

**The Impacts of Conservatism, Social Dominance, and Rape Myth Acceptance on Blame
Attribution in Ambiguous Rape Scenarios**

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Abstract

Participants (N=496) reviewed an ambiguous rape scenario involving a ‘perpetrator’, in a high/low authority position, and a ‘victim’, who had/had not consumed alcohol. They indicated whether they viewed what happened as rape, and rated the perceived responsibility of the individuals involved. They also completed Conservatism and Rape Myth Acceptance scales. Most believed the scenario to constitute rape. Perpetrator responsibility ratings were highest in the high-authority condition, and victims were assigned greater responsibility when they had consumed alcohol. Those who scored higher on the Conservatism/RMA scale attributed less responsibility to the perpetrator and more responsibility to the victim across all conditions.

Keywords: rape myths, conservatism, gender roles, alcohol consumption, ambiguous rape scenarios

Background

Rape is a highly prevalent, gendered crime which has long-lasting repercussions for victims' physical and mental health and long-term wellbeing (Hine & Murphy, 2019). Gendered crime affects women disproportionately through higher rates of repeated victimization of sexual violence, where rape is used as a tool to subjugate women (Papp & Erchull, 2016; Walby & Towers, 2017; Walters & Tumath, 2014). In such instances, the victim may have lost their sense of personal autonomy and self-worth as a result of the abuse suffered (Alhabib et al., 2010). The subjugation of women, however, can be implicit and subtle, where women often take on lower-status roles in line with expected gender norms of being nurturing or caring, whereas men often dominate higher-status roles (Taschler & West, 2017). Sexism is ingrained within Western culture, and uses racism, homophobia, ageism, and classism to reinforce gender norms where the expectation is for women to modify their behavior to reduce their risk of rape and sexual assault (Stoll et al., 2017; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010; Vonderhaar & Carmody, 2014).

Despite the high prevalence of rape, society has reinforced barriers that prevent victims from seeking therapeutic and legal support, and which have led to low conviction rates (Klement et al., 2019). Rape myths are widely believed but inaccurate schemas that blame the victim through exonerating the perpetrator and minimizing the impact of rape by rationalizing sexual aggression (Edwards et al., 2011). Individuals demonstrating high levels of Rape Myth Acceptance (RMA) are likely to assign more responsibility to the victim and less to the perpetrator, with previous research having found that participants judge perpetrators who are culturally similar to themselves as less guilty and less deserving of punishment while simultaneously demonstrating higher levels of victim blaming (Bongiorno et al., 2016; Hayes et al., 2013). Stereotypes reinforced through RMA also impact how jurors perceive the victim and perpetrator within the context of criminal trials, which could

influence the legal processing of rape cases and help contribute to low conviction rates (Sommer et al., 2015).

Previous research has found that men, older adults, and those who hold conservative political beliefs and traditional gender roles or who express high levels of aggression are more likely to subscribe to rape myths (Barnett & Hillz, 2018; Grubb & Turner, 2012; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). The endorsement of traditional gender roles and sexist attitudes within society reinforces RMA, as victims who do not fit gender norms are more likely to be blamed or assigned higher levels of responsibility (Chapleau et al., 2008; Davies et al., 2012). Previous research has not considered how conservatism interacts with RMA and sexism in regard to attributing responsibility to perpetrators and victims. Political ideologies reflect a long-term and rationalized collection of beliefs and values that are stable across a lifespan (Chen & Urminsky, 2019).

The Moral Foundation Theory (MFT) suggests that political values are rationalized and justified through binding foundations (“loyalty/betrayal”, “authority/subversion”, and “sanctity/degradation”) and individualizing foundations (“care/harm” and “fairness/cheating”) (Clifford et al., 2015). Conservatives endorse all five foundations but place greater emphasis on the binding foundations, as they have a stronger preference for familiar, stable, and predictable behaviors with a strong emotional sensitivity to threats to social order (Barnett & Hillz, 2018; Reynolds et al., 2020). Conservatives also tend to have a pessimistic view of human nature, with behaviors or values that conflict with the perceived needs of society seen as immoral, and society seen as needing the constraints of authority, institutions, and traditions to limit the liberties of individuals who threaten the social order (Graham et al., 2011; Rempala et al., 2016). Thus, individuals who ascribe to stereotypical beliefs about social hierarchy, particularly values believed by conservatives, would be more

likely to condone the existing social structures and traditional gender roles that underpin RMA (Barnett & Hillz, 2018). The endorsement of traditional gender roles and sexist attitudes within society reinforces RMA, as victims who do not fit gender norms are more likely to be blamed or assigned higher levels of responsibility (Chapleau et al., 2008; Davies, Gilston, & Rogers, 2012).

Previous research suggests that endorsement of traditional gender roles, where men are dominant and women are passive, may result in moral judgements based on the belief that it is wrong to challenge established social hierarchies and to be sexually promiscuous (Milesi et al., 2019). Where occurrences counter the “norm”, many individuals may have difficulty in identifying and labelling a rape as the common script is of a “stranger attack” on a woman alone at night (Deming et al., 2013). Rape myths reinforce a script of what “normal” rape is, where a perpetrator is unable to control his behavior, so a woman must remain safe, or is responsible for her own victimization; if - for example - she had consumed alcohol (Hayes et al., 2016). While there is a wealth of literature showing the impacts of rape myths on jury-decision making, previous research has tended to use scenarios that depict clear scenarios of non-consensual sexual acts and/or have not measured the perceived contributory responsibility of the perpetrator and victim (Dinos et al., 2015).

Misperceptions of sexual intentions are important, as men who assume that a woman is sexually interested in them or who infer greater sexual interest from the woman may feel justified in pushing for unwanted sexual activity (Wegner et al., 2015). Sexual double standards are evidenced in previous research which suggests that individual judgements of victims and perpetrators are impacted by alcohol consumption (Hockett et al., 2016). Previous research suggests that victims who have consumed alcohol are blamed more than sober victims, whereas the more alcohol the perpetrator has consumed, the less blame they are likely to be attributed (Gravelin et al., 2019). Alcohol consumption means that the female

victim is often judged as more responsible and the male perpetrator's behavior as more appropriate; indeed, even when a jury was exposed to thoughts or images of alcohol, they ascribed more responsibility to the victim who had consumed alcohol (Monk & Jones, 2014). Offences in which alcohol has been consumed may be interpreted as being the victim's fault, as they partook in risky-behavior and deviated from gender norms (Romero-Sánchez et al., 2018). It should also be noted that previous research has tended to focus on student populations, who may have different alcohol consumption behaviors, lower levels of RMA and greater awareness of sexual violence which means that findings cannot necessarily be generalized to the broader population (Barn & Powers, 2018; Hayes et al., 2016; Larsen et al., 2016). Thus, further research is needed to understand the complex interplay between alcohol consumption and RMA.

The Present Study

Previous research has found a correlation between levels of RMA and conservative political ideology; however, scenarios employed in such paradigms are based on clear non-consensual acts where perpetrators are strangers or the victim had consumed alcohol (Cook, et al., 2011). Further, there is limited research into the responsibility assigned to the perpetrators and victims in non-consensual acts, and whether perceived responsibility changes if the perpetrator or victim deviate from stereotypes or expectations.

The present study investigated whether a perpetrator in a high or low authoritative position would be attributed higher levels of blame for a non-consensual act in comparison to a victim who had consumed either an alcoholic or soft drink. Age, gender, ethnicity, and academic attainment was also considered, to explore whether demographic factors play a role in RMA alongside conservatism (Reling et al., 2018). It was hypothesized that individuals who ascribe to conservative ideologies would be less likely to judge the scenario as rape.

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Responsibility allocated to the low-authority perpetrator was expected to be lower and responsibility allocated to the victim was expected to be higher. Generally it was predicted that where the victim had consumed alcohol a higher level of responsibility would be allocated to them. Individuals who ascribed to conservative ideologies were expected to assign higher responsibility to the victim and lower responsibility to the perpetrator. It was hypothesized that older adults, males, and those with lower levels of academic attainment would ascribe to rape myths to a greater extent, would judge the scenario not to be a rape, and would attribute lower responsibility to the perpetrator and higher responsibility to the victim.

Method

Design

The study used a 2x2 between-subject design, with authority and traditional gender norms as manipulated variables. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions. Each condition involved a short vignette of an ambiguous rape scenario involving a male (Paul) and female (Katie). The male had consumed alcohol and was in a high authority position (superintendent) or a low authority position (unemployed plumber). The female either conformed (soft drink) or deviated (alcohol) from norms which have been linked to ambiguous scenarios that counter stereotypical assumptions and which have been shown to influence judgments of the contributory responsibility of women and men. Thus, the conditions were high authority/normal (superintendent/soft drink), high authority/deviated (superintendent/alcohol), low authority/normal (unemployed plumber/soft drink) and low authority/deviated (unemployed plumber/alcohol).

Participants

The sample consisted of 496 participants, 356 of which were female, 116 male, 4 who self-identified as “other”, and 20 who did not disclose their gender. The average age was 34.55 (SD= 11.76), with a range of 18 - 73. The majority of the sample described themselves as White British (52%), and the most common academic attainment level was level three, or the equivalent of education up to age 18 (29.4%) and level 6, the equivalent of a bachelor’s degree (29.2%).

Participants were recruited via opportunity and snowballing sampling, including through social media (e.g. Facebook, Reddit), and via Birmingham City University's Research Participation Scheme (RPS). This was a deliberate strategy employed to ensure a broad and diverse sample, as studies focusing on specific populations - such as students –

have generated inconclusive findings regarding factors impacting on levels of RMA (Edwards et al., 2011).

Materials

The questionnaire used in the present study was comprised of two parts. In part one, participants read a vignette and answered questions regarding the scenario presented. In part two, participants completed a 20-item questionnaire measuring levels of RMA and conservatism via responses indicating level of agreement with a number of generalized statements.

The vignette depicted Paul, who was consuming alcohol in a pub setting, buying an acquaintance, Katie, a drink. Katie invited Paul back to her apartment, where they began kissing and undressing. Katie then pushed Paul away and went to get out of bed, but Paul continued with sexual advances by getting on top of Katie and engaging in sexual intercourse. After it was over, Paul got dressed and went home. A previous review of the literature found that the victim's gender, sexuality, level of resistance exhibited, and the relationship with the perpetrator, alongside the observer's gender, professional status, gender role attitude, and RMA had a significant effect on the attribution of RMA (van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014). The present study depicts ambiguity by describing those involved as acquaintances and through Katie only using behavioral cues to show non-consent.

Within the four scenarios, Paul was described as either a superintendent or an unemployed plumber to connote a difference in perceived authority (Nicol & De France, 2016). Jobs reflect social status and perceived authority so, for individuals who adhere to social dominance, social status would be an important factor to maintain social hierarchy and may ascribe less responsibility to those they perceive to have value and authority in their role

(Davies & Bailey, 2018; Umphress et al., 2007). Alcohol consumption was manipulated by describing Katie as consuming an alcoholic or soft drink.

Following the vignette, the participants were asked to indicate whether they judged the scenario as rape, and how responsible they believed both Paul and Kate to be for what happened in the scenario. Responsibility was measured on a seven-point semantic differential scale, from one (not at all responsible) to seven (completely responsible).

Participants subsequently completed a 20-item questionnaire which adapted four scales to measure RMA and broad conservative political ideologies based on authority and traditional gender roles. The conservatism/RMA scale utilized the following items: a) four and 15 of part one, eight, nine, 10, and 14 of the part two measure of the Moral Foundation Questionnaire (MFQ) ($\alpha = .73$) (Graham et al., 2011); b) three, nine, and 10 of the Social Dominance Orientation Seven Scale (SDO7) ($\alpha = .72$) (Ho et al., 2015); c) five, seven, 12 and 22 of the Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale (RWAS) ($\alpha = .87$) (Altemeyer, 1998; Riley & Yamawaki, 2018); and d) one, six, seven, 10, 18, 26, 27, the Acceptance of Modern Myths and Sexual Aggressions Scale (AMMSA) ($\alpha = .76$) (Gerger et al., 2007). The conservatism/RMA scale, made up of the four sub-scales, had good internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.88$), with a higher score indicating a higher adherence to RMA and conservative beliefs. The scale was adapted to reduce participant burden of completing all four scales, as the adapted scale had good internal consistence while utilizing items that focused specifically on RMA and alcohol consumption, the role played by women and men in society, and traditional and conservative values (Eisele et al., 2022) (Table 1).

Procedure

Ethical approval was obtained from the Birmingham City University BLSS Faculty Research Ethics Committee and adhered to the British Psychological Society's ethical guidelines.

The study was conducted online, using a questionnaire hosted on Qualtrics. Participants were invited to take part via an online link, which led them to a randomly assigned condition. The participant was asked to read a participant information sheet and complete a consent form. The participant then read the vignette, answered the questions regarding the scenario, and then completed the second part of the questionnaire comprising the measures of RMA and conservatism. Participant demographic information was also collected. Upon completion, participants were completely debriefed.

Results

A chi-square test of independence found no significant difference between the conditions in terms of whether the scenario was judged as rape, $\chi(3) = 5.93$, $p = .115$. Across the four conditions, the majority of the sample (86.5%) judged the scenario to be rape. Table 2 shows the proportional breakdowns of “rape” and “not rape” for each of the conditions.

There were no significant differences between the conditions in terms of judgements of the responsibility of Paul, $\chi(15) = 11.0$, $p = .753$. Across all conditions 61.1% of the sample said that he was “completely responsible”, 21.6% said he was “mostly responsible”, 11.1% said “somewhat responsible”, 4.6% “neither agreed nor disagreed”, 0.6% said he was “somewhat not responsible”, and 1.0% said Paul was “not at all responsible”. Proportional breakdowns for each of the conditions are presented in Table 3.

There were also no significant differences between the conditions in terms of judgements of the responsibility of Katie, $\chi(28) = 27.6$, $p = .069$. Across all conditions 40.1% said that she was “not at all responsible”, 15.7% as “mostly not responsible”, 11.3% as “somewhat not responsible”, 13.7% as “neither agree or disagree”, 10.1% as “somewhat responsible”, 3.4% as “mostly responsible”, and 5.6% as “completely responsible”. Proportional breakdowns for each of the conditions are presented in Table 4.

A Pearson Chi-square test found that there was a significant relationship between RMA and judgement of the scenario the scenario as being rape, $\chi^2(39) = 99.86$, $p < .001$, in that the higher the RMA score was the less likely the scenario was to be judged to be rape. There was also a significant relationship between RMA and the level of responsibility ascribed to Paul, $\chi^2(195) = 465.36$, $p < .001$; the higher the RMA score, the less responsibility was assigned to Paul. Finally, there was a significant relationship between

RMA and the level responsibility attributed to Katie, $\chi^2(234) = 329.51, p < .001$; the higher the RMA score, the greater the degree of responsibility assigned to Katie.

The RMA/Conservative scale scores were classified using seven categories to reflect the range of political attitudes from low as 0-20 classed as “far left/Low RMA”, 21-40 as “Left/low RMA”, 41-60 as “center left/low RMA”, medium as 61-80 as “center/average RMA”, 81-100 as “center-right/high RMA”, and high as 101-120 as far right/high RMA, and 121-140 as “far right/high RMA”. Across the four conditions, the mean score of conservatism was 59.27 (SD = 2.26). A Pearson Chi-square test found that there was a significant relationship between conservatism and likelihood of the scenario being judged to be rape, $\chi^2(59) = 100.85, p < .001$, in that the higher the level of conservatism the less likely the scenario was to be viewed to be rape. There was a significant relationship between the RMA/conservatism score and the level of responsibility attributed to Paul, $\chi^2(295) = 483, p < .001$; the higher the RMA/conservatism score, the less responsible Paul was judged to be. There was also a significant relationship between RMA/conservatism score and the level of responsibility attributed to Katie, $\chi^2(354), = 459.05, p < .001$; the higher the score on the RMA/conservatism scale, the higher the level of responsibility assigned to Katie.

A logistic regression was performed to assess the impact of RMA and conservatism on the likelihood that the scenario was judged to be rape. The full model containing all predictors was statistically significant, $\chi^2(97, N = 496) = 169.84, p < .001$, indicating that the model was able to distinguish between participants who judged and did not judge the scenario as rape. The model as a whole explained between 29% (Cox and Snell R squared) and 53% (Nagelkerke R squared) of the variance in the judgements, and correctly classified 90% of cases. However, neither of the IVs made a significant contribution in their own right, which indicates a complex interplay between RMA and conservatism.

A multiple regression was performed to investigate the judgement of Paul's responsibility with RMA, conservatism, age, gender, ethnicity, and academic attainment. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Since a no priori hypotheses had been made to determine the order of entry of predictor variables, a direct method was used for the analysis. The six independent variables explained 8.7% of variance responsibility attributed to Paul ($F(6, 468) = 7.43, p = .001$). In the final model, only RMA score were statistically significant ($\beta = -.29, p < .001$); see Table 5.

A multiple regression was performed to investigate the judgement of Katie's responsibility with RMA, conservatism, age, gender, ethnicity, and academic attainment. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Since a no priori hypotheses had been made to determine the order of entry of predictor variables, a direct method was used for the multiple linear regression analysis. The six independent variables explained 19% of variance in responsibility attributed to Katie ($F(6,468) = 18.79, p < .001$). In the final model, only two predictor variables were statically significant, with RMA recording a higher Beta value ($\beta = .32, p < .001$) than age ($\beta = .14, p < .002$); see Table 6.

Discussion

The current study examined responsibility attributed to the perpetrator and victim in an ambiguous rape scenario, and whether judgments were impacted by RMA, conservatism, or demographics. Whilst the majority of participants viewed the scenario as constituting rape, the low authority/deviated condition was the least likely to be viewed as rape. Paul was generally allocated a high level of responsibility across the four conditions, and Katie was generally allocated a low level of responsibility. In conditions where Paul was a superintendent (*high authority*), he was ascribed more blame than in conditions where he was an unemployed plumber (*low authority*). Paul's responsibility was judged to be lower in conditions where Katie had consumed alcohol as opposed to a soft drink. Katie was ascribed the highest responsibility in the low authority/deviated condition, where alcohol was consumed, implicating the complex relationship between the perceptions of perpetrator authority and victim alcohol consumption. There was a weak association between RMA/conservatism and perceived responsibility of Paul, and there was a weak association with RMA/conservatism and age and the perceived responsibility of Katie. The results suggest that while participants were able to delineate non-consensual behavior, individual attitudes towards the perpetrator and victim may impact how the scenario may be viewed in court.

That the scenario was judged to be a rape in all four conditions suggests that people understand non-behavioral cues that convey consent. Within the UK, consent is included as a violation of personal autonomy in law; however, within court processes, rape myths still reinforce the narrative of force and resistance, with barristers often focusing on how the victim had withdrawn consent rather than how perpetrators gained enthusiastic consent (Dowds, 2019). In conditions where Katie had consumed alcohol the likelihood of the scenario being judged as rape was lower than when Katie had consumed a soft drink. The

prosecution of rape requires the jury to determine whether the perpetrator believed that the victim had consented to sexual intercourse, with the implication that victims are responsible for their own victimization through the consumption of alcohol (Gray, 2014). Victim-blaming may be attributed to participants' holding conservative views, as those who scored highly on the RMA/conservatism scale were less likely to judge the scenario to be rape. Stereotypes reinforced through RMA may impact how jurors perceive the victim and perpetrator within the context of criminal trials, which could impact upon the legal processing of rape cases and contribute to low conviction rates for sexual offences.

Paul was assigned high levels of responsibility across the four conditions, with the highest scores observed for the high authority/normal condition and the lowest for the low authority/deviated condition. In both conditions where Paul was a superintendent, participants may have assumed that the police would have more knowledge of the law and rape so should be in a higher moral position and, in such instances, judged him to be more responsible than in the conditions where Paul was unemployed (Kugler et al., 2014). A superintendent has higher legal responsibility within society, but it is not clear if this would be the same for individuals with different types of authority such as economic or intellectual authority.

Across the four conditions, individuals who scored higher on the RMA/conservatism scale attributed less responsibility to Paul. Individuals who scored higher on the RMA/conservatism scale were less likely to judge the scenario as rape and to attribute less responsibility to Paul. This implies that – with regard to jury decision making, where the decision has real-life consequences - jurors may interpret information differently based on RMA and political beliefs, with individuals who ascribe to rape myths and hold conservative beliefs perhaps being less likely to return guilty verdicts. However, further research is needed to ascertain how and in what ways RMA and conservatism interact, as the scale employed

here did not separate the two, and so the judgements made cannot be correlated with factors such as sexism.

The vignettes suggested that Paul had consumed alcohol, however it was unclear if this had had an impact on participant's decisions. Whilst perpetrator motives differ, previous research suggests that perpetrators process ambiguous and non-consensual cues in a way that confirm their beliefs in the woman's sexual interest. Alcohol impacts the processing of consensual and non-consensual cues, resulting in perpetrators feeling justified to use force if they believe the woman was sexually interested (Abbey, 2011). Further research should seek to ascertain whether judgement of a perpetrator is impacted by their consumption of alcohol in high or low authority conditions.

Katie was ascribed higher levels of responsibility where participants scored higher on the RMA and conservatism scale, which supports the hypothesis that RMA impacts individual judgements of responsibility. Both RMA and age were significant predictors of the level of responsibility assigned, which supports the proposition that RMA places the emphasis on victims to engage in behaviors to avoid victimization rather than on perpetrators to not commit crimes, in line with traditional gender roles and sexism linked to RMA (Grubb & Turner, 2012). Katie may have been judged as more responsible because rape myths support the notion that women who partake in risky behaviors, such as consuming alcohol, are responsible for their victimization (Carlson & Duckworth, 2016). Rape myths reinforce the notion that a "real" rape would involve force and injury, and cases that counter the stereotype are less likely to be believed.

Previous research has focused on the impact of right-wing beliefs on RMA as, generally, right-wing individuals show a greater endorsement of gender roles and RMA. The present sample consisted of mostly white, Eurocentric, educated women, who may share

similar beliefs about rape, consent, RMA, and the attribution of responsibility of perpetrators and victims due to the similarity between ethnicity, culture, religion, social economic status, gender, and educational levels (Barn & Powers, 2018). In ambiguous scenarios, however, there may be a more complicated relationship as more factors may impact judgments. In the present study, Katie and Paul were acquaintances, which may have had an impact on perceived responsibility compared to in a scenario in which they were strangers. Whilst Katie was generally judged not to be responsible for what happened, participants provided a wider range of judgements than they did for Paul, demonstrating a complex interplay between alcohol consumption and victim blaming.

Research has focused on miscommunication in consent, as the definition of consent requires verbal and non-verbal ongoing and voluntary agreement to sexual acts (Conaghan & Russell, 2014). The focus on consent ignores the reinforcement of traditional gender norms that set up a sexual double-standard, whereby women are expected to place their male partner's needs ahead of their own, with coercive tactics being employed to ensure that women consent to sex to avoid upsetting or disappointing their partner (Jozkowski et al., 2017). The implication of the study suggest that RMA and conservatism play a complex role in the judgement of rape scenarios and the responsibility of perpetrators and conservatives, with RMA being a predictor of the responsibility of the perpetrator and victim, and age being a predictor of the judgement of the responsibility of the victim.

Limitations and Future Research

A limitation of the study are the low variances of the models, with the six independent variables explaining 8.7% of the variance which may be due to the gender and ethnicity of the participants. There was a larger number of females (n = 356) compared to males (n = 116), and those who self-identified as other (n = 4), which suggests that the findings cannot

be generalized to a jury which is likely to have a more reflective sample of the population. Further, 29.2% of the participants had achieved an undergraduate qualification, which suggests lower RMA and conservatism levels; and 52% of respondents described as White British, where previous research found similarity to cultures may be linked to lower responsibility attributed. Future research may benefit from participants from more diverse backgrounds, including those of more varied socioeconomic status and with differing levels of education, and to include scales that separate conservatism and RMA. In addition, further research should seek to employ more representative samples from populations that may have different norms or cultural expectations, in order to understand how prejudices interact to increase RMA.

Previous research has focused on heterosexual relationships, with the present study focusing on responsibility between a heterosexual man and woman. It has been found that individuals who are gay, lesbian, or bisexual are less likely to exhibit RMA compared to heterosexual people, but also that lesbian women exhibit elevated levels of RMA, which has been attributed to lesbian women's biases and animosity around women who have heterosexual relationships, where animosity led to victim blaming as a result of rape education focusing on heterosexual relationships and not lesbian relationships (Worthen, 2021). Participants in the present study were mostly White, western-educated women, which may not represent how racism, homophobia, or transphobia impact RMA beliefs or attitudes towards responsibility of perpetrators and victims.

The present study was conducted wholly online and completed by participants on their own, whereas during jury deliberations multiple people will discuss the evidence. Previous research suggests that rape myths around victims' behaviors are commonly expressed during jury deliberations, with education around RMA being beneficial during mock jury trials (Leverick, 2020). In the future, it would be beneficial for research to employ

a mock trial paradigm with jury deliberation, in order to consider how social influence moderates the relationships between RMA, conservatism and blame attribution identified here. Studies might also include education around rape myths relevant to the scenario as a condition, before asking participants to make judgments as to the level of responsibility of those involved. With a clearer understanding of how RMA and political ideologies impact juror decision making it would be possible to put theory into practice and ensure that interventions are able to effectively minimise the impacts of RMA on judgements of perpetrator and victim responsibility.

Conclusion

Rape is a universal method used to subjugate women and maintain patriarchy. Previous research had used non-contestable scenarios of rape that do not reflect common scenarios where there is no apparent force or injury. Those who ascribe to high levels of conservatism often endorse gender roles and sexism that play a role in RMA and are less likely to judge scenario as rape in court. However, there is limited research into the perceived responsibility of perpetrators and victims, and how this impacts jury decision making. In the present study, while participants had generally agreed that a non-consensual scenario was rape, levels of responsibility assigned to the perpetrator and victim in ambiguous rape scenarios were significantly impacted by alcohol consumption, perceived authority, and subscription to rape myths.

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Tables & Figures

Table 1.

Items used in conservatism/RMA scale with associated scales.

Scale	Items
AMMSA	1. When it comes to sex, women expect men to take the lead 2. It is a biological necessity for men to release sexual pressure from time to time 3. After sexual assault, women nowadays receive ample support 4. As long as they don't go too far, suggestive remarks and allusions simply tell a woman that she is attractive 5. When a single woman invites a single man to her flat she signals that she is not averse to having sex 6. Many women tend to misinterpret a well-meant gesture as a "sexual assault" 7. Alcohol is often the culprit when a man rapes a woman
RWA	8. It is always better to trust the judgment of the proper authorities in government and religion than to listen to the noisy rabble-rousers in our society who are trying to create doubt in people's minds 9. The only way our country can get through the crisis ahead is to get back to our traditional values, put some tough leaders in power, and silence the troublemakers spreading bad ideas. 10. The old -fashioned ways and the old-fashioned values still show the best way to live 11. This country would work a lot better if certain groups of troublemakers would just accept their group's traditional place in society
SDO7	12. It's probably a good thing that certain groups of people are at the top and other groups are at the bottom 13. We should not push for group equality as there are more important issues for government to deal with 14. The government should not try to guarantee that every group has the same quality of life
MFQ Part 2	15. Justice is the most important requirement for a society 16. Men and women each have different roles to play in society 17. People should be loyal to their family members, even when they have done something wrong.
MFQ Part 1	18. It is more important to be a team player than to express oneself 19. It is wrong to show a lack of respect for authority 20. People who deviate from the norm cause chaos in the world

Table 2.

Number of participants that judged each condition as rape or not rape.

Condition	Scenario judged as rape	Scenario judged as not rape
High Authority/Deviated	174 (87.88%)	24 (12.12%)
High Authority/ Normal	95 (89.62%)	11 (10.38%)
Low Authority/Deviated	107 (80.45%)	26 (19.55%)
Low Authority/ Normal	53 (89.83%)	6 (10.17%)

PUNITIVE ATTITUDES IN AMBIGUOUS RAPE SCENARIOS

Table 3.

Number of participants who attributed level of responsibility to Paul in each condition

Attributed Responsibility	HA/D	HA/N	LA/N	LA/D
Fully responsible	125 (63.13%)	74 (69.81%)	33 (55.93%)	71 (53.38%)
Mostly responsible	39 (19.70%)	20 (18.87%)	14 (23.73%)	34 (25.56%)
Somewhat responsible	22 (11.11%)	8 (7.54%)	7 (11.86%)	18 (13.53%)
Neither agree nor disagree	9 (4.54%)	3 (2.83%)	4 (6.78%)	7 (5.26%)
Somewhat not responsible	1 (0.51%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.69%)	1 (0.75%)
Mostly not responsible	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Fully not responsible	2 (1.01%)	1 (0.94%)	0 (0%)	2 (1.50%)

PUNITIVE ATTITUDES IN AMBIGUOUS RAPE SCENARIOS

Table 4.

Number of participants who attributed level of responsibility to Katie in each condition

Attributed Responsibility	HA/D	HA/N	LA/N	LA/D
Fully responsible	16 (8.08%)	8 (7.55%)	1 (1.69%)	3 (2.26%)
Mostly responsible	5 (2.53%)	3 (2.83%)	1 (1.69%)	8 (6.02%)
Somewhat responsible	12 (6.06%)	12 (11.32%)	6 (10.17%)	20 (15.04%)
Neither agree nor disagree	24 (12.12%)	12 (11.32%)	11 (18.64%)	21 (15.79%)
Somewhat not responsible	30 (15.15%)	9 (8.49%)	4 (6.78%)	13 (9.77%)
Mostly not responsible	36 (18.18%)	15 (14.15%)	11 (18.64%)	16 (12.03%)
Fully not responsible	75 (37.88%)	47 (44.34%)	25 (42.37%)	52 (39.10%)

Table 5.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for responsibility of Paul

	R ²	β	B	SE	CI 95%
Model	.09*				
RMA/Con Score		-.29**	-.035	.007	-.289/-.226
Age		.01***	.001	.004	-.007/.009
Gender		.02****	.026	.078	-.128/.179
Ethnicity		-.05*****	-.019	.018	-.054/.016
Academic Attainment		-.03*****	-.013	.024	-.060/.034

Note. Statistical significance: *p < .001; **p < .001; ***p < .001; ****p < .001; *****p < .001;

*****p < .592

Table 6.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for attributed responsibility of Katie

	R ²	β	B	SE	CI 95%
Model	.19*				
RMA/Con Score		.01**	.07	.01	.05/.09
Age		.01***	.02	.01	.01/.04
Gender		.13*****	-.17	.13	-.43/.09
Ethnicity		.03*****	.07	.03	.01/.13
Academic Attainment		.04*****	.01	.04	-.07/.09

Note. Statistical significance: *p < .001; **p < .001; ***p < .002; ****p < .191; *****p < .293;

*****p < .849

Author Biography

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