

WALK A MILE IN HER SHOES: THE IMPACT OF (LOW) POWER ON BLAMING THE  
VICTIM  
BY  
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### **Abstract**

The effects of situationally-activated social power and just world beliefs on victim blame and endorsement of rape myths were examined. Male and female participants were randomly assigned to high power or low power (or served as a control) condition before they evaluated a case of sexual assault. Belief in a just world had no effect on victim blame or rape myth acceptance. Men generally blamed the victim more than did women, but the low power manipulation significantly reduced the extent to which they blamed the victim, moving them to a low level of victim blame comparable to that of women. High power did not differentially affect victim blaming relative to the control condition for men, and no condition effects were observed for women. A moderated-mediation analysis indicated that the tendency for males in the low power condition to decrease their victim blaming was significantly mediated by a decrease in their endorsement of rape myths that portray sexual assault victims as liars. The results of this study point to important implications of social power in a legal context.

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## Walk a Mile in Her Shoes: The Impact of (Low) Power on Blaming the Victim

### **Introduction**

Every two minutes someone in the United States is sexually assaulted (RAINN, 2009). Aside from the trauma brought about by a sexual assault, many victims suffer secondary victimization caused by the negative reactions by those around them (Ulman, 1996; Williams, 1984). Of these negative reactions, perhaps the most harmful is the frequent tendency to blame the victim for his or her assault. This tendency to hold victims of assault responsible for their fate has been labeled “blaming the victim”, a term inspired by William Ryan (1971). Females are the primary target of sexual assaults. In 2003 the U.S. Department of Justice’s National Crime Victimization Survey determined that 9 out of every 10 reported rapes involved a female victim. Compared to other violent crimes, rapes and sexual assaults are among the most under-reported (Fisher et al., 2000, 2003; Rennison, 2002). In the literature investigating why such crimes are underreported, researchers find that victims are more likely to report a rape or sexual assault to the police only if they are confident that doing so will result in a positive outcome (Felson, 2002; Fisher et al., 2003).

In the current research, I examine how perceivers’ frame of mind while considering a case of sexual assault may alleviate or enhance the tendency to blame the victim. Specifically, I explore the role of social power—the perception that one has power or does not in a given context—may affect the tendency to blame the victim of a sexual assault. Before describing this research in detail, I will first review the literature on blaming the victim, then consider how this phenomenon may be linked to social power, and then review the extant literature on the effects of social power. I will then discuss the importance of social power on the tendency to blame the victim and the goals of the research.

## **Victim Blame and Restoring our Belief in a Just World**

In his theoretical work on justice and justice motives, Lerner (1980) asserted that individuals have a need to believe in a just world (BJW). BJW reflects the need to maintain a belief that “good things happen to good people, and bad things happen to bad people” (Hafer, 2000; Lerner, 1965; 1970; 1977; 1980; Lerner & Miller, 1978; Lerner, Miller, & Holmes, 1976; Miller, 1977). Such a belief was hypothesized to be necessary in order for individuals to delay immediate gratification and work towards maximizing rewards in the long run (Hafer & Bogue, 2005; Lerner, 1980; 1997). BJW enables individuals to maintain predictability and stability in the environment and to go about their daily lives with a sense of trust and confidence in their future (Lerner, 1970, 1980; Lerner & Miller, 1978; Rubin & Peplau, 1973). The degree of endorsement of the belief in a just world varies across individuals, but Lerner (1980) asserted that most people have an underlying belief in a just world and are motivated to preserve it (Lerner & Miller, 1978).

BJW dictates that other peoples’ fates are important to the self as well. If those around you are not getting what they deserve, the notion of a fair world is threatened and thus threatens one’s own achievement of long-term goals (Hafer & Bogue, 2005; Lerner, 1980). Victims receive negative outcomes, and therefore observers may tend to blame and devalue victims in order to maintain their perception of a just and predictable world (Furnham, 2003; Hafer, 2000; Hafer & Bogue, 2005). Observers may focus on the behavior and personal characteristics of the victim to explain negative outcomes, often construing events to fit the belief that the individual deserves their fate. If this fails, observers may reinterpret the event, by perceiving the outcome to have a later benefit to the sufferer (“it made the victim a better person”; Lerner, 1980).

While the extant literature indicates a relationship between BJW and victim blaming in various domains (Rubin & Peplau, 1975), there is surprisingly little research on BJW and victim blame in rape cases (see Lambert & Raichle, 2000 for a discussion). And in the relevant research that has been conducted, conflicting findings have emerged. For example, Kleinke & Meyer (1990) found that women scoring high in BJW blamed rape victims *less* than their low BJW counterparts, not more as the theory suggests (see also, Wyer, Bodenhausen & Gorman, 1985). Other studies have found no effect of belief in a just world on blame of sexual assault victims (among female participants, Drout & Gaertner, 1994; among both genders Hammond et al., 2011). In the study I present here, I further explore the effects of belief in a just world on blaming the victim utilizing a date rape scenario. My main focus, however, is less on BJW as a predictor of victim blame than on situational factors that promote or reduce it.

### **The Ease of Blaming the Victim**

Establishing the legitimacy of a reported sexual assault is quite difficult, often becoming a game of “he said-she said” (O’Donohue & O’Hare, 1997, p.274). While a variety of factors contribute in determining fault, many seem to direct blame at the alleged victim while excusing (or giving the benefit of the doubt to) the alleged assailant. The ease in which individuals blame the victim (BTV) is perpetuated by the current cultural climate. Subtle cues in the environment may heighten the tendency to find fault with the rape victim. For instance, the media often depict rape victims as liars, and the perpetrators as the true, falsely accused, victims (Doherty & Anderson, 1998; Gruber, 2009). Further, media reports tend to focus on sexual assaults that reinforce stereotypical rape scripts (Soothill, 1991). Specifically, the news media tend to focus predominantly on assaults enacted by strangers that are extremely violent in nature (Soothill,

1991), reinforcing the perceived legitimacy of rape myths that perpetuate the tendency to blame the victims of sexual assault.

There are also a variety of factors in sexual assault cases that promote BTV tendencies, including the presence of drugs or alcohol (Wild, Graham, & Rehm, 1998), as well as the attractiveness of the victim (Gerdes, Dammann, & Helif, 1988) and assailant (Deitz & Byrnes, 1981). Additionally, research has found that the more strongly individuals endorse traditional gender roles, the more they derogate the victim of a sexual assault (Brownmiller, 19175; Burt, 1980; Deitz, Tiemann Blackwell, Daley, & Bentley, 1982). Within the legal system, rape victims are found to be treated poorly by the police and courts (Belknap, 2010; Kaukinen & DeMaris, 2009; Kelleher & McGiloway, 2009; Maier, 2008; Orenstein, 2007). Further, victims who go to trial often find themselves degraded in cross-examinations by the defense (Orenstein, 2007). Specifically, Orenstein (2007) reports that the primary defense of an attorney in an acquaintance-rape is to assert that the victim is lying, and that the sex act in question was consensual, not forced. The extent to which the victim attempted to resist the assault (Krulowitz, 1981; Krulowitz & Nash, 1979) as well as the clothing worn by the victim (Workman & Orr, 1996; Yarmey, 1985) has also been found to influence the extent to which perceivers blame the victim. Previous relations with the assailant may also increase victim blame (Bridges, 1991; Check & Malamuth, 1983; Freetly & Kane, 1995; Tetreault & Barnett, 1987; Yamawaki & Tschanz, 2005). For example, much research has found that participants are more likely to blame the victim when the assault is depicted as an acquaintance (i.e., date rape) rape than a stranger rape. (Anderson, 2007; Bell, Kuriloff, & Lottes, 1994; Johnson & Russ, 1989; L'Armand & Pepitone, 1982; Pollard, 1992; Quankenbush, 1989; Ward, 1995). Indeed, in the legal context stranger rape cases have the greatest possibility of conviction, gaining strength with every feature of a stereotypical rape they

possess (Estrich, 1987; Larcombe, 2002). Many victims do not even recognize their plight as a rape if it does not fit the stranger rape prototype (Wood & Rennie, 1994). As such these cultural cues that suggest finding blame with the victim even influence how victims interpret their assault, as researchers have found that victims engage in self-blame as well (Katz & Burt, 1988).

BJW theory might suggest that women are more likely to blame rape victims than men, as they are more threatened by rape and therefore more motivated to restore a sense of justice via victim blame. However, the empirical literature documents that women are *less* likely to blame victims of sexual assaults than their male counterparts (Calhoun, Selby, Cann, & Keller, 1978; Calhoun, Selby, & Warring, 1976; Deitz et al., 1984; Feldman-Summers & Lindner, 1976; Field, 1978; Kleinke & Meyer, 1990; White & Kurpius, 2002). Women also tend to punish alleged assailants to a greater extent than men (Yamawaki, Darby & Queiroz, 2007). This pattern suggests that counter to the BJW perspective, women may blame female rape victims less because they identify with the victim more so than male observers (DeKeseredy, Schwartz, & Tait, 1993; Doherty & Anderson, 1998; Koss, Gidycz, & Winiewski, 1987; Kleinke & Meyer, 1990; Lerner & Miller, 1978).

### **Rape Myth Acceptance**

Rape myths are “prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs” about sexual assault, victims, and assailants that are widely accepted to be true (p.217; Burt, 1980). For example, some rape myths serve to trivialize the event (Women tend to exaggerate how much rape affects them), while others identify factors found within a “typical” assault (Rape is unlikely to happen in the woman’s own familiar neighborhood). Acceptance of these rape myths perpetuate the cultural tendency to blame the victim, as rape myths may be used to dismiss the severity of cases that don’t meet prototypes (e.g., if a weapon isn’t used it can’t be considered rape; women who are

assaulted are usually dressed provocatively). Such myths often define rape narrowly and cast blame on the victims while simultaneously denying and/or justifying male sexual aggression against females (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; see also Peterson & Muehlenhard, 2004).

Endorsement of rape myths affects not only labeling and reporting of the crime, but also individuals' reactions to rape victims and offenders (Blumberg & Lester, 1991; Field, 1978; Mazelan, 1982; Muehlenhard & MacNaughton, 1988). For instance, high endorsers of rape myths tend to blame the victim of an assault more so than those with lower rape myth endorsement (Jenkins & Dambrot, 1987). Similar to their greater tendency to blame the victim, research has also found that men endorse rape myths to a greater extent than women (Geiger, Fishcer, & Eshet, 2004; Hammond, Berry, Rodriquez, 2011; Hinck & Thomas, 1999; Johnson, Kuck, & Schander, 1997; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, 1995). Not only do men agree with rape myths to a greater extent than women they also have been found to empathize less with victims and blame them more for the event (Bell et al., 1994; Brady et al., 1991; Davies, Pollard, & Archer, 1991; White & Kurpius, 2002). Fortunately, recent work indicates that endorsement of rape myths in general appears to be declining, with participants typically disagreeing with rape myth statements overall. However, this is observed to a much greater extent among female participants (Anderson, 2007). Further, demystifying rape myths utilizing rape awareness workshops appears to reduce agreement with rape myths (Anderson & Whiston, 2005; Hinck & Thomas, 1999).

### **Power and Blaming the Victim**

Feminist explanations for sexual assaults propose that the patriarchal culture predominant in society contributes to sex roles which endorse an unequal power distribution between males and females (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). This gendered

perspective identifies rape as motivated by power, with violence against women a function of male domination and female exploitation (Brownmiller, 1975; Ward, 1995). Endorsing gender inequality and traditional gender roles has been found to predict acceptance of rape myths and victim blaming (Bohner, 1998, Whatley, 2005).

One power relation that has been explored in the BTV literature is the effect of status on victim blaming. For example, low socioeconomic status (SES) male defendants are more likely to be found guilty and receive harsher penalties for sexual assaults than comparable high status men (Mazzella & Feingold, 1994; Vaughan, 2001). And in a study manipulating the SES of victim and assailant, participants who believed women use sex as a way to gain power from men tended to minimize the severity of an alleged rape and perceive the alleged victim as responsible for the incident, but only when the assailant was described as having higher socioeconomic status (SES) than the victim (Yamawaki, Darby, & Quieroz, 2007).

This line of research has examined the role power plays in assignment of blame between the victim and assailant within a rape scenario. To my knowledge, however, there is no research examining the effects of observers' power/status on their tendencies to blame the victim. The current research seeks to explore how personal feelings of power in evaluating a rape scenario may affect assignment of blame to the victim.

### **Social Power**

Power differentials are an important feature of society; possessing (or lacking) power is ever-present in social life. Not surprisingly, power has been described as a fundamental concept in social science (Russell, 1938; Turner, 2005). Researchers have attempted to define and characterize this construct in psychological literature for decades (see Cartwright, 1959; French & Raven, 1959). However, providing clear accounts of how individuals behave when in a state

of high or low has proved difficult (see Guinote & Vescio, 2010). Specifically, while some research highlights the positive implications of power (Galinsky et al., 2003; Overbeck & Park, 2001, 2006; Weick & Guinote, 2008), other findings point to the negative consequences of possessing power (Fiske & Dépret, 1996; Galinsky et al., 2003; Weick & Guinote, 2008). Additionally, relatively little attention has been given to the effects of *low power* or *powerlessness* on behavior (cf., Branscombe, Schmitt, & Harvey, 1999).

While there are many definitions of power, in general power is characterized by the ability to influence or control others using methods of persuasion, legitimate authority, or coercion (see Copeland, 1994; Fiske, 1993a; French & Raven, 1959; Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003; Turner, 2005). The degree of power an individual has is thought to exist on a continuum (low to high power), but research typically differentiates between two dichotomous categories: those who possess power, and those who lack power.

**Possessing power.** High-power individuals have been characterized as more extraverted, talkative, and more likely to interrupt and speak out of turn than their low-power counterparts (Anderson, John, Keltner, & Kring, 2001; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003). Powerful individuals are also more likely to take action than those in a position of low power, regardless of the social implications of the behavior (Galinsky et al., 2003) or risk (Anderson & Galinsky, 2006). For instance, power increased action regardless of whether the action expanded (as observed in a public-goods dilemma task) or depleted (as observed in a commons dilemma task) a shared resource (Galinsky et al., 2003, Study 3). Individuals possessing power are less dependent on others (Dépret & Fiske, 1993) due to their ease of access to desired resources (Fiske & Berdahl, 2007). As such, those in a position of power are more likely to behave

consistently with their own personal values (Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001; Keltner et al., 2003).

*Negative effects of power.* Research suggests that high levels of power are related to aggressive behavior (Haney, Banks, & Zimbardo, 1973), including child abuse (Bugental, Lyon, Krantz, & Cortez, 1997) and sexual aggression (Bargh, Raymond, Pryor, & Strack, 1995; Leibold & McConnell, 2004; Lisak & Roth, 1988; Pryor, 1987; Pryor & Stoller, 1994). Further, high-power individuals have a tendency to take credit for the contributions of subordinates (Kipnis, 1972) and are less likely to adopt the perspectives of others, perhaps due to a lack of motivation to form accurate appraisals of others (Galinsky et al., 2006; Keltner & Robinson, 1997). Research on power and stereotyping has found that relative to those without power, individuals who have power tend to individuate others less (i.e., pay less attention to them) (Fiske, 1993; Goodwin et al., 2000), and attend to stereotype-consistent information more than stereotype-inconsistent information (Dépret & Fiske, 1999; Fiske, 1993; Goodwin et al., 2000; Rodríguez-Bailón, Moya, & Yzerbyt, 2000). Those in low power positions are more likely to effortfully seek individuating information about others, especially about those in high power positions in order to better predict their behavior (Dépret & Fiske, 1999; Stevens & Fiske, 2000). High-power individuals also tend to show more ingroup bias and to prefer inequality among social groups relative to low-power individuals (Jost, 2001).

Additionally, powerful individuals tend to ignore the perspectives of others. For instance, Galinsky et al. (2006) found that individuals primed with high power were more likely to draw an “E” on their forehead in a self-oriented direction than those in the low power condition. In other words, high power individuals were more concerned with an accurate appearance of the E for their own viewing, while low power individuals were more likely to draw the E so that others

could view the E correctly. In a second study, Galinsky et al. (2006) found that high power participants were less likely to take into account that other people did not have access to their privileged knowledge in interpreting a message. Both studies therefore suggest that power leads individuals to insufficiently adjust to the perspectives of others. These findings seemingly support the common adage that “power corrupts” (see Gruenfeld, Keltner & Anderson, 2003; Kipnis 1972, 1976; Rind & Kipnis, 1999).

***Positive effects of power.*** In contrast to these negative consequences of power, additional research indicates that possessing power does not always lead to negative outcomes. For instance, social power has been linked to positive behavior when responsibility is made salient (Goodwin et al., 2000) or when those in a position of power will be held accountable for their actions (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999). Individuals whose position of power is unstable rather than irrevocable are also more likely to apply careful thought about consequences or response alternatives (Gruenfeld et al., 2003). In impression formation tasks, power-primed perceivers are also more motivated to process additional information about targets with inconsistent attributes than perceivers in the control (neutral) condition (Chen, Ybarra, & Kiefer, 2004). This finding provides evidence that powerful individuals are capable of attending to specific details rather than default to easier stereotype-consistent information.

***Lacking power.*** Much less research has focused on the effects of having low power, unless it is being used as a source of comparison to individuals with power. In general, however, individuals lacking power are often defined as such due to their limited access to resources, which therefore makes them more vulnerable to punishments (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002), more dependent on others, and more sensitive to how others evaluate them (Keltner et al., 2003). Low-power individuals are also more likely to go along with the preferences of those in power

(Anderson & Berdahl, 2002), and to feel more uncertainty about belonging than high-power individuals (Walton & Cohen, 2007).

Those who personally believe they are lacking power in a given situation are also more sensitive to and reactive to power cues in their environment especially when under cognitive load (Bugental, Lyon, Cortez, & Krantz, 1997). That is, those low in power in a given interaction are more sensitive to the potential of being at a power disadvantage and therefore attempt to prevent it with their subsequent behavior. For instance, in the domain of parent-child relationships, parents who perceived themselves as lacking control are more likely to be abusive (Bradley & Peters, 1991; Bugental et. al, 1989).

### **Path to Current Project**

In my own initial research on social power, I attempted to investigate the effects of high and low power on participants' liking for, willingness to interact with, and extent to which they individuated versus categorized ingroup (White) and outgroup (Black) targets. In this research, Caucasian participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions (High Power v. Low Power v. Control) before beginning a purported study on "understanding university student's experiences on campus". Specifically, participants were asked to engage in the Galinsky et al., (2003) writing task prime which asked participants to either recall an incident where they had power over another individual (High Power condition), someone else had power over them (Low Power condition), or to recall their day yesterday (Control). This task was depicted as an unrelated task to ostensibly help participants clear their minds before beginning the study. Utilizing the "Who said what?" paradigm, an established method for assessing categorization (Klauer and Wegner, 1998; Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, & Ruderman, 1978), participants observed a computerized group discussion involving 3 White targets and 3 Black targets, ostensibly fellow

University of Kansas students, discussing ways to improve their campus. Following this task, participants were asked to recall each statement made during the discussion, intermixed with an equal number of new statements, and correctly assign each statement made during the discussion to the correct speaker. Within-race errors were identified as statements that were incorrectly assigned to a speaker of the same race as the correct speaker, while between-race errors were identified as statements that were incorrectly assigned to a speaker of the incorrect race of the correct speaker. The tendency to make more within- than between-race errors is a highly replicable effect, indicating the use of race as a categorization tool (e.g., see Klauer & Wegener, 1998). Following the recall phase, participants were asked to assess their liking for and willingness to interact with each target, as well as their perceived similarity to each target.

A mixed-model analysis of variance (ANOVA), with power condition and participant gender as between-subjects factors and type of error (within- v. between-race) as the within-subjects factor, indicated only a main effect of error type, replicating past research,  $F(1,104) = 171.89$ . Participants made more within-race errors ( $M$  proportion = .14) than between-race errors ( $M = .06$ ). Unfortunately, there were no significant effects of power condition or participant gender on errors (all  $ps > .05$ ). Further, power condition and gender had no effect on perceptions of similarity, liking for, or willingness to interact with targets, regardless of target race (all  $ps > .05$ ).

Failure to find effects of power on these measures leads to two potential conclusions. It is possible that the power manipulation failed or was not strong enough to produce observable effects on these measures. It is also possible that power does not differentially affect categorization or judgments of minority and majority targets. In an attempt to answer this question, I attempted another study that used a different manipulation of power, a word search

task, with a Caucasian community sample via Amazon Mechanical Turk (N=54). Additionally, a simpler indicator of categorization was used in which participants were introduced to one target and given some basic information about them. At the end of the study participants were asked to recall some of the information they read about the target as well as select his picture from a matrix of other same-race faces. Again, results indicated no effect of power or gender on participants perceptions of similarity, liking for, or willingness to interact with targets regardless of target race (all  $ps >.05$ ). Further, there were no differences in recall of information or ability to accurately identify the target within the matrix by participant gender or power condition (all  $ps >.05$ ).

In the current study, I have decided to continue to explore the role social power plays in the evaluation of targets. However, rather than examining race, I instead explore the tendency to blame the victim. In this work, I do not examine liking, willingness to interact with, or perceptions of similarity to the victim or assailant, and instead examine the potential impact of social power on the extent to which one blames the victim for their assault, as well as their endorsement of various rape myths. To my knowledge, no research has explicitly examined how situation-specific feelings of high power or low power affect the tendency to blame victims of sexual assault.

### **Overview of the Present Research**

Participants in the present study were exposed to a situation-specific manipulation to alter their feelings of high power or low power (or a control state) before reading a sexual assault scenario (a “date rape”) involving a female victim and a male assailant. Acquaintance/date rape scenarios are characterized as being ambiguous in nature (Hammond, Berry, & Rodriguez, 2011); the scenario created for the current study was also careful to assure assignment of blame

to be difficult. This ambiguity may enhance the likelihood that a power manipulation may shift blame decisions.

Based on the existing literature I predict that an individual's feeling of personal power will influence the degree of blame placed on the victim. Specifically, I expect that individuals in the high power condition will tend to ignore the perspective of the victim (Galinsky et al., 2006), and therefore place more blame on the victim for the assault, relative to the control condition. On the other hand, because victim status connotes powerlessness (Lamb, 1999) and because observers recognizing a common vulnerability are less likely to respond with derogation (Lerner & Miller, 1978), I predict that participants in the low power condition may highlight the powerlessness of the victim in an assault and thus elicit less victim blaming.

Will men and women respond differently as a function of condition? Among individuals in the control condition, I expect to replicate past findings that men will engage in more victim blaming than women (Calhoun, Selby, Cann, & Keller, 1978; Calhoun, Selby, & Warring, 1976; Deitz et al., 1984; Feldman-Summers & Lindner, 1976; Field, 1978; Kleinke & Meyer, 1990; White & Kurpius, 2002). I expect that in the high power condition, women will blame the victim more, mirroring the high victim-blaming of their male counterparts. Conversely, I expect males to blame the victim less in the low power condition, mirroring the lower-victim blaming tendencies of females.

Consistent with the literature on rape myth acceptance, I also expect a main effect of gender, such that males will endorse rape myths to a greater extent than females (Geiger et al., 2004; Hammond et al., 2011; Hinck & Thomas, 1999; Johnson et al., 1997; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, 1995). I expect this same main effect of gender pattern to emerge within each subscale as of the Rape Myth Acceptance scale as well. Paralleling my predictions for victim

blaming, I expect individuals in the high power condition to endorse rape myths to a greater extent than those in the control condition, while those in the low power condition will endorse them less than those in the control condition. Further, I expect a gender by condition interaction such that women will endorse rape myths less regardless of manipulation due to their greater knowledge and awareness of rape myths (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

Finally, based on existing literature, I believe that individuals with high BJW will blame the victim more and blame the assailant less than those lower in BJW (Kleinke & Meyer, 1990; Rubin & Peplau, 1975).

## **Method**

### **Participants**

136 undergraduates (79 female) at the University of Kansas received course credit in their introductory psychology course for participating in a study purportedly examining “cognitive processes in evaluating others.” All potential participants were required to have responded “no” to a pre-screening question, administered via an on-line survey earlier in the semester assessing whether “they or someone close to them” had ever been the victim of a sexual assault. This screening reduced the likelihood of any participant distress in reading about a rape case, and of personal experience with assault contributing to blame decisions. Of course this also limits the generalizability of the results to non-victimized introductory psychology students. It is worth noting, that of the 1,231 participants exposed to the prescreen, 944 participants were eligible to participate (266 participants responded “yes” to the prescreen question, 21 participants declined to answer).

### **Procedure and Design**

Upon entering the lab, participants – run in groups of 1 to 4 – were greeted by a Caucasian female experimenter and seated at a desk in front of a computer monitor. Following completion of the informed consent, all participants were given information about the Obama administration’s recent Title IX initiative, which included a definition of sexual harassment and sexual violence (see Appendix A) before being randomly assigned to one of three situational power conditions (High Power v. Low Power v. Control) resulting in a one-way between-subjects design. Specifically, following the cover story, participants in the high power condition were told the following:

*Under this initiative the Obama administration is calling for more on-campus involvement in internally handling issues of alleged sexual assaults. As a result, The University of Kansas is implementing a student court to review sexual assault cases and determine fault and subsequent punishment if fault is found. In other words, KU has decided to utilize an anonymous peer review processes in which actual students provide input on determining fault in sexual violence cases. On the following screen you will read a recent report that has been filed on the KU campus (the names of the individuals involved have been changed for privacy). The evaluations you provide will be used to aid the campus’s decisions regarding the outcome of this case.*

Conversely, those in the low power condition read the following:

*Under this initiative the Obama administration is calling for more on-campus involvement in internally handling issues of alleged sexual assaults. As a result, The University of Kansas is considering implementing a student court to review sexual assault cases and determine fault and subsequent punishment if fault is found. In other words, KU may decide to utilize an anonymous peer review processes in which actual students provide input on determining fault in sexual violence cases. On the following screen you will read a recent report that has been filed on the KU campus (the names of the individuals involved have been changed for privacy). The outcome of this case has already been established and thus the evaluations you provide will not be used to aid the campus’s decisions regarding the outcome of this case, but simply provide us with information on the cognitive processes used in evaluating sexual violence cases.*

Finally, participants randomly assigned to serve as a control read the following after the cover story:

*Under this initiative the Obama administration is calling for more on-campus involvement in internally handling issues of alleged sexual assaults. On the following screen you will read a recent report that has been filed on the KU campus (the names of the individuals involved have been changed for privacy). The evaluations you provide will provide us with information on the cognitive processes used in evaluating sexual violence cases.*

Following exposure to their respective condition, all participants read the following sexual assault scenario designed to be relatively ambiguous in determining assignment of fault:

*Karen and James are first introduced at a party by a mutual friend. The two spend most of the night together laughing, talking, and flirting with each other. At the end of the party the two exchange numbers and agree to meet up again. The next night James asks Karen over to his apartment. Karen and James both begin drinking and soon both are intoxicated. Karen starts kissing James and soon James grabs her and throws her onto his bed. Karen gets very dizzy and disoriented and James asks her if she is okay. Karen wakes up in the hospital and is told that her friends were concerned when she did not come home and came looking for her. They found her in James's bedroom and she was vomiting so they called 9-1-1. Later Karen is told that James admitted to the police that they were both very drunk and had sex but it was consensual. Karen informs the police that she did not consent and would like to file a rape report against James.*

After reading this scenario, participants responded to a variety of measures assessing the degree of blame they assigned to the alleged victim and assailant, their belief in a just world, and endorsement of rape myths. At the conclusion of the experiment, participants were first probed for suspicion utilizing a funnel debrief before finally being fully debriefed regarding the purpose of the research. Participants were then given the opportunity to ask the researcher any questions they may have and finally, due to the sensitive nature of the topic examined, participants were provided with information on sexual assaults and contacts for more information before being thanked and dismissed.

### **Stimulus Materials**

Participants were run separately on Dell computers. Stimulus materials and questionnaires were presented using Media Lab software (Jarvis, 2008).

**Blaming the Victim.** In order to assess the extent to which the alleged victim was blamed in the sexual assault scenario participants responded to four items created for the purpose of the current research. All items were presented one at a time and were assessed on a 1 (*not at all*) to 9 (*completely/totally*) response scale. Specifically, participants were asked “How much is Karen to blame for what happened?”, “How much do you think James took advantage of Karen?”(Reverse scored), “How interested was Karen in having sexual relations?”, and “How certain are you that this incident would be considered rape?”(Reverse scored). These four items formed a reliable measure of blaming the victim ( $\alpha=.70$ ; see Appendix B).

**Percent Blame.** In addition to the above blaming the victim items, participants also indicated the percentage of blame they would assign to both the victim and the assailant. Specifically, participants were asked “If you were dividing blame for this incident between Karen and James, what percent of the blame goes to James (Karen)?” Participants assigned a percentage of blame from 0 to 100 for each of the targets (see Appendix C).

**Belief in a Just World.** Participants answered questions regarding their belief in a just world using the 7-item scale by Lipkus (1991; see Appendix D). All questions were presented one at a time and were assessed on a 1 (*totally disagree*) to 6 (*totally agree*) Likert-type scale. These seven items formed a reliable measure of belief in a just world ( $\alpha=.75$ ).

**Rape-Myth Acceptance.** To assess the extent to which participants endorsed various rape myths, participants completed the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, Short Form (Payne, Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1999; see Appendix E). This scale consists of 20 items, divided into eight subscales; She Asked For It (4 items,  $\alpha=.73$ ; *If a woman is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of control*), It Wasn’t Really Rape (2 items,  $r=.25$ ; *If the rapist doesn’t have a weapon, you really can’t call it rape*), He Didn’t Mean To (2

items,  $r=.37$ ; *Men don't usually intend to force sex on a woman, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away*), She Wanted It (2 items  $r=.41$ ; *Many women secretly desire to be raped*), She Lied (2 items,  $r = .57$ ; *A lot of women lead a man on and then they cry rape*), Rape is a Trivial Event (2 items  $r=.34$ ; *Women tend to exaggerate how much rape affects them*), Rape is a Deviant Event (3 items,  $\alpha=.63$ ; *It is usually only women who dress suggestively that are raped*), as well as 3 filler items (not scored). Subscale items were intermixed and presented one at a time. All items were assessed on a 1 (*not at all agree*) to 7 (*very much agree*) Likert-type scale. The overall scale formed a reliable measure of rape-myth acceptance ( $\alpha=.88$ ).

**Funnel debrief.** In order to probe for general suspicion or awareness concerning the priming manipulation and the true purposes of the task, participants completed a funnel debriefing questionnaire. Questions progressed from general ones that asked about the overall purpose of the study to more specific inquiries (Reis & Judd, 2000; see Appendix F).

## Results

All of the dependent variables (Blaming the Victim, Percent Blame, Rape Myth Acceptance, and Belief in a Just World) were analyzed using Participant Gender X Condition (High Power, Low Power, Control) univariate analysis of variance (ANOVA). In terms of the Rape Myth Acceptance subscales, all subscales were first subjected to a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) before examining individual subscales. Finally, a moderated mediation was conducted examining a moderator of gender and a mediation of the She Lied subscale on the extent to which participants blamed the victim according to condition. All means by condition and gender are reported in Table 1 and all correlations among variables are reported in Table 2.

### Blaming the Victim

The 2 (Participant gender: Male v. Female) by 3 (Condition: High Power, Low Power, Control) between-subjects ANOVA on blaming the victim revealed no main effects of gender,  $F(1,130) = 1.76$ , *ns*, or condition,  $F(2,130) = 1.03$ , *ns*, but the interaction was significant,  $F(2,130) = 5.18$ ,  $p < .01$ . To probe the interaction, which is depicted in Figure 1, I tested the effects of condition within levels of gender, and the effects of gender within each condition. For female participants there were no significant differences in blaming the victim across the three conditions,  $p = .19$ . A significant effect of condition was observed among male participants,  $F(2,54) = 3.50$ ,  $p < .05$ . Post-hoc analyses using Fisher's LSD reveals that male participants in the low power condition blamed the victim significantly less than males in the high power condition and the control condition, both  $ps < .05$ ). The latter two conditions did not differ from each other,  $p > .9$ .

Further, participant gender effects were not significant within the high power or low power condition, all  $ps > .09$ , but did emerge in the control condition,  $F(1,39) = 5.76$ ,  $p < .05$ , where females blamed the victim significantly less than males.

### **Percent Blame**

As previously mentioned, participants were asked to allocate percentage of blame for the alleged assault to both the victim and assailant, with the assignment of blame between the two adding up to 100 percent. While most participants successfully distributed 100 percent of the blame, some participants assigned over or under 100 percent across the two individuals. I therefore decided to examine percentage of blame assigned to the assailant as well as the victim separately. Separate 2 (Participant gender: Male v. Female) by 3 (Condition: High Power, Low Power, Control) between-subjects ANOVAs were therefore conducted on blame assigned to the victim, and blame assigned to the assailant. For percent blame of the assailant, there were no

significant effects, all  $ps > .12$ . For percent victim blame, the main effects were nonsignificant, all  $ps > .55$ , but the interaction was marginally significant,  $F(2,130) = 2.48, p = .088$  (see Figure 2).

To probe this interaction I tested the effects of condition within levels of gender and effects of gender within condition. Results revealed a marginally significant main effect of condition within female participants,  $F(2,76) = 2.24, p = .11$ . Post-hoc analyses using Fisher's LSD reveals that this effect appears to be largely a function of females in the low power condition assigning a higher percentage of blame to the victim than in the control condition. Tests of gender effects within condition revealed no significant differences ( $ps > .14$ ).

### **Rape Myth Acceptance**

I first conducted a 2 (Participant gender: Male v. Female) by 3 (Condition: High Power, Low Power, Control) between-subjects ANOVA on the full Rape Myth Acceptance scale. As demonstrated in Table 1, results revealed only a significant main effect of gender  $F(1,130)=8.96, p<.01$ , but no effect of condition or the interaction emerged, all  $ps >.29$ .

**Rape Myth Acceptance Subscales.** The RMA scale includes seven subscales. To focus on these components of RMA, I first conducted a 2 (Participant gender: Male v. Female) by 3 (Condition: High Power, Low Power, Control) between-subjects multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with all seven subscales of Rape Myth Acceptance as dependent variables. Omnibus tests revealed a significant main effect of gender,  $F(7,124) = 5.09, p < .001$  as well as a significant gender by condition interaction,  $F(14,248) = 1.84, p < .05$ . No main effect of condition was observed,  $p > .67$ .

As depicted in Table 1, results revealed no significant main effect of condition on any of the subscales, all  $ps > .16$ . However significant main effects of gender emerged on the following

subscales: She Asked For It,  $F(1,130) = 4.82, p < .05$ ; He Didn't Mean To,  $F(1,130) = 5.13, p < .05$ ; She Lied,  $F(1,130) = 11.59, p = .001$ ; Rape is a Trivial Event,  $F(1,130) = 15.00, p < .001$ ; and Rape is a Deviant Event,  $F(1,130) = 6.56, p < .05$ . The Condition X Gender interaction was significant only for the She Lied subscale,  $F(2,130) = 4.55, p < .05$ .

***She Lied.*** The interaction on the She Lied scale is depicted in Figure 3. To probe this interaction I tested the effects of condition within levels of gender and effects of gender within condition. No significant differences across condition emerged for females,  $p = .44$ . However, men's endorsement of the "she lied" items significantly varied across condition,  $F(2, 54) = 4.01, p < .05$ . Post-hoc analyses using Fisher's LSD reveals that male participants were significantly less likely to endorse the She Lied rape myths when in a state of low power than when in a position of high power, or when in a control state (see Table 1 and Figure 3). The high power and control conditions did not significantly differ from each other,  $p = .47$ . In examining the effects of gender within each condition, significant effects emerged in the high power,  $F(1,41) = 7.74, p < .01$ , and control conditions,  $F(1,38) = 12.34, p < .01$ , with males endorsing the "she lied" items significantly more than females. No significant gender difference emerged in the low power condition,  $p > .71$ .

### **Belief in a Just World.**

There was no evidence that Belief in a Just World scores were affected by participant gender or condition (all  $ps > .09$ ). Counter to prediction, correlations between participants' BJW scores and tendency to blame the victim were not significant ( $r = .06$  with victim blame,  $r = -.13$  with percent blame to assailant and  $r = .17$  with percent blame to victim). Further, I regressed the blame measures on belief in a just world (centered), participant gender, condition, and their interactions. Because condition was a 3-level variable, I created two contrast codes. The first

contrast examined the difference between the low power condition (coded as  $2/3$ ), and the high power and control condition (each coded as  $-1/3$ ). The second contrast examined the difference between the high power condition (coded as  $-.5$ ) and the control condition (coded as  $.15$ ). There were no main effects of BJW (all  $ps > .56$ ) or any interactions involving BJW (all  $ps > .11$ ) on any of the blame variables.

### **Moderated-Mediation**

A comparison of Figures 1 and 3 indicates very similar patterns: Men in the low power condition both blamed the victim less and were less likely to endorse the She Lied rape myths. This raised the question of whether the gender by condition interaction on victim blaming was mediated by endorsement of She Lied subscale of the RMA inventory. To test this, I conducted a moderated-mediation analysis (Model 2 in Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007; Model 8 in Hayes, 2012), using the Hayes (2012) *Process* macro for SPSS, which provided bootstrapped confidence intervals (bootstrap  $N = 10,000$ ) for the indirect effects and treated participant gender as the moderating variable (female = 0, male = 1). Regression analyses indicate that while the high power and control conditions differed from the low power condition on She Lied and BTV, these conditions did not differ from each other on either of these variables,  $ps > .5$ . To test the specific effect of the low power condition I therefore contrasted these two conditions against the low power condition using an orthogonal contrast code (Cohen, Cohen, West & Aiken, 2003) which contrasted the low power condition from the other two conditions: high power =  $-1/3$ , control =  $-1/3$ , low power =  $2/3$ .

As seen in Figure 4, the moderated mediation model reproduced the significant effects of gender on She Lied, She Lied on BTV, as well as the gender by condition interactions on She Lied and BTV as explained in the ANOVAs above. The conditional direct effect of the low

power condition on BTV was not significant for females,  $p = .28$ , but was significant for males,  $p < .05$ , confirming the prior analyses which demonstrated that while condition had no effect on female participants, males in the low power condition blamed the victim less than in the control or high power condition. The conditional indirect effect, through decreased endorsement of She Lied, significantly decreased blaming the victim for male participants ( $B = -.38$ , 95% CI [-.79, -.12]) but not for female participants ( $B = .14$ , 95% CI [-.06, .45]). Thus, the overall moderated mediation model revealed that for men in the low power condition, She Lied was a significant mediator of BTV ( $B = -.52$ , 95% CI [-1.08, -.17])<sup>1</sup>. Specifically, low power males lower BTV scores were significantly mediated by their lower endorsement of She Lied rape myths.

### Discussion

The primary goal of this research was to examine the impact of differential degrees of social power on the tendency to blame the victim of a sexual assault. Further, given the tendency in the literature to ignore the low power and powerless side of the social power spectrum, I focused on both high power and low power conditions, in addition to a no reference to power control. It is important to distinguish how the social power manipulation in this study, particularly the high power condition, differs from a manipulation of accountability. While the two are highly similar, I identify the manipulation used in the current work as a power manipulation due to the anonymity of participants' decisions, and absence of needing to provide justification for their decisions. Specifically, the literature on accountability stresses in their definition of this term the expectation that one may be called on to justify their beliefs or actions (see Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Tetlock, 1992). Further, one such measure used in accountability work is identifiability. In other words, participants feel *accountable* when led to believe that their

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that this is a partial mediation as the interaction predicting BTV remains significant in the full model.

beliefs or actions will be linked back to them personally (see Lerner & Tetlock, 1999; Price, 1987). In this research, I was also particularly interested in exploring the effects of situationally-manipulated social power on rape myth acceptance. In the current study effects of low social power were found for blaming the victim and for one component of rape myths (among men), though power did not affect the more general endorsement of various rape myths.

### *Blaming the Victim*

In line with past research on blaming the victim of sexual assaults, male participants blamed the victim to a larger extent than their female counterparts in the control condition. Additionally, the priming conditions appear to reduce, or even eliminate, this gender difference. Building upon the existing literature, the current work revealed the important function social power, in particular low power, plays on the tendency to blame the victim. Specifically, I found that priming men to feel low in social power reduced their tendency to blame the victim of an assault, and indeed brought them to (low) levels of victim blame comparable to that of women. Interestingly, and counter to predictions, condition had no effect on blaming the victim for female participants, and priming men to feel powerful did not significantly differ from control.

It is unclear as to why condition had no effect on blame among female participants. Specifically, I had expected that priming participants to feel low in social power would lead to increased identification with the victim leading to less blaming than the other conditions, but this was only true among the male participants. A possible explanation for this finding may be a floor effect – women were already very low in victim blaming, and condition effects were essentially washed out.

At present, little can be said about the lack of effects for individuals in the high power condition, as the high power and control conditions did not significantly differ from one another

on any of the measures of interest. I expect that the high power condition was not strong enough to elicit a response greater than the “natural” response observed in the control condition, especially among male participants. Specifically, as men hold dominant status in society, it is possible the relatively subtle manipulation of high power was not strong enough to differentiate its effects from the control condition. Additionally, the high power condition used in this study simply alerted participants that they would have some decision-making influence on the case. It is possible that this was also assumed in the control condition, such that the added specification of high power did not have added impact. It is worth noting that a slightly different pattern of results emerged on a different measure of victim blame – the percent blame assignment.

Depicted in Figure 2, there was a tendency for low power women to blame the victim more than in the other conditions. The overall interaction was only marginal, however, and perhaps little should be read into this finding. Men continued to show low levels of percent victim blame in the low power condition, but this effect was nonsignificant. The two variables – BTV and percent victim blame – were highly correlated,  $r = .70$ ,  $p < .01$ , but future work will be needed to address any discrepancies between the two methods of assessing victim blame.

### *Rape Myth Acceptance*

Much past research has documented that men endorse rape myths to a greater extent than do women. The same was true in this study, though only for five of the seven subscales: that the victim asked for it or is lying, that the assailant didn't mean to assault the victim, and that rape is a trivial and deviant event. The two subscales that did not produce gender effects, She Wanted It and It Wasn't Really Rape, may indicate some positive change in men's understanding of sexual assault. These components of rape myth may now appear outdated. These myths suggest that an event can only be considered a rape if a weapon or physical force is used and that women

secretly want to be assaulted. The remaining subscales that do produce significant gender differences appear to make less specific and bold claims about what must be involved for an event to be considered a rape. Furthermore, rather than stating that the victim asked for it, they state that she brought it upon herself because she was intoxicated or she was sending mixed signals to the alleged assailant.

The overall MANOVA results indicated an interaction between participant gender and condition, but the univariate effect was only significant for the She Lied subscale. Low power male participants endorsed this myth to a lesser extent than those in the high power and control conditions. The She Lied subscale depicts victims as making up or exaggerating the event for attention or retribution. It is unclear why the She Lied subscale was the only rape myth subscale to be affected by condition. Perhaps this effect was due to the scenario used, in which the assignment of blame in the scenario is relatively ambiguous. While many of the other subscales concern beliefs about assault in general, the She Lied subscale is central to the victim. Perhaps priming males to feel low in power allows them to identify with the victim to a greater extent, and therefore makes them more willing to align themselves with her perspective. Future research will need to explore this possibility further, by utilizing measures of perceived empathy and similarity to the victim. Further, while this subscale was the only one to reach significance, an examination of Table 1 reveals that low power men were low in endorsement of all the subscales compared to the other conditions. Despite their lack of significance, the trend of the interaction appears to be the same.

#### *Belief in a Just World*

Similar to the sparse and inconsistent findings of belief in a just world on victim blame, the current project was unable to determine any gender or condition effects on levels of belief in

a just world. I offer a potential explanation based on previous research that finds that individuals' belief in a just world is only threatened when the victim is believed to be innocent (Correia, Vala & Aguiar, 2007). While victims were generally assigned less blame than the assailant, the victim was not viewed as completely free of any responsibility. Specifically, participants assigned on average 39% of the blame to the victim and 62% to the assailant, demonstrating that while the victim was held less responsible than the assailant they were not viewed as entirely innocent. Perhaps BJW would have played a larger role in a case more heavily weighted against the assailant. Also worth noting is the fact that gender and condition had no effect on BJW. While I had no specific predictions about gender or condition affecting BJW, it is interesting that neither of these variables had an influence on BJW.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

The present study points to the potential impact priming male individuals to feel low in power may have on subsequent evaluations of rape victims and endorsement of rape myths. Unfortunately the current work can offer little about the potential effects of priming individuals to feel powerful, as the high power condition did not differ significantly from the control. The present research failed to conduct a manipulation check to monitor the effectiveness of the manipulations. Future studies will include a manipulation check to ensure the manipulations are working as intended. Further, I plan to develop a stronger high power manipulation in order to exaggerate differences between the high power and control group as it appears in the current study that they did not differ. Doing so will shed more light on the role social power plays in victim blame and rape myth endorsement.

While this study suggests that low power males are less likely to blame rape victims, at present it is unclear why this is the case. I was able to show that the effect was mediated by

endorsement of rape myths, but it seems likely that a more proximal variable was responsible. Specifically, the low power manipulation may have increased men's feelings of empathy for the victim, leading them to believe victim reports more and reduce blame. Future research should include a measure of empathy, and other related attitudes towards rape victims to aid in understanding this finding (see Kleinke & Meyer, 1990).

Another limitation of the current study concerns the participant sample. Due to the fact that my sample consists of university students, many likely do not have experience serving as a juror, and therefore their reactions to the case as a pseudo juror may not accurately reflect that of the general population. Further, due to the sensitive nature of the material used in this study, I limited my sample to include only students who indicated they, or anyone close to them, had not been a victim of a sexual assault. Although this reflects how juries for similar cases are selected, it limits the ability to draw any conclusions about general society. It is likely that individuals who have been victimized themselves, or know someone who has, would have stronger reactions to the scenario depicted in this study. Additionally, I did not account for individuals in the current study who may have been accused of a sexual assault, wrongfully or not, which again may have influenced alignment with the assailant in the scenario. Including such individuals would help to offer a more complete picture of the victim blame tendencies of a jury. Future work will seek to extend these findings to a more diverse sample of participants as well as take into account special subsets of the population, such as those who may have been or know someone who has been a victim or an alleged assailant.

### **Implications and Conclusions**

The main finding from this research is that priming males to feel low in social power reduces their tendency to blame the victim of an assault and their endorsement of rape myths to

such an extent that their victim blame levels are comparable to those of women. As the manipulations used in the current study parallel a scenario within an actual courtroom environment, this could be critical in the legal domain in which verdicts of guilt and the severity of punishment often are guided by judgments of personal blame (Carroll, 1979; Hogarth, 1971). Jurors are always in a position of high power, in that they are given the responsibility to determine fault. While reducing the power of male jurors may not be possible, knowing males' greater tendency to find fault with the victim unless they feel low in power may be useful to prosecutors in sexual assault cases. Further, as witness credibility is crucial when determining fault it is important to understand the processes that alleviate endorsement of rape myths depicting the victim as a liar.

Compared to other violent crimes, rapes and sexual assaults are among the most under-reported (Fisher et al., 2000, 2003; Rennison, 2002). Victims are unwilling to report a sexual assault to the authorities if they don't believe doing so will be effective (Felson, 2002; Fisher et al., 2003). Reducing males' personal feelings of power decreases the amount of blame assigned to the victim. If jurors, particularly male jurors, were to feel less powerful, there may be more favorable sentencing in assault cases, and therefore greater potential for victims to come forward. While there are feasibility issues and ethical concerns with reducing male jurors' personal feelings of power, future work might point to more readily manipulable factors—such as empathy for the victim—that might reduce victim blame and rape myth acceptance, or even feelings of social power.

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## Tables

**Table 1**

*Means and standard deviations for all variables by gender and condition*

Dependent Variable	Females			Males		
	Control	High Power	Low Power	Control	High Power	Low Power
Victim Blame	4.26 (1.27)	4.67 (1.23)	4.93 (1.40)	5.34 (1.59)	5.30 (1.15)	4.19 (1.69)
Percent Blame Victim	33.81 (13.96)	38.58 (14.35)	41.76 (12.73)	40.75 (20.28)	43.42 (14.05)	34.72 (21.93)
Percent Blame Assailant	67.86 (14.19)	62.67 (14.62)	60.29 (11.99)	60.00 (20.46)	56.58 (14.05)	65.28 (21.93)
Rape Myth Acceptance	2.16 (.60)	2.26 (.86)	2.19 (.85)	2.78 (.73)	2.28 (.98)	2.33 (.91)
She Lied	2.41 (.96)	2.52 (1.33)	2.85 (1.56)	3.93 (1.64)	3.61 (1.19)	2.69 (1.24)
She Asked For It	2.69 (.68)	2.55 (1.04)	2.65 (1.34)	3.38 (1.05)	3.05 (.90)	2.71 (1.31)
It Wasn't Really Rape	1.21 (.41)	1.56 (.84)	1.52 (.80)	1.80 (.83)	1.68 (.77)	1.44 (.80)
He Didn't Mean To	3.19 (1.27)	3.46 (1.72)	2.84 (1.36)	3.75 (1.34)	3.82 (1.16)	3.58 (1.41)
She Wanted It	1.76 (1.42)	2.36 (1.24)	2.09 (.88)	2.05 (.83)	2.00 (.71)	1.75 (.86)
Rape is a Trivial Event	1.64 (.76)	1.83 (.95)	1.72 (.93)	2.30 (1.06)	2.74 (.92)	2.11 (1.13)
Rape is a Deviant Event	1.84 (.87)	1.57 (.95)	1.55 (.76)	2.02 (.98)	2.28 (.98)	1.87 (.89)
Belief in a Just World	3.29 (.58)	3.60 (.82)	3.52 (.81)	3.79 (.75)	3.44 (.78)	3.50 (.53)

*Note.* Standard deviations are presented in the parentheses.

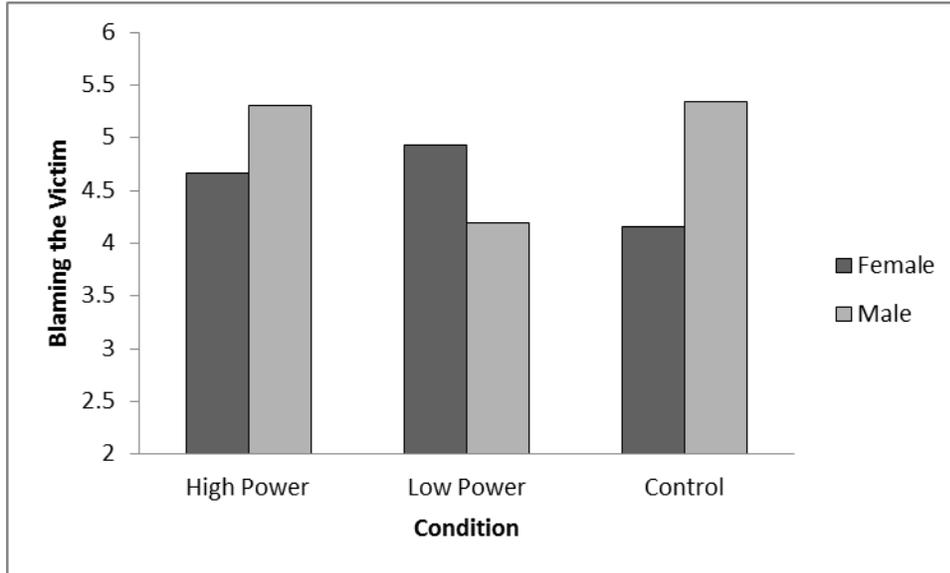
**Table 2***Correlations for all variables*

	Victim Blame	Percent Blame Victim	Percent Blame Assailant	RMA	LI	SA	NR	MT	WI	TE	DE	BJW
Victim Blame		.70**	-.72**	.31**	.40**	.33**	.28**	.11	.18*	.17*	.05	.05
Percent Blame Victim			-.91**	.27**	.26**	.34**	.20*	.08	.14	.25**	.04	.12
Percent Blame Assailant				-.18*	-.24**	-.24**	-.14	-.03	-.10	-.17	.04	-.12
RMA					.80**	.85**	.61**	.73**	.59**	.80**	.70**	.38**
LI						.66**	.45**	.46**	.38**	.56**	.48**	.28**
SA							.38**	.51**	.37**	.63**	.49**	.34**
NR								.41**	.35**	.46**	.39**	.23**
MT									.38**	.53**	.43**	.30**
WI										.54**	.23**	.27**
TE											.50**	.28**
DE												.22*

*Note.* RMA = rape myth acceptance scale; LI = she lied subscale; SA = she asked for it subscale; NR = it wasn't really rape subscale; MT = he didn't mean to subscale; WI = she wanted it subscale; TE = rape is a trivial event subscale; DE = rape is a deviant event subscale; BJW = belief in a just world.

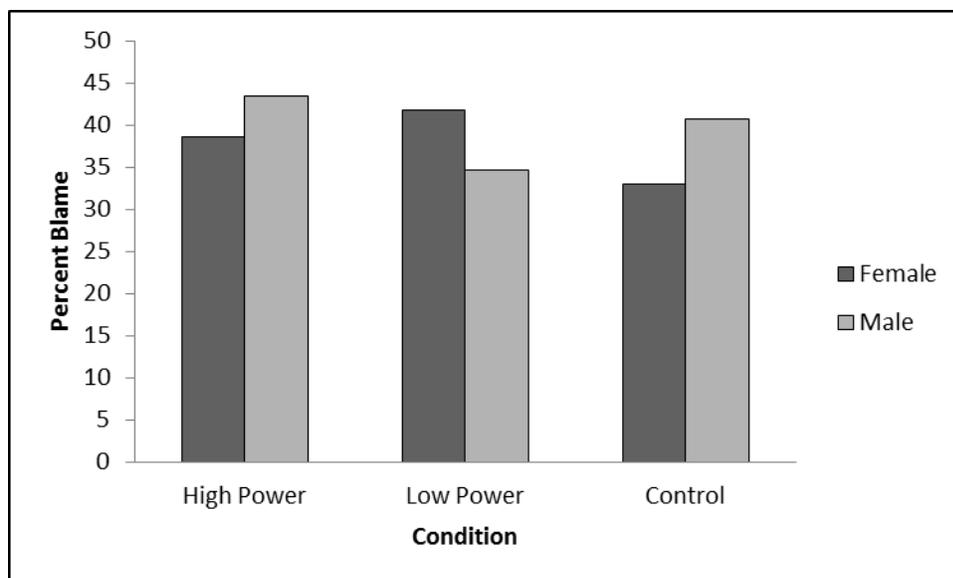
\*  $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$ .

## Figures



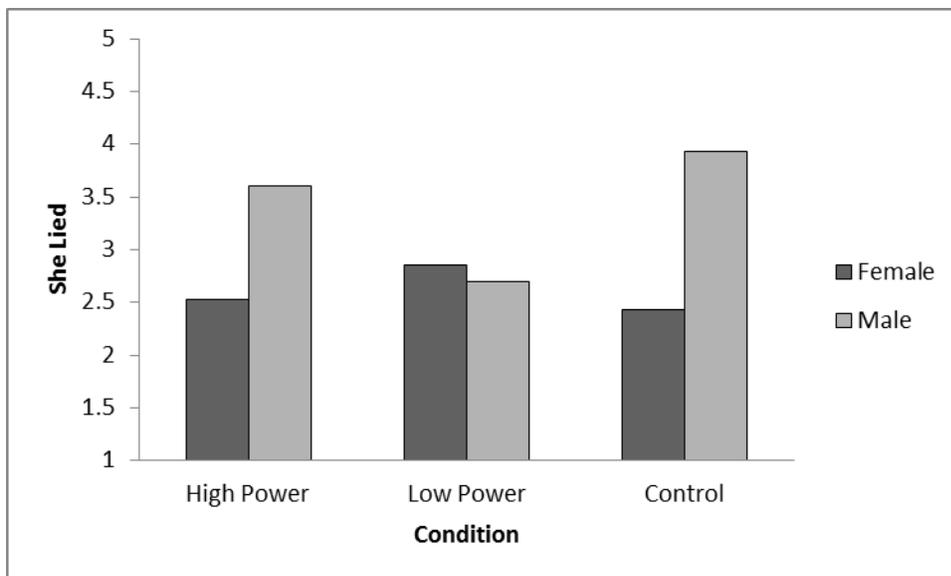
**Figure 1.**

*Blaming the victim by condition and gender. Larger numbers indicate greater victim blaming.*



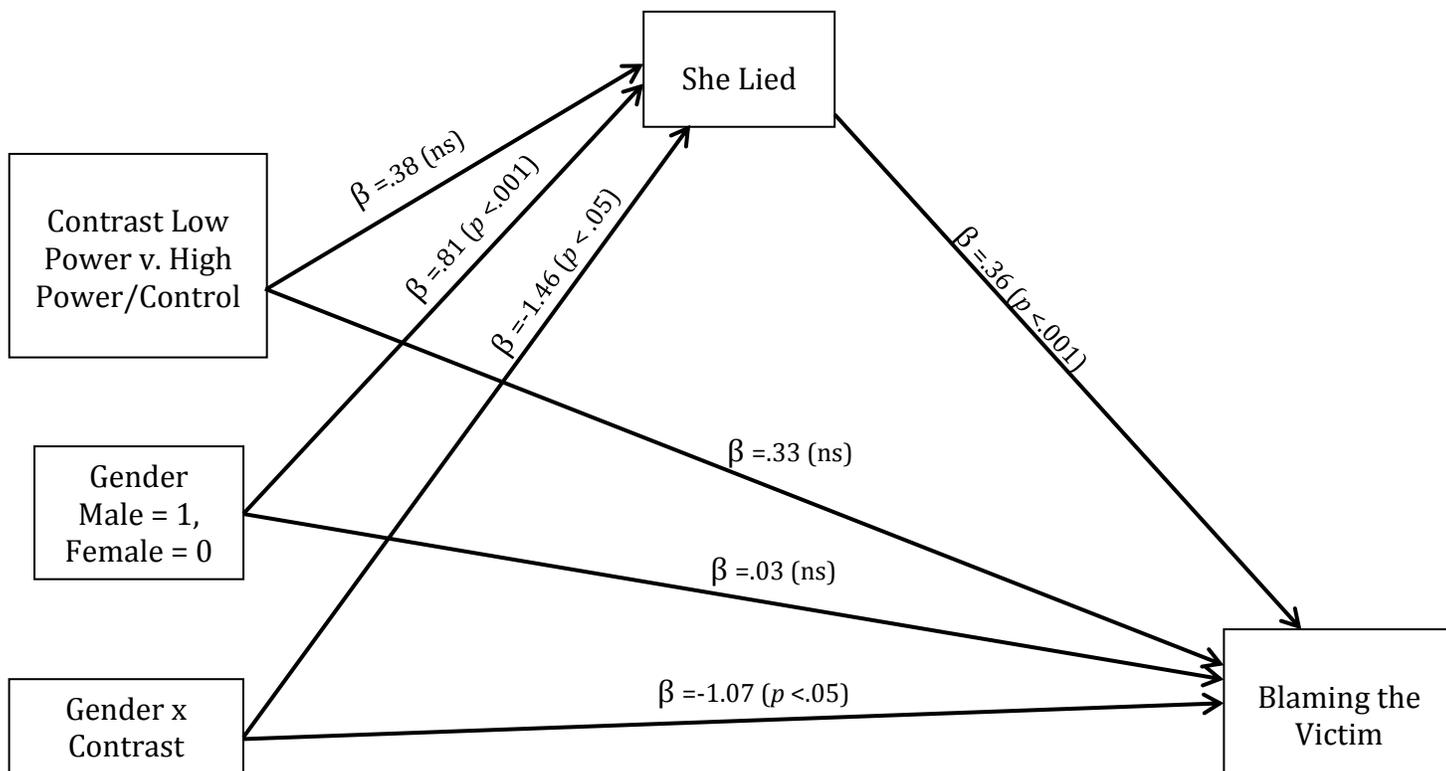
**Figure 2.**

*Percent blame assigned to the victim by condition and gender. Larger numbers indicate a greater percentage of blame allocated to the victim.*



**Figure 3.**

*Endorsement of “she lied” rape myths by condition and gender. Larger numbers indicate greater endorsement of “she lied” rape myths.*



Note.  $\beta$  denotes the unstandardized regression coefficient

**Figure 4.**

*Moderated-mediation model: Endorsement of “she lied” rape myths mediates the gender X power condition effect on blaming the victim.*

## **Appendix A**

### **Cover Story (shown to all three conditions)**

The Obama administration has recently advocated an initiative to prevent sexual violence in schools and college campuses. Schools will receive letters outlining their duties under Title IX (see below), the federal civil rights law banning sexual discrimination, harassment and violence. Officials say schools need comprehensive guidelines for filing complaints, helping victims, disciplining perpetrators and monitoring campus climates in the wake of an attack.

### **Title IX Requirements Related to Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence**

#### **Schools' Obligations to Respond to Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence**

Sexual harassment is unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature. It includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal, nonverbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual violence is a form of sexual harassment prohibited by Title IX.

**Appendix B****Blaming the Victim**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Not at all									Completely/ Totally

1. How much is Karen to blame for what happened?
2. How much do you think James took advantage of Karen? R
3. How interested was Karen in having sexual relations?
4. How certain are you that this incident would be considered rape? R

## Appendix C

### Percent Blame

If you were dividing blame for this incident between Karen and James, what percent of the blame goes to James? \_\_\_\_\_%

If you were dividing blame for this incident between Karen and James, what percent of the blame goes to Karen? \_\_\_\_\_%

## **Appendix D**

### **Belief in a Just World (Lipkus, 1991)**

1. I feel that people get what they are entitled to have.
2. I feel that a person's efforts are noticed and rewarded.
3. I feel that people earn the rewards and punishments they get.
4. I feel that people who meet with misfortune have brought it on themselves.
5. I feel that people get what they deserve.
6. I feel that rewards and punishments are fairly given.
7. I basically feel that the world is a just place.

## Appendix E

### Rape Myth Acceptance (Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, Short Form; Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999)

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

17. When women are raped, it's often because the way they say "no" was ambiguous. **SA**
18. Men don't usually intend to force sex on a woman, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away. **MT**
19. A woman who dresses in skimpy clothes should not be surprised if a man tries to force her to have sex. **SA**
20. Rape happens when a man's sex drive gets out of control. **MT**

*Note. SA= She asked for it; NR= It wasn't really rape; MT= He didn't mean to; WI= She wanted it; LI= She lied; TE= Rape is a trivial event; DE= Rape is a deviant event; FI= Filler item (not scored).*

## **Appendix F**

### **Funnel Debrief**

1. What is your understanding of what this experiment was about?
2. Did any of the tasks you completed seem related in any way?
3. Have you ever seen any of the tasks or questionnaires you completed today before? If so, please explain.
4. Was there anything that stood out or felt weird about this experiment?
5. Do you think there was more to this study than meets the eye? If yes, what?