

2013

## Race, Ethnicity, and Differential Perceptions of Sexual Victimization (Assault)

Kaleea Regina Lewis  
*University of South Carolina - Columbia*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd>



Part of the [Public Health Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Lewis, K. R.(2013). *Race, Ethnicity, and Differential Perceptions of Sexual Victimization (Assault)*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/2673>

This Open Access Dissertation is brought to you by Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact [digres@mailbox.sc.edu](mailto:digres@mailbox.sc.edu).

RACE, ETHNICITY, AND DIFFERENTIAL PERCEPTIONS OF SEXUAL  
VICTIMIZATION (ASSAULT)

by

Kaleea Regina Lewis

Bachelor of Science  
Converse College, 2011

---

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements  
For the Degree of Master of Science in Public Health in  
Health Promotion, Education and Behavior  
The Norman J Arnold School of Public Health  
University of South Carolina

2013

Accepted by:

Alyssa Robillard, Director of Thesis

Kellee White, Reader

Deborah Billings, Reader

Lacy Ford, Vice Provost and Dean of Graduate Studies

© Copyright by Kaleea Regina Lewis, 2013  
All Rights Reserved.

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this work to my sister Camille. I look forward to the day when you, and all young brown girls, come into your true potential. You are a gift from God and I admire your compassionate and outgoing spirit. Every day I watch grow into a strong, independent, and critical thinking young woman who has the world in front of her. However cliché it may sound, you are the future and I know that with God in your corner, man will never be able to steal your power.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First I would like to send all praises to my lord and savior, Jesus Christ. My alpha and omega, I know that this would not have been possible without you. I would also thank my number one supporter, my go-to source of common-sense and intellect, my everything, my mother. My love, admiration, respect, and desire to be like you cannot be expressed in words.

I would also like to thank my committee, Dr. White, Dr. Billings, and Dr. Robillard, for all of their support and guidance. Thank you Dr. Frass all your help with the statistical analysis. Dr. Robillard you are a constant source of positivity. I look forward to working every day because I know that I will be in the presence of such an intelligent, graceful, successful, and accomplished black woman. You are truly a role model!

Lastly I would like to thank the Women's and Genders Studies for the Carlisle Award which funded my research.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this pilot study is to ascertain how a sample of female college students perceives a hypothetical victim of a fabricated sexual assault. Participant perceptions of the sexual assault were explored through three dependent variables: (1) victim responsibility attributes, (2) levels of trauma suffered due to the experience, and (3) levels of social support. This study addressed the two following research question: (1) how does the hypothetical sexual assault victim's race or ethnicity affect how the dependent variables are assessed? **Methods:** This mixed methods study utilized a randomized post-test-only design to test participant reactions to a hypothetical sexual assault vignette. Participants received a vignette story-line, each with a unique scenario of the "victim" randomly assigned to reflect a Latina, White, or African American female college student. Each participant was asked to complete a paper-pencil survey after reading the vignette, as well as respond to a set of eleven open-ended questions regarding the vignette. In order to ensure optimal randomization of the study vignette, electronic block randomization (found at [Randomizer.org](http://Randomizer.org)) was utilized. **Results:** Statistical analysis using SPSS revealed no statistically significance for the trauma and responsibility dependent variables and marginally significant outputs for the social support dependent variable. Qualitative data revealed both overt victim blaming and shaming of the Latina and African American

hypothetical victim of sexual assault. **Conclusions:** In spite of the lack of statistical significance differential perceptions of sexual assault may be formed due to the victim's race and ethnicity. Manifestations of the jezebel stereotype influence how a woman of color sexual assault victim is perceived and subsequently treated.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
ABSTRACT .....	v
LIST OF TABLES .....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	ix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	xi
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
I. PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION .....	1
II. PROBLEM DEFINITION.....	2
III. FORMAL STATEMENT OF PROBLEM .....	6
IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	8
V. RESEARCH QUESTION .....	9
VI. JUSTIFICATION OF RESEARCH .....	9
VII. PREVIEW .....	10
CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE .....	11
I. OPPRESSIVE IMAGES OF LATINA & AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN .....	13
II. COLLEGE COMMUNITIES ATTITUDES & PERCEPTIONS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT.....	17
III. RACISM, PREJUDICE & GENDER ROLES .....	19

IV. INSTRUMENTATION .....	21
V. CONCLUSION .....	23
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY.....	25
I. STUDY DESIGN.....	25
II. TARGET POPULATION .....	26
III. STUDY VARIABLES .....	27
IV. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES .....	28
V. ETHICS & PROCEDURES TO PROTECT HUMAN SUBJECTS .....	31
VI. ANALYSIS PLAN.....	32
CHAPTER 4 MANUSCRIPT: RACE, ETHNICITY, AND DIFFERENTIAL PERCEPTIONS OF SEXUAL VICTIMIZATION (ASSAULT) .....	33
ABSTRACT.....	34
INTRODUCTION.....	34
I. SEXUAL ASSAULT ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES .....	36
II. JEZEBEL STEREOTYPIC IMAGE .....	37
METHODOLOGY.....	39
I. STUDY DESIGN.....	39
II. STUDY SAMPLE DESCRIPTION.....	39
III. STUDY MEASURES.....	41
IV. DATA COLLECTION .....	42
V. ANALYSIS .....	42
RESULTS.....	43
I. QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS .....	44
II. QUALITATIVE FINDINGS .....	48

DISCUSSION .....	52
CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	55
I. QUANTITATIVE FINDINGS.....	56
II. QUALITATIVE FINDINGS.....	61
III. LIMITATIONS .....	65
IV. IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS.....	65
REFERENCES .....	68
APPENDIX A – STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE .....	72
APPENDIX B – OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS .....	78
APPENDIX C – STUDY VIGNETTE .....	79

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Demographic Study Sample Characteristics.....	7
Table 4.2 One-Way ANOVA Analysis: Mean Scores of Dependent Variables as Examined by Race/Ethnicity of Hypothetical Victim .....	9
Table 4.3 One-Way ANOVA Analysis: Mean Scores of Dependent Variables as Examined by Race/Ethnicity of Participants .....	2
Table 5.1 Demographic Study Sample Characteristics.....	7
Table 5.2 One-Way ANOVA Analysis: Mean Scores of Dependent Variables as Examined by Race/Ethnicity of Hypothetical Victim .....	9
Table 5.3 One-Way ANOVA Analysis: Mean Scores of Dependent Variables as Examined by Race/Ethnicity of Participants .....	2

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Study Conceptual Model .....	4
Figure 3.1 Research Study Design.....	23

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA .....	Analysis of Variance
SES.....	Sexual Experience Survey
SPSS.....	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The racially influenced societal perceptions held by student within a campus community can shape the treatment of women of color who are sexual assault survivors. Differential responses to women of color following a sexual assault can further stigmatize an already marginalized group, particularly within majority white college communities where their presence may be overshadowed. Understanding students' attitudes and perceptions towards victims of sexual assault, and the context that alters these perceptions is important, chiefly when attempting to explore the underlying causes of such ingrained bias (Frese, Moya, and Megias, 2004). Present-day rape accepting myths only function to demean, obstruct, and minimize the seriousness of sexual victimization perpetrated against women of color on college campuses (Communities of Color, 2006; Demings, Krassen, Swan, and Billings, 2013). Rape myths are commonly held beliefs about sexual violence/assault and victims of rape and have been shown to support racial and sexual stereotypes (Carmody and Washington, 200; Jimenz and Abreu, 2003).

### **I. Problem Identification**

Everyone, regardless of their gender, sex, or sexuality, is susceptible to becoming a victim of sexual assault, but research has shown that college age and/or attending women are at a particularly high risk of experiencing sexual violence (Krebs, et al., 2007; Koelsch, Brown, Boisen, 2012) . Despite the decades of studies that have been conducted and the multiple intervention strategies that have been implemented, the incidence of

sexual assault cases that occur on college campuses remains a significant problem that can have severe psychological consequences (Koelsch, Brown, Boisen, 2012; Fisher, Cullen, and Turner, 2000; Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, and Martin, 2007). Sexual assault is an issue that is convoluted by myths, sexism, and of particular interest to this research, racial stereotypes (Donovan, 2007). While recognizing the serious nature of sexual assault this research is focused on exploring the differential, and in some cases detrimental, perceptions of a sexual assault survivor based on her race and/or ethnicity.

Empirical research has shown that race can have a strong impact on the daily experience of college students, and the experiences of ethnic / racial minority students within a predominately white institution are distinctly different from that of their counterparts (Suarez-Balcazar, Orellana-Damacela, Portillo, Rowan and Adrews-Guillen, 2003; Jones, Castellanos, and Cole, 2002). Within his research exploring the campus culture and experiences of minorities within a predominately white university, Gonzalez (2002) found that majority of the African American and Latino students interpret the culture of the university to be hostile, unsupportive, alienating and isolating (Gonzalez, 2002). There is an absence of published peer reviewed literature that explores how a woman of color experience after a sexual assault encounter is confounded by her experience at predominantly white universities. This pilot research study will attempt to expound upon this intricate relationship.

## **II. Problem Definition**

Defined by the U.S Department of Justice (2008) as any form of unwanted non-consensual sexual contact that is obtained through a violent or non-violent pathway, sexual assault occurs at a startlingly high rate among female college students (Young,

Grey and Boyd, 2008). Studies utilizing samples of participants enrolled in U.S colleges and universities revealed that between 11% and 15% of college women are survivors of rape, and as many as 50% of college women have experienced some form of sexual victimization (an umbrella term that encompasses all forms of violating and violent sexual conduct ) (Koelsch, Brown, Boisen, 2012). Instances of sexual assaults on college campuses, particularly those experienced by female African American and Latina college students, is an under-reported issue that is influenced by multiple factors (Bryant-Davis, Chung, and Tillman, 2009).

Accounts of sexual assault experienced by African American women are often confounded by the intersectionality of variables such as intergenerational trauma, sexism, and racism (Bryant-Davis, Chung and Tillman, 2009). Attributable to America's legacy of slavery, particularly the historical accounts of sexual victimization, the perpetuated images of African American women as sexually aggressive and promiscuous can shape their recourse after a sexual assault encounter (Thomas, Witherspoon, and Speight, 2004). Research conducted by Krebs et al. (2011) found that the rates of reporting are substantially lower for college attending African American females in comparison to their White counterparts who are victims of sexual assault. Statistical analysis reported a 44.3% reporting rate for white female sexual assault victims and a 17% reporting rate for African American victims (Krebs, Lindquist, and Barrick, 2011). When qualitatively assessing the difference between racial reporting rates, the belief that their experience would not be considered serious enough to investigate by campus authorities due to their race, was a frequently cited response (Krebs, Lindquist, and Barrick, 2011).

Likewise, through focus group methodology Ahrens, Isas, Rios-Mandel and del Carmen Lopez (2010) found that when examining the cultural influences on Latina's identification and disclosure of sexual assault, low reporting rates among college aged Latina students was linked to factors such as cultural norms, adherence to traditional gender roles, and racial stereotypes. For instance, an example may be cultural norms that do not support sharing intimate and personal information with strangers outside your community or the gender roles linked to marriage, virginity, and a woman's responsibility (i.e. to remain pure and chaste) (Ahrens, Isas, Rios-Mandel and del Carmen Lopez, 2010). Past and current stereotypical images of Latinas often depict them as women who are teasing, hot-blooded and passionate, and flirtatious (Abreu, Goodyear, Campos and Newcomb, 2000). As stated within the research by Abreu, Goodyear, Campos and Newcomb's (2000), an awareness that these images exist , even within same race social circles, lessens their likelihood to report a sexual assault encounter for the fear that they will not be believed, both by individuals outside and within their culture. Although evident in most cultures, rigid sex-role expectations and norms tied to machismo which privileges men at the expense of women is a prominent aspect of Latino culture that may explain the differences in disclosure and seeking help (Jimenez and Abreu, 2003).

**i. Women of Color & Sexual Assault Experiences on College Campuses**

When examining the relationship between sexual assault and its high prevalence on college campuses, it is critical to note that although sexual victimization can occur in multiple ways, date/acquaintance rape (completed or attempted) is the predominate form. For example, studies conducted by the National Institute of Justice report that within college campuses between 80-90% of sexual assault cases reported that the victim and

the assailant knew each other. Of the aforementioned college campus sexual assault cases, 35% of completed rapes in comparison to 43% of attempted rapes were committed by a classmate and 34% of completed rapes in comparison to 24 % of attempted rapes were committed by a friend (Rape Abuse & Incest National Network, 2000). Most sexual assault cases within college communities occur within dating situations (Rape Abuse & Incest National Network, 2000). Furthermore, research conducted by the National College Women's Study (2000) found that within a study sample of college students who attended large public schools, nearly 48% of the women sampled reported that they had experienced sexual victimization while on a date with a classmate (Krebs, et al., 2007). Of the 40% who reported sexual victimization, 12.8% experienced a completed rape and 35% were victims of attempted rapes (Krebs, et al., 2007).

Research by Krebs et al. (2007) found that race/ethnicity is a significant risk factor for sexual assault, particularly in which type of sexual assault is attempted (Krebs, 2007). Women of color are reported as experiencing significantly higher rates of physically forced sexual intercourse and emotional coercion by an acquaintance or within a dating situation as compared to white women (Krebs, et al., 2007). For example, quantitative survey based research conducted by Kalof (2000) found that within a diverse racial and ethnic sample of undergraduate females, African American females (18.8%) and Hispanic females (21.1%) had the highest rates of physically forced sexual intercourse (Kalof, 2000). For this reason, this pilot study will be constructed around a hypothetical date/acquaintance rape (completed or attempted) experience.

Following a sexual assault experience an individual's response usually exists along a broad spectrum of emotions and actions that can range from denial, shame,

substance abuse, anger, forgiveness and/or ambivalence (Communities of Color, 2006). A woman of color's response to her victimization may be influenced by individual and cultural factors, which alters her experience and subsequent actions (Communities of Color, 2006). In addition to dealing with the implications of her experience, a woman of color is responsible for coping for her experience as well as confronting the cultural values and norms, possible mistreatment, and issues surrounding her family/community linked to her sexual assault experience (Communities of Color, 2006).

This is not to suggest that White victims of sexual assault are able to deal with a sexual assault encounter better due to their position in society, but that they may not have to contend with other factors (such as cultural norms) that are directly linked to their race and ethnicity. Regardless of availability of resources, financial or otherwise, women of color are faced with norms and challenges that don't exist within the context of White culture. Such norms and challenges include, and are not limited to, rape myth acceptance that fosters self-blame, internalizations that reinforce the belief that women of color are promiscuous, cultural mandates that reinforce that survivors should be strong and able to handle their trauma without assistance, and cultural norms against sharing personal information with strangers (West and Johnson, 2013; Ahrens, Isas, Rios-Mandel and del Carmen Lopez, 2010).

### **III. Formal Statement of Problem**

The purpose of this pilot study is to ascertain how a sample of female college students perceives a hypothetical victim of a fabricated sexual assault. Participant perceptions of the sexual assault will be explored through three dependent variables: (1) victim responsibility attributes, (2) levels of trauma suffered due to the experience, and

(3) levels of social support. To add more contextual value, the description of the victim will be constructed around the stereotypic image that is often perpetuated in American culture, the jezebel. Specific aims for this pilot study are: (1) to develop one hypothetical date/acquaintance rape vignette; (2) create a contextual image of the victim presented in the vignette within the confines of the selected stereotypic image of women of color (jezebel); and (3) to quantitatively and qualitatively assess and compare participant reactions to the vignette when presented as an African American, Latina, or White college student.

The jezebel image can be applied to women of all races and ethnicities, including white women, but it is most often used to represent and demoralize a woman of African and Latin American descent (Donovan, 2007; Arrizon, 2008). With roots derived from the sexual exploitation and victimization of African American women that occurred during the era of slavery, the term jezebel was commonly used as a justification of non-consensual sexual relations between a female slave and her master (Thomas, Witherspoon, and Speight, 2004). The sexual acts of violence forced upon enslaved African American women was rationalized by ideologies that stereotyped them as immoral, hypersexual and insatiable (Donovan, 2007). Within the lense of Latin culture, the term jezebel arises from the tropicalism trope perpetuated by American culture (Guzman and Valdivia, 2004). Tropicalism stereotypes Latinas as seductive women with curvaceous hips and breasts who are overtly sexually. This trope feeds into the jezebel stereotype to present Latina women as promiscuous with high sex drives (Guzman and Valdivia, 2004). There larger issue at stake in this discourse about instances sexual assault and women of color: the role of the perceptions held by the campus community.

Their perceptions (known or unknown) of the victim, based on her race/ethnicity, shape the post-assault treatment of the victim and are capable of defining their next steps, or even the recovery process.

#### **IV. Theoretical Framework**

Examined from a social ecological framework, this research operates within many different levels, specifically the intrapersonal, interpersonal and community level. Originally developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), the social ecological model purports that human behavior should be viewed as occurring within and among multiple systems (Simmons Morton, McLeroy, and Wendel, 2012). This research will focus on the more modern conception created by McLeroy et al. (1988) (Simmons Morton, McLeroy, and Wendel, 2012). McLeroy (1988) social ecological model utilized five distinct societal levels, which include an intrapersonal, interpersonal, organizational, community level and public policy level (Simmons Morton, McLeroy, and Wendel, 2012).

The intrapersonal level consists of individual characteristics that influence a specific health behavior such as attitudes and beliefs (National Cancer Society, 2005). The interpersonal level consists of interpersonal influences on behavior, such as influences from friends and social norms that may exist within specific social groups (Simmons Morton, McLeroy, and Wendel, 2012). The community level which consists of formal and informal social networks and norms existing among individuals, groups, or organizations (National Cancer Society, 2005). The policy level is comprised of local, state, and federal policies that function to either regulate or support actions and practices related to disease prevention (National Cancer Society, 2005).

The social ecological model is a framework that is used to examine the social interrelationships that affect health related behaviors (Simmons Morton, McLeroy, and Wendel, 2012). The health behavior of focus is the differential treatment of sexual assault victims based on race and ethnicity. Attitudes and beliefs about race, sexual assault, and sexuality play an important role. At an individual level, this behavior may be influenced by attitudes and beliefs about race and women who are assertive in their sexuality. Within an interpersonal level social norms supported by friends, peer-groups and social circles shape perceptions about race and sexual assault. The community level is also of particular importance because it is a setting that fosters formal and informal cultural values, norms and standards, especially those centered on perceptions about sexual assault victims and race. Although advantageous, this research study does not examine the implications of the policy level.

## **V. Research Question**

The research question examined within this study is as follows:

- How does the hypothetical sexual assault victim's race or ethnicity affect how the dependent variables are assessed?

## **VI. Justification of Research**

Very few studies have examined how the implications of the culturally stereotyped images of women of color influence perceptions and responses, by the victim and her peers, when addressing sexual assault among African Americans and Latinas (Donovan and Williams, 2002; Bryant-Davis, Chung and Tillman, 2009; Donovan, 2007; Rivera, 1994; Ahrens, Isas, Rios-Mandel and del Carmen Lopez, 2010). The findings of this research could fill gaps and add to the current body of literature related to the

intersectionality of sexual assault and racial stereotypes, among college attending African American women and Latina's. It is important to study and understand the influence of the unique racial and gender stereotypes of African American women particularly due to the prevalence of racism and sexism (Thomas, Witherspoon, and Speight, 2004).

Moreover, it is crucial that we explore how these factors influence Latinas and African American woman who have been sexually assaulted. There is a lack of empirical literature that studies how racial stereotypes affect Latina and African American women who have been sexually victimized (Thomas, Witherspoon, and Speight, 2004).

The end goal of this mixed methods study is to aid in the development of culturally tailored and sensitive campus-lead sexual assault prevention initiatives. The results of the study will be reported to campus community partners, e.g., Sexual Assault and Violence Intervention & Prevention (SAVIP), Stand Up Carolina, Changing Carolina Peer Leaders and the Sexual Assault Relationship Violence (SARV) Multi-disciplinary Committee, for whom this information is most relevant. The data generated from this pilot study will be used to educate campus staff and community advocates who serve the university's sexual assault survivors. Furthermore, findings may be useful in the design of new interventions/projects that respond to the sexual assault of women of color.

## **VII. Preview**

The following chapters will include a review of related literature, discussion of research methodology, a manuscript for publication and a discussion of the study results and future recommendations.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

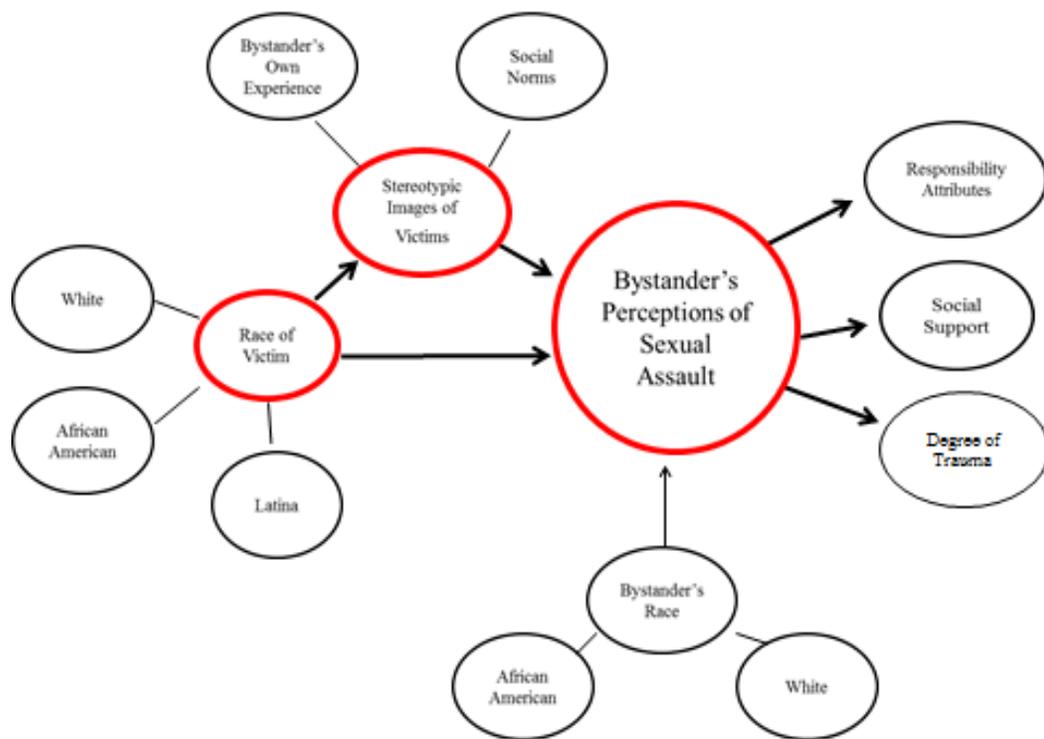
Women of color who attend college face a unique duality. They are not only at a greater likelihood to experience sexual victimization, but they are also more likely to be held accountable for their victimization, chiefly when judged by their peers (Donovan and Williams, 2002). These judgments not only possess the power to alter her perception of the experience but also that of her self-worth and environment (Donovan and Williams, 2002). Drawn from research conducted by Willis (1992), it was revealed that when asked to respond to hypothetical scenarios that involve sexual assault, students reported that they were more likely to judge a black date rape victim, as compared to a white victim of the same situation, as being less truthful and more likely to be responsible for her sexual assault (Willis, 1992). Employing the same study design, Foley et al. (1995) also found that when the victim was an African American female, college students were less likely to define the incident as date rape, to believe the crime should be reported to the police, or hold the perpetrator accountable (Foley et al., 1995). Although the two previous examples were cited from dated literature, it shows that the discourse around the issue of race, sexual assault, and differential perception of sexual assault victims has been prevalent for many years.

The incidence of sexual assaults among college-attending African American females is higher than both Latina and White females who attend college (Townsend, Neilands, Thomas and Jackson, 2010). Seminal research conducted by Estrich (1987)

purported that African American women need to demonstrate more proactive resistance in fighting off a rapist in comparison to White woman in order for the public to perceive the sexual assault as a legitimate and real crime of rape (Jimenez and Abreu, 2003). Supporting this notion, research conducted by Wyatt (1992) was concluded that the credibility of an African American woman as a rape victim has never been as established and esteemed as firmly as it is for a White woman who experienced the same magnitude of trauma (Wyatt,1992). There is a plethora of research that purports that female African American sexual assault victims are judged more harshly for their victimization, as seen within the above mentioned literature (Foley et al., 1995; Willis, 1992; Donovan, R. and Williams, M. 2002; Bryant-Davis,T., Chung, H., and Tillman, S., 2009; Tillman, S., Bryant-Davis, T., Smith, K. & Marks, A., 2010; Tillman, S., Bryant-Davis, T., Smith, K. & Marks, A., 2010). Although this study is comparing perceptions of White, Latina, and African American sexual assault victims, literature to date supports the need for this research. The purpose of this research is to quantitatively and qualitatively assess if perceptions, due to race and ethnicity, affect the dependent variables of responsibility, social support, and trauma, in conjunction to examining how stereotypic images affect the assessment of the previously stated dependent variables.

Below, Figure 1 depicts a conceptual model created for this research. This conceptual model is constructed around three major concepts, bystander perceptions of sexual assault, race, and stereotypic images and was created to explore how the hypothetical sexual assault victim's race or ethnicity affect how the dependent variables are assessed This conceptual model posits that the dependent variable (responsibility attributes and degree of trauma) are determined by bystander perceptions of sexual

assault. Bystander perceptions of sexual assault, the central and most important concept, is in turn simultaneously, although through different pathways, influenced by race (race of the victim and the bystander). The stereotypic images of victims concept is influenced by the race concept (race of the victim) and influences the bystander perceptions of sexual assault concept. The stereotypic images of victims construct has two contributing factors, the bystanders own experience and social norms.



**Figure 2.1 Research Conceptual Model**

**I. Oppressive Images of Latina & African American Women**

Prejudicial attitudes may exist without personal awareness of biased beliefs, and stereotypes based on race possess the power to influence the behavior and beliefs of both the perceiver and the stereotyped individual (Menaker and Franklin, 2012). An influential, albeit negative, stereotype that has persisted for centuries is that African

Americans, particularly females, are hypersexual (Reid-Pharr, 2009). The inception of the institution of slavery marks the beginning of a rather overzealous and dehumanizing interest with Black American sexuality (Reid-Pharr, 2009; Washington, 2001). The continual and unprohibited sexual victimization of enslaved Africans gave birth to the racist images of bestial black men and lascivious black women (Reid-Pharr, 2009; Washington, 2001). Sectarian attempts to demonize black sexual practices and sexuality were successful in not only further alienating enslaved Africans from Whites, but also in silencing their voice and sense of community, which was particularly detrimental for enslaved females (Reid-Pharr, 2009). The sexual victimization of enslaved women was legally and morally condoned and primarily used as a means to oppress or dominate women. Women, in general, were not seen as human beings, but as property, but much more so for African American women (Tillman et al., 2010).

Within her narrative entitled *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, ex-slave Harriet Jacobs, recounts the years she spent eluding unwanted sexual advances from her slave master (Sommerville, 2005). Recognizing that both men and women of African descent shared the experience of being enslaved, Jacobs also goes on to recount that enslavement and the color of their skin were the only similarities they shared (Sommerville, 2005). According to Jacobs, enslaved women experienced a unique threat that made their experience more devastating, unbearable and deathly –sexual assault (Sommerville, 2005). Due to the institutionalized access and their unprecedented status, white male slave owners were able to capitalize, financially and carnally, off of African American women's sexuality. It was a common belief that African American women were unable to say no to a sexual advance because of her insatiable appetite for sex (Sommerville, 2005).

Homosexuality was punishable by death, negating the aforementioned statements as true for an enslaved man (Sommerville, 2005).

Seminal literature quintessentially characterizes a Jezebel as an African American female who is sexually aggressive, promiscuous, and easily aroused (Gillum, 2002). More socially current representations of a jezebel is a female whose primary role is that of a seductive, hypersexual exploiter of men's weaknesses and needs (Gillum, 2002). She is often seen as provoking or even desiring of her own sexual victimization, thus she is not seen as a "true" victim (Menaker and Franklin, 2012). The jezebel image is a particularly destructive representation of African American women, especially for survivors of sexual assault (Donovan and Williams, 2002). Within the confines of this stereotype, the victim is held responsible for her assault, regardless of the circumstances (Donovan and Williams, 2002). This ideology not only reinforces rape myths but also promotes the idea that the survivor's behavior somehow contributed or is correlated with her sexual victimization (Donovan and Williams, 2002).

Although the jezebel stereotype is not a part of Latino culture, manifestations of prejudice, racism and oppressive images exist, just within a different context. Within U.S. culture, Latinas are presented within the confines of a Madonna/Whore Complex (Arrizon, 2008). They simultaneously represent both innocent virgins and sexy vixens (Rivera, 1994). This juxtaposition arises from the racist ideology that Latin women are inherently docile and primed for domestication, but in order to satisfy her partner she becomes sensual, overtly sexual, passionate and hot-blooded (Rivera, 1994). Embedded within a cultural legacy shaped by Christian values and patriarchies, these views exoticize Latina women and present them as a sexual fetish (Arrizon, 2008).

Detrimental stereotypes of women of color, particularly of African American women and Latinas, have permeated social media outlets and as an immediate consequence, public perception and thought. When examining the relationship between sex, race effects and sexual assault related rape myths within a sample of self-identified Latino and White undergraduates, Jimenez and Abreu (2003) found that white female participants within this study had greater sympathy for the rape victim who was presented as White. Participants were exposed to a written acquaintance rape vignette that manipulated the victim and perpetrators' race. Although the sample of white women who participated in this study had more sympathetic attitudes towards female rape victims than the Latina participants did, they were not as sympathetically receptive towards rape myths centered on ethnicity (Jimenez and Abreu, 2003). Pervasive stereotypes of Latina sexuality and generalizations of Latinas as being hot-blooded, passionate, teasing and overly flirtatious, was found to have restricted the amount of sympathy given to the hypothetical Latina victim (Jimenez and Abreu, 2003).

Although the research findings produced by Jimenez and Abreu (2003) added to the current body of literature related to sexual assault and non-white races/ethnicities, it is important to examine a context of such findings. This study used an analogue design which may have not accurately assessed the true attitudinal perceptions of the participants, thus skewing the results. Analogue research designs attempt to simulate real-life situations, but under controlled conditions, thus making it virtually impossible to assess or yield perceptions that are formulated without constraint (Jimenez and Abreu, 2003). While Jimenez and Abreu's (2003) research yielded notable outcomes, their use of the analogue design affected the overall generalizability of the results. Utilizing an

analogue design negates the spontaneity of real life occurrences, and as a result the true attitudinal perceptions of the participants were not accurately captured and analyzed.

The relevance of oppressive images for Latina and African American women is influenced by societal viewpoints, as evidenced by the aforementioned study. Nonetheless, factors such as racial identity, cultural affiliation, access to support, and comfort with traditional interventions greatly feeds the connectivity between race, ethnicity and differential perceptions of sexual assault (Donovan and Williams, 2002). Research by Donovan and Williams, which investigated the relationship between stereotypic images of African American women and their marginalization as rape survivors, suggests that further exploration needs to be undertaken to evaluate how these images interact with other variables to impact African American and Latina sexual assault survivors (Donovan and Williams, 2002).

## **II. College Communities Attitudes & Perceptions of Sexual Assault**

Research has shown that when compared to others, college students consistently underestimate their own risk for a wide range of health-related problems, particularly sexual assault (Cue, George, and Norris, 1996). When examining this issue within the confines of date/acquaintance rape, while able to acknowledge the fact that their peers may be at risk of experiencing victimization (sexual assault), many female college students resist seeing themselves as vulnerable to the same form of victimization, (Koelsch, Brown, Boisen, 2012). Seminal research by Estrich (1987) stated that most college students consider a “real” incidence of rape to occur within a situation in which an innocent young woman is dragged into a dark alley or behind bushes by a stranger with a weapon (Foley et al., 1995). Despite the frequency of acquaintance and date rape

occurrences, the aforementioned stereotypical image of “real” rape still prevails within college communities (George and Martinez, 2002).

Although sexual assault is a significant issue that affects individuals on college campuses, the belief that “it won’t happen to me” is a mindset that can create a false sense of invincibility. Within their research Cue, George, and Norris (1996), present the term “positive illusion” which is defined as feeling less at risk for sexual assault in comparison to other women. Generally used within the discipline of psychology, positive illusions allow one to feel invulnerable to dangers that are truly present (Cue, George, and Norris, 1996). Women of color who rely on this credence (“it won’t happen to me”) are at greater risk for exacerbating the monumental physical, emotional, and mental effects of their sexual victimization namely because rape, of any form, impacts women of color and White women differently (George and Martinez, 2002). By thinking that only other woman are vulnerable to sexual victimization, women of color become more vulnerable to sexual assault due to misperceiving or ignoring the cues that might indicate a higher degree of danger (Cue, George, and Norris, 1996).

Within their research methodology Cue, George, and Norris (1996) expanded upon the concept of “positive illusions” by utilizing a written scenario involving a hypothetical dating couple, in conjunction to the participant also reading about themselves, within the sexual assault experience. Within their study, the participants were instructed to read a vignette about a hypothetical victim, and themselves, going on the date, or about another woman going on a date, and subsequently encountering a sexual assault experience (Cue, George, and Norris, 1996). When utilizing a vignette in which the female participant is simply instructed to imagine another woman in a particular

sexual assault scenario, judgments of vignette characters may not accurately reflect women's belief regarding their own victimization, when concordant with her own race /ethnicity (Cue, George, and Norris, 1996).

### **III. Racism, Prejudice, & Gender Roles**

Some of the most powerful variables in influencing social perceptions are class, gender, social economic status, and as it relates to this research, race (George and Martinez, 2002, p.110; Hewstone, Hantzi, and Johnston, 1991; Stangor, Lynch, Duan, and Glass, 1992). For example, Stangor, Lynch, Duan and Glass's (1992) seminal research utilizing five separate experiments to explore how undergraduate students categorize individuals on the basis of social features found that race was the most consistently chosen feature to categorize an individual. Stangor et al.'s research found that racially prejudiced students were more likely to rely upon race as a basis for categorization due to ingrained racial stereotypes (Stangor, Lynch, Duan and Glass, 1992). A study conducted by Gaertner and Dovidio (1986) which examined forms of prejudice and racism revealed that when a person's opinion cannot be clearly labeled as prejudiced, stereotypic, or old-fashioned, they are more likely to rely upon those ingrained ideas regardless of the characteristics of the stipulated event (Frese, Moya, & Megias, 2004). Within their research Frese, Moya, and Megias (2004), state that attitudes' towards rape are a very important piece to understanding how college students react or behave towards victims and perpetrators of rape. The attitudes attributed to a victim of rape are often characterized as blaming the victim, minimizing the psychological impact and justifying the perpetrator (Frese, Moya, & Megias, 2004). Additionally, race has a high likelihood

of affecting the attitudes and subsequent judgments concerning a rape involving an African American female (George and Martinez, 2002).

In an attempt to decrease the initiation of racially introduced bias, Frese, Moya, and Megias (2004) simply asked the participants to inform the interviewer about their perceptions of the hypothetical situation. They were able to ascertain the specific labels participant's think society, not them, would place upon the victim of sexual assault (Frese, Moya, & Megias, 2004). Within their study, participants were also asked to provide the perceived demographics of the individual they are assigned which included race, ethnicity, age, or even descriptive socio-economic factors (Frese, Moya, & Megias, 2004). Frese, Moya, and Megias (2004), found that victim blaming was the highest in the acquaintance rape situation, revealing the underlying belief that an assailant who knows the victim may not understand her refusal, thus making him think he has the right to rape her.

While exploring the effects variables such as victim and perpetrator race, type of rape, and participant racism have on victim blaming within rape occurrences, George and Martinez (2002) hypothesized that racial factors would have the greatest bearing on victim blaming with a rape encounter. After performing a hierarchical multiple regression analysis, they discovered that in rapes involving an African American female, victim blaming was highly correlated with the participants' racism (George and Martinez, 2002). Latin culture has been found to have more victim-blaming and conservative attitudes towards rape than other racial/ethnic groups (Ahrens, Isas, Rios-Mandel and del Carmen Lopez, 2010).

Findings from Talbot, Neill, and Rankin's (2009) research stated that college attending women who subscribe to more traditional gender roles were more likely to blame the victim for rape, feel the victim led the perpetrator on, and attribute responsibility to the victim, not the perpetrator. This is particularly interesting because 62% of the participants were female and 87% were white, which mirrors the demographics of the sample population this research pooled from. A hypothesis can be formed that similar results, as it relates to instances of victim blaming and attributing culpability, may be found within this research study. Research conducted by Menaker and Franklin (2012) indicated that women who do not demonstrate behaviors that conform to traditional sex role ideology are more likely to be blamed for their sexual victimization when compared to traditional women, especially when race is introduced as a factor (Menaker and Franklin, 2012). Research has shown that African American female victims of sexual assault (rape) are attributed greater culpability for their victimization than a White female victim (Menaker and Franklin, 2012). Additionally, observers are less likely to label a forced sexual encounter as a crime when the victim is African American (Menaker and Franklin, 2012).

Conversely research examining gender roles by Ahrens, Isas, Rios-Mandel and del Carmen Lopez (2010), through focus group methodology was able to elicit qualitative data that support the notion that the emphasis for Latina women to remain chaste and pure limits their ability to identify physical and sexual abuse, and increases the risk of blaming themselves for these acts upon the realization.

#### **IV. Instrumentation**

While examining the impact of race, prior sexual assault victimization, and the acceptance of rape myths, Carmody and Washington (2001) measured sexual assault victimization history using an abbreviated version of the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) created by Koss and Oros (1982). The Sexual Experiences Survey (SES) is a 13 item survey that consists of yes/no questions aimed at measuring sexual assault victimization (Carmody and Washington, 2001). It consists of survey questions regarding participant's sexual experiences involving threat, force, or coercion (Carmody and Washington, 2001). Although Carmody and Washington's (2001) use of the SES was a definite highlight, a limitation within their study was the use a cross sectional study design, which prevented them from determining a temporal order of the variables examined within the study. This is especially problematic when attempting to explore the relationship between women's attitudes and their prior victimization experiences, particularly their use of the Sexual Experience Survey (Carmody and Washington, 2001). Within the confines of this limitation the researchers will not know if the women who participated changed, or maintained their attitudes in response to the victimization. It is also important to note that within their study outcomes, Carmody and Washington (2001) found that previous sexual victimization experiences did not appear to affect women's attitudes concerning the sexual assault vignette (Carmody and Washington ,2001).

Similar to Carmody and Washington's (2001) research design, researchers Talbot et al. (2010) also used a cross sectional design. This research used an internet based survey in which data were collected at only one period of time. This proved more successful because it attempted to describe the status of phenomena (sexual assault)

among a sample of college students. Talbot et al. (2010) also used notable instrumentation within their study, namely the College Date Rape Attitude Survey and the Attitudes Towards Women survey. The College Date Rape Attitude Survey consists of 20 questions which reflect current rape myths and are effective in measuring rape-related myths of college students. Each question within this survey requires a response on a 5 point Likert scale with available choices strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The Attitudes Towards Women Scale consists of 15 questions which gauge respondents attitudes towards women's rights and are used to measure respondents level of gender role stereotyping. According to its creators, this scale is intended to assess people's beliefs about responsibilities, privileges, and behaviors that are usually divided among gender lines. Each of the 15 items on the AWS is accompanied by a 4 point response scale whose extremes are labeled agree strongly to disagree strongly.

## **V. Conclusion**

As asserted by Tilman et al. (2010) and Ahrens et al. (2010), sexual assault researchers and activists have found that African American women and Latina are generally unlikely to seek help from rape crisis centers that are predominately directed by White staff members due to the belief that their needs and concerns will be overlooked and not addressed. Research about sexual assault and violence against women is usually not presented separately by ethnic groups, and most researchers acknowledge that lack of diversity in their samples (Tillman, Bryant-Davis, Smith, and Marks, 2010). Latina and African American women have developed a culture of silence around the notion of sexual assault (Donovan and Williams, 2002; Rivera 1994). Even though stories of victimization were passed down through generations as a method of preparing young African American

girls and Latinas to protect themselves, but in general they are taught to be reluctant to publicly or privately speak about their assaults (Donovan and Williams, 2002; Ahrens, Isas, Rios-Mandel and del Carmen Lopez, 2010).

Very few studies have examined how the implications of the culturally stereotyped images of African American and Latina females' influence perceptions and responses, by the victim and her peers, when addressing sexual assault among African Americans and Latinas (Donovan and Williams, 2002; Bryant-Davis, Chung and Tillman, 2009; Donovan, 2007). As stated by Jimenez and Abreu (2003), future research needs to explore the relationship between the stereotypes ascribed to Latina sexuality and attitudes towards rape. Additionally, Ahrens et al., (2010) acknowledged that research needs to continue to explore the implications of sexual assault within the Latin community, specifically how it ties to traditional cultural beliefs and sexist images of women.

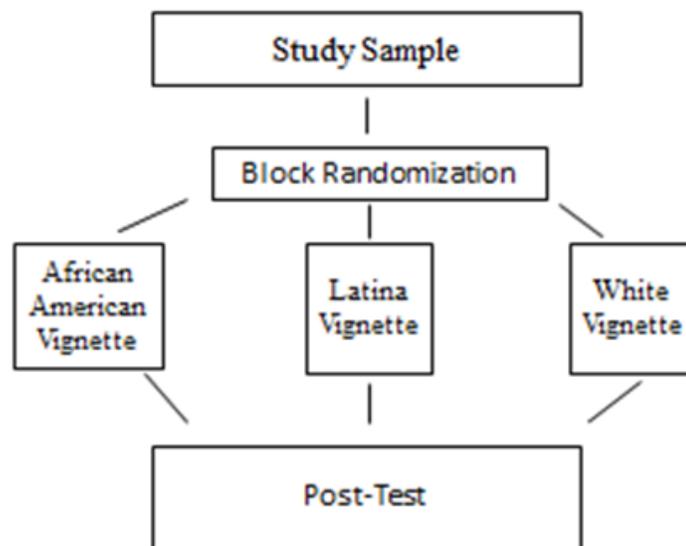
There is a scant amount of research that utilizes a female African American and Latina college population for the aforementioned purposes. Many of the studies utilized a relatively homogenous sample especially with regard to socioeconomic background with a majority of participant's coming from two-parent middle/upper –middle class backgrounds. It is essential that future research examines the implications of traditional sex role attitudes (attitudes and beliefs about the role of men and women) among Latinas, African Americans, and White women in order to empirically differentiate how the possible difference and similarities may affect treatment after a sexual assault encounter (Jimenez and Abreu, 2003).

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### I. Study Design

This mixed methods study utilized a randomized post-test-only design to test participant reactions to a hypothetical sexual assault vignette. Participants received a vignette story-line, each with a unique scenario of the “victim” randomly assigned to reflect a Latina, White, or African American female college student. Each participant was asked to complete a paper-pencil survey after reading the vignette, as well as respond to a set of eleven open-ended questions regarding the vignette. In order to ensure randomization of the study vignette, an online electronic block randomization tool (found at Randomizer.org) was utilized (Figure 2).



**Figure 3.1 Research Study Design**

## **II. Target Population**

Eligibility criteria were limited to students who were: currently enrolled undergraduate students on the Columbia campus of the University of South Carolina, self-identified as female, and were 18 years old and above. Only female participants were recruited because this study was aimed at capturing their perceptions and opinions as they relate to how they view victims of sexual assault. While instances of sexual assault have the power to affect an entire campus community, women of color are more often the casualty of sexual victimization and are statistically at higher risk. The perceptions of sexual assault held by women of color, namely African American and Latina college students, are important. Female African American and Latina college students are an important portion of the target population and will be actively sought out to participate. Granted, while it is important to understand the male college community perceptions of a sexual assault vignette centered on race among, this research focuses on women because they are more likely, than males, to be victims of sexual assault (Gillum, 2002, p.66; Kalof, 2000).

### **i. Sampling Strategy & Recruitment**

This research used a combination of a criterion and typical case sampling strategy to aid in recruitment. Criterion sampling involves selecting participants that meet some pre-determined criteria and is a common strategy used to ensure quality assurance (Patton, 2002). Although the study criteria were placed on flyers and advertisements the central recruiting strategy, and most fruitful, for this study involved person-to-person interactions. I actively advertised and sought out participants. Once a conversation was

initiated with a possible participant, I use the pre-determined criteria to verbally screen the participant for eligibility.

### **III. Study Variables**

Participants were instructed to read a brief vignette describing a fabricated sexual assault encounter (acquaintance/date rape). The vignette was adapted from study instrumentation utilized within a research study conducted by Black and Gold (2008). Subjectivity of the interpretation of the victims' race was recognized as a limitation. Consequently, each created vignette was slightly altered so that each contains a different yet discrete identifying statement. No leading information was provided about the perpetrator, besides a pseudonym. A paper-pencil survey was completed first, followed by a packet of open-ended questions. The survey was utilized to collect explanatory quantitative data to elucidate measurements of participants' perceptions. Follow-up open-ended questions were utilized to collect exploratory data to further elucidate the attributes that construct the perceptions of female sexual assault victims, based on race or ethnicity.

This study's usage different vignettes, as stated by the university IRB, introduced the issue of deception. The participants were not initially informed of the full purpose of the study; therefore, there was an element of deception involved. Using different vignettes, each with their own discrete identifying statement was put in place to subconsciously rouse racial bias without being too forthcoming or obvious. Although the research question focuses primarily on differential perceptions due to race and ethnicity, participants were not out-rightly asked to shape their responses surrounding the person's race.

#### **IV. Data Collection Procedures**

Preceding any data collection, a letter of invitation was outlined for the participants. Each participant was required to verbally consent to a letter of invitation. As suggested by the IRB, participants did not need to sign a traditional letter of informed consent, since the information would remain anonymous. As previously stated, participants received a vignette each with a unique scenario of the “victim” randomly assigned to reflect a White, Latina, or African American female college student. After receiving their vignette, participants were instructed to complete a questionnaire assessing their responses to the vignette and dependent variables. After the questionnaire was complete, students were instructed to complete a packet of 11 open-ended questions. The participant was allowed to complete their questionnaire and open-ended question packet in a private room. This step was implemented based the assumption that participants would answer more freely if they were not watched and to check for self-monitoring and testing bias, which unfortunately is impossible to eliminate within this type of study,.

##### **i. Study Measures & Instrumentation**

As previously mentioned, participant data were collected through a quantitative paper-pencil survey and multiple qualitative open-ended questions. The quantitative questionnaire consisted of six sections. The first three sections were implemented to assess the three dependent variables (perceived victim responsibility attributes, levels of trauma due to experience, and social support). Using a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from “not at all” to “a lot,” or “definitely no” to “definitely yes”, participants were asked to respond to a set of questions about the vignette they received.

Section four and five of the questionnaire consisted of the Attitudes Towards Women and the College Date Rape Attitudes Survey scales. These scales were used to assess and gauge each participant's rape related attitudes and levels of gender stereotyping (Talbot, Neill, & Rankin, 2010). For the College Date Rape Attitudes Survey scale, several of the items were reversed scored so that high scores (5) always correspond with the desirable, anti-rape responses (Talbot, Neill, & Rankin, 2010). For the Attitudes Towards Women scale, total scores ranged from 0 most traditional and conservative to 45 (most egalitarian and liberal) (Talbot, Neill, & Rankin, 2010). The final part of the questionnaire, section 6, consisted of seven demographic questions. Participants were asked to complete questions that inquired about their age, major, year of study, race and ethnicity and parent's highest level of education.

Qualitative data were ascertained using multiple open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were utilized to compliment the questionnaire and further elucidate the attributes that construct the perceptions of female sexual assault victims, based on race, ethnicity, or racial stereotypes.

## **ii. Study Conceptualizations**

The victim responsibility attribute variable was operationalized through characteristics/examples such as clothing/attire, time and location of incident, moral decency, level of acquaintance with the assailant and levels of resistance to the unwanted experience (Whatley, 1996, p.82; Frese, Moya, and Megias, 2004, p. 155). The variable used to determine the level of trauma the victim suffered due to the experience was conceptualized through characteristics including and not limited to being physically, verbally, or emotionally harmed, and level of acquaintance with assailant (Frese, Moya,

and Megias, 2004, p. 155). The variable used to determine social support was conceptualized through characteristics such as rates of disclosure, reporting to the police, support from family and peers and seeking outside assistance (therapy or hospital visit) (Bryant-Davis, Chung, and Tillman, 2009) (Tillman, Bryant-Davis, Smith and Marks, 2010).

In order to identify contextual visuals of the victim within the confines of the stereotypic images of African American women, the image of the Jezebel stereotype was operationalized by characteristics or attributes such as being overtly sexual, sexually aggressive, promiscuous, and easily aroused (West, 1995, p. 462; Gillum, 2002, p.66). Within the hypothetical scenario, terms such as sexually aggressive, tempting, and sexually uninhibited will be used to link the victim and attributes typified by the jezebel stereotype.

### **iii. Vignettes**

As previously stated within the proposal, the created vignette presented a hypothetical scenario involving an incidence of date/acquaintance rape. Rationale behind this to display a fabricated incident of date/acquaintance rape not only stems from the aforementioned facts and statistics but is also supported by research conducted by Black and Gold (2008). Black and Gold (2008) found in comparison to men, women are more likely to judge a scenario of sexual assault as an instance of date rape when the encounter is centered on the occurrence of forced sexual intercourse that occurs between a dating couple (Black and Gold, 2008). In order to mitigate the limitation of subjectivity of the interpretation of the victim's race, each created vignette was altered slightly so that each contained a different name and discrete identifying statement. Highlighted below are the

identifying statements utilized with the vignette. The full document, adapted from Black and Gold (2008), can be found within the appendix.

- ❖ *African American Victim* One evening during her family's annual Juneteenth (holiday that marks the emancipation of slaves celebrated annually by African Americans) cook-out *Diamond* received a text from James telling her to meet him at 11 pm for a late night movie date.
- ❖ *Latina Victim* One evening during her sister's quinceañera (traditional 15<sup>th</sup> birthday party for Latina girls) *Maria* received a text from James telling her to meet him at 11 pm for a late night movie date.
- ❖ *White Victim* One evening while at her family's annual July 4<sup>th</sup> picnic *Molly* received a text from James telling her to meet him at 11 pm for a late night movie date.

## V. Ethics & Procedures to Protect Human Subjects

Consent procedures were conducted prior to any research activities with each participant. Once located in the room in which the study took place, a letter of invitation was verbally reviewed before participants could begin the study. If they decided to take part in the study, they were asked for a verbal consent. A copy of the letter of invitation was given to each participant. Participation in this study was completely voluntary. Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason without negative consequences. In the event that participants did withdraw from the study, the information they had already given was kept confidential.

Protecting the participants' confidentiality was a very important facet of this study. Study participants were only identifiable by a study subject number (e.g. 0001, 0002, and etc.) written on the questionnaire and open-ended questions packet. All information gathered within this study remained confidential. There were no documents used in this study that stated the participants' name. Responses to the questionnaire were not identifiable or linkable to a particular participant, due to the use of study participant

numbers. Transcribed participant answers to the open-ended questions were stored in password protected computer files at the university.

Participants were not encouraged to disclose any personal information, particularly information that pertains to experiences with sexual assault. Resource information on counseling services was made available in the event that participation caused emotional strain. Due to the element of deception mentioned above, a brief debriefing session took place after the completion of the open-ended question packet. During the debriefing session participants were informed about the true purpose and intent of the study.

## **VI. Analysis Plan**

Qualitative open-ended questions were transcribed and the subsequent data was coded and entered into NVivo 10 in order to document important and emergent themes. The quantitative data produced by the paper-pencil survey was manually entered into SPSS. The quantitative data were stratified by race and ethnicity (of the participant and the hypothetical victim). Quantitative data was also analyzed to explore differences between participant responses to selected questions where differences in the means of continuous variables will be evaluated using simple t-tests. Analyses of variance and differences in proportions were evaluated using chi-square tests. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be analyzed to explore what occurs when participants race/ ethnicity matches that of her given vignette and what occurred when they were discordant.

## CHAPTER 4

### RACE, ETHNICITY, AND DIFFERENTIAL PERCEPTIONS OF SEXUAL VICTIMIZATION (ASSAULT)<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Lewis, K.R., Robillard, A.G., Billings, D.L and White, K. To be submitted to Violence Against Women

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this pilot study is to ascertain how a sample of female college students perceives a hypothetical victim of a fabricated sexual assault. Participant perceptions of the sexual assault were explored through three distinct dependent variables: (1) victim responsibility attributes, (2) levels of trauma suffered due to the experience, and (3) levels of social support. This study addressed the two following research questions: (1) how does the hypothetical sexual assault victim's race or ethnicity affect how the dependent variables are assessed? This mixed methods study utilized a randomized post-test-only design to test participant reactions to a hypothetical sexual assault vignette. Participants received a vignette story-line, each with a unique scenario of the "victim" randomly assigned to reflect a Latina, White, or African American female college student. Each participant was asked to complete a paper-pencil survey after reading the vignette, as well as respond to a set of eleven open-ended questions regarding the vignette. Statistical analysis using SPSS revealed no statistical significance for the trauma and responsibility dependent variable and marginally significant outputs for the social support dependent variable. Quantitative data revealed both overt victim blaming and shaming of the Latina and African American hypothetical victim of sexual assault. In spite of the lack of statistical significance differential perceptions of sexual assault may be formed due to the victim's race and ethnicity.

## INTRODUCTION

The racially influenced societal perceptions held by students within a campus community can shape the treatment of women of color who are sexual assault survivors. Differential responses to women of color following a sexual assault can further stigmatize

an already marginalized group, particularly within majority white college communities where their presence may be overshadowed. Understanding students' attitudes and perceptions towards victims of sexual assault, and the context that alters these perceptions is important, chiefly when attempting to explore the underlying causes of such ingrained bias (Frese, Moya, and Megias, 2004). Present-day rape accepting myths only function to demean, obstruct, and minimize the seriousness of sexual victimization perpetrated against women of color on college campuses (Communities of Color, 2006; Demings, Krassen, Swan, and Billings, 2013). Rape myths are commonly held beliefs about sexual violence/assault and victims of rape and have been shown to support racial and sexual stereotypes (Carmody and Washington, 200; Jimenz and Abreu, 2003).

Everyone, regardless of their gender, sex, or sexuality, is susceptible to becoming a victim of sexual assault, but research has shown that college age and/or attending women are at a particularly high risk of experiencing sexual violence (Krebs, et al., 2007; Koelsch, Brown, Boisen, 2012) . Despite the decades of studies that have been conducted and the multiple intervention strategies that have been implemented, the incidence of sexual assault cases that occur on college campuses remains a significant problem that can have severe psychological consequences (Koelsch, Brown, Boisen, 2012; Fisher, Cullen, and Turner, 2000; Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, and Martin, 2007). Sexual assault is an issue that is convoluted by myths, sexism, and of particular interest to this research, racial stereotypes (Donovan, 2007). While recognizing the serious nature of sexual assault this research is focused on exploring the differential, and in some cases detrimental, perceptions of a sexual assault survivor based on her race and/or ethnicity.

## **I. Sexual Assault on College Campuses**

Defined by the U.S Department of Justice (2008) as any form of unwanted non-consensual sexual contact that is obtained through a violent or non-violent pathway, sexual assault occurs at a startlingly high rate among female college students (Young, Grey and Boyd, 2008). Studies utilizing samples of participants enrolled in U.S colleges and universities revealed that between 11% and 15% of college women are survivors of rape, and as many as 50% of college women have experienced some form of sexual victimization (an umbrella term that encompasses all forms of violating and violent sexual conduct ) (Koelsch, Brown, Boisen, 2012).

When examining the relationship between sexual assault and its high prevalence on college campuses, it is critical to note that although sexual victimization can occur in multiple ways, date/acquaintance rape (completed or attempted) is the predominate form. For example, studies conducted by the National Institute of Justice report that within college campuses between 80-90% of sexual assault cases reported that the victim and the assailant knew each other. Most sexual assault cases within college communities occur within dating situations (Rape Abuse & Incest National Network, 2000). Furthermore, research conducted by the National College Women's Study (2000) found that within a study sample of college students who attended large public schools, nearly 48% of the women sampled reported that they had experienced sexual victimization while on a date with a classmate (Krebs, et al., 2007). Of the 40% who reported sexual victimization, 12.8% experienced a completed rape and 35% were victims of attempted rapes (Krebs, et al., 2007).

Research by Krebs et al. (2007) found that race/ethnicity is a significant risk factor for sexual assault, particularly in which type of sexual assault is attempted (Krebs, 2007). Women of color are reported as experiencing significantly higher rates of physically forced sexual intercourse and emotional coercion by an acquaintance or within a dating situation as compared to white women (Krebs, et al., 2007). For example, quantitative survey based research conducted by Kalof (2000) found that within a diverse racial and ethnic sample of undergraduate females, African American females (18.8%) and Hispanic females (21.1%) had the highest rates of physically forced sexual intercourse (Kalof, 2000). For this reason, this pilot study will be constructed around a hypothetical date/acquaintance rape (completed or attempted) experience.

## **II. Jezebel Stereotypic Image**

The jezebel image can be applied to women of all races and ethnicities, including white women, but it is most often used to represent and demoralize a woman of African and Latin American descent (Donovan, 2007; Arrizon, 2008). With roots derived from the sexual exploitation and victimization of African American women that occurred during the era of slavery, the term jezebel was commonly used as a justification of non-consensual sexual relations between a female slave and her master (Thomas, Witherspoon, and Speight, 2004). The sexual acts of violence forced upon enslaved African American women was rationalized by ideologies that stereotyped them as immoral, hypersexual and insatiable (Donovan, 2007). Within the lense of Latin culture, the term jezebel arises from the tropicalism trope perpetuated by American culture (Guzman and Valdivia, 2004). Tropicalism stereotypes Latinas as seductive women with curvaceous hips and breasts who are overtly sexually. This trope feeds into the jezebel

stereotype to present Latina women as promiscuous with high sex drives (Guzman and Valdivia, 2004). There larger issue at stake in this discourse about instances sexual assault and women of color: the role of the perceptions held by the campus community. Their perceptions (known or unknown) of the victim, based on her race/ethnicity, shape the post-assault treatment of the victim and are capable of defining their next steps, or even the recovery process.

Very few studies have examined how the implications of the culturally stereotyped images of women of color influence perceptions and responses, by the victim and her peers, when addressing sexual assault among African Americans and Latinas (Donovan and Williams, 2002; Bryant-Davis, Chung and Tillman, 2009; Donovan, 2007; Rivera, 1994; Ahrens, Isas, Rios-Mandel and del Carmen Lopez, 2010). There is a lack of empirical literature that studies how racial stereotypes affect Latina and African American women who have been sexually victimized (Thomas, Witherspoon, and Speight, 2004). The findings of this research could fill gaps and add to the current body of literature related to the intersectionality of sexual assault and racial stereotypes, among college attending African American women and Latina's.

The purpose of this pilot study is to ascertain how a sample of female college students perceives a hypothetical victim of a fabricated sexual assault. Participant perceptions of the sexual assault will be explored through three dependent variables: (1) victim responsibility attributes, (2) levels of trauma suffered due to the experience, and (3) levels of social support. To add more contextual value, the description of the victim will be constructed around the stereotypic image that is often perpetuated in American culture, the jezebel. Specific aims for this pilot study are: (1) to develop one hypothetical

date/acquaintance rape vignette; (2) create a contextual image of the victim presented in the vignette within the confines of the selected stereotypic image of women of color (jezebel); and (3) to quantitatively and qualitatively assess and compare participant reactions to the vignette when presented as an African American, Latina, or White college student. The research question examined within this study is as follows (1) how does the hypothetical sexual assault victim's race or ethnicity affect how the dependent variables are assessed?

## METHODOLOGY

### **I. Study Design**

This mixed methods study utilized a randomized post-test-only design to test participant reactions to a hypothetical sexual assault vignette. Participants received a vignette story-line, each with a unique scenario of the “victim” randomly assigned to reflect a Latina, White, or African American female college student. Each participant was asked to complete a paper-pencil survey after reading the vignette, as well as respond to a set of eleven open-ended questions regarding the vignette. In order to ensure randomization of the study vignette, an online electronic block randomization tool (found at [Randomizer.org](http://Randomizer.org)) was utilized (Figure 2).

### **II. Study Sample Description**

Demographic characteristics, including race and ethnicity, current year of study, age, and parent's highest level of education were assessed. Forty five percent of the study sample identified as White, 43% identified as Black or African American, 6% identified as Hispanic or Latino, and 6% of the study sample identified as either Asian, Other, or did not provide a response. The mean age of the study sample was 20.16 (std.

dev. 1.322) and 45.1% of the study sample reported a senior academic standing. Within the study sample, 35.5% of the participants' mothers and 37.3% of the fathers had a four year college (bachelor's) degree, which was the highest percentage of educational attainment for both categories.

Eligibility criteria were limited to students who were: currently enrolled undergraduate students on the Columbia campus of the University of South Carolina, self-identified as female, and were 18 years old and above. Only female participants were recruited because this study was aimed at capturing their perceptions and opinions as they relate to how they view victims of sexual assault. The perceptions of sexual assault held by women of color, namely African American and Latina college students, are important. Female African American and Latina college students are an important portion of the target population and will be actively sought out to participate. This research used a criterion sampling strategy to aid in recruitment. Criterion sampling involves selecting participants that meet some pre-determined criteria and is a common strategy used to ensure quality assurance (Patton, 2002). Although the study criteria were placed on flyers and advertisements the central recruiting strategy, and most fruitful, for this study involved person-to-person interactions.

Consent procedures were conducted prior to any research activities with each participant. Participation in this study was completely voluntary. Participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time, for any reason without negative consequences. In the event that participants did withdraw from the study, the information they had already given was kept confidential. Participants were not encouraged to disclose any personal information, particularly information that pertains to experiences with sexual assault.

Resource information on counseling services was made available in the event that participation caused emotional strain. Due to the element of deception mentioned above, a brief debriefing session took place after the completion of the open-ended question packet. During the debriefing session participants were informed about the true purpose and intent of the study.

### **III. Study Measures**

Data were collected through a quantitative paper-pencil survey and multiple qualitative open-ended questions. The quantitative questionnaire consisted of six sections. The first three sections were implemented to assess the three dependent variables (perceived victim responsibility attributes, levels of trauma due to experience, and social support). Using a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from “not at all” to “a lot,” or “definitely no” to “definitely yes”, participants were asked to respond to a set of questions about the vignette they received.

Section four and five of the questionnaire consisted of the Attitudes Towards Women and the College Date Rape Attitudes Survey scales. These scales were used to assess and gauge each participant’s rape related attitudes and levels of gender stereotyping (Talbot, Neill, & Rankin, 2010). For the College Date Rape Attitudes Survey scale, several of the items were reversed scored so that high scores (5) always correspond with the desirable, anti-rape responses (Talbot, Neill, & Rankin, 2010). For the Attitudes Towards Women scale, totals scores ranged from 0 most traditional and conservative to 45 (most egalitarian and liberal) (Talbot, Neill, & Rankin, 2010). The final part of the questionnaire, section 6, consisted of seven demographic questions.

Participants were asked to complete questions that inquired about their age, major, year of study, race and ethnicity and parent's highest level of education.

Qualitative data were ascertained using multiple open-ended questions. The open-ended questions were utilized to compliment the questionnaire and further elucidate the attributes that construct the perceptions of female sexual assault victims, based on race, ethnicity, or racial stereotypes.

#### **IV. Data Collection**

Preceding any data collection, a letter of invitation was outlined for the participants. Each participant was required to verbally consent to a letter of invitation. Participants received a vignette each with a unique scenario of the "victim" randomly assigned to reflect a White, Latina, or African American female college student. After receiving their vignette, participants were instructed to complete a questionnaire assessing their responses to the vignette and the dependent variables. After the questionnaire was complete, students were instructed to complete a packet of 11 open-ended questions. The participant was allowed to complete their questionnaire and open-ended question packet in a private room. This step was implemented based the assumption that participants would answer more freely if they were not watched and to check for self-monitoring and testing bias, which unfortunately is impossible to eliminate within this type of study.

#### **V. Analysis**

Qualitative open-ended questions were transcribed and the subsequent data was coded and entered into NVivo 10 in order to document important and emergent themes. The quantitative data produced by the paper-pencil survey was manually entered into SPSS. The quantitative data were stratified by race and ethnicity (of the participant and the

hypothetical victim). Quantitative data was also analyzed to explore differences between participant responses to selected questions where differences in the means of continuous variables will be evaluated using simple t-tests. Analyses of variance and differences in proportions were evaluated using chi-square tests. Both quantitative and qualitative data will be analyzed to explore what occurs when participants race/ ethnicity matches that of her given vignette and what occurred when they were discordant.

## RESULTS

The primary goal of this research was to learn how race and ethnicity influence how female college students perceive a hypothetical victim of sexual assault. Participant perceptions of the sexual assault scenario were explored through three dependent variables: (1) victim responsibility attributes, (2) perceptions of levels of trauma suffered by the victim due to the experience, and (3) levels of social support for the victim. To add more contextual value to the vignette, the description of the hypothetical victims (Black, White and Latina) were constructed around the “jezebel” stereotypic image. Formative research in the field of sexual assault has found that college students are more likely to judge a black date rape victim as being less truthful, hold her responsible for her sexual assault and are less likely to define the incident as date rape as compared to a white date rape victim (Willis, 1992; Foley et al., 1995). Examples of contemporary research exploring these notions are very scarce.

This study intends to add to the previous body of knowledge by examining how racist and sexist stereotypes contribute to the differential perceptions of college attending women who are survivors of sexual assault. The following research question was explored: how does the hypothetical sexual assault victim’s race or ethnicity affect how

the dependent variables are assessed? Quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to answer this research question.

### Quantitative Findings

This section will report the quantitative findings from this study.

**Table 5.1. Demographic Study Sample Characteristics**

<b>Study Sample Characteristics</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>		
Black or African American	22	43.1
White	23	45.1
Hispanic or Latino	3	5.9
Asian	1	2
Other	1	2
No Answer	1	2
<b>Current Year of Study</b>		
Freshman	6	11.8
Sophomore	15	29.4
Junior	7	13.7
Senior	23	45.1
<b>Age</b>		
18	6	11.8
19	12	23.5
20	10	19.6
21	13	25.5
22	10	19.6
<b>Mothers Highest Level of Education</b>		
High school / GED	10	19.6
Some College	9	17.6
2 year College Degree ( Associates)	6	11.8
4 Year College Degree (Bachelors)	18	35.5
Master's Degree	6	11.8
Doctoral Degree	1	2
Professional Degree (MD, JD)	1	2
<b>Fathers Highest Level of Education</b>		
Less than High school	1	2
High school / GED	8	15.7
Some College	8	15.7
2 year College Degree ( Associates)	4	7.8
4 Year College Degree (Bachelors)	19	37.3
Master's Degree	9	17.6
Professional Degree (MD, JD)	2	3.9

**i. Comparison of Dependent Variable Assessed Across Race and Ethnicity of Hypothetical Victim**

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedures were utilized to determine the proportion of variability attributable to the independent (race and ethnicity of victim) and dependent variables being assessed within this study (Cronk, 2011). Using a 5-point Likert scale with written responses such as “not at all” and “a lot,” or “definitely no” and “definitely yes”, corresponding to numerical values 1 through 5, the scores of the dependent variables were initially calculated for each individual participant. A computation procedure was used to calculate the mean scores of the dependent variables for all participants. Following that step, a one-way ANOVA test was executed to assess the differences among the dependent variables across each race/ethnicity of the hypothetical victims. Table 5.2 depicts the mean scores of the dependent variables allocated to each hypothetical victim. There was only a marginally significant difference found for the social support dependent variable ( $p = 0.053$ ), and no significant difference was found for the responsibility and trauma dependent variables ( $p > 0.847$  and  $p > .602$ ).

**ii. Comparison of Dependent Variables Assessed Across Race and Ethnicity of Hypothetical Victim and Participant**

A factorial ANOVA test was executed to assess the differences among the dependent variables across the race and ethnicity of the hypothetical victims and the participants. There were no significant differences found within the comparisons of the dependent variables when assessed across race and ethnicity of the hypothetical victim and participant. Although this research intended to reach a representative sample of female college students, only three Latina students participated. Consequently the

standard deviations are missing for the Latina participants. The statistical results should be assessed with caution. When examining the differences (mean scores) of the dependent variables within divergent and convergent hypothetical victim/participant race dyads, the African American hypothetical victim was deemed most responsible for the sexual assault encounter by African American and White participants ( $M= 1.666$ ,  $s.d.= .7011$ ;  $M= 1.562$ ,  $s.d.= .6232$ ). African American participants deemed the Latina hypothetical victim as least responsible ( $M=1.500$ ,  $s.d. = .8291$ ) and White participants deemed the White hypothetical victim as least responsible ( $M=1.406$ ,  $s.d.= .4419$ ).

When examining the mean scores for the dependent variables of social support, both African American and White participants scored the Latina hypothetical victim as most deserving of social support ( $M=3.531$ ,  $s.d. = .3116$ ;  $M=3.571$ ,  $s.d. =.3450$ ). Both the African American and White participants scored the hypothetical victim of their own race as deserving of the least amount of social support ( $M= 2.750$ ,  $s.d. =1.048$ ;  $M=3.250$ ,  $s.d. =.5976$ ).

When examining the mean scores for the dependent variable of trauma, African American participants deemed the sexual assault encounter most traumatic for the Latina hypothetical victim ( $M =2.437$ ,  $s.d.= .5189$ ) and least traumatic for the White hypothetical victim ( $M= 2.062$ ,  $s.d.= .9126$ ). White participants deemed this experience to be the most traumatic for the White hypothetical victim ( $M=2.437$ ,  $s.d.= .3555$ ) and least traumatic for the Latina victim ( $M=2.404$ ,  $s.d.= .3313$ ).

Although none of the dependent variables were found to be statistically significant, the results suggest differential perceptions due to race and ethnicity may exist. Of particular interest is the assessment of the dependent variables of responsibility

and social support within convergent and divergent race dyads. African American and White participants deemed the black hypothetical victim as more responsible. This finding is concurrent with Willis (1992) and Foley et al. (1995) research results in that African American victims are more likely to be believed to be responsible for their victimization. It is also important to note that both the African American and White participants scored the hypothetical victim of their own race as deserving of the least amount of social support. Research regarding intra-racial perceptions of sexual assault was not included in this study, but it is important to acknowledge so that future research can study this finding more intensely.

**Table 5. 2 One Way ANOVA Analysis: Mean Scores of Dependent Variables by Race/Ethnicity of Hypothetical Victims**

	Mean	Range (Min-Max)	P-Value
<b>Responsibility</b>			
Black Victim	1.5625	1.00-2.75	
White Victim	1.4861	1.00-3.00	
Latina Victim	1.6176	1.00-3.25	
<b>Total</b>	1.5539		
<b>Social Support</b>			
Black Victim	3.0625	1.00-4.25	
White Victim	3.3194	2.25-5.00	
Latina Victim	3.6029	3.00-4.00	
<b>Total</b>	3.3333		
<b>Trauma</b>			
Black Victim	2.3229	1.17-3.17	
White Victim	2.2870	00-3.00	
Latina Victim	2.4608	1.33-3.00	
<b>Total</b>	2.3562		

**Table 5.3 One Way ANOVA Analysis: Mean Scores of Dependent Variables by Race/Ethnicity of Participants and Hypothetical Victim**

	<b>African American Participant</b>	<b>White Participant</b>	<b>P-Value</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>			
Black Victim	1.666	1.562	
White Victim	1.593	1.406	
Latina Victim	1.500	1.500	
			<b>.833</b>
<b>Social Support</b>			
Black Victim	2.750	3.375	
White Victim	3.468	3.250	
Latina Victim	3.531	3.571	
			<b>.326</b>
<b>Trauma</b>			
Black Victim	2.388	2.416	
White Victim	2.062	2.437	
Latina Victim	2.437	2.404	
			<b>.602</b>

### I. **Qualitative Findings**

This section will address the qualitative findings from this study. The qualitative portion of the study consisted of 11 open-ended questions. The questions were framed around the dependent variables and were created to elicit responses that reflected the participant's perceptions of the hypothetical victim, particularly as it related to the jezebel stereotype. All responses were transcribed verbatim, grouped by race/ethnicity of the hypothetical victim, and then grouped again per each individual question. Responses to the open-ended questions were examined within divergent and convergent hypothetical victim/participant race dyads. When initially examining the transcripts, a content analysis approach was used to search the text for reoccurring themes and phrases. The content analysis revealed patterns and themes within the participant responses, more so in regards to the African American and Latina hypothetical victim (Patton, 2002).

To delve deeper into the data, it was revisited using a comparative approach was used to help illuminate the commonalities and differences within the groupings of the responses (Patton, 2002). Four overarching themes and six subcategories emerged from the content and comparative analyses. The four themes included blameworthiness, descriptive terminology, differences in social support, and justification of the sexual assault experience. Subcategories within the blameworthiness theme included victim-blaming of the hypothetical victim, blaming the hypothetical boyfriend, and overt attribution of blame. Subcategories within the descriptive terminology theme included neutral descriptive terminology, negative descriptive terminology, and objectifying descriptive terminology.

The analyses of the open-ended question transcripts revealed two commonalities, regardless of race of the hypothetical victim or participant. The first commonality was found in participant responses to the question that asked them to describe the victim. Participant's responses often described her as a member of a sorority. The second commonality was found in participant responses to the question that asked them to state what they think is the difference between someone who should or should not be supported after a sexual assault encounter. Participant's responses (regardless of the victim's race) often dichotomized differences in support based on the character of the victim. For example, participants stated that a person is responsible for their rape if she gets drunk or uses drugs at a party, has a history of making "dangerous" decisions, enjoys the act [of rape], or doesn't make any effort to stop the rape. Within the following sections, the same questions will be reviewed in order to highlight the differences among the responses for the hypothetical victim solely depending on her race.

**i. Response to White Hypothetical Victim**

The neutral descriptive term “All-American” was used very frequently by participants when they were asked to describe the White hypothetical victim. When participants were asked to state what they think the victim’s friends and family would say once they were informed of the her experience, responses often included language that was indicative of victim blaming. For example, participants stated that the victim’s friends and family would tell her that she “needs to be more careful and use better judgment”, “shouldn’t dress and act the way she does” and that she “can’t be taken seriously because of the way she acts”. When participants were asked to state how they thought the experience made the victim feel, responses included terms such as heartbroken, sad, traumatized and embarrassed. When participants were asked to state how responsible they think the victim was for the encounter she experienced, responses often blamed the boyfriend. Within the responses, participants stated the assumption that the victim trusted her boyfriend, which is not stated in the vignette, and stated that no matter the circumstances “no means no”. Participant responses included statements such as “James was her boyfriend and she trusted him so she did nothing wrong”, “it doesn’t matter if she was drinking, she clearly said no”, and “she trusted James, she told him to stop and he didn’t”.

**ii. Responses to African American & Latina Hypothetical Victims**

The responses for the African American and Latina hypothetical victim were grouped together because they shared many similarities. When participants were asked to describe the African American and Latina victims, responses included negative descriptive terms such as promiscuous, “hoe”, prostitute, and weak. When answering the previously mentioned question, responses also often included descriptive terms that objectified the

victim's body. For example, the African American and Latina victim were often described using terms such as "curvy/curvaceous", "voluptuous", and "thick". Language indicative of victim blaming often occurred within the open-ended responses regarding the African American and Latina victim. For example, when participants were asked how they thought the experience made the African American or Latina victim feel, responses often stated that it made her feel as if "she needs to rethink her actions on using her sexuality to get her way", "she needs to be more reserved and respectful of her body" and that "she should be used to this because of her actions".

When participants were asked to state how responsible they think the African American or Latina victim was for the encounter she experienced, responses often overtly attributed blame. For example, participants stated that "she is responsible since she didn't stop him earlier", "she put herself in that situation", "she is responsible because she didn't make her intentions clear", "she is responsible because she is known for her promiscuity", and "she is responsible because of her poor decision making". Also, when participants were asked to state if they think the description of the vignettes justified what happened to the African American or Latina victim, responses often bluntly stated "yes", in conjunction to highlighting the victims promiscuity, personality, and actions, as a reason why she was sexually assaulted.

The use of the term promiscuous was cited very frequently within the responses regarding the African American and Latina open-ended questions. Whereas this term was used once within the White hypothetical victim open-ended question responses, it was used a total of 15 times within the African American and Latina hypothetical victim open-ended question responses (9 times within the African American victim responses

and 6 times within the Latina victim responses). There were major differences found in the participant responses regarding the White, African American, and Latina hypothetical victim. Responses for the African American and Latina hypothetical victim were more harsh, judgmental and accusatory, when compared to the responses the White hypothetical victim received. Victims of sexual assault may be perceived differently due to their race and ethnicity as seen within the above data.

## DISCUSSION

In spite of the lack of statistical significance, the findings from this study suggest that college age/attending African American and Latina victims of sexual assault are perceived differently and in more pejorative ways than are White victims. The dependent variables of responsibility and social support illuminate this position. The findings, although not statistically significant, from this research also highlight that African American college attending victims of sexual assault are not only perceived differently by White college students, but also female African American students. For example, African American and White participants deemed the black hypothetical victim as more responsible for the sexual assault experience. Similarly, African American participants scored the hypothetical victim of their own race as deserving of the least amount of social support. Inter and intra-racial perceptions of college attending female sexual assault victims is a topic that should be studied in-depth. The qualitative findings from this research offer a complimentary in-depth perspective of how the participants perceive the hypothetical victims of sexual assault. The qualitative portion of this research produced rich and powerful contextual data that not only highlights the importance of this research but also need for culturally tailored and sensitive sexual assault initiatives. Although the

findings from this research may not be generalizable, recommendations on how it relates to the college community and larger surroundings can be asserted

There were numerous limitations, especially in relation to the quantitative portion of this study, which means that the findings should be interpreted with caution. This study could not control social desirability bias and testing bias. Although the questions were created as open and non-leading, they were not neutral due to the manner in which they were stated. An example is the use of the term victim. The qualitative portion of this study consisted of numerous in-depth questions which required a lot of time and may have been taxing to the participants. The qualitative analysis of this study could have been by having the data peer-reviewed. The study sample was not representative, so statistical results, particularly regarding Latina participants (Table 5.3) should be assessed with caution. This factor also affected the generalizability of the research findings. It is also important to note that this is a pilot study, and that future research including a substantially larger sample size is recommended.

Future research on this topic is needed. It is very important that the differences in perceptions found within this research be more rigorously assessed in future studies. Future research may have the greatest impact for individuals who work or interact with survivors of sexual assault. There is a need for culturally competent and inclusive education for faculty, staff, and students who have firsthand contact with women of color who are sexually assault survivors. A creation of safe spaces and environments that foster healthy communication may possibly lead dialogues about social change regarding the social norms that shape perceptions around race and sexual assault. When addressing the issue of sexual assault among African Americans and Latinas, studies should conduct in-

depth explorations of how the implications of sexist and racist images of women of color influence perceptions and responses to them when they experience sexual violence (Donovan and Williams, 2002; Bryant-Davis, Chung and Tillman, 2009; Donovan, 2007; Rivera, 1994; Ahrens, Isas, Rios-Mandel and del Carmen Lopez, 2010). Women of color, not simply limited to the racial and ethnic groups studied within this research, should be included in such research recommendation because there is a sparse amount of current peer reviewed literature that is inclusive of all races and ethnicities.

Even though this research is considered a pilot study, the findings of this research could possibly add to the current body of knowledge concerning the intersectionality of sexual assault, racial stereotypes, and college attending African American and Latina women. The findings from this research could possibly provide the foundation for larger scale studies because it is important to study and understand the influence racial and gender stereotypes may have on women of color who have been sexually assaulted (Thomas, Witherspoon, and Speight, 2004). Advancements in health education and promotion have led to landmark innovations, but it is now take the public health agenda forward towards gender-based/sexual

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The primary goal of this research was to learn how race and ethnicity influence how female college students perceive a hypothetical victim of sexual assault. Participant perceptions of the sexual assault scenario were explored through three dependent variables: (1) victim responsibility attributes, (2) perceptions of levels of trauma suffered by the victim due to the experience, and (3) levels of social support for the victim. To add more contextual value to the vignette, the description of the hypothetical victims (Black, White and Latina) were constructed around the “jezebel” stereotypic image. Formative research in the field of sexual assault has found that college students are more likely to judge a black date rape victim as being less truthful, hold her responsible for her sexual assault and are less likely to define the incident as date rape as compared to a white date rape victim (Willis, 1992; Foley et al., 1995). Examples of contemporary research exploring these notions are very scarce.

This study intends to add to the previous body of knowledge by examining how racist and sexist stereotypes contribute to the differential perceptions of college attending women who are survivors of sexual assault. The following research question was explored: how does the hypothetical sexual assault victim’s race or ethnicity affect how the dependent variables are assessed? Quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to answer this research question.

## **II. Quantitative Findings**

This section will report the quantitative findings from this study.

### **i. Study Sample Description**

Descriptive frequencies generate a profile of the study sample (Table 5.1). Demographic characteristics, including race and ethnicity, current year of study, age, and parent's highest level of education were assessed. Forty five percent of the study sample identified as White, 43% identified as Black or African American, 6% identified as Hispanic or Latino, and 6% of the study sample identified as either Asian, Other, or did not provide a response. The mean age of the study sample was 20.16 (std. dev. 1.322) and 45.1% of the study sample reported a senior academic standing. Within the study sample, 35.5% of the participants' mothers and 37.3% of the fathers had a four year college (bachelor's) degree, which was the highest percentage of educational attainment for both categories.

### **ii. Comparison of Dependent Variables Assessed Across Race and Ethnicity of Hypothetical Victim**

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) procedures were utilized to determine the proportion of variability attributable to the independent (race and ethnicity of victim) and dependent variables (responsibility, trauma, and social support) being assessed within this study (Cronk, 2011). Using a 5-point Likert scale with written responses such as "not at all" and "a lot," or "definitely no" and "definitely yes", corresponding to numerical values 1 through 5, the scores of the dependent variables were initially calculated for each individual participant. A computation procedure was used to calculate the mean

scores of the dependent variables for all participants. Following that step, a one-way ANOVA test was executed

**Table 5.1. Demographic Study Sample Characteristics**

<b>Study Sample Characteristics</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Race and Ethnicity</b>		
Black or African American	22	43.1
White	23	45.1
Hispanic or Latino	3	5.9
Asian	1	2
Other	1	2
No Answer	1	2
<b>Current Year of Study</b>		
Freshman	6	11.8
Sophomore	15	29.4
Junior	7	13.7
Senior	23	45.1
<b>Age</b>		
18	6	11.8
19	12	23.5
20	10	19.6
21	13	25.5
22	10	19.6
<b>Mothers Highest Level of Education</b>		
High school / GED	10	19.6
Some College	9	17.6
2 year College Degree ( Associates)	6	11.8
4 Year College Degree (Bachelors)	18	35.5
Master's Degree	6	11.8
Doctoral Degree	1	2
Professional Degree (MD, JD)	1	2
<b>Fathers Highest Level of Education</b>		
Less than High school	1	2
High school / GED	8	15.7
Some College	8	15.7
2 year College Degree ( Associates)	4	7.8
4 Year College Degree (Bachelors)	19	37.3
Master's Degree	9	17.6
Professional Degree (MD, JD)	2	3.9

to assess the differences among the dependent variables across each race/ethnicity of the hypothetical victims. Table 5.2 depicts the mean scores of the dependent variables allocated to each hypothetical victim. There was only a marginally significant difference found for the social support dependent variable ( $p = 0.053$ ), and no significant difference was found for the responsibility and trauma dependent variable ( $p > 0.847$  and  $p > .602$ ).

**Table 5. 2 One Way ANOVA Analysis: Mean Scores of Dependent Variables by Race/Ethnicity of Hypothetical Victims**

	Mean	Range (Min-Max)	P-Value
<b>Responsibility</b>			
Black Victim	1.5625	1.00-2.75	
White Victim	1.4861	1.00-3.00	
Latina Victim	1.6176	1.00-3.25	
<b>Total</b>	1.5539		<b>.847</b>
<b>Social Support</b>			
Black Victim	3.0625	1.00-4.25	
White Victim	3.3194	2.25-5.00	
Latina Victim	3.6029	3.00-4.00	
<b>Total</b>	3.3333		<b>.053</b>
<b>Trauma</b>			
Black Victim	2.3229	1.17-3.17	
White Victim	2.2870	00-3.00	
Latina Victim	2.4608	1.33-3.00	
<b>Total</b>	2.3562		<b>.602</b>

**i. Comparison of Dependent Variables Assessed Across Race and Ethnicity of Hypothetical Victim and Participant**

A factorial ANOVA test was executed to assess the differences among the dependent variables across the race and ethnicity of the hypothetical victims and the participants. There were no significant differences found within the comparisons of the dependent variables when assessed across race and ethnicity of the hypothetical victim and participant. Although this research intended to reach a representative sample of female college students, only three Latina students participated. Consequently the

standard deviations are missing for the Latina participants. The statistical results should be assessed with caution.

When examining the differences (mean scores) of the dependent variables within divergent and convergent hypothetical victim/participant race dyads, the African American hypothetical victim was deemed most responsible for the sexual assault encounter by African American and White participants ( $M= 1.666$ ,  $s.d.= .7011$ ;  $M= 1.562$ ,  $s.d.= .6232$ ). African American participants deemed the Latina hypothetical victim as least responsible ( $M=1.500$ ,  $s.d. = .8291$ ) and White participants deemed the White hypothetical victim as least responsible ( $M=1.406$ ,  $s.d.= .4419$ ).

When examining the mean scores for the dependent variable of social support, both African American and White participants scored the Latina hypothetical victim as most deserving of social support ( $M=3.531$ ,  $s.d. = .3116$ ;  $M=3.571$ ,  $s.d. =.3450$ ). Both the African American and White participants scored the hypothetical victim of their own race as deserving of the least amount of social support ( $M= 2.750$ ,  $s.d. =1.048$ ;  $M=3.250$ ,  $s.d. =.5976$ ).

When examining the mean scores for the dependent variable of trauma, African American participants deemed the sexual assault encounter most traumatic for the Latina hypothetical victim ( $M =2.437$ ,  $s.d.= .5189$ ) and least traumatic for the White hypothetical victim ( $M= 2.062$ ,  $s.d.= .9126$ ). White participants deemed this experience to be the most traumatic for the White hypothetical victim ( $M=2.437$ ,  $s.d.= .3555$ ) and least traumatic for the Latina victim ( $M=2.404$ ,  $s.d.= .3313$ ).

Although none of the dependent variables were found to be statistically significant, the results suggest differential perceptions due to race and ethnicity may

exist. Of particular interest is the assessment of the dependent variable of responsibility and social support within convergent and divergent race dyads. African American and White participants deemed the black hypothetical victim as more responsible. This finding is concurrent with Willis (1992) and Foley et al. (1995) research results in that African American victims are more likely to be believed to be responsible for their victimization. It is also important to note that both the African American and White participants scored the hypothetical victim of their own race as deserving of the least amount of social support. Research regarding intra-racial perceptions of sexual assault was not included in this study, but it is important to acknowledge so that future research can study this finding more intensely.

**Table 5.3 One Way ANOVA Analysis: Mean Scores of Dependent Variable by Race/Ethnicity of Participants and Hypothetical Victim**

	<b>African American Participant</b>	<b>White Participant</b>	<b>P-Value</b>
<b>Responsibility</b>			
Black Victim	1.666	1.562	
White Victim	1.593	1.406	
Latina Victim	1.500	1.500	
			<b>.833</b>
<b>Social Support</b>			
Black Victim	2.750	3.375	
White Victim	3.468	3.250	
Latina Victim	3.531	3.571	
			<b>.326</b>
<b>Trauma</b>			
Black Victim	2.388	2.416	
White Victim	2.062	2.437	
Latina Victim	2.437	2.404	
			<b>.602</b>

### III. Qualitative Findings

This section will address the qualitative findings from this study. The qualitative portion of the study consisted of 11 open-ended questions. The questions were framed around the dependent variables and were created to elicit responses that reflected the participant's perceptions of the hypothetical victim, particularly as it related to the jezebel stereotype. All responses were transcribed verbatim, grouped by race/ethnicity of the hypothetical victim, and then grouped again per each individual question. Responses to the open-ended questions were examined within divergent and convergent hypothetical victim/participant race dyads. When initially examining the transcripts, a content analysis approach was used to search the text for reoccurring themes and phrases. The content analysis revealed patterns and themes within the participant responses, more so in regards to the African American and Latina hypothetical victim (Patton, 2002).

To delve deeper into the data, it was revisited using a comparative approach was used to help illuminate the commonalities and differences within the groupings of the responses (Patton, 2002). Four overarching themes and six subcategories emerged from the content and comparative analyses. The four themes included blameworthiness, descriptive terminology, differences in social support, and justification of the sexual assault experience. Subcategories within the blameworthiness theme included victim-blaming of the hypothetical victim, blaming the hypothetical boyfriend, and overt attribution of blame. Subcategories within the descriptive terminology theme included neutral descriptive terminology, negative descriptive terminology, and objectifying descriptive terminology.

The analyses of the open-ended question transcripts revealed two commonalities, regardless of race of the hypothetical victim or participant. The first commonality was found in participant responses to the question that asked them to describe the victim. Participant's responses often described her as a member of a sorority. The second commonality was found in participant responses to the question that asked them to state what they think is the difference between someone who should or should not be supported after a sexual assault encounter. Participant's responses (regardless of the victim's race) often dichotomized differences in support based on the character of the victim. For example, participants stated that a person is responsible for their rape if she gets drunk or uses drugs at a party, has a history of making "dangerous" decisions, enjoys the act [of rape], or doesn't make any effort to stop the rape. Within the following sections, the same questions will be reviewed in order to highlight the differences among the responses for the hypothetical victim solely depending on her race.

### **iii. Response to White Hypothetical Victim**

The neutral descriptive term "All-American" was used very frequently by participants when they were asked to describe the White hypothetical victim. When participants were asked to state what they think the victim's friends and family would say once they were informed of her experience, responses often included language that was indicative of victim blaming. For example, participants stated that the victim's friends and family would tell her that she "needs to be more careful and use better judgment", "shouldn't dress and act the way she does" and that she "can't be taken seriously because of the way she acts". When participants were asked to state how they thought the experience made the victim feel, responses included terms such as heartbroken, sad, traumatized and

embarrassed. When participants were asked to state how responsible they think the victim was for the encounter she experienced, responses often blamed the boyfriend. Within the responses, participants stated the assumption that the victim trusted her boyfriend, which is not stated in the vignette, and stated that no matter the circumstances “no means no”. Participant responses included statements such as “James was her boyfriend and she trusted him so she did nothing wrong”, “it doesn’t matter if she was drinking, she clearly said no”, and “she trusted James, she told him to stop and he didn’t”.

#### **iv. Responses to African American & Latina Hypothetical Victims**

The responses for the African American and Latina hypothetical victim were grouped together because they shared many similarities. When participants were asked to describe the African American and Latina victims, responses included negative descriptive terms such as promiscuous, “hoe”, prostitute, and weak. When answering the previously mentioned question, responses also often included descriptive terms that objectified the victim’s body. For example, the African American and Latina victim were often described using terms such as “curvy/curvaceous”, “voluptuous”, and “thick”. Language indicative of victim blaming often occurred within the open-ended responses regarding the African American and Latina victim. For example, when participants were asked how they thought the experience made the African American or Latina victim feel, responses often to stated that it made her feel as if “she needs to rethink her actions on using her sexuality to get her way”, “she needs to be more reserved and respectful of her body” and that “she should be used to this because of her actions”.

When participants were asked to state how responsible they think the African American or Latina victim was for the encounter she experienced, responses often overtly attributed blame. For example, participants stated that “she is responsible since she didn’t stop him earlier”, “she put herself in that situation”, “she is responsible because she didn’t make her intentions clear”, “she is responsible because she is known for her promiscuity”, and “she is responsible because of her poor decision making”. Also, when participants were asked to state if they think the description of the vignettes justified what happened to the African American or Latina victim, responses often bluntly stated “yes”, in conjunction to highlighting the victims promiscuity, personality, and actions, as a reason why she was sexually assaulted.

The use of the term promiscuous was cited very frequently within the responses regarding the African American and Latina open-ended questions. Whereas this term was used once within the White hypothetical victim open-ended question responses, it was used a total of 15 times within the African American and Latina hypothetical victim open-ended question responses (9 times within the African American victim responses and 6 times within the Latina victim responses). There were major differences found in the participant responses regarding the White, African American, and Latina hypothetical victim. Responses for the African American and Latina hypothetical victim were more harsh, judgmental and accusatory, when compared to the responses the White hypothetical victim received. Victims of sexual assault may be perceived differently due to their race and ethnicity as seen within the above data.

#### **IV. Limitations**

There were numerous limitations, especially in relation to the quantitative portion of this study, which means that the findings should be interpreted with caution. This study could not control social desirability bias and testing bias. Although the questions were created as open and non-leading, they were not neutral due to the manner in which they were stated. An example is the use of the term victim. The qualitative portion of this study consisted of numerous in-depth questions which required a lot of time and may have been taxing to the participants. The qualitative analysis of this study could have been by having the data peer-reviewed. The study sample was not representative, so statistical results, particularly regarding Latina participants, should be assessed with caution. This may also be due to the racial/ethnic make-up the university, in which Latinas make up a very small population. This factor also affected the generalizability of the research findings. It is also important to note that this is a pilot study, and that future research including a substantially larger sample size is recommended.

#### **V. Implications and Recommendations**

In spite of the lack of statistical significance, the findings from this study suggest that college age/attending African American and Latina victims of sexual assault are perceived differently and in more pejorative ways than are White victims. The dependent variables of responsibility and social support illuminate this position. The findings, although not statistically significant, from this research also highlight that African American college attending victims of sexual assault are not only perceived differently by White college students, but also female African American students. For example, African

American and White participants deemed the black hypothetical victim as more responsible for the sexual assault experience. Similarly, African American participants scored the hypothetical victim of their own race as deserving of the least amount of social support. Inter and intra-racial perceptions of college attending female sexual assault victims is a topic that should be studied in-depth. The qualitative findings from this research offer a complimentary in-depth perspective of how the participants perceive the hypothetical victims of sexual assault. The qualitative portion of this research produced rich and powerful contextual data that not only highlights the importance of this research but also need for culturally tailored and sensitive sexual assault initiatives. Although the findings from this research may not be generalizable, recommendations on how it relates to the college community and larger surroundings can be asserted.

Future research on this topic is needed. It is very important that the differences in perceptions found within this research be more rigorously assessed in future studies. Future research may have the greatest impact for individuals who work or interact with survivors of sexual assault. There is a need for culturally competent and inclusive education for faculty, staff, and students who have firsthand contact with women of color who are sexually assault survivors. A creation of safe spaces and environments that foster healthy communication may possibly lead dialogues about social change regarding the social norms that shape perceptions around race and sexual assault. When addressing the issue of sexual assault among African Americans and Latinas, studies should conduct in-depth explorations of how the implications of sexist and racist images of women of color influence perceptions and responses to them when they experience sexual violence (Donovan and Williams, 2002; Bryant-Davis, Chung and Tillman, 2009; Donovan, 2007;

Rivera, 1994; Ahrens, Isas, Rios-Mandel and del Carmen Lopez, 2010). Women of color, not simply limited to the racial and ethnic groups studied within this research, should be included in such research recommendation because there is a sparse amount of current peer reviewed literature that is inclusive of all races and ethnicities.

Even though this research is considered a pilot study, the findings of this research could possibly add to the current body of knowledge concerning the intersectionality of sexual assault, racial stereotypes, and college attending African American and Latina women. The findings from this research could possibly provide the foundation for larger scale studies because it is important to study and understand the influence racial and gender stereotypes may have on women of color who have been sexually assaulted (Thomas, Witherspoon, and Speight, 2004). Advancements in health education and promotion have led to landmark innovations, but it is now take the public health agenda forward towards gender-based/sexual violence and equity.

## REFERENCES

- Abreu, J. M., Goodyear, R. K., Campos, A., & Newcomb, M. D. (2000). Ethnic belonging and masculinity ideology among African Americans, European Americans and Latinos. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 1, 75-86.
- Ahrens, C. E., Rios-Mandel, L.C., Isas, L., and del Carmen Lopez, M. (2010). Talking about interpersonal violence: Cultural influences on Latinas' identification and disclosure of sexual assault and intimate partner violence. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*(4), 2, pp. 284-295.
- Arrizon, A. (2008). Latina subjectivity, sexuality and sensuality. *Women & Performance: a Journal of Feminist Theory*. DOI: 10.1080/07407700802495928
- Black, K.A., and Gold, D.J. (2008). Gender Differences and Socioeconomic Status Biases in Judgments About Blame in Date Rape Scenarios. *Violence and Victims* (1), 23, pp.115-128.
- Bryant-Davis,T., Chung, H., and Tillman, S. (2009). From the Margins to the Center: Ethnic Minority Women and the Mental Effects of Sexual Assault. *Trauma, Violence, and Abuse* (4), 10, pp. 330-357.
- Carmony, D.C., and Washington, L.M. (2001). Rape Myth Acceptance Among College Women, The Impact of Race and Prior Victimization. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (5), 16, pp. 424-436.
- Cronk, B.C. (2011). *How to use SPSS*. Pyrczak Publishing Los Angeles California
- Cue, K.L., George, W.H., and Norris, J. (1996). Women's Appraisal of Sexual-Assault Risk in Dating Situations. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 20, pp. 487-504.
- Donovan, R.( 2007). To Blame or Not To Blame; Influences of Target Race and Observer Sex on Rape Blame Attribution. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (6), 22, pp.722-736.
- Donovan, R. and Williams, M. (2002). Living at the Intersection: The Effects of Racism and Sexism on Black Rape Survivors. *Women & Therapy* 3-4, 25, pp. 95-105.

- Fisher, B.S., Cullen, F.T., and Turner, M.G. (2000). The Sexual Victimization of College Women. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/182369.pdf>
- Foley, L. A., Evanic, C., Karnik, K., King, J., & Parks, A. (1995). Date rape: Effects of race and Assailant and victim and gender on subjects on perceptions. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 21, 6-18.
- Frese, B., Moya, M., and Megias, J.L. (2004). Social Perception of Rape: How Rape Myth Acceptance Modulates the Influence of Situational Factors. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* (2), 19, pp. 143-161.
- George, W.H., and Martinez, L.J. (2002) Victim Blaming in Rape: Effects of Victim and Perpetrator Race, Type of Rape, and Participant Racism. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 26, pp. 110-119.
- Gillum, T.L. (2002). Exploring the Link Between Stereotypic Images and Intimate Partner Violence in the African American Community. *Violence Against Women*, 8, pp. 64-86.
- Gonzalez, K.P. (2002). Campus Culture and the Experiences of Chicano Students in a Predominantly White University. *Urban Education*, 37, pp.193-217
- Guzman, I.M., and Vadivia, A.N. (2004). Brain, Brow, and Booty: Latina Iconicity in U.S. Popular Culture. *The Communication Review* 7, pp.205- 221
- Hewstone, M., Hantzi, A., Johnston, L. (1991). Social Categorization and Person Memory: The Pervasiveness of Race as an Organizing Principle. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 21, pp.517-528.
- Jimenz, J.A. and Abreu, J.M. (2003). Race and Sex effects on Attitudinal Perceptions of Acquaintance Rape. *Journal of Counseling Psychology* (2), 50, pp.252-256.
- Jones, L., Castellanos, J., and Cole, D. (2002). Examining the Ethnic Minority Student Experience at Predominantly White Institutions: A Case Study. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education*. DOI: 10.1177/1538192702001001003
- Kalof, L. (2000). Ethnic Differences in Female Sexual Victimization. *Sexuality and Culture* (4), 4, pp.75-98.
- Koelsch, L.E., Brown, A.L., and Boisen, L. (2012). Bystander Perceptions: Implications for University Sexual Assault Prevention Programs. *Violence and Victims* (4), 27, pp. 563- 576.
- Krebs, C.P., Lindquist, C.H., and Barrick, K. (2011). The Historically Black College and

- University Campus Sexual Assault (HBCU-CSA) Study. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/233614.pdf>
- Krebs, C.P., Lindquist, C.H., Warner, T.D., Fisher, B.S, and Martin, S.L. (2007). The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) Study. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221153.pdf>
- Patton, M.Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Menaker, T.A. and Franklin, C.A. (2013). Commercially Sexually exploited Girls and Participant Perceptions of Blameworthiness: Examining the Effects of Victimization History and Race Disclosure. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*. DOI:10.1177/0886260512471078
- National Cancer Society. (2005). *Theory at a Glance*. Retrieved from: <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/cancerlibrary/theory.pdf>
- Rape Abuse & Incest National Network. (2000). *Campus Safety*. Retrieved from: <http://www.rainn.org/public-policy/campus-safety>
- Reid-Pharr, R. (2009) Sexuality. In *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-first Century* (Vol. 1, pp. 296-298. New York, NY : Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-first Century
- Rivera, J. (1994). Domestic Violence Against Latinas by Latino Males: An Analysis of Race, National Origin, and Gender Differentials. *Boston College Third World Law Journal* (2), 14. pp. 231-258.
- Simmons Morton, B., McLeroy, K.R., and Wendel, M.L. (2012) *Behavior Theory in Health Promotion Practice and Research*. Jones and Barlett Learning, Burlington, MA
- Sommerville, D.M. (2005). Rape. In *Black Women in America: A Historical Encyclopedia*. (Vol. 2 pp.460-465 ). New York, NY: Black Women in America: A Historical Encyclopedia.
- Stangor, C., Lynch, L., Duan, C., and Glass, B. (1992). Categorization of Individuals on the Basis of Multiple Social Features. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* (2), 62, pp. 207-218.
- Suarez-Balcazar, Y., Orellana-Damacela, L., Portillo, N., Rowan, J.M. and Adrews-Guillen, C. (2003). Experiences of Differential Treatment Among College Students of Color. *The Journal of Higher Education* (4), 74. pp.428-444.

- Talbot, K.K., Neill, K.S., and Rankin, L.L. (2010). Rape-accepting attitudes of University Undergraduate Students. *Journal of Forensic Nursing*, 6, pp.170-179.
- Thomas, A.J., Witherspoon, K.M., Speight, S.L. (2004). Toward the Development of the Stereotypic Roles of Black Women Scale. *Journal of Black Psychology* (3), 30, pp. 126-442.
- Tillman, S., Bryant-Davis, T., Smith, K. & Marks, A. (2010). Shattering Silence: Exploring Barriers to Disclosure for African American Sexual Assault Survivors. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse* 2, 11, pp.59-70.
- Townsend, T.G., Neilands, T.B., Thomas, A.J., Jackson, T.R. (2010). I'm no Jezebel; I am Young, Gifted and Black: Identity, Sexuality and Black Girls. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 34, pp.273-285.
- Washington, P.A. (2001). Disclosure Patterns of Black Female Sexual Assault Survivors. *Violence Against Women* (11), 7, pp. 1254-1238.
- West, C.M. (1995). Mammy, Sapphire and Jezebel: Historical Images of Black Women and their implications for Psychotherapy. *Psychotherapy* (3), 32, pp. 458-466.
- West, C.M., and Johnson, K. (2013). Sexual Violence in the Lives of African American Women. Retrieved from: [http://www.vawnet.org/Assoc\\_Files\\_VAWnet/AR\\_SVAAWomenRevised.pdf](http://www.vawnet.org/Assoc_Files_VAWnet/AR_SVAAWomenRevised.pdf)
- Whatley, M. (1996). Victim Characteristics Influencing Attributions of Responsibility to Rape Victims: A Meta-Analysis. *Aggression and Violent Behavior* (2), 1, pp. 81-95.
- Willis, C. E. (1992). The effect of sex role stereotype, victim and defendant race, and Prior relationship on race culpability attributions. *Sex Roles*, 26, pp. 213-226.
- Women of Color Network.. (2006). Sexual Violence , Communities of Color. Retrieved from: [http://womenofcolornetwork.org/docs/factsheets/fs\\_sexual-violence.pdf](http://womenofcolornetwork.org/docs/factsheets/fs_sexual-violence.pdf)
- Wyatt, G. E. (1992). The sociocultural context of African American and White American women's rape. *Journal of Social Issues*, 48(1), 77-91.
- Young, A.M., Grey, M., Boyd, C.J. (2009). Adolescents Experiences of Sexual Assault by Peers: Prevalence and Nature of Victimization Occurring Within and Outside of School. *Journal of Youth Adolescence*, 38, pp. 1072-1083.

## APPENDIX A – STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE\*\*

The following questions (Part I–III) will ask about the scenario you just read. Please read each question carefully and circle one number on each line that corresponds to the statement that you think best reflects your level of agreement

### Part I.

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>Based on the scenario:</b>					
Molly is responsible for the experience she encountered	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Molly would be less responsible if she fought back more aggressively	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Molly would be less to blame if the assailant was not her boyfriend	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Molly’s description in the scenario (first paragraph) leads me to believe that she is responsible for what occurred that night	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

### Part II.

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>Based on the scenario:</b>					
Molly should tell her family and friends about her experience with James	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

Molly should receive support from her family and friends after she tells them of her experience with James	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Molly 's description in the scenario (first paragraph) helped me determine how much social support she should receive from her friends and family.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Molly 's description in the scenario (first paragraph) leads me to believe that she should not receive social support from her family and friends	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

\*\* Names utilized within each questionnaire changed to reflect the race / ethnicity of the hypothesized victim.

**Part III.**

The word trauma is defined as a direct personal experience of a negative event that produces distress and/or involves threats to one's physical integrity\*

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>Based on the scenario:</b>					
This experience was traumatic for Molly	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
<b>Please read the following questions very carefully. Pick one question out of each set to answer</b>	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
a. This experience was <b>more</b> traumatic for Molly because the assailant was her boyfriend	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
b. This experience was <b>less</b> traumatic for Molly because the assailant was her	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

boyfriend					
a. This experience was <b>more</b> traumatic for Molly because she was not physically harmed (hit, slapped, or punched)	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
b. This experience was <b>less</b> traumatic for Molly because she was not physically harmed (hit, slapped, or punched)	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Molly’s description in the scenario (first paragraph) leads me to believe that what occurred was traumatic for her	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

Briere, J.N., and Lanktree, C.B. (2012). Treating Complex Trauma in Adolescents and Young Adults. Los Angeles, California: SAGE Publications

Please answer the following questions (Part IV and V) by checking the box that corresponds to the statement that you think best reflects your level of agreement. Please read each question carefully.

**Part IV.**

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Swearing and obscenity are more repulsive in the speech of a woman than a man	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Under modern economic conditions, with women active outside the home, men should share in household tasks such as washing dishes and doing laundry	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
It is insulting to a woman to still have the “obey” clause in the marriage service	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
A woman should be as free as a man to propose marriage	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]

Women should worry less about their rights and more about becoming good wives and mothers	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Women earning as much as their dates should bear equally the expense when they go out together	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Women should assume their rightful place in business and all professions along with men	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Women should not expect to go to exactly the same places or to have quite the same freedom of action as a man	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Sons in a family should be given more encouragement to go to college than daughters	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
It is ridiculous for a woman to run a locomotive for a man to sew socks	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
In general, the father should have greater authority than the mother in the bringing up of children	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
The intellectual leadership of a community should be largely in the hands of men	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Economic and social freedom is worth far more to women than the acceptance of the ideal of femininity, which has been set up by men	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
There are many jobs in which men should be given preference over women in being hired or promoted	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]
Women should be given equal opportunity with men for apprenticeship in various trades	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]

**Part V.**

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Undecided</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
Males and females should share the expense of a date	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
I believe talking about sex destroys the romance of that particular moment	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Most women enjoy being submissive in sexual relations	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
If a woman asks a man out on a date, then she is definitely interested in having sex	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

In the majority of date rapes, the victim is promiscuous or has a bad reputation	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
A man is entitled to intercourse if his partner had agreed to it but at the last minute changed her mind	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
A man can control his behavior no matter how sexually aroused he feels	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
The degree of woman's resistance should be a major factor in determining if a rape has occurred	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
When a woman says no to sex, she really means maybe	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
If a woman lets a man buy her dinner or pay for a movie or drinks, she owes him sex	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Women provoke rape by their behavior	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Women often lie about being raped to get back at their dates	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
It is OK to pressure a date to drink alcohol in order to improve one's chance of getting ones date to have sex.	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
When a women asks her date back to her place, the man should expect something sexual to take place	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
Date rapists are usually motivated by an overwhelming unfulfilled sexual desire	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
In most cases when a woman gets raped, she was asking for it	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
When a woman fondles a man's genitals it means she has consented to sexual intercourse	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]
If a woman dresses in a sexy dress she is asking for sex	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]

Please read each question carefully. For questions 1 and 2 please place your answer in the space provided below the question. For questions 3-7 please place an **X** in the box that corresponds to the correct answer.

1	<b>How old are you?</b>	2	<b>What is your major?</b>

3	<b>What is your current year of study?</b>
	Freshman
	Sophomore
	Junior
	Senior

4	<b>Are you Hispanic or Latino?</b>
	Yes
	No

5	<b>What is your race? (Please choose all that apply)</b>
	Black or African American
	White
	American Indian or Alaska Native
	Asian
	Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
	Other:

6	<b>What is the highest level of education your mother has completed?</b>	7	<b>What is the highest level of education your father has completed?</b>
	Less than High school		Less than High school
	High school / GED		High school / GED
	Some College		Some College
	2 year College Degree ( Associates)		2 year College Degree ( Associates)
	4 Year College Degree (Bachelors)		4 Year College Degree (Bachelors)
	Master's Degree		Master's Degree
	Doctoral Degree		Doctoral Degree
	Professional Degree (MD, JD)		Professional Degree (MD, JD)

## APPENDIX B – OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS\*\*

Instructions: Please fully answer each question. Please add as much detail as possible.

How would you describe Molly? What does she look like? What type of people would you associate her with?

How did this experience make Molly feel?

How responsible is Molly for what she experienced that night with James?

How much and what kind of support, if any, does Molly deserve from her family and friends?

Should Molly tell her family and friends of her experience with James? Why or why not?

Thinking about the scenario, what will Molly's friends and family say to her if she tells them about her experience with James?

Does Molly come from a culture that would support a sexual assault victim? Why or why not?

What is the difference between someone who should or should not be supported after an experience of that magnitude?

What do you remember most about description of Molly?

How does Molly's description justify what happened to her?

What types of campus support, if any, should be available for Molly?

\*\* Names utilized within each set of open-ended questions changed to reflect the race / ethnicity of the hypothesized victim.

## APPENDIX C – STUDY VIGNETTE\*\*

[Hypothetical Victims Name] is the typical college student who enjoys tailgating, college football, and hanging out with her friends. [Hypothetical Victims Name] describes herself as someone who is sexually “uninhibited” and knows how to use her sexuality to her advantage. She doesn’t mind being a “tease” to get her way. [Hypothetical Victims Name] friends call her the temptress and say that she is very flirty and playful with cute guys. She’s had a few one-night stands with guys she’s met on campus, but now she has a steady relationship.

A mutual acquaintance introduced [Hypothetical Victims Name] and James to each other at a party. They are also both enrolled in the same class (Math 304). They hit it off immediately and began dating the next week. [Hypothetical Victims Name] told all of her friends how much she liked James. He was smart, handsome, and funny. [Hypothetical Victims Name] is very satisfied with her relationship with James.

- ❖ *African American Victim* One evening during her family’s annual Juneteenth (holiday that marks the emancipation of slaves celebrated annually by African Americans) cook-out **Diamond** received a text from James telling her to meet him at 11 pm for a late night movie date.
- ❖ *Latina Victim* One evening during her sister’s quinceañera (traditional 15<sup>th</sup> birthday party for Latina girls) **Maria** received a text from James telling her to meet him at 11 pm for a late night movie date.
- ❖ *White Victim* One evening while at her family’s annual July 4<sup>th</sup> picnic **Molly** received a text from James telling her to meet him at 11 pm for a late night movie date.

[Hypothetical Victims Name] was really excited because it was the mid-night opening premiere of one of her favorite movies. [Hypothetical Victims Name] enjoyed the way James touched her while they were watching the movie. After the movies they went back to James apartment. They sat on the sofa and before long, they started kissing and touching each other. After some heavy foreplay leading to a point just short of intercourse, [Hypothetical Victims Name] whispered, “No. I don’t want to. Stop!” She tried to squirm away from James to get him off of her. James did not stop. He continued to kiss her as she as she shook her head to say no. James held down [Hypothetical Victims Name] as she told him to stop. He pulled down [Hypothetical Victims Name] pants and intercourse followed.

Adapted from: Black, K.A., and Gold, D.J. (2008). Gender Differences and Socioeconomic Status Biases in Judgments About Blame in Date Rape Scenarios. *Violence and Victims* (1), 23, pp.115-128.

\*\* Names utilized within each vignette changed to reflect the race / ethnicity of the hypothesized victim