

# Differences in Social Reactions by Gender of Victim & Recipient Conceptions in Sexual Assault from a Disclosure Recipient's View

Hannah Bradham<sup>1</sup>, Klejdis Bilali<sup>1</sup>, Sarah Lopez<sup>1</sup>, Lindsey Rodriguez<sup>1</sup>, Katie Edwards<sup>2</sup>, Emily Waterman<sup>2</sup>, & Sarah Ullman<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of South Florida, St. Petersburg, <sup>2</sup>University of Nebraska –Lincoln, <sup>3</sup>University of Illinois –Chicago

## INTRODUCTION

- Female survivors of sexual assault (SA) are more likely to endure victim-blaming; individuals that endorse rape myths are more likely than those that do not hold such beliefs to victim blame, regardless of victim gender (Ayala, Kotary, & Hetz, 2018)
- While males are less likely than females to report sexual assault, research concerning male sexual victimization is also lacking (Ayala, Kotary, & Hetz, 2018)
- Male SA victims may face more barriers to disclosure than women largely because they are less likely to disclose than women → less resources for male survivors (Allen, Ridgeway, & Swan, 2015; Walsh et al., 2010)
- **H1:** Male disclosers will receive more negative feedback from recipients of disclosures, especially if recipients are male
- **H2:** Overall, female recipients will react more positively toward disclosers compared to male recipients, especially when disclosers are female

## METHOD

### Participants

- N = 1,268 undergraduate students from a medium-sized northeastern University. Ages ranged from 18 to 24 years, with a mean of 19.6 (*SD* = 1.2)
- Participants included 30.9% male; *M* age = 21.5 (*SD* = 2.04)
- 91.2% Caucasian, 4.5% Asian, 1.4% African American, 0.2% Native American/Pacific Islander, 2.6% Multiracial/Other
- 88.0% Heterosexual/Straight, 6.4% Bisexual, 1.4% Unsure, 1.3% Gay, 1.1% Pansexual, 0.7% Lesbian, 0.6% Asexual, and 0.4% Other

### Procedures

- Participants completed a baseline survey and then were randomly assigned to treatment or control groups. The treatment group was given a Supporting Survivors and Self (SSS) intervention on how to react to disclosures of sexual violence. Follow-up was completed 6 months after initial baseline survey → Data prior to intervention was utilized

### Measures

- **Social Reactions Questionnaire-Shortened** (Relyea & Ullman, 2015): participants are asked about how they have or would respond to a disclosure on a scale 1 = Never/Extremely unlikely to 5 = Always/Extremely likely. E.g. item: "Told them that they were irresponsible or not cautious enough"
- **Intermediary Outcomes:** items were created for the study asking about how they felt about their effectiveness in dealing with the disclosure study on a scale from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree. E.g. items: "Victims of intimate partner abuse and sexual assault are at least partly responsible for what happened to them," or "I feel confident that I could help a friend who has been a victim of intimate partner abuse and/or sexual assault."

## ANALYSIS PLAN

An analysis of variance models were ran to look at differences in the outcomes as a function of the four categories. Follow up tests examined pairwise comparisons where we compared each group to every other group.



## RESULTS

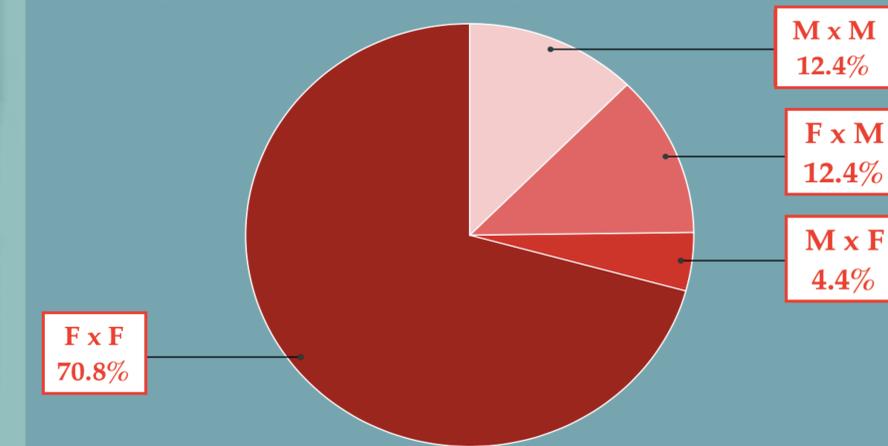
Table 1

ANOVA and estimated marginal means for each outcome by group

Outcome	Omnibus ANOVA F	M-M	F-M	M-F	F-F
Negative SR	11.17***	1.54 <sub>ab</sub>	1.35 <sub>a</sub>	1.40	1.28 <sub>b</sub>
Positive SR	16.09***	3.49 <sub>abc</sub>	3.72 <sub>ad</sub>	3.81 <sub>b</sub>	4.04 <sub>cd</sub>
Victim Responsibility	10.16***	2.13 <sub>bcd</sub>	1.71 <sub>b</sub>	1.66 <sub>c</sub>	1.65 <sub>d</sub>
Empathy	2.28	--	--	--	--
Confusion	2.81*	2.38 <sub>a</sub>	2.61 <sub>ab</sub>	2.46	2.35 <sub>b</sub>
Ineffectiveness	3.60*	2.22 <sub>a</sub>	2.67 <sub>bc</sub>	1.96 <sub>b</sub>	2.06 <sub>ac</sub>

\* Note. \* *p* < .05 \*\*\* *p* < .001. Means that share a subscript are significantly different from each other. Empathy was not significant.

Percentage of Disclosers and Recipients by Gender



## DISCUSSION

- **Both hypotheses were supported:** Male survivors disclosing SA were more likely to face negative social reactions, especially when disclosing to males. Female disclosures faced the least negative social reactions with disclosing to a female being the most positive.
- The RMA perpetuates that only women can be victims and men are always the perpetrators. More sympathy might have been offered to women because of the prevalence of rape myths
- **Limitation:** overwhelming majority of the participants were White, female, & heterosexual → not particularly generalizable
- **Future Direction:** interventions for men that endorse RMA as well as victims of SA could help better negative social reactions to disclosures and combat self-blaming behavior in male survivors.
- Future studies should explore the prevalence of male sexual victimization → researchers should aim to reject the notion of SA being a "woman's issue."
- Research such as this current study may help encourage the implementation of sexual assault awareness and response programs in universities.

## REFERENCES

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R34AA025347A; PI: Katie Edwards  
First Author: Hannah Bradham  
Contact: hannaheliza@mail.usf.edu