WEIGHING THE EVIDENCE:
THE INFLUENCE OF STEREOTYPICAL ATTITUDES AND SURVIVOR BODY WEIGHT ON PUBLIC PERCEPTIONS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

by

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Abstract

The present study explored the influence of survivor weight and participant gender, rape myth acceptance and anti-fat attitudes on perceptions of sexual assault. Using an online survey tool, participants (N = 413) read a vignette describing a hypothetical sexual assault scenario and completed several self-report questionnaires. Generalized linear model analyses revealed that participants were more likely to hold the survivor responsible, excuse the perpetrator’s actions, and respond more negatively toward the survivor and more positively toward the perpetrator when the survivor was depicted as thin versus overweight. Interactions were found between rape myth acceptance and survivor weight, gender and survivor weight, and gender and anti-fat attitudes, for certain dependent variables. In addition, men and those with higher levels of rape myth acceptance and anti-fat attitudes were found to make more negative evaluations of the survivor and more positive evaluations of the perpetrator. Recommendations for future research and interventions are discussed.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Sexual victimization is a devastating experience with significant physical, emotional, psychological and social consequences. The type of response that survivors receive from others following a sexual assault can either facilitate healing or exacerbate existing trauma (Campbell, Wasco, Ahrens, Sefl, & Barnes, 2001; Herman, 2003; Maier, 2008; Starzynski, Ullman, Filipas, & Townsend, 2005). In spite of legislative change and enhanced efforts to improve the response that survivors receive in legal and social spheres, research suggests that understandings of sexual assault in Canada continue to be informed by myths and stereotypes (Alksnis, 2001; L’Heureux-Dubé, 2001, Tang, 2000). Prejudicial beliefs, particularly those that define certain kinds of victims as more “real” and “legitimate” than others, have the potential to negatively impact the amount of support and justice received by survivors and may compound the effects of the initial violation. Recent research by Clarke and Lawson (2009) suggests that perceptions of sexual assault may be unduly influenced by stereotypical attitudes about sexual violence and overweight individuals, as well as the weight of the survivor in question. As this specific area has remained largely unexamined within the sexual violence research field, the present study aimed to corroborate and expand upon past research by further evaluating the ways in which participant attitudes (namely, rape myth acceptance and anti-fat prejudice) and survivor weight may influence evaluations of a hypothetical male-against-female sexual assault case.

1 The terminology used to refer to those who have experienced sexual violence remains a contentious issue. “Survivor” is currently the preferred term in many circles, as it recognizes one’s strength and courage in surviving their abuse and avoids many of the negative connotations of weakness associated with the term “victim”. However, it can be argued that at times “victim” is a more appropriate label, as it acknowledges that the person has experienced a violation from which they may not have yet recovered. As such, both terms are used within this paper.

2 This focus on male-against-female sexual assault is not meant to trivialize or overlook other forms of victimization. However, while there is no denying that men are sexually victimized and women can be perpetrators, statistics indicate that the greatest percentages of adult victims are female and the vast majority of perpetrators are male (Payne, Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1999; Rozee & Koss, 2001). In addition, the most common stereotypes held about sexual assault typically focus on female victimization and male perpetration (Payne et al., 1999). As such, the present study specifically targets attitudes about male-against-female sexual assault.
When determining how to respond to a person in need, one’s actions tend to be informed by their thoughts and feelings regarding the event in question. Weiner (1980) proposed an attribution-affect-action model wherein one’s attributions about a situation influences their affective reactions toward those involved, and these feelings then influence whether one decides to respond with help or neglect. Thus, when deciding whether to assist someone in need, one begins by contemplating the reason or cause of the event, considering such factors as whether the problem is caused by internal or external forces, whether it is temporary or permanent, and whether the problem is beyond the personal control of the individual(s) involved. For example, if one sees a person fall down in the street, they may attempt to determine whether the fall was due to illness (a likely more permanent problem caused by external factors outside personal control) or drunkenness (a more temporary problem caused by internal factors largely within personal control) (Weiner, 1980).

The perceived causality of the event is then argued to determine the affective reactions that follow. When the cause of an adverse event is attributed to factors beyond the personal control of those involved (e.g., one’s fall is caused by illness), the individual(s) are likely to be met with feelings of pity and sympathy. However, if the person(s) involved are deemed personally responsible for the adverse event (e.g., the fall is the result of drinking too much alcohol), they are less likely to receive a sympathetic reaction and more likely to be met with negative affect such as anger and disgust (Weiner, 1980). One’s affective reactions toward a person will then arguably either increase or decrease their likelihood of offering help and assistance to them. Feelings of sympathy tend to be associated with a greater likelihood of help being offered, while feelings of disgust and anger are related to a decreased likelihood of helping behaviour and an increased likelihood of neglect. Therefore, using the example mentioned above, a person whose fall is due to uncontrollable illness is more likely to be met with sympathy
and receive assistance than a person whose fall is thought to be due to their own self-inflicted drunkenness (Weiner, 1980).

Although the majority of research on the attribution-affect-action model has looked at helping behaviour in academic contexts, this model is thought to be generalizable to a range of help-giving situations, including sexual assault (Clarke & Lawson, 2009). Within a sexual assault case, the ways in which the conduct of the perpetrator and survivor are perceived has implications for the social actions that follow (Coates & Wade, 2004). If Weiner’s model holds, one would expect a survivor of sexual assault to be met with more positive affect and offers of assistance in situations where the offender was held responsible and the survivor was perceived as unable to have prevented the incident from occurring. On the other hand, if the survivor is seen as somehow personally responsible for her victimization, perhaps because of some perceived carelessness or encouragement of the perpetrator, one would expect others to respond with more negative affect and demonstrate a decreased willingness to assist her in her recovery or punish her assailant. Consistent with this, Clarke and Lawson (2009) found that attributions of responsibility toward a perpetrator of sexual assault were associated with heightened feelings of sympathy and decreased feelings of anger and disgust toward the survivor, as well as an increased willingness to offer assistance to the survivor throughout her recovery. Attributions of responsibility toward the survivor, on the other hand, were associated with lower levels of sympathy and higher levels of anger and disgust toward her, and these feelings were in turn associated with a decreased desire to help her in her recovery. As such, Weiner’s (1980) attribution-affect-action model seems to provide a useful theoretical framework for conceptualizing the ways in which people respond to survivors and perpetrators of sexual assault.
Within the Canadian legal system, sexual assault legislation has traditionally been informed by bias and sexist stereotypes (Tang, 1998). As women were historically considered to be the property of their fathers or husbands, rape was originally viewed as a crime committed against the ‘property owner’ rather than the woman herself. Further, because men were believed to have open sexual access to their ‘property’, sexual assault was not recognized within the context of marriage. Vaginal penetration was considered a necessary pre-requisite for a charge to be laid and a police report had to be filed immediately following an assault in order to be deemed valid (Tang, 1998). If and when a case made it to trial, juries were frequently warned that an accusation of rape “is one which is easily made and, once made, difficult to defend against, even if the person accused is innocent” (Berger, 1977, p. 10, as cited in Donat & White, 2000). Women were regarded as “morally underdeveloped” (Tang, 1998, p. 259) and jurors were frequently instructed to view their testimony with suspicion (Donat & White, 2000). In addition, factors such as the survivor’s sexual history and reputation were deemed relevant to establishing consent and credibility and, as such, were regularly presented to the courts for examination (L’Heureux-Dubé, 2001; Tang, 1998).

In response to criticisms from feminist groups, who contended that these laws and regulations were prejudicial and responsible for low reporting and conviction rates, Canadian sexual assault legislation underwent a dramatic change in 1983 (Gunn & Linden, 1997; Tang, 1998). As a result of Bill C-127, the term “rape” has been replaced with the term “sexual assault”, in an effort to emphasize the violence of the act and encompass a broader range of sexual acts beyond vaginal penetration (Du Mont, Miller, & Myhr, 2003; Gunn & Linden, 1997; Tang, 1998). The crime of sexual assault has been further classified into three types – sexual assault; sexual assault with a weapon, threats to third party or causing bodily harm; and
aggravated sexual assault – with differing levels of penalty assigned based on the level of violence involved (for more detail, please see Sections 271 to 273 of the Canadian Criminal Code). Gender-neutral language is now used when referring to this crime and sexual assault within marriage has been recognized and prohibited. Corroborating evidence is no longer required and complaints no longer need to be filed immediately following an assault in order for the case to be substantiated (Gunn & Linden, 1997; Tang, 1998).

Over the past several decades, a number of other changes have been adopted as well. The Canadian Criminal Code has been further revised, with Section 276 now stating that information about the survivor’s previous sexual history (with the perpetrator and/or any other person) can not be used to infer information about her credibility or likelihood of consenting. Further, the introduction of information of this nature into trial proceedings has been significantly limited (L’Heureux-Dubé, 2001; Tang, 1998). In addition, following the Supreme Court of Canada’s 1999 ruling on the R. v. Ewanchuk case, definitions around consent have been revised such that a defense of “implied consent” (e.g., the idea that the victim consented through silence or ambiguous behaviour) is no longer valid (L’Heureux-Dubé, 2001; Tang, 2000). Specialized units within the police department have been created to address sexual assault and more training is now provided to many officers and correctional service employees (Du Mont et al., 2003). Finally, in cases where the perpetrator is found guilty, it is now possible for survivors to address the courts and make a statement about the impact of the offender’s actions on their life and wellbeing prior to sentencing (Tang, 1998).

These changes in legislation represent an important step forward in improving the legal response to sexual assault. However, many have argued that the overall impact of these changes has been minimal. Although an initial increase in reporting was noted in the period immediately following these changes, sexual assault remains a highly underreported crime (Du Mont et al., 2003; Gunn & Linden, 1997). Conviction rates remain low (Gunn & Linden, 1997; Krahé,
and the number of cases declared as founded has not significantly changed (Gunn & Linden, 1997), meaning that sexual assault cases continue to be declared unfounded by the police more than any other violent crime (Tang, 1998). Further, faulty beliefs and stereotypes about sexual assault continue to be endorsed by members of the general public and legal professionals alike, suggesting that changes to the law may not have been matched by changes in attitudes (Alksnis, 2001; Krahé et al., 2008; Ryckman, Graham, Thornton, Gold, & Lindner, 1998; Tang, 1998; Tang, 2000).

This persistent adherence to rape myths, defined as “attitudes or beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women” (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 134), is worrisome as these beliefs can lead to prejudicial treatment of survivors of sexual assault at both an individual and systemic level (L’Heureux-Dubé, 2001). For example, myths that suggest that women frequently make false accusations of sexual assault can lead individuals to question the veracity of a survivor’s disclosure, while beliefs that only certain types of women are targets of sexual assault or that women bring upon victimization by appearing or acting a certain way may lead people to mistakenly attribute personal responsibility to the victim rather than the perpetrator. Indeed, studies using sexual assault vignettes have shown that those who endorse rape myths tend to attribute greater blame and responsibility to the victim (Clarke & Lawson, 2009; Kopper, 1996; Krahé et al., 2008; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Mason, Riger & Foley, 2004; Vrij & Firmin, 2001), respond more negatively toward her (Clarke & Lawson, 2009), view her as less honest (Vrij & Firmin, 2001), and show less empathy for her (Payne et al., 1999) than those who do not endorse these myths.

In addition, studies have shown that those with higher levels of rape myth acceptance attribute less blame to the perpetrator (Kopper, 1996; Krahé et al., 2008; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994), view the evidence against him as less convincing (Vrij & Firmin, 2001), demonstrate a
decreased likelihood to convict him of his crime (Burt & Albin, 1981), and tend to assign shorter sentences when he is found guilty (Krahé et al., 2008; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Although the studies mentioned above all involved the use of hypothetical scenarios, these beliefs are widespread and have serious implications for the justice system. In a study of Canadian trial judgments, Coates and Wade (2004) found that inaccurate beliefs about sexual assault were often used by judges to excuse the behaviour of perpetrators. Across cases, the judges frequently explained the perpetrators’ actions as resulting from alcohol and drug abuse, sexual needs/urges, psychological disorders and psychopathology, unpleasant life events, personality or character factors, and/or an inability for self-control. These explanations all effectively lessened the degree of responsibility assigned to the perpetrator by construing his actions as resulting from external forces or inborn factors, rather than conscious choice. Consistent with these attributions, the judges in these cases tended to assign less punitive sentences and recommend treatment programs to address the supposed problems (e.g., substance abuse, sexual addiction) rather than the underlying issues of violence and abuse (Coates & Wade, 2004).

Myths about sexual assault can also construct a hierarchy wherein certain kinds of assaults (e.g., violent, stranger-perpetrated attacks) and certain types of victims (e.g., chaste, morally upstanding women) are viewed as more “real” or “legitimate” than others. This can lead to the denial and trivialization of the experiences of those who do not fit this standard, and may identify certain women as more deserving of assistance and justice than others (Alksnis, 2001; Burt, 1998; Du Mont et al., 2003; L’Heureux-Dubé, 2001; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Maier, 2008; Payne et al., 1999). In a recent study of prospective lawyers, Krahé and colleagues (2008) found that information about the prior relationship between the individuals involved and the degree of force used in the attack influenced decision making about a hypothetical sexual assault case. Within this study, both undergraduate and post-graduate law students held an alleged perpetrator more responsible and attributed less blame to the survivor in situations where the two
parties did not know one another prior to the assault and/or physical force was used to coerce the victim (Krahé et al., 2008). Similarly, perceptions of survivor credibility and trustworthiness are found to be enhanced when survivors conform to stereotypical ideals (Maier, 2008) and, perhaps as a result, survivors are more likely to engage with the legal system when they are assaulted by strangers (Campbell et al., 2001; Starzynski et al., 2005) or have evidence of visible injuries or use of weapons (Du Mont et al., 2003; Starzynski et al., 2005). In addition, prosecution of the perpetrator has been found to be more likely when the assault meets traditional definitions of a “classic rape” (e.g., an act committed by a stranger, involving a weapon, and/or resulting in noticeable physical injury) (Campbell et al., 2001).

Thus, despite legal reform, studies show that survivors continue to face negative and prejudicial responses from others and often do not receive the justice they deserve. Indeed, one study found that over half of those survivors who had involvement with the legal system reported that it was a hurtful experience (Campbell et al., 2001). Rather than providing a supportive, empowering atmosphere, the legal system can often take away a survivor’s sense of control and agency and force her to relive her trauma, all while attacking her character and credibility (Herman, 2003). Experiences of being blamed, doubted, dismissed, or denied services and assistance are common following a disclosure of sexual assault and can contribute to a number of negative outcomes, including physical health problems, increased episodes of post-traumatic stress and depression, elevated feelings of self-blame, doubt about the validity of one’s experiences and poorer self-esteem (Ahrens, 2006; Campbell et al., 2001; Campbell & Wasco, 2005; Herman, 2003; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Mason et al., 2004). These responses can also cause survivors to fear that additional disclosures will be ineffective and/or result in harmful treatment. This fear and distrust can prompt survivors to decide to remain silent about their abuse in the future, thereby preventing them from accessing potentially beneficial support services and resources (Ahrens, 2006; Starzynski et al., 2005). Clearly, further examination of the current
nature of attitudes and beliefs about sexual assault within Canadian society is needed in order to address these issues.

_The Influence of Attractiveness Bias on Perceptions of Sexual Assault_

Stereotypical beliefs about sexual assault can distort understandings of the nature of this crime and may lead individuals to believe that characteristics such as the appearance of the survivor are relevant to judgments of a sexual assault case. Due to its sexual component, sexual assault is frequently misunderstood as a sexually motivated crime, a “crime of passion” rather than an act motivated by a desire for power or control (Anderson & Swainson, 2001; Coates & Wade, 2004; Deitz, Littman, & Bentley, 1984). According to this view, men have innate sexual needs and urges that, when left unchecked, lead them to commit sexual assault (Anderson & Swainson, 2001; Burt, 1998, Coates & Wade, 2001). The responsibility for controlling these supposed biological drives is often placed in the hands of women, such that a woman is expected to accept the consequences if she arouses a man, intentionally or unintentionally, to a point where his urges cannot be controlled (Donat & White, 2000). As a result, when evaluating a sexual assault case, jurors or judges who adhere to this idea may be persuaded to excuse the actions of the perpetrator, concluding that he “just couldn’t help himself” (Feild, 1979, Coates & Wade, 2004) and may hold the survivor responsible instead.

Not only does the acceptance of this “crime of passion” belief distort the nature of sexual assault and increase the danger of sexual victimization being dismissed as ‘only sex’ (Anderson & Swainson, 2001), it may also result in factors such as the survivor’s physical attractiveness or sexual desirability being deemed as relevant to the processing of sexual assault cases. This may explain why, prior to testifying, survivors frequently report adjusting their clothing and makeup in a conscious effort to appear professional, conservative, and – importantly – non-sexual to the judge and jury (Konradi, 1996). When a survivor is sexually attractive, sexual assault may be
considered a likely or expected event that was provoked – at least in part – by her presumably desirable and “provocative” appearance (Burt, 1998; Deitz et al., 1984; DeJong, 1999; Jacobson & Popovich, 1983; Seligman, Brickman, & Koulack, 1977; Thornton & Ryckman, 1983). Consistent with this idea, study participants have been found to rate survivors as more careless, provocative and responsible in precipitating their assaults when they are depicted as attractive versus unattractive (Calhoun, Selby, Cann, & Keller, 1978; Jacobson & Popovich, 1983). If Weiner’s (1980) attribution-affect-action model holds, these greater attributions of personal responsibility are likely to negatively impact the affective responses and degree of help that is received by attractive survivors as well.

However, not all research has shown support for the above mentioned relationship between attractiveness and perceptions of sexual assault. In fact, some research suggests that it may be advantageous for a survivor of sexual assault to be attractive. Consistent with Dion, Berscheid, and Walster’s (1972) “beautiful is good” stereotype, attractive people tend to be associated with a number of socially desirable traits (see meta-analyses by Eagly, Ashmore, Makhijani, & Longo, 1991; Feingold, 1992; and Langlois, Kalakanis, Rubenstein, Larson, Hallam, & Smoot, 2000). Studies have repeatedly shown that physically attractive individuals are perceived as more professionally and socially successful, with individuals rating them as more competent, intelligent, likeable, popular, well-adjusted and mentally healthy than their less attractive counterparts (Eagly et al., 1991; Feingold, 1992; Langlois et al., 2000). Attractive people are thought to be more sexually desirable, have better luck with relationships, and make more exciting dating partners and better spouses than unattractive people (Dion et al., 1972), who are often stereotyped as socially awkward, undesirable and asexual (Feingold, 1992). Further, attractive people may be deemed more worthy of justice, as a recent study found that participants rated a woman’s death was rated as significantly more unfair and unjust, and expressed an increased desire to punish the person responsible for her demise, when the woman
was depicted as attractive versus unattractive (Callan, Powell, & Ellard, 2007). This positive bias toward attractive individuals has been found to influence behaviour as well. As a group, attractive individuals tend to be treated better by others; are better liked; receive more attention, rewards, assistance and prosocial behaviour; and experience less negative interactions and fewer punishments from others than their unattractive peers (Langlois et al., 2000).

Evidence of a positive bias toward attractiveness has also been found within the realm of sexual violence, with several studies suggesting that unattractive sexual assault survivors may be at a disadvantage relative to attractive survivors. Across a number of studies, unattractive survivors have been attributed greater personal responsibility for their assault (Seligman et al., 1977; Thornton & Ryckman, 1983; Vrij & Firmin, 2001), viewed as less honest and credible (Vrij & Firmin, 2001), and been met with more negative feelings (Deitz et al., 1984) and greater rejection (Thornton & Ryckman, 1983) than attractive survivors. Further, when a survivor is unattractive, participants have shown a tendency to perceive the evidence against the perpetrator as weaker (Vrij & Firmin, 2001) and assign shorter prison sentences to him, leading some to suggest that a sexual assault committed against an unattractive woman is seen as less serious and less deserving of punishment than one committed against an attractive woman (Erian, Lin, Patel, Neal, & Geiselman, 1998; Field, 1979, Thornton, 1977).

The explanation for these findings is not immediately clear. It is possible that, because attractive individuals tend to be more well-liked and respected, people have a greater desire to believe and support them and punish their assailant(s) (Erian et al., 1998). Alternatively, it has been suggested that because an unattractive woman is seen as a rather unlikely target for sexual assault, people may conclude that she must have provoked her assailant and contributed to her victimization in some way, perhaps by presenting herself in a seductive or provocative manner (Deitz et al., 1984; DeJong, 1999; Seligman et al., 1977; Thornton & Ryckman, 1983). As a result, participants may then be more likely to respond with increased negative affect toward the
unattractive survivor and express a decreased willingness to assist her and punish her attacker (Weiner, 1980). Whatever the direction of the influence and the specific reasons behind it, the fact that attractiveness exerts a biasing influence is worrisome as no person is less deserving of justice and a fair trial, particularly not when decisions are based on an irrelevant factor largely beyond personal control (Thornton & Ryckman, 1983).

The Potential Influence of Survivor Body Weight on Perceptions of Sexual Assault

A limitation of the previous research on attractiveness bias within sexual assault cases is that it has focused primarily on facial attractiveness and neglected the influence of other appearance cues, such as physical size or body weight (Clarke & Lawson, 2009). Similar to Dion et al.’s (1972) “beautiful is good” stereotype, an examination of current levels of prejudice toward overweight individuals (commonly referred to within psychological research as “anti-fat attitudes”) suggests that a “thin is good” stereotype may also exist within North American culture. Overweight individuals are often stigmatized as unattractive, undesirable, unlikable, lazy, and lacking in willpower and self-control and, as a result, face considerable prejudice and discrimination in their everyday interactions with peers, coworkers, employers, teachers, landlords, store clerks, and health care professionals (Bess, 1997; Crandall, 1994; Morrison & O’Connor, 1999; Regan, 1996; Sobal, 2005). Considering the prevalence of these negative social and sexual perceptions, it seems likely that the weight of a sexual assault survivor could prejudicially influence the ways in which her situation is evaluated (Clarke & Lawson, 2009).

On the one hand, one might expect an overweight survivor of sexual assault to be at a relative disadvantage. Individuals may presumably respond more negatively toward her as a result of their negative attitudes toward overweight people in general, or perhaps because they perceive her (a supposedly more unattractive woman) as an unlikely victim who must have provoked her assailant in some way (Deitz et al., 1984; DeJong, 1999; Seligman et al., 1977;
Thornton & Ryckman, 1983). Alternatively, individuals may feel that an overweight woman should have the size and strength to defend herself from potential attackers and, as a result, may hold her more responsible and feel less sympathy for her when an assault occurs. Consistent with this latter idea, Ryckman and colleagues (1998) found that participants attributed greater responsibility and displayed more negative feelings toward a survivor of sexual assault when she was depicted as larger than the perpetrator compared to when she was depicted as smaller. These findings suggest that participants expected the larger woman to use her enhanced size and supposed strength to successfully fend off her assailant and, when this was not the case, began to question her actions and respond more negatively toward her (Ryckman et al., 1998).

To date, only one study has investigated the influence of survivor body weight specifically. In a mock-jury study of women’s attitudes toward acquaintance sexual assault, Clarke and Lawson (2009) found that a thin sexual assault survivor was held more responsible for her victimization than an overweight survivor was. Thus, contrary to the direction of influence predicted above, this study suggests that a thin survivor may in fact be the one to face greater stigma following a sexual assault. The authors argued that, because sexual assault is commonly misunderstood as a sexually motivated act (Anderson & Swainson, 2001; Burt, 1998; Coates & Wade, 2004) and because overweight individuals are commonly perceived as sexually unattractive, undesirable, and inexperienced (Bess, 1997; Crandall, 1994; Regan, 1996; Sobal, 2005), an overweight woman may be seen as an unusual and unlikely target for sexual assault. As a result, individuals may tend to hold an overweight woman less personally responsible for the assault than a thin (and thus supposedly more sexually attractive, desirable and experienced) woman. Further, it was suggested that perhaps a man who forces himself upon an overweight woman is perceived as particularly deviant and, therefore, assigned complete responsibility for the assault (Clarke & Lawson, 2009). Whatever the precise explanation, these differential attributions of responsibility based on body weight have the potential to affect subsequent
feelings and behaviours toward survivors and perpetrators, making further research on this topic an important priority.

The Interaction between Participant Attitudes and Survivor Characteristics

There is some evidence that the influence of survivor characteristics such as appearance on perceptions of sexual assault may depend to some degree on the evaluator’s existing attitudes about sexual violence. In one study, those with low levels of empathy toward a survivor of sexual assault were significantly more influenced by attractiveness cues than those with high levels of empathy. Specifically, those with lower empathy held the survivor more responsible for the assault and reported less certainty of the perpetrator’s guilt when the survivor was depicted as unattractive as opposed to attractive. Those who had high levels of empathy were not influenced by the survivor’s attractiveness when making judgments about the situation (Deitz et al., 1984).

In another study, participants with high levels of rape myth acceptance appeared strongly influenced by survivor appearance, perceiving the evidence against the perpetrator to be significantly weaker when the survivor was unattractive versus attractive. Those who held low levels of rape myth acceptance, on the other hand, were largely unaffected by the attractiveness of the survivor when evaluating the case (Vrij & Firmin, 2001).

In light of these findings, it has been suggested that those who endorse rape myths may hold a more stereotypical or intolerant worldview and, as such, may be more sensitive to the influence of other stereotypical information, such as appearance-related cues, when forming opinions about sexual assault cases (Vrij & Firmin, 2001). This seems plausible, as rape myth acceptance has been associated with a number of other oppressive beliefs, such as sexism, racism, homophobia, ageism, classism, religious intolerance (Aosved & Long, 2006) and anti-fat attitudes (Clarke & Lawson, 2009). Rape myth acceptance has also been associated with a high “social dominance orientation” (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994), an attitudinal orientation characterized by the support of hierarchical ideologies and practices that maintain the
superiority of one social group over others. As such, it seems likely that rape myth acceptance and anti-fat prejudice are components of an overarching belief system that is intolerant of difference and deviation from a perceived social norm (Aosved & Long, 2006; Crandall, 1994; Pratto et al., 1994; Vrij & Firmin, 2001) and that holding these attitudes may predispose individuals to be particularly susceptible to the influence of survivor body weight when evaluating a specific sexual assault case (Clarke & Lawson, 2009).

**Gender Differences in Attitudes and Evaluations of Sexual Assault**

A great deal of previous research has identified significant gender differences in the ways in which men and women evaluate sexual assault cases. Men have been found to hold more stereotypical understandings of sexual assault than women, showing a greater tendency to define it as a sexually motivated crime (Anderson & Swainson, 2001) and endorsing consistently higher levels of rape myth acceptance (Aosved & Long, 2006; Kopper, 1996; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Morry & Winkler, 2001; Payne et al., 1999; Vrij & Firmin, 2001). Men tend to attribute more blame to survivors of sexual assault (Calhoun et al., 1978; Deitz et al., 1984; Thornton & Ryckman, 1983; Ryckman et al., 1998; Vrij & Firmin, 2001); respond more negatively and identify less with survivors (Deitz et al., 1984; Ryckman et al., 1998; Vrij & Firmin, 2001); respond more positively and identify more with perpetrators (Deitz et al., 1984; Ryckman et al., 1998); and express less certainty of the perpetrator’s guilt (Deitz et al., 1984). In addition, men tend to hold higher levels of anti-fat prejudice (Morrison & O’Connor, 1999); modern and old-fashioned sexism (Aosved & Long, 2006) and social dominance orientation (Pratto et al., 1994). As a result, it is important to consider the role of gender when studying social perceptions of sexual assault.

**The Present Study**

The present study was designed to corroborate and expand upon the work of Clarke and Lawson (2009) by further exploring the influence of survivor body weight and participant rape
myth acceptance and anti-fat attitudes on perceptions of a hypothetical sexual assault case. At the same time, this study aimed to further investigate the applicability of Weiner’s (1980) attribution-affect-action model to sexual assault research; examine the relationships between different forms of social prejudice (rape myth acceptance, anti-fat attitudes, sexism, and social dominance orientation); and assess the current levels of these biases among a diverse community sample of Canadian men and women. Based upon the findings of previous researchers, the following hypotheses were made:

1. In support of Weiner’s (1980) attribution-affect-action model, it was expected that participants who attributed personal responsibility to the survivor would respond with greater feelings of anger and disgust and decreased feelings of sympathy toward her. These feelings were then expected to lead to a decreased willingness to help the survivor in her recovery and punish her assailant (as measured by the length of sentence assigned to him). Participants who did not hold the survivor responsible for the assault were expected to respond with greater feelings of sympathy and less anger and disgust, and these feelings were expected to contribute to a greater willingness to help the survivor and punish the offender.

2. In support of the assertion that those who are prejudiced toward one group are more likely to hold prejudicial attitudes toward other groups (Aosved & Long, 2006; Pratto et al., 1994), positive correlations were predicted between rape myth acceptance, anti-fat attitudes, sexism and social dominance orientation.

3. Consistent with the findings of Clarke and Lawson (2009), it was predicted that participants would attribute more blame and responsibility to a thin survivor of sexual assault than an overweight survivor. This attribution of increased personal responsibility was then expected to lead participants to respond more negatively toward the thin
survivor, demonstrate less willingness to assist her in her recovery, and result in the assignment of a more lenient prison term to the assailant.

4. Consistent with previous research (e.g., Clarke & Lawson, 2009; Kopper, 1996; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Mason et al., 2004; Payne et al., 1999; Vrij & Firmin, 2001), it was predicted that those participants with higher levels of rape myth acceptance would be more likely blame the victim, hold more negative feelings toward her and have less interest in helping her in her recovery. These participants were expected to be more likely to excuse the actions of the perpetrator, feel more positively toward him, and sentence him to a shorter prison term. In addition, an interaction between rape myth acceptance and survivor body weight was predicted, such that those participants with a higher belief in rape myths would be particularly blameful and negative toward the thin survivor.

5. As a result of the intolerant belief system believed to be associated with prejudice toward overweight individuals (Crandall, 1994) and previous findings by Clarke & Lawson (2009), participants high in anti-fat attitudes were predicted to hold the survivor more responsible, feel more negatively toward her and demonstrate less interest in helping her in her recovery. In addition, these participants were expected to hold the perpetrator less responsible, feel more positively toward him and assign him a more lenient prison sentence than those low in anti-fat attitudes. An interaction was also predicted between anti-fat attitudes and survivor body weight, such that those who held high levels of anti-fat prejudice would be particularly unlikely to hold the overweight survivor responsible for her victimization.

6. Based upon previous research showing gender differences in perceptions of sexual assault as well as levels of attitudinal prejudice (e.g., Anderson & Swainson, 2001; Aosved & Long, 2006; Calhoun et al., 1978; Deitz et al., 1984; Kopper, 1996; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Morrison & O’Connor, 1999; Morry & Winkler, 2001; Payne et al.,
1999; Pratto et al., 1994; Thornton & Ryckman, 1983; Ryckman et al., 1998; Vrij & Firmin, 2001), it was predicted that men would hold the survivor more responsible, feel more negatively toward her and have less interest in helping her relative to women. Male participants were expected to hold the perpetrator less responsible, feel more positively toward him and assign him a more lenient prison sentence as well. In addition, it was predicted that men would hold higher levels of rape myth acceptance, anti-fat prejudice, sexism, and social dominance orientation.
CHAPTER 2

Study Design and Methodology

Participants

A community sample of 658 Canadian adults was recruited for this online study. Two hundred and forty-five individuals were excluded due to missing data, leaving a final sample of 413 participants. Of these, 299 identified as female, 107 identified as male, three identified as “other”, and four declined to provide their gender. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 71 years, with a mean age of 30.55 years and a modal age of 26.0 years. The majority of the sample identified their racial/ethnic background as White/Caucasian (66.6%), with the remaining participants identifying as Asian (South, East, and/or Southeast – 16.2%), Black (6.8%), Middle Eastern (2.2%), Hispanic (1.9%), bi-racial/mixed race (1.9%), and Aboriginal/First Nations (0.2%). A total of 4.1% declined to answer this question.

Measures

Evaluations of the Hypothetical Sexual Assault Case

Mock police report.

Participants were first asked to imagine that they were jurors in a sexual assault trial and instructed to read a brief mock police report filed by a woman named “Jill Brown” regarding an alleged sexual assault that occurred between her and a classmate, “Mark Stevens” (see Appendix A). The mock report was developed using vignettes created by Clarke and Lawson (2009), Mason et al. (2004) and Jacobson and Popovich (1983) as a guide. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions, such that approximately half read a report where the woman was described as “thin” \( N = 214 \) while half read one where she was described as “overweight” \( N = 199 \). The reports were otherwise identical.
After reading the report, participants were asked to make a series of evaluations about the case, including attributions of survivor and perpetrator responsibility, feelings of sympathy and negative affect toward each party, perceptions of perpetrator guilt, sentencing recommendations, and willingness to assist the survivor in her recovery (see Appendix B). The construction of these items was informed by the work of Clarke & Lawson (2009) and Jacobson & Popovich (1983).

**Attributions of survivor responsibility.**

Four items were used to assess participants’ attributions of responsibility to the survivor: “It is Jill Brown’s own fault that she is in this situation”, “Jill Brown is to blame for what happened”, “Jill Brown is responsible for what happened because she acted carelessly” and “Jill Brown is responsible for what happened because she acted provocatively”. These items were strongly and significantly correlated with one another (intercorrelations ranged from .59 to .67, all with \( p < .001 \)) and were thus combined to create a composite measure of Attributions of Survivor Responsibility. The combined measure had a coefficient alpha of 0.88 for this sample. Responses on each item were made using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*, and therefore scores on this composite measure could range from 4 to 28, with higher scores indicating greater attributions of survivor responsibility.

**Attributions of perpetrator responsibility.**

The following four items were initially included to assess participants’ attributions of the alleged perpetrator’s responsibility: “I think that what happened is entirely Mark Stevens’ fault”, “Mark Stevens is to blame for what happened”, “Mark Stevens is not responsible for what happened because he could not control his sexual urges”, and “Mark Stevens is not responsible for what happened because he must be mentally disturbed” (with the latter two items reverse-scored). However, an examination of the intercorrelations between these items revealed that some of the items were more strongly related than others. The item “I think that what happened is entirely Mark Stevens’ fault” demonstrated a significant moderate correlation with the item
“Mark Stevens is to blame for what happened” ($r = .51$, $p < .001$), but had a weaker relationship with the items “Mark Stevens is not responsible for what happened because he could not control his sexual urges” ($r = .26$, $p < .001$), and “Mark Stevens is not responsible for what happened because he must be mentally disturbed” ($r = .10$, $p = .035$). The item “Mark Stevens is to blame for what happened” was weakly correlated with the items “Mark Stevens is not responsible for what happened because he could not control his sexual urges” ($r = .26$, $p < .001$), and “Mark Stevens is not responsible for what happened because he must be mentally disturbed” ($r = .19$, $p < .001$), while a significant moderate correlation was found between the items “Mark Stevens is not responsible for what happened because he could not control his sexual urges” and “Mark Stevens is not responsible for what happened because he must be mentally disturbed” ($r = .35$, $p < .001$).

When all four items were combined to form a composite measure of Attributions of Responsibility to the Perpetrator, the resulting measure was found to have quite low reliability (coefficient alpha = 0.59), a finding not surprising considering the relatively low correlations between some of the items. Further examination revealed that the items “Mark Stevens is not responsible for what happened because he could not control his sexual urges” and “Mark Stevens is not responsible for what happened because he must be mentally disturbed” were responsible for the low alpha level and they were therefore omitted. The revised measure (consisting of the items “I think that what happened is entirely Mark Stevens’ fault” and “Mark Stevens is to blame for what happened”) had improved reliability, with a coefficient alpha of 0.67. Responses on each individual item were made using a 7-point Likert scale, where $1 = \text{strongly disagree}$ and $7 = \text{strongly agree}$, and therefore scores on this composite measure could range from 2 to 14, with higher scores indicating greater attributions of responsibility to the perpetrator.
Sympathy for the survivor.

The items “I feel sorry for Jill Brown”, “I feel sympathy for Jill Brown”, and “I feel pity for Jill Brown” were used to measure participants’ level of sympathy toward the survivor. These three items were significantly related to each other, with correlations ranging from .45 to .58 ($p < .001$), and were thus combined to form a composite measure of Sympathy for the Survivor. This composite measure had a coefficient alpha of 0.75. Each individual item was responded to using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*, and therefore scores on this composite measure could range from 3 to 21, with higher scores indicating greater feelings of sympathy for the survivor.

Sympathy for the perpetrator.

Sympathy toward the perpetrator was assessed with three items: “I feel sorry for Mark Stevens”, “I feel sympathy for Mark Stevens”, and “I feel pity for Mark Stevens”. Significant moderate correlations (ranging between .44 and .51, all with $p < .001$) were found between these items and they were thus combined to form a composite measure of Sympathy for the Perpetrator. A coefficient alpha of 0.73 was found for this measure. Responses on each individual item were made using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*. As such, scores on this composite measure could range from 3 to 21, with higher scores reflecting greater feelings of sympathy for the perpetrator.

Negative affect for the survivor.

Three items were included to assess participants’ feelings of anger and disgust toward the survivor: “I feel angry with Jill Brown”, “I feel annoyed with Jill Brown” and “I feel disgusted with Jill Brown”. These three items demonstrated a significant moderate relationship with one another, with correlations ranging from .50 to .60 ($p < .001$). A composite measure of Negative Affect for the Survivor was thus created, with a coefficient alpha of 0.79. Participants initially responded to each individual item using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7
= strongly agree, and therefore scores on this composite measure could range from 3 to 21, with higher scores indicating greater negative affect for the survivor.

**Negative affect for the perpetrator.**

Participants’ feelings of anger and disgust toward the perpetrator were measured by the following items: “I feel angry with Mark Stevens”, “I feel annoyed with Mark Stevens” and “I feel disgusted with Mark Stevens”. Correlations between these items ranged from .31 to .52 ($p < .001$), and they were thus combined to form a composite measure of Negative Affect for the Perpetrator. This measure had a coefficient alpha of 0.70. Each individual item was responded to using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. As such, scores on this composite measure could range from 3 to 21, with higher scores indicating greater negative affect for the perpetrator.

**Perceptions of perpetrator guilt and sentencing recommendations.**

After reading the mock police report and making their judgments of responsibility and affect toward the survivor and perpetrator, participants were asked to state whether or not they found the perpetrator guilty (assessed with the question “Is Mark Stevens guilty of sexual assault?”) and their certainty of this decision (“How certain are you of your decision?”). If the perpetrator was found guilty, participants were then asked to recommend an appropriate prison sentence for him (“If Mark Stevens is found guilty of sexual assault, how long do you think his prison sentence should be?”).

**Willingness to assist the survivor.**

Participants were also asked to indicate whether or not they felt the survivor required assistance (operationalized by the item “Does Jill Brown need help or assistance?”), the kind of assistance they believed she might need (“What kind of help or assistance do you think Jill Brown needs?”) and their likelihood of offering this assistance to her (“If Jill Brown were an acquaintance of yours, how likely would you be to help her receive this type of assistance?”).
Requests for additional information.

An open-ended question was included at the conclusion of this section, asking participants if there was anything else that they would have found helpful to know when evaluating the scenario (“Is there anything else that would have been helpful for you to know about this case when making your judgments?”). This question was similar to one developed by Burt & Albin (1981) and was included in the hopes of identifying any unanticipated factors that may have come into play during participants’ decision-making process.

Rape Myth Acceptance

The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA; Payne et al., 1999) was used to assess participants’ levels of rape myth acceptance. The IRMA is thought to have a number of advantages over other commonly used scales (e.g., Burt’s 1980 Rape Myth Acceptance Scale [RMAS]) in examining the present research questions. With its greater number of items (40 myth items and 5 filler items), the IRMA is able to assess general rape myth acceptance as well as belief in seven specific myths: She asked for it; It wasn’t really rape; He didn’t mean to; She wanted it; She lied; Rape is a trivial event and Rape is a deviant event. The items and response options are worded in a clearer, more straightforward way than in other scales and colloquial phrasing is kept to a minimum. The IRMA tends to have higher internal consistency than the RMAS, as well as good content and construct validity and reliability (Payne et al., 1999). A coefficient alpha of 0.96 was obtained in the present sample.

Participants indicated their agreement with each of the 45 items using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not at all agree and 7 = very much agree). The five filler items were not included in the analysis and therefore scores could range from 40 – 280, with higher scores indicating greater levels of rape myth acceptance.
Anti-fat Attitudes

Participants also completed Morrison and O’Connor’s (1999) Anti-fat Attitudes Scale (AFAS), a 5-item scale that assesses prejudice toward overweight individuals. The AFAS is psychometrically sound, with good construct and discriminant validity and good internal consistency (Morrison & O’Connor, 1999). A coefficient alpha of 0.80 was found in the present study.

In its original formulation, participants respond to the AFAS items using a 5-point Likert scale. However, the present study employed a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not at all agree and 7 = very much agree), in order to increase consistency with other measures in the study. As such, participants’ scores on the AFAS could range from 5 to 35, with higher scores indicating greater levels of prejudice. In order to disguise the research questions of the present study, the AFAS items were interspersed among items from the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Sexism

The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996) is a scale designed to assess two different forms of prejudice toward women: hostile sexism, defined as a traditional expression of negative prejudice toward women and their place in society (e.g., “Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for ‘equality’”); and benevolent sexism, defined as attitudes about women that, although stereotypical, are subjectively more positive (e.g., “Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess”). Each subscale has 11 items, for a total of 22 items overall. Responses can be analyzed separately according to subscale or, as in the present study, summed together for an overall measure of sexism. The ASI has good internal consistency and good convergent, discriminant and predictive validity (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The coefficient alpha in the present study was 0.89.
In its original form, participants respond to each item of the ASI using a 6-point Likert scale. In this study, in order to increase consistency with other measures and allow for the presentation of the ASI and the AFAS together, the response scale was changed to a 7-point Likert scale where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*. As such, scores on this measure could range from 22 to 154, with higher scores indicating higher levels of sexism.

**Social Dominance Orientation**

The Social Dominance Orientation Scale (Pratto et al., 1994) was included to assess participants’ preference for unequal, hierarchical social relationships and their belief in the inherent superiority of certain people over others. This scale has been found to be psychometrically sound, with good internal reliability; stable test-retest reliability; and good predictive, discriminant and convergent validity (Pratto et al., 1994). The coefficient alpha in this sample was 0.89.

The scale has 14 items, half of which are worded to reflect support of inequality and half which reflect support of equality. Participants indicated their feelings toward each item using a 7-point Likert scale where 1 = *very negative* and 7 = *very positive*. As such, scores could range from 14 to 98, with higher scores indicating a higher social dominance orientation.

**Social Desirability Bias**

The Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (M-C SDS) Short Form (Reynolds, 1982) was included to measure any potential social desirability bias within the present sample’s responses. This scale contains 13 true-false items that assess one’s desire to present themselves in an overly favourable, socially desirable manner. The M-C SDS Short Form is easier to administer than the original M-C SDS (Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) and has good validity and acceptable reliability comparable to the original 33-item form (Reynolds, 1982). The coefficient alpha in this study was 0.67. Socially desirable responses are given a score of “1” and summed
together, such that participants’ scores on this scale could range from 0 to 13 with higher overall scores reflecting greater social desirability bias.

Demographic Information

Demographic information was assessed at the conclusion of the study, including participant age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, level of education, degree of political conservatism and experience with sexual victimization. These questions are presented in Appendix C.

Procedure

Participants were recruited through flyers posted on bulletin boards in a variety of public spaces across Toronto, including libraries, hardware stores, coffee shops, movie stores, fitness facilities and Laundromats. In addition, advertisements were listed in a local daily newspaper and posted online on sites such as craigslist.org and yourstudy.ca. The flyers and advertisements described the study as an investigation of social attitudes and opinions and directed participants to a secure internet site, where they were able to learn more about the study and connect to the questionnaire.

The questionnaire itself was created using an online survey tool called Survey Monkey (www.surveymonkey.com). Once participants connected to the Survey Monkey site, they were able to complete the informed consent process and begin the survey. Once starting the study, participants were first asked to read a mock police report depicting an acquaintance sexual assault and complete a series of evaluations regarding the incident. Following this, they completed the Marlowe–Crowne Social Desirability Scale (M-C SDS) Short Form (Reynolds, 1982), followed by the Anti-fat Attitudes Scale (Morrison & O’Connor, 1999) and Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996), the Social Dominance Orientation Scale (Pratto et al.,
1994), the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Payne et al., 1999), and the demographic questionnaire.

Participants were assured of their anonymity and confidentiality throughout the questionnaire, and were aware of their right to discontinue the study at any time. They were instructed to take as much time as needed in answering the questions and were given the option to save their results and return to the survey at a later time if desired. Contact information for local sexual assault centres and counselling services was provided in the event that participants experienced any distress as a result of completing this study, and debriefing information was provided at the end. At the conclusion of the study, all participants were able to request a summary of the results and had the option of entering a cash prize draw. Once data collection was complete, a winner was randomly selected and awarded the $100 cash prize.

**Planned Analyses**

*Examination of Weiner’s (1980) Attribution-Affect-Action Model*

Bivariate correlations were conducted to assess whether the predicted relationships existed between attributions of responsibility, affect, and action within the sexual assault scenario (Weiner, 1980). As these correlations supported the initial predictions, Baron and Kenny’s (1986) method for establishing mediation was used to ascertain whether affect mediated the relationship between attributions and action intentions.

*Exploration of the Relations between Prejudicial Attitudes*

Correlational analyses were conducted to test whether the hypothesized positive relationships existed between rape myth acceptance, anti-fat prejudice, sexism and social dominance orientation.
Examination of the Relations between Case Judgments, Gender and Social Prejudices

Custom generalized linear model (GZLM) analyses were used to explore the influence of participant gender, rape myth acceptance, anti-fat prejudice and survivor body weight on participants’ judgments of the sexual assault case (e.g., their attributions of responsibility to both survivor and perpetrator; feelings of sympathy, anger and disgust for each party; willingness to assist the survivor in receiving help; and length of prison sentence recommended for the perpetrator). This method was chosen over hierarchical linear regression, as the distributions of all of the dependent variables within the present study were significantly skewed and thus violated the assumption of normality necessary for hierarchical linear regression analyses.
CHAPTER 3

Results

Hypothesis 1: Examining the Applicability of Weiner’s (1980) Attribution-Affect-Action Model

Preliminary Correlational Analyses

In line with the findings of Weiner (1980), it was hypothesized that those individuals who held the survivor personally responsible for her victimization would demonstrate increased feelings of negative affect and decreased feelings of sympathy toward her, which would in turn result in a decreased willingness to assist her and punish her assailant. Those who did not attribute personal responsibility to the survivor, instead holding the perpetrator responsible for the assault, were expected to respond with increased feelings of sympathy and decreased negative affect toward the survivor; and these feelings were in turn predicted to increase their willingness to help the survivor and punish the offender.

An initial exploration of the data indicated that, on average, participants tended to attribute relatively low amounts of responsibility and blame toward the survivor, had high levels of sympathy for her, and relatively low levels of anger and disgust, regardless of her body weight (see Table 1). The majority of the participants (77.7%) felt that the survivor needed some form of help or assistance, with only 6.3% feeling that she did not need assistance and 16.0% reporting uncertainty about her needs. Further, 64.8% stated that they would be very likely to help the survivor receive needed assistance (assuming that she were a personal acquaintance), while 29.2% stated they would be somewhat likely to help her. Only 5.9% stated that they would be either somewhat unlikely (4.2%) or very unlikely (1.7%) to offer this help.

Participants also tended to attribute high levels of responsibility and blame toward the alleged perpetrator, had low levels of sympathy for him, and relatively high levels of anger and disgust. The majority of the participants felt that the perpetrator was guilty of sexual assault
(77.5%). Of those remaining participants, 19.1% expressed uncertainty about the perpetrator’s
guilt and only 3.4% reported that they did not believe that he was guilty.

Table 1

*Modes, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Case Judgments*

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Variables</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Thin</th>
<th>Overweight</th>
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<td>Survivor responsibility a</td>
<td>4.0 (9.1)</td>
<td>4.0 (9.0)</td>
<td>4.0 (9.1)</td>
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<td>21.0 (15.9)</td>
<td>21.0 (15.8)</td>
<td>21.0 (16.0)</td>
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<td>3.0 (7.0)</td>
<td>3.0 (6.9)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Likelihood to help</td>
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<td>4.0 (3.6)</td>
<td>4.0 (3.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrator responsibility d</td>
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<td>14.0 (10.5)</td>
<td>14.0 (10.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrator sympathy b</td>
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<td>3.0 (6.9)</td>
<td>3.0 (6.7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Perpetrator negative</td>
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<td>21.0 (16.3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>affect b</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sentence length e</td>
<td>5.0 (4.6)</td>
<td>1.0 (4.3)</td>
<td>5.0 (4.9)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Scores have a potential range from 4 to 28, with higher scores reflecting greater attributions of responsibility to the survivor.  
b Scores have a potential range from 3 to 21, with higher scores reflecting greater endorsement of these items.  
c Scores have a potential range from 1 to 4, with higher scores reflecting a greater likelihood of helping the survivor receive assistance.  
d Scores have a potential range from 2 to 14, with higher scores reflecting greater attributions of responsibility to the perpetrator.  
e Sentence lengths are reported in years.

Correlational analyses were conducted to determine whether the predicted relationships
existed between attributions of fault, affect and action. The intercorrelations between each case
variable, as well as with the various measures of social prejudice, are presented in Table 2.
Table 2

*Intercorrelations between Study Variables*

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<td>-.34*</td>
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<td>.50*</td>
<td>.38*</td>
<td>.06</td>
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<td>-.20*</td>
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<td>.38*</td>
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<td>.24*</td>
<td>.07</td>
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<td>5. Perpetrator responsibility</td>
<td>-.30*</td>
<td>.60*</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>-.38*</td>
<td>-.16*</td>
<td>-.34*</td>
<td>-.27*</td>
<td>-.12*</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Perpetrator sympathy</td>
<td>-.28*</td>
<td>-.18*</td>
<td>.29*</td>
<td>.11*</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.16*</td>
<td>.03</td>
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<td>7. Perpetrator negative affect</td>
<td>.24*</td>
<td>-.24*</td>
<td>-.13*</td>
<td>-.19*</td>
<td>-.21*</td>
<td>-.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Sentence length</td>
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<td>-.15*</td>
<td>-.20*</td>
<td>-.06</td>
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<td>9. Rape myth acceptance</td>
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<td>.65*</td>
<td>.47*</td>
<td>.47*</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<td>10. Anti-fat attitudes</td>
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<td>.44*</td>
<td>.15*</td>
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<td>11. Sexism</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Social dominance orientation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Social desirability</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < .05.
Consistent with predictions, attributions of responsibility toward the survivor had a moderate negative correlation with feelings of sympathy for her ($r = -.35, p < .001$) and a strong positive correlation with feelings of anger and disgust ($r = .76, p < .001$). Attributions of responsibility toward the perpetrator were moderately positively correlated with feelings of sympathy for the survivor ($r = .45, p < .001$) and negatively correlated with feelings of anger and disgust toward her ($r = -.38, p < .001$).

Feelings of sympathy toward the survivor were in turn positively correlated with the belief that she needed help or assistance ($r = .32, p < .001$) as well as a willingness to help ensure that she received this assistance ($r = .24, p < .001$). Feelings of sympathy for the survivor were also positively, although somewhat weakly, correlated with a belief in the perpetrator’s guilt ($r = .20, p < .001$) and recommendations of longer prison sentences ($r = .18, p = .001$). Feelings of negative affect (anger and disgust) toward the survivor were negatively correlated with the belief that she needed help or assistance ($r = -.18, p = .001$), as well as willingness to help her receive this assistance ($r = -.25, p < .001$), a belief in the perpetrator’s guilt ($r = -.23, p < .001$), and recommendations of longer prison sentences ($r = -.20, p < .001$).

The predicted relationships between attributions of responsibility, affect and action were also supported with regards to the perpetrator. Specifically, attributions of responsibility toward the perpetrator demonstrated a negative correlation with feelings of sympathy toward him ($r = -.30, p < .001$) and a positive correlation with feelings of anger and disgust ($r = .60, p < .001$). Attributions of responsibility toward the survivor were positively related to feelings of sympathy for the perpetrator ($r = .33, p < .001$) and negatively related to feelings of anger and disgust toward him ($r = -.29, p < .001$).

Feelings of sympathy for the perpetrator were negatively correlated with the belief that he was guilty of sexual assault ($r = -.21, p < .001$) and recommendations for longer prison sentences ($r = -.18, p < .001$). In addition, sympathy for the perpetrator was negatively related to
the belief that the survivor required help or assistance \((r = - .18, p = .001)\) as well as willingness to help her receive this assistance \((r = - .16, p = .001)\). Feelings of negative affect toward the perpetrator, on the other hand, were positively correlated with a belief in his guilt \((r = .30, p < .001)\), increased sentence length \((r = .24, p < .001)\), the belief that the survivor needed some form of assistance \((r = .27, p < .001)\) and willingness to help her receive this assistance \((r = .24, p < .001)\).

Therefore, consistent with the predictions of Weiner’s (1980) model, attributions of personal responsibility to the survivor were associated with decreased sympathy and increased anger and disgust toward her, as well as greater sympathy for the perpetrator and decreased negative affect toward him. These feelings were in turn associated with a weaker belief in the survivor’s need for assistance, a decreased likelihood to help her receive this assistance, a weaker belief in the perpetrator’s guilt and a tendency to recommend shorter, less punitive prison sentences. Attributions of perpetrator responsibility, on the other hand, were associated with increased sympathy and decreased negative affect toward the survivor, as well as lower levels of sympathy and greater anger and disgust for the perpetrator. This affect was in turn associated with a stronger belief in the survivor’s need for assistance, an increased likelihood to support her in receiving this assistance, a stronger belief in the perpetrator’s guilt and an increased likelihood to assign a longer, more punitive prison sentence to him.

*Test for Mediation Effects*

In addition to the bivariate correlations described above, a series of regression analyses were conducted to investigate the hypothesis that affect (feelings of sympathy as well as anger and disgust) acts as a mediator between attributions of responsibility and action intentions. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), mediation effects can be tested by conducting three separate regression equations. Mediation exists if: 1) the independent variable (in this case, attributions of survivor and perpetrator responsibility) is shown to have an effect on the mediator
(affect) in the first regression equation; 2) the independent variable is shown to have an effect on the dependent variable of action (operationalized in this study as both willingness to assist the survivor and sentencing recommendations for the perpetrator) in the second regression equation, 3) the mediator is shown to have an effect on the dependent variable in the third equation, and 4) the independent variable has a significantly smaller effect on the dependent variable in the third equation than the second equation (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

It was hypothesized that both sympathy and negative affect (anger and disgust) toward the survivor would mediate the relation between attributions of survivor responsibility and willingness to assist the survivor in receiving help. These hypotheses were not supported in the regression analyses. Attributions of survivor responsibility did significantly affect the proposed mediators of both sympathy, \( \beta = - .35, t(393) = - 7.29, p < .001 \), and negative affect, \( \beta = .76, t(389) = 23.26, p < .001 \), as well as the dependent variable of willingness to assist the survivor in receiving help, \( \beta = -.34, t(389) = - 7.19, p < .001 \). However, although the third regression equation showed that the path from sympathy to willingness to help was also significant, \( \beta = .13, t(380) = 2.59, p = .010 \), the Sobel test (1982, as cited in Baron & Kenny, 1986) - a test used to assess the significance of the independent variable’s indirect influence on the dependent variable via the mediator - was not significant, \( Z = -2.47, p = .993 \). As such, it appears that sympathy did not significantly mediate the relationship between attributions of survivor responsibility and willingness to assist her for this sample. When sympathy was replaced with negative affect for the survivor, it was found that the path from negative affect to willingness to help, controlling for attributions of survivor responsibility, was not significant, \( \beta = .02, t(376) = 0.28, p = .776 \), thereby indicating that feelings of anger and disgust also did not significantly mediate the relationship between attributions of survivor responsibility and willingness to help her.

Similar findings appeared when the dependent variable was changed to recommended sentence length for the perpetrator. Once again, survivor responsibility significantly affected the
proposed mediators of both sympathy, $\beta = - .35$, $t(393) = - 7.29$, $p < .001$, and negative affect, $\beta = .76$, $t(389) = 23.26$, $p < .001$, as well as the dependent variable of sentencing recommendations, $\beta = -.21$, $t(357) = - 3.97$, $p < .001$. However, although the proposed mediator of sympathy had a significant effect on sentencing recommendations when attributions of survivor responsibility were controlled, $\beta = .12$, $t(349) = 2.18$, $p = .030$, the Sobel test was not significant, $Z = - 2.08$, $p = 1.96$, indicating that the association between attributions of survivor responsibility and sentencing recommendations was not mediated by sympathy. When the analyses were conducted with negative affect, the path from negative affect to recommended sentence length, controlling for attributions of survivor responsibility, was not significant, $\beta = -.11$, $t(344) = - 1.29$, $p = .198$. As such, negative affect also did not mediate the association between attributions of survivor responsibility and sentencing recommendations for the perpetrator.

It was also predicted that the relation between attributions of responsibility to the perpetrator and willingness to help the survivor would be mediated by both sympathy and negative affect toward the survivor. These hypotheses were supported. Attributions of responsibility toward the perpetrator significantly affected the proposed mediator of sympathy toward the survivor, $\beta = .45$, $t(398) = 10.12$, $p < .001$, as well as willingness to assist the survivor in receiving help, $\beta = .29$, $t(394) = 6.11$, $p < .001$. When both attributions of perpetrator responsibility and sympathy toward the survivor were entered into the equation, sympathy had a significant effect on willingness to assist the survivor, $\beta = .14$, $t(385) = 2.47$, $p = .014$. The Sobel test was significant, $Z = 2.27$, $p = .023$, indicating that attributions of perpetrator responsibility had an indirect influence on willingness to help the survivor via the mediator of sympathy. Although the relation between attributions of perpetrator responsibility and willingness to help the survivor was still significant in the third equation, the effect was smaller than in the second equation, $\beta = .23$, $t(385) = 4.23$, $p < .001$, indicating that the relation was partially mediated by sympathy toward the survivor.
Similar results were found when sympathy was replaced with negative affect toward the survivor as a potential mediator. Attributions of responsibility toward the perpetrator significantly influenced negative affect toward the survivor, $\beta = - .38$, $t(394) = - 8.26$, $p < .001$, as well as willingness to assist the survivor in receiving help, $\beta = .29$, $t(394) = 6.11$, $p < .001$. In the third equation, when attributions of perpetrator responsibility were controlled for, negative affect toward the survivor had a significant effect on participants’ willingness to assist her, $\beta = - .15$, $t(381) = - 2.91$, $p = .004$. The Sobel test was significant, $Z = 2.72$, $p = .007$, indicating that the indirect relation between attributions of perpetrator responsibility and willingness to help the survivor as mediated by negative affect was significant. In the third equation, attributions of perpetrator responsibility had a significant relation with willingness to help, although the effect was smaller than in the second regression analysis, $\beta = .25$, $t(381) = 4.79$, $p < .001$. As such, it can be concluded that feelings of anger and disgust for the survivor partially mediated the relation between attributions of perpetrator responsibility and willingness to assist the survivor.

Also supported were the hypotheses that affect toward the survivor would mediate the relation between attributions of perpetrator responsibility and recommended sentence length for the perpetrator. Attributions of responsibility toward the perpetrator significantly affected the proposed mediator of sympathy toward the survivor, $\beta = .45$, $t(398) = 10.12$, $p < .001$, as well as recommended sentence length for the perpetrator, $\beta = .20$, $t(363) = 3.87$, $p < .001$. The path from sympathy to recommended sentence length, controlling for attributions of perpetrator responsibility, was also significant, $\beta = .12$, $t(355) = 2.07$, $p = .039$. The Sobel test was significant, $Z = 2.02$, $p = .044$, indicating that attributions of responsibility had an indirect influence on sentencing recommendations via the mediator of sympathy. Although the relation between attributions of perpetrator responsibility and sentencing recommendations was still significant in the third equation, the effect was smaller than in the second equation, $\beta = .15$, $t(355) = 2.56$, $p = .011$. As such, it can be concluded that sympathy for the survivor had a
partially mediating effect on the relation between attributions of perpetrator responsibility and sentencing recommendations.

When negative affect replaced sympathy as a potential mediator, attributions of responsibility toward the perpetrator significantly affected negative affect toward the survivor, $\beta = - .38$, $t(394) = - 8.26$, $p < .001$, as well as recommended sentence length for the perpetrator, $\beta = .20$, $t(363) = 3.87$, $p < .001$. When attributions of perpetrator responsibility were controlled, the path from negative affect to recommended sentence length was significant, $\beta = - .14$, $t(350) = - 2.46$, $p = .014$. The Sobel test was also significant, $Z = 2.35$, $p = .019$, indicating that the indirect relation between attributions of perpetrator responsibility and sentencing recommendations as mediated by negative affect toward the survivor was significant. Attributions of responsibility also had a significant relation with sentencing recommendations in the third equation, although the effect was smaller than in the second regression analysis, $\beta = .14$, $t(350) = 2.49$, $p = .013$. As such, it can be concluded that negative affect toward the survivor had a partially mediating effect on attributions of perpetrator responsibility and sentencing recommendations. A summary of these findings is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

*Summary of Relationships Mediated by Survivor Affect*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proposed Mediators</th>
<th>Mediated Relationship between Attributions and Action Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attributions of Survivor Responsibility &amp; Willingness to Assist Survivor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sympathy for Survivor</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Affect for Survivor</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypothesis 2: Examining the Relationships between Prejudicial Attitudes

Previous research has indicated that those who are prejudiced toward one group are more likely to hold prejudicial attitudes toward other groups as well (Aosved & Long, 2006; Pratto et al., 1994). As a result, it was hypothesized that rape myth acceptance, anti-fat attitudes, sexism and social dominance orientation would be positively related to one another in the present study. Correlational analyses were conducted to test this hypothesis (see Table 2). As predicted, rape myth acceptance was moderately and positively correlated with anti-fat prejudice ($r = .45, p < .001$), sexism ($r = .65, p < .001$), and social dominance orientation ($r = .47, p < .001$). Further, anti-fat attitudes were moderately and positively correlated with sexism ($r = .46, p < .001$) and social dominance orientation ($r = .44, p < .001$). Finally, sexism was moderately and positively correlated with social dominance orientation ($r = .45, p < .001$). As predicted, it appears that those who endorse one form of prejudice are indeed more likely to endorse other forms of prejudice as well.

Hypotheses 3 – 6: Examining the Relationships between Case Judgments, Survivor Weight, Participant Gender, and Social Prejudices

Preliminary Analyses

Preliminary correlational analyses were conducted to examine the relation between each form of social prejudice and participants’ evaluations of the sexual assault scenario (see Table 2). Despite the relatively low levels of social prejudice endorsed by the participants within this sample (see Table 4), these attitudinal beliefs were found to significantly influence case judgments.
Table 4

*Modes, Means, and Standard Deviations for the Measures of Social Prejudice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Participant Condition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape myth acceptance <em>a</em></td>
<td>40.0 b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-fat attitudes <em>c</em></td>
<td>5.0 b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexism <em>d</em></td>
<td>83.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social dominance orientation <em>e</em></td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social desirability <em>f</em></td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a* Within the present sample, scores on the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Payne et al., 1999) ranged from 40 to 250, with higher scores reflecting greater levels of rape myth acceptance. *b* Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown. *c* Scores on the Anti-fat Attitudes Scale (Morrison & O’Connor, 1999) ranged from 5 to 35, with higher scores reflecting greater endorsement of anti-fat prejudice. *d* Scores on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) ranged from 25 to 123, with higher scores reflecting greater levels of sexism. *e* Scores on the Social Dominance Orientation Scale (Pratto et al., 1994) ranged from 14 to 81, with higher scores reflecting greater social dominance orientation. *f* Scores on the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale Short-form (Reynolds, 1982) ranged from 0 to 13, with higher scores reflecting greater social desirability bias.

Consistent with predictions, those who held the survivor more responsible for her victimization were also more likely to hold higher levels of rape myth acceptance ($r = .66, p < .001$), anti-fat prejudice ($r = .31, p < .001$), sexism ($r = .50, p < .001$) and social dominance orientation ($r = .38, p < .001$). Feelings of sympathy for the survivor were negatively correlated with rape myth acceptance ($r = - .25, p < .001$), anti-fat prejudice ($r = - .11, p = .023$), sexism ($r = - .20, p < .001$) and social dominance orientation ($r = - .22, p < .001$); while feelings of anger and disgust for the survivor were positively correlated with rape myth acceptance ($r = .58, p < .001$), anti-fat prejudice ($r = .28, p < .001$), sexism ($r = .46, p < .001$) and social dominance orientation ($r = .31, p < .001$). Willingness to assist the survivor in receiving help was negatively
correlated with rape myth acceptance \( (r = - .29, p < .001) \), anti-fat prejudice \( (r = - .16, p = .001) \), sexism \( (r = - .24, p < .001) \) and social dominance orientation \( (r = - .24, p < .001) \).

Participants’ levels of social prejudice were also found to influence their evaluations of the perpetrator. Attributions of perpetrator responsibility were negatively related to rape myth acceptance \( (r = - .38, p < .001) \), anti-fat prejudice \( (r = - .16, p = .002) \), sexism \( (r = - .34, p < .001) \) and social dominance orientation \( (r = - .27, p < .001) \). Those who reported greater sympathy for the perpetrator also reported higher levels of rape myth acceptance \( (r = .29, p < .001) \), anti-fat prejudice \( (r = .11, p = .024) \), sexism \( (r = .17, p = .001) \) and social dominance orientation \( (r = .16, p = .002) \). Anger and disgust for the perpetrator was negatively correlated with rape myth acceptance \( (r = - .24, p < .001) \), anti-fat prejudice \( (r = - .13, p = .012) \), sexism \( (r = - .19, p < .001) \) and social dominance orientation \( (r = - .21, p < .001) \). A belief in the perpetrator’s guilt was negatively correlated with rape myth acceptance \( (r = - .27, p < .001) \), anti-fat prejudice \( (r = - .18, p = .001) \), sexism \( (r = - .23, p < .001) \) and social dominance orientation \( (r = - .15, p = .010) \). Sentence length was also negatively correlated with these variable, such that a tendency to assign more punitive sentences to the perpetrator was associated with lower levels of rape myth acceptance \( (r = - .19, p < .001) \), anti-fat prejudice \( (r = - .15, p = .004) \), and sexism \( (r = - .20, p < .001) \).

It was predicted that men and women would hold differing levels of the above-mentioned prejudices and would respond differently to the sexual assault case. A series of independent t-tests were conducted to assess these predicted gender differences. As expected, men were significantly more likely to hold the survivor responsible for the assault than women, \( t(161) = - 3.77, p < .001 \). They had significantly more anger and disgust for the survivor, \( t(158) = - 3.00, p = .003 \), and were significantly more likely to feel sympathy for the perpetrator than women were, \( t(398) = - 4.24, p < .001 \). Men were less likely than women to believe that the survivor required assistance, \( t(102) = 2.01, p = .047 \); and were less likely to express a willingness to help her
receive this assistance, \( t(159) = 2.37, p = .019 \). Contrary to predictions, men and women did not significantly differ in their attributions of responsibility toward the perpetrator, \( t(399) = 0.45, p = .652 \); feelings of sympathy for the survivor, \( t(396) = 1.34, p = .181 \); feelings of anger and disgust for the perpetrator, \( t(384) = 1.46, p = .146 \); belief in the perpetrator’s guilt, \( t(111) = 0.88, p = .383 \); and recommended sentence length, \( t(226) = 1.78, p = .076 \).

With regards to the levels of prejudice endorsed, men had significantly higher levels of rape myth acceptance than women, \( t(365) = -4.89, p < .001 \); as well as greater anti-fat attitudes, \( t(396) = -2.61, p = .010 \). Men also had significantly higher levels of sexism than women, \( t(370) = -3.96, p < .001 \); and a greater social dominance orientation, \( t(372) = -3.75, p < .001 \). The means and standard deviations for each of these variables, split by gender, are found in Table 5.
Table 5

*Gender Differences in Case Judgments and Levels of Prejudice*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Male M (SD)</th>
<th>Female M (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survivor responsibility *</td>
<td>11.07 (6.34)</td>
<td>8.41 (5.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survivor sympathy *</td>
<td>15.44 (4.18)</td>
<td>16.08 (4.21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survivor negative affect *</td>
<td>8.15 (4.79)</td>
<td>6.58 (4.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood to help survivor *</td>
<td>3.43 (0.71)</td>
<td>3.62 (0.64)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrator responsibility *</td>
<td>10.49 (3.21)</td>
<td>10.65 (3.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrator sympathy *</td>
<td>8.16 (4.35)</td>
<td>6.28 (3.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perpetrator negative affect *</td>
<td>15.51 (4.25)</td>
<td>16.22 (4.16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sentence length *</td>
<td>4.86 (3.84)</td>
<td>5.76 (5.20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape myth acceptance *</td>
<td>101.65 (42.07)</td>
<td>79.17 (37.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-fat attitudes *</td>
<td>18.19 (7.75)</td>
<td>16.07 (6.94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexism *</td>
<td>81.28 (19.00)</td>
<td>71.88 (20.72)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social dominance orientation *</td>
<td>36.97 (14.54)</td>
<td>30.80 (13.98)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Scores can range from 4 to 28, with higher scores reflecting greater attributions of responsibility to the survivor. *  
Scores can range from 3 to 21, with higher scores reflecting greater endorsement of these items.  
Scores can range from 1 to 4, with higher scores reflecting a greater likelihood of helping the survivor receive assistance.  
Scores can range from 2 to 14, with higher scores reflecting greater attributions of responsibility to the perpetrator.  
Sentence lengths are reported in years.  
Scores can range from 40 to 280, with higher scores reflecting greater levels of rape myth acceptance.  
Scores can range from 5 to 35, with higher scores reflecting greater endorsement of anti-fat attitudes.  
Scores can range from 22 to 154, with higher scores reflecting greater levels of sexism.  
Scores can range from 14 to 98, with higher scores reflecting greater social dominance orientation.

The relation between social desirability bias and the other variables was also assessed within the correlational analyses (see Table 2). Weak negative relationships were found between social desirability bias and anti-fat prejudice ($r = - .15, p = .003$) and social desirability bias and
social dominance orientation ($r = - .15, p = .003$). Further, social desirability bias was also negatively correlated with feelings of sympathy toward the survivor ($r = - .13, p = .011$) and attributions of perpetrator responsibility ($r = - .12, p = .014$). No significant relationships were found between social desirability and rape myth acceptance, sexism, or any of the other case evaluations.

**Generalized Linear Model Analyses**

Generalized linear model analysis, a semi-parametric method of analysis, was used to examine the relations between survivor body weight, participant gender, rape myth acceptance, anti-fat attitudes, and the dependent variables of attributions of survivor and perpetrator responsibility, affect toward both parties, likelihood of offering assistance to the survivor and recommended sentence length for the perpetrator. A separate analysis was run for each dependent variable, with survivor weight, participant gender, rape myth acceptance, anti-fat attitudes, and all possible two-way interactions between these variables entered as the independent variables. Each analysis was run using a custom model with a gamma probability distribution, as this is considered the most appropriate type of distribution to use when the dependent variables form a positively skewed distribution (SPSS 16.0 for Windows). An identity link function was selected for each analysis, as this link function was appropriate for the present distribution and maintained the dependent variables in their original form, allowing for easy interpretation of the regression coefficients (SPSS 16.0 for Windows).

*The influence of the independent variables on attributions of survivor responsibility.*

The influence of survivor weight, participant gender, rape myth acceptance and anti-fat attitudes on attributions of responsibility toward the survivor was assessed first. The omnibus test for the model fit was significant, $\chi^2 (10) = 225.21, p < .001$, indicating that the fitted model was a better fit to the data than the intercept-only model. The ratios of deviance and the Pearson chi-
square to the degrees of freedom were both close to 1 (.21 and .23, respectively), indicating a good fit of the model.

Significant effects were found for survivor weight and participant gender, as well as the interactions between survivor weight and participant gender, and survivor weight and rape myth acceptance. The main effect of survivor weight suggests that, consistent with the initial hypotheses, participants attributed less responsibility to the survivor when she was depicted as overweight than when she was depicted as thin, $B = -4.39, p = .004$. The main effect for participant gender suggests that female participants attributed less responsibility to the survivor than male participants, $B = -4.22, p = .007$. However, the significant interaction found between survivor weight and gender must be taken into account when interpreting these main effects, as it suggests that the effect of participant gender varies depending on the weight of the survivor, $B = 2.26, p = .034$. While women held both survivors less responsible for the assault than men did, regardless of the survivor’s weight, they attributed significantly less responsibility to the survivor when she was depicted as overweight.

A significant interaction was also found between survivor weight and rape myth acceptance, $B = .05, p < .001$, suggesting that the effect of rape myth acceptance varies depending on the weight of the survivor. When she was depicted as overweight, those with higher levels of rape myth acceptance attributed significantly more responsibility to the survivor than those with lower levels of rape myth acceptance. When the survivor was depicted as thin, those with higher levels of rape myth acceptance did not significantly differ from those with lower levels of rape myth acceptance in their attributions of survivor responsibility. Contrary to predictions, neither rape myth acceptance nor anti-fat prejudice independently influenced attributions of survivor responsibility. In addition, no significant interactions were found between anti-fat attitudes and survivor weight, anti-fat attitudes and gender, anti-fat attitudes and
rape myth acceptance, or rape myth acceptance and gender. The parameter estimates for this model are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

*Parameter Estimates with Attributions of Survivor Responsibility as Dependent Variable*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>95% Wald Confidence Intervals</th>
<th>Hypothesis Test</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>10.40</td>
<td></td>
<td>11.18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight (a)</td>
<td>- 4.39</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>- 7.41</td>
<td>- 1.37</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (b)</td>
<td>- 4.22</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>- 7.26</td>
<td>- 1.18</td>
<td></td>
<td>7.39</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape myth acceptance (RMA)</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>- .01</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-fat attitudes (AFA)</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>- .25</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td></td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight (\times) Gender</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>4.34</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.52</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.034</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight (\times) RMA</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight (\times) AFA</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (\times) RMA</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (\times) AFA</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td></td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA (\times) AFA</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.294</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(a\) Survivor type was coded as 0 = “overweight” and 1 = “thin”. \(b\) Gender was coded as 0 = “female” and 1 = “male”.

The influence of the independent variables on sympathy for the survivor.

Sympathy toward the survivor was assessed next. The distribution of this variable was initially negatively skewed and was therefore recoded to be positively skewed in order to meet the requirements for using a gamma probability distribution. Thus, the recoded dependent variable reflected a lack of sympathy for the survivor. The omnibus test was significant, \(\chi^2 (10) = 22.61, p = .012\), indicating that this model was a better fit to the data than one with no predictors.
The ratios of deviance and the Pearson chi-square to the degrees of freedom were both close to 1 (.60 and .49, respectively), indicating a good fit of the model. Contrary to predictions, no significant effects were found for any of the independent variables, indicating that neither survivor weight, participant gender, rape myth acceptance nor anti-fat prejudice, alone or in combination, had an influence on feelings of sympathy for the survivor in this model. The parameter estimates are presented in Table 7.

Table 7

Parameter Estimates with Sympathy for the Survivor as Dependent Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>95% Wald Confidence Intervals</th>
<th>Hypothesis Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wald Chi-Square</td>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>5.58</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>10.06</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight (^a)</td>
<td>-2.86</td>
<td>1.72</td>
<td>-6.24</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (^b)</td>
<td>-.29</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>-3.81</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape myth acceptance (RMA)</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.04</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-fat attitudes (AFA)</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-0.20</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × Gender</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>-1.04</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × RMA</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.015</td>
<td>-0.00</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × AFA</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.15</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender × RMA</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender × AFA</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>.38</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA × AFA</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The dependent variable was recoded such that higher scores reflect a lack of sympathy for the survivor.

\(^a\) Survivor type was coded as 0 = “overweight” and 1 = “thin”. \(^b\) Gender was coded as 0 = “female” and 1 = “male”. 
The influence of the independent variables on negative affect toward the survivor.

When the influence of the independent variables on negative affect toward the survivor was assessed, the omnibus test was significant, $\chi^2 (10) = 155.11, p < .001$, indicating that this model was a better fit to the data than one with no predictors. The ratios of deviance and the Pearson chi-square to the degrees of freedom were both close to 1 (.25 and .27, respectively), indicating a good fit of the model.

Significant effects were found for participant gender, anti-fat attitudes, and survivor weight, as well as the interactions between participant gender and anti-fat attitudes, and survivor weight and rape myth acceptance. The main effect for gender suggests that women displayed less negative affect toward the survivor than men, $B = -3.47, p = .010$; while the main effect for anti-fat attitudes suggests that those with higher levels of this prejudice displayed less negative affect toward the survivor than those with lower levels of anti-fat attitudes, $B = -0.23, p = .010$.

However, these effects are qualified by the interaction found between participant gender and anti-fat attitudes, as the effect of anti-fat prejudice was found to vary depending on the gender of the participant, $B = .13, p = .023$. When women were the ones making the judgments, those with higher levels of anti-fat attitudes displayed greater negative affect toward the survivor than those with lower levels of anti-fat attitudes. When men were making the judgments, however, the level of negative affect displayed toward the survivor was similar regardless of one’s level of anti-fat attitudes.

A main effect was also found for survivor weight, suggesting that participants demonstrated less anger and disgust toward the survivor when she was overweight than when she was thin, $B = -4.81, p < .001$. In addition, a significant interaction was found between survivor weight and rape myth acceptance, indicating that the effect of rape myth acceptance varies depending on the weight of the survivor, $B = .05, p < .001$. When the survivor was overweight, those with higher levels of rape myth acceptance demonstrated significantly more negative affect.
toward her than those with lower levels of rape myth acceptance. When the survivor was depicted as thin, those with higher levels of rape myth acceptance did not significantly differ from those with lower levels of rape myth acceptance in their levels of anger and disgust for the survivor.

Contrary to predictions, no significant main effects were found for rape myth acceptance. Further, no significant effects were found for the interactions between survivor weight and gender, survivor weight and anti-fat attitudes, gender and rape myth acceptance, and rape myth acceptance and anti-fat attitudes, although this last interaction approached significance. The parameter estimates are presented in Table 8.

Table 8

Parameter Estimates with Negative Affect toward the Survivor as Dependent Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>95% Wald Confidence Intervals</th>
<th>Hypothesis Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Wald Chi-Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>8.05</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td>11.52</td>
<td></td>
<td>20.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight a</td>
<td>-4.81</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>-7.43</td>
<td>-2.20</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender b</td>
<td>-3.47</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>-6.10</td>
<td>-.84</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape myth acceptance (RMA)</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-fat attitudes (AFA)</td>
<td>-.23</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-.40</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × Gender</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × RMA</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td></td>
<td>12.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × AFA</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td></td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender × RMA</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender × AFA</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA × AFA</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a Survivor type was coded as 0 = “overweight” and 1 = “thin”. b Gender was coded as 0 = “female” and 1 = “male”. 
The influence of the independent variables on willingness to assist the survivor.

The influence of the independent variables on participants’ willingness to assist the survivor in obtaining necessary help or assistance was assessed next. The omnibus test was significant, $\chi^2 (10) = 52.07, p < .001$, indicating that this model was a better fit to the data than one with no predictors. The ratios of deviance and the Pearson chi-square to the degrees of freedom were both close to 1 (.15 and .18, respectively), indicating a good fit of the model. The hypothesized influences of survivor weight, participant gender, rape myth acceptance and anti-fat attitudes on willingness to assist the survivor were not supported as, although the interaction between gender and rape myth acceptance approached significance, no statistically significant main or interaction effects were found for any of the independent variables. The parameter estimates are presented in Table 9.
### Table 9

**Parameter Estimates with Willingness to Assist the Survivor as Dependent Variable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>95% Wald Confidence Intervals</th>
<th>Hypothesis Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intercept</strong></td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td>.78</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td></td>
<td>19.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weight</strong></td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>.69</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td>-.42</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>-.89</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rape myth acceptance (RMA)</strong></td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Anti-fat attitudes (AFA)</strong></td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weight × Gender</strong></td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.32</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weight × RMA</strong></td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weight × AFA</strong></td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender × RMA</strong></td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender × AFA</strong></td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RMA × AFA</strong></td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*a* Survivor type was coded as 0 = “overweight” and 1 = “thin”.  
*b* Gender was coded as 0 = “female” and 1 = “male”.

The influence of the independent variables on attributions of perpetrator responsibility.

The influence of the independent variables on attributions of responsibility to the perpetrator was also assessed. The distribution of this variable was initially negatively skewed and was therefore recoded to be positively skewed in order to meet the requirements for using a gamma probability distribution. As a result, higher scores indicated an increased likelihood to *not* attribute responsibility to the perpetrator. The omnibus test was significant, $\chi^2 (10) = 65.32, p < .001$, indicating that the fitted model was a better fit to the data than the intercept-only model.
The ratios of deviance and the Pearson chi-square to the degrees of freedom were both close to 1 (.56 and .54, respectively), indicating a good fit of the model.

Survivor weight was found to influence attributions of perpetrator responsibility, both on its own and in combination with rape myth acceptance. Consistent with predictions, participants were less likely to not attribute responsibility to the perpetrator (and thus more likely to attribute responsibility to him) when the survivor was depicted as overweight, $B = -3.37, p = .009$. A significant effect was also found for the interaction between survivor weight and rape myth acceptance, indicating that the effect of rape myth acceptance varies depending on the weight of the survivor, $B = .03, p = .005$. When the survivor was depicted as overweight, those with higher levels of rape myth acceptance were significantly more likely to not attribute responsibility to the perpetrator (and therefore less likely to attribute responsibility to him) than those with lower levels of rape myth acceptance. When the survivor was depicted as thin, those with higher levels of rape myth acceptance did not significantly differ from those with lower levels of rape myth acceptance in their likelihood to attribute responsibility to the perpetrator.

Contrary to predictions, no significant main effect was found for participant gender, rape myth acceptance, or anti-fat prejudice. Further, no interaction effects emerged between survivor weight and gender, survivor weight and anti-fat attitudes, gender and rape myth acceptance, gender and anti-fat attitudes, nor rape myth acceptance and anti-fat attitudes. The parameter estimates are presented in Table 10.
### Table 10

**Parameter Estimates with Attributions of Perpetrator Responsibility as Dependent Variable**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Wald Confidence Intervals</th>
<th>Hypothesis Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Upper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>2.82</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>- .91</td>
<td>6.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight $^a$</td>
<td>- 3.37</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>- 5.88</td>
<td>-.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender $^b$</td>
<td>- 1.46</td>
<td>1.36</td>
<td>- 4.13</td>
<td>1.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape myth acceptance (RMA)</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>- .02</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-fat attitudes (AFA)</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>- .10</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × Gender</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>.81</td>
<td>- .26</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × RMA</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × AFA</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender × RMA</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender × AFA</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA × AFA</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The dependent variable was recoded such that higher scores reflect a tendency to *not* attribute responsibility to the perpetrator.

$^a$ Survivor type was coded as 0 = “overweight” and 1 = “thin”. $^b$ Gender was coded as 0 = “female” and 1 = “male”.

**The influence of the independent variables on sympathy for the perpetrator.**

When sympathy for the perpetrator was entered as the dependent variable, the omnibus test was significant, $\chi^2 (10) = 39.91, p < .001$, indicating that this model was a better fit to the data than one with no predictors. The ratios of deviance and the Pearson chi-square to the degrees of freedom were both close to 1 (.32 and .33, respectively), indicating a good fit of the model. Contrary to predictions, neither survivor weight, participant gender, rape myth acceptance nor anti-fat prejudice were found to influence sympathy for the perpetrator, either
alone or in combination with one another. The parameter estimates for this model are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Parameter Estimates with Sympathy for the Perpetrator as Dependent Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>95% Wald Confidence Intervals</th>
<th>Hypothesis Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>8.26</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>12.65</td>
<td></td>
<td>13.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight a</td>
<td>- .77</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>- 3.89</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td></td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender b</td>
<td>- 1.81</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>- 5.07</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape myth acceptance (RMA)</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>- .05</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-fat attitudes (AFA)</td>
<td>- .13</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>- .35</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × Gender</td>
<td>- .25</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>- 2.25</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td></td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × RMA</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>- .01</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × AFA</td>
<td>- .06</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>- .18</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td></td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender × RMA</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>- .03</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td></td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender × AFA</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td>- .11</td>
<td>.21</td>
<td></td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA × AFA</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Survivor type was coded as 0 = “overweight” and 1 = “thin”. b Gender was coded as 0 = “female” and 1 = “male”.

The influence of the independent variables on negative affect toward the perpetrator.

The influence of the independent variables on negative affect toward the perpetrator was assessed next. The distribution of this variable was initially negatively skewed and was therefore recoded to be positively skewed in order to meet the requirements for using a gamma probability distribution. As such, the recoded dependent variable reflected positive affect for the perpetrator. The omnibus test was significant, $\chi^2 (10) = 25.27, p = .005$, indicating that this model was a
better fit to the data than one with no predictors. The ratios of deviance and the Pearson chi-square to the degrees of freedom were both close to 1 (.62 and .52, respectively), indicating a good fit of the model.

A main effect was found for survivor weight, indicating that participants were less likely to display positive affect for the perpetrator (and thus more likely to display negative affect) when the survivor was depicted as overweight versus thin, $B = -4.23, p = .012$. Contrary to predictions, no significant main effects were found for participant gender, rape myth acceptance, or anti-fat prejudice. In addition, no significant interaction effects were found for any of the variables, although the interaction between survivor weight and gender approached significance. The parameter estimates are presented in Table 12.
Table 12

Parameter Estimates with Negative Affect toward the Perpetrator as Dependent Variable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>95% Wald Confidence Intervals</th>
<th>Hypothesis Test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Wald Chi-Square</td>
<td>df</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>4.46</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>8.78</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
<td>-4.23</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>-7.54</td>
<td>-.92</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.72</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>-4.02</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td></td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape myth acceptance (RMA)</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-fat attitudes (AFA)</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.32</td>
<td></td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × Gender</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>4.57</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × RMA</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × AFA</td>
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<td>0.07</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender × RMA</td>
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<td>0.02</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender × AFA</td>
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<td>0.08</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td>.08</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA × AFA</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The dependent variable was recoded such that higher scores reflect a lack of negative affect (and therefore positive affect) toward the perpetrator.

* Survivor type was coded as 0 = “overweight” and 1 = “thin”.  b Gender was coded as 0 = “female” and 1 = “male”.

The influence of the independent variables on sentencing recommendations.

Lastly, the influence of survivor weight, participant gender, rape myth acceptance, and anti-fat attitudes on the length of the prison sentence recommended for the perpetrator was analyzed. The omnibus test was significant, $\chi^2(10) = 30.94, p = .001$, indicating that this model was a better fit to the data than one with no predictors. The ratios of deviance and the Pearson
chi-square to the degrees of freedom were both close to 1 (.57 and .69, respectively), indicating a good fit of the model.

No significant effects were found for any of the independent variables, although the interaction between survivor weight and anti-fat attitudes approached significance. Ultimately, however, neither survivor weight, participant gender, rape myth acceptance nor anti-fat prejudice influenced the length of prison sentence recommended for the perpetrator, alone or in combination with one another. The parameter estimates are presented in Table 13.

Table 13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter Estimates with Recommended Sentence Length as Dependent Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parameters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rape myth acceptance (RMA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anti-fat attitudes (AFA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × Gender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × RMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight × AFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender × RMA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender × AFA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RMA × AFA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a Survivor type was coded as 0 = “overweight” and 1 = “thin”. b Gender was coded as 0 = “female” and 1 = “male”.
Recommended Assistance for the Survivor

Toward the end of the case evaluation section, the participants were asked whether or not they felt that the survivor needed help or assistance and, if so, to indicate what kind of help they thought she might need. Across both conditions, 320 responses were given, many of which included recommendations for more than one form of help or assistance. The responses were coded, tabulated, and compared across groups split by survivor weight, participant gender, and level of rape myth acceptance (based on scores on the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, categorized into categories of high and low via median split).

The most frequent form of assistance recommended for the survivor was some kind of professional counselling or psychological assistance, with 92.5% of the comments across groups referencing this type of assistance. This form of help was more likely to be suggested by women and those low in rape myth acceptance. The need for non-professional support was also highlighted by the participants; as 16.3% of the comments mentioned the importance of the survivor having the support of family, friends and/or peers (e.g., a support group of other survivors). Those with lower levels of rape myth acceptance were over three times more likely to recommend this kind of assistance, mentioning it in 23.5% of comments made compared to only 7% of the comments offered by those with high levels of rape myth acceptance.

The need for medical assistance and/or treatment (e.g., rape kits, pregnancy testing, STI testing/treatment) was mentioned in 9.7% of responses, with women more likely to recommend treatment than men. Legal assistance was recommended in 14.4% of responses. In addition, three comments mentioned the need for financial assistance to aid with potential legal costs and missed work, and two comments mentioned the need for potential academic support/accommodations from the university that the survivor was reportedly attending.
The responses described above are all largely supportive and reflect acknowledgement of the seriousness of the trauma that the survivor underwent as well as concern for her future recovery. However, there was one final category of responses (representing 8.4% of the total number of comments) that focused on the need for the survivor to receive education on how her actions may have precipitated the assault as well as how to prevent such a thing from occurring in the future. While there is some potential value in self-defence training, particularly in terms of teaching women strategies for communicating assertively and avoiding dangerous situations, a number of these comments appeared more judgmental than supportive. For example, one participant stated that the survivor “needs to learn to say NO forcefully”; while another stated that she may need “education on dealing with men”.

Other comments were more strongly blameful, explicitly implying that had the woman behaved differently (e.g., less carelessly or foolishly), she would have been able to avoid victimization altogether. For example, one respondent stated that “She needs to understand that her actions helped dictate what happened. Why would she put on music, and then get on the couch and start something - Mark should have stopped, but Jill should know she led him down this path”. Another noted that “she needs to retake gr9 sex ed.... she didn't even know doing so would make the guy 'think' that it is ok?” Therefore, while some participants’ suggestions of self-defence training and education on “how not to put yourself in situations where you will be taken advantage of” may have been made with the honest intention of protecting the survivor from further abuse, many of these comments reflect an adherence to victim-blaming rape myths and suggest that the survivor’s behaviours, rather than the perpetrator’s, are the ones in need of change. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these comments were more frequently made by men and those higher in rape myth acceptance.
Further Information Requested

After making their judgments about the case, participants were given the option to state whether there was any further information that they felt would have been helpful to have when making their evaluations. In total, 305 responses were given, many of which included requests for several different pieces of information. The responses were coded, tabulated, and compared across groups split by survivor weight, participant gender, and level of rape myth acceptance (based on scores on the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, categorized into categories of high and low via median split).

Of all the responses, the most frequent request was for additional information about the perpetrator. In nearly one-third (31.5%) of responses, participants requested further information about the perpetrator’s background (e.g., age, appearance, culture, “childhood experiences”, “area he lives in”, kinds of people he associates with, hobbies, etc.), character/personality (e.g., “Is Mark often aggressive?”), medical and psychiatric history (e.g., presence of any mental illnesses or “handicaps”, sexual addictions, “chemical imbalances”, etc.), previous criminal history (e.g., prior accusations, charges or convictions of sexual assault), and/or potential motives for assault (e.g., “Why Mark Stevens thought it was ok to proceed to sex after Jill Brown’s protests, if indeed these protests were made”). Women and those with lower levels of rape myth acceptance were more likely to request information about the perpetrator than men and those with higher levels of rape myth acceptance. Responses were similar across survivor types, with one exception: when the survivor was depicted as overweight, three participants remarked on the perpetrator’s size/physical stature, with one participant noting “If Jill was that tall and that big, Mark must have been huge to be able to hold her down” and another wondering “…she is somewhat heavy set so what build/physique was he?” When the survivor was depicted as thin, no comments were made regarding Mark’s appearance or stature.
The next most frequent request (present in 27.9% of responses overall) was for more information about the incident from the perpetrator’s perspective (e.g., his “side of the story”). Those with lower levels of rape myth acceptance requested this information somewhat more frequently than those with higher levels of this prejudice. Requests to know more about the relationship between the two individuals, including “the length and nature of their relationship prior to the night in question” and the level of intimacy and prior sexual contact between them, was the third most frequent request and was mentioned in 20.7% of responses across groups. Men and those high in rape myth acceptance were more likely to request this information than women and those low in rape myth acceptance.

Participants also expressed a desire to know more about the survivor, with requests for information about her character, background, and history present in 15.5% of the comments made. Questions were posed regarding her trustworthiness and potential motives for lying (e.g., “Is Jill Brown a trustworthy person or is she prone to lying?”, “Does Jill have any reason to frame Mark?”), previous convictions/criminal record, prior experiences or allegations of sexual assault (e.g., “It would be helpful to know if Jill has been in this situation before or if this is a single occurrence”), psychological history (e.g., any history of mental illness, current emotional state, etc.) and relationship/sexual history (e.g., whether she currently had a boyfriend, her level of promiscuity, her number of previous sexual relationships, etc.). In addition, two individuals wanted to know what she had been wearing at the time of the assault. Questions about the survivor were somewhat more common when she was depicted as overweight.

More information about the sexual assault itself was also requested, with 7.5% of the comments asking to know more about who initiated the sexual contact, particularly the role that the survivor may have played. Men were more likely to ask about this topic, as were those with higher levels of rape myth acceptance. A number of participants appeared to believe that the survivor must have done something to contribute to her victimization, as evidenced by questions
such as “How much of Jill’s action provoked Mark to act that way?”, “Did Jill Brown urge him on?”, “What did Jill Brown do to contribute to this assault?”, and “I don't know who made the first kiss, if it is Ms. Brown she precipitated events that were possible to follow”. Similarly, a number of the comments (6.9%) expressed a desire for more details regarding how exactly the survivor responded during the assault (e.g., “…when during the process did she say NO, when he was about to enter her or when they were just getting undressed?”; “Did she truly do everything in her power to stop him?”; “I need to know if there was any signal of resistance from the Jill's side because I don't believe in resignation from her side…”; “[I would like to know] How strongly Jill protested. It didn't sound like she opposed it that vehemently”). Once again, those with higher levels of rape myth acceptance were more likely to request information of this nature.

Information about the presence of alcohol or drugs was requested within 5.6% of the responses, while 4.9% requested further information about how violent the assault was and the amount of physical and emotional trauma that was experienced by the victim. Nearly one-fifth (19.7%) of the comments requested corroborating information and “science-based evidence, not just circumstantial or anecdotal evidence” (e.g., medical evidence from rape kits and doctor’s exams, proof of intercourse, documented injuries, statements from witnesses, character references, etc) to “back up” the survivor’s allegations. A small percentage of comments (1.6%) requested more information about what happened immediately following the assault (e.g., “when, how and under what circumstances or conditions did Mark leave Jill’s place” and “why did it take her more than 5 hours to report the complaint?”), while 1.3% expressed the need for more information about legal definitions and related laws and 2.3% simply requested more details overall, without specifying exactly what information they required. Finally, a small number of the respondents (3.0%) used this space not to request more information about the case but rather to express their condemnation of the perpetrator’s crime through statements such as
“Once a woman says "NO" and clearly indicates that, then the person she is engaging with should be respectful of her decision and only go as far as she is comfortable” and “Nothing else matters, especially whether or not the victim was drinking, her sexual history or orientation, or what she was wearing. These should have no influence on the juries decision and thus should not be presented”.
CHAPTER 4

Discussion

The present study was conducted with several goals in mind, the primary of which was to further explore the ways in which survivor body weight and participant rape myth acceptance and anti-fat attitudes may influence perceptions of sexual assault. In addition, this study aimed to further investigate the applicability of Weiner’s (1980) attribution-affect-action model to sexual assault research; identify the relations between different forms of prejudicial beliefs; and provide a snapshot of the current levels of these prejudices among Canadian men and women.

Support for the Attribution-Affect-Action Model

Consistent with the predictions set forth by Weiner’s (1980) attribution-affect-action (AAA) model, causal attributions of responsibility made in response to the sexual assault vignette were found to influence subsequent feelings of affect toward the survivor and perpetrator, and these emotions in turn influenced participants' willingness to offer help and punishment. Specifically, when the survivor was held personally responsible for her victimization, participants were less likely to feel sympathetic and more likely to feel angry and disgusted with her. This decreased sympathy and increased negative affect was associated with a weaker belief in the survivor’s need for assistance and a decreased willingness to assist her in obtaining help, as well as a decreased tendency to find the perpetrator guilty of sexual assault and punish him for his actions with a lengthy prison sentence. However, when the perpetrator was held personally responsible for the assault, participants were more likely to feel sympathy for the survivor and less likely to feel angry and disgusted with her. This increased sympathy and decreased negative affect was in turn associated with a stronger belief in the survivor’s need for assistance, an increased likelihood to help her, a stronger tendency to find the perpetrator guilty, and a greater willingness to punish him for his crime with a longer prison sentence.
Weiner’s (1980) theory was also supported when it came to participants’ judgments of the perpetrator. When the perpetrator was help responsible for his actions, participants responded with less sympathy toward him and greater feelings of anger and disgust. This increased negative affect and decreased sympathy toward the perpetrator was in turn associated with a greater belief in his guilt and an increased desire to punish him for his crime, as well as a heightened desire to assist the survivor in her recovery. However, when the survivor was held responsible for precipitating the assault, participants tended to feel more sympathy for the perpetrator and less anger and disgust toward him. As a result, these participants were then less likely to find the perpetrator guilty of sexual assault, tended to recommend a shorter and less punitive prison sentence, and expressed a decreased willingness to assist the survivor in receiving help or support.

In addition to predicting associations between attributions, affect, and action, Weiner’s (1980) model also proposes that affect mediates the relation between attributions of responsibility and intentions to act. Consistent with this assertion, both sympathy and negative affect for the survivor were found to partially mediate the relation between attributions of perpetrator responsibility and willingness to help the survivor, as well as between attributions of perpetrator responsibility and recommended sentence length, in the directions described above. This provides further support for Weiner’s (1980) model and suggests that causal attributions that hold the perpetrator, rather than the victim, responsible and the positive emotional responses that follow from these attributions are both very important in shaping subsequent intentions to provide support to the survivor and punishment to the perpetrator (Clarke & Lawson, 2009).

Interestingly, neither sympathy nor negative affect toward the survivor were found to mediate the relations between attributions of survivor responsibility and outcomes of sentence length or willingness to assist the survivor. The reasons for this inconsistency are not
immediately clear, although it is possible that it may be due, at least in part, to the generally low levels of blame and responsibility attributed to the survivor by the participants in this study (Clarke & Lawson, 2009). It should still be noted, however, that even despite the lack of significant mediation effects for survivor affect, attributions of responsibility toward the survivor still had a significant (and negative) influence on participants’ feelings toward her and their resulting willingness to assist her and punish her assailant.

Clearly, the attributions that one makes regarding survivor and perpetrator responsibility have important implications for the feelings that one holds toward each party as well as their subsequent helping intentions and behaviours toward them. This study therefore lends further credence to the assertions of many feminist groups and researchers (e.g., Ahrens, 2006; Campbell et al., 2001; Clarke & Lawson, 2009; L’Heureux-Dubé, 2001; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Maier, 2008) who have argued that victim-blaming attitudes result in insensitive treatment and a lack of support and justice for survivors. As such, an important priority for future public education campaigns is an exploration of the ways in which sexual assault is understood by various groups, with a specific focus on beliefs around culpability and the eradication of victim-blaming myths. Weiner’s (1980) attribution-affect-action model is thought to be an appropriate framework to draw upon when developing these public awareness campaigns and conducting further academic research within the field of sexual violence.

The Influence of Survivor Body Weight on Case Judgments

In an attempt to expand upon previous research on appearance bias, the present study explored the influence of survivor body weight on participants’ evaluations of an alleged sexual assault case. As discussed previously, sexual assault is often perceived as a crime resulting from a man’s inability to control his sexual urges in the presence of a desirable woman (Anderson & Swainson, 2001; Burt, 1998; Coates & Wade, 2004; Deitz et al., 1984). This widely held
misconception about the nature of sexual assault suggests that attractive women are more likely targets for sexual victimization and may explain why attractive survivors have been stereotyped as more careless and provocative and held more responsible for sexual assault than unattractive survivors (Calhoun et al., 1978; Jacobson & Popovich, 1983). As overweight women are commonly viewed as less sexually appealing and experienced than thinner women (Bess, 1997; Crandall, 1994; Regan, 1996; Sobal, 2005), it has been argued that they may be subject to the same bias. In support of this idea, Clarke & Lawson (2009) found that, when evaluating a hypothetical sexual assault case, participants held a thin survivor more to blame for her victimization than an overweight survivor. The present research aimed to determine whether these results would be replicated with a new sample and somewhat revised design.

As predicted, the participants in this study assigned more personal responsibility and reported greater feelings of disgust and anger toward a survivor of sexual assault when she was depicted as thin compared to when she was described as overweight. In addition, participants held the perpetrator less responsible for his actions and reported less negative affect toward him when he was accused of assaulting a thin woman versus an overweight woman. Contrary to predictions, survivor body weight did not affect participants’ feelings of sympathy for either survivor or perpetrator, perhaps because the group as a whole demonstrated such relatively high levels of sympathy for the survivor and low levels of sympathy for the perpetrator. Additionally, participants’ likelihood of offering assistance to the survivor and their recommended prison sentences for the perpetrator were not found to be influenced by the weight of the survivor, again perhaps because the majority of participants were generally quite willing to assist the survivor, find the perpetrator guilty, and punish him for his actions.

Thus, although participants appeared to be relatively uninfluenced by survivor weight in terms of their levels of sympathy and helping intentions, it appears that this variable did play a
role when it came to making causal attributions of blame and feeling angry and disgusted toward both survivor and perpetrator. Rather than holding the assailant of the thin survivor accountable for his actions, participants were more likely to cast blame onto the victim instead. Not only was a thin woman held more responsible for her victimization than an overweight woman, she was also viewed more negatively (with greater anger and disgust) as well.

Although it is difficult to explain these results with certainty, it seems plausible that when a survivor is thin she is deemed to be a more likely target for sexual assault due to her stereotypically attractive physique (Clarke & Lawson, 2009). Further, she may be viewed as more sexually experienced than an overweight (and thus supposedly unattractive and undesirable) woman (Regan, 1996). As such, participants may expect a thin woman to be more cautious in interpersonal relationships so as not to invite any unwanted sexual attention or inadvertently arouse a man’s supposedly “uncontrollable” sexual desires. In the scenario utilized in this study, the woman may potentially have been viewed as initiating sexual contact with her assailant, as she was reported to have “put on some music” and engaged in some sexual behaviours (e.g., kissing and touching) prior to saying no to his advances. While participants may excuse the actions of an overweight woman, perhaps believing that she did not know any better due to her presumably limited sexual experience, they may believe that a thinner (and thus more attractive and sexually experienced) woman was behaving overly provocatively and/or being careless and inviting trouble. As a result, they may view the thinner woman as more personally responsible for the assault and, consistent with Weiner’s (1980) attribution-affect-action model, feel increased anger and disgust toward her and decreased negative affect toward her assailant.

The present study also sought to identify any potential interactions between prejudicial beliefs, survivor body weight and the case evaluations. Previous research has indicated that
prejudicial attitudes may influence the degree to which one is swayed by characteristics such as physical appearance, such that those with higher levels of prejudice may be particularly sensitive to these cues (Clarke & Lawson, 2009; Deitz et al., 1984; Vrij & Firmin, 2001). Within the present study, significant interactions were found between survivor weight and rape myth acceptance, such that the effects of rape myth acceptance on attributions of survivor and perpetrator responsibility, as well as negative affect toward the survivor, were found to vary depending on the survivor’s body weight. Specifically, when the survivor was depicted as overweight, those with higher levels of rape myth acceptance attributed significantly more blame toward her than those with lower levels of rape myth acceptance. In addition, when the survivor was overweight, those with higher levels of rape myth acceptance demonstrated significantly more feelings of anger and disgust toward the survivor and attributed significantly less responsibility to the perpetrator than those with lower levels of this prejudice. When the survivor was depicted as thin, participants were found to be similarly blameful and negative toward her and attribute similar levels of responsibility to the perpetrator regardless of their level of rape myth acceptance.

Similar findings were found in Clarke and Lawson’s 2009 study. Although survivor weight did not significantly influence the length of prison sentence recommended for the perpetrator in this study, it did affect the influence that rape myth acceptance and anti-fat prejudice had on sentencing decisions. When the survivor was thin, sentencing decisions did not vary as a result of the participants’ levels of these prejudices. When the survivor was overweight, however, those with greater levels of rape myth acceptance and anti-fat attitudes recommended lengthier sentences than those with lower levels of these biases. It was proposed that the participants in this group may have been particularly confused or disturbed by the perpetrator’s decision to attack an overweight (and thus “unlikely”) victim and, as a result, may have been
more likely to rely on their overarching beliefs about sexual assault and overweight individuals when forming judgments about the case (Clarke & Lawson, 2009).

As discussed previously, a thinner woman is likely perceived as more sexually desirable and experienced than an overweight woman, and is thus more easily assigned blame and viewed with feelings of anger and disgust. Therefore, within the present study, participants may have perceived the thin survivor as more careless or provocative and felt more negatively toward her, regardless of their level of rape myth acceptance. When the survivor was overweight, however, participants may have been unsure how to evaluate her actions and therefore may have consulted their pre-existing views about sexual assault (Clarke & Lawson, 2009). Those with less prejudicial views about sexual assault likely determined that she was not responsible for the incident and therefore assigned her less blame, demonstrated more positive affect toward her, and assigned greater responsibility to the perpetrator. Those with more prejudicial beliefs, on the other hand, may have decided that the overweight survivor was still somewhat to blame for the assault, even despite her weight, and therefore felt more negatively toward her and assigned less responsibility to the perpetrator than those without these stereotypical views.

The fact that participants’ judgments of responsibility and negative affect were influenced by survivor body weight, a factor that should be irrelevant to the evaluation of sexual assault cases, is concerning. Women of all physical types are assaulted and deserve equal treatment from others, particularly where legal judgments are involved. The findings of the present study suggest that this may not be the reality for women with thinner physiques and thereby highlights the potential need for specialized educational programming and further study of the influence of survivor body weight, as well as the interactions between weight and various forms of attitudinal prejudice, on perceptions of sexual assault.
The Influence of Participant Rape Myth Acceptance on Case Judgments

Despite advances in legal reform and public education, stereotypical myths about sexual assault persist within the legal system and society at large. These myths are widespread and have been consistently found to prejudicially influence the evaluation of sexual assault cases and the ways in which survivors and perpetrators are perceived (Burt, 1998; Clarke & Lawson, 2009; Coates & Wade, 2004; Kopper, 1996; Krahé et al., 2008; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; L’Heureux-Dubé, 2001; Mason et al., 2004; Payne et al., 1999; Vrij & Firmin). The present study aimed to further examine the presence and influence of these beliefs within a community sample of Canadian adults. It was predicted that those with a stronger adherence to rape myths would attribute more personal responsibility to the survivor, express decreased feelings of sympathy and increased anger and disgust toward her, and display a decreased willingness to assist her in obtaining help, as compared to those with a lower adherence to rape myths.

Regarding the perpetrator, it was predicted that those with higher levels of rape myth acceptance would hold him less responsible for his crime, express more favourable affect toward him, and assign him a shorter prison sentence than those with lower levels of rape myth acceptance would.

Preliminary correlational analyses revealed that, as expected, higher levels of rape myth acceptance were indeed associated with greater attributions of responsibility to the survivor, reduced feelings of sympathy and increased feelings of anger and disgust toward her, and a decreased likelihood of assistance being offered. Further, greater rape myth acceptance was associated with decreased attributions of responsibility to the perpetrator, increased feelings of sympathy and decreased negative affect toward him, a weaker belief in his guilt, and a tendency to assign shorter prison sentences to him. These findings are consistent with those of previous research and suggest that rape myths continue to bias evaluations of sexual assault scenarios.
However, when rape myth acceptance was entered into the generalized linear model analyses with the other independent variables, it did not demonstrate a significant influence on any of the dependent variables, aside from the three significant interactions with survivor weight described above. This finding was unexpected but may potentially be due to the significant correlations between the independent variables, as well as the reduced power that results from the inclusion of multiple predictors in a generalized linear model analysis (O. Falenchuk, personal communication, July 2009). It has been argued that, rather than simply holding stereotypical ideas about one particular group or issue, individuals who hold one form of prejudice are more likely to hold an overarching intolerant belief system characterized by prejudice toward a number of different groups (Aosved & Long, 2006; Crandall, 1994; Pratto et al., 1994; Vrij & Firmin, 2001). Within the present study, significant relationships were found between rape myth acceptance, anti-fat attitudes, sexism, and social dominance orientation; and each of these variables was found to independently bias perceptions of sexual assault. Based on the correlational analyses, those with higher levels of each form of prejudice were more likely to hold the survivor responsible for her victimization, less likely to hold the perpetrator responsible, more likely to respond negatively toward the survivor and favourably toward the perpetrator, less likely to assist the survivor, and less likely to assign a lengthy prison sentence to the perpetrator. Significant relationships were also found between gender and each of these forms of prejudice, with men holding significantly higher levels of rape myth acceptance, anti-fat attitudes, sexism and social dominance orientation than women.

As a result, those who endorsed high levels of rape myths within the present study were also more likely to be male and endorse high levels of anti-fat attitudes. It is therefore possible that, when all entered into the generalized linear model analyses together, these variables may have competed with one another and ultimately cancelled out the effects of rape myth
acceptance. Indeed, when gender was excluded from the analyses, rape myth acceptance had a significant influence on attributions of survivor and perpetrator responsibility. When the model was simplified further by removing the two-way interactions between the independent variables, such that only the main effects for rape myth acceptance, anti-fat prejudice and survivor weight were analyzed, rape myth acceptance was found to significantly influence each of the dependent variables in the predicted directions. Further research would benefit from looking more closely at the relationships between rape myth acceptance, gender, and other forms of prejudice, and the ways in which these variables may interact to influence judgments about sexual assault.

Despite the somewhat inconsistent results found within the quantitative analyses, it appears that rape myth acceptance was still responsible for biasing participants’ perceptions of the sexual assault case. An examination of the qualitative responses provided by the participants lends further support to this conclusion, as many of the requests and comments made appear to reflect endorsement of rape mythology. For example, when asked what other information may have been useful to know when forming their judgments about the case, participants frequently requested information about the character and history of the perpetrator and survivor, the prior relationship between them, the presence of alcohol or drugs, and the level of violence involved in the assault. While requests for information about the perpetrator’s character or history may be relevant to establishing a pattern of behaviour or determining the perpetrator’s capacity to stand trial, they may also potentially represent an attempt to excuse or minimize his actions by implying that his behaviour resulted from some force (e.g., a psychological disorder, addiction, etc.) outside of conscious control (Coates & Wade, 2004). Further, the desire to know more about the perpetrator’s mental state and personal background may tie into myths about the “type” of men who rape (e.g., men who are “sick” or “deviant”), which may in turn excuse the actions of perpetrators who do not fit this image and lead to a denial of the actual nature of sexual
violence as a crime motivated not by uncontrollable urges or illness but by a desire for power and control.

Further review of the qualitative comments suggests that the survivor’s credibility was an issue of concern for many participants as well. Previous research has found that when assaults meet stereotypical notions of “real” sexual assault (e.g., stranger-perpetrated, violent, involving the use of a weapon, etc.), survivors are perceived as more credible and less responsible, and rates of prosecution are higher (Campbell et al., 2001; Krahé et al., 2008; Maier, 2008). Within the present study, a number of participants inquired about the previous relationship between the survivor and perpetrator as well as the level of violence involved in the assault, implying that these characteristics continue to be deemed important in deciding how to respond to a claim of sexual assault. Some participants also explicitly questioned the survivor’s character and trustworthiness, while others raised questions about her mental or emotional state. The frequent request for corroborating forensic evidence suggests that, for many, a survivor’s word alone cannot be trusted; while questions about the survivor’s sexual history and clothing choices suggest that outdated stereotypes continue to influence perceptions of credibility and culpability.

Even when the survivor’s story was believed, many participants appeared to still question her actions. Indeed, although the majority of participants attributed low levels of responsibility to the survivor when making their initial quantitative responses, an examination of the qualitative comments indicates that a number of participants remained doubtful as to whether she could be deemed completely innocent. Some participants implied that the survivor must have done something to provoke the assault (e.g., “What did Jill Brown do to contribute to this assault?”), while others suggested that she should have “known better” or could have done more to stop the assault (e.g., “She needs to understand that her actions helped dictate what happened. Why
would she put on music, and then get on the couch and start something - Mark should have stopped, but Jill should know she led him down this path”).

An interesting component of these qualitative comments is the fact that many respondents appeared caught between the “politically correct” messages they had previously received about sexual assault and their own personal biases. For example, one participant stated “[I would like to know] if they had slept together before, or if they were dating ... but at the end of the day, she said no and he forced himself on to her anyway. He is guilty of rape/sexual assault”. Another expressed a desire to know “what was she wearing”, stating “I know it should not matter but it would help to know”. A third participant initially provided a common catch phrase promoted by anti-violence educators, followed immediately by a more honest reflection of her actual views: “No means no (what was Jill thinking when she set the mood for romance)”. The ambivalence shown in these comments is striking, as is the discrepancy seen between the relatively low scores participants obtained on the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale and the presence of myths within their qualitative responses. Indeed, although those participants who obtained higher scores on the quantitative measure of rape myth acceptance were somewhat more likely to request certain types of stereotypical information (e.g., about the prior relationship between the parties or the survivor’s behaviour leading up to and during the assault), many of the requests and comments were made by those who scored very low on the scale. The fact that stereotypical beliefs about sexual assault were present among those who were classified as “low” in rape myth acceptance suggests that the attitudinal measure used within this study may not accurately reflect contemporary, perhaps more subtle, aspects of rape mythology. In addition, although scores on the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale were not significantly correlated with social desirability ratings within this sample, it is possible that participants may still have altered their responses on the questionnaire so as to present themselves in a favourable and unbiased way. When asked to
express themselves in their own words, however, they may have had greater difficulty concealing their true attitudes. As a result, researchers seeking to assess current levels of rape myth acceptance among various populations in the future may be well advised to consider the inclusion of qualitative methodologies, as well as the development of new questionnaires able to measure more subtle attitudes toward sexual assault.

The Influence of Anti-fat Attitudes on Case Judgments

In addition to exploring the influence of survivor body weight and participant rape myth acceptance, the present study aimed to further examine the influence of prejudice toward overweight individuals (also known as “anti-fat attitudes”) on perceptions of sexual assault. Anti-fat attitudes have been previously associated with rape myth acceptance and have been found to lead individuals to attribute greater responsibility to a survivor of sexual assault and express increased feelings of negative affect toward her (Clarke & Lawson, 2009). As a result, within the present study, it was hypothesized that individuals with higher levels of this prejudice would attribute more blame to the survivor, feel less sympathy and more negative affect toward her, and be less inclined to support her in securing needed assistance. Further, these individuals were predicted to hold the perpetrator less responsible, feel more sympathy and less negative affect toward him, and assign him a more lenient prison sentence. An interaction was also predicted between anti-fat attitudes and survivor body weight, such that those with higher levels of anti-fat prejudice would be particularly unlikely to hold the overweight survivor responsible for her victimization.

Consistent with the hypotheses, preliminary correlational analyses revealed that higher levels of anti-fat attitudes were associated with greater attributions of survivor responsibility and lower attributions of perpetrator responsibility. Those with stronger anti-fat attitudes were more likely to express decreased sympathy and increased negative affect for the survivor, as well as
display increased sympathy and decreased negative affect for the perpetrator. In terms of intentions for action, stronger anti-fat attitudes were associated with a decreased willingness to offer assistance to the survivor, a weaker belief in the perpetrator’s guilt, and recommendations of shorter prison sentences to the perpetrator.

Within the generalized linear model analyses, anti-fat attitudes were found to influence feelings of anger and disgust toward the survivor in the direction predicted. However, this effect was found to vary depending on the gender of the participant. Among the female participants, those with higher levels of anti-fat attitudes displayed greater negative affect toward the survivor than those with lower levels of anti-fat attitudes, a finding consistent with the general hypothesis regarding the influence of anti-fat attitudes. Among male participants, however, the level of negative affect displayed toward the survivor was similar regardless of level of anti-fat prejudice. This interaction effect was unexpected but may be explained by men’s increased tendency to express negative affect toward the survivor. While women may be more reluctant to feel anger or disgust toward a survivor unless holding some sort of additional prejudicial belief, men may possess a pre-existing bias toward survivors of sexual assault and may therefore be more likely to respond with anger and disgust, regardless of their level of anti-fat attitudes. Future research is needed to test these speculations.

With the exception of negative affect toward the survivor, anti-fat prejudice was not found to exert a significant influence on any of the other dependent variables within the generalized linear model analyses, alone or in combination with survivor weight. This finding was unexpected but, as discussed above, may result from the significant correlations between the independent variables and the loss of power that results from the inclusion of multiple predictors in a generalized linear model analysis (O. Falenchuk, personal communication, July 2009). Similar to the findings for rape myth acceptance, when a simpler model was used wherein only
the main effects for anti-fat attitudes, rape myth acceptance, participant gender and survivor weight were analyzed, anti-fat attitudes significantly influenced attributions of survivor responsibility, sympathy for the survivor and perpetrator, negative affect for the perpetrator, and sentencing recommendations. Further research would therefore benefit from looking more closely at the relationships between anti-fat attitudes, rape myth acceptance, gender, and survivor weight, and the ways in which these variables interact to influence perceptions of sexual assault.

*Gender Differences in Prejudicial Attitudes and Case Judgments*

Gender is one factor that has been almost consistently found to influence the endorsement of prejudicial beliefs, with previous research showing that men tend to hold higher levels of rape myth acceptance (Aosved & Long, 2006; Kopper, 1996; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994; Morry & Winkler, 2001; Payne et al., 1999), anti-fat prejudice (Morrison & O’Connor, 1999), modern and old-fashioned sexism (Aosved & Long, 2006) and social dominance orientation (Pratto et al., 1994). Perhaps as a result of these heightened prejudices, men have also been found to attribute more blame to survivors of sexual assault (Calhoun et al., 1978; Deitz et al., 1984; Thornton & Ryckman, 1983; Vrij & Firmin, 2001); respond more negatively toward them (Vrij & Firmin, 2001); respond more positively toward perpetrators of sexual assault (Deitz et al., 1984); and express less certainty of the perpetrator’s guilt (Deitz et al., 1984), relative to women. As a result, similar findings were predicted to emerge within the present study.

Consistent with the hypotheses, the men in this sample endorsed significantly higher levels of rape myth acceptance, anti-fat attitudes, sexism, and social dominance orientation than the female participants. In addition, a series of independent *t*-tests revealed that the male participants were more likely to attribute blame to the survivor, expressed greater anger and disgust toward her, and felt greater sympathy for the perpetrator than women did. Men were less likely to believe that the survivor needed assistance and were significantly less willing to help
her obtain assistance than women. Contrary to predictions, the $t$-tests revealed no gender differences in attributions of responsibility toward the perpetrator, sympathy for the survivor, negative affect toward the perpetrator, belief in the perpetrator’s guilt, and recommended sentence length.

Within the generalized linear model analyses, gender was found to have an effect on attributions of survivor responsibility, with men attributing significantly more blame to the survivor than women. However, the effect of participant gender was found to vary depending on the weight of the survivor. While women held both survivors less responsible for the assault than men did, regardless of the survivor’s weight, they attributed significantly less responsibility to the survivor when she was depicted as overweight. It appears that, although women were reluctant to hold either survivor particularly responsible, they were still not immune from the influence of attractiveness cues and expressed a greater tendency to blame a thinner woman for her victimization, perhaps due to some perceived provocativeness or carelessness on her part (Clarke & Lawson, 2009).

Gender was also found to significantly influence negative affect toward the survivor within the generalized linear model analyses, with women displaying less negative affect toward the survivor than men. Surprisingly, gender did not have an influence on feelings of sympathy toward the survivor, willingness to assist the survivor, attributions of perpetrator responsibility, sympathy or negative affect for the perpetrator, or recommended sentence length within the generalized linear model analyses. Once again, this finding may be due to the significant relationships seen between gender, rape myth acceptance and anti-fat attitudes, as well as the loss of power arising from the inclusion of multiple predictors in the analysis (O. Falenchuk, personal communication, July 2009). When the two-way interactions were removed from the model, such that only the main effects of gender, rape myth acceptance, anti-fat attitudes, and survivor weight
were analyzed, gender was found to exert a significant effect on attributions of survivor and perpetrator responsibility, negative affect toward the survivor and perpetrator, and sympathy for perpetrator, in the directions predicted previously.

Although the results were somewhat inconsistent, this study suggests that men and women continue to differ in their attitudes toward different social groups and issues, although perhaps not to the same extent as has been found in the past. However, even if the lack of significant findings in certain areas within the present study is suggestive of a shift in male attitudes, the fact remains that men as a group still appear to hold more extreme prejudicial views and respond in a more stereotypical and biased way toward survivors and perpetrators of sexual assault. This is worrisome, particularly when one considers that men continue to occupy a place of privilege and hold the majority of positions of power within the Canadian legal system (Tang, 1998). When the majority of those responsible for implementing the law are more prone to hold biased views, the consequences are potentially devastating. As such, further exploration is needed to better understand the ways in which gender, alone and in combination with other forms of prejudice, may interfere with objective and sensitive handling of sexual assault cases.

**Concluding Remarks**

The present study demonstrates that, despite ongoing advancements in legal reform and public education programming, individuals are still far from objective when it comes to forming opinions about sexual assault. Within this study, causal attributions of responsibility made toward the survivor and perpetrator were found to influence the feelings and actions that resulted. Unfortunately, these causal attributions, and the responses which followed, were found to be unduly influenced by the body weight of the survivor in question as well as participants’ gender and personal level of prejudice.
Consistent with predictions, generalized linear model analyses revealed that participants were more likely to hold the survivor responsible for her victimization and excuse the actions of the perpetrator when evaluating a case involving a thin survivor versus an overweight survivor. Further, participants tended to respond with increased negative affect toward the survivor and decreased anger and disgust toward the perpetrator when the survivor was thin, suggesting that a woman’s physical size may have serious implications for the level of support and justice that she receives from others.

Further, correlational analyses revealed that those who endorsed one form of attitudinal prejudice were more likely to endorse other forms of bias as well, and that these prejudices exerted an influence on the ways in which participants evaluated the sexual assault case. Those with higher levels of attitudinal prejudice (rape myth acceptance, anti-fat attitudes, sexism and social dominance orientation) were more likely to hold the survivor responsible for her victimization, feel less sympathy and increased anger and disgust toward her, and express a decreased willingness to aid her in securing needed assistance. Further, these individuals tended to hold the perpetrator less responsible, feel more sympathy and less negative affect toward him, and sentence him to a shorter prison term. The gender of the participant was also found to exert an influence, with men not only holding higher levels of each form of attitudinal prejudice but also demonstrating an increased tendency to blame the victim, feel anger and disgust toward her, express sympathy for the perpetrator, and decline to help the survivor in obtaining assistance.

The results of the generalized linear model analyses were somewhat less supportive of these hypotheses but did reveal some significant effects and interactions between the independent variables. Interactions between rape myth acceptance and survivor weight were found, such that prejudicial attitudes and rape myths were activated to a greater degree when the survivor was depicted as overweight. While a thin woman was held more responsible and viewed
with increased negative affect regardless of participants’ levels of rape myth acceptance, those with higher levels of rape myth acceptance appeared to rely on their existing prejudices when evaluating the situation and therefore still responded more negatively toward the overweight survivor, even despite her weight, than those with lower levels of rape myth acceptance. The significant interaction between gender and survivor weight suggests that, although less likely than men to hold either survivor responsible, women were particularly unlikely to blame an overweight survivor for her victimization. Finally, the interaction between anti-fat attitudes and gender suggests that anti-fat attitudes may exert a stronger influence on the decision-making processes of women as opposed to men.

Taken together, these results indicate that there are many variables which can negatively impact the ways in which sexual assault cases are understood and evaluated, making further study on this topic a priority for improving the response that survivors receive following an assault.

Strengths and Limitations of the Present Study

The present study is thought to provide a valuable contribution to the existing body of sexual assault research by investigating the largely unexplored influence of survivor weight on public perceptions of sexual assault, as well as the interactions between this variable, participant gender, and different forms of social prejudice. In addition, this study provides further evidence for the validity of Weiner’s (1980) attribution-affect-action model and offers a snapshot of the current attitudes and beliefs held by a relatively diverse sample of Canadian adults.

This project was strengthened by its large sample size and use of a community sample. The majority of psychological research in the area of sexual violence has relied upon undergraduate students, a population suspected to hold lower levels of prejudice due to their age and education level, as well as the liberal atmosphere found on most university campuses.
Although the present sample was still quite highly educated (84.5% reported having completed at least some college or university education) and reported a generally non-conservative political orientation (75.1% identified their political beliefs as somewhere between “middle of the road” and “very liberal”), participants ranged in age from 18 to 71 years (with a mean age of 30.55 years) and are thus considered to be at least somewhat more generalizable to the broader population in terms of background and life experience than the samples used in many previous studies.

That said, the present study does have its limitations. As in any vignette-based study, the hypothetical nature of the sexual assault scenario used does not take into account the complexity of real world situations. Participants were only presented with the survivor’s description of the events that occurred and, as a result, had limited information on which to base their judgments. As a result, one might expect individuals to provide somewhat different, perhaps more objective, responses in an actual jury situation where they are presented with more information about the assault and sworn to uphold a higher standard of objectivity in their judgments.

The present study is also limited by the lack of counterbalancing in the presentation of the scales, as it is possible that participants’ perceptions of the sexual assault scenario may have influenced their responses to the attitudinal questionnaires that followed (Clarke & Lawson, 2009). Further, the study was quite lengthy and, as a result, had a high drop-out rate which resulted in 37% of the participants being excluded due to significant missing data. It is therefore possible that the sample may not be completely generalizable to the broader population, as those participants who completed the full study may have had higher levels of motivation or interest in the subject matter, as well as in the general process of participating in psychological research and online questionnaires. Finally, the fact that two-thirds of the sample identified their race/ethnicity as White somewhat limits the generalizability of the results to other populations.
Areas for Future Research

Future researchers would do well to address the limitations mentioned above by sampling a broader range of participants and employing a wider range of methodologies. Specifically, future research may benefit from the development of questionnaires that tap into more subtle or modern prejudices about rape myths as well as the use of more qualitative methodologies, as these techniques may allow researchers to better assess the current levels of bias held within Canadian society.

The present study suggests that survivor body weight influences the judgments made following an assault, both on its own and in combination with rape myth acceptance. As this is only the second study to investigate this specific area, further research is needed to gain a better sense of the effects of survivor weight on various aspects of perceptions of sexual assault. Further, the present results suggest that more research is needed to understand the relationships between survivor weight, participant gender, rape myth acceptance, and anti-fat attitudes, as well as other forms of prejudice that are likely to be associated with one another (e.g., sexism, racism, homophobia/heterosexism, classism, etc.), with particular attention paid to the ways in which these variables may interact to influence evaluations of sexual assault. In addition, future research would benefit from examining the intersections between sexism, racism, homophobia/lesbophobia, prejudice toward those with disabilities and rape myth acceptance, and the implications that these prejudices may have for survivors of varying body weights, as well as those who do not meet stereotypical ideals of femininity, attractiveness, and female sexuality.

Finally, research that moves beyond the use of hypothetical vignettes into the real world is needed. Consultation with survivors who have gone through the legal system, as well as the surveying of legal professionals and those working within various social systems, would be
valuable in gaining a sense of the prejudices that persist and the impact of attractiveness and weight bias in the real world.

Practical Implications

Taken together, the findings of the present study suggest that further efforts at prevention and intervention are needed. Following a sexual assault, survivors need emotional support and resources. The decision to seek legal assistance should bring validation, safety, protection, and help survivors restore a sense of control and stability to their lives (Du Mont et al., 2003; Herman, 2003). Unfortunately, studies show that this is often not the reality, as survivors are frequently met with blame, doubt, dismissal and a denial of services and assistance following a disclosure to the authorities (Ahrens, 2006; Campbell et al., 2001). The present study suggests that an acceptance of rape myths and anti-fat attitudes, as well as beliefs surrounding the character or intentions of women of varying body weights, may contribute to these negative and re-victimizing experiences. These biases pose a serious risk to survivors’ rights to support and equality within the public sphere and legal system, making it necessary to address and eradicate them (L’Heureux-Dubé, 2001).

Considering the implications that causal attributions have for subsequent emotional responses and helping behaviour (Weiner, 1980), public education would do well to focus attention on those myths that influence attributions of blame and culpability, particularly those that suggest that certain types of women invite sexual assault by virtue of their appearance (Clarke & Lawson, 2009; Ryckman et al., 1998). Within the legal system, training in sexual assault issues, as well as education on other forms of prejudice such as anti-fat attitudes and sexism, should begin in law school and police academy training (Campbell et al., 2001; Krahé et al., 2008). A non-biased understanding of sexual assault issues should be made a condition of employment and promotion within the legal field, as it is crucial that those who frequently work
with survivors are educated and trained to respond in a sensitive and helpful manner (Ahrens, 2006; Maier, 2008; Starzynski et al., 2005; Tang, 2000). In addition, it may be beneficial for measures of rape myth acceptance and anti-fat attitudes, as well as other prejudicial beliefs with the potential to bias evaluations, to be administered as a screening measure prior to jury selection and the hiring of employees within the justice system (Clarke & Lawson, 2009). Further, it would be beneficial for lawyers and judges to address any potential lingering bias during the trial by providing accurate information about the nature of sexual assault and the negative impacts of relying on stereotypes about appearance and body weight when evaluating evidence and making decisions (Ryckman et al., 1998).

When immaterial factors such as survivor body weight or stereotypes about sexual assault and certain social groups are allowed to bias individuals’ judgments of sexual assault cases, the consequences can be severe. When survivors are silenced and mistreated, this can lead to additional trauma and limit their likelihood of accessing beneficial and needed services in the future (Ahrens, 2006; Maier, 2008; Starzynski et al., 2005). This not only represents a miscarriage of justice at the individual level (Alksnis, 2001), it also prevents us as a society from addressing the issue of sexual assault in a meaningful way and working toward social change (Ahrens, 2006). As a result, it is essential that we, as a culture, work to eliminate all forms of bias from our legal and social systems and ensure that all members of society are met with the justice and support that they deserve.
References


Maier, S. L. (2008). “I have heard horrible stories…”: Rape victim advocates’ perceptions of the revictimization of rape victims by the police and medical system. *Violence Against Women, 14*, 786-808.


Please imagine that you have been selected to be a juror in an alleged sexual assault trial. Presented below is a copy of the police report filed by the complainant on the night in question. Please read this information carefully and take a few moments to fully picture this scene in your mind. When you are ready, please answer the questions that follow.

On March 21, 2008, at approximately 1:00am, the following complaint was filed with the Toronto Police Department by Jill Marie Brown. Jill Brown is described as a 20 year old female, approximately 5'6” tall. She has a thin/overweight build, brown hair and brown eyes. She is a university student and lives in an apartment in downtown Toronto with her older sister.

At approximately 7:30pm on the evening of March 20, 2008, Jill Brown invited a classmate, Mark Stevens, over to her apartment to work on an assignment for their psychology class. Ms. Brown's sister was out for the evening, allowing Ms. Brown and Mr. Stevens to work undisturbed. After studying for about one hour, they decided to take a break and Ms. Brown put on some music. Ms. Brown reports that she and Mr. Stevens sat down on the couch in the living room and began to kiss and touch each other. Mr. Stevens began to undress Ms. Brown, at which point Ms. Brown reports telling him that she did not want to have sex with him. He continued to remove her clothes and again she told him no. Jill Brown alleges that Mark Stevens ignored her protests and, using his body weight to prevent her from leaving the living room, had sex with her. When Mr. Stevens was finished, he reportedly collected his things and left the apartment.

After giving her statement, Jill Brown provided detectives with the contact information for Mark Stevens. Mr. Stevens was brought in for questioning and, after reviewing the evidence, a charge of sexual assault was filed against him.
Appendix B

Judgments of the Case

As a juror in this trial, it is your responsibility to make some judgments about the case involving Jill Brown and Mark Stevens. Presented below are a number of items relevant to the case. Please read each statement carefully and then indicate how much you agree or disagree with each one using the scale provided. There is no right or wrong answer, so please choose the answer that best reflects your honest opinion. All answers will be kept anonymous and confidential.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>It is Jill Brown’s own fault that she is in this situation ( ^a )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Jill Brown is to blame for what happened ( ^a )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Jill Brown is responsible for what happened because she acted carelessly ( ^a )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Jill Brown is responsible for what happened because she acted provocatively ( ^a )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I feel sorry for Jill Brown ( ^b )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I feel sympathy for Jill Brown ( ^b )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I feel pity for Jill Brown ( ^b )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I feel angry with Jill Brown ( ^c )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I feel annoyed with Jill Brown ( ^c )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I feel disgusted with Jill Brown ( ^c )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I think that what happened is entirely Mark Stevens’ fault ( ^d )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Mark Stevens is to blame for what happened ( ^d )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Mark Stevens is not responsible for what happened because he could not control his sexual urges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Mark Stevens is not responsible for what happened because he must be mentally disturbed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>I feel sorry for Mark Stevens ( ^e )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>I feel sympathy for Mark Stevens ( ^e )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>I feel pity for Mark Stevens ( ^e )</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
18. I feel angry with Mark Stevens
19. I feel annoyed with Mark Stevens
20. I feel disgusted with Mark Stevens
21. I can identify with Jill Brown and how she must feel.
22. I can identify with Mark Stevens and how he must feel.
23. This event will have a severe psychological impact on Jill Brown.
24. This event will have a severe psychological impact on Mark Stevens.
25. Does Jill Brown need help or assistance?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Don’t know
26. If yes, what kind of help or assistance do you think Jill Brown needs? ________________
27. If Jill Brown were an acquaintance of yours, how likely would you be to help her receive this type of assistance?
   a) Very likely
   b) Somewhat likely
   c) Somewhat unlikely
   d) Very unlikely
28. Is Mark Stevens guilty of sexual assault?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Don’t know
29. How certain are you of your decision?
   a) Very certain
   b) Somewhat certain
   c) Somewhat uncertain
   d) Very uncertain
30. If Mark Stevens is found guilty of sexual assault, how long do you think his prison sentence should be? ________ (please indicate your response in years).

31. Is there anything else that would have been helpful for you to know about this case when making your judgments? _________________________

*Note. Items 1 – 24 were answered using a 7-point scale, where 1 = *strongly disagree* and 7 = *strongly agree*. Items 13 & 14 were reverse-scored. The order of items was randomized within this scale.

*These items were combined to form a composite measure of attributions of survivor responsibility. Scores on this measure could range from 7 to 28, with higher scores indicating greater attributions of responsibility toward the survivor. *These items were combined to form a composite measure of sympathy toward the survivor. Scores on this measure could range from 3 to 21, with higher scores indicating greater feelings of sympathy. *These items were combined to form a composite measure of negative affect toward the survivor. Scores on this measure could range from 3 to 21, with higher scores indicating greater feelings of negative affect. *These items were combined to form a composite measure of attributions of responsibility to the alleged perpetrator. Scores on this measure could range from 2 to 14, with higher scores indicating greater attributions of responsibility to the perpetrator. *These items were combined to form a measure of sympathy for the perpetrator. Scores on this measure could range from 3 to 21, with higher scores indicating greater feelings of negative affect. *These items were combined to form a measure of negative affect for the perpetrator. Scores on this measure could range from 3 to 21, with higher scores indicating greater feelings of negative affect.
Appendix C

Demographic Information

This section asks a few questions about you. These questions will help us to determine whether a wide variety of people have been surveyed, so that we can make sure that the results will reflect the many differing views that different people may hold on these issues. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions.

1. What province/territory do you currently reside in?
   a) Alberta
   b) British Columbia
   c) Manitoba
   d) New Brunswick
   e) Newfoundland/Labrador
   f) Northwest Territories
   g) Nova Scotia
   h) Nunavut
   i) Ontario
   j) Prince Edward Island
   k) Quebec
   l) Saskatchewan
   m) Yukon

2. How old are you (in years)?

3. What is your gender?
   a) Female
   b) Male
   c) Other

4. What is your sexual orientation?

5. What is your race/ethnicity?

6. What is the highest grade or level of formal education that you have completed?
7. Are you currently attending some kind of formal school or educational program?
   a) Yes (please continue on to Question 8)
   b) No (please skip to Question 9)

8. If you answered “Yes” to Question 7, what kind of educational program are you currently attending?

9. Do you personally know anyone who has been the victim of sexual assault?
   a) Yes
   b) No
   c) Don’t know

10. Have you personally experienced sexual assault?
    a) Yes
    b) No
    c) Don’t know

11. Which of the following best describes where you grew up?
    a) An urban centre (i.e., a mid-to-large sized city)
    b) A rural centre (i.e., a farm, acreage, or small town)

12. How would you describe your political beliefs?
    a) Very conservative
    b) Conservative
    c) Slightly conservative
    d) Middle of the road
    e) Slightly liberal
    f) Liberal
    g) Very liberal
    h) Don’t know