M. (2015). What constitutes a reasonable belief in consent to sex? A thematic

analysis. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, *21*(3), 337-353.

https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2014.900122

Gray, J. M., & Horvath, M. A. H. (2018). Rape myths in the criminal justice system. In E.

Milne, K. Brennan, N. South, & J. Turton (Eds.), *Women and the criminal justice*

system (pp. 15–41). Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-76774-1_2

Greeson, M. R. (2015). Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) functioning and

effectiveness: Findings from the National SART Project (National Sexual

Violence Resource Center Research Brief).

https://www.nsvrc.org/publications/research-briefs/sexual-assault-response-team-

sart-functioning-and-effectiveness

Greeson, M. R., Campbell, R., & Fehler-Cabral, G. (2016). "Nobody deserves this":

Adolescent sexual assault victims' perceptions of disbelief and victim blame from

police. *Journal of Community Psychology*, *44*(1), 90-110.

https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21744

Groth, A. N., & Burgess, A. W. (1980). Male rape: Offenders and victims. *The American*

Journal of Psychiatry, *137*(7), 806-810. https://doi.org/10.1176/ajp.137.7.806

Hankin, C. S., Skinner, K. M., Sullivan, L. M., Miller, D. R., Frayne, S., & Tripp, T. J. (1999). Prevalence of depressive and alcohol abuse symptoms among women V.A. outpatients who report experiencing sexual assault while in the military. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, *12*(4), 601. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1024760900213

Hansen, N. B., Nielsen, L. H., Bramsen, R. H., Ingemann-Hansen, O., & Elklit, A. (2015). Attrition in Danish rape reported crimes. *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology*, *30*(4), 221-228. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801217710002

Hansen, N. B., Hansen, M., Campbell, R., Elklit, A., Hansen, O. I., & Bramsen, R. H. (2019). Are rape cases closed because of rape stereotypes? Results from a Danish police district. *Nordic Psychology*, *71*(1), 51-61. https://doi.org/10.1080/19012276.2018.1470552

Hawkins, D. (1981). Causal attribution and punishment for crime. *Deviant Behavior*, *2*(3), 207-230. https://doi.org/10.1080/01639625.1981.9967554

Henninger, A. L., Iwasaki, M., Carlucci, M. E., & Lating, J. M. (2019). Reporting sexual assault: survivors' satisfaction with sexual assault response personnel. *Violence Against Women*, *26*(11), 1362–1382. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801219857831

Herman, D. F. (1989). The rape culture. In J. Freeman (Ed.), *Women: A Feminist Perspective* (pp. 45–53). Mayfield Publishing Company.

Heumann, M., Jaslove, A., Zhou, E., & Cassak, L. (2019). Going with your gut: 'hunches' and 'hunching' in judicial decision-making. *Criminal Law Bulletin*, *55*(1).

Heydon, G., & Powell, A. (2018) Written-response interview protocols: An innovative

approach to confidential reporting and victim interviewing in sexual assault

investigations, *Policing and Society*, *28*(6), 631-

646, https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2016.1187146

Hine, B., & Murphy, A. (2017). The impact of victim-perpetrator relationship, reputation

and initial point of resistance on officers' responsibility and authenticity ratings

towards hypothetical rape cases. Journal of criminal justice, *49*, 1-13.

https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2017.01.001

Hine, B., & Murphy, A. (2019). The influence of 'High' vs. 'Low' rape myth acceptance

on police officers' judgements of victim and perpetrator responsibility, and rape

authenticity. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *60*(2019), 100-107.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2018.08.001

Hockett, J. M., Smith, S. J., Klausing, C. D., & Saucier, D. A. (2016). Rape myth

consistency and gender differences in perceiving rape victims: A meta-analysis.

Violence Against Women, *22*(2), 139

167. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801215607359

Hohl, K., & Stanko, E. (2015). Complaints of rape and the criminal justice system: Fresh

evidence on the attrition problem in England and Wales. *European Journal of

Criminology*, *12*(3), 324–341. https://doi.org/10.1177/1477370815571949

Holland, K. J., Gustafson, A. M., Cortina, L. M., & Cipriano, A. E. (2020). Supporting

survivors: The roles of rape myths and feminism in university resident assistants'

response to sexual assault disclosure scenarios. *Sex Roles*, *82*(3-4), 206-218.

https://doi.org/10.1007/S11199-019-01048-6

Holmstrom, L. L., & Burgess, A. W. (1983). *The Victim of Rape: Institutional reactions*. Transaction Books.

Horan, L., & Beauregard, E. (2018). Sexual violence against marginalized victims: Choice of victim or victim of choice? *Victims & Offenders*, *13*(2), 277-291. https://doi.org/10.1080/15564886.2016.1232326

Huemmer, J., McLaughlin, B., & Blumell, L. E. (2019). Leaving the past (self) behind: Non-reporting rape survivors' narratives of self and action. *Sociology*, *53*(3), 435–450. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038518773926

Hust, S. J. T., Rodgers, K. B., & Bayly, B. (2017). Scripting sexual consent: Internalized traditional sexual scripts and sexual consent expectancies among college students. *Family Relations*, *66*(1):197–210. https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12230

International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP). (2015). Sexual assault response: Policy and training content guidelines. https://www.theiacp.org/resources/sexual-assault-response-policy-and-training-content-guidelines

James, W. (1890) *The Principles of Psychology*. Vol. 1. Henry Holt.

Janoff-Bulman, R. (1979). Characterological versus behavioral self-blame: Inquiries into depression and rape. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *37*(10), 1798-1809. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.37.10.1798

Johnson, H. (2017). Why doesn't she just report it? Apprehensions and contradictions for women who report sexual violence to the police. *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law*, *29*(1), 36-59. https://doi.org/10.3138/cjwl.29.1.36

Johnson, K., Ju, H., & Wu, J. (2016). Young adults' inferences surrounding an alleged

    sexual assault: Alcohol consumption, gender, dress, and appearance schematicity.

    Clothing and Textiles Research Journal, *34*(2), 127-142.

    https://doi.org/10.1177/0887302X15624550

Jordan, J. (2015). Justice for rape victims? The spirit may sound willing, but the flesh

    remains weak. In *Crime, Victims and Policy.* (pp. 84-106). Palgrave Macmillan.

    https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137383938_5

Kahn Academy. (2014, October 23). Ethnocentrism and cultural relativism in group and

    out group (video). https://www.khanacademy.org/test-prep/mcat/individuals-and-

    society/perception-prejudice-and-bias/v/ethnocentrism-and-cultural-relativism-in-

    group-and-out-group

Kahn, S. R., Hirsch, J. S., Wamboldt, A., & Mellins, C. A., (2018). "I didn't want to be

    'that girl'": The social risks of labeling, telling, and reporting sexual

    assault. *Sociological Science*, 5, 432- 460. https://doi.org/10.15195/v5.a19

Kaiser, K. A., O'Neal, E. N., & Spohn, C. (2017). "Victim refuses to cooperate": A focal

    concerns analysis of victim cooperation in sexual assault cases. *Victims &*

    Offenders, *12*(2), 297-322.

    https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1080/15564886.2015.1078864

Kerstetter, W. A. (1990). Gateway to justice: Police and prosecutorial response to sexual

    assaults against women. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, *81*(2), 267-

    313. https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/193957368.pdf

Kerstetter, W. A., & Van Winkle, B. (1990). Who decides? A study of the complainant's

decision to prosecute in rape cases. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *17*(3), 268–
283. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854890017003003

King, R. A., Scott, K. E., Renno, M. P., & Shutts, K. (2020). Counterstereotyping can
change children's thinking about boys' and girls' toy preferences. *Journal of
Experimental Child Psychology*, *191*, 104753.
https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jecp.2019.104753

Kirkner, A., Lorenz, K., & Ullman, S. E. (2017). Recommendations for responding to
survivors of sexual assault: A qualitative study of survivors and support providers.
Journal of Interpersonal Violence. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517739285

Kline, R. B. (2016). *Principles and Practice of Structural Equation Modeling* (4th ed.).
Guilford Press.

Kline, N. K., Berke, D. S., Rhodes, C. A., Steenkamp, M. M., & Litz, B. T. (2018). Self-
blame and PTSD following sexual assault: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of
interpersonal violence*, *36*(5–6), NP3153–NP3168.
https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518770652

Koren, M. (2016, June 6). Telling the story of the Stanford rape case. *The Atlantic*.
http://www.theatlantic.com/news/archive/2016/06/stanford-sexual-assault-
letters/485837/

Koss, M. P. (1985). The hidden rape victim: Personality, attitudinal, and situational
characteristics. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *9*(2), 193-212.
https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1985.tb00872.x

Koss, M. P., Dinero, T. E., & Seibel, C. A. (1988). Stranger and acquaintance rape: Are

there differences in the victim's experience? *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 12(1), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1988.tb00924.x

Koss, M. P., White, J. W., & Lopez, E. C. (2017). Victim voice in reenvisioning responses to sexual and physical violence nationally and internationally. *American Psychologist*, *72*(9), 1019-1030. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000233

Krahé, B. (2016). Societal responses to sexual violence against women: Rape myths and the "real rape" stereotype. In H. Kury, S. Redo, & E. Shea (Eds.), *Women and Children as Victims and Offenders:Background, Prevention, Reintegration*, (pp. 671–700). Springer. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-08398-8_24

LaFree, G. D. (1980). The effect of sexual stratification by race on official reactions to rape. *American Sociological. Review*, *45*(5), 842–854. https://doi.org/10.2307/2094898

LaFree, G. D., (1981). Official reactions to social problems: Police decisions in sexual assault cases. *Social Problems*, *28*(5), 582–94. https://doi.org/10.2307/800232

LaFree, G., Reskin, V. F., & Visher, C. A. (1985). Jurors' response to victims' behaviour and legal issues in sexual assault trials. *Social Problems. 32*(4), 389–407. https://doi.org/10.2307/800760

LaFree, G. D. (1989). *Rape and Criminal Justice: The Social Construction of Sexual Assault*. Wadsworth.

Lankford, A. (2016). Are there reasons for optimism in the battle against sexual assault? *Sociology Compass*, *10*(1), 38-47. https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12341

Legal Momentum. (2017). *History of the Violence Against Women Act*.

https://www.legalmomentum.org/history-vawa

Lehner, E. A. (2017). Rape process templates: A hidden cause of the underreporting of rape. *Yale Journal of Law & Feminism*, *29*, 207. https://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/yjlf/vol29/iss1/5

Lerner, M. J., & Miller, D. T. (1978). Just world research and the attribution process: Looking back and ahead. *Psychological Bulletin*, *85*(5), 1030-1051. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.85.5.1030

Levine, E. C. (2018). Sexual scripts and criminal statutes: Gender restrictions, spousal allowances, and victim accountability after rape law reform. *Violence Against Women*, *24*(3), 322-349. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801216687876

Lipsky, M. (1976). *Towards A Theory of Street Level Bureaucracy*. In W. D. Hawley, M.

Lipsky, S. B. Greenberg, J. D. Greenstone, I. Katznelson, K. Orren, ... D. Yates (Eds.), *Theoretical Perspectives on Urban Policy*, (pp. 196-213). Prentice Hall.

Lipsky, M. (1980). *Street Level Bureaucracy: Dilemmas of The Individual in Public Services*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Logan, T., Walker, R., & Cole, J. (2015). Silenced suffering: The need for better measures of partner sexual violence. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, *16*(2), 111–135. http://dx.doi.org/10. 1177/1524838013518560

Long, L. M. (2018). Rape victim advocates experiences with law enforcement in the emergency room. *Feminist Criminology*, *13*(5), 498–515. https://doi.org/10.1177/1557085116687033

Lonsway, K. A., & Fitzgerald, L. F. (1994). Rape myths: In review. *Psychology of*

Women Quarterly, *18*(2), 133-164. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1994.tb00448.x

Lorenz, K., & Maskaly, J. (2018). The relationship between victim attitudes, training, and behaviors of sexual assault investigators. *Journal of Crime and Justice*, *41*(1), 81-97. https://doi.org/10.1080/0735648X.2016.1218356

Lorenz, K., & Ullman, S. E. (2016). Exploring correlates of alcohol-specific social reactions in alcohol-involved sexual assaults. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment, and Trauma*, *25*(10), 1058-1078. https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2016.1219801

Lundrigan, S., Dhami, M., & Agudelo, K. (2019). Factors predicting conviction in stranger rape cases. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*, 1-12. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.00526

Lynch, K. R., Jewell, J. A., Wasarhaley, N. E., Golding, J. M., & Renzetti, C. M. (2017). Great sexpectations: The impact of participant gender, defendant desirability, and date cost on attributions of a date rape victim and defendant. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *35*(17-18), 3437-3461. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517709800

Martin, P. Y. (2016). The rape prone culture of academic contexts: Fraternities and athletics. *Gender & Society*, *30*(1), 30-43. https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243215612708

Martin, C. E., Vujanovic, A. A., Paulus, D. J., Bartlett, B., Gallagher, M. W., & Tran, J. K. (2017). Alcohol use and suicidality in firefighters: Associations with

depressive symptoms and posttraumatic stress. *Comprehensive psychiatry*, *74*, 44-
52. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.comppsych.2017.01.002

Marx, B. P., Forsyth, J. P., Gallup, G. G., Fusé, T., & Lexington, J. M. (2008). Tonic
immobility as an evolved predator defense: Implications for sexual assault
survivors. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice, 15*(1), 74–
90. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2850.2008.00112.x

Maurer, T. W. (2016). Perceptions of incapacitated heterosexual sexual assault:
Influences of relationship status, perpetrator intoxication, and post-assault
sleeping arrangements. *Violence Against Women*, *22*(7), 780-797.
https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801215612599

McCray, K. L. (2015). Intercollegiate athletes and sexual violence: A review of literature
and recommendations for future study. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, *16*(4), 438-
443. https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838014537907

McMillan, L. (2018). Police officers' perceptions of false allegations of rape. *Journal of
Gender Studies*, *27*(1), 9-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2016.1194260

McKimmie, B. M., Antrobus, E., & Baguley, C. (2014). Objective and subjective
comprehension of jury instructions in criminal trials. *New Criminal Law Review:
An International and Interdisciplinary Journal*, *17*(2), 163-183.
https://doi.org/10.1525/nclr.2014.17.2.163

McKimmie, B. M., Masser, B. M., & Bongiorno, R. (2014). What counts as rape? The
effect of offense prototypes, victim stereotypes, and participant gender on how the
complainant and defendant are perceived. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*,

29(12), 2273-2303. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260513518843

Meeker, K. A., O'Neal, E. N., & Hayes, B. E. (2019). Policing and prosecuting sexual

assault: An examination of arrest and initial filing decisions in cases involving

adolescent complainants. Justice Quarterly, *38*(5), 1-22.

https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2019.1679863

Mellins, C. A., Walsh, K., Sarvet, A. L., Wall, M., Gilbert, L., Santelli, J. S., Thompson,

M., Wilson, P. A., Khan, S., Benson, S., Bah, K., Kaufman, K. A., Reardon, L., &

Hirsh, J. S. (2017). Sexual assault incidents among college undergraduates:

Prevalence and factors associated with risk. *Plos One*, *12*(11), 1-23.

https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0186471

Menaker, T. A., & Franklin, C. A. (2015). Gendered violence and victim blame: Subject

perceptions of blame and the appropriateness of services for survivors of domestic

sex trafficking, sexual assault, and intimate partner violence. *Journal of Crime

and Justice*, *38*(3), 395-413. https://doi.org/10.1080/0735648X.2014.996321

Mennicke, A., Anderson, D., Oehme, K., & Kennedy, S. (2014). Law enforcement

officers' perception of rape and rape victims: A multimethod study. *Violence and

Victims*, *29*(5), 814–827. https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-13-00017

Messman-Moore, T., Ward, R. M., Zerubavel, N., Chandley, R. B., & Barton, S. N.

(2015). Emotion dysregulation and drinking to cope as predictors and

consequences of alcohol-involved sexual assault: Examination of short-term and

long-term risk. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *30*(4), 601–621.

http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0886260514535259

Miller, A. G. (1970). Role of physical attractiveness in impression formation. *Psychonomic Science*, *19*, 241-243. https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03328797

Miron, L. R., & Orcutt, H. K. (2014). Pathways from childhood abuse to prospective revictimization: Depression, sex to reduce negative affect, and forecasted sexual behavior. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 38*(11)*, 1848–1859. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2014.10.004

Morabito, M. S., Pattavina, A., & Williams, L. M. (2019). It all just piles up: Challenges to victim credibility accumulate to influence sexual assault case processing. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *34*(15), 3151-3170. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260516669164

Moylan, C. A., Lindhorst, T., & Tajima, E. A. (2017). Contested discourses in multidisciplinary Sexual Assault Response Teams (SARTs). *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *32*(1), 3-22. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260515585530

Muldoon, S. D., Taylor, S. C., & Norma, C. (2016). The survivor master narrative in sexual assault. *Violence Against Women*, *22*(5), 565-587. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1177/1077801215608701

Murphy, A., & Hine, B. (2019). Investigating the demographic and attitudinal predictors of rape myth acceptance in U.K. Police officers: Developing an evidence-base for training and professional development. *Psychology, Crime, and Law, 25*(1), 69-89. https://doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2018.1503663

Neubauer, D. W. (1973). After the arrest: The charging decision in Prairie City. *Law & Society Review*, *8*(3), 495-517. https://doi.org/10.2307/3053085

Nichols, K. (2018). Moving beyond ideas of laddism: Conceptualising 'mischievous masculinities' as a new way of understanding everyday sexism and gender relations. *Journal of Gender Studies*, *27*(1), 73-85. https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2016.1202815

Nitschke, F. T., McKimmie, B. M., & Vanman, E. J. (2019). A meta-analysis of the emotional victim effect for female adult rape complainants: Does complainant distress influence credibility? *Psychological Bulletin*, *145*(10), 953– 979. https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000206

Nisbett, R. E., & Wilson, T. D. (1977). The halo effect: Evidence for unconscious alteration of judgments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *35*(4), 250- 256. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.35.4.250

Norman, S. B., Haller, M., Hamblen, J. L., Southwick, S. M., & Pietrzak, R. H. (2018). The burden of co-occurring alcohol use disorder and PTSD in U.S. Military veterans: Comorbidities, functioning, and suicidality. *Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, *32*(2), 224. https://doi.org/10.1037/adb0000348

O'Brien, C., Keith, J., & Shoemaker, L. (2015). Don't tell: Military culture and male rape. *Psychological Services*, *12*(4), 357-365. https://doi.org/10.1037/ser0000049

Oehme, K., Stern, N., & Mennicke, A. (2015). A deficiency in addressing campus sexual assault: The lack of women law enforcement officers. *Harvard Journal of Law & Gender*, *38*(2), 337-372. https://ir.law.fsu.edu/articles/445

O'Neal, E. N., Tellis, K., & Spohn, C. (2015). Prosecuting intimate partner sexual assault: Legal and extra-legal factors that influence charging decisions. *Violence*

Against Women, *21*(10), 1237-1258. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801215591630

O'Neal, E. N. (2017) Victim cooperation in intimate partner sexual assault cases: A mixed methods examination. *Justice Quarterly*, *34*(6), 1014-1043. https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2016.1244285

O'Neal, E. N., & Spohn, C. (2017). When the perpetrator is a partner: Arrest and charging decisions in intimate partner sexual assault cases—A focal concerns analysis. *Violence Against Women*, *23*(6), 707-729. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801216650289

O'Neal, E. N., & Kaiser, K. A. (2015). Resistance strategies and sexual assault outcomes: Do measurement decisions influence empirical findings? *Criminology, Criminal Justice, Law & Society*, *16*(2), 56-73. https://scholasticahq.com/criminology-criminal-justice-law-society/

O'Neal, E. N., Beckman, L. O., & Spohn, C. (2019). The sexual stratification hypothesis: Is the decision to arrest influenced by the victim/suspect racial/ethnic dyad? *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 34*(6), 1287-1310. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260516651093

O'Neal, E. N., & Hayes, B. E. (2019). "A rape is a rape, regardless of what the victim was doing at the time": Detective views on how "problematic" victims affect sexual assault case processing. *Criminal Justice Review*, *45*(1), 26-44. https://doi.org/10.1177/0734016819842639

O'Neal, E. N. (2019). "Victim is not credible": The influence of rape culture on police perceptions of sexual assault complainants. *Justice Quarterly*, *36*(1), 127-160.

https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2017.1406977

Osborne, Y., & Rappaport, N. (1985). Sentencing severity with mock jurors: Predictive validity of three variable categories. *Behavioral Sciences and the Law*, *3*(4), 467-473. https://doi.org/10.1002/bsl.2370030411

Parratt, K. A., & Pina, A. (2017). From "real rape" to real justice: A systematic review of police officers' rape myth beliefs. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *34*, 68–83. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2017.03.005

Pattavina, A., Morabito, M., & Williams, L.M. (2016). Examining connections between the police and prosecutors in sexual assault case processing: Does the use of exceptional clearance facilitate a downstream orientation? *Victims & Offenders*, *11*(2) 315–334. https://doi.org/10.1080/15564886.2015.1046622

Patterson, D., & Tringali, B. (2015). Understanding how advocates can affect sexual assault victim engagement in the criminal justice process. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *30*(12), 1987-1997. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260514552273

Payne, D. L., Lonsway, K. A., & Fitzgerald, L. F. (1999). Rape myth acceptance: Exploration of its structure and its measurement using the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *33*(1), 27–68. http://dx.doi.org/10.1006/jrpe.1998.2238

Peter-Hagene, L. C., & Ullman, S. E. (2014). Social reactions to sexual assault disclosure and problem drinking: Mediating effects of perceived control and PTSD. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *29*(8), 1418–1437.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260513507137

Peter-Hagene, L., & Ullman, S. E. (2015). Sexual assault characteristics effects on PTSD

and psychosocial mediators: A cluster analysis approach to sexual assault types.

Psychological Trauma, *7*(2), 162-170. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0037304

Peter-Hagene, L. P., & Ullman, S. E. (2016). Longitudinal effects of sexual assault

victims' drinking and self-blame on PTSD. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*,

33(1), 83-93. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260516636394

Phipps, A., Ringrose, J., Renold, E., & Jackson, C. (2018). Rape culture, lad culture and

everyday sexism: Researching, conceptualizing and politicizing new mediations

of gender and sexual violence. *Journal of Gender Studies*, *27*(1), 1-8.

https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2016.1266792

Pica, E., Sheahan, C., & Pozzulo, J. (2017). "But he's a star football player!": How social

status influences mock jurors' perceptions in a sexual assault case. *Journal of*

Interpersonal Violence, *35*(19-20), 3963-3985.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517713715

Pratto, F., Sidanius, J., Stallworth, L. M., & Malle, B. F. (1994). Social dominance

orientation: A personality variable predicting social and political

attitudes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 67*(4), 741–

763. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.67.4.741

Preston, J. (2016). Understanding the neurobiology of traumatic assault and the

implications for prosecutors and investigators. *Prosecutor's Brief*, 38(4), 258–

266.

https://vrnclearinghousefiles.blob.core.windows.net/documents/The%20Neurobio

logy%20of%20trauma%20and%20interviewing%20victims.pdf

Price, M., Davidson, T. M., Ruggerio, K. J., Acierno, R., Resnick, H. S. (2014).

Predictors of using mental health services after assault. *Journal of Traumatic

Stress*, *27*(3), 331–337. https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.21915

Puar, J. K., & Rai, A. S. (2002). Monster, terrorist, fag: The war on terrorism and the

production of docile patriots. *Social Text*, *20*(3), 117-148.

https://www.muse.jhu.edu/article/31948

Qi, S. J., Starfelt, L. C., & White, K. M. (2016). Attributions of responsibility, blame and

justifiability to a perpetrator and victim in an acquaintance rape scenario: The

influence of marijuana intoxication. *Journal of Sexual Aggression*, *22*(1), 20-35.

https://doi.org/10.1080/13552600.2015.1025868

Rachlinski, J. J., & Wistrich, A. J. (2017). Judging the judiciary by the numbers:

Empirical research on judges. *Annual Review of Law and Social Science, 13*(1)*,

203–229. http://dx.doi.org/10.1146/annurev-lawsocsci-110615-085032

Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN). (2018). The criminal justice system

statistics. https://www.rainn.org/statistics/criminal-justice-system

Reiner, R. (1985). *The Politics of the Police*. St. Martin′s.

Relyea, M., & Ullman, S. E. (2015). Unsupported or turned against: Understanding how

two types of negative social reactions to sexual assault relate to postassault

outcomes. Psychology of Women Quarterly, *39*(1), 37-52.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684313512610

Rich, K. (2019). Trauma-informed police responses to rape victims. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma*, *28*(4), 463-480. https://doi.org/10.1080/10926771.2018.1540448

Risan, P., Binder, P. E., & Milne, R. (2016). Regulating and coping with distress during police interviews of traumatized victims. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, *8*(6), 736–744. https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000119

Robbins, J. M., & Krueger, J. I. (2005). Social projection to ingroups and outgroups: A review and meta-analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, *9*(1), 32-47. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0901_3

Rowe, M., & Macauley, M. (2019). Giving voice to the victims of sexual assault: The role of police leadership in organisational change. *Policing*, *42*(3), 394-407. https://doi.org/10.1108/PIJPSM-03-2018-0037

Rumney, P. N., McPhee, D., Fenton, R. A., & Williams, A. (2019). A police specialist rape investigation unit: A comparative analysis of performance and victim care. *Policing and Society*, *30*(5), 548-568. https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2019.1566329

Santaularia, J., Johnson, M., Hart, L., Haskett, L., Welsh, E., & Faseru, B. (2014). Relationships between sexual violence and chronic disease: A cross-sectional study. *BMC Public Health*, *14*, 1286. https://doi.org/10.1186/1471-2458-14-1286

Schiewe, M. (2019). Tonic immobility: The fear-freeze response as a forgotten factor in sexual assault laws. *DePaul Journal of Women Gender & Law*, *8*(1), 1-28.

https://via.library.depaul.edu/jwgl/vol8/iss1/2

Schwendinger, J. R., & Schwendinger, H. (1974). Rape myths: In legal, theoretical, and everyday practice. *Crime and Social Justice*, (1), 18-26. http://www.jstor.org/stable/29765884

Schumm, J. A., Dickstein, B. D., Walter, K. H., Owens, G. P., & Chard, K. M. (2015). Changes in posttraumatic cognitions predict changes in posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms during cognitive processing therapy. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *83*(6), 1161-1166. https://doi.org/10.1037/ccp0000040

Scott, S. (2018). A sociology of nothing: Understanding the unmarked. *Sociology*, *52*(1), 3–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038038517690681

Seabrook, R. C., Ward, L. M., & Giaccardi, S. (2019). Less than human? Media use, objectification of women, and men's acceptance of sexual aggression. Psychology of Violence, 9(5), 536-545. https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000198

Shamilishvili, G. (2019). Psychological influence of modern mass media on formation of gender stereotypes. *Economics. Ecology. Socium*, *3*(2), 71-76. https://doi.org/10.31520/2616-7107/2019.3.2-8

Shaw, J., Campbell, R., & Cain, D. (2016). The view from inside the system: How police explain their response to sexual assault. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, *58*(3-4), 446-462. https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12096

Shaw, J., Campbell, R., Cain, D., & Feeney, H. (2017). Beyond surveys and scales: How rape myths manifest in sexual assault police records. *Psychology of Violence*, *7*(4), 602-614. https://doi.org/10.1037/vio0000072

Sidanius, J. (1993). The psychology of group conflict and the dynamics of oppression: A social dominance perspective. In S. Iyengar & W. J. McGuire (Eds.), *Duke studies in political psychology. Explorations in political psychology*, (pp. 183-219). Duke University Press.

Sidanius, J., Liu, J. H., Shaw, J. S., & Pratto, F. (1994). Social dominance orientation, hierarchy attenuators, and hierarchy enhancers: Social dominance theory and the criminal justice system. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *24*(4), 338–366. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.1994.tb00586.x

Sidanius, J., & Pratto, F. (1999). *Social dominance: An intergroup theory of social hierarchy and oppression.* Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139175043

Siegel, D. J. (1999). *The Developing Mind: Toward a Neurobiology of Interpersonal Experience*. Guilford Press.

Siegel, D. J. (2010). *The Mindful Therapist: A Clinician's Guide to Mindsight and Neural Integration*. W. W. Norton.

Sigurvinsdottir, R., & Ullman, S. E. (2015). Social reactions, self-blame and problem drinking in adult sexual assault survivors. *Psychology of Violence*, *5*(2), 192-198. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036316

Simonson, K., & Linda, M. S. (1999). Rape perceptions as a function of gender-role traditionality and victim-perpetrator association. *Sex Roles, 40*(7), 617-634. http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1018844231555

Sit, V. K. Y. (2015). Sexual assault and formal service use: Understanding help-seeking

among women living in poverty (Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto).

http://hdl.handle.net/1807/69733

Skolnick, J. H. (2008), Enduring issues of police culture and demographics. *Policing & Society*, *18*(1), 35-45. https://doi.org/10.1080/10439460701718542

Sleath, E., & Bull, R. (2015). A brief report on rape myth acceptance: Differences between police officers, law students, and psychology students in the United Kingdom. *Violence and Victims*, *30*(1), 136–147. https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-13- 00035

Sleath, E., & Bull, R. (2017). Police perceptions of rape victims and the impact on case decision making: A systematic review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, *34*, 102-112. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2017.02.003

Smith, M., Wilkes, N., & Bouffard, L. A. (2016). Rape myth adherence among campus law enforcement officers. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, *43*(4), 539-556. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854815604178

Smith, S. G., Chen, J., Basile, K. C., Gilbert, L. K., Merrick, M. T., Patel, N., . . . Jain, A. (2017). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010–2012 State Report*. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Smith, S. G., Zhang, X., Basile, K. C., Merrick, M. T., Wang, J., Kresnow, M., & Chen, J. (2018). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2015 Data Brief – Updated Release*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Snipes, D. J., Calton, J. M., Green, B. A., Perrin, P. B., & Benotsch, E. G. (2017). Rape and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD): Examining the mediating role of explicit sex–power beliefs for men versus women. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 32*(16), 2453–2470. http://dx.doi.org/10 .1177/0886260515592618

Social Security Administration. (2020). Top Names Over the Last 100 Years. Retrieved October 09, 2020, from

https://www.ssa.gov/oact/babynames/decades/century.html

Sommer, S., Reynolds, J., & Kehn, A. (2016). Mock juror perceptions of rape victims: Impact of case characteristics and individual differences. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 31*(17), 2847-2866. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260515581907

Spencer, D., Dodge, A., Ricciardelli, R., & Ballucci, D. (2018). "I think it's re-victimizing victims almost every time": Police perceptions of criminal justice responses to sexual violence. *Critical Criminology*, *26*(2), 189–209. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10612-018-9390-2

Spohn, C. C., & Horney, J. (1996). The impact of rape law reform on the processing of simple and aggravated rape cases. *Journal of Criminal Law & Criminology*, *86*(3), 861. https://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/jclc/vol86/iss3/6

Spohn, C., & Tellis, K. (2014). *Policing & Prosecuting Sexual Assault: Inside the Criminal Justice System*. Lynne Rienner Publishers.

Spohn, C., & Tellis, K. (2019). Sexual assault case outcomes: Disentangling the overlapping decisions of police and prosecutors. *Justice Quarterly*, *36*(3), 383-411. https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2018.1429645

Spohn, C., White, C., & Tellis, K. (2014). Unfounding sexual assault: Examining the decision to unfound and identifying false reports. *Law & Society Review*, *48*(1), 161–192. https://doi.org/10.1111/lasr.12060

Spohn, C. (2020). Sexual assault case processing: The more things change, the more they stay the same. *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*, *9*(1). 86-94. https://doi.org/10.5204/ijcjsd.v9i1.1454

St. George, S., & Spohn, C. (2018). Liberating discretion: The effect of rape myth factors on prosecutors' decisions to charge suspects in penetrative and non-penetrative sex offenses. *Justice Quarterly*, *35*(7), 1280-1308. https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2018.1529251

Strand, R. (2019). *The Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview (FETI)—A conversation with the brainstem*. https://www.mncasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/FETI-Public-Description.pdf

Starzynski, L. L., Ullman, S. E., & Vasquez, A. L. (2017). Sexual assault survivors' experiences with mental health professionals: A qualitative study. *Women & Therapy*, *40*, 228–246. https://doi.org/10.1080/02703149.2016.1213609

Steffensmeier, D., Ulmer, J. T., & Kramer, J. (1998). The interaction of race, gender, and age in criminal sentencing: The punishment cost of being young, black, and male. *Criminology*, *36*(4), 763-797. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1998.tb01265.x

Stuart, S. M., McKimmie, B. M., & Masser, B. M. (2019). Rape perpetrators on trial: The effect of sexual *assault–Related schemas on attributions of blame. Journal* of Interpersonal Violence, *34*(2), 310-336.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260516640777

Swidler, A. (1986), 'Culture in action: symbols and strategies', *American Sociological Review*, *51*(2). 273-86. http://www.jstor.org/stable/2095521?origin=JSTOR-pdf

Süssenbach, P., & Bohner, G. (2011). Acceptance of sexual aggression myths in a representative sample of German residents. *Aggressive Behavior*, *37*(4), 374-385. https://doi.org/10.1002/ab.20390

Süssenbach, P., Albrecht, S., & Bohner, G. (2017). Implicit judgments of rape cases: An experiment on the determinants and consequences of implicit evaluations in a rape case. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, *23*(3), 291–304. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1068316X.2016.1247160

Süssenbach, P., Eyssel, F., Rees, J., & Bohner, G. (2017). Looking for blame: Rape myth acceptance and attention to victim and perpetrator. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *32*(15), 2323–2344. http://dx.doi.org/10 .1177/0886260515591975

Suzuki, Y. E., & Bonner, H. S. (2017). Factors associated with college students' responses to rape-disclosure scenarios: Influence of gender, rape characteristics, and opinions about health professionals. *Journal of School Violence*, *16*(2), 160-172. https://doi.org/10.1080/15388220.2017.1284482

Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2007). *Using Multivariate Statistics* (5th ed.). Pearson.

Tasca, M., Rodriguez, N., Spohn, C., & Koss, M. P. (2013). Police decision making in sexual assault cases: Predictors of suspect identification and arrest. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *28*(6), 1157-1177.

https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0886260512468233

Temkin, J., Gray, J. M., & Barrett, J. (2018). Different functions of rape myth use in court: Findings from a trial observation study. *Feminist Criminology*, *13*(2), 205– 226. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1557085116661627

Tin, J., & Parker, L. (2016). The effect of childhood abuse and expert witness testimony on jurors in rape cases: A cultural comparison. *Journal of Law and Criminal Justice*, *4*(1), 40-62. https://doi.org/10.15640/jlcj.v4n1a3

Tyler, T. R. (1989). The psychology of procedural justice: A test of the group-value model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *57*(5), 830-838. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.57.5.830

Tyson, V. (2019) Understanding the personal impact of sexual violence and assault. *Journal of Women, Politics & Policy*, *40*(1), 174 183. https://doi.org/10.1080/1554477X.2019.1565456

Ullman, S. E. (2014). Reflections on researching rape resistance. *Violence Against Women*, *20*(3), 343– 350. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801214526308

Ullman, S. E., Peter-Hagene, L. C., & Relyea, M. (2014). Coping, emotion regulation, and self-blame as mediators of sexual abuse and psychological symptoms in adult sexual assault. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, *23*(1), 74-93. https://doi.org/10.1080/10538712.2014.864747

Ullman, S. E. (2016). Sexual revictimization, PTSD, and problem drinking in sexual assault survivors. *Addictive behaviors*, *53*, 7-10. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.addbeh.2015.09.010

Ullman, S. E., Lorenz, K., & Kirkner, A. (2017). Alcohol's role in social reactions to sexual assault disclosures: A qualitative study of informal support dyads. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 35*(23–24), 5365–5389. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517721172

Van Maanen, J. (1974), Working the street: A developmental view of police behavior, in Jacob, H. (Ed.), *The Potential for Reform of Criminal Justice*, 83-130. Sage.

Venema, R. M. (2016a). Making judgments: How blame mediates the influence of rape myth acceptance in police response to sexual assault. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *34*(13), 2697–2722. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260516662437

Venema, R. M. (2016b). Police officer schema of sexual assault reports: Real rape, ambiguous cases, and false reports. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, *31*(5), 872–899. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260514556765

Venema, R. M. (2018). Police officers' rape myth acceptance: Examining the role of officer characteristics, estimates of false reporting, and social desirability bias. *Violence and Victims*, *33*(1), 176-200. https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-15-00016

Venema, R. M., Lorenz, K., & Sweda, N. (2019). A descriptive study of training and its perceived helpfulness among Illinois sexual assault investigators. *Journal of Crime and Justice*, *43*(1), 110-124. https://doi.org/10.1080/0735648X.2019.1601585

Waterhouse, G. F., Reynolds, A., & Egan, V. (2016). Myths and legends: The reality of rape offences reported to a U.K. police force. *The European Journal of*

Psychology Applied to Legal Context, *8*(1), 1–10.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpal.2015.04.001

Weiser, D. A. (2017). Confronting myths about sexual assault: A feminist analysis of the

false report literature. *Family Relations*, *66*(1), 46-60.

https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12235

Weitzman, A., & Mallory, A. B. (2019). Racial, socioeconomic, and attitudinal

disparities in trajectories of young women's willingness to refuse unwanted

sex. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *64*(6), 746-752.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2018.12.002

Wentz, E., & Keimig, K. (2019). Arrest and referral decisions in sexual assault cases: The

influence of police discretion on case attrition. *Social Sciences*, *8*(6), 180.

https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci8060180

Westera, N. J., Kebbell, M. R., & Milne, B. (2016). Want a better criminal justice

response to rape? Improve police interviews with complainants and

suspects. *Violence against Women*, *22*(14), 1748-1769.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801216631439

Westley, W. A. (1970), *Violence and the Police: A Sociological Study of Law, Custom,*

and Morality. MIT Press.

White, J. W., Sienkiewicz, H. C., & Smith, P. H. (2019). Envisioning future directions:

Conversations with leaders in domestic and sexual assault advocacy, policy,

service, and research. *Violence Against Women*, *25*(1), 105-127.

https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801218815771

Wilson, J. Q. (1969), *Varieties of Police Behaviour: The Management of Law and Order in Eight Communities*. Harvard University Press.

Wrede, O & Ask, K. (2015). More than a feeling: Public expectations about emotional responses to criminal victimization. *Violence and Victims*, *30*(5), 902-915. https://doi.org/10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-14-00002

Wright, P. J., & Tokunaga, R. S. (2016). Men's objectifying media consumption, objectification of women, and attitudes supportive of violence against women. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, *45*(4), 955-964. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10508-015-0644-8

Zacharek, S., Dockterman, E., & Edwards, H. S., (2017) *The Silence Breakers*. http://time.com/time-person-of-the-year-2017-silence-breakers/

Zalta, A. K., Gillihan, S. J., Fisher, A. J., Mintz, J., McLean, C. P., Yehuda, R., & Foa, E. B. (2014). Change in negative cognitions associated with PTSD predicts symptom reduction in prolonged exposure. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, *82*(1), 171-175. https://doi.org/10.1037/a0034735

Zweig, J., Newmark, L., Raja, D., & Denver, M. (2014). *Accessing sexual assault medical forensic exams: Victims face barriers* (Sexual Assault Medical Forensic Exams and VAWA 2005: Brief 2). http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11990/468

Appendix A: Participant Survey

Gender and Sexual Behavior

Consent Form

12%

Hello and Welcome! This research study is on "Perceptions of Gender and Sexual Behavior" utilizing data from law enforcement officers and non-law enforcement officers. This research is in partial fulfillment for a Ph.D. in Forensic Psychology with a specialization in Victimology with Walden University. Please ensure to read this form carefully and ask any questions before consent.

What this study is about: This study intends to examine societal perceptions of gender and sexual behavior by obtaining responses gathered from law enforcement officers and non-law enforcement officer participants. This researcher intends to obtain 150 participants, evenly split between law enforcement officers and non-law enforcement officers.

What you will be asked to do: If you agree to participate in this research, you will take a 40-question survey. The initial questions include unidentifiable demographic information, followed by a hypothetical vignette, and then survey questions. Please take your time and read each question carefully.

Risks: No risks anticipated while participating in this study.

Benefits: Although you may not receive benefits directly, it is the author's intention with this research to supplement prior research surrounding the topic of sexual violence with the hopes of bringing awareness. Awareness can ensure changes to societal perception to promote the safety and equality of all beings.

Costs and Compensation: None.

Confidentiality: This research is completely anonymous. No identifying information will be requested. The data will be collected via a third-party site that does not store or identify IP addresses. The results of the study will be kept private in password-protected files only available to the author. In any follow-up reports made public, no information will be included that would make it possible to identify the participants. Complete anonymity is to promote honest responses!

Taking Part is Voluntary: Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Participants may quit at any time. Choosing to decline or cease participation in this study will not negatively impact you in a personal or professional manner. No conflicts of interest are foreseen.

Qualifications: You must be 18 years or older.

If you have questions: Please ask any questions prior to proceeding. If you have questions, you may contact the author at ava.ene@waldenu.edu or at (619) 929-6047. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact Walden University's Research Participant Advocate at (612) 312-1210 or irb@mail.waldenu.edu

You might wish to retain this consent form for your records. You may ask the researcher or Walden University for a copy at any time using the contact info above.

I sincerely thank you for your time, *Ava D. Ene*

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in this study.

○ Yes
○ No

1

Read comment   ✕

Next

Gender and Sexual Behavior

25%

2 **What is your Identified Gender?**

○ Female
○ Male
○ Other

3 **What is your Age?**

18   100

4 **What is your Ethnicity?**

○ White or Caucasian
○ Black or African American
○ Hispanic or Latino
○ Asian or Asian American
○ Other

5 **Highest Level of Education?**

○ High School Diploma/GED
○ Associate's Degree
○ Bachelor's Degree
○ Master's or Higher

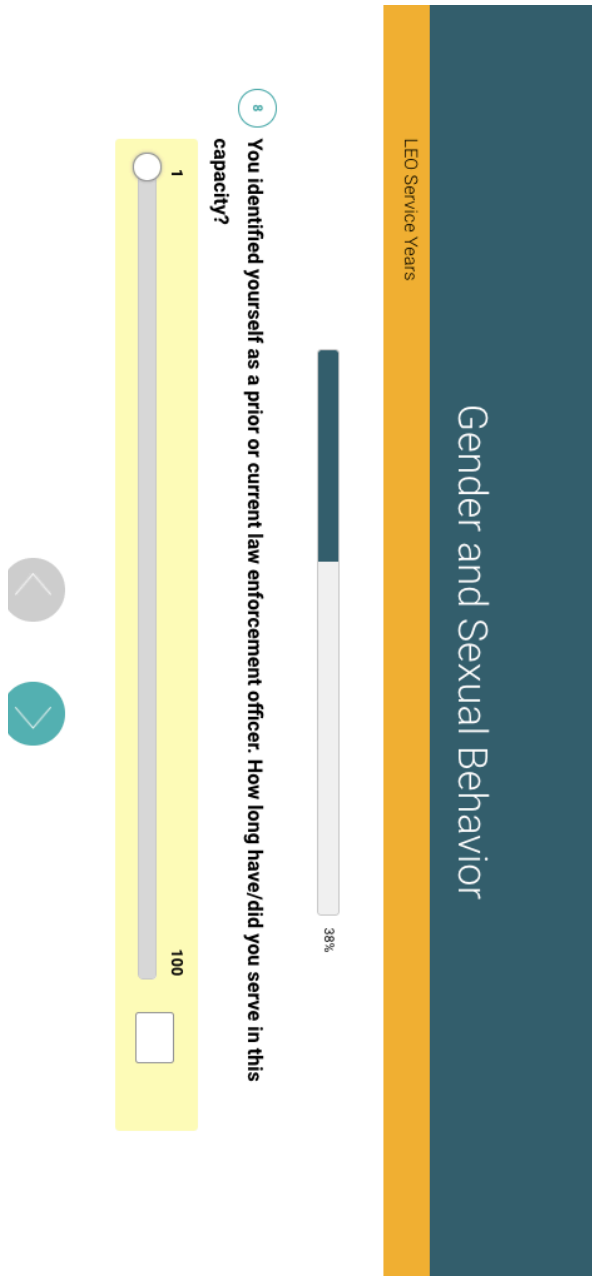**6** **Have you experienced Sexual Violence at any age?**

○ Yes
○ No
○ Prefer Not to Say

7 **Have you OR are you currently serving as a Law Enforcement Officer?**

'Law Enforcement Officer' for this research will include any peace officer working for the city, state, or at the federal level that is sworn in, serves the public, and performs in the role of enforcing laws. These include police officers, sheriff deputies, marshals, investigators, correctional officers, federal agents (does not include military personnel)

○ Yes
○ No

Gender and Sexual Behavior

LEO Service Years

38%

8

You identified yourself as a prior or current law enforcement officer. How long have/did you serve in this capacity?

1

100

(Only participants who marked "yes" to Question 7 indicating they have or are

currently serving as a LEO, will see question 8)

Gender and Sexual Behavior

50%

Please respond to the following two questions (Q9 & Q10) after reading the vignette, utilizing the responses completely disagree (1) to completely agree (7). The same vignette will be used for both questions.

One-night Mary went to a house party with James, who had asked her on a date. Although Mary and James had met a few times before, this was their first time out together and he was considered an acquaintance. At the party, James and Mary consumed alcohol, and both became intoxicated (both were of legal drinking age). Following the party, Mary and James went back to her apartment to watch television. While watching television, James put his arm around Mary's shoulder, to which she responded positively. They began to kiss... The next day, Mary goes to the police station to report her allegation of sexual assault. However, recollection by both Mary and James differ. Mary claims James asked her whether she was interested in having sex. Mary claimed she said "No" very forcefully, but James did not pay attention to her answer. He grabbed her, began to kiss her, and then lifted her skirt. He forced himself on her and completed the act of sexual intercourse. James stated that Mary said "Yes" and they continued kissing, and sexual intercourse was consented by both of them.

9

Mary is responsible for her actions that night AND her possible sexual assault.

(1) Completely Disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Disagree Somewhat	(4) Neutral	(5) Agree Somewhat	(6) Agree	(7) Completely Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

10

Mary and her allegation of sexual assault are credible, even though she had alcohol in her system and James was an acquaintance.

(1) Completely Disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Disagree Somewhat	(4) Neutral	(5) Agree Somewhat	(6) Agree	(7) Completely Agree
○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Prev   Next

Survey (1)

62%

(11) When it comes to sexual contact, women expect men to take the lead.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

(12) Once a man and a woman have started "making out", a woman's misgivings against sex will automatically disappear.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

(13) A lot of women strongly complain about sexual infringements for no real reason, just to appear emancipated.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

(14) To get custody for their children, women often falsely accuse their ex-husband of a tendency towards sexual violence.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

(15) Interpreting harmless gestures as "sexual harassment" is a popular weapon in the battle of the sexes.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

(16) It is a biological necessity for men to release sexual pressure from time to time.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

(17) After a rape, women nowadays receive ample support.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

(18) Nowadays, a large proportion of rapes is partly caused by the depiction of sexuality in the media as this raises the sex drive of potential perpetrators.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

(19) If a woman invites a man to her home for a cup of coffee after a night out this means that she wants to have sex.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

(20) As long as they don't go too far, suggestive remarks and allusions simply tell a woman that she is attractive.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

75%

21) Any woman who is careless enough to walk through "dark alleys" at night is partly to be blamed if she is raped.

- ○ (1) Completely Disagree
- ○ (2) Disagree
- ○ (3) Disagree Somewhat
- ○ (4) Neutral
- ○ (5) Agree Somewhat
- ○ (6) Agree
- ○ (7) Completely Agree

22) When a woman starts a relationship with a man, she must be aware that the man will assert his right to have sex.

- ○ (1) Completely Disagree
- ○ (2) Disagree
- ○ (3) Disagree Somewhat
- ○ (4) Neutral
- ○ (5) Agree Somewhat
- ○ (6) Agree
- ○ (7) Completely Agree

23) Most women prefer to be praised for their looks rather than their intelligence.

- ○ (1) Completely Disagree
- ○ (2) Disagree
- ○ (3) Disagree Somewhat
- ○ (4) Neutral
- ○ (5) Agree Somewhat
- ○ (6) Agree
- ○ (7) Completely Agree

24) Because the fascination caused by sex is disproportionately large, our society's sensitivity to crimes in this area is disproportionate as well.

- ○ (1) Completely Disagree
- ○ (2) Disagree
- ○ (3) Disagree Somewhat
- ○ (4) Neutral
- ○ (5) Agree Somewhat
- ○ (6) Agree
- ○ (7) Completely Agree

25) Women like to play coy. This does not mean that they do not want sex.

- ○ (1) Completely Disagree
- ○ (2) Disagree
- ○ (3) Disagree Somewhat
- ○ (4) Neutral
- ○ (5) Agree Somewhat
- ○ (6) Agree
- ○ (7) Completely Agree

26) Many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence.

- ○ (1) Completely Disagree
- ○ (2) Disagree
- ○ (3) Disagree Somewhat
- ○ (4) Neutral
- ○ (5) Agree Somewhat
- ○ (6) Agree
- ○ (7) Completely Agree

27) When a man urges his female partner to have sex, this cannot be called rape.

- ○ (1) Completely Disagree
- ○ (2) Disagree
- ○ (3) Disagree Somewhat
- ○ (4) Neutral
- ○ (5) Agree Somewhat
- ○ (6) Agree
- ○ (7) Completely Agree

28) When a single woman invites a man to her flat she signals that she is not averse to having sex.

- ○ (1) Completely Disagree
- ○ (2) Disagree
- ○ (3) Disagree Somewhat
- ○ (4) Neutral
- ○ (5) Agree Somewhat
- ○ (6) Agree
- ○ (7) Completely Agree

29) When politicians deal with the topic of rape, they do so mainly because this topic is likely to attract the attention of the media.

- ○ (1) Completely Disagree
- ○ (2) Disagree
- ○ (3) Disagree Somewhat
- ○ (4) Neutral
- ○ (5) Agree Somewhat
- ○ (6) Agree
- ○ (7) Completely Agree

30) When defining "marital rape", there is no clear-cut distinction between normal conjugal intercourse and rape.

- ○ (1) Completely Disagree
- ○ (2) Disagree
- ○ (3) Disagree Somewhat
- ○ (4) Neutral
- ○ (5) Agree Somewhat
- ○ (6) Agree
- ○ (7) Completely Agree

Prev   Next

201

88%

31 A man's sexuality functions like a steam boiler – when the pressure gets too high, he has to "let off steam."

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

32 Women often accuse their husbands of marital rape just to retaliate for a failed relationship.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

33 The discussion about sexual harassment on the job has mainly resulted in many harmless behavior being misinterpreted as harassment.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

34 In dating situations the general expectation is that the woman "hits the brakes" and the man "pushes ahead."

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

35 Although the victims of armed robbery have to fear for their lives, they receive far less psychological support than do rape victims.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

36 Alcohol is often the culprit when a man rapes a woman.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

37 Many women tend to misinterpret a well-meant gesture as a "sexual assault."

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

38 Nowadays, the victims of sexual violence receive sufficient help in the form of women's shelters, therapy offers, and support groups.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

39 Instead of worrying about alleged victims of sexual violence society should rather attend to more urgent problems, such as environmental destruction.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

40 Nowadays, men who really sexually assault women are punished justly.

(1) Completely Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Disagree Somewhat (4) Neutral (5) Agree Somewhat (6) Agree (7) Completely Agree

Prev

Next

Appendix B: Survey Resources

Gender and Sexual Behavior

100%

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research. Due to the sensitivity of this research content, a list of resources is provided here.

If you need to report a sexual assault or obtain information regarding sexual violence:

RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network)
https://www.rainn.org/about-rainn
National Sexual Abuse Hotline 1 (800) 656- HOPE (4673)

Mental Health Resources

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
https://www.nami.org/help
1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline
SAMHSA's National Helpline – 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Open Counseling
https://www.opencounseling.com/hotlines-us

Better Help Counseling
https://www.betterhelp.com/start/

The final dissertation will be made available by the author after the successful completion of the doctoral program. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to reach out to the author at (619) 929-6047 or ava.ene@waldenu.edu. Questions or concerns regarding your rights as a participant in this study, contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at IRB@mail.waldenu.edu or access their website at https://academicguides.waldenu.edu/research-center/research-ethics/office-hours

Thank you for participating in this research.
Ava D. Ene

Prev   Done

Appendix C: AMMSA Scale with Author Permission

PsycTESTS

Acceptance of Modern Myths About Sexual Aggression

Instrument Type:
Rating Scale

Test Format:
Values could range from 1, totally disagree, to 7, totally agree.

Source:
Supplied by author.

Dear Participant,

First of all thank you for your willingness to participate in our study.

We assure you that all information will be held strictly confidential and anonymous. Please answer all questions honestly and carefully, as this is of great importance for the success of our study.

You will be presented with a set of statements and asked to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each. There are no right or wrong answers – we are only interested in your personal opinion.

Please read each statement carefully and then circle that number from 1 to 7 that you feel best represents your opinion. The points on the scale have the following meaning:

1 = completely disagree
2 = disagree
3 = disagree somewhat
4 = neutral
5 = agree somewhat
6 = agree
7 = completely agree

For example:

It snows in winter.

completely disagree   1   2   3   4   ⑤   6   7   completely agree

In this example the answer of 5 would indicate that you agree somewhat with the statement but not entirely (for example, because it does not snow everywhere and all the time in winter).

Please use the complete range of the scale to express your exact opinion.

1. When it comes to sexual contacts, women expect men to take the lead.

   completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

2. Once a man and a woman have started "making out", a woman's misgivings against sex will automatically disappear.

   completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

3. A lot of women strongly complain about sexual infringements for no real reason, just to appear emancipated.

   completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

4. To get custody for their children, women often falsely accuse their ex-husband of a tendency towards sexual violence.

   completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

5. Interpreting harmless gestures as "sexual harassment" is a popular weapon in the battle of the sexes.

   completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

6. It is a biological necessity for men to release sexual pressure from time to time.

   completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

7. After a rape, women nowadays receive ample support.

   completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

8. Nowadays, a large proportion of rapes is partly caused by the depiction of sexuality in the media as this raises the sex drive of potential perpetrators.

   completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

9. If a woman invites a man to her home for a cup of coffee after a night out this means that she wants to have sex.

   completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

10. As long as they don't go too far, suggestive remarks and allusions simply tell a woman that she is attractive.

    completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

11. Any woman who is careless enough to walk through "dark alleys" at night is partly to be blamed if she is raped.

    completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

12. When a woman starts a relationship with a man, she must be aware that the man will assert his right to have sex.

    completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

13. Most women prefer to be praised for their looks rather than their intelligence.

    completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

14. Because the fascination caused by sex is disproportionately large, our society's sensitivity to crimes in this area is disproportionate as well.

    completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

15. Women like to play coy. This does not mean that they do not want sex.

    completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

16. Many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence.

    completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

17. When a man urges his female partner to have sex, this cannot be called rape.

    completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

18. When a single woman invites a single man to her flat she signals that she is not averse to having sex.

    completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

19. When politicians deal with the topic of rape, they do so mainly because this topic is likely to attract the attention of the media.

    completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

20. When defining "marital rape", there is no clear-cut distinction between normal conjugal intercourse and rape.

    completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

21. A man's sexuality functions like a steam boiler – when the pressure gets too high, he has to "let off steam".

    completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

22. Women often accuse their husbands of marital rape just to retaliate for a failed relationship.

    completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

23. The discussion about sexual harassment on the job has mainly resulted in many a harmless behavior being misinterpreted as harassment.

    completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

24. In dating situations the general expectation is that the woman "hits the brakes" and the man "pushes ahead".

      completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

25. Although the victims of armed robbery have to fear for their lives, they receive far less psychological support than do rape victims.

      completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

26. Alcohol is often the culprit when a man rapes a woman.

      completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

27. Many women tend to misinterpret a well-meant gesture as a "sexual assault".

      completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

28. Nowadays, the victims of sexual violence receive sufficient help in the form of women's shelters, therapy offers, and support groups.

      completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

29. Instead of worrying about alleged victims of sexual violence society should rather attend to more urgent problems, such as environmental destruction.

      completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree

30. Nowadays, men who really sexually assault women are punished justly.

      completely disagree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   completely agree