The 'Ideal Victim' of Intimate Partner Violence Against Women: An Examination of the Impact of Victim/Offender Relationship Status, Victim Self-Identity, and Observer Gender on Constructing Victim Status

Kelli Dauphinais
University of Central Florida

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THE ‘IDEAL VICTIM’ OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: AN EXAMINATION OF THE IMPACT OF VICTIM/OFFENDER RELATIONSHIP STATUS, VICTIM SELF-IDENTITY, AND OBSERVER GENDER ON CONSTRUCTING VICTIM STATUS

by

KELLI S. DAUPHINAIS
B.A. Florida Gulf Coast University, 2016

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Sociology in the Department of Sociology in the College of Sciences at the University of Central Florida Orlando, Florida

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Major Professor: Jacqueline Woerner
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Guided by Nils Christie’s (1986) Ideal Victim framework, the current study examines the effect that victim/offender relationship status (casual vs. serious), victim self-identity (as a “victim” or a “survivor”), and observer gender (woman vs. man) have on victim blame attributions. Data were collected from 329 adult students at a large public university in the Southwest United States using an online, experimental vignette design. Three separate one-way analysis of variances (ANOVAs) were conducted to test the study’s three hypotheses. Results suggest that among the study sample, victim/offender relationship status (H1) and victim self-identity (H2) do not significantly affect victim blame attribution towards victims of IPVAW. Results do support H3 suggesting that observer gender does significantly affect victim blame attribution towards victims of IPVAW with men participants attributing more victim blame than women participants. Future research directions to better capture the nuances of (IPVAW) victim/offender relationship status (among “dating” couples) and self-identity of an (IPVAW) victim (as a “victim” or a “survivor”) are identified and conceptual replication is encouraged.

Keywords: ideal victim, intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW), gender, intimacy level, terminology, experimental vignette
I would like to dedicate this work to my husband, Chad R. Dauphinais. Chad, without your unconditional love and support, this thesis would not have been possible—thank you.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IPV</td>
<td>intimate partner violence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPVAW</td>
<td>intimate partner violence against women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVAW</td>
<td>partner violence against women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VAW</td>
<td>violence against women</td>
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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Intimate partner violence (IPV) is a serious, preventable public health problem that contributes to a host of short and long term mental, physical, and economic repercussions extending far past its primary victims and into the lives of victims’ families and communities (CDC 2020; Basile et al. 2011:1-4, 7-13; National Coalition Against Domestic Violence [NCADV] 2015; Niolon et al. 2017:7-10; Riger et al. 2002:184-187, 190-198; Sullivan 1992:270-274; Sutherland et al. 1998:1134-1140; Weil 2016). IPV is generally understood as any threatened, attempted, or completed physical, sexual, or psychological harm caused by a current or former intimate partner or spouse (Black 2011; Basile et al. 2011; National Institute of Justice [NIJ] 2007; Niolon et al. 2017; Weil 2016; World Health Organization [WHO] 2012). The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates 36.4% of women and 33.6% of men in the U.S. have “experienced contact sexual violence, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner during their lifetime” (Smith et al. 2018:8-9). Additionally, over one third of U.S. women (36.4%) and men (34.2%) have “experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner during their lifetime” (Smith et al. 2018:8-9).

Public perceptions and attitudes surrounding persons who have experienced violence by a current or former romantic partner impact victim help-seeking efforts (Meyer 2016; Overstreet & Quinn 2013; Wagers et al. 2021; for men: Bates 2020). In a review of literature focused on the influence of stigmatization on IPV victims help-seeking behaviors, evidence was cited suggesting that both anticipated and cultural stigmatization negatively influenced victims’ decisions to seek help from formal or informal support networks (Overstreet & Quinn 2013:112,117). Particularly, that fear of stigma and fear of lack of support from support systems contributes to victims’ choice to not seek help from support systems (Overstreet & Quinn
Additionally, cultural beliefs surrounding IPV, and in particular stigmas about what is considered IPV and who is considered an IPV victim was cited as influencing victims’ choice to seek help due to fear of not meeting cultural expectations of victimhood when seeking help from formal and informal support networks (Overstreet & Quinn 2013:118).

The current study aims to investigate how the factors of victim/offender relationship status (i.e., casual vs. serious), victim self-identity (i.e., “victim” vs. “survivor” vs. control), and observer gender (i.e., woman vs. man) influences public perceptions of, and willingness to ascribe “complete and legitimate [victim] status” (Christie 1986:18), to women who have experienced IPV by a romantic partner who is a man. Specifically, the following study examines how a sample of college students from a large U.S. public research institution construct victim status for a woman who has experienced psychological and sexual violence by her romantic partner who is a man through assessing how the factors of victim/offender relationship status, victim self-identity, and observer gender impact participants’ victim blame attributions.

The remainder of this paper covers the guiding theory behind this study before arguing the need for research to investigate the effects of victim/offender relationship status and victim self-identity on victim blame attribution. After which, the paper highlights relevant literature surrounding theories about, and influences on, victim blame. Next, the paper presents the goals, methods, and results of this research project before explaining study findings in relation to current literature as well as providing future research directions and practical applications for study findings.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

The Ideal Victim framework was first published in 1986 by Norwegian sociologist and criminologist Nils Christie in his book chapter “The Ideal Victim” in From Crime Policy to Victim Policy (Fattah 1986). The framework suggests that there are six attributes surrounding a victim and their victimization that the public uses to assess whether a crime victim receives “complete and legitimate [public] status of being a victim” (Christie 1986:18), and with it, the informal and formal social support needed to cope with their victimization. The six attributes identified by Christie (1986) are as follows: (1) perceived weakness of the victim; (2) victim’s activities during the time of their victimization; (3) location of the victim during the crime; (4) the threat of the offender; (5) the relationship between the offender and the victim; (6) the victim’s ability to address their victimization and claim ideal victim status (Christie 1986:19, 21). Depending on how the public perceives these six attributes, the more or less the public will ascribe the “complete and legitimate status of being a victim” (p. 18) to a crime victim. In other words, the more or less the public will blame the crime victim for their victimization effectively determining the amount the public will provide said crime victim with the formal and informal social support needed to cope with their victimization (Meyer 2016).

Christie (1986) explains that the process of ascribing ideal victim status to a crime victim is culturally rooted, and as such, what makes a victim an ideal victim to receive absolute victim status is influenced by the cultural and social norms regarding the attributes outlined above (p. 18). For Western societies, these attributes typically translate into a weak or vulnerable victim who does not know their offender and whose offender is perceived as “big and bad” (Christie 1986:19). The framework also suggests that an ideal victim will be victimized by an offender...
when the victim is situated in a respectable location and conducting reputable activities (Christie 1986:19). Finally, Christie (1986) maintains that an ideal victim must be strong enough to address their victimization and successfully claim ideal (i.e., total and recognized) victim status while still being “weak enough not to become a threat to other important interests” (p. 21).

Christie’s (1986) framework has been extensively applied to social science research examining the construction and public perceptions of victimhood for various types of victims (crime or otherwise), with findings from these research endeavors strongly supporting the (applied) framework’s tenets. Examples of such applications include victims of bullying (Alexius 2020; Tholander 2019), product re-call (Fitzgerald 2010), international crimes (Schwöbel-Patel 2018; Van Wijk 2013), human trafficking (Marmo & Chazal 2010; Wilson & O’Brien 2016), sex crimes (adult and child) (Bows 2018; Eelmaa & Murumaa-Mengel 2021; Ring 2018), IPV(AW) (Meyer 2016), cybercrime (Black et al. 2019; Cross 2018), burglary (Mawby 2012), and convicted offenders (Rainbow 2018). Due to both the longevity of this theory and the flexibility of its application by various areas of research when seeking to explain public perceptions of victims, the Ideal Victim framework was chosen to guide the construction of this research project. Examples of such applications of Christie’s (1986) framework used in explaining public perceptions of relevant (i.e., crime) victims can be found in the following paragraphs.

In a content analysis of the International Criminal Court’s (ICC) multimedia exhibition aimed at “bring[ing] the work of the Court to life” (p. 704), researcher Christine Schwöbel-Patel (2018) found support for the four aspects of Christie’s (1986) theory that were examined. Specifically, Schwöbel-Patel’s (2018) research noted that within international criminal law perceived victim weakness (attribute one), the threat of offender (attribute four), victim/offender relationship (attribute five), and victim’s ability to claim ideal victim status (attribute six) are
vital in constructing the concept of victimhood for international criminal law, and in so doing, work to reinforce the legitimacy of these attributes as being the stereotypical representation of how a victim of international crime is understood/perceived (Pp. 710-721, 724). Schwöbel-Patel’s (2018) research further shows that when a victim of international criminal law conflicts with the ideal or stereotypical version of one of the four above mentioned attributes of Christie’s (1986) framework examined in her work, the victim receives less support and sympathy from the ICC (Pp. 713-715, 724).

When examining the construction of the ideal human trafficking victim and its effect on policy-making decisions, researchers Michael Wilson and Erin O’Brien (2016) conducted a content analysis of the US’ Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Reports from 2001 through 2012 using Christie’s (1986) model to guide their coding process (Pp. 33-34). Using visual and written representations of victims and offenders within the introductory portions of the TIP Reports published during the 12 years identified above, Wilson and O’Brien (2016) identified 361 unique victim narratives and 25 offender narratives (p. 34). After coding, Wilson and O’Brien (2016) found that victims’ narratives were composed of elements representing Christie’s (1986) ideal victim while offenders were presented in a way that exemplified an ideal offender (Pp. 37-43). To elaborate, in the 12 TIP Reports examined, victims of human trafficking were displayed as weak (attribute one) (p. 37) and blameless (attributes two and three) (Pp. 38-39). In contrast, narratives surrounding human traffickers (i.e., offenders) presented offenders as “‘big and bad’ relative to the victim” (p. 39) (i.e., strong, powerful, etc.) and deviate (attribute four) as well as unknown to the victim (attribute five) (Pp. 39-40).

Specific to IPV, Christie’s (1986) framework was used to explain findings from Silke Meyer’s (2016) qualitative study exploring the narratives of women victims of IPV living in
“metropolitan regions of Southeast Queensland, Australia” (p. 80) as they worked to construct “victimization-free identit[ies]” (p. 75) after multiple years of severe IPV exposure (p. 80). Through conducting semi-structured interviews with 28 women victims of IPV currently separated from their “most recent abusive partner” (p. 80), Meyer (2016) found evidence supporting that participants seeking formal and informal support when leaving their abusive partner are often confronted by support systems whose perceptions of an ideal victim affect the level of support they were willing to offer to the study’s participants (Pp. 82-84). Namely, these support systems use attribute three (location of the victim during the crime [p. 19]) of Christie’s (1986) framework when deciding what level of support, if any, they were willing to provide to participants seeking to leave their abusive partner (Meyer 2016:82-84, 86-87). Applied, the use of attribute number three manifests as support systems believing that IPV victims are in some way contributing to their victimization through their actions (or inactions) to leave a known dangerous location (i.e., their relationship, living arrangements, etc.) during the time of their victimization (Meyer 2016:82-84, 86-87).

While Meyer’s (2016) findings are limited to the re-telling of participants’ experienced reactions from social support systems contacted while seeking help when leaving their abusive partner, public perception of IPV victims as being contributors to their victimization by a partner has been noted in other sources of data taken from the broader Australian population. For example, findings from Australia’s 2017 National Community Attitudes towards Violence against Women Survey (NCAS) show that nearly one out of every three (or 32%) of Australians agreed that women who do not leave a violent relationship hold some responsibility for the abuse continuing (Webster et al. 2018:80-81). Additionally, data from the NCAS shows that just over one out of every six (or 16%) of Australians “don’t believe it’s as hard as people say it is for
women to leave a violent relationship” (Webster et al. 2018:80-81). The 2017 NCAS results suggest that the perceived choice of women to stay in a location where a known offender resides contributes to victim blaming attitudes towards IPV victims and that such beliefs fall in line with the third attribute in Christie’s (1986) theory.

Ideal Victim Framework and the Current Study

While every attribute outlined in Christie’s (1986) Ideal Victim framework holds value and merits research consideration, it is attribute number five, the relationship between the offender and the victim, and number six, the victim’s ability to address their victimization and claim ideal victim status, that this study will center its attention (Pp. 19, 21). Specifically, this research will examine how relationship status (casual vs. serious) between an IPVAW victim and offender and how IPVAW victims address their victimization (“victim” vs. “survivor” self-identification) when claiming victim status impacts how the public confers ideal victim status to IPVAW victims. The choice to focus on attributes five and six stems from (a) this researcher’s research interests, (b) the availability of her resources, and (c) the current IPV literature, which suggests that future investigation into the two attributes mentioned above would meaningfully contribute to the existing knowledge regarding the public view of IPV victims by providing insight on how cultural shifts surrounding the norms of intimate partner relationships and the language used when describing victims of crime (and circumstance) may impact the factors mentioned above (i.e., attributes five and six) used by the public when assigning “complete and legitimate [victim] status” (Christie 1986:18) (i.e., ideal victim status).

Past research suggests that among college-aged young adults, the culture surrounding romantic relationships and dating have shifted from serious, committed, long-term relationships to those of more non-committed, short-term, sexually based relationships (e.g., hookups, friends
with benefits, casual partners, etc.) (Bogle 2007; Bogle 2008; Garcia et al. 2012; Heldman & Wade 2010; Kalish & Kimmel 2011; Stinson 2010). However, little is known about how this cultural shift in intimate partners’ intimacy levels influences the public construction of victimhood for those residing in violent intimate relationships. Past literature on blame attribution towards crime victims suggests mixed findings regarding how the relationship between the victim and offender influences the level of blame attributed by the public to victims for their victimization. A number of studies’ findings suggest that victim/offender relationship has a significant positive relationship with victim blame attribution such that the more intimate the relationship between the victim and the offender the more victim blame is attributed to the victim (see Summers & Feldman 1984; Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014; Whatley 1996; Weller et al. 2013). However, other studies’ findings stand in stark contrast suggesting there to be a significant negative relationship between victim/offender relationship and victim blame attribution such that the less intimate the relationship between the victim and the offender the more victim blame is attributed to the victim (see Strömwall et al. 2013; Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014; Whatley 1996). Still yet, there are some studies which suggest there to be no significant relationship between participant victim blame attribution and victim/offender relationship (see Ayala et al. 2018; Whatley 1996).

For example, an experimental vignette study conducted by Swedish researcher Leif Strömwall and colleagues (2013) with a community sample of 166 participants found more victim blame attributed by participants to victims portrayed in stranger rape scenarios than victims of acquaintance or marital rape scenarios (Pp. 257-258). Although not uncommon in older research findings (see Bolt & Caswell 1981; Smith et al. 1976), Strömwall et al.’s (2013) findings are inconsistent with more recent findings, which suggest that victims of date or
acquaintance rape scenarios receive more victim blame from participants than victims portrayed in stranger rape scenarios (see Bell et al. 1994; Kelly 2009; Newcombe et al. 2008).

Specific to IPV research, an experimental study conducted by Gertrude Summers and Nina Feldman (1984) suggest relationship (intimacy) status meaningfully affects IPV victim blame attribution. In their study Summers and Feldman (1984) arranged for 60 male and 60 female undergraduate students from a large Northeast public university to observe a video of a man (John) verbally and physically abusing a woman (Mary) in a living room setting after Mary has disclosed to John that she was in a parking lot car accident that resulted in a small dent in John’s car (Pp. 341-342). Before observing the video, participants were provided with written introductory information which manipulated the relationship intimacy level between John and Mary wherein participants were told either one of three conditions—John and Mary “were either [1] married, [2] living together, or [3] simply acquainted” (Summers & Feldman 1984:342). Findings from Summers and Feldman’s (1984) experimental study showed that victim blaming increased as relationship intimacy increased (Pp. 343, 345). Specifically, when Mary was labeled John’s wife, she was seen as significantly more responsible for causing John’s violence than when she was labeled as cohabitating with John or merely an acquaintance of John’s (Summers & Feldman 1984:343, 345).

While Summers and Feldman’s (1984) work offers insight on the influence that the victim/offender relationship has on attributions of blame for IPV victims, their work is dated and does not reflect responses from participants living in today’s non-traditional dating culture (Bogle 2007; Bogle 2008; Garcia et al. 2012; Heldman & Wade 2010; Kalish & Kimmel 2011; Olmstead, Anders, & Conrad 2017; Olmstead, Norona, & Anders 2019; Stinson 2010; Tilman, Harker, & Holway 2019). As such, additional research into how the relationship (intimacy) status
between an IPV victim and her partner affects victim blame attributions for IPV victims is needed. Therefore, and in agreement with Christie’s (1986) framework, this study offers a hypothesis that projects participants to attribute more blame to an IPVAW victim in a serious relationship with her abuser than an IPVAW victim in a causal relationship with her abuser (H1).

Additionally, cultural shifts have begun to occur in the public dialogue surrounding individuals who have been victimized. This shift in dialogue surrounding the victimized pushes the public to recognize and speak about persons who have experienced victimization not as “weak,” but as “strong,” not as “victims” but as “survivors” (Augustine 2019; Benness 2017; Boyle & Rogers 2020; Campoamor 2018; Cooper 2015; Dunn 2005; Elford et al. 2015; Fitch 2019; Harding 2020; Israeli 2020; Papendick & Bohner 2017; Profitt 1996; RAINN. n.d.; Rees 2018; Sehgal 2016; Women Against Abuse n.d.; Wu 2016). Further, this push to publicly refer to individuals who have been victimized as “survivors,” and not “victims,” also encourages those who have been victimized to perceive and refer to themselves as “survivors” (Augustine 2019; Benness 2017; Boyle & Rogers 2020; Campoamor 2018; Cooper 2015; Dunn 2005; Elford et al. 2015; Fitch 2019; Harding 2020; Israeli 2020; Papendick & Bohner 2017; Profitt 1996; RAINN. n.d.; Rees 2018; Sehgal 2016; Women Against Abuse n.d.; Wu 2016).

Initially used as a legal term to denote one individual who outlives another, the term “survivor” was expanded in the twentieth century to refer to an individual who has pulled through (or survived) some form of adversity (Online Etymology Dictionary n.d.). In the 1970s, the term was adopted by feminists, and other social activists to refer to rape victims and then, more broadly, was applied to all individuals who experience forms of violence against women (VAW) (Boyle & Rogers 2020; Dunn 2005; Profitt 1996). Frequently used in quotidian dialogue, the term “survivor” refers to an individual who embodies strength and agency and typically
conjures thoughts of empowerment, choice, and fight (Augustine 2019; Benness 2017; Boyle & Rogers 2020; Campoamor 2018; Dunn 2005; Elford et al. 2015; Harding 2020; Israeli 2020; Papendick & Bohner 2017; Profitt 1996; RAINN. n.d.; Rees 2018; Women Against Abuse n.d.; Wu 2016). Conversely, the term “victim” is applied more frequently in legal and medical contexts and typically invokes images of helplessness and emotions of pity (Augustine 2019; Benness 2017; Boyle & Rogers 2020; Campoamor 2018; Dunn 2005; Elford et al. 2015; Harding 2020; Israeli 2020; SAKI 2014; Papendick & Bohner 2017; Profitt 1996; RAINN. n.d.; Rees 2018; Wu 2016). In these contexts, “victim” is a type of status needed to garner the rights required to pursue a criminal case and to receive other manners of formal support (SAKI 2014:1) while “survivor” reminds the public that a victim of VAW is more than her experience with VAW and retains the power needed to survive and (ideally) thrive after such experiences (Augustine 2019; Benness 2017; Boyle & Rogers 2020; Campoamor 2018; Dunn 2005; Elford et al. 2015; Harding 2020; Israeli 2020; Papendick & Bohner 2017; Profitt 1996; RAINN. n.d.; Rees 2018; Women Against Abuse n.d.; Wu 2016).

Overall, literature related to the effects on public perception of VAW victims by the shift in language from “victim” to “survivor” is limited. As such, little is known about the possible impacts that shifting from “victim” to “survivor” language may have on the public perceptions of victimhood and in particular, the victim blame attributions towards persons who have experienced VAW, and specifically those who have experienced IPVAW. Understanding the impact that the move from “victim” language to “survivor” language may have on victim blame attributions may help to identify the best language practices to use when speaking about persons who have experienced IPVAW (and other forms of VAW) in public dialogue, within the media, and in the courts and other legal contexts so as to limit IPVAW victims’ exposure to both
specific and general victim blaming attitudes from the public. Additionally, as the shift from “victim” to “survivor” also encourages persons who have been victimization to refer to themselves as “survivors,” more insight is needed to understand how persons who have experienced VAW, and in particular IPVAW, are perceived by the public when choosing to use “survivor” language when disclosing their own victimization.

Little research has investigated how the shift in dialogue from “victim” to “survivor” when referring to individuals who have experienced VAW impacts the public perceptions of VAW victims. One pioneering study into this area was conducted by Michael Papendick and Gerd Bohner (2017) and sought to investigate how the terms “victim” and “survivor,” when used to describe a female rape victim, impacted the perceptions of participants for (a) the terms themselves, (b) the rape case, and (c) the rape victim (Pp. 5-6, 9-10, 14). Through the use of vignettes, Papendick and Bohner (2017) found that participants associated “more positivity, strength, and activity” (p. 9) connotations with the term “survivor” than with the term “victim” (Pp. 5-9). However, “victim” was more positively associated with the term “innocent” (Papendick & Bohner 2017:9) than was the term “survivor” (Papendick & Bohner 2017:9).

When examining how the terms “victim” and “survivor” influenced participants’ perceptions of a rape case, Papendick and Bohner (2017) found gender differences among participants, wherein “survivor” was associated with an increase in the “perceived severity of the rape and its outcomes” for female participants (p. 13). However, for male participants, the term “victim” was associated with more severity in the perception of the rape case (Papendick & Bohner 2017:13).

Papendick and Bohner (2017) also found data to suggest that how a woman chooses to self-refer when describing herself and her experience with sexual violence effects the level of severity ascribed to her victimization by participants and such severity attribution differs by participant
gender such that female participants were more apt to perceive the experience of a woman who self-referred as a “victim” as more severe while male participants saw the experience of the woman who self-referred as a “survivor” as more severe (p. 16). Previous literature surrounding the relationship between crime severity and perceived victim responsibility (i.e., victim blame) has found evidence of a negative association between the two variables, essentially suggesting that the more severe the crime, the more sympathy for the victim and less responsibility for the crime is placed on the crime victim (see Feigenson et al. 1997; Landström et al. 2016; Kanekar et al. 1985).

Relevant to the current study, it can be seen from Papendick and Bohner’s (2017) study that the term “survivor” is associated with “strength,” a connotation directly in conflict with the construction of an ideal victim as defined by Christie’s (1986) framework, which suggests that a victim’s perceived weakness by the public significantly affects how the public ascribes victim status to a crime victim.\(^1\) Considering the connotations of the terms being examined, and guided by Christie’s (1986) Ideal Victim framework, the current study hypothesizes that participants will attribute more victim blame to victims who self-identify as a “survivor” of IPV versus as a “victim” of IPV (H2). Support for victim “weakness” influencing perception of crime victims has been noted in multiple studies using Christie’s (1986) framework (for applied examples see Fitzgerald 2010; Wilson & O’Brien 2016; Schöbel-Patel 2018), suggesting that a victim’s perceived weakness has a significant impact on the public’s decision to confer ideal victim status. Thus, further investigation into how the term “survivor,” a term associated with connotations of strength and empowerment, by a victim when used by a victim of IPVAW when

\(^{1}\) Refers to attribute one of Christie’s (1986) theory. Please see Theoretical Framework section (page 12) for refresher on this. Also see validation of perceived victim weakness in constructing victim status in works by Schöbel-Patel (2018) and Wilson & O’Brien (2016) (summary of these works available starting on page 13 of this document).
disclosing her victimization affects the level of blame that is attributed to her for her victimization is warranted.

A Word on Word Choice

This researcher recognizes and appreciates the reasons for using the term “survivor” when referring to women who have experienced VAW. However, it is her position that using the term “victim” to refer to individuals who have experienced VAW is the most appropriate term to use for this study to be consistent with the Ideal Victim framework terminology that guides the current research. Consistency in word choice is required to maintain clarity throughout this work and, ideally, limit any unnecessary confusion that switching between the terms “survivor” and “victim” may cause the reader. To that end, it is the term “victim” and not “survivor” that is applied throughout the remainder of this study when describing persons who have experienced forms of VAW.

Understanding Victim Blame

In the broadest sense, victim blame is understood as the attribution of partial or full responsibility towards an individual for the negative consequences of an experienced wrongful or harmful act or circumstance (Cramer et al. 2013:2895-2896; CRCVC 2009:2; Roberts 2016). Victim blame is most commonly discussed as blame assigned to crime victims by the (micro or macro) public, but victim blame is not limited to such circumstances and by such persons. Attitudes of victim blame are widespread and influence the beliefs about victims (of crime or other circumstance) from offenders, the general public, law, and health professionals, and even victims themselves (i.e., self-blame), making victim blame a perplexing concept that merits research attention (Allegrante 1981; Crawford 1977; Goldner 1999; Henning & Holdford 2006;
Martin 2001; Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014; Whiting et al. 2019:79). In consequence, victim blame has become an extensively studied area of research applied to an array of topics from victims of crime to individuals with physical or mental health illnesses and examined through the lens of various disciplines, including sociology, psychology, criminology, law, and medicine. While many disciplines have established theories surrounding why individuals adopt victim blaming attitudes towards victims of crime or other circumstances (see Banicki 2017; Goldner 1999; Janoff-Bulman 1979; Lener 1980; Lim 2015; Maes 1994; Shaver 1970; Valdez 1985; Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014; Walster 1966), it is beyond the scope of this research to investigate such topics in considerable detail. However, as this study aims to examine under what circumstances victim blame is more likely to occur with IPVAW victims, providing some context on why individuals attribute blame to crime victims may prove helpful. As such, the remainder of this literature review will first provide an overview of two noteworthy theories that address the question of why individuals victim blame before focusing attention on the current literature surrounding victim blaming attitudes conferred by the public onto VAW victims generally, and more specifically towards women victims of IPV.

Victim Blame Theories

Public use of victim blaming can be explained by two noteworthy theories on the subject: (1) Defense Attribution Hypothesis and (2) Just World Theory. The defense attribution hypothesis suggests that victim blaming is a defensive tactic used to distance oneself from trauma related to victimization and is an attempt to control or avoid experiencing said trauma (Maes 1994:70; Shaver 1970:101-103; Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014:525; Walster 1966). Essentially, when a member of the public confers blame onto a victim (of crime or other circumstance), they do so in an effort to protect themselves from experiencing the same trauma.
as the victim because by finding fault in the victim, they (cognitively) distance themselves from the circumstances leading up to a victim’s victimization (i.e., trauma) (Maes 1994:70; Shaver 1970; Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014:525; Walster 1966).

The just world theory suggests that there is a strong belief amongst the public in a fair world where consequences (positive or negative) are directly linked to one’s actions (Lerner 1965:360; Lerner 1980; Lerner 1997; Maes 1994:70; Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014:524-525). To maintain such a belief mandates that acts of suffering or trauma must be a consequence of the sufferer’s own actions (Furnham 2003; Lerner 1965:360; Lerner 1980; Lerner 1997; Maes 1994:70; Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014:524-525). Therefore, a person who is victimized or afflicted by trauma is perceived as responsible for their trauma (Lerner 1965:360; Lerner 1980; Lerner 1997; Maes 1994:70; Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014:524-525). For crime victims, this translates into members of the public finding fault with (i.e., blaming) victims of crime for their own victimization in an effort to validate and maintain their perception of the world.

Influences on Victim Blame

Because much of the literature surrounding public victim blame centers on victims of rape, it would be irresponsible not to include, if only briefly, the findings from research on the area of study. As such, we turn to a 2014 literature review for a (limited) overview of the topic. Conducted by authors Madeleine Van der Bruggen and Amy Grubb (2014), the review examines experimental vignette designed studies wherein victim or observer characteristics were analyzed in relation to their independent effect on rape victim blame (Pp. 5-6).

While each study reviewed by Van der Bruggen and Grubb (2014) produced its own set of results, common themes were found throughout the literature that manipulated victim characteristics to test participant victim blame attribution. Significant findings suggested that
victim gender, sexuality, resistance level, and relationship to perpetrator significantly effect the level of victim blame attributed to victims of rape (Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014:9-15). An example relevant for this proposed study can be found in victim relationship to the perpetrator (attribute five in Christie’s [1986] framework); a variable which, despite operationalization differences, consistently produced results from recent studies suggesting that the closer the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, the more observers (typically) attribute blame to the rape victim (Pp. 14-15). Applied, this manifests as rape victims receiving more blame in date and acquaintance rape scenarios than compared to stranger rape scenarios (tp. 14). Additionally, marital rape scenarios are often minimized by observers (if recognized as “rape” at all) and perceived as less violating and psychologically harmful to the victim than an acquaintance or stranger rape (Pp. 14-15). Such findings fall in line with Christie’s (1986) framework, which suggests that victims who encounter an unknown offender are more likely to receive ideal victim status (e.g., less victim blame) (p. 19).

Findings discussed concerning manipulated observer characteristics when testing participant victim blame attribution noted research findings that suggest that observer gender, professional status, gender role attitudes, and rape myth acceptance levels influence the level of victim blame attributed to victims of rape (Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014:15-23). Relevant to this proposed study’s purpose, the authors noted that observer gender has consistently shown that observers who are men blame rape victims more often than observers who are women regardless of rape victim factors (i.e., victim gender, victim relationship to the perpetrator, victim sexual orientation, etc.) (Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014:16-17). It is suggested that male observers attribute blame towards rape victims based on characteristic factors (i.e., victim race, gender, age, etc.) (Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014:17). In contrast, women who blame the rape victim
do so based on behavioral factors (i.e., victim behavior leading up to or during their victimization) (Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014:17).

Although the findings presented by Van der Bruggen and Grubb (2014) provide important insight into victim blame attitudes towards rape and sexual assault victims, it is essential to understand how victim blame relates to victims of IPV. Research surrounding victim blame attitudes attributed to IPV victims suggests that both participant (termed “observer” above) and victim characteristics influence victim blame attitudes towards IPV victims. Specific to participant characteristics, research conducted by Enrique García and Tomás José (2014) found that among a representative sample of the Spanish population, participant socio-demographics of age, education level, and perceived social status are predictors of victim blame attitudes towards IPV victims (p. 33). Specifically, García and Tomás’ (2014) research showed a significant positive relationship between participant age and level of victim blame such that for every unit (10 years) increase in participant age there was 24.1% increased odds of blaming the IPV victim (p. 33). Conversely, participant education level and perceived social status were found to have a significant inverse (negative) relationship to victim blaming wherein for every one point decrease in participant education level and perceived social status there was, respectively, a 30.37% and 27.22% increase in the odds of blaming the IPV victim (García & Tomás 2014:33).

García and Tomás’ (2014) work also found that the participant psychosocial indicators of (a) perceived frequency of partner violence against women (PVAW), (b) VAW acceptance attitudes, and (c) knowing a victim within friend or family network increased the odds of victim blaming attitudes towards IPV victims (p. 33). Specifically, results showed that one unit increase in perceived frequency of PVAW was associated with a 21.1% increased odds of blaming the
victim while a one unit increase in acceptability of VAW violence was associated with 76.3% increased odds of blaming the victim (García & Tomás 2014:33). Finally, the study also showed that knowing a victim of IPV within the context of one’s family or friends resulted in a 90.3% increase in the odds of blaming the victim (García & Tomás 2014:33).

Although the findings from García and Tomás’ (2014) are limited in generalizability to the Spanish population, Eve Waltermaurer’s (2012) meta-analysis of 23 quantitative studies wherein findings from 61 countries where random national samples or census survey data were analyzed also found evidence of participant sociodemographic variables influencing IPV justification attitudes. In particular, the sociodemographic variables of age, education level, marital status, socioeconomic status (SES), employment status, and community type were noted by Waltermaurer (2012) as having a significant influence on respondents’ IPV justification level (p. 171). More specifically, the Waltermaurer (2012) meta-analysis indicated that individuals who were “younger, had little or no education, were currently married, were poor, unemployed, and from rural communities” (p. 171) were more likely to justify IPV. Additionally, the meta-analysis found that patriarchy measures in respondents’ families and witnessing one’s father beat one’s mother increased the risk for IPV justification in respondents (Waltermaurer 2012:171).

Of particular interest to the current study are the mixed findings surrounding participant gender and its relationship with victim blame attitudes towards IPV victims. Much research suggests that participant gender is significantly associated with victim blame attitudes towards IPV victims, specifically with men participants more likely to blame IPV victims than women participants (Sylaska & Walters 2014; Waltermaurer 2012). However, the Waltermaurer (2012) meta-analysis found cases where females were more likely to justify IPV than their male counterparts (p. 171). Additionally, the previously discussed study by García & Tomás (2014)
cites participant gender as having no significant effect on victim blame attitudes towards IPV victims in their sample (p. 33). Such mixed results suggest that further research is needed regarding the effect that participant gender has on victim blaming attitudes towards IPV victims. As such, this study aims to assess the effect of participant gender on IPVAW victim blame, and proposes that there will be a difference between women and men participants’ level of victim blame attribution but does not make any assumptions about the direction of that difference (H3).

Gender has also been used to assess victim characteristic blame towards IPV victims. In a vignette design study examining the perceptions and reactions of 178 undergraduate students pulled from a psychology research pool at a Southwestern university in the United States, researchers found that participants perceived less responsibility to victims of IPV for female victims than male victims (Sylaska & Walters 2014:140). Such findings contradict the limited studies that have also examined the effects of victim gender on public victim blame attitudes associated with IPV victims (see Hamby & Jackson 2010). Various studies have also examined behavioral victim characteristics when assessing public victim blame attitudes for IPV victims (Lane & Knowles 2000; Meyer 2016; Waltermaurer 2012; Witte et al. 2006). Turning again to the Waltermaurer (2012) meta-analysis, which (again) examined findings from literature with national or census survey data representing 61 countries, the analysis found that 18% of the countries represented had 50% or more of their respondents justify IPV in at least one scenario (p. 169). Within the entire sample of countries, Waltermaurer (2012) found that the top two scenarios that most respondents felt the use of IPV was justified were (a) when a woman neglects her children or (b) when a woman goes out without her husband’s permission (p. 169).
CHAPTER THREE: STUDY GOALS AND HYPOTHESES

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects that victim relationship to the offender, victim’s self-identity (as a victim or survivor), and observer gender, have on the willingness of participants to ascribe “complete and legitimate [victim] status” (Christie 1986:18) to victims of IPVAW. To better understand how these three identified factors influence the construction of the ideal victim of IPVAW, this research seeks to address three research questions and their corresponding hypotheses:

(RQ1) How does the relationship status of an IPVAW victim and her abusive partner (casual vs. serious relationship) affect the level of victim blame participants give an IPVAW victim?

(H1) Participants will endorse less victim blaming when IPVAW victims are in a casual (vs. serious) relationship.

(RQ2) How does an IPVAW victim’s self-identity as a victim (victim vs. survivor vs. control) affect the level of victim blame participants give an IPVAW victim?

(H2) Participants will endorse more victim blaming to IPVAW victims who identify as a “survivor” than IPVAW victims who identify as a victim. Additionally, participants will endorse more victim blaming to IPVAW victims who identify as a “victim” than IPVAW victims in this study’s control condition.

(RQ3) Does observer gender identification (woman vs. man) influence the level at which they ascribe complete and legitimate victim status to victims of IPVAW?

(H3) Men and women participants will endorse victim blaming towards IPV victims differently.²

² Due to the mixed findings regarding observers’ gender influence on victim blame attitudes, this non-directional hypothesis is exploratory and no hypothesis is generated in advance regarding the direction of effect.
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

Procedures

To test the three hypotheses outlined above, an anonymous online experimental study was conducted. Specifically, the study followed a two by three between-subjects vignette design wherein the study’s independent variables, type of the relationship (casual vs. serious), and victim status identity (victim vs. survivor vs. control) were manipulated (see Appendix A). The entirety of the study was conducted online using Qualtrics® XM, an online survey platform made available for free to this researcher through her university’s paid subscription. Data collection for this study did not occur until after the University of Central Florida’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) granted study approval (see Appendix B). Additionally, all study procedures and the analytic plan were pre-registered for transparency purposes through the Open Science Framework (OSF).

All participants were adult students currently enrolled at a large, Research I, public university located in the Southeastern United States and recruited using one of two methods: (1) through SONA, a university-wide research participation system hosted by the university’s Psychology Department offering course credit for participation in social research or (2) through emails from professors offering course credit to students currently enrolled in the summer 2021 session from the university’s, Sociology, Social Work, and Criminal Justice departments. 3

Approximately 29% (n = 95) of usable data were collected from participants who were recruited

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3 Procedures were implemented to ensure that participants who may have had access to engage in the study via both SONA and professor email recruitment were identified and any duplicate data removed. More on this in both the “Duplicate Participation Check” and “Data Cleaning” sections of this paper.
to participate in the study via SONA while the remaining 71% \((n = 234)\) of usable data originated from participants who were recruited from professor emails.

In an effort to combat response bias and gain the most authentic responses from participants, the true intention of this study was masked from participants by explaining in the study’s consent form and throughout the study’s instructions that the purpose of the study was to identify factors that influence students’ perceptions of dating experiences. Such deception effectively omitted the true goal of this study to better understand how participant gender, victim/offender relationship status, and victim’s self-identity (as a victim or survivor) influences the construction of the ideal victim of IPVAW. All procedures employed were IRB approved and participants were properly debriefed about the true purpose of the study after completion of the study (see Appendix C).

Before starting the study, participants were presented an online consent form informing them of the study purpose (again, using deception), study procedures, and the voluntary nature of the study highlighting participants’ ability to not consent, and thus not continue the study, as well as the option for participants to close out of the study at any point without consequence. After receiving consent to continue with the study, the study began and participants were randomly assigned to one of six possible conditions, each taking the form of a fictional online blog post created by this researcher that manipulated the independent variables previously mentioned (see Appendix D) (Pegram 2018:106-109). Participants were then instructed to read their assigned blog post thoroughly and carefully through either an online format made to resemble an authentic blog post (see Appendix E) or through a plain-text Microsoft Word document available for download for accessibility purposes. A one-minute clock was placed on the online blog post disabling participants’ ability to continue to the rest of the study until one minute had passed.
Such a measure was put in place with the aim of encouraging participants to take their time and carefully read their randomly assigned blog post. Once enabled (i.e., the one-minute time requirement was met), participants were able to access the self-report survey sections of the study.

The self-report survey sections where administered in the following order: (1) a seven-item victim blame measure specific to the blog posts; (2) six blog-specific questions separate from the blog-specific victim blame measure; (3) a five-item general victim blame measure with one attention check question (e.g., “choose strongly agree for this question”); (4) a twenty-item past IPV victimization and perpetration measure with two attention check questions; (5) three blog-specific attention check questions; (6) nineteen participant demographics questions. The survey was programmed to notify participants when a question was left unanswered before moving on to the next page of the survey to ensure that participants did not mistakenly leave questions unanswered. However, participants may skip any question(s) without penalty.

Once completed, the survey thanked participants for their time and debriefed them about the study in which they participated. This debriefing process was completed to the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) specifications, and included complete transparency regarding any deception about this study’s real purpose. Additionally, during the study’s debriefing process participants were provided with a list of resources including the university’s counseling and psychological services, university victims services, the National Domestic Violence Hotline, and the National Sexual Assault Hotline in the event that participants experienced any distress or otherwise need to seek support after completing this study given that many survey items in the study focused on violence. These resources were also made available during the informed consent process.
The data collected from participants through Qualtrics® was exported to the International Business Machines’ (IBM) Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) V.28 statistics software, a program made available to this researcher for free through her university. Using SPSS V.28, data first underwent a data cleaning process wherein the study’s preregistered data exclusion criteria was also applied. After which, descriptive statistical analysis and bivariate correlations were performed with the data. To test the study’s three hypotheses, data were analyzed using three one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistical tests testing the relationship between the study’s dependent variable (i.e., victim blame) and each of the independent variables (i.e., victim/offender relationship status, victim (self) identity status, and participant gender), respectively.

Sample

After conducting a priori power analysis with G*Power (Faul et al. 2007), it was determined that a minimum of 270 participants were required to obtain the statistical power (power = .80; alpha = .05; medium effect size ($f = 0.25$) needed for hypothesis testing. To account for missing data and other data exclusions during the data cleaning process, this researcher oversampled by thirty percent and aimed to recruit 360 participants, with the goal of obtaining 60 participants for each of the six experimental conditions. Once the target sample of 360 was obtained, the study was deactivated in the SONA system and no new emails from professors were sent. However, given that some course instructors allowed their students to earn extra credit for study participation up until the last day of the summer 2021 semester, data collection from participants recruited through professor emails continued after the target sample of 360 was attained. In total, 455 participants accessed this study.
All participants were adult (i.e., 18 years or older) students actively enrolled at a large, Research I, public university located in the Southeastern United States. Participant recruitment was conducted through two platforms simultaneously and over a four month time period (May 2021 through August 2021) during the university’s summer 2021 session. In conjunction with the second recruitment method (i.e., professor emails), the first method of participant recruitment was conducted through the university’s psychology department’s SONA research participation program, a program open to all active students, but whose majority of participants are undergraduate students offered course credit for research participation (UCF Office of Research n.d.).

SONA participants are undergraduate students who are (typically) enrolled in a psychology course and who are fulfilling a course requirement to participate in a research study for course credit (UCF Office of Research n.d). Participants recruited through SONA were rewarded with class credit in the amount of half credit for their participation in this study—a rate predetermined by the SONA system based on the average time taken to complete a study. To ensure no undue pressure was placed on research participants, instructors using the SONA research platform in their course curriculum are required to offer an alternative assignment for those who do not wish to participate in research, to ensure that all participants who chose to engage in this study did so of their own volition.

Additionally, participants were also recruited through emails from professors offering course credit to students currently enrolled in the summer 2021 session from the university’s Sociology, Social Work, and Criminal Justice departments. Professors were recruited through an email sent by this researcher’s thesis chair to colleagues requesting support in study participant recruitment (see Appendix F). Like with participants recruited through SONA, all participants
recruited through professor emails received course credit for their participation at an amount set at each professors’ discretion. Additionally, to ensure no undue pressure was placed on research participants recruited through professor emails, instructors were required to offer an alternative assignment for those who did not wish to participate in research but still wished to receive course credit to ensure that all participants who chose to engage in this study did so of their own volition.

The sample as whole is a non-random sample of convenience as all participants were actively enrolled students at this researcher’s university during the time of their participation. In all, 455 participants accessed the study. However, after implementing standard data cleaning practices and preregistered\textsuperscript{4} exclusion criteria, 126 (27.69 %) participants were excluded from the analysis leaving a total sample of 329 participants with just under 29\% (n = 95) of participants recruited through SONA and just over 71\% (n = 234) recruited through emails from professors. A full and detailed explanation of the preregistered exclusion criteria can be found in the \textit{Data Screening} section of this document. However, briefly, participants were excluded for the following reasons: (a) duplicate participations; (b) failure to correctly respond to, or missing data for, three or more attention checks; (c) failure to correctly respond to, or missing data for, any of the study’s blog comprehension check questions; (d) missing data for the blog-specific victim blame measure (i.e., study dependent variable); (e) missing data for self-report gender identification (i.e., independent variable required to test \textbf{H3}). All descriptive data about the sample can be found in the \textit{Preliminary Analysis} section of this page as well as in Tables 1 through 4.

\textsuperscript{4} This study was preregistered with the Center for Open Science’s OSF preregistration system.
Variables

To test the study’s three hypotheses, this researcher has identified one dependent variable and three independent variables.

Dependent Variable

Pursuant to Christie’s (1986) Ideal Victim framework, the dependent variable for all three of this study’s hypotheses is the level of ideal victim status ascribed by study participants to the study’s (constructed) IPVAW victim. This study’s dependent variable is operationalized as victim blame attribution towards the study’s IPVAW victim by participants. Victim blame as this study’s dependent variable is the most appropriate way to measure how participants ascribe ideal victim status as Christie’s (1986) framework suggests that victim blaming is a function of the construction of ideal victim status as it is the public’s collective blame for a victim (or lack thereof) that determines a victims’ ideal victim status. To assess victim blame for the purpose of testing the study’s hypotheses, this researcher will use one victim blame measure that gauges victim blaming by participants specific to their assigned condition (e.g., blog-specific victim blame). A detailed explanation of this measure is found in the Measures and Questionnaires section of this paper.

Independent Variables

The independent variable that will be manipulated to test hypothesis number one (H1) is attribute number five from the Ideal Victim framework—“the relationship between the [IPVAW] victim and the offender” (Christie 1986:18). The independent variable for hypothesis number one (H1) has been operationalized as relationship status with two conditions: (a) a casual romantic relationship and (b) a serious romantic relationship.
The independent variable that will be manipulated to address hypothesis number two (H2) is the latter portion of attribute number six from the Ideal Victim framework—“...the [IPVAW] victim’s ability to claim victim status” (Christie 1986:18). The independent variable for hypothesis number two (H2) has been operationalized as the study’s IPVAW victim’s self-identification with three conditions: “victim,” “survivor,” or “not specified” (i.e., the control). The “victim” self-identification was represented in the blog posts as an IPVAW victim in the early stages of the recovery process who identifies as a victim and who presents a coping mentality through their written blog. The “survivor” self-identification was represented in the blog posts as an IPVAW victim who actively identifies as an IPVAW survivor and presents a mentality of strength and empowerment through their written blog. The “not specified” self-identification was the study’s control group and was represented in the blog post as an IPVAW victim who details an incident of IPVAW but does not attach a self-identity to her victimization.

The final independent variable used to address hypothesis three (H3) is participants’ self-reported gender. Data on participant gender was collected by asking the following question: “Which best describes your gender identity?” Participants were prompted to respond to the question by selecting one of the following choices: (a) “Woman,” (b) “Man,” (c) “Transgender woman,” (d) Transgender man,” (e) Genderqueer or gender non-conforming,” (f) “Questioning,” and (g) “Another, please specify.” Participant’s self-report gender was then coded into three groups with group one including “woman” and “transgender woman,” group two including “man” and “transgender man,” and group three to include “genderqueer or gender non-conforming,” “questioning” and any other specified genders.
Measures and Questionnaires

Blog-Specific Victim Blame

To gauge victim blame specific to the online blog posts, participants were asked to indicate their responses to seven self-report questions adapted from Abrams and colleagues’ (2003) study which employed a similar vignette design to this study. Beyond changing the names of the victim and offender in each question to correspond with the names of characters used in this study, original questions were also altered to reflect the storyline of this study. Additionally, six of the seven questions were altered and presented to participants as statements rather than questions (e.g., “Christina is to blame for what happened.” vs. “How much do you think Christina should blame herself for what happened?”). The adapted measure was presented to participants as seven separate statements/questions and were accompanied by a seven-point scale (1 = Completely agree to 7 = Completely disagree; 1 = Completely sympathetic to 7 = Completely unsympathetic; 1 = Completely Christina’s to 7 = Marc’s) (Abrams et al. 2003:115).

The questions were presented to participants in the following order: (1) “Christina is to blame for what happened;” (2) “Marc is to blame for what happened;” (3) “Christina had control over the situation;” (4) “Marc had control over the situation;” (5) “If Christina did not want to be in that situation with Marc she should have left;” (6) “Whose fault do you think it is that things turned out the way they did?;” (7) “Do you feel sympathy for Christina?”

Additionally, to provide a transparent approach to how Abrams and colleagues’ (2003) measure was adapted, the adapted and the original questions from the Abrams et al. (2003) study can be found in Appendix G of this paper. The internal consistency of the adapted scale was tested and a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.668 was found.
To prepare the measure for analysis, the items were averaged to “provide a victim blame score for each participant” (Abrams et al. 2003:115). The items “Marc is to blame for what happened,” “Marc had control over the situation,” and “Do you feel sympathy for Christina?” were reverse coded before the scores were averaged for a composite scale (Abrams et al. 2003:115). For this study, higher averaged scores indicate higher endorsement of victim blame. It is the above outlined blog-specific victim blame measure that was used for this study’s dependent variable and from which data were applied to test all three hypotheses.

General Victim Blame

To evaluate general victim blame attitudes, participants were asked to complete a five-item measure from using response options from a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree (Eigenberg & Policastro 2016:44). The measure used is from a study conducted by Eigenberg and Policastro (2016) and asked participants to indicate their agreement with the following five statements: (1) “Some people who are victims deserve it because of the way they act;” (2) “Some victims ask to be victimized;” (3) “Some victims like to be in the victim role;” (4) “People usually play some role in their own victimization;” (5) “If you take precautions, you should not become a victim” (Eigenberg & Policastro 2016:54). The internal consistency of the above outlined scale was tested and a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.778 was found.

To prepare the measure for analysis, scores were averaged to compute a general victim blame score for each participant. The general victim blame measure outlined above was used to describe and provide context for sample data. Additionally, the data collected from this measure was used as a covariate in the primary analysis as a simple correlation test during preliminary data analysis suggested the data from this measure significantly relate to the blog-specific victim
blame measure (e.g., the dependent variable). As there were no specific hypotheses for this measure no hypothesis testing was conducted using this measure.

Past IPV Victimization and Perpetration

This study uses the revised and validated short form of the revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2S) from Straus and Douglas (2004) as measurement of participants’ past IPV victimization and perpetration. The CTS2S consists of twenty questions (see Appendix H), all of which are accompanied by an eight point scale gauging the frequency in which IPV within the relationship occurred (1 = Once in the past year; 2 = Twice in the past year; 3 = 3-5 times in the past year; 4 = 6-10 times in the past year; 5 = 11-20 times in the past year; 6 = More than 20 times in the past year; 7 = Not in the past year, but it did happen before; 8 = This has never happened) (Straus & Douglas 2004:519, 521). The internal consistency of the above outlined scale for the past annual frequency of IPV victimization was tested and a Cronbach’s alpha score of 0.509 was found. The internal consistency of the above outlined scale for the past annual frequency of IPV perpetration was tested and a Cronbach's alpha score of 0.549 was found.

Scale scores were created to be consistent with the originating authors’ annual frequency method (Straus 2004:5). As the CTS2S measure outlined above produced Cronbach’s alpha scores below an acceptable level for analyses (i.e., below 0.70), these data were not used to help describe or provide context for sample data.

Blog Comprehension Check

To assess the level of attention participants gave to their assigned condition, participants were directed to answer three multiple-choice comprehension questions about the blog post they were assigned to read. The questions asked were as follows: (Q1) “What was Christina and
Marc’s relationship status?;” (Q2) “Where did the incident between Christina and Marc occur?;” (Q3) “What started the fight between Christian and Marc?” The answers to these questions are as follows: (Q1) (a) “Casually dating,” (b) “Serious relationship,” (c) “They just met,” (d) “Friends;” (e) “Coworkers;” (Q2) (a) “A bar,” (b) “An apartment,” (c) “Work,” (d) “A movie theater,” (e) “school;” (Q3) (a) “Christina’s wardrobe choice,” (b) “Christina being late,” (c) “Marc being late,” (d) “Marc’s wardrobe choice.” As the first question relates to one of the study’s independent variables (victim/offender relationship status) being manipulated, the correct answer to this question will vary between (a) “Casually dating” and (b) “Serious relationship” depending on participants’ randomly assigned condition. In contrast, the second and third question in this study’s comprehension check series do not relate to any testable variables leaving the two remaining questions with only one correct answer. The correct answers for questions two and three in the study’s comprehension check series are “A bar” and “Christina’s wardrobe choice” respectively. Participants who failed any of the comprehension checks were excluded from analyses.

Sociodemographics

Nineteen self-report sociodemographic questions were asked and the following information about participants was collected: age, race and ethnicity, gender, relationship status, current and raised size and type of community, socioeconomic status, financial strain, political affiliation, religious affiliation, student status, and participant’s goal job industry after graduation. The exact format of these questions can be found in Appendix I of this proposal. The self-report sociodemographic data collected for this study were chosen after consulting current research on victim blaming which suggested more research on the relationship between victim blame and participant sociodemographic is needed (See García & Tomás 2014; Van der Bruggen
& Grubb 2014; Waltermaurer 2012). As this study’s sample is an adult student population, some of the questions asked were altered to best fit the population being sampled (i.e., student status and goal job industry after graduation).

Excluding data collected from participants about their gender, age, and financial strain, data obtained from these nineteen self-report sociodemographic questions were collected purely for descriptive purposes and, as such, had no hypotheses associated with them. These data may be used in the future for exploratory research purposes, however, for this thesis, they were used solely to describe and provide context for the sample data. Data collected from the self-report demographics question about participant gender were used to test hypothesis number three (H3). Data collected on participant age was proposed to be used as a covariate in primary analyses if shown to be significantly related to the blog-specific victim blame measure (i.e., the dependent variable). The decision to use participant age as a possible covariate arose from the fact that participant age is a scale variable and because past research focused on victim blame specific to IPV suggests participant age as having a significant impact on participants’ victim blame attribution (see García & Tomás 2014; Waltermaurer 2012). However, participant age did not prove to have a significant association with the study dependent variable (see Table 6) and as such was not used as a covariate. Additionally, a measure gauging participants financial strain (Hamby, Turner, and Finkelhor 2011) was proposed to be used as a covariate in primary analyses if shown to be significantly related to the study dependent variable. Preliminary analysis showed a significant positive association (see Table 6) between participant financial strain and the study dependent variable and as such participant financial strain was used as a study covariate in primary analyses. The decision to use participant financial strain as a possible covariate arose from the fact that participant financial strain is a scale variable and because past research focused
on victim blame specific to IPV suggests social class as having a significant impact participants’
victim blame attribution (see Waltermaurer 2012) and financial strain is considered an indicator of social class.

Duplicate Participant Check

To combat the possibility of duplicate participation by recruited participants who had access to the study via both the SONA system and through their summer courses (i.e., email from a professor recruitment method) or who may have had summer courses with more than one professor offering the study as extra credit in their course, three questions were designed and added to the end of the study. The questions are as follows: (Q1) “Based on the options below, please select your favorite color;” (Q2) “Please identify your favorite animal using the text box below;” (Q3) “Please provide the first two digits of your street address in the text box below.” For question one, the possible options available for participants were as followed: (a) “Red;” (b) “Orange;” (c) “Yellow;” (d) “Green;” (e) “Blue;” (f) “Indigo;” (g) “Violet.” For questions two and three participants were provided a text box to write in their responses. Duplicate responses to these questions were identified and only the first participant’s data were included in the analysis. This strategy was chosen so as to assess duplicate participation without unnecessarily collecting identifying information from participants.

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5 Measured by the date and time the participant submitted their study responses.
CHAPTER FIVE: ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Data Screening

Using SPSS V.28, data screening procedures were followed prior to conducting analyses. All syntax and output is provided on the OSF project page: osf.io/xpufv/. A total of 455 participants opened the survey over an 82 day period (Tuesday, May 18, 2021 through Saturday, August 7, 2021). Of the 455 participants, one participant opened the, selected “No, I do not wish to continue with this study” on the study consent form leaving a remaining 454 participants. Of the remaining 454 participants, 38 opened the study but closed out before beginning, leaving a total of 416 participants. From the remaining 416 participants, 87 participants’ data were excluded from analysis based on the preregistered criteria outlined below.

First, participants with duplicate responses to the three duplicate participation check questions were identified and excluded so that only the first⁶ of the duplicated responses was kept for analysis. In total, 12 participants were excluded for this reason. Participants who failed to complete (i.e., were missing data from) the seven-item blog-specific victim blame measure were excluded from analysis as these questions are the basis for this study’s dependent variable and as such are required for hypotheses testing. Only one participant was excluded for this reason. Additionally, participants who failed to self-report their gender identity were excluded from analysis as these data are needed to test hypothesis number three (H3). No participants were excluded from analyses for this reason. After filtering participants who did not meet the criteria outlined above, any remaining participants who incorrectly answered or failed to answer one or more of the three blog comprehension check questions were excluded from analysis. In total, 62 participants were excluded for this reason. All remaining participants who failed to

⁶ Measured by the date and time the participant submitted their study responses.
answer or incorrectly answered three or more attention check questions placed throughout the survey were also excluded from analysis. In total, 12 participants were excluded for this reason. After all data exclusions, the final analytic sample size was 329.

Preliminary Analysis and Results

Demographic Information

Descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations (for scale variables) and frequencies (for categorical variables) were assessed. Participants’ age ranged from 18 to 29 years \( (n = 321; M = 22.57; Sd = 3.90; Md = 22; Mode = 18) \). Seventy-nine percent \( (n = 260) \) of participants self-reported their gender identity as “Woman,” 16.7\% \( (n = 55) \) as “Man,” 0.6\% \( (n = 2) \) as “Transgender man,” 2.4\% \( (n = 8) \) as “Genderqueer or gender non-conforming,” 0.6\% \( (n = 2) \) as “Questioning,” and 0.6\% \( (n = 2) \) as “Another, please specify” (responses: “Boy Adjacent/Vaguely Feminine” and “Non-Binary”). One-hundred and five (31.9\%) of participants reported being of Hispanic or Latino/a/x origin. Two-hundred and thirty-five (71.4\%) participants self-reported as “White,” 60 (18.2\%) as “Black or African American,” 29 as “Asian,” two (0.6\%) as “Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander,” nine (2.7\%) as “American Indian or Alaskan Native,” and 26 (7.9\%) as “Other, please specify.”\(^7\) Just over 78\% \( (n = 257) \) of students reported being enrolled in a full-time class load (i.e., 12 credit hrs. or more) while 21.9\% \( (n = 72) \) reported being enrolled part-time at the university (i.e. less than 12 credit hrs.). The sample was comprised of 14.3\% \( (n = 47) \) first year undergraduates, 14.3\% \( (n = 47) \) second year undergraduates, 27.7\% \( (n = 91) \) third year undergraduates, 37.1\% \( (n = 122) \) fourth year

\(^7\) Due to study design, the totals of self-reported racial identities amount to a value larger than 100\% as participants were able to choose “all that apply” when self-reporting their racial identity.
undergraduates, and 6.7% ($n = 22$) fifth or more year undergraduates. Two-hundred and thirty-three (98.2%) participants reported living in the continental United States during the time of this study. The remaining six participants (1.8%) reported residing outside of the U.S. during the time of this survey. For complete demographic information and descriptive statistics, please see Tables 1 through 4.

Table 1: Frequencies for Study Conditions and Manipulations ($n = 329$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conditions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casually Dating × Victim Self-Identity</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casually Dating × Survivor Self-Identity</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>18.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casually Dating × Control (Self-Identity)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>16.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious Relationship × Victim Self-Identity</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious Relationship × Survivor Self-Identity</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>15.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious Relationship × Control (Self-Identity)</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Manipulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Causal</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Identity Manipulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim Self-Identity</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>32.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survivor Self-Identity</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>33.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control (Self-Identity)</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>33.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Sociodemographic Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hispanic or Latino/a/x (n = 328)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>31.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>67.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Race (n = 329)</strong> *</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender identity (n = 329)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>79.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender woman</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender man</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genderqueer or gender non-confirming</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual household income (n = 321)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than $10,000</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$10,000 - $19,999</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>12.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$20,000 - $29,999</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$30,000 - $39,999</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$40,000 - $49,999</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$50,000 - $59,999</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$60,000 - $69,999</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$70,000 - $79,999</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$80,000 - $89,999</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$90,000 - $99,999</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$100,000 - $149,999</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than $150,000</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reside in the United States (n = 329)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>98.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Current community type (n = 327)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>26.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>217</td>
<td>66.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island community</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military base</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area raised (n = 327)</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>23.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>63.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Island community</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military base</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ever been in a romantic relationship (n = 329)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>287</td>
<td>87.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Relationship status (n = 329)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship status</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>38.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casually dating or hooking up (brief sexual encounters)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusive dating relationship</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married, civil union, or domestic partnership</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divorced or widowed</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Political affiliation (n = 328)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political affiliation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely liberal</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>17.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat liberal</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>25.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the middle or moderate</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat conservative</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely conservative</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not have a political affiliation</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>20.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Religious affiliation (n = 327)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious affiliation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agnostic</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>16.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheist</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>7.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>41.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindu</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not have a religious affiliation</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>17.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Religiosity (n = 327)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religiosity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all religious</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>35.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly religious</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately religious</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very religious</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely religious</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Due to study design, the totals of self-reported racial identities amount to a value larger than 100% as participants were able to choose “all that apply” when self-reporting their racial identity.
Table 3: Student-Related Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student status (n = 329)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Student (12 credit hrs. or more)</td>
<td>257</td>
<td>78.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time Student (less than 12 credit hrs.)</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student level (n = 329)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First year undergraduate</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second year undergraduate</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third year undergraduate</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>27.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth year undergraduate</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth or more year undergraduate</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classes fully online this semester (n = 329)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>294</td>
<td>89.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Live on campus (n = 329)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I currently live on campus</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I currently live off campus, but have lived on campus in the past</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have never lived on campus</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>58.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Declared Major (n = 329)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology/Biochemistry/Biological Sciences</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Science</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminal Justice/Criminology</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>22.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Management</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerging Media</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English/Literature:</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Science/Management</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forensic Sciences</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary/Integrative Studies</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International and Global Studies</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kinesiology</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nursing</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Science/Pre-Law/Legal Studies</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio/Television</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>declared major cont’d (n = 329)*</td>
<td>frequency</td>
<td>percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual and Preforming Arts</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>planned job industry after graduation (n = 329)**</th>
<th>frequency</th>
<th>percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case Management</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer Sciences/Software</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrections</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Criminology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12 Education and School Support</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency Management</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Sciences</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare/Medical Field (Physical)</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality/Services Industry</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law/Legal</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>12.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PR/Communications/Marketing/Advertising</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance, Fine, and Creative Arts</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology/Counseling/Other Mental Health Services</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work/Social Services</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech Pathology</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sports</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veterinary</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victims Advocate/Victims Services</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undecided</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Students with double majors where placed in both major identified

** Participants who identified two possible industry fields (Ex: “Victim advocate or translator for law enforcement”) were counted twice—once in field one (i.e., victims advocate) and once in field two (i.e., law enforcement).
### Table 4: Frequencies for Blog Related Questions and Statements (n = 329)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Christina has been negatively impacted by her experience with Marc.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely agree</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly agree</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly disagree</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Christina is a victim of dating violence.</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely agree</td>
<td>271</td>
<td>82.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly agree</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>10.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither agree nor disagree</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely disagree</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How severe do you think Marc’s behavior towards Christina was?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very low severity</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low severity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately low severity</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither low nor high severity</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately high severity</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>13.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High severity</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very high severity</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>41.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How empowered do you think Christina is after her experience with Marc?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely empowered</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly empowered</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat empowered</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither empowered nor not empowered</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat not empowered</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>11.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mostly not empowered</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>24.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely not empowered</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>34.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Do you think Christina and Marc are still together?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely yes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably yes</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Might or might not</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probably not</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitely not</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>35.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Did Marc sexually assault Christina?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>314</td>
<td>95.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Victim Blame Scale Descriptive Statistics

The mean blog-specific victim blame score (i.e., study dependent variable) was low among the study sample with a mean of 2.31 and a standard deviation of 0.44 (items assessed on 1-7 point scale). The mean general victim blame score was also low: the mean was 1.54 with a standard deviation of 0.52 (items assessed on 1-4 point scale). For a full representation of all scale variables, please see Table 5.

Table 5: Scale Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blog-Specific Victim Blame</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>2.3112</td>
<td>0.44109</td>
<td>0.195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Victim Blame</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>1.5437</td>
<td>0.52301</td>
<td>0.274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past IPV Victimization (CTS2S)</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>96.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>96.00</td>
<td>19.6170</td>
<td>19.38252</td>
<td>375.682</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Past IPV Perpetration (CTS2S)</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>78.00</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>78.00</td>
<td>20.3617</td>
<td>19.58922</td>
<td>383.738</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Strain Index</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.6602</td>
<td>0.41397</td>
<td>0.171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Age</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>11.00</td>
<td>18.00</td>
<td>29.00</td>
<td>22.5670</td>
<td>3.90064</td>
<td>15.215</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Bivariate Correlations

Bivariate correlations were conducted to assess associations between participants’ blog-specific victim blame, age, financial strain index, and general victim blame. Results showed no significant correlation between the blog-specific victim blame and participants’ self-reported age ($p = .207$). However, all other associations were statistically significant. Specifically, results revealed a weak, positive correlation ($n = 329; r = .109; p = .049$) between the financial strain index and blog-specific victim blame suggesting that as participant financial strain increases, blog-specific victim blame attribution also increases. A positive correlation ($n = 329; r = .529; p < .001$) was revealed between general victim blame and blog-specific victim blame suggesting that as participant general victim blame attribution increases, blog-specific
victim blame attribution also increases. For all bivariate correlations, please see the correlations matrix presented in Table 6.

**Table 6: Bivariate Correlations Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M (Sd)</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Blog-Specific Victim Blame</td>
<td>2.31 (0.44)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Participant Age</td>
<td>22.56 (3.90)</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Financial Strain Index</td>
<td>2.66 (0.41)</td>
<td>.109*</td>
<td>.345**</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. General Victim Blame</td>
<td>1.54 (0.52)</td>
<td>.529**</td>
<td>.119*</td>
<td>.142*</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

**Primary Analysis and Results**

To test study hypotheses, three separate one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted, each with a significance threshold of 0.05. Each model was then repeated to control for participants’ financial strain index and general victim blame attribution (as these variables showed significant relationships with blog-specific victim blame when tested for bivariate correlations) using three separate analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) tests each also with a significance threshold of 0.05.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to assess the effect of victim/offender relationship (i.e., casual relationship \([n = 173; M = 2.31; Sd = 0.44]\) vs. serious relationship \([n = 156; M = 2.31; Sd = 0.44]\)) on participants' blog-specific victim blame attribution. The test revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference between the causal relationship conditions and the serious relationship conditions, \(F(1, 327) = 0.002, p = .967\). As such, this study’s first hypothesis (H1) was not supported, suggesting that, within this sample, victim/offender
relationship status does not have an effect on the level of victim blame attributed to IPVAW victims by participants.

An ANCOVA was conducted to assess the effect of victim/offender relationship (i.e., casual vs. serious relationship) on participants’ blog-specific victim blame attribution when adjusted for participants’ financial strain index scores and general victim blame scores. The test revealed that there was no statistically significant effect on participants’ blog-specific victim blame attribution between participants in the casual relationship condition and the serious relationship condition when adjusting for participants’ financial strain index scores and general victim blame scores, $F(3, 329) = 0.014, p = .907$.

A second one-way ANOVA was conducted to assess the effect of victim self-identity (i.e., victim [$n = 108; M = 2.31; Sd = 0.47$] vs. survivor [$n = 111; M = 2.29; Sd = 0.45$] vs. control [$n = 110; M = 2.34; Sd = 0.41$]) on participants’ blog-specific victim blame attribution. The test revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference between the mean blog-specific victim blame scores of participants in the victim self-identity conditions, the survivor self-identity conditions, and those in the control self-identity conditions, $F(2, 326) = 0.299, p = .742$. As such, this study’s second hypothesis ($H2$) was not supported by sample data, suggesting that, within this sample, victim self-identity does not have an effect on the level of victim blame attributed to IPVAW victims by participants.

An ANCOVA was conducted to assess the effect of victim self-identity (i.e., victim vs. survivor, vs. control) on participants’ blog-specific victim blame attribution when adjusted for participants’ financial strain index scores and general victim blame scores. The test revealed that there was no statistically significant effect on participants’ blog-specific victim blame attribution between participants in the victim self-identity condition, the survivor self-identity condition,
and/or the control condition when adjusting for participants’ financial strain index scores and general victim blame scores $F(4, 329) = 0.83, p = .438$.

A third and final one-way ANOVA was conducted to assess the effect of participants’ self-reported gender identity (women vs. men) on participants’ blog-specific victim blame attribution. The (G1) woman group ($n = 260; M = 2.28; Sd = 0.40$) was composed of participants who self-reported their gender identity as either “woman ($n = 260$)” or “transgender woman ($n = 0$),” (G2) the man group ($n = 57; M = 2.52; Sd = 0.57$) was composed of participants who self-reported their gender identity as either “man ($n = 55$)” or “transgender man ($n = 2$).” Twelve additional participants reported another gender: “Genderqueer or gender non-conforming ($n = 8$),” “Questioning ($n = 2$),” or “Another, please specify ($n = 2$).” Due to group three (i.e., other specified gender) not having a sufficient group size, this group was excluded from analysis. For descriptive purposes, the mean victim blame score for this group was $2.05$ ($Sd = 0.25$) indicating that victim blame attributions were lowest among participants with another gender identity (compared to women and men) although it can not be ascertained whether this difference is statistically significant. For purposes of consistency and equal representation, Table 7 of this thesis provides the descriptive statistics for the mean blog-specific victim blame scores aggregated by participants’ self-report gender identification.
Table 7: Descriptive statistics of blog-specific victim blame scores by participant gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Gender</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Min.</th>
<th>Max.</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Variance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>260</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>2.2769</td>
<td>0.39908</td>
<td>0.159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>4.38</td>
<td>2.5432</td>
<td>0.56888</td>
<td>0.324</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender woman</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender man</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>1.9375</td>
<td>0.26517</td>
<td>0.070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genderqueer or gender non-conforming</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.0938</td>
<td>0.24776</td>
<td>0.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.0000</td>
<td>0.35355</td>
<td>0.125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Another, please specify</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>1.9375</td>
<td>0.26517</td>
<td>0.070</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ANOVA test revealed that there was a statistically significant difference in the mean blog-specific victim blame scores for men and women, $F(1, 315) = 14.86, p < .001$. As such, the study’s third hypothesis (H3) was supported by sample data and suggests that within this sample, participant gender identity does have an effect on the level of victim blame attributed to IPVAW victims by participants. Specifically, results suggest that participants who self-identify as “man” or “transgender man” ascribe higher levels of victim blame towards victims of IPVAW than participants who self-identify as “woman.”

An ANCOVA was conducted to assess the effect participant self-report gender identity (i.e., women vs. men) on participants’ blog-specific victim blame attribution when adjusted for participants’ financial strain index scores and general victim blame scores. The test revealed a statistically significant effect on participants’ blog-specific victim blame attribution between participants in the women gender identity group and the men gender identity group when adjusting for participants’ financial strain index scores and general victim blame scores $F(3, 317) = 4.19, p = .042$. Results indicate that men attribute more victim blame compared to women,
even after accounting for financial strain and general victim blame. For full ANOVA model results, please see Table 8. For full ANCOVA model results, please see Table 9.

**Table 8:** Analysis of Variances (ANOVAs) comparing the mean blog-specific victim blame between and within the groups for the victim/offender relationship status, victim self-identity, and participant conditions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Manipulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(casual vs. serious)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 329</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.002</td>
<td>0.967</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>63.815</td>
<td>0.195</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>63.815</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Identity Manipulation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(victim vs. survivor vs. control)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 329</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.117</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>0.299</td>
<td>0.742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>326</td>
<td>63.699</td>
<td>0.195</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>63.816</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(woman vs. man)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n = 317</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between groups</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.806</td>
<td>2.806</td>
<td>14.857</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within groups</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>59.503</td>
<td>0.185</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>62.309</td>
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Table 9: Analysis of covariances (ANCOVAs) with victim/offender relationship status, victim self-identity, and participant gender predicting blog-specific victim blame controlling for financial strain index and general victim blame.

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<th>Source</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Type III SS</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>η²</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>1821.172</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>63.816</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>1821.172</td>
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<th>Source</th>
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<td>316</td>
<td>62.309</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

a. R Squared = 0.281 (Adjusted R Square = 0.274)
b. R Squared = 0.285 (Adjusted R Square = 0.276)
c. R Squared = 0.282 (Adjusted R Square = 0.275)
CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects that victim/offender relationship type (casual vs. serious), victim’s self-identity (victim vs. survivor vs. control) as a victim, and participants’ gender (woman vs. man) on victim blame attributed to a woman who had experienced IPV perpetrated by her romantic partner who was a man. Hypotheses one (H1) and two (H2) of this study were guided by Christie’s (1986) Ideal Victim framework. The third hypothesis (H3) of this study was exploratory and guided by past research on the relationship between observer gender and victim blame attribution. Results indicated support for gender differences in that men attributed significantly higher blame to the woman IPV victim compared to women (H3), however the other two hypotheses (H1 and H2) were not supported in this study.

Turning first to H1, results from the one-way ANOVA suggest that victim/offender relationship status does not have an effect on the level of victim blame attributed to IPVAW victims by participants. This is inconsistent with the Ideal Victim framework which argues that the closer the relationship between the victim and the offender, the more blame will be attributed to the victim for their victimization, and the less ideal victim status will be ascribed to the victim by the public (Christie 1986:19, 21). Past research guided by the Ideal Victim framework has found support for victim/offender relationship type (i.e., intimacy level) being a contributing factor in the level of ideal victim status provided to victims of non-VAW crimes (see Eelmaa & Murumaa-Mengel 2021; Schwöbel-Patel 2018; Wilson & O’Brien 2016). Among VAW crimes however, past research suggests mixed findings regarding how intimacy levels between a victim and offender affects attribution of victim blame. Some research suggests victim blame attribution rises as the level of intimacy between the victim and offender rises (see Summers & Feldman...
while other research finds that as the intimacy levels between the victim and the offender decrease, victim blame attribution increases (see Strömwall et al. 2013; Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014; Whatley 1996), and yet still, other studies find no significant relationship between victim/offender intimacy levels and victim blame attribution (see Ayala et al. 2018; Whatley 1996).

The mixed findings regarding the relationship between victim blame attribution and victim/offender relationship intimacy levels from the VAW studies cited above investigated men on women rape, sexual assault, IPV/DV, and stalking. As this study investigated man on woman IPV, the finding that victim/offender relationship status does not affect the level of victim blame attributed to IPVAW victims by participants is consistent with other mixed findings on this topic. However, such a finding is inconsistent with the Ideal Victim framework that guided H1, as well as past research that indicates victim/offender relationship intimacy as meaningfully impacting the construction of an ideal victim (see Eelmaa & Murumaa-Mengel 2021; Schwöbel-Patel 2018; Wilson & O’Brien 2016). Future research is needed to help clarify why, seemingly, crimes of VAW stray from the tenets of the ideal victim framework and, as such, the ideal victim paradigm.

The finding of this study that victim/offender relationship status does not significantly affect participants victim blame attribution may suggest that relationship status and intimacy is more nuanced than the terms used to describe the relationships (i.e., casual vs. serious) in this study. Past research examining the relationship between victim blame attribution and relationship intimacy for VAW-centered research tends to distinguish relationship statuses using any of the combinations of “strangers,” “acquaintances,” “dating/(ex-)intimate partner,” “married,” and “divorced” (see Ayala et al. 2015; Strömwall et al. 2013; Summers & Feldman 1984; Van der
Bruggen & Grubb 2014; Weller et al. 2013). As such, it may be the case that strangers vs. acquaintances vs. a couple dating (or an ex-couple) vs. a married couple (or divorced couple) offers more distinguishable differences in intimacy levels than that between the study’s conditions of casually dating vs. a serious relationship. Future research examining the effect of victim/offender relationship status of dating partners (i.e., casual vs. serious) on the construction of an ideal victim of IPVAW should seek to provide more context about the differences in intimacy levels between a casual vs. serious relationship.

Additionally, when research studying relationships among college students operationalize long-term (i.e., serious) romantic relationships by length of time, it tends to operationalize these relationships as anything lasting six month or longer (see England et al. 2008; Kuperberg & Padgett 2016), a measurement that is relatively short-lived and more casual on the spectrum of traditional romantic relationships. As study conditions did not provide participants with a definition of a casual or a serious relationship, nor did they offer context surrounding the difference in intimacy and commitment levels (i.e., living together vs. living separate, shared vs. separate finances, quantified length of the relationship, etc.), participants were left to interpret (depending on their randomly assigned condition) what a casual or serious relationship meant to them. As many students have their first serious romantic relationships in college (see Braithwaite et al. 2010; Kaukinen 2014) and with 12.8% of study participants indicating they have never been in a romantic relationship (see Table 2), it may be the case that the difference in intimacy levels associated with a casual and a serious relationship was not understood in a manner consistent across all participants. Future research examining the effect of victim/offender relationship status of dating partners (i.e., casual vs. serious) on the construction of an ideal victim of IPVAW should also seek to capture participants’ understanding, perceptions, and/or
attitudes surrounding intimacy levels attached to “casual” and “serious” relationships. Adding such a component to future research may help provide needed context about how participants’ understanding of the intimacy levels attached to different (dating) relationships (i.e., casual vs. serious) impacts their victim blame attribution.

Turning next to $H_2$, results from the one-way ANOVA suggest that victim self-identity (as a “victim” or a “survivor”) does not affect the level of victim blame attributed to IPVAW victims by participants. Essentially this means that the level of victim blame attributed to a woman who has experienced IPV by her romantic partner who is a man is not affected by whether or not she chooses to self-identify as a “victim of IPV” or a “survivor of IPV.” Such a finding does not support the Ideal Victim framework which maintains that an ideal victim must be strong enough to successfully claim ideal (i.e., total and recognized) victim status while still perceived to be weak enough as to not jeopardize the perceived weakness required of a victim (see attribute one of the framework) if she is to be ascribed ideal victim status by the public (Christie 1986:19, 21).

As previously expressed in this study’s literature review, the term “victim” is noted as having connotations of weakness, helplessness, and pity while the term “survivor” brings about connotations of strength, empowerment, and fight (Augustine 2019; Benness 2017; Boyle & Rogers 2020; Campoamor 2018; Dunn 2005; Elford et al. 2015; Harding 2020; Israeli 2020; Papendick & Bohner 2017; Profitt 1996; Sexual Assault Kit Initiative [SAKI] 2014; RAINN. n.d.; Rees 2018; Wu 2016). As such, it was expected (see $H_2$) that participants assigned to the self-identified “survivor” of IPVAW condition would confer more strength onto said survivor than those who encountered a self-identified “victim” of IPVAW and by conferring more strength onto the encountered self-identified survivor of IPVAW, collected data would show
(significantly) more victim blame attributed towards the self-identified “survivor” of IPVAW than the self-identified “victim” of IPVAW. However, such results were not revealed during analyses, suggesting instead that the terms used by women when self-identifying as women who have experienced IPV do not carry strong enough connotations of strength or weakness to meaningfully affect the perceived weakness required of her to be ascribed ideal victim status. While not meaningfully affecting victim blame attribution, the victim/survivor terms used in study conditions may have instead impacted participants’ perceptions of strength and empowerment of the victim. Future research should include measures that gauge participants’ perceptions of victim strength/empowerment and related constructs, alongside victim blame measures when seeking to understand the impact that victim self-identity as either a “victim” or “survivor” of IPVAW has on public perceptions of victimhood.

Additionally, it may also be the case that no meaningful difference was found when comparing the mean blog specific victim blame scores between participants in the different victim self-identity study conditions due to the construction of my study vignettes. To elaborate, nowhere in the study conditions were the terms “victim” or “survivor” clearly defined for participants, who, with a mean age of 22.5 years old, may not have much exposure to the terms “victim” and “survivor”—and the respective connotations of “weakness” and “strength” typically associated with the two terms—when describe in the context of a women disclosing her victimization by her romantic partner who is a man. Furthermore, while efforts were made to construct the different victim self-identity conditions in a way that embodied the respective connotations of weakness/helplessness and strength/empowerment typically associated with the terms “victim” and “survivor,” it may be the case that the language chosen to represent the respective connotations of the terms was too subtle. As such participants may not have been
provided with strong enough representations of the respective connotations that are typically associated with the terms “victim” and “survivor” to have created enough distinction between the conditions to have tested for any meaningful difference between the mean blog-specific victim blame scores of participants in the different conditions. Going forward, it may be necessary for future research examining the effects of victim /survivor self-identity on victim blame to include a method to meaningfully capture participants perceptions of the terms “victim” and “survivor” so as to better gauge whether or not participants in their assigned conditions are aware of the connotations associated with these terms.

Of the three hypotheses presented in this study, H3 was the only one supported by study data. Study findings suggest that participant gender does have a significant effect on the level of victim blame attributed to IPVAW victims by participants. Specifically, results indicate that men ascribe higher levels of victim blame towards victims of IPVAW than women participants. Past research regarding the relationship between participants’ gender and victim blame towards IPV victims offers mixed findings. Results that note higher levels of victim blame from men participants than women participants tend to originate from studies using an experimental vignette design with college student samples (see Bryant & Spencer 2003; Eigenberg & Policastro 2015; Sylaska & Walters 2014; West & Wandrei 2002; Yamawaki et al. 2012) while those studies that find evidence of women participants attributing more victim blame towards women who have experienced IPV than men participants originate from surveys using randomized national or general samples (see Waltermaurer 2012). As such, the findings from this study support the majority of findings from studies using student samples and experimental vignette research designs which suggest that men participants have higher levels of victim blame towards women who have experienced IPV than women participants. Future research should
seek to examine why studies using (a) student populations and/or (b) experimental vignette
designs produce results suggesting that men study participants attribute more victim blame
toward women who have experienced IPV than women.

More broadly, past VAW research notes higher levels of victim blame towards VAW
crime victims by men participants than women participants due to men’s lower level of empathy
towards (see Bongiorno et al. 2020) and lack of perceived similarity to (see Bell et al. 1994;
Grubb & Harrower 2008) the rape victim versus their empathy towards and perceived to the
offender. As study participants observed conditions wherein a man offender (i.e., “Marc”)
perpetrated acts of violence towards his woman romantic partner (i.e., “Christina”), it may be the
case that men participants felt more empathy towards “Marc,” the offender, than “Christina,” the
victim, thus affecting how much responsibility they were willing to attribute to Marc for his
actions and blame they were willing to attribute towards Christina for her role in the observed
scenario. Future research should aim to measure empathy levels and perceived similarity towards
both the offender and the victim of the IPVAW scenario presented to participants to better
understand to what level the effect of participants’ empathy towards and perceived similarity
towards the offender and victim may have on victim blame attribution towards victims of
IPVAW.

Finally, as the type of violence portrayed in study conditions depicted the sexual assault
of a woman by a man, it is important to note that past research on sexual assault cites men as
having higher levels of acceptance of rape/sexual assault myths than women (see Crall &
Goodfriend 2016; Giacopassi & Dull 1986; Martini & De Piccoli 2020; Van der Bruggen &
Grubb 2014). Rape/sexual assault myth acceptance has also been positively linked to victim
blame such that the higher the level of participants’ acceptance of rape/sexual assault myths the
more victim blame participants attribute to a rape/sexual assault victim for her victimization (see Grubb & Turner 2012; Russell & Hand 2017; Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014). As such, future research depicting sexual assault as a form of IPV should include a measure assessing participants’ acceptance of in rape/sexual assault myths to better gauge how this factor may affect overall victim blaming towards the IPVAW victim represented in study conditions.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research Directions

Despite not finding support for two out of the three hypotheses tested (i.e., H1 and H2), this study offers four meaningful contributions to the current literature on IPVAW. First, this study is heavily guided by a theory which has not frequently been applied to past IPVAW-centered research. To elaborate, few studies have applied the Ideal Victim framework to IPVAW research, and those that have, employed qualitative study designs narrowing the application of the framework as an explanation for victim narratives not as a guiding theory in research design (see Meyer 2016). By applying the Ideal Victim framework to IPVAW-centered research as a guiding theory instead of a reactionary explanation, researchers can piece together a more robust understanding of (a) factors which influence the public construction of victimhood and (b) how the importance of those factors may differ for the construction of victimhood for victims of IPVAW versus other victims of crime (or circumstance).

Second, this study suggests that victim/offender relationship status (as operationalized in this study) does not meaningfully contribute to the construction of an ideal victim of IPVAW. Such a finding does not support the Ideal Victim framework that guided this study; a framework which maintains that the closer the relationship a victim and offender have to one another, the more blame and thus less ideal victim status a victim will be ascribed by the public (Christie 1986:19, 21). Although the conclusions that can be drawn from the current sample are limited,
this is still a notable finding as it suggests more research is needed to better understand why this tenet of an established and tested theory is not supported when used to address the construction of an ideal IPVAW victim among a sample of undergraduate college students. As shifts amongst college students’ dating norms continue to move away from traditional romantic relationships (i.e., serious, committed, long-term) to more non-committal, short-term, sexually based relationships (i.e., hookups) (see Bogle 2007; Bogle 2008; Garcia et al. 2012; Heldman & Wade 2010; Kalish & Kimmel 2011; Olmstead, Anders, & Conrad 2017; Olmstead, Norona, & Anders 2019; Stinson 2010; Tilman, Harker, & Holway 2019) understanding how relationship statuses impact the victim blaming attitudes of college students towards victims of IPVAW may help to provide insight about the levels of informal social support college students who have experienced IPVAW can expect to receive from their student peers.

Third, the study systematically evaluated the impact of IPVAW victims’ self-identity in terms of either a “victim” or “survivor” of IPVAW on victim blame attribution—currently an understudied factor in the literature surrounding public construction of victimhood. Over the past decade, there has been a push in public dialogue to refer to “victims” as “survivors” when speaking about persons who have experienced violence, and specifically those who have experienced VAW. The impact on how this shift from victim-to-survivor language impacts public perceptions of VAW-crime victims is understudied. As such the current study helps to provide needed insight into how public perception of victims, specifically, public victim blaming attitudes towards victims of IPVAW, is impacted by victims’ self-referred identity as either a victim or a survivor of IPVAW.

Finally, this study meaningfully contributes to the current literature addressing the effect of observer gender on victim blame attribution towards victims of VAW crimes more broadly
and victims of IPVAW more specifically, helping to support current evidence suggesting that among college student populations, men participants attribute more victim blame towards victims of IPVAW than their women counterparts.

There are several limitations to this study. First, the study sample limits the generalizability of this study to populations of adult, undergraduate students attending university at similar institutions located in the United States. Additionally, with just under 72% of the sample identifying as white, 79% identifying as (cis) women, and no participants reporting to be over the age of 29, the study’s diversity with respect to race, gender, and age, is a major limitation and should be taken into consideration when drawing conclusions. Furthermore, the study failed to inquire about sample participants’ sexual orientation, an oversight on the part of this researcher which only further limits the reportable diversity of the sample. The lack of diversity in the areas of race, gender, age, and sexual orientation is a significant limitation as the literature consulted to inform this study cites these factors as typically having notable influence on participants’ level of victim blame attribution (see Diamond-Welch et al. 2017; García & Tomás 2014; Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014; Waltermaurer 2012). Future research should seek to sample non-student populations as past research suggests victim blame attribution to differ depending on participants’ level of education, age, socioeconomic status, and professional industry. Such factors tend to be markedly different for non-student populations. For research unable to commit to sampling non-student populations, researchers should seek to include more diversity within their sample especially regarding race, gender, age, and sexual orientation.

Second, the scope of this study is limited to understanding participant victim blame attribution towards women who have experienced IPV by her romantic partner who is a man and is not generalizable to understanding victim blame attribution towards men who have
experienced IPV by a romantic partner who is a woman or couples who identify as LGBTQIA+. Future research should aim to investigate how the factors of victim/offender relationship type, victim’s self-identity (as a victim or survivor), and observer gender affect the ideal victim paradigm of men victims of IPV by a romantic partner who is a woman and among couples who identify as LGBTQIA+.

Third, the study conditions provided situations of psychological and sexual IPV tactics, as such, it may prove useful to employ a scale that measures participants’ beliefs regarding what constitutes psychological and sexual abuse by a romantic partner. Gauging participants’ beliefs about what constitutes IPV with regards to psychological and sexual abuse may provide context for recorded victim blame scores as well as help to identify areas where student populations may benefit from IPV education and prevention programs. Further the measure used to capture participants’ blog-specific victim blame attribution had a Cronbach’s alpha just under the .70 threshold. Future research applying a vignette design may benefit from the inclusion of a more internally consistent measure, potentially with several facets of victim blame (e.g., victim blaming attitudes, acceptability/justification attitudes, perceived severity, belief in a just world, ambivalent sexism, traditional gender-role beliefs), aimed to capture IPVAW victim blame specific to study conditions.

Fourth, future research is needed that better considers the nuances of victim self-identity (as a “victim” or a “survivor”). As previously noted, both the terms “victim” and “survivor” bring about different types of connotations. Unfortunately, this study failed to provide a meaningful way to measure how participants’ perceptions and/or understandings of the connotations associated with the terms “victim” and “survivor” may have impacted participants' victim blame attributions. As such, while the study is able to examine how the denotations of the
terminology used by a woman when self-identifying as a “victim” or “survivor” of IPVAW effects participants’ victim blame attribution, the study is unable to draw conclusion about how the connotations of the terms used may have affected victim blame attribution by study participants. Future research seeking to examine the impact that an IPVAW victim’s self-identity as a “victim” or a “survivor” has on participants’ level of victim blame attribution should consider adding a measure that gauges participants’ perceptions of the terms’ (i.e., victim and survivor) connotations when used by a victim of IPVAW when disclosing her victimization. Such data would allow for a deeper understanding of how the connotations of the terms “victim” and “survivor” impact participants’ victim blame attribution.

Finally, it should be noted that study findings for H1 and H2 may also be the result of an unknown factor, or factors, not examined in this study, but which have been cited as impacting victim blaming attitudes in past research, having a significant impact on the importance of the victim/offender relationship and victim self-identity (as a “victim” vs. “survivor”) in constructing an ideal victim (of IPVAW). Factors which have been noted as impacting victim blaming attitudes include sample sociodemographics, traditional gender-role beliefs, IPV justification beliefs, the belief in a just world, empathy levels towards victims and offenders, acceptance of rape/sexual assault myths, and victim characteristics (see Bell et al. 1994; Bongiorno et al. 2020; García and Tomás 2014; Grubb & Harrower 2008; Strömwall et al. 2013; Van der Bruggen & Grubb 2014; Waltermaurer 2012). Future research should seek to understand how these factors, and others not identified here but which are known to affect victim blame attitudes, impact the importance of the victim/offender relationship and victim self-identity (as a “victim” vs. a “survivor”) in constructing an ideal victim of IPVAW.
Implications

Results from the current study suggest that among the sample of college students studied, men attributed more victim blame towards IPVAW victims than women participants. This finding offers practical use for professionals seeking to implement or enhance IPV education and prevention programs for college students. Specifically, this finding may help such professionals to tailor IPV education and prevention programs or target funds for such programs towards men college students.

Additionally, while the study assessed victim blame attribution among a sample of college students, the findings may offer insight to formal support systems about the level of victim blame college students who have experienced IPV may encounter from their peers before seeking professional help (Sylaka & Edwards 2013:18). Past research estimates the prevalence of dating violence among college students from 10% to 50% with scholars suggesting college students are particularly vulnerable to dating violence as many may be involved in their first serious relationship during their college years (Kaukinen 2014:284). It is suggested that 75% (or more) of IPV victims disclose their victimization to informal (i.e., non-paid) supports (e.g., family, friends, classmates, coworkers, etc.) and that the social reactions by informal supports to the disclosure of an IPV victim’s victimization can significantly impact victims’ psychological well-being (Sylaka & Edwards 2013:4, 15-16). Having insight into the level of victim blame (i.e., a negative social reaction) college victims of IPV may have experience from student peers before seeking more professional support may better prepare professionals to address the needs of the victims they are seeking to support.

Finally, while no evidence was found to support study hypotheses that victim/offender relationship status (i.e., casual vs. serious) and victim self-identity (i.e., victim vs. survivor) as a victim significantly impact victim blame attribution (H1 and H2), the study examined aspects of
these variables previously understudied by current literature effectively providing scholars with new insights and future research directions needed to more fully understand the effects of these variables on victim blame attribution towards victims of IPVAW. For example, examining the effect of victim/offender relationship status of dating partners (i.e., casual vs. serious) on the construction of an ideal victim of IPVAW and including measures that gauge participants’ perceptions of victim strength/empowerment and related constructs when examining the effect of victim self-identity (as a “victim” or “survivor”) on the construction of an ideal victim of IPVAW.
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Using an experimental vignette design, this study examined the effects that victim/offender relationship status, victim self-identity, and observer gender have on the ideal victim paradigm of victims of IPVAW among a sample of undergraduate students enrolled at a large public university in the Southwest United States. Using victim blame as marker for participants’ ascription of ideal victim status towards the (fictional) IPVAW victim represented in study conditions, hypothesis testing revealed insufficient evidence to conclude that victim/offender relationship status (i.e., casual vs. serious) and victim self-identity (i.e., victim vs. survivor vs. control) meaningfully impact participants’ victim blame attribution and as such their construction of an ideal victim of IPVAW. However, sufficient evidence was found to conclude that participants who identify as men attribute more victim blame towards victims of IPVAW than participants who identify as women even after factoring for participants’ financial strain and general victim blame attitudes.

The study provides meaningful contributions to IPVAW-centered research by offering insights on how the factors of victim/offender relationship status, victim self-identity (as a “victim” or a “survivor”), and observer gender impacts victim blame attributions, and thus the construction of an ideal IPVAW victim, among student populations. Additionally, this study identifies various future research directions for scholars hoping to contribute to IPVAW-centered research. Conceptual replication and extension of this study is encouraged and would further support the understanding of the public construction of an ideal IPVAW victim.
APPENDIX A: CONDITION MANIPULATIONS
Condition One: Casually Dating × “Victim” Self-Identity
Condition Two: Casually Dating × “Survivor” Self-Identity
Condition Three: Casually Dating × Control Self-Identity
Condition Four: Serious Relationship × “Victim” Self-Identity
Condition Five: Serious Relationship × “Survivor” Self-Identity
Condition Six: Serious Relationship × Control Self-Identity
April 13, 2021

Dear Kelli Dauphinais:

On 4/13/2021, the IRB determined the following submission to be human subjects research that is exempt from regulation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Review</th>
<th>Initial Study, Category 2(a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Perceptions of Dating Experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigator</td>
<td>Kelli Dauphinais</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IRB ID</td>
<td>STUDY00002965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funding</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant ID</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Documents Reviewed:
- Perceptions of Dating Experiences HRP-251.pdf, Category: Faculty Research Approval;
- Perceptions of Dating Experiences HRP-254.pdf, Category: Consent Form;
- Perceptions of Dating Experiences HRP-265, Category: IRB Protocol;
- Perceptions of Dating Experiences HRP-609.pdf, Category: Consent Form;
- Perceptions of Dating Experiences QualitiesXM Study.docx, Category: Survey / Questionnaire;
- Perceptions of Dating Experiences Recruitment Email.docx, Category: Recruitment Materials;
- Perceptions of Dating Experiences SCNA Description.docx, Category: Recruitment Materials;
- Perceptions of Dating Experiences Study Conditions 1-6.docx, Category: Survey / Questionnaire

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made, and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please submit a modification request to the IRB. Guidance on submitting Modifications and Administrative Check-in are detailed in the Investigator Manual (HRP-103), which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the IRB system. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request so that IRB records will be accurate.

If you have any questions, please contact the UCF IRB at 407-823-2901 or irb@ucf.edu. Please include your project title and IRB number in all correspondence with this office.

Sincerely,

Katie Kilgore
Designated Reviewer
APPENDIX C: DEBRIEFING STATEMENT
Debriefing Statement

For the study entitled:
“Perceptions of Dating Experiences”

Dear Participant;

During this study, you were asked to read one (1) of six (6) possible blog posts that described a negative dating experience and answer questions regarding your perception of the blog post you were assigned. Additionally, you were asked questions about your perception of dating violence, your experience with dating violence, and questions aimed to collect sociodemographic information about you. You were told that the purpose of the study was to identify factors that influence UCF students’ perceptions of dating experiences. The actual purpose of the study was to examine how participant gender, victim-offender relationship status, and victim self-identity influence blame attribution by college students towards victims of intimate partner violence (IPV).

We did not tell you everything about the purpose of the study because we wanted to collect unbiased information from you about victim blaming attitudes towards victims of IPV.

You are reminded that your original consent document included the following information: Your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in this study at any time without prejudice or penalty. Your decision to participate or not participate in this study will in no way affect your relationship with UCF, including continued enrollment, grades, employment or your relationship with the individuals who may have an interest in this study. If you have any concerns about your participation or the data you provided in light of this disclosure, please discuss this with us. We will be happy to provide any information we can to help answer questions you have about this study.

The responses in this study are de-identified and cannot be linked to you.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints feel free to contact the study’s PI, Mrs. Kelli Dauphinais, Graduate Student, Applied Sociology Program, College of Sciences by phone at (407) 882-0626 or by email at KelliDauphinais@Knights.ucf.edu or Dr. Jacqueline Woerner, Faculty Supervisor, Department of Sociology by email at jacqueline.woerner@ucf.edu.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of

If you have experienced distress as a result of your participation in this study, a referral list of mental health providers is attached to this document for your use. (Please remember that any cost in seeking medical assistance is at your own expense.)

Please again accept our appreciation for your participation in this study.

**National Domestic Violence Hotline**
Get Confidential Help 24/7
Call: (800) 799-7233
Chat line: [https://www.thehotline.org/#](https://www.thehotline.org/#)
Website: [https://www.thehotline.org/](https://www.thehotline.org/)

**National Sexual Assault Hotline**
Get Help 24/7
Call: 800-656-HOPE (4673)
Chat line: [https://hotline.rainn.org/online](https://hotline.rainn.org/online)
Website: [https://rainn.org](https://rainn.org)

**UCF Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)**
Crisis Hotline: 407-823-2811
(Press #5 and you will be immediately connected to a licensed therapist)
Crisis Center: 407-425-2624
24-hour crisis hotline service available to students. Counselors who staff the hotline will help you manage a crisis situation.
Website: [https://caps.sdes.ucf.edu](https://caps.sdes.ucf.edu)
Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) is a free-of-charge campus agency designated to provide culturally and trauma informed services to university-enrolled students.

**UCF Victim Services**
24/7 number: 407-823-1200
Website: [https://victimservices.ucf.edu/](https://victimservices.ucf.edu/)
Victim Services provides confidential crisis intervention, options and advocacy to anyone impacted by crime, violence, or abuse. If you or someone you know has been impacted by crime, violence, or abuse, we can help.
APPENDIX D: STUDY CONDITIONS (BLOG POSTS)
Pizza & A Movie

By Christina

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I quickly grabbed my bag, and ran out to meet him. As soon as he saw me, his face soured. I opened the passenger door and started to say “Hi” when he cut me off and said, "I said dress comfortable, not like a hobo." I was so embarrassed. I quickly apologized and told him I would be right back and went up and changed into the new dress I had been planning to wear before I got his text. When I came back down, he was furious. He turned off the car, got out, and angrily told me, "Now you look like a whore." He went on to say that if I couldn't dress right then we might as well stay in that night.

We went up to the apartment, and his mood started to subside a bit. He decided we would throw a frozen pizza in the oven and spend the rest of the evening watching a movie. I turned on the TV in the living room when Marc came up behind me and started to kiss my neck. I was happy that he wasn't angry with me anymore, but I wasn't really in a romantic mood. I politely told him not now because I was trying to find a movie for us to watch. He pulled me to the couch and kept kissing me, telling me how beautiful I looked and that he couldn't wait. I pushed him off a bit and told him I just wasn't in the mood. He ignored me and kept kissing. I pushed back a little harder, and he started to get angry and said that I shouldn't have worn that dress if I wasn't going to have sex with him because it sent the wrong signals. Before I could say anything, he was kissing me again and began to start taking my dress off. I wasn't sure what to do or say to make him stop and I was scared that if I said anything, he would get angry with me again. We ended up having sex.

Despite us only casually seeing each other, Marc’s behavior that night really took a toll on me. I’ve been distraught and confused since that date and am unsure of how to deal with my emotions and the effect they are having on my life. Looking back on our date, I feel that I am a victim of intimate partner violence. I am hoping that having this recognition about my victimization and sharing this story will allow me to start dealing with the emotional aftermath
from Marc’s behaviors. While I’m uncertain of the next steps I need to take in order to deal from the trauma of my relationship with Marc, I know that I need help to do this and hope to find the help I need to deal with all of this.

Condition Two: Casually Dating × “Survivor” Self-Identity

Pizza & A Movie

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**Condition Three: Casually Dating × Control Self-Identity**

Pizza & A Movie

By Christina

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Our date was on my mind the whole next day and it was a bit distracting, especially when I was at work. However, I was able to push through the distraction and perform my daily tasks at work without a hitch. Which was helpful, because the Regional Manager was conducting a walk through at my location that day and took note by complimenting me on how well I was doing. It was so great to receive recognition for my hard work and hear the Regional Manager's complement. I’ve always loved working and feel that a huge part of who I am revolves around being an employee with a great company and a supportive team of coworkers. I hope one day that all my hard work at my company pays off and I too can work my way up to Regional Manager.

**Condition Four: Serious Relationship × “Victim” Self-Identity**

**Pizza & A Movie**

**By Christina**

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Condition Five: Casually Dating × “Survivor” Self-Identity

Pizza & A Movie
By Christina

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**Condition Six: Casually Dating × Control Self-Identity**

**Pizza & A Movie

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APPENDIX E: EXAMPLE OF BLOG POST DESIGN
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APPENDIX F: EMAIL TO PROFESSORS REQUESTING STUDY PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT SUPPORT
Good morning,

Currently, I am the faculty advisor for graduate student Kelli Dauphinais' master's thesis, which focuses on students' perceptions of dating experiences. The study is an online vignette design hosted on Qualtrics and takes approximately 30 minutes to complete.

To expand participant recruitment, Ms. Dauphinais is seeking the support of faculty members who are willing to offer students in their summer A, C, and D courses extra course credit for their participation. Our university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) has approved this recruitment method, and documentation of that approval will be made available upon request.

As is required by IRB, a comparable alternative assignment for extra course credit must be made available to students who wish to receive extra credit but not participate in the study. To assist faculty who wish to offer this study to their students for extra credit but do not have a readily available alternative assignment option for those students who do not want to participate in this study, Ms. Dauphinais has prepared an alternative assignment option for use.

The alternative assignment takes the form of an interactive learning module hosted by the CDC entitled *Dating Matters*. Information on how to ensure that students correctly complete the module so that you can award students extra credit can be found in the "Extra Credit—Dating Matters" document attached to this email. Additionally, you can find a template of a recruitment email attached for your use when recruiting students to participate in the study. This email also offers instruction on how to ensure students who complete the survey receive extra credit.

Ms. Dauphinais sincerely appreciates your consideration in this matter and is happy to answer any questions you may have by email at KelliDauphinais@Knights.ucf.edu. Additionally, as the faculty advisor for this study, please feel free to reach out to me by responding to this email if you have any questions.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Jackie
APPENDIX G: BLOG-SPECIFIC VICTIM BLAME MEASURE ADAPTATIONS

1. "How much do you think Kathy should blame herself for what happened?"
2. "How much control do you think Kathy had over the situation?"
3. "How much control do you think Jason had over the situation?"
4. "How much do you agree Kathy should not have invited Jason over [or walked with Jason] if she did not want to have sex with him?" (statements not questions)
5. "Do you think this incident could have been avoided?"
6. "Whose fault do you think it is, that things turned out the way they did?"
7. "How much sympathy do you feel for Kathy?"

Altered questions as they appear in this study:

1. "Christina is to blame for what happened."
2. "Marc is to blame for what happened."
3. "Christina had control over the situation."
4. "Marc had control over the situation."
5. "If Christina did not want to be in that situation with Marc she should have left."
6. "Whose fault do you think it is that things turned out the way they did?"
7. "Do you feel sympathy for Christina?"
No matter how well a couple gets along, there are times when they disagree, get annoyed with the other person, want different things from each other, or just have spats or fights because they are in a bad mood, are tired or for some other reason. Couples also have many different ways of trying to settle their differences. This is a list of things that might happen when you have differences. Please mark how many times you did each of these things in the past year, and how many times your current or former partner did them in the year. If you or your current or former partner did not do one of these things in the past year, but it happened before that, please select "7." If it never happened, please select "8."

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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 = Once in the past year</td>
<td>2 = Twice in the past year</td>
<td>3 = 3-5 times in the past year</td>
<td>4 = 6-10 times in the past year</td>
<td>5 = 11-20 times in the past year</td>
<td>6 = More than 20 times in the past year</td>
<td>7 = Not in the past year, but it did happen before</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

01. I explained my side or suggested a compromise for a disagreement with my partner
02. My partner explained his or her side or suggested a compromise for a disagreement with me
03. I insulted or swore or shouted or yelled at my partner
04. My partner insulted or swore or shouted or yelled at me
05. I had a sprain, bruise, or small cut, or felt pain the next day because of a fight with my partner
06. My partner had a sprain, bruise, or small cut or felt pain the next day because of a fight with me
07. I showed respect for, or showed that I cared about my partner’s feelings about an issue we disagreed on
08. My partner showed respect for, or showed that he or she cared about my feeling about an issue we disagreed on
09. I pushed, shoved, or slapped my partner
10. My partner pushed, shoved, or slapped me
11. I punched or kicked or beat-up my partner
12. My partner punched or kicked or beat-me-up
13. I destroyed something belonging to my partner or threatened to hit my partner
14. My partner destroyed something belonging to me or threatened to hit me
15. I went see a doctor (M.D.) or needed to see a doctor because of a fight with my partner
16. My partner went to see a doctor (M.D.) or needed to see a doctor because of a fight with me
17. I used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make my partner have sex
18. My partner used force (like hitting, holding down, or using a weapon) to make me have sex
19. I insisted on sex when my partner did not want to or insisted on sex without a condom (but did not use physical force)
20. My partner insisted on sex when I did not want to or insisted on sex without a condom (but did not use physical force)
APPENDIX I: SELF-REPORT DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS
**Instructions:** To help us better understand your background, we ask that you please answer the following self-report questions with care and honesty.

**Self-Report Demographics Questions:**
1. What is your age?
   a. [drop down menu]
      i. Age responses range from "18" to "Over 60" at intervals of one (1) year (e.g., 18, 19, 20...59, 60, Over 60)

2. What is your student status?
   a. Full-time student (12 credit hrs. or more)
   b. Part-time student (less than 12 credit hrs.)

3. What is your student level?
   a. First year, undergraduate
   b. Second year, undergraduate
   c. Third year, undergraduate
   d. Fourth year, undergraduate
   e. Fifth or higher year, undergraduate
   f. Masters student
   g. PhD student

4. Please specify your declared major in the text box below.
   a. [text box]

5. Are your classes fully online this semester?
   a. Yes
   b. No

6. Do you currently, or have you ever lived, on campus?
   a. I currently live on campus
   b. I currently live off campus, but have lived on campus in the past
   c. I have never lived on campus

7. Please specify in the text box below, what field you plan to work in after your graduate.
   a. [text box]

8. Are you of Hispanic or Latino/a/x origin?
   a. Yes
   b. No

9. Which of the following best describes you? Please select all that apply.
   a. White
   b. Black or African American
   c. Asian
   d. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   e. American Indian or Alaskan Native
   f. Another, please specify
      i. [text box]
10. Which best describes your gender identity?
   a. Woman
   b. Man
   c. Transgender woman
   d. Transgender man
   e. Genderqueer or gender non-conforming
   f. Questioning
   g. Another, please specify
      i. [text box]

11. Please specify your annual household income. This includes income from all sources, such as work, investments, child support, and public assistance.
   a. [drop down menu]
      i. Less than $10,000
      ii. $10,000 - $19,999
      iii. $20,000 - $29,999
      iv. $30,000 - $39,999
      v. $40,000 - $49,999
      vi. $50,000 - $59,999
      vii. $60,000 - $69,999
      viii. $70,000 - $79,999
      ix. $80,000 - $89,999
      x. $90,000 - $99,999
      xi. $100,000 - $149,999
      xii. More than $150,000

12. Please indicate the extent to which the following are true about your current financial situation.\[^{11}\]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Very true</th>
<th>A little true</th>
<th>Not true</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You don’t have enough money to buy the clothes or household items that you or your family need.</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are behind one month or more on your rent or mortgage payment.</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You don’t have enough money to pay your regular bills.</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
<td>o</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You don’t have enough money to go out to dinner, or pay for entertainment or recreational activities.

It would be hard for you to find the money to cover an unexpected expense, such as a medical bill or repair that was $500 or more.

Financial Strain Index (Hamby, Turner, & Finkelhor, 2011)

13. Do you currently reside in the United States?
   a. Yes, please specify in which state you reside
      i. [text box]
   b. No, please specify in which country you reside
      i. [text box]

14. Which best describes the area where you live?
   a. Urban
   b. Suburban
   c. Rural
   d. Island community
   e. Military base

15. Which best describes the area where you were raised?
   a. Urban
   b. Suburban
   c. Rural
   d. Island community
   e. Military base

16. Which best describes your current primary relationship status?
   a. Single
   b. Casually dating or hooking up (brief sexual encounters)
   c. Exclusive dating relationship
   d. Married, civil union, or domestic partnership
   e. Divorced or widowed

17. Which of the following best describes your political affiliation?
   a. Extremely liberal
   b. Somewhat liberal
   c. In the middle or moderate
   d. Somewhat conservative
   e. Extremely conservative
   f. Do not have a political affiliation
18. Which of the following best describes your religious affiliation?
   a. Agnostic
   b. Atheist
   c. Buddhist
   d. Christian
   e. Hindu
   f. Jewish
   g. Muslim
   h. Another, please specify
      i. [text box]
   i. Do not have a religious affiliation

19. How religious are you?
   a. Not at all religious
   b. Slightly religious
   c. Moderately religious
   d. Very Religious
   e. Extremely religious
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