

# Belief in a Just World and Jury Decisions in a Civil Rape Trial

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When people's belief in a just world (BJW) is challenged, it can be restored by attributing blame to the victim or alleviating the victim's suffering. In criminal cases, jurors can attribute responsibility to victims, but cannot alleviate suffering. Participants ( $n = 106$ ) heard a taped civil rape case. The effect of age of plaintiff, gender of participant, and type of participant on mock jurors' reactions to a plaintiff were examined. Participants evaluated responsibility of plaintiff and awarded monetary damages. It was hypothesized that, given this opportunity to compensate the victim, jurors would be less likely to derogate the victim. As hypothesized, women with high and low BJW attributed the same level of responsibility to the plaintiff, but those with a high BJW awarded more monetary damages. Men with high BJW awarded much less in damages than did men with low BJW. The just-world theory appears to explain many of the decisions made by mock jurors.

Lerner's (1970, 1980) just-world theory proposes that people view the world as a just place; when people are good and kind, good things happen to them. By the same token, people believe that when bad things happen to a person, it is because that person has done something to deserve it. In other words, life events are just and fair. However, sometimes innocent and good people are victimized. When an unjust event occurs, this event challenges people's belief in a just world. There are two ways in which people can restore their belief in a just world: by attributing blame to the victim or by alleviating the suffering of the victim. Kleinke and Meyer (1990) applied this theoretical response to challenges of people's belief in a just world to a study of the perceptions of rape victims. These authors concluded that "since it is not possible to reverse a crime of rape, rape victims are subject to derogation" (p. 344).

There has been considerable research on factors affecting mock jurors' reactions to victims and rapists in simulated criminal cases (see Pollard, 1992, for a review). Criminal cases allow jurors to punish the rapist, but do not give them the opportunity to make up for or alleviate the victim's suffering. In contrast, civil cases do give jurors the chance to compensate the victim (plaintiff). It is possible

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that when given this opportunity to compensate the plaintiff, jurors will be less likely to derogate her. Given the increasing tendency of victims to pursue parallel legal actions in criminal and civil courts, it is possible to use the context of a civil trial to evaluate jurors' reactions to victims of rape.

The civil rape trial is the focus of the current research. The legal basis of the plaintiff's claim is that the defendant, the owner/manager of her apartment complex, failed to provide a safe place for her (the tenant) to live. Utilizing a civil case allows us to have two measures relating to verdict—judgments of responsibility, and assessments of monetary damages (a means by which to compensate the plaintiff)—as well as to compare the results of our work with those from the numerous studies conducted on criminal cases.

The main purpose of this experiment is to investigate the impact of people's belief in a just world on attributions of responsibility and awards of monetary damages in a civil rape case. A second personality variable related to just-world belief, locus of control, is also studied. In addition, a comparison is made between college students' perceptions and those of jury-eligible participants.

Much psychological research on rape has examined perceptions of the responsibility of the victim and the rapist. Most studies focus on whether observers attribute blame to the victim, thereby excusing the rapist for some of the responsibility, or hold the rapist entirely accountable for the rape (Hymes, Leinart, Rowe, & Rogers, 1993; Pollard, 1992; Varelas & Foley, 1998). The current research is an attempt to apply the just-world theory by giving jurors an opportunity to compensate the victim/plaintiff instead of derogating her by attributing responsibility to her. As in most civil cases, the actual rapist was not included in the evaluation of responsibility. Participants were told that the rapist had been convicted and that they were only to evaluate the responsibility of the plaintiff and the apartment owner/manager.

#### Age of Plaintiff

The primary characteristic of the plaintiff varied in the current study was her age. While many studies have investigated attributions of responsibility for very young to college-age victims of rape, there has been a dearth of studies that have looked at victims who are middle-aged or older. Weis and Borges (1973) suggest that older rape victims will be held less responsible than younger ones. Their rationale for this assumption is that the younger victim is more "able-bodied" and thus better able to defend herself. The only empirical test of this assumption found support for it to be limited to female participants (Villenor & Hyde, 1983). Only female participants attributed more responsibility to the perpetrator when the victim was old than when she was young; male participants did not differentiate on the basis of age. These researchers found that age is associated with respectability; in other words, older victims are perceived as being more respect-

able than are younger victims. While studies with older victims are almost non-existent, there have been studies examining the effects of victim respectability on verdict. Generally, research indicates that as victim respectability increases, her perceived responsibility decreases (e.g., Felman-Summers & Lindner, 1976; Luginbuhl & Mullin, 1981). Respectable victims are also viewed by jurors as being more psychologically affected by the crime of rape.

Prior research, however, has not given respondents a means by which to restore perceived justice to the world by compensating the victims. Perhaps having this opportunity would channel respondents' reactions to the victims in another direction and decrease the likelihood that respondents would derogate the victims. Despite the assumption that older victims would be perceived as more respectable, we hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 1.* Younger plaintiffs and older plaintiffs will be held equally responsible for the rape.

Assuming that an older woman will be perceived as more affected by the crime of rape, we predict that she will receive greater compensation. In other words, participants will restore justice by compensating the older plaintiff with greater monetary awards. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 2.* Older women will be awarded more monetary damages than will younger women.

#### Gender of Observer

Most prior research has indicated that men tend to find the victim more responsible for a rape than women (e.g., Cann, Calhoun, & Selby, 1979; Kanekar, Pinto, & Mazumdar, 1985; Kleinke & Meyer, 1990; Luginbuhl & Mullin, 1981; McLendon, Foley, Hall, Sloan, Wesley, & Perry, 1994). However, some research has found no gender differences (Feldman-Summers & Lindner, 1976) or that women attribute more responsibility to the rape victim than do men (e.g., Krulewitz, 1981). Kleinke and Meyer explain that these latter findings occur in situations in which women "are motivated to attribute responsibility to the victim in order to protect their own feelings of control" (1990, p. 350). The attributions of responsibility in these studies involve situations that vary the amount of victim resistance (Krulewitz, 1981; Krulewitz & Nash, 1979), her acquaintance with the rapist (Tetreault & Barnett, 1987), and her provocativeness (Yarmey, 1985). These are all situations in which women observers could see themselves behaving differently than the victim in order to avoid danger. By attributing responsibility to the victim for her behavior, women observers can decrease their own perceived likelihood of being assaulted, and increase their feelings of control.

Reactions to many of the factors investigated in rape research (e.g., resistance to rapist, past sexual experience, dress or provocativeness of victim) appear to be related to people's attitudes toward women's rights and roles. Pollard (1992) argues that men have more traditional attitudes toward women, thereby increasing men's susceptibility to variations in these factors. He adds that "when factors are present that could potentially trigger less sympathetic judgments about the victim, male judgments are more affected by these" (p. 321). In fact, some research has indicated that traditional attitudes toward women may be more significant in attributions of responsibility to rape victims than gender itself (e.g., Howells et al., 1984; Shotland & Goodstein, 1983). However, this explanation is not universally accepted. For example, Szymanski, Devlin, Chrisler, and Vyse (1992) found that "gender, not gender role, emerged as the significant indicator of attitudes toward rape" (p. 51). It appears that whether differences in perceived responsibility of a rape victim are a result of gender role attitudes or gender, men react with less sympathy to rape victims than do women. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 3.* Men will attribute more responsibility to the plaintiff and award less monetary damages than will women.

#### Just World

Rubin and Peplau (1975) maintain that people vary in their level of belief in a just world, and those with a high belief in a just world are more likely to derogate a victim or try to restore justice than are those with a low belief in a just world. However, Kleinke and Meyer (1990) found that women with a high belief in a just world were less likely to hold a rape victim responsible for the rape or to derogate her than were women with a low belief in a just world. The authors explain this reaction by pointing out that, because women are more likely to identify with a rape victim than are men, they are less likely to blame the rape on her character. They go on to say that women who believe that "people get what they deserve" and also identify with a rape victim have a great deal of difficulty reconciling their belief in a just world with the rape. These women are less likely to derogate a woman for a rape that could, conceivably, happen to them. Unlike the women, men with a high belief in a just world evaluated the crime as more serious and the rape victim as more responsible than did men with a low belief in a just world. Apparently, men with a high belief in a just world saw the incident as a challenge to their belief in a just world, and therefore blamed the victim (Kleinke & Meyer, 1990).

Once again, respondents in the Kleinke and Meyer (1990) study were not given the opportunity to compensate for the suffering of the rape victim. We hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 4.* Women will attribute the same amount of responsibility to the plaintiff, regardless of their level of belief in a just world.

*Hypothesis 5.* Women with a high belief in a just world will give the plaintiff more monetary damages. In other words, these women can restore justice to the world by giving the plaintiff more money, rather than attributing less responsibility to her.

Assuming that men with a high belief in a just world would see rape as a challenge to their belief in a just world, we further hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 6.* Men with a high belief in a just world will attribute more responsibility to the plaintiff and award less in damages to the plaintiff than will men with a low belief in a just world.

#### Locus of Control

A personality variable closely related to belief in a just world is locus of control (Rotter, 1966). People with an internal locus of control believe that they control the rewards and benefits in their lives, while those with an external locus of control believe that fate, luck, or some external force controls these reinforcements. Considerable research documents a correlation between internal locus of control and a belief in a just world (Furnham & Procter, 1989; Lerner, 1980; Rubin & Peplau, 1975). Furnham and Procter state that this relationship can be explained in two ways: (a) Belief in a just world and locus of control are highly related constructs, so that people with a high belief in a just world think that "people come into good luck because of some good deed that they have recently performed" (p. 375); and (b) belief in a just world is a factor of internal locus of control. There is some evidence to support both explanations (Collins, 1974; Furnham & Procter, 1989). However, neither explanation is universally accepted.

There is little psychological research on the relationship between locus of control and attitudes toward rape. Barnett, Quackenbush, Sinisi, Wegman, and Otney (1992) found that while men were more likely than were women to attribute rape to chance, participants generally perceived rape as resulting from factors outside a victim's control: external attributions. Logically, one would assume that locus of control would influence attributions of responsibility in rape cases. However, the one in-depth study of locus of control and rape found no relationship (Villemur & Hyde, 1983). The authors postulated that no significant results were found because locus of control is moderated by whether participants identify with the victim or the perpetrator. It would follow that a mock juror with an external locus of control who identifies with the plaintiff will hold the defendant more responsible. Likewise, a juror with an external locus of control who

identifies with the defendant will hold the plaintiff more responsible. Identification with the plaintiff or defendant in the present study is expected to be based on the gender of the juror: Females will be more likely to identify with the female plaintiff, and males will be more likely to identify with the male defendant. Thus, internal-external locus of control is expected to be differentially related to verdict depending on juror gender. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

*Hypothesis 7.* Women with an external locus of control will hold the plaintiff less responsible than will men with an external locus of control, while there will be no difference in attributions of responsibility between men and women with an internal locus of control.

*Hypothesis 8.* Women with an internal locus of control will hold the plaintiff more responsible than will women with an external locus of control, while there will be no difference for men.

### Type of Participant

Almost all research studies of attributions of responsibility in rapes have been conducted with undergraduate students as participants (Pollard, 1992; Schneider, 1992). Both Scroggs (1976) and Schneider found that nonstudent samples reacted differently than did students. Schneider found that non-college participants perceived rape victimization as more serious than did college participants and that the two samples evaluated its effects differently. Schneider attributed the differences to the limited life experiences of college students. Although no generalizations can be made on the basis of two studies with quite different dependent variables, reliance on college populations may distort findings. Therefore, the present study includes jury-eligible participants as well as college students.

### Method

#### *Participants*

Some of the participants ( $n = 47$ ) were students in Introductory Psychology at a midsized university in the southeast who volunteered as one option for obtaining course credit. The 37 female and 10 male participants varied in age from 17 to 47 years with a mean age of 20.3 and a mode of 18. Most participants were White ( $n = 33$ ), although some were Black ( $n = 7$ ), Hispanic ( $n = 2$ ), Asian ( $n = 4$ ), and other ( $n = 1$ ). The remaining participants ( $n = 59$ ) were jury-eligible residents of the same state who had been recruited for participation as mock jurors in various counties in that state. These 38 female and 21 male participants varied in

age from 19 to 84 years ( $M = 48.5$ ,  $SD = 16.7$ ), with the ages evenly distributed across the range. Most participants were White ( $n = 45$ ), although some were Black ( $n = 12$ ), and Hispanic ( $n = 2$ ). These participants were paid for their participation.

### *Design*

The study was a  $2 \times 2 \times 2$  between-subjects comparison (Age of Stimulus Person/Plaintiff: Old or Young  $\times$  Type of Participant: Jury-Eligible or University Student  $\times$  Gender of Participant). Predictor variables were belief in a just world (Rubin & Peplau, 1975), locus of control (Nowicki & Duke, 1983), and participants' demographics. Dependent measures were percentage of responsibility attributed to the plaintiff (stimulus person), percentage of responsibility attributed to the defendant, and monetary damages awarded to the plaintiff.

### *Scenario*

The scenario involved a woman who was raped in her apartment by an employee of the apartment where she resided. Prior to the rape, the plaintiff (a nurse who worked varying shifts) complained a number of times to the defendant (the apartment manager/owner) that someone was entering her apartment. She asked to have the locks changed, but he refused. He said that no one was ever allowed into an apartment without his being present. The rapist, the pool maintenance man, was employed by the defendant apartment owner. He used the master key that hung in the manager/owner's office to enter the plaintiff's apartment.

### *Stimulus Person*

The stimulus person (plaintiff) was a woman. A photograph of a young, White woman was changed by a graphic artist using a computer program. The artist computer-generated a second photograph of an old White woman. The photographs were identical except for aging of the features for the older woman. The young woman was 27 years old, and the older woman was made to look in her 60s (pretesting revealed that respondents perceived the older woman to be in her mid-60s).

### *Procedure*

Participants came to a conference room in groups of 5 to 10, were informed that the study involved a civil rape trial, and were asked to fill out and sign a consent form. Participants then filled out the demographic questionnaire, the Internal-External Locus of Control Scale (Nowicki & Duke, 1983), and the Just

World Scale (Rubin & Peplau, 1975), in addition to questionnaires for another study. When all participants had completed the questionnaires, the experimenter showed them a photograph of the stimulus person (plaintiff) and played a 20-min taped description of the facts of a civil case and the jury instructions. The case description was identical for all participants. However, each participant saw one of two photographs of the plaintiff, which were randomly assigned by group. The participants were asked to individually indicate the amount of responsibility that the plaintiff and defendant had for the sexual assault. Participants were told that the actual rapist had been convicted and was not to be considered in this case and that the total amount of responsibility for both parties (plaintiff and defendant) had to equal 100%. Participants then were asked to determine what monetary damages the plaintiff should be awarded (a free-choice decision).

### *Measures*

*Demographic variables.* All participants completed a brief demographic questionnaire. It measured the following characteristics: age, gender, education, political orientation, ethnicity, marital status, number of children, employment status, student status, occupation, spouse's occupation (if applicable), and crime victimization.

*Just World Scale.* The Just World Scale (JWS; Rubin & Peplau, 1975) was completed by all participants. The JWS measures participants' responses to 20 items on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores indicate greater belief in a just world.

*Locus of control.* The Adult Nowicki-Strickland Internal-External Control Scale (I-E) was completed by all participants (Nowicki & Duke, 1983). The I-E, a 40-item scale, measures participants' attitudes with Yes or No responses. Higher scores are indicative of an external locus of control.

## Results

A MANOVA was run with the type of participant (university student or jury-eligible citizen), age of plaintiff (old or young), and gender of the participant (male or female) as the independent variables and the decisions concerning the amount of money awarded and amount of responsibility of the plaintiff as the dependent variables. Decisions were truncated at 3.5 standard deviations above and below the mean.

### *Gender of Participant*

A Hotelling's trace evaluation indicated a significant main effect for the gender of the participant,  $F(2, 97) = 3.79, p = .026$ . Follow-up univariate  $F$  tests



found that gender of the participant had a significant effect on the amount of responsibility attributed to the plaintiff,  $F(1, 105) = 5.78, p = .018$ , with more responsibility attributed by men ( $M = 16.97\%$ ) than by women ( $M = 10.63\%$ ).

### *Age of Plaintiff*

Follow-up univariate  $F$  tests found no significant effect on the responsibility of the plaintiff. There was a significant effect for the age of the plaintiff on amount of award,  $F(1, 105) = 3.91, p = .05$ . Participants awarded more damages to the older plaintiff ( $M = \$353,844$ ) than they did to the younger plaintiff ( $M = \$240,771$ ).

### *Interaction Effects*

A Hotelling's trace evaluation indicated a significant three-way interaction effect for Gender of Participant  $\times$  Type of Participant  $\times$  Age of Plaintiff,  $F(2, 97) = 5.54, p = .005$ . Follow-up univariate  $F$  tests found that interaction had a significant effect on the amount of responsibility attributed to the plaintiff,  $F(1, 105) = 9.9, p = .002$ . Male university students attributed significantly more responsibility to the young woman ( $M = 34.2\%$ ) than did male ( $M = 9.20\%$ ) and female ( $M = 10.29\%$ ) jury-eligible participants. Female university students ( $M = 5.19\%$ ) attributed significantly less responsibility to the young woman than did any of the other three groups of participants. The jury-eligible men attributed significantly more responsibility to the older woman ( $M = 19.55\%$ ) than did jury-eligible women ( $M = 12.29$ ), university men ( $M = 9.60\%$ ), or university women ( $M = 13.37\%$ ; Table 1).

### *Belief in a Just World*

Scores on the JWS (Rubin & Peplau, 1975) were sorted into quartiles with the highest and lowest quartiles used as the levels of the variable. The extremes of this variable were used because it is the people who demonstrate the highest and lowest belief in a just world (BJW) who are most different in their evaluations of victims. A MANOVA was run with the type of participant (university student or jury-eligible), gender of participant, and level of the participants' BJW (high or low) as the independent variables and the individual decisions concerning the responsibility of the plaintiff and monetary awards as the dependent variables. Reported results will be limited to those directly addressing the hypotheses.

A Hotelling's trace evaluation indicated a significant two-way interaction effect for gender of participant by participant's level of BJW,  $F(2, 41) = 3.87, p < .029$ . Follow-up univariate  $F$  tests found that the two-way interaction had a significant effect on the award,  $F(1, 49) = 5.8, p < .02$  (see Table 2 for means).

Table 1

*Mean Percentage of Responsibility of Plaintiff Based on Gender of Participants, Age of Plaintiff, and Type of Participant*

	Type of participant	
	University student	Jury eligible
Males		
Old plaintiff	9.60 ( $n = 5$ )	19.55 ( $n = 11$ )
Young plaintiff	34.20 ( $n = 5$ )	9.20 ( $n = 10$ )
Females		
Old plaintiff	13.37 ( $n = 21$ )	12.29 ( $n = 21$ )
Young plaintiff	5.19 ( $n = 16$ )	10.29 ( $n = 17$ )

Table 2

*Mean Amount of Monetary Award to Plaintiff Based on Gender of Participant and Belief in a Just World*

	Belief in a just world	
	Low	High
Male participants	\$334,285.70 ( $n = 7$ )	\$195,000.00 ( $n = 8$ )
Female participants	\$236,470.60 ( $n = 17$ )	\$253,055.60 ( $n = 18$ )

A Hotelling's trace evaluation indicated a significant two-way interaction effect for gender of participant by participant's level of BJW,  $F(2, 41) = 5.23, p < .009$ . Follow-up univariate  $F$  tests found that the two-way interaction had a significant effect,  $F(1, 49) = 4.1, p < .049$ , on the award and the responsibility of the plaintiff,  $F(1, 49) = 7.43, p < .009$ . There were no significant differences for jury-eligible participants. University students with a high BJW attributed more responsibility ( $M = 13.88\%$ ) and awarded less money ( $M = \$301,875$ ) than did students with a low BJW ( $M_s = 9.17\%$  and  $\$320,833$ , respectively).

### *Locus of Control*

Scores on the I-E Scale (Nowicki & Duke, 1983) were sorted into quartiles with the highest and lowest quartiles used as the levels of the variable. The extremes of this variable were used because it is the people who demonstrate the

highest and lowest locus of control who are most different in their evaluations of victims. The data were split into groups based on type of participant. A two-way ANOVA was run for each group with gender of participant and level of participants' locus of control as the independent variables and the decisions (truncated) concerning the amount of responsibility of the plaintiff as the dependent variables. For jury-eligible participants, there was no significant effect on the decision. For university students, there was a significant interaction effect for gender and locus of control,  $F(1, 20) = 4.21, p = .056$ . University men with an external locus of control attributed much more responsibility to the plaintiff ( $M = 37.7\%$ ) than did external university women ( $M = 10.56\%$ ). There was no significant difference in responses for men and women for university students with an internal locus of control (men,  $M = 11.5\%$ ; women,  $M = 7.14\%$ ). A correlation between BJW and locus of control was not significant.

## Discussion

### *Age of Plaintiff*

Despite the assumption that age is positively correlated with respectability and that respectable victims/plaintiffs are held less responsible, Hypothesis 1 predicted that mock jurors would attribute equal amounts of responsibility to the older plaintiff and the younger plaintiff. As predicted, there were no significant differences in the amount of responsibility attributed to the women based on their age. This prediction was based on our belief that participants would not feel a need to perceive the older plaintiff as less responsible since they could, instead, award her more monetary damages as predicted in Hypothesis 2. This is exactly what occurred. Participants awarded significantly more monetary damages to the older woman than they did to the younger woman despite the two plaintiffs being perceived as equally responsible for the incident.

There might be other explanations for the differences in monetary awards besides perceived restoration of a just world. The damages awarded might have been the result of other considerations besides the responsibility of the plaintiff. One aspect of damages for which the plaintiff sought compensation was monetary compensation for her inability to work after the rape. Perhaps jurors made the assumption that the older woman had more monetary losses than did the younger woman. This assumption could have been made for some logical reasons. First, the older woman could have been assumed to be making more money than the younger woman, and thus the monetary compensation should be higher for her. In addition, any physical injuries as a result of the rape might be more severe for the older woman and might take longer to heal, thus she would have missed more time from work than would the younger woman. However, a counterargument could be made that the younger woman has a longer work life

than does the older woman and could be expected to miss more time in the future as a result of the trauma of the rape.

Another aspect of damages that jurors awarded was compensation for pain and suffering. Again, the rationale for awarding the older woman higher damages is compelling. It is possible that jurors felt that her injuries were more severe. It is possible that older victims/plaintiffs are viewed by jurors as being more psychologically affected by the crime of rape. However, there are opposing arguments to these reasons also. Considering long-term pain and suffering, the younger woman has a greater life expectancy and thus should be expected to suffer for a longer period of time than the older woman. Finally, it is also possible that the older woman was seen as being more respectable or more vulnerable and, thus, as deserving of more compensation. The rationale for the decisions must be explored in future research.

### *Gender*

As predicted in Hypothesis 3, men and women had significantly different perceptions of the responsibility of the plaintiff, with men attributing much more responsibility to the plaintiff than women. This finding is similar to most prior research (Calhoun, Selby, Cann, & Keller, 1978; Kanekar et al., 1985; Kleinke & Meyer, 1990; Luginbuhl & Mullin, 1981; McLendon et al., 1994). Apparently, women in our study were more sympathetic to the female plaintiff than were men. However, contrary to Hypothesis 3, there was no difference in monetary awards based on the gender of the participant. Despite men attributing more responsibility for the rape to the plaintiff than women, they did not award her less money.

One of the most interesting findings was that male university students differed from the other respondents in perceptions of the plaintiff's responsibility. Male university students attributed much more responsibility to the young woman (34%) than did the female university students (5%). Male and female jury-eligible participants attributed about the same amount of responsibility to the young woman (9% to 10%), also much less than the male students. It is not extremely plausible that the (mostly young) male university students identified with the defendant (the apartment complex owner/manager) more than did the older jury-eligible men. Pollard (1992) maintains that men have more traditional attitudes toward women than do women. Perhaps these young men believe the myth that young women frequently precipitate their own rapes because of provocative dress or behavior (Burt, 1980). If so, they would tend to think that this young woman was responsible for the rape. If this scenario with a young woman rape plaintiff activated their less sympathetic attitudes about her, those beliefs would account for their attributing more responsibility to her for the rape.

Interestingly, male university students perceived the incident quite differently when the plaintiff was an older woman. They only attributed 9.6% of the responsibility to the older woman involved in the same rape situation. Perhaps these men associated the older woman with their mothers or grandmothers. They might believe the rape myth that women who dress provocatively elicit rape, but do not think that the older woman would have dressed or acted provocatively—this older woman is more respectable. It is also possible that the young university men find it inconceivable that a 60-ish woman would want to have sex and thus act provocatively. The university women attributed a greater amount of responsibility to the older woman (13.4%) than to the younger woman (5.2%). They appeared to identify with the young woman and saw her as having very little responsibility for the rape.

The people who attributed the highest amount of responsibility to the older woman were the jury-eligible men (19.6%). All of the other groups of participants attributed much less responsibility to her (between 9% and 13%). It could be reasoned that the jury-eligible men identified with the defendant apartment owner/manager, except that they attributed less than half as much responsibility to the young woman (9%). Perhaps because the jury-eligible participants were older and more likely to have children than the students, these men were reacting to the rape of the young woman as fathers would react and, therefore, viewed the younger woman in a protective manner and saw her as less responsible. Another plausible explanation focuses on the fact that men seem to attribute more responsibility to a woman about their own age: Older jury-eligible men attributed more responsibility to a woman in her 60s, and younger university men attributed more responsibility to the young woman. Each age group might be responding to their perceptions of the sexual attractiveness of women their own age. Perhaps older men realized that older women are interested in sex and at times can act provocatively. Thus, they attributed more responsibility to the older plaintiff.

### *Belief in a Just World*

Just-world theory contends that people with a high BJW are motivated to reconcile the perceived injustice or to derogate the victim. Prior research has found that people with a high BJW tend to derogate a rape victim (e.g., Kleinke & Meyer, 1990). However, participants were not given the option of compensating the victim in prior research. In addition, men and women have reacted differently to rape victims based on their level of BJW (Kleinke & Meyer, 1990). Therefore, separate hypotheses were made for men and women. Hypothesis 4 stated that women would attribute the same amount of responsibility to the female plaintiff, regardless of their level of BJW. This hypothesis was supported; there was no difference in attributions of responsibility for women based on their BJW. We further hypothesized in Hypothesis 5 that women with a high BJW would give

the plaintiff more monetary damages in place of attributing more responsibility to her than women with a low BJW. This hypothesis was also supported.

In contrast, Hypothesis 5 stated that men with a high BJW would attribute more responsibility to the plaintiff than men with a low BJW. This hypothesis was not supported. Men with high and low levels of BJW did not attribute different amounts of responsibility to the plaintiff. The corollary to the fifth hypothesis about men with a high BJW was that they would award less in damages to the plaintiff than would men with a low BJW. This part of the hypothesis was strongly supported. Men with a high BJW awarded much less in monetary damages to the plaintiff than did men with a low BJW. It would appear that these men's BJW was challenged by the crime of rape. Instead of attributing more responsibility to the plaintiff, however, they reduced the monetary damages awarded to her.

It appears that when people with a high BJW (both males and females) are given the opportunity to compensate a plaintiff in a civil rape case as well as attribute responsibility to her, they are less likely to derogate the plaintiff. There is no difference in attributions of responsibility based on BJW. However, both male and female participants awarded differential amounts of damages based on their BJW. Women, who are more likely to identify with the female plaintiff, awarded her much more in monetary damages when they had a high BJW than when they had a low BJW. Their method of restoring justice to the world was to compensate the plaintiff more. In contrast, men with a high BJW, whose beliefs are challenged by the unjust event, compensate the plaintiff with less money than men with a low BJW.

The generalization of these conclusions is somewhat limited because all of the participants were given the opportunity to compensate the plaintiff. Consideration was given to a manipulation involving opportunity versus no opportunity to compensate the plaintiff. However, because of the desire to maintain a high degree of external validity, all mock jurors participated in decisions of liability (attributions of responsibility) and damages (monetary compensation). Civil trials always involve the jurors' consideration of both liability and damages, even in cases of bifurcation (separating liability and damages decisions), jurors eventually award damages, as long as they have found the defendant responsible. Further, it is customary for real civil jurors to be informed of the status of companion criminal action, including the conviction and sentencing of the criminal perpetrator, so that they will have all of the information necessary to render a fair verdict. In fact, although client-confidentiality concerns preclude disclosure of particular case facts, it is the second author's experience that imprisoned perpetrators often are called to testify in civil rape trials, in which they are not being sued, on issues such as negligent security, failure to warn, and negligent hiring. In summary, the present study's high degree of external validity accounts for certain limitations in its manipulation of variables.

### *Locus of Control*

Hypothesis 7 stated that women with an external locus of control would perceive the plaintiff to be less responsible than men with an external locus of control. There was limited support for this hypothesis. It was supported only for university students. There was no significant effect for gender by locus of control for jury-eligible participants. However, for university students, external men attributed over 3 times the responsibility to the plaintiff as did external women. The reasoning behind the hypothesis was that women would identify with the plaintiff, and, therefore, a female juror with an external locus of control would blame the defendant and hold the plaintiff less responsible. On the other hand, those jurors with an external locus of control who identified with the defendant (presumably men) would hold the plaintiff more responsible.

Although, in general, men held the plaintiff more responsible than did women, there was no difference between men and women who had an internal locus of control. There was also no difference between women with an internal and an external locus of control, contrary to our Hypothesis 8. The big difference appeared to be for university men with an external locus of control, who attributed about 38% of the responsibility to the plaintiff. The other groups varied in attributions of responsibility from 7% to 11%. Perhaps university women in our study identified so closely with the vulnerability of the plaintiff that they did not blame the plaintiff, even if they had a high internal locus of control.

### *Type of Participant*

The data give strong evidence that non-college students react differently than do college students. Schneider (1992) found that non-college participants perceived rape victimization as more serious than did college participants. The results of the current study are not as simple. Male college students and male jury-eligible respondents attributed very different amounts of responsibility to the plaintiffs of different ages. Both BJW and locus of control influenced university students and jury-eligible participants differently. In addition, these influences appear to be moderated by the gender of the participant. In the future, researchers studying rape must be careful not to generalize to non-college populations from college samples. Conducting research on rape entirely with college populations may seriously distort results.

In summary, decisions in a civil rape case appear to be influenced by characteristics of the plaintiff and the jurors. Older women were awarded more monetary damages. Women, who are more likely to perceive a common vulnerability with the plaintiff, were more sympathetic to the plaintiff than were men. Influence of personality variables, BJW and locus of control, were moderated by the type of participant and the gender of the juror. The just-world theory appears to explain many of the decisions.

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