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Jillian S. Ramey

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Asking For It: An Examination of Victim Blaming Reasons and Correlates

Jillian Ramey

Department of Psychology, Union College

Senior Thesis

Advised by Conor O'Dea

Abstract (270 words)

Previous research has demonstrated the relationship between masculine honor and just world beliefs on victim blaming of sexual assault victims. However, little research has investigated the specific reasons for that blame, nor how these reasons differ for male versus female victims. As such, we sought to examine how participants with higher levels of masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs would respond to a news story depicting a sexual assault of either a male or female victim. Based on prior research on rape myths, participants read the news story and described what they had read, followed by items assessing the degree to which participants blamed the victim in the story on the basis of promiscuity and weakness, as well as overall deserving. We hypothesized that participants higher in both masculine honor and just world ideologies would have greater victim blaming than those lower in these belief systems. Furthermore, we hypothesized that the male victim would be blamed more based on being perceived as weak, and as acting like he desired sex, while the female victim would be blamed more based on being perceived as promiscuous in appearance and behavior, and acting like she desired sex. Consistent with our hypotheses, masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs predicted victim blaming across all dimensions assessed. It was also consistent with our hypotheses that the male victim was blamed more for perceptions of weakness, while the female victim was blamed for a promiscuous appearance. We hope that this research can be used to educate against victim blaming and perpetuation of rape myths, as well as to continue research on the effects of dominant ideologies.

Keywords: victim blame, rape myths, masculine honor beliefs, just world beliefs.

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Asking For It: An Examination of Victim Blaming Reasons and Correlates

“College kids had a fun night. Someone regretted it and accused the other of rape.”
“Non-consensual sex is impossible with a guy, total BS.” These quotations from our participants are indicative of how participants in our study viewed victims of sexual assault, the first in response to a female victim, and the second in response to a male victim. The aim of the present study was to assess perceptions of sexual assault victims. Specifically, we assessed how masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs affect perceptions of male and female sexual assault victims. In short, masculine honor beliefs are an ideology that justifies men’s violent or aggressive behavior to maintain a masculine reputation. Just world beliefs are another system of justification, but more generally relate to justifying bad things that happen to people in order to fit their view of a just world, (i.e., people get what they deserve). Based on prior research, we hypothesized that greater levels of masculine honor beliefs would correlate with greater levels of just world beliefs, and that both belief systems would be associated with higher levels of sexual assault victim blaming. We also predicted that female victims would be blamed more due to being perceived as promiscuous in appearance, while male victims would be blamed more due to being perceived as weak, a trait that is not deemed masculine.

Rape Myths, Victim Blaming, and Just World Beliefs

Rape mythology and victim blaming frequently occur simultaneously, as rape myths perpetuate false ideas that undermine the experiences of victims and downplay the role of the perpetrators (Ryan, 2019). These ideas are often centered around perceptions of people getting what they *deserve* (see just world beliefs; Rubin & Peplau, 1975; Haynes & Olsen, 2006, etc.). Just world beliefs are essentially a way of making sense of and coping

with the bad things that happen in life by believing that the world is just: good things happen to good people, and likewise, bad things happen to bad people (Lerner, 1980; Valor-Segura et al., 2011). These types of justification construe events and victims' personal attributes to fit the belief that the world is just and victims are deserving. In general, a person is deserving of their fate based on their behavior and their attributes (Lerner, 1980). This ideology is important to study because of its social implications. Choosing to believe that things happen as they are meant to puts less priority on trying to change the institutions that allow bad things to happen to people. There is less of a desire to change society when one thinks that people naturally get what they deserve (Santa Clara University, 2013). As it pertains to sexual assault, just world beliefs have been found to correlate with rape myth acceptance and victim blaming (Hayes et al., 2013; Vonderhaar & Carmody, 2015; Russell, 2017; Yamawaki, 2009; Daugherty & Esper, 1998; Stromwell et al., 2013). Prior research also shows that just world beliefs predict less favorable views of sexual assault victims for both female and male victims (Sakalli-Ugurlu et al., 2007; Daugherty & Esper, 1998). Tangentially related, just world beliefs are associated with victim blaming in domestic violence cases when the trigger for aggression is unknown (Valor-Segura, 2011). This demonstrates a tendency to be suspicious of victims or justify aggressors when there is no clear reason for violence. Overall, rape myths and victim blaming may be manifestations of just world beliefs in response to sexual assault in order to justify why such a horrific crime has occurred.

Rape myths can have detrimental impacts on victims at every stage in the aftermath of an assault. First, as outlined in Ryan's chapter, rape myths may impact a victim's ability to understand that he or she was raped, due to their belief that rape must look a certain way

or include certain details to “count” (Ryan, 2019). Additionally, rape myths prevent rapists from understanding what is or is not rape. This may be due to not fitting the descriptions of rapists common to many rape myths, such as that rape is done by a stranger rather than an acquaintance, or that rapists are lower-class (Ryan, 2019). If the rapist does not fit the description, he/she may not recognize themselves as a rapist. At a larger level, rape myths infiltrate our justice systems. This begins with the victim’s decision of whether or not to report, which they very often do not. This may be due to a variety of factors such as societal shame, or the rape stereotypes held by police, lawyers, juries, and judges, which prevent victims from getting justice even when they do report (Ryan, 2019).

Interestingly, the rape myths that exist for female and male victims differ in many ways, which is a major focus of the present study. Prior psychological research has demonstrated the impact of rape myths and victim blaming at the individual level. Much of this research has centered on female rape victims, which perpetuates the myth that female rape is more legitimate than male rape. One of the most salient myths contributing to female victim blaming is that of the promiscuous victim. Sexually objectified women are seen as more responsible for their rape compared to a non-objectified control victim (Loughnan et al., 2013). Similarly, women’s adornment of revealing clothes has been perceived as sexually exciting to men and teasing to them, as well as having more “sexual intent” (Johnson, 1995; Maurer & Robinson, 2008; Whatley, 2005). Thus, the way a woman dresses is viewed as provoking sexual assault. Not only is provocative dress a source of blame, but it is used as a reason to not even categorize an incident as rape (Cassidy & Hurrell, 1995). These studies demonstrate the biased assumptions that women are responsible based on sexual objectification and how they dress.

Unsurprisingly, sexism is frequently associated with the perpetuation of female rape myths. There are two primary forms of sexism that are involved. Hostile sexism endorses punishment of women who fail to conform to traditional gender expectations. This type of sexism has been found to correlate with the acceptance of rape myths about women (Glick & Fiske, 1997). On the reverse, those who hold less stereotypical beliefs about gender roles tend to view incidents of rape of women as more serious and cast less blame on the victim (Simonson & Subich, 1999). Benevolent sexism has a more subtle expression, holding the traditional view that it is a man's obligation to protect women. Benevolent sexism has been found to predict greater levels of victim blaming in an acquaintance rape scenario (Abrams et al., 2003). However, benevolent sexists will blame rather than protect women who do not comply with gender roles, such as blaming an unfaithful married woman more than an unmarried woman who is assaulted (Viki & Abrams, 2002). In this case, the act of adultery is a violation of gender roles, and thus is perceived as justification for her assault. Taking sexism and assumptions of promiscuity into consideration, we predicted that the female victim in our study would be blamed for perceived promiscuity, and that this effect would be greater for participants higher in masculine honor and just world beliefs.

Unlike female victims, male rape victims are often viewed as weak, receiving blame for not successfully fighting off the assailant (Hammond et al., 2016). Victim blaming against male victims is frequently centered around his failure to fight back or escape, and this makes recovery even more challenging (Davies et al., 2012). Furthermore, this failure often leads to perceptions of victims lacking masculinity and not being "real men" (Davies et al., 2012). At the same time, there is a greater expectation for male victims

to not be afraid, as demonstrated by participants describing a “typical” male rape victim as not screaming (Davies et al, 2013). The authors note this is likely because screaming is not considered to be a masculine behavior, which is relevant to the current study’s focus on masculine honor as it pertains to victim blaming. Despite this perception of male victims as weak, other men think of male rape victims as experiencing less serious injury than female victims. In reality, female victims equally assume injury (Davies et al., 2013). It is also assumed that male victims are not likely to report their assault, and if they do, that they will not be believed (Anderson, 2007; Davies et al., 2013; Hammond et al., 2016).

Rape myths are also harmful to male victims because they are less likely than women to know that their unwanted sexual experience is a rape, likely due to the messaging surrounding what a rape is expected to be (Reed et al., 2020). The rejection of rape myths correlates with acknowledging that an incident is a rape; as such, because men are more likely to *accept* rape myths, they may then also be less likely to know if they have been raped (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010; Reed et al., 2020; Hammond et al., 2011). As such, men’s greater endorsement of rape myths further harms their ability to heal as victims, as well as increases their likelihood of becoming perpetrators (Grubb & Turner, 2012). Men in general are also more likely than women to endorse masculine honor beliefs, which influence victim blaming.

Masculine Honor Beliefs

Masculine honor ideology is a set of beliefs regarding how men should respond to threats in order to maintain masculinity (Saucier et al., 2016). This code of conduct is heavily related to the perpetuation of rape myths and even the act of rape itself. Though masculine honor beliefs are hardly limited to the U.S. (see Baldry et al., 2013; Tomsen &

Crofts, 2012; Sakalli-Ugurlu et al., 2007; Travaglino et al., 2015), the study of masculine honor beliefs originated with the prevalence of violence in the American South. U.S. southerners endorsed the view that violence is acceptable when used in self-defense, defense of honor, and socialization of children (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994). One possible explanation for the violence present in the Southern United States is the argument of herding economies. Unlike the immigrants of the North, whose crops were more difficult to steal, the Celtic immigrants of the South based their economy on herding and hunting (Nisbett, 1993). It was crucial to the success and survival of Southerners to not have their livestock stolen, as they relied on livestock for food and resources. This necessitated an attitude of violence and vigilance in order to ward off thieves (Nisbett, 1993). Additionally, Cohen and Nisbett reference a historical account of the failures of law enforcement, citing that officers were often “powerless or afraid to intervene” (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994, pg 552). Without being able to rely on law enforcement for protection, demonstrations of toughness were necessary, even in response to minor conflicts. As a result, male Southerners learned to rely on self-protection for the defense of their family, honor, and livestock. The adoption and adherence to this code of beliefs served as defense to immediate threats and prevention of future threats for men (Cohen et al., 1996).

The consistent differences between the violence of Northerners and Southerners established masculine honor beliefs as a regional difference. Over time herding culture has grown less important in Southern society, yet the culture of honor persists. This regional difference in the U.S. is still evident—for example, heightened aggression in response to insult among Southern college students compared to Northern students, Southerners being more understanding towards honor-related murder than Northerners, and Southern students

being more likely to want the terrorists responsible for 9/11 to die than Northern students (Cohen et al., 1996; Cohen & Nisbett., 1997; Barnes et al., 2012). Regional differences are established even outside of lab manipulations, such as the higher rates of homicide and higher official rapes in Southern states compared to Northern ones (Nisbett, 1993; Brown et al., 2018).

More recent research has worked to establish masculine honor beliefs as an individual trait rather than just a regional difference. Saucier et al. (2016) argued that viewing masculine honor beliefs as a cultural difference is limiting due to the growing use of the internet and the ability to move to various states. Indeed, masculine honor beliefs extend beyond the original regional borders and scales have been created to measure it as an individual difference (Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2002; Barnes et al., 2012; Saucier et al., 2016). These authors took varying approaches to measuring masculine honor. For instance, Mosquera et al. created a scale that not only included masculine honor but also feminine honor, integrity in social situations, and family honor to encompass honor concerns as a whole (Mosquera et al., 2002). Barnes et al. measured masculine honor alone, specifically assessing the elements of physical aggression and what defines a “real man” (Barnes et al., 2012). Saucier et al. measure masculine honor beliefs as an individual difference assessed on seven categories: masculine courage, pride in manhood, socialization, virtue, protection, provocation/insult, and family/community bonds (Saucier et al., 2016). This aims to encapsulate many of the rationalizations for violent or aggressive behavior found in studies of regional differences.

One prevalent aspect in masculine honor ideology is the protection of women. The rape of a woman is associated with a loss of honor, both to the individual who has been

raped, and to the men in her life who are viewed as having failed to protect her (Saucier et al., 2022). If a woman in his family is dishonored, this is considered to be a direct reflection onto the man, as it is his duty to protect and defend the women in his family (Saucier et al., 2015). This is demonstrated by the fact that men higher in masculine honor beliefs expect other men to intervene in potential sexual assault scenarios and blame them if they do not (Saucier et al., 2022). As a result of the effect on the man's character, those higher in masculine honor ideology seek greater punishment of sexual offenders. For instance, a recent study found that men who endorse masculine honor ideology report a preference to seek revenge on their abuser if they were sexually assaulted, and support concealing (not reporting) sexual assault status (Foster et al., 2023). Men who endorse masculine honor beliefs also tend to have negative views of women who have been raped, as a way of distancing themselves from the dishonor (Saucier et al., 2015).

Men higher in masculine honor ideology perceive it as more acceptable to respond aggressively to romantic rejections (Leary et al., 2006; Stratmoen et al., 2018). Stratmoen et al. argue that this hostility can be explained as a way to defend their honor, specifically their own sense of worth (Stratmoen et al., 2018). They are also more likely to engage in sexually coercive behaviors and violence (Brown et al., 2018). Among men imprisoned for violence against women in Spain, honor traits and gender role endorsement are common characteristics (Rodríguez-Espartal, 2021). Even though one aspect of honor is protection and defense of women, another aspect is violence and aggression in the face of threat. As such, violence is enacted against women when there is a perceived threat to a man's honor (Brown et al., 2018). When it comes to initiatives to help sexual assault victims, men who endorse masculine honor beliefs have been found to be more likely to volunteer to help

prevent assaults, such as by walking women home, than to join in support strategies for women who have already been raped (Saucier et al., 2021). It is more important to their honor that they protect and defend women before something has happened to them than to help after a rape has occurred. Taken altogether, when considering their disapproval of rape and desire to shield women from it, it is quite hypocritical that men endorsing masculine honor beliefs are also more likely to *be* the assaulters, and to engage in victim blaming of the assaulted.

Masculine honor beliefs and violence resulting from honor threats are closely related to the phenomenon of precarious manhood. This is the concept that manhood is earned through particular actions and behaviors in a social setting and can easily be revoked from one perceived misstep (Bosson et al., 2009). Bosson et al. suggest that manhood is most effectively proven or restored through aggression, thus providing a link between precarious manhood and masculine honor beliefs: violence can be justified for the sake of maintaining masculinity, and *not* engaging in aggressive behavior when faced with a threat may lead to a perceived loss of masculinity.

One way that men can put their masculinity on display is through physical appearance, particularly muscularity. Research has shown that masculine honor beliefs correlate positively with muscularity concerns, and building muscle may function to ward off and defend against threats (Saucier et al., 2018). This finding seems reminiscent of the original argument for herding economics. Furthermore, if men higher in masculine honor beliefs prioritize muscularity for defending against threats, they may perceive male victims as weak for failing to defend themselves against sexual assault. It has further been suggested that men with higher levels of masculine honor beliefs view other men as less

manly if they choose not to fight after being personally threatened or insulted (O’Dea et al., 2017). This may lead one to assume that violence in general is perceived positively among those higher in masculine honor beliefs. However, it is not violence in general that is respected, but rather fighting when in response to being threatened, *and* winning the fight (O’Dea et al., 2018). Therefore, situations where men fail to protect and defend themselves may leave them vulnerable to losing their masculine reputation (i.e., precarious manhood). Both the drive for muscularity and the perceptions of fighting contribute to our prediction that male sexual assault victims would be blamed on the basis of weakness, as men higher in masculine honor beliefs may associate the assault with being too weak to fight back or too weak to win the fight.

Current Study Overview

The aim of the present study was to examine the role of masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs in the perception of sexual assault victims. We hypothesized that masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs would be positively correlated with one another. Though there is limited research on masculine honor and just world beliefs together, there are studies of Turkey, an honor culture, where sexism and just world beliefs were found to be associated with less positive attitudes toward rape victims (Gul & Schuster, 2020; Sakalli-Ugurlo, 2007). This indicates that there may be an overlap in honor-adherence and just world beliefs. Justification is a central component to both belief systems, one justifying violence to maintain a masculine reputation and the other justifying bad things that happen to people under the assumption that the world is just. Additionally, both masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs have been established as contributing factors to victim blaming. As such, we predicted that participants higher in masculine honor

beliefs would also be higher in just world beliefs. We further hypothesized that both male and female victims of sexual assault would be blamed, but for different reasons. Consistent with male rape myths, we hypothesized that the male victim would be perceived as weak and having a greater desire for sex. Consistent with female rape myths, we predicted that the female victim would likely be blamed for promiscuity, as well as desire for sex and general deserving. Though the female victim may be perceived as weak, we believed that the effect would be stronger for the male victim.

Methods

Participants

Participants were collected through CloudResearch (Litman et al., 2017). We sought to collect data from 300 cisgender male participants, limited only to participants with at least 90% hit approval rate, living in the United States, and who spoke English. We chose to only allow cisgender males to participate due to previous findings that men are more likely than women to have negative perceptions of sexual assault victims and engage in more victim blaming (Anderson & Quinn, 2009; Macrae & Shepherd, 1989), in addition to the expectation that men would be more likely to endorse masculine honor beliefs than women. The sample size was based on available funding (\$390). It was also based on best practices of 50 participants per condition for experimental studies (50 x 2 = 100) plus 100 participants per continuous variable (just world beliefs and masculine honor beliefs = 200). It also satisfied 80% power with an alpha level of .05 with a small-medium effect size of .06 for a linear multiple regression fixed model R^2 increase with 7 tested predictors (the 3 main effects [honor ideology, just world beliefs, gender], 3 two-way interactions, and 1 three-way interaction). 812 participants accessed our study on

Qualtrics. 45 failed one or more of the captchas or did not advance beyond the informed consent and were unable to participate. 418 did not identify as cisgender men and were unable to participate. 7 participants had substantial missing data and were removed from data analysis. 8 participants did not respond to the attention check assessing whether they read the news story and were removed from analysis. 1 participant did not complete any of the outcome variables and was removed from analysis. Overall, 333 participants remained for data analysis. Of these participants, the majority were White (244, 73%), followed by 11% Black (38), 8% Asian (27), 6% Latino/a (19), 1% Pacific Islander/ Native Hawaiian, (2) and 3 who selected “not listed,” describing themselves as mixed, biracial, and Indigenous American. The average age was 42.55 ($SD = 12.80$). 306 participants, or 92%, identified as straight, followed by 4% identifying as gay (14), 4% as bisexual (12), and 1 as pansexual. On a scale of 1 (*strongly liberal*) to 7 (*strongly conservative*), the average score of our participants was 5.48, meaning that our participants were slightly more conservative on average.

Materials

Predictor Measures

Masculine Honor Beliefs. To measure participants’ levels of masculine honor beliefs, they completed the Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale (Saucier et al. 2016). This measure included 35 items (e.g., *physical violence is the most honorable way to defend yourself*) evaluated on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale, which was used to collect the average score of participants’ masculine honor beliefs. This measure has been used in similar studies to predict things such as expectations of men and women responding to threats and response to romantic rejections (Chalman et al., 2021; Stratmoen et al.,

2018). We selected the Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale by Saucier et al. as opposed to any other scale measuring masculine honor beliefs due to the breadth of aspects of masculine honor covered and the focus exclusively on masculine honor, as opposed to including feminine honor and family honor. The items for this measure have been found to be reliable with good internal consistency across the subscales ranging from $\alpha = .69$ to $\alpha = .88$), with an overall combined internal consistency of $\alpha = .90$ (Saucier et al., 2016). Saucier et al. also assessed convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity for the measure (Saucier et al., 2016). The Masculine Honor Belief Scale items are attached in Appendix A.

Just World Beliefs. To measure participants' levels of just world beliefs, they completed the Belief in a Just World Scale (Lucas et al., 2011). This measure offers separate items evaluating fairness with respect to others and fairness with respect to yourself. We only selected the items assessing fairness with respect to others. We did not use the fairness with respect to yourself subscale because we wanted to evaluate if just world beliefs affected victim blaming in situations related to other people. Whether they believed in a just world in events related to their own experiences did not seem relevant. The fairness with respect to others subscale consisted of eight items (e.g., *people usually receive the outcomes that they deserve*). This was assessed on a 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) scale and was used to collect an average score of participants' level of just world beliefs about others. This measure has been used in prior research to evaluate the effect of just world beliefs on life-satisfaction (Lucas et al., 2013) and counterfactual thinking (Sirois & Iyer, 2018). The original measure offers the ability to calculate four lower-order subscales. Though we used the "fairness with respect to others" items all-together, reliability is reported for each individual subscale, of which two are accounted

for in the items we used. The reliability is as follows: distributive justice for others (the first four items we used) ($\alpha = .85; .87; .85$) and procedural justice for others (the last four items we used) ($\alpha = .91; .93; .79$) (Lucas et al., 2011). Validity was assessed through associations with criterion measures (Lucas et al., 2011). The Belief in a Just World items are attached in Appendix B.

News Story with Gender Manipulation. Participants were randomly assigned to either the male victim condition (with a female perpetrator) or the female victim condition (with a male perpetrator). Participants in both conditions were shown a news story that we developed which depicted a first-year student in the early weeks of college going to a party. The student leaves the party without his/her friends and goes with another student he/she has not previously met, ultimately being sexually assaulted. The story remained the same for each condition, with the only change being whether the male or female character was the victim. Copies of each version of the news story are attached in Appendix D.

Dependent Measures

Perceptions of weakness, promiscuity, and deservingness. After writing their interpretation of the news story, we assessed participants' perceptions of the victim as weak, promiscuous, and generally deserving of the sexual assault. We originally grouped the items under the categories of weakness, promiscuity, and deservingness. Participants rated all items on a scale of 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*). To assess weakness we wrote six items. Items were the same for both female victims and male victims but adapted to the proper pronoun for the gender of the victim. To assess perceptions of promiscuous action we wrote 6 items, and for promiscuous appearance we wrote 5 items. Again, these items were the same for both male and female victims with the pronouns

changed to match the gender of whichever victim condition participants received. Lastly, we assessed perceptions of deservingness of the victim with five items. These items were also consistent between the male victim condition and female victim condition with the pronouns adapted for the gender of the victim. The factor analysis (see Table 1) separated the items differently than we predicted, with both weakness and promiscuous action items loading onto the same factor which we labeled Behavioral Deserving (e.g., *if he/she was stronger, this probably would not have happened.*) The second factor was labeled Appearance Deserving (e.g., *he/she was probably dressed provocatively*). The third factor was labeled Lack of Safety Deserving (e.g., *he/she should have stayed with his/her friends*). All items are attached in Appendix C. Reliability and correlations of the factors from the factor analysis are presented in Table 2.

Procedure

Participants were recruited on CloudResearch and completed the study on Qualtrics. Participants began by reading the informed consent and passing five captchas. Participants completed the Masculine Honor beliefs Scale and the Belief in a Just World Scale either before or after the rest of the study (i.e., these were counterbalanced). The rest of the study consisted of reading the randomly assigned news story and describing in their own words what occurred. They were presented with a text box and the question included a timer for 40 seconds in order to encourage more effort to be spent on their interpretation. This was done to assess what details or attributes participants assigned to the story. They then responded to the items assessing perceptions of the victim as weak, promiscuous, and deserving (later renamed as Appearance Deserving, Behavior Deserving, and Safety Deserving according to the factor analysis, or exploratory weakness, exploratory

promiscuous act, exploratory promiscuous look, and exploratory safety in our exploratory analyses). At the end of the survey, participants received a debrief and resources such as crisis text line and suicide prevention lifeline.

Results

We hypothesized that masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs would correlate with each other, and that both would be associated with victim blaming across all dimensions and victim gender. Further, we hypothesized that the male victim would be more strongly blamed for weakness and desire for sex and that the female victim would be blamed for promiscuity and desire for sex especially by those higher in masculine honor ideology. A principal components analysis was conducted on the items we wrote using JAMOVI software. An oblimin rotation was used. Item retention was based on main factor loadings $> .50$ and no cross-loadings $> .40$. This analysis is shown in Table 1. The Principal Components analysis produced three factors which we labeled as Behavioral Deserving (e.g., “he[*she*] probably lets people take advantage of him[*her*]”), Appearance Deserving (e.g., “he[*she*] was probably dressed provocatively”) and Lack of Safety Deserving (e.g., “he[*she*] should have known better than to leave the party with a stranger”). Unfortunately, the results of our principal components analysis ended up having the weakness and deserving behavior items we had originally written both fall onto the same factor, Behavioral Deserving, inhibiting our ability to make concrete conclusions about weakness items producing the strongest relationship with honor ideology when the victim was a man. That being said, as we discuss in the exploratory analyses below, we did examine whether splitting these items would provide greater differentiation between male and female victims according to our hypothesis.

We first conducted correlations between each of our variables. As seen in Table 2 we found a significant positive correlation between masculine honor beliefs and the beliefs in a just world. Additionally, masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs positively correlated significantly with each of our three sources of victim blaming: Behavioral Deserving, Appearance Deserving, and Safety Deserving. This means that as levels of masculine honor and just world beliefs increased, levels of victim blaming also increased for each type of victim blaming assessed in this study. These findings are consistent with our hypotheses.

Then we conducted a series of 2 (condition: male victim and female victim) by continuous (masculine honor beliefs) by continuous (just world beliefs) linear regressions (see Tables 4-6). For Behavioral Deserving, we found that higher levels of masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs were associated with more Behavioral Deserving blame perceptions of the victim. We also found a significant effect of victim gender on Behavioral Deserving, such that participants blamed the male victim ($M = 3.32$, $SD = 1.72$) more than the female victim ($M = 2.41$, $SD = 1.31$). No significant interactions were found. We found that higher levels of masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs were associated with greater perceptions of Appearance Deserving blame toward the victim. We also found a significant effect of victim gender on Appearance Deserving, but unlike Behavioral Deserving, participants blamed the female victim ($M = 2.48$, $SD = 1.46$) more than the male victim ($M = 2.15$, $SD = 1.38$) based on appearance. A significant interaction effect was found for masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs, showing a significant effect for masculine honor beliefs at all levels of just world beliefs, but especially at high levels indicating that participants who have higher just

world beliefs and masculine honor beliefs are the ones engaging in the most victim blaming on the basis of appearance-related promiscuity. Finally, the Safety Deserving analysis showed that higher levels of masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs were associated with significantly greater Safety Deserving blame perceptions. Unlike Behavioral and Appearance Deserving, victim gender did not have a significant effect on Safety Deserving. No significant interaction effects were found. Taken together, these results supported our hypotheses that the maintenance of beliefs in a just world and masculine honor has a positive relationship with victim blaming, and that this is further affected by the sex of the victim.

Exploratory Analyses

As mentioned previously, unfortunately the items that most allowed us to test the effects of victim blaming on men were items related to weakness (see Appendix C). Our original weakness items were loaded with the items we expected to be based on Behavioral Deserving perceptions which weakened our abilities to test our hypothesis that men would be most blamed for weakness related characteristics. To address this issue, we used confirmatory factor analyses to examine whether our original items and 4 hypothesized factors might produce a reliable factor structure. Although not included in our pre-registered analytic plan, there is theoretical rationale to separate these into distinct variables. The initial confirmatory factor analysis showed poor to moderate fit ($CFI = .88$, $TLI = .87$, $SRMR = .07$, $RMSEA = .11$). We used modification indices to remove items to enhance the fit and reliability of our factors (removed items are shown in bold in Appendix C). This left 4 factors (Weakness = 4 items, e.g., “She/he should have been able to resist his/her advances,”; Promiscuous Actions = 3 items, e.g., “She/he

probably gave the assaulter an indication that she/he wanted sex,” Promiscuous Appearance = 3 items, e.g., “She/he was probably dressed provocatively,” and Safety Deserving = 3 items, e.g., “She/he should have stayed with her/his friends.”) which showed excellent fit ($CFI = .97$, $TLI = .96$, $SRMR = .04$, $RMSEA = .07$) and reliabilities (Weakness $\omega = .91$, Promiscuous actions $\omega = .89$, Promiscuous appearance $\omega = .93$, Safety Deserving $\omega = .85$).

Like the above, we conducted correlations. Reliability and correlations of the items as separated for the exploratory analyses are presented in Table 3. The correlations were consistent with our findings in the first correlation table with greater endorsement of masculine honor and just world beliefs being associated with all forms of victim blaming. We then conducted the same 2 (gender: man, woman) x continuous (masculine honor beliefs) x continuous (just world beliefs) linear regressions as above (see Tables 7-10). For the exploratory analysis of weakness (Table 7), masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs were associated with greater perceptions of the victim as weak. Furthermore, victim gender had a significant effect, such that the male victim ($M = 3.39$, $SD = 1.99$) was perceived as weaker on average than the female victim ($M = 2.29$, $SD = 1.41$). This is consistent with our hypothesis that the male victim would be blamed more than the female on the basis of weakness. A significant interaction effect was also found between masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs, showing a significant effect for masculine honor beliefs at all levels of just world beliefs, but especially at high levels. Finally, a significant interaction effect was found for masculine honor beliefs and victim gender, such that masculine honor beliefs were associated with significantly greater

weakness blaming for both men and women, but this effect was significantly stronger for the male victim compared to the female victim.

The exploratory analysis of promiscuous acts (Table 8) showed that masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs were again associated with victim blaming based on promiscuous activity which is consistent with our hypotheses. We did not make specific predictions about whether men or women would be most blamed for promiscuous actions because both male and female victims are often blamed for giving indications of desiring sex after being sexually assaulted (Abrams et al., 2003; Davies & Rogers, 2006). That being said, victim gender did show a significant effect, such that the male victim ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.74$) was viewed as acting promiscuous more so than the female victim ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 1.52$). There were no significant interactions which is consistent with our expectations that people higher in masculine honor and just world beliefs would more blame both men and women for promiscuous actions.

Through the analysis for exploring promiscuous appearance (Table 9), masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs continued to be associated with victim blaming based on promiscuous appearance. Victim gender also had a significant effect, such that the female victim ($M = 2.47$, $SD = 1.44$) was perceived as more promiscuous looking than the male victim ($M = 2.12$, $SD = 1.37$). This is consistent with our hypothesis that the female victim would be blamed more than the male victim for promiscuous appearance. A significant interaction effect was found for masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs, showing a significant effect for masculine honor beliefs at all levels of just world beliefs, but especially at high levels. Interestingly, there were no significant interactions.

Our hypotheses predicted that the effect of gender would be significantly larger for those higher in masculine honor beliefs and/or just world beliefs.

Finally, the exploratory analysis of safety (Table 10) showed that masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs continued to be associated with victim blaming for safety reasons. Victim gender did not have significant effects, and no other significant interaction effects were found. This suggests that victims regardless of gender were blamed for not acting safely, also regardless of levels of masculine honor and just world beliefs.

Overall, it is notable that masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs were correlated and had interaction effects, as this has not been investigated in other studies. It is also notable that both masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs were associated with victim blaming at all levels (Behavioral Deserving, Appearance Deserving, and Safety Deserving). This finding is consistent with previous literature showing correlations between masculine honor and just world beliefs with victim blaming of sexual assault victims. The results of the exploratory analyses are also notable in that they support our hypotheses about male victims being perceived as weak and female victims being perceived as promiscuous in appearance. The exploratory analysis indicating male victims being perceived as more promiscuously behaved was an unexpected but interesting finding that has the potential to be further investigated.

Discussion

The current study examined the relationships between masculine honor beliefs, just world beliefs, and perceptions of male and female victims of sexual assault based on prior research demonstrating how these belief systems are connected (Hayes et al., 2013; Saucier

et al., 2015b). Our hypotheses that greater levels of masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs would be associated with blaming the male victim for perceived weakness and the female victims for perceived promiscuity were also based on existing studies (Saucier et al., 2022; Davies et al., 2012). Consistent with our hypotheses, masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs were positively correlated with one another. We found support for our hypotheses that the male victim would be perceived as weak and the female victim would be perceived as promiscuous in appearance. In total, the findings suggest that masculine honor and just world belief systems predict victim blaming and victim gender effects the type of blame a victim receives due to gender role violations and common rape myths.

Though we were unable to assess our main hypotheses with the factor analysis, the results of the exploratory analysis in many ways were consistent with prior research. First, the finding that masculine honor beliefs correlated with victim blaming in sexual assault cases is one that has been found in existing literature (Gul & Schuster, 2020; Saucier et al., 2015b). Also supported by past research is the finding that just world beliefs and victim blaming are positively correlated (Hayes et al., 2013; Vonderhaar & Carmody, 2015; Russell, 2017; Yamawaki, 2009). The tendency for participants to view the female victim as appearing promiscuous has also been found previously (Johnson, 1995; Maurer & Robinson, 2008; Whatley, 2005; Cassidy & Hurrell, 1995). Likewise, the tendency of our participants (especially those higher in honor ideologies) to view the male victim as weak is consistent with existing research (Hammond et al., 2016; Davies et al., 2012). While we did not pre-register a hypothesis about which gender would be perceived as more promiscuously behaved, our data shows that the male victim was perceived this way. This has been backed by prior research, as many male victims report believing that they are

always supposed to be ready for and enjoy sex, sometimes in order to maintain masculinity (Erentzen et al., 2022; Murray, 2018). While female victims are also viewed as promiscuously behaved (Brownmiller, 1975, as cited in Ryan, 2019), we did not review literature prior to this study that specifically compared male and female victims on this element of blame.

This study offers a novel investigation into the relationship between masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs, which, to our knowledge, have not been paired together in prior research. Our finding that these two belief systems had interaction effects may be important for future efforts around sexual assault awareness and prevention, as people who fall under these belief systems may be more likely to endorse rape myths and victim blaming. It is extremely important to continue studying correlates of victim blaming because of the prevalence of sexual assault in the U.S. Statistics from 2022 report that one in three women and one in four men will experience rape at some point in their life (Ahmed, 2022). Among female victims, 40.8% were assaulted by an acquaintance, and for male victims 52.4% were assaulted by an acquaintance (which is especially relevant due to the myth that rapes are done by strangers) (*Statistics*, n.d; Ryan, 2019.). Of college campus assaults, only 12% are reported (Ahmed, 2022). Female college students who experience sexual assault may experience lower grade-point averages, more missed classes, and fewer serious romantic relationships in college following the assault, in addition to more long-term problems such as depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder, and lower emotional and sexual intimacy (Rothman et al., 2021). Similarly, male victims often experience a sense of shame, stigma, and embarrassment, as well as higher levels of

depression and hostility, and are more likely to endure discrimination in medical settings (Tewksbury, 2007; Anderson & Quinn, 2009).

Rape myths and victim blaming have an impact on our justice system by affecting how police, lawyers, juries, and judges perceive and treat victims of sexual assault (Ryan, 2019). This only continues to perpetuate rape culture and punish victims further. As it pertains to masculine honor and just world beliefs, there are real-world implications of the correlations found in our study. People who adhere to these belief systems may be police officers, who play a role in sexual assault cases that are reported, or endorse right-wing authoritarian candidates like Donald Trump, who has his own history as an abuser (Baldry et al., 2013; Martens et al., 2018; Spaccatini et al., 2019). Therefore, there is a clear need for more research on the effects of masculine honor beliefs on sexual assault, whether that continues to focus on victim blaming, as investigated in this study, or on other aspects of sexual assault such as likelihood to be a perpetrator, effects on law enforcement and the judicial system, etc.

Future research should continue to assess the element of just world beliefs, as the link between just world beliefs and masculine honor beliefs found in our study is a novel insight. Other adaptations in future research could take many different forms. For instance, male and female victim experiences should continue to be investigated, but there is even more work to be done regarding victims of other genders. Perceptions of assault victims who are transgender, gender fluid, or gender nonconforming may be of further interest, and these are victims who are vastly understudied. Based on our findings so far, we might predict that transgender, non-binary, or gender nonconforming individuals who are biologically male might face the most severe victim blaming, and possibly higher rates of

assault, due to perceived non-compliance with masculinity. Results may differ even by how victims are perceived as fitting their perceived gender identity. Similarly, our study only investigated male-on-female and female-on-male rape incidents. Future research should examine other gender combinations of assault, which are currently understudied.

For future replications of our study, new items could be written that are more distinct from one another. In addition to or instead of assessing weakness and promiscuity, other common rape myths can be assessed in future replications. Though we wrote our items based on what appeared to be the most pertinent reasons for victim blaming, there are certainly others that could have an effect on the treatment of sexual assault victims. Finally, female participants may be included in future replications, as this study only permitted male participants. Though we selected male participants based on evidence of greater victim blaming and masculine honor beliefs among men, there is evidence that women can adhere to masculine honor beliefs and also engage in victim blaming (Chalman et al., 2021; Whatley, 2005).

Limitations

The present study has limitations that should be taken into consideration. To begin, the study was run on the Qualtrics survey software using participants recruited via CloudResearch (Litman et al., 2017). As a result of the online format, reading the news story online may have been less impactful or less realistic than if it were conducted in person. Furthermore, the American Psychological Association (APA) lists a few potential challenges when using an online format for research. This includes the potential for participants to put less energy and time into the task, and the fact that it is not representative

of the whole population but rather only includes people who have access to the internet (*Psychological Research Online: Opportunities and Challenges*, 2003).

Another potential limitation is that the news story we wrote might not have had enough detail, leading to less of an effect. While this may be the case, we chose to include a purposely vague account of an alleged sexual assault in order to evaluate participants' interpretations of what happened as well as to keep it short to avoid fatigue. We could have added details associated with common reasons for victim blaming, such as what the victim was wearing, whether they had drunk any alcohol, etc. (Ryan, 2019). We chose not to include these details because we wanted to see how participants would respond to the scenario with little to no context in order to see the most prevalent sources of blame. A third limitation to this study is the lack of manipulation of just world beliefs and masculine honor beliefs. Our study was a cross sectional design with the inclusion of masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs only for correlation. This inhibits causal conclusions from being drawn. We counterbalanced to reduce the possible order effects, though even with counterbalance they could have impacted one another. Future replications might include manipulations of these variables for more information, such as by personalizing the story for the participants in order to provoke masculine honor or just world beliefs. Finally, the major limitation of this study was that the items we wrote to measure perceptions of weakness, promiscuity, and deservingness did not separate how we predicted. This was found in the factor analysis, as our weakness and behavioral deserving items did not load onto separate factors. This made it difficult to assess our hypotheses regarding weakness-based and promiscuity-based blame except through exploratory analysis.

Conclusion

Sexual assault is a pervasive problem in America, particularly in colleges, and the effects on victims are detrimental. Among undergraduate students, victim blaming and shaming are common occurrences in response to sexual violence (Hackerman et al., 2017). Victims are frequently blamed for their assault, and, as our study suggests, victims may be blamed differently depending on their sex and/or gender identity. This effect is further influenced by endorsement of masculine honor and just world belief systems, as victim blaming across all sources of blame increased with the presence of masculine honor and just world beliefs. The results of this study are important for considering what factors in U.S. society contribute to the perpetuation of rape culture. Justifications of violence and of bad things happening to people who “deserve” it steer the conversation away from what changes can be made in society to prevent sexual assault from happening. Perhaps targeting why masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs develop will contribute to reducing incidents of rape. Continuing to uncover the role that masculine honor beliefs and just world beliefs have on victim blaming can also be useful when designing education efforts and prevention strategies against assault. Overall, our study provides insight into some of the most salient aspects contributing to the perpetuation of rape myths and victim blaming of sexual assault victims.

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Tables

Table 1: Principal Components Analysis

Item	Factor		
	1	2	3
1. She probably gave the assaulter an indication that she wanted sex.	.88		
2. She probably lets people take advantage of her.	.87		
3. She probably wanted it to happen.	.87		
4. She is likely often exploited.	.85		
5. She should have been able to resist his advances.	.80		
6. She is weak.	.78		
7. She probably wanted the attention of the accused man.	.77		
8. If she was stronger, this probably would not have happened.	.75		
9. She should have been more clear she did not want to have sex.	.71		
10. She should not have shown fear.	.68		
11. She was probably being flirtatious.	.67		
12. She was probably playing "hard to get."	.52	.45	
13. She probably drank too much at the party.	.48		.47
14. She was probably dressed provocatively.		.87	
15. The clothes that she wore probably made the assaulter think that she wanted sex.		.87	
16. If she did not want to have sex, she should have dressed less provocatively.		.86	
17. She should have dressed more modestly.		.85	
18. She is promiscuous.	.41	.49	
19. She should have stayed with her friends.			.86
20. She should have known better than to leave the party with a stranger.			.82
21. She should have carried a deterrent (pepper spray, etc.)		.43	.67
22. She should have learned self defense to better protect herself from harm.			.65
% variability	37.89%	20.06%	14.37%

Note. A principal components analysis was conducted using JAMOVI software. An oblimin rotation was used. Bolded items were removed. Item retention was based on main factor loadings > .50 and no cross-loadings > .40. Loadings below .40 are suppressed. Factor 1 = Behavioral Deserving; Factor 2 = Appearance Deserving; Factor 3 = Lack of Safety Deserving.

Table 2: Correlations

Means, standard deviations, and correlations between each of the variables in Study 1.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Masculine Honor Beliefs	4.38	1.09	(.96)				
2. Belief in a Just World	4.13	1.38	.38***	(.96)			
3. Behavioral Deserving	2.86	1.60	.39***	.33***	(.96)		
4. Appearance Deserving	2.31	1.43	.41***	.30***	.66***	(.95)	
5. Safety Deserving	3.66	1.67	.38***	.27***	.58***	.56***	(.85)

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$. The reliability values are McDonald's Omega values.

Table 3: Exploratory Correlations

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for exploratory variables in Study 1.

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Masculine Honor Beliefs			(.96)					
2. Belief in a Just World	.38***			(.96)				
3. Explore Weakness	.40***		.33***		(.91)			
4. Explore Promiscuous Acts	.34***		.28***	.77***		(.89)		
5. Explore Promiscuous Look	.40***		.30***	.61***	.61***		(.93)	
6. Explore Safety	.38***		.27***	.55***	.56***	.54***		(.85)

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 4: Behavioral Deserving Interactions

Variable	$F(1, 324)$	p	η^2_p	β	95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Model	18.70	<.001	.29			
MHBS	41.58	<.001	.11	.33	.33	.63
BJW	15.12	<.001	.04	.20	.11	.34
Victim Gender	33.72	<.001	.09	-.57	-1.22	-.60
MHBS*BJW	3.02	.083	.01	.07	-.01	.16
MHBS*Victim Gender	3.18	.075	.01	-.18	-.56	.03
BJW*Victim Gender	.05	.816	.00	-.02	-.26	.20
MHBS*BJW*Victim Gender	.42	.518	.00	.05	-.11	.23

Note. MHBS = Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale, BJW = Beliefs in a Just World.

Analyses were conducted using JAMOV I GAMLJ module for linear regressions. MHB and BJW were mean centered. Victim Gender was simple coded (Male = -0.5, Female = 0.5).

Table 5: Appearance
Deserving Interactions

Variable	$F(1, 324)$	p	η^2_p	β	95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Model	13.39	<.001	.22			
MHBS	42.89	<.001	.12	.35	.32	.59
BJW	11.45	<.001	.03	.18	.08	.29
Victim Gender	6.21	.013	.02	.26	.08	.66
MHBS*BJW	4.43	.036	.01	.09	.00	.16
MHBS*Victim Gender	1.06	.303	.00	.11	-.13	.42
BJW*Victim Gender	.83	.364	.00	-.10	-.32	.12
MHBS*BJW*Victim Gender	.17	.680	.00	-.04	-.19	.13
MHBS*BJW Simple Slopes						
BJW level		$t(324)$	p	η^2_p	Lower	Upper
Low (-1 SD)		3.84	<.001		.16	.51
High (+1 SD)		6.33	<.001		.40	.75

Note. MHBS = Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale, BJW = Beliefs in a Just World. Analyses were conducted using JAMOVI GAMLJ module for linear regressions. MHB and BJW were mean centered. Victim Gender was simple coded (Male = -0.5, Female = 0.5).

Table 6: Safety Deserving Interactions

Variable	$F(1, 324)$	p	η^2_p	β	95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Model	10.14	<.001	.18			
MHBS	35.57	<.001	.10	.32	.33	.66
BJW	6.42	.012	.02	.14	.04	.30
Victim Gender	2.27	.133	.01	.16	-.08	.61
MHBS*BJW	.35	.555	.00	.03	-.07	.12
MHBS*Victim Gender	.50	.478	.00	-.08	-.45	.21
BJW*Victim Gender	1.82	.179	.01	-.15	-.44	.08
MHBS*BJW*Victim Gender	1.59	.208	.01	-.11	-.31	.07

Note. MHBS = Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale, BJW = Beliefs in a Just World.

Analyses were conducted using JAMOVI GAMLJ module for linear regressions. MHB and BJW were mean centered. Victim Gender was simple coded (Male = -0.5, Female = 0.5).

Table 7: Exploratory Weakness Interactions

Variable	$F(1, 324)$	p	η^2_p	β	95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Model	21.17	<.001	.31			
MHBS	47.21	<.001	.13	.34	.41	.73
BJW	14.23	<.001	.04	.19	.12	.37
Victim Gender	38.54	<.001	.11	-.60	-1.43	-.74
MHBS*BJW	4.14	.043	.01	.08	.00	.19
MHBS*Victim Gender	5.39	.021	.02	-.23	-.71	-.06
BJW*Victim Gender	.05	.815	.00	-.02	-.29	.23
MHBS*BJW*Victim Gender	.03	.870	.00	.01	-.17	.20
MHBS*BJW Simple Slopes						
BJW level		$t(324)$	p	η^2_p	Lower	Upper
Low (-1 SD)		4.14	<.001	.05	.23	.64
High (+1 SD)		6.54	<.001	.12	.49	.42
MHBS*Victim Gender						
Victim Gender		$t(324)$	p	η^2_p	Lower	Upper
Male		6.35	<.001	.11	.53	1.00
Female		3.29	.001	.03	.15	.60

Note. MHBS = Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale, BJW = Beliefs in a Just World. Analyses were conducted using JAMOV I GAMLJ module for linear regressions. MHB and BJW were mean centered. Victim Gender was simple coded (Male = -0.5, Female = 0.5).

Table 8: Exploratory Promiscuous Act Interactions

Variable	$F(1, 324)$	p	η^2_p	β	95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Model	11.08	<.001	.19			
MHBS	27.66	<.001	.08	.28	.27	.60
BJW	9.75	.002	.03	.17	.08	.33
Victim Gender	17.05	<.001	.05	-.43	-1.07	-.38
MHBS*BJW	1.34	.248	.00	.05	-.04	.15
MHBS*Victim Gender	.58	.446	.00	-.08	-.45	.20
BJW*Victim Gender	.14	.710	.00	-.04	-.31	.21
MHBS*BJW*Victim Gender	.91	.341	.00	.08	-.10	.28

Note. MHBS = Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale, BJW = Beliefs in a Just World.

Analyses were conducted using JAMOV I GAMLJ module for linear regressions. MHB and BJW were mean centered. Victim Gender was simple coded (Male = -0.5, Female = 0.5).

Table 9: Exploratory
Promiscuous Appearance
Interactions

Variable	$F(1, 324)$	p	η^2_p	β	95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Model	12.84	<.001	.22			
MHBS	39.15	<.001	.11	.33	.30	.57
BJW	12.52	<.001	.04	.19	.09	.30
Victim Gender	6.42	.012	.02	.26	.08	.66
MHBS*BJW	5.26	.022	.02	.10	.01	.17
MHBS*Victim Gender	.56	.454	.00	.08	-.17	.38
BJW*Victim Gender	.21	.643	.00	-.05	-.26	.16
MHBS*BJW*Victim Gender	.01	.942	.00	-.01	-.16	.15
MHBS*BJW Simple Slopes						
BJW level		$t(324)$	p	η^2_p	Lower	Upper
Low (-1 SD)		3.49	<.001	.04	.13	.48
High (+1 SD)		6.26	<.001	.11	.38	.74

Note. MHBS = Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale, BJW = Beliefs in a Just World. Analyses were conducted using JAMOVI GAMLJ module for linear regressions. MHB and BJW were mean centered. Victim Gender was simple coded (Male = -0.5, Female = 0.5).

Table 10: Exploratory Safety
Deserving Interactions

Variable	$F(1, 324)$	p	η^2_p	β	95% CI	
					Lower	Upper
Model	10.14	<.001	.18			
MHBS	35.57	<.001	.10	.32	.33	.66
BJW	6.42	.012	.02	.14	.04	.30
Victim Gender	2.26	.133	.01	.16	-.08	.61
MHBS*BJW	.35	.555	.00	.03	-.07	.12
MHBS*Victim Gender	.50	.478	.00	-.08	-.45	.21
BJW*Victim Gender	1.82	.179	.01	-.15	-.44	.08
MHBS*BJW*Victim Gender	1.59	.208	.00	-.11	-.31	.07

Note. MHBS = Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale, BJW = Beliefs in a Just World.

Analyses were conducted using JAMOVI GAMLJ module for linear regressions. MHB and BJW were mean centered. Victim Gender was simple coded (Male = -0.5, Female = 0.5).

Appendix A - Masculine Honor Beliefs Scale (Saucier et al, 2016)

1. You would want your son to stand up to bullies.
2. A man should be embarrassed if someone calls him a wimp.
3. If a man's mother is insulted, his manhood is insulted.
4. A man should be expected to fight for himself.
5. If a man does not defend his wife, he is not a very strong man.
6. It is important for a man to be able to face danger.
7. It is important for a man to be more masculine than other men.
8. You would praise a man who reacted aggressively to an insult.
9. A man should protect his wife.
10. It is important to interact with other members of your community.
11. As a child you were taught that boys should defend girls.
12. It is very important for a man to act bravely.
13. Physical violence is the most honorable way to defend yourself.
14. It is important for a man to be able to take pain.
15. It is a male's responsibility to protect his family.
16. A man should not be afraid to fight.
17. If a man's wife is insulted, his manhood is insulted.
18. If your son got into a fight, you would be proud that he stood up for himself.
19. As a child you were taught that boys should always defend themselves.
20. It is a man's responsibility to respect his family.
21. It is morally wrong for a man to walk away from a fight.
22. A man should stand up for a female who is in his family or is a close friend.

23. It is important for a man to be loyal to his family.
24. If a man's brother is insulted, his manhood is insulted.
25. Physical aggression is always admirable and acceptable.
26. If a man does not defend himself, he is not a very strong man.
27. It is important to spend time with the members of your family.
28. A man should do whatever it takes to protect his wife because it is the right thing to do
29. If your son got into a fight to defend his sister, you would be proud that he protected his sister.
30. A man's family should be his number one priority.
31. If a man cares about his wife, he should protect her even if everyone else thinks it's wrong
32. If a man is insulted, his manhood is insulted.
33. It is important for a man to be courageous.
34. If a man's father is insulted, his manhood is insulted.
35. A man who "doesn't take any crap from anybody" is an admirable reputation to have.

**Appendix B - Belief in a Just World Scale (Fairness with Respect to Others
Subscale) (Lucas et al., 2011)**

1. I feel that people generally earn the rewards and punishments that they get in this world.
2. People usually receive the outcomes that they deserve.
3. People generally deserve the things that they are accorded.
4. I feel that people usually receive the outcomes that they are due.
5. People usually use fair procedures in dealing with others.
6. I feel that people generally use methods that are fair in their evaluations of others.
7. Regardless of the specific outcomes they receive, people are subjected to fair procedures.
8. People are generally subjected to processes that are fair.

Appendix C - Items Assessing Perceptions of the Victim

1. She/he is weak.
- 2. If she/he was stronger, this probably would not have happened.**
3. She/he should have been able to resist his/her advances.
4. She/he probably lets people take advantage of her/him.
- 5. She/he is likely often exploited.**
6. She/he should not have shown fear.
- 7. She/he probably wanted it to happen.**
8. She/he probably gave the assaulter an indication that she/he wanted sex.
9. She/he should have been more clear she/he did not want to have sex.
- 10. She/he was probably being flirtatious.**
- 11. She/he was probably playing "hard to get."**
12. She/he probably wanted the attention of the accused man/woman.
13. She/he was probably dressed provocatively.
- 14. She/he is promiscuous.**
- 15. She/he should have dressed more modestly.**
16. The clothes that she/he wore probably made the assaulter think that she/he wanted sex.
17. If she/he did not want to have sex, she/he should have dressed less provocatively.
- 18. She/he probably drank too much at the party.**
- 19. She/he should have carried a deterrent (pepper spray, etc.)**
20. She/he should have stayed with her/his friends.

21. She/he should have learned self defense to better protect herself/himself from harm.

22. She/he should have known better than to leave the party with a stranger.

Note. Items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 12 loaded onto Factor 1, labeled as Behavior Deserving. Items 13, 15, 16, and 17 loaded onto Factor 2, labeled as Appearance Deserving. Items 20, 21, and 22 loaded onto Factor 3, labeled as Safety Deserving. Items 1, 3, 4, and 6 were used in the weak EFA. Items 8, 9, and 22 were used in the promiscuous act EFA. Items 13, 16, and 17 were used in the promiscuous look EFA. Items 20, 21, and 22 were used in the Safety Deserving EFA. Items 2, 5, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 18, and 19 were removed for the EFA.

Appendix D- News Stories

TOP NEWS**College Student Detained Over Sexual Assault Claim**

Posted: November 19, 2022 / 2:33 PM EDT



College student Michael (last name omitted for privacy) is being investigated over allegations of non-consensual sex with Jane (last name omitted for privacy). Jane is a first year student whose assault reportedly occurred during the first two weeks of classes. Witnesses report that they were at an off-campus house party, which Jane attended with friends. She left the party with Michael, after which he proceeded to sexually assault her.

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TOP NEWS**College Student Detained Over Sexual Assault Claim**

Posted: November 19, 2022 / 2:33 PM EDT



College student Jane (last name omitted for privacy) is being investigated over allegations of non-consensual sex with Michael (last name omitted for privacy). Michael is a first year student whose assault reportedly occurred during the first two weeks of classes. Witnesses report that they were at an off-campus house party, which Michael attended with friends. He left the party with Jane, after which she proceeded to sexually assault him.

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