

EXPLANATIONS AND BLAME FOLLOWING UNWANTED SEX:
A MULTI-METHOD INVESTIGATION

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Explanations and Blame Following Unwanted Sex: A Multi-Method Investigation

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Self-blame commonly follows unwanted sexual experiences (USEs), and women with USE histories are twice as likely to be sexually revictimized (SRV). Moreover, a recent prospective investigation revealed that post-USE self-blame increases women's SRV risk over 4.2-months. Two studies are presently conducted to investigate the underpinnings of post-USE blame among victims and observers.

In Study 1, the USE interviews of 144 college women are content analyzed. Study 1 results support an Experiential Processing Model of SRV. That is, a measure combining Negative Emotionality and Perceived Preventability evidenced in women's USE narratives prospectively predicts SRV, an effect that is mediated by post-USE self-blame. The Causal element of the proposed model is not supported.

Study 2 is a supplemental experiment, intended to empirically test the notion that context factors influence victim blame attributions. A general sample of 124 female undergraduates read a prototypic USE scenario, within which context factors (i.e., effectiveness of sociolegal context in deterring/preventing USEs, male scenario target's USE propensity) are experimentally manipulated among conditions. Study 2 results support a hypothesized interaction effect. Specifically, when a high-propensity male scenario target perpetrates a USE, a female scenario target is blamed to a greater extent

within a sociolegal context perceived to be ineffective in deterring/preventing USEs and holding perpetrators to account.

Taken together, the present studies further our understanding of 1) “real-life” intraperson factors fueling post-USE self-blame and SRV vulnerability among college women and 2) extraperson context factors that converge in affecting USE victim-blame attributions among a sample of college women observers.

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Explanations and Blame following Unwanted Sex:

A Multi-Method Investigation

Acquaintance sexual assault against women is a compelling phenomenon for scientific inquiry, given its prevalence among general and college populations (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000; Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000), its well-documented emotional consequences (Arata & Burkhart, 1995; Atkeson, Calhoun, Resick, & Ellis, 1982; Ellis, Atkeson, & Calhoun, 1981; Kilpatrick, Resick, & Veronen, 1981), and its troubling tendency to recur (Fisher et al., 2000; Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000). One landmark study of sexual assault prevalence among college women found that, according to behaviorally anchored survey items, 54% of students across 32 institutions reported a history of sexual assault, and 25% endorsed having been the victim of rape or attempted rape (Koss et al., 1987). As alarming, the National Violence Against Women Survey (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2000) found that women raped prior to age 18 were twice as likely to have been raped again as adults.

Studies of sexual revictimization (SRV) have been numerous and wide-reaching in breadth, but only recently has this body of work been organized according to its reliable themes (Classen, Palesh, & Aggarwal, 2005). Classen et al. reviewed 90 empirical SRV studies and determined that approximately 2 of 3 sexual victims are sexually revictimized (with an SRV prevalence range of 10-69% depending on the study). Indeed, sexual victimization history has been the only robust risk factor yet identified in the prediction of SRV. Classen and colleagues described that although multitudinous other factors (e.g., distress, psychiatric symptoms, alcohol and other

substance abuse, interpersonal and coping difficulties, affective dysregulation, number of sexual partners and problems, self-blame and shame) have sometimes been *associated* with SRV, cross-sectional methodologies have prevented clarification of these as correlates, consequences, or risk factors for SRV. Thus, Classen et al. (2005) appealed that researchers “develop a framework for understanding revictimization” and observed, “longitudinal, prospective studies are needed to address the limitations of the existing research and to determine the moderators and mediators of sexual revictimization” (p. 125).

Part of the trouble with studying acquaintance sexual assault has been that it is frequently unacknowledged as such by all involved parties (Kahn & Andreoli Mathie, 2000; Koss, 1988), perhaps owing to the illusory lack of force characteristic of USEs (Andreoli Mathie & Kahn, 1995; Bondurant, 2001; Koss, 1988; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987). Indeed, USEs can be difficult, on their surface, to differentiate from consensual sex. To address this issue, researchers studying sexual assault refer to the phenomenon descriptively, in behavioral terms of “unwanted sexual experiences” (Koss & Oros, 1982), denoted presently as USEs. In so doing, charged descriptors (e.g., “force,” “sexual assault,” “rape”) that might provoke “victims” to jump the line to “nonvictims” during the assessment phase of study, are minimized. The present investigation likewise focuses on women’s (actual and hypothetical) unwanted heterosexual experiences, by definition involving at least two parties – a man and a woman. In keeping with the Classen et al. mandate, USEs are presently considered from an assumptive framework

that persons are embedded within multifaceted situational and sociocultural contexts that may influence their explanations of these events.

Following negative life events such as USEs, people (victims and observers alike) are often compelled to ask themselves causal questions, such as *why* and *how*. Answers to these sorts of questions may feel difficult to answer, especially insofar as we could consider a limitless number of factors that potentially contributed to any given outcome. Yet, with “unwantedness” as a premise, the rational logician should conclude that a male perpetrator’s behavior is the only factor that is both necessary *and* sufficient to cause a woman’s USE. Consider, in contrast, the assertion of Roiphe (1994), who mused on the trouble of women and their “morning after” (i.e., merely post hoc) USEs, on how many of these women must have brought these incidents on themselves or asked for them somehow, and so forth. Under logical scrutiny, even Roiphe would have to admit that women’s provocative behavior is not *necessary* for unwanted sex to occur (e.g., some women do not ask for anything but are nevertheless assaulted) and, although provocative behavior arguably piques men’s interest, scarcely would it be *sufficient* to cause the act itself of unwanted sexual penetration.¹ In contrast, a woman’s (heterosexual) USE could not possibly have occurred in the absence of a male’s ultimate sexual advance (i.e., this part is *necessary*), and, barring successful resistance strategies, men’s advances are generally *sufficient* to result in a USE. Thus, a methodical, rational approach leads to the conclusion that, among all participant factors conjoining to bring about women’s USEs, the male participants’ behavior, borrowing McGill and Tenbrunsel’s (2000) emphasis, is “the” causal force.

Yet, most of us do not experience the world as though we were logicians.

Women who report having endured USEs often blame themselves for these occurrences (Arata, 1999, 2000; Branscombe et al., 2003; Frazier, 1990, 1991; Janoff-Bulman, 1979, 1985). Although it is well known that self-blame occurs, relatively little is known about the real-life explanatory processes that lead victims to self-blame or about the functional costs of post-USE self-blame (but see Arata, 1999, 2000). Also, although observers notoriously subject victims to judgmental fallacies (Bennett & Dunkel-Schetter, 1992), the empirical literature less thoroughly explicates underlying social-cognitive dynamics contributing to rape victim derogation (but see Carli, 1999; Carli & Leonard, 1989). This investigation aspires to dissect the phenomenology of post-USE blame, including its hypothesized experiential underpinnings (as evidenced within women's USE narratives) and consequences (i.e., SRV), according to social cognitive theories that have rarely been directly applied to this pressing issue. To do this, theories regarding causal attribution, blame, perceived avoidability/preventability, and counterfactual thinking will be integrated in order to develop empirical hypotheses aimed at better understanding 1) the person-centered phenomenology of post-USE self-blame and SRV vulnerability among undergraduate women with USE histories and 2) sociocultural factors and dynamics posited to contribute to post-USE victim blame ascription. As Classen et al. (2005) noted in their review of the SRV literature, extant efforts to examine self-blame as a mediator of SRV have been inconclusive (cf. Miller, Markman, & Handley, 2005). They wrote, "Given that shame, self-blame, and powerlessness are just as likely to be consequences of revictimization and that [extant] studies were cross-sectional, it is

impossible to draw conclusions regarding mediation” (Classen et al., 2005, p. 121).

Thus, this investigation exploits the fundamental theoretical literature about how people explain life events – from how they determine cause and blameworthiness to the logical errors they make in doing these – in order to build a framework that might explicate the nature of blame following USEs and its true relationship, among victims, with SRV.

Puzzle Pieces of Victimization, Part I:

“Why?” from a Rational Analysis-of-Cause Perspective

Normative Models of Causal Analysis

Insofar as they are unwanted, sexual experiences may be perceived as negative, unexpected, and threatening to control and safety. These characteristics uniquely place USEs at a focal point for retrospective causal analysis (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), centering on inferences about the actors’ dispositions and intentions (Gilbert, 1998). Weaving a line through the work of classicists (e.g., Heider, 1958; Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967), Fiske and Taylor (1991) defined attribution theory as “dealing with how the social perceiver uses information to arrive at causal explanations for events” (p. 23). These authors also emphasized that we search for cause(s), implicitly (e.g., automatically, nondeliberatively) and/or explicitly (e.g., intentionally, deliberately), in an effort to control (or at least predict) our futures. Gilbert (1998) underscored that the information output of greatest use in controlling our worlds is dispositional (i.e., personality-based) attribution. That is, with individuals’ behavior as the mere medium for transmission, the ultimate meaning of attributing cause to our experiences is dispositional diagnosis, which “enables one to grasp an unlimited variety of behavioral

manifestations by a single concept (Heider, 1958, p. 30)” and serves “to integrate a bewildering mass of data in the most economical terms” (Heider, p. 53; cited in Gilbert, 1998).

Fiske and Taylor (1991) discussed that normative attribution theories are concerned with the social perceiver generally. Given this generality, this section focuses on extending normative causal attribution models to both self- and other-attribution in the case of USEs (for arguments and data supporting the notion that self-perception mirrors other-perception, see Bem, 1972). That is, it is presently assumed that normative attribution theories forward our understanding both of victims’ and observers’ blame attributions following USEs. Therefore, although forthcoming examples may be framed in terms of a woman’s attributions about her own USE(s), or may discuss attribution from an observer’s perspective, it is assumed unless otherwise noted that self-other attribution processes are roughly analogous.² Nevertheless, recognizing potential complications arising from victims’ unique dual role as perceiver-object of USE(s), upcoming sections deal more explicitly with fallibility and bias in causal attribution generally (see *Fallibility and Bias in Causal Reasoning*) and, in particular, with special issues regarding victims’ simultaneous roles as actor and perceiver of their USEs (e.g., boundary conditions on the actor-observer effect; see *Victims’ Dual Role as Object-Perceiver: Are Self and Other Causal Attribution Really Created Equal?*).

Heider (1958) emphasized that an object of causal analysis cannot be considered as a direct (i.e., objective) perception but, rather, is viewed, within its contextual elements, through a perceiver’s subjective lens. Heider essentially proposed that an

algorithm of internal (victim/observer) and external (e.g., male perpetrator, context, society) factors delivers the perceiver at a final perception. Moreover, Fiske and Taylor (1991) submitted that this process of calculus, Heider's "naïve epistemology, can best be learned through the natural language that people employ for describing their experience" (p. 24). For this reason, Study 1 will investigate college women's USE narratives in an effort to understand their subjective algorithms for understanding the events. In Study 2, an experimental methodology will be used in order to test the effect of contextual elements, about which Heider wrote, hypothesized to influence college women's post-USE blame attributions.

Jones and Davis (1965) stated that we consider the causes of human actions in order to infer dispositional qualities (i.e., stable characteristics) of an actor. By considering the outcomes or effects of a chosen behavior, *A*, and by contrasting these against the effects, *B, C, D...*, of alternative behaviors, Jones and Davis posited that we make attributions about an actor's underlying intentions and character. In the presence of multiple "noncommon effects" (i.e., consequences that follow from the chosen behavior in contrast to others), perceivers rely on additional information (e.g., social desirability of the chosen behavior, degree of freedom versus constraint in choosing the behavior, target actor's pattern of prior behaviors) in inferring an actor's dispositions. For example, a woman considering her own USE might retrospectively account for numerous potential causes of the event's occurrence. In distilling these and considering her own role in the event, she may be more likely to infer negative self-dispositions (e.g., "I'm a slut," "I'm a pushover") to the extent that she perceives: 1) her behavior was

socially undesirable (e.g., “Women who get themselves into these situations are sluts”); 2) her behavior was the product of unconstrained choice (e.g., “I asked for this by drinking too much, flirting, and kissing him, so I must have chosen the USE”); 3) she perceives that she failed in escape or resistance opportunities (e.g., “I didn’t resist vigorously enough”); and/or 4) her involvement was consistent with her prior behaviors (e.g., “It’s happened to me before, so it must reflect something about me”).

Kelley’s (1967) covariation model of causal attribution may be particularly relevant to the problem of multiple USEs (i.e., SRV). That is, Kelley posited that in examining the potential causes (e.g., self, other, situation) of a recurrent event (e.g., unwanted sex), perceivers consider the consistency of various cause-effect pairings. For example, a woman with a history of more than one USE may conclude that because she has been the most reliable factor across those experiences (e.g., “the guy’s been different every time, but this keeps happening to *me*”), she is the most salient cause of the outcomes. Kelley’s model also submits that consensus data provides information about the strength of a perceived cause. Specifically, perceiving low-consensus (e.g., “this happens only to me”) lends to attributing greater cause to the target (self), whereas perceiving high-consensus (e.g., “USEs are fairly normative among college women”) lends to attributing lesser cause to the target (self) and greater cause to other factors (e.g., societal attitudes, male behavior). Finally, and importantly for the issue of prospective SRV risk, Kelley’s model suggests that person attributions (e.g., a woman deciding that she is to blame for a USE) promote stimulus generalization (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). That is, to the extent women decide they are the causal factors in their USEs, they may be

more likely to perceive that similar outcomes will occur in the presence of other presumably innocuous “stimuli” (e.g., men and situations).

Fallibility and Bias in Causal Reasoning

In his book exploring reflection in European portraiture, medical doctor and art historian Jonathan Miller (1998) compared the fallibility of the mirror image to that of human perception. He stated:

...the mind could be said to represent the world just as the mirror does...I cannot directly compare my perceptions with whatever I take them to be perceptions of, [but] I can navigate by them so successfully that they must be causally related to the structure of the external world. In other words they are, like reflections, veridical representations. pp. 207-209

The empirical outgrowth of attribution theory has long recognized that our attributions (like mirror images and perceptions) are biased despite ostensible fidelity to truth. In Gilbert’s (1998) language, attributions have an experiential “given” quality, undercutting impetus to reality test. As Fiske and Taylor (1991) described, “background factors, social context, roles, or situational pressures that may have given rise to behavior are...relatively pallid and dull and unlikely to be noticed in comparison to the dynamic behavior of the actor” (p. 67). This description sheds theoretical light on persons’ well-documented tendencies to discount situational and sociocultural factors arguably giving rise to sexual assault (Koss, 1988).

Gilbert (1998) delineated two separate but related sources of error for interpersonal perception. He called the mirror problem – a presumptive reality that

appears objective – “realism,” and he called a related source of error – “using the information that most vigorously presents itself” (p. 126) to the relative exclusion of other information – “circumstantialism.” Gilbert summarized that the information we tend to neglect includes that which is “(1) present but pallid (the salience bias), (2) stored in memory but not active in the mind (the accessibility bias), or (3) absent but obtainable (the availability bias)” (p. 126). These biases point to the general notion that we rely on information that presents itself most immediately, most expeditiously, and most fervently. In the case of multifaceted situations such as USEs (i.e., those in which multiple factors converge), women recalling their own experiences, for example, may disproportionately consider factors that pop to the fore with an element of surprise (e.g., what has occurred between the actors), neglecting those factors that weigh heavily in the pallid distance (e.g., the noise level, the keg stand going on downstairs; see endnote regarding alcohol myopia).³ Gilbert echoed the perceptual invisibility of social-situational forces, borrowing the words of a little-known Polish refugee and failed academic, Gustav Ichheiser. In short, “we are not in the position to see and to evaluate correctly the dynamic meaning of the social, invisible factors in the total situation” (Ichheiser, 1949, p. 47; as cited in Gilbert, 1998). While USEs may vigorously present themselves for causal analysis, the social and situational factors giving rise to them, rather, may be relatively invisible.

Trope (1986) proposed a two-stage model describing behavioral judgments. During the first stage (identification), an actor’s prior behaviors as well as immediate behaviors and circumstances are spontaneously identified in dispositional terms (e.g.,

“she had sex with an acquaintance, and this has happened before, which means she is easy”). During Trope’s second stage (dispositional inference), the perceiver deliberately considers outcome-inhibiting situational factors that augment the dispositional inference (e.g., “she didn’t escape the situation when her friend checked in”) and outcome-perpetuating situational factors (e.g., “that guy was subtly threatening her”), which in sum adjust the final dispositional inference (e.g., “she must have complied out of fear, which kept her during that escape opportunity from confiding in her friend”). As emphasized in Trope’s formulation, then, only following a deliberate, correctional process are our most primitive, spontaneous judgments about victims (“she is easy”) assuaged (“she must have complied out of fear”). Analogously, Quattrone (1982) suggested that people quickly and crudely solve problems of dispositional inference and only then effortfully adjust from this dispositional anchor in terms of situational inferences.

Based on a framework similar to Trope’s (1986) two-stage model, Gilbert, Pelham, and Krull (1988) posited and found that cognitive load does not interfere with relatively automatic dispositional inferences but does interfere, because of the deliberation inherent in them, with the ability to adjust dispositional inferences based on situational information. Similarly, self-regulation (i.e., behavioral monitoring) saps deliberative resources needed to consider situational information in dispositional inference-adjustment (Gilbert, Krull, & Pelham, 1988). A general hypothesis drawn from these findings is that to the extent that factors load onto, overwhelm, and/or distract from cognitive resources, individuals may be vulnerable to maintaining uncorrected,

spontaneous, crude, and poorly-thought dispositional attributions. Taken together, the work of Gilbert and others brings to light a problem with strict adherence to stage models of causal attribution: human beings (i.e., non-logicians) are subject to influences (e.g., distractibility, emotional processing) that may interfere with precise application of causal algorithms. Extending this to the issue of victim blame, Goldinger, Kleider, Azuma, and Beike (2003) found that people with lower working memory capacity (i.e., attention resources) were more likely than those with higher capacity to blame victims for highly mutable actions.

The retrospectively exaggerated sense that an outcome was foreseeable, anticipated, predictable, and even inevitable is known as the hindsight bias (Fischhoff, 1975; for a meta-analysis, see Christensen-Szalanski & Willham, 1991), and this bias is believed to occur insofar as people automatically form causal links between an outcome and preceding events (Hawkins & Hastie, 1990). Although scarcely investigated in cases of self-relevant outcomes, a couple of extant studies (Haslam & Jayasinghe, 1995; Renner, 2003; but see Mark & Mellor, 1991) lend preliminarily support generalization of the hindsight bias to real-world negative outcomes. Although the hindsight bias has never been investigated with rape victims directly, Carli (1999) conducted a study in which participants read a scenario about a budding relationship between a man and a woman, varied between conditions only on the ending (i.e., “no-ending” vs. scenario ending in the woman’s rape). Carli found that, 1 week later, participants who had read the scenario ending in rape remembered more rape-consistent antecedents and, importantly, *misremembered* more rape-consistent details (i.e., antecedents that had not

actually appeared within the scenario). Moreover, regression analyses suggested that participants' biased remembering and misremembering of rape-consistent antecedents contributed to their judgments that the rape had been more likely (hindsight bias), in turn contributing to greater rape victim derogation. Carli (1999) described an important contribution of this study to the hindsight bias literature:

Previously, researchers have argued that victim derogation occurs because the hindsight bias makes the negative outcome appear foreseeable, which, in turn, would make the victim appear quite foolish not to have acted to prevent the outcome. The present study suggests that derogation also occurs because the victim's behaviors can be causally linked to the outcome in the mind of the observer. (p. 977)

Although the present investigation does not specifically test hindsight bias, it draws on Carli's work in positing that USE victims are not immune to self-derogatory biases. In fact, USE victims may be particularly vulnerable to these biases insofar as they are preferentially aware of their own behaviors, antecedents that so quickly and crudely may be "causally linked" to the outcome.

Victims' Dual Role as Object-Perceiver:

Are Self and Other Causal Attribution Really Created Equal?

As previously noted, the present investigation generally assumes that similar processes of post-USE causal attribution, and fallibility/bias in causal attribution, operate for victims and observers. Yet, the actor-observer effect (Jones & Nisbett, 1971), while reinforcing that we tend to explain others' behavior in terms of dispositions, would

suggest that we tend instead to perceive our own behaviors as the product of transient, situational causes (not the result of self-dispositions). Relatedly, Weiner (1971) described a phenomenon, presumably based on a self-serving bias, that people “take credit while laying blame” by attributing positive performance to themselves but negative performance to situational factors. Given these biases are ubiquitous, it would seem that victims are unlikely to make self-blame attributions in the same way observers blame others. Therefore, a case is presently made to support the assumption of rough self-other attribution equality. First, from a naturalistic perspective, it is well established that victims disproportionately blame themselves for the negative life events that have befallen them (e.g., Bulman & Wortman, 1977; Davis, Lehman, Silver, Wortman, & Ellard, 1996). Indeed, therapeutic interventions have been designed with the specific goals of helping clients achieve accurate appraisal of their own roles in their traumas and reducing “trauma-related guilt” (CT-TRG; Kubany & Manke, 1995). It seems a conservative assumption to conclude from this knowledge that a portion of victims are not laying exclusively external blame for their negative outcomes. Second, empirical studies have established significant caveats and boundary conditions to “actor-observer” and “taking credit while laying blame” effects that raise doubts about their ubiquity.

Storms (1973) found in an innovative study that the tendency of actors to attribute their own behavior to situational factors was reversed when participants watched a videotape of themselves from an observer’s perspective. That is, participants perceiving themselves from behind a lens were more likely to attribute their own behavior to dispositional factors, as we tend to do when observing others. Similarly, it is

possible that women experience their USEs not only from “within themselves,” as unwitting sexual participants (i.e., actors), but also from “outside themselves,” from a pseudo-observer’s perspective. Lending support to the speculation that victims most impacted by their USEs experience them at least in part from a pseudo third-person perspective, Miller (2002) found that adolescent USE victims’ posttraumatic cognitions were positively related to degree of their dissociative experiences (e.g., “I felt like a spectator watching what was happening to me”) during the event.

Causal attribution theorists have traditionally dissected actors’ behavioral dynamics and inferred dispositions as outcome determinants. From Heider’s (1958) perspective, disposition is that essence captured by behavioral language – we *are* our behavior(s). However, McGill (1989, 1998) took a holistic slant on behavior attribution by emphasizing the critical (yet oft-neglected) influence of the “pallid field” (Fiske & Taylor, 2000) or “causal field” (Mackie, 1974), that is, the *backdrop* against which behavior subject to causal analysis is considered. McGill (1989, study 1) replicated the actor-observer effect within an ambiguous causal question condition; however, within a condition implying causal focus with a prompt, actor-observer response differences did not result. Specifically, in McGill’s ambiguous condition, participants were asked to indicate their (or their best friend’s) academic major and then responded to the question, “Why did you (your best friend) choose this major?” As expected within this condition, actor-observer effects emerged: actors made an equal number of person and stimulus attributions for their own major, whereas observers were more likely to make person attributions for their friend’s major. However, when a person comparison was implied by

the question – “Why did you (your best friend) in particular choose this major?” – both actors and observers were more likely to make person attributions; whereas, when a stimulus comparison was implied by the question – “Why did you (your best friend) choose this major in particular?” – both actors and observers were more likely to make stimulus attributions. Importantly, the actor-observer effect disappeared under conditions in which participants had an implicit attention focus.

McGill (1989; study 3) has also qualified Weiner’s (1971) “taking credit while laying blame” effect by manipulating expectations for success (versus failure) on an anagram task and providing ostensible performance feedback. Subjects randomly assigned to complete a relatively “easy” anagram (i.e., expectation of success condition), like those assigned to an ambiguous expectation condition (similar to most “taking credit while laying blame” methodologies), responded as expected by attributing positive performance to self but negative performance to the task. However, subjects randomly assigned to complete a “quite difficult” anagram task (i.e., expectation of failure condition) attributed positive performance to the task (presumably contrasting it against the expectation – e.g., “The task was not as difficult as I had expected”) but negative performance to themselves (presumably noting that their performance was consistent with expectation – e.g., “As expected, this task was quite difficult and my performance reflected that”). Thus, in the condition of negative expectancies and “poor performance,” subjects made sense of a prompt for causal explanation not by considering the obvious – the task was difficult – but by considering the feature that made the difference – themselves – in producing their own outcome (poor performance) rather than the

alternative (good performance). Analogously, within a state of affairs in which USEs among college women approach normalcy (perhaps making them *feel*, at least in retrospect, not *entirely* unexpected), women who “fail” by enduring a USE may consider themselves to be the factor that made the difference in producing the outcome.

Overall, McGill’s work has demonstrated that actor-observer and “taking credit while laying blame” effects disappear under certain conditions, and, in these, self-perception indeed mirrors other-perception. A through line of her work has concerned where the focus lies among a field of multiple potential causes for an event, and her findings reinforce that the focal case rests on that element which is perceived to make the critical difference in producing the outcome (e.g., “*I failed to successfully complete this task*,” “*I failed to prevent my USE*”), relative to its mundane alternatives (e.g., “obviously the task was going to be difficult,” “obviously a college guy’s going to get it if he can”). Hilton and Slugoski (1986) proposed that this process of identifying the *abnormal* condition of an event to be explained is the essence of causal attribution.

McGill (1989) concluded with an important point about the irony of victim blame attributions amidst noxious (though internally normative) sociopolitical contexts:

...people who live under historically corrupt political rule tend to characterize the abuse and torture of fellow citizens as the result of agitation on the part of the victim rather than the product of a political system gone awry (Conroy, 1988). Without knowledge of relevant comparison cases (e.g., different political systems) people may be unable to identify the factors causally related to an occurrence. p. 198

McGill's person-with-a-sociopolitical-system paradox is readily extended to the present conceptualization of incongruous self-blame among USE victims. That is, insofar as we are living within a proverbial "boys will be boys" world, where sexual opportunism among college males is expected, unwanted sex is normative or nearly so among college women, and "USEs" have their name because they tend to be so categorically ambiguous that we do not know what else to call them, USE victims may have little alternative but to look at themselves as the "focal case" in considering what *made the difference* in producing their USEs. That is, attributing cause in the same way others do, USE victims likely consider, "(all things being equal, including 'given' situational and social factors), why did this happen (versus not happen) to me?"

Is Blame Ascription a Product of Normative Causal Analysis?:

A Departure from the Rational

Intuitively, causal analysis, responsibility attribution, and blame ascription go hand-in-hand. For example, in his seminal responsibility model, Shaver (1985) proposed that an identified *causal* actor is assigned increasing degrees of *responsibility* to the extent that an outcome was foreseeable, the individual intended the outcome, the individual freely enacted the consequences, and the individual understood the moral wrongfulness of her behavior; secondarily, *blame* is assigned insofar as the perceiver declines the individual's justification or excuse. Drawing from stage models predicated on rational causal analysis, Fiske and Taylor (1991) submitted, "attributions of responsibility presuppose a judgment of causality...and attributions of blame presuppose judgments of both causality and responsibility" (p. 84). However, Alicke (1992, 2000)

took issue with the notion that blame determinations presuppose rational analysis of cause. Advancing the culpable control model of blame, Alicke (2000) noted:

...blame is an inherently psychological construct. Predisposing biases, which represent departures from normative responsibility models, are endemic to ordinary blame ascription....[yet] theoretical perspectives on blame and responsibility are dominated by normative decision stage-models that prescribe how blame judgments should be made by *rational* perceivers. Italics my own, pp. 556-556

Thus, the culpable control model, in contrast to normative decision stage-theories, accords a central role to “relatively unconscious, spontaneous” (i.e., potentially *irrational*) blame evaluations, which bias conscious, deliberate assessment of causal linkages; in short, “expectations and affective reactions [are] conflated with...assessments of personal control” (Alicke, 2000, p. 558). Indeed, Alicke (1992) empirically demonstrated that, evaluating negative outcome-scenarios in which multiple potential causal candidates (equal in necessity, sufficiency, and proximity) converge, participants select the most blameworthy factor (e.g., the actor whose behavior is most socially undesirable) as the prepotent causal factor.

Like causal attribution models, the culpable control model posits that we consider factors such as foresight (i.e., degree of anticipation, desire), intention (i.e., degree of planfulness, purposefulness), and causation (i.e., degree of sufficiency, efficacy) to determine an actor’s degree of personal control over an outcome (i.e., the index by which blame is ultimately intensified-mitigated) and, thus, the extent to which actors are to

blame. Yet, diverging from these models, Alicke (2000) proposed that we review these factors (or “linkages”) with graduated dimensionality (rather than in absolute terms) and, perhaps most importantly, through biased lenses, in a “blame-validation” mode. Akin to Gilbert et al.’s (1988) finding that automatic dispositional inferences are not easily overcome by deliberate adjustment based on situational factors, Alicke incorporated into his model the notion that spontaneous, emotion-laden blame evaluations (i.e., “affective reactions to features of harmful events and the people involved,” p. 564) shade any effortful, deliberative “reasoning” in which we may, thereafter, engage. Specifically, he proposed that, based on our blame attributions, we may exaggerate an actor’s degree of control, lower the threshold according to which we attribute blame, and/or engage in a biased information search to support our blame attributions.

Alicke’s (2000) model provided that capacity constraints (i.e., physical, psychological) and situational constraints (e.g., provocation, self-defense) might reduce or negate an actor’s perceived control in bringing about a negative outcome. Yet, according to a construct called “process control,” blame mitigation is not provided insofar as “people can be blamed for relinquishing control” (p. 562) that, through a chain of events, distally results in a negative outcome. Indeed, Alicke’s (1992) empirical work has suggested that blame determinations surrounding an initiating event influence causal judgments of even remote elements along an extended event chain. Pointing to the particular relevance of process control for perceptions of sexual assault, Alicke (2000) stated:

...studies on acquaintance rape have shown that victims are blamed more if they

asked the man out on the date (Bostwick & Delucia, 1992), if they were drinking (Richardson & Campbell, 1982), if they went to the man's apartment (Muehlenhard, Friedman, & Thomas, 1985), if they dressed or acted provocatively (Kanekar, Kolsawalla, & D'Souza, 1981; Schult & Schneider, 1991; Scroggs, 1976), or if they drove on a dangerous route and approached the assailant (Karuza & Carey, 1984). p. 562

These examples highlight that victims are not necessarily blamed for their causal force per se (at least insofar as foresight, intention, and causation highlight rational elements of causal force) but, rather, they may be judged blameworthy based on the perception that control was relinquished by the victim along the way and that this surrendering, in itself, makes her culpable. Although Alicke's (2000) model did not explicitly discuss self-blame, it is possible that a victim, uniquely privy to her missed opportunities to control an indeterminate number of elements leading up to her USE (the drink she drank, the skirt she chose, the lipstick she wore, the friend she let fall behind, the bar she picked, the guy she trusted to follow to his room, the eyelash she batted, the kiss she regretted, her silence, her failure to resist, her failure to resist vigorously enough, etc.) *and* uniquely impacted by them, is, by the same mechanism of process control, subject to self-blame for the distal USE. The concept of process control closely overlaps with the critical issues of perceived avoidability and counterfactual thinking, discussed extensively in upcoming sections. For now, suffice it to say that, although elements of stage theories are incorporated into Alicke's (2000) culpable control model, it uniquely converges with empirical data in challenging the notion that "causal attribution is a

necessary precondition for the assignment of blame” (Davis et al., 1996, p. 565).

Importantly, in order to understand the way that real people make blame attributions, we must ascribe a central role to “the emotional component of spontaneous evaluations” (Davis et al., 1996, p. 570).

Puzzle Pieces of Victimization, Part II:

Integrating Emotion into Cognition-Experience-Self

Epstein and his colleagues (1992, 1998) have provided an organizing framework, cognitive-experiential self-theory (CEST; Epstein, 1994), which sheds light on the way our emotions and thinking about experiences interrelate. Specifically, as identified by Epstein and Pacini (1998), two information-processing systems, a preconscious experiential system and a primarily conscious rational system, operate in parallel and are interactive. The influence of experiential processing on rational processing is presently considered, both because it is particularly relevant to the present discussion and because of the relatively direct influence of the experiential system according to CEST.

The rational system operates deliberately according to logical rules of inference (e.g., rational analysis of cause). In contrast, the experiential system, afforded primacy by Epstein’s model as a behavioral determinant, operates according to heuristic principles that, as discussed, may be sources of considerable logical error. Epstein has outlined a multitude of features in comparing these two systems. For example, processing in the experiential system is said to be “far more rapid and efficient than the rational system for coping with events of everyday life” (Epstein & Pacini, pp. 462-63). Moreover, “the experiential system encodes information in a concrete, holistic, primarily

nonverbal form; is intimately associated with affect; and is inherently compelling” (p. 463). Also, and perhaps most important, the experiential system is guided by “vibes” or “subtle feelings of which people are often unaware” (p. 463). This feature – that compelling emotions about which we may be unaware undergird the experiential system according to CEST – highlights its primary divergence from other cognitive theories. Whereas Epstein’s rational system relies on logic, evidence, and thought control, the experiential system, characterized by a “self-evident validity [in which] ‘experiencing is believing’” (Epstein & Pacini, p. 463), is prone to the irrational and, moreover, is likely to influence our “rational” processing.

CEST is explicitly predicated on our having more than one fundamental need, including: 1) hedonism (i.e., maximizing pleasure and avoiding pain), 2) coherency (i.e., organizing experience in a stable way), 3) relatedness (i.e., maintaining relatedness with others), and 4) self-esteem maintenance (Epstein & Pacini, 1998). Following from these, Epstein and Pacini pointed out that degree of fulfillment of needs corresponds to implicit assessments of reality (e.g., world as benign-malevolent, meaningful-unmeaningful, orderly-disorderly, controllable-uncontrollable; relationships as supportive-threatening; self as worthy-unworthy). Behavior, as conceptualized by CEST, is a compromise among these needs; specifically, needs are interdependent, and change in one basic belief (e.g., deciding “the world is a dangerous place”) provokes changes in other beliefs (e.g., “events are uncontrollable,” “my relatedness to others is maladaptive,” “I am an incompetent sexual gatekeeper”; Epstein & Pacini, p. 464). Epstein and Pacini also delineated, “schemas in the experiential system consist primarily of generalizations

derived from emotionally significant experience” and are one of two types. First, descriptive schemas are generalizations about the self and the world consistent with the need/belief categories described above (e.g., “I am an unworthy person,” “The world is a dangerous place”). Second, motivational schemas are implicit beliefs about means-end relations, associations between actions and outcomes based on past experience (e.g., “I got drunk, and a USE resulted”). Without insight into these implicit beliefs, rational control cannot be exercised (Epstein & Pacini, 1998).

Support for CEST’s dual systems and specific system distinctions has come in part from empirical investigations demonstrating an “I know better, but...” phenomenon (e.g., Epstein et al., 1992). Although participants in these studies report knowledge of how “logical persons” would behave (i.e., according to rational inferential rules), they admit that real people (including themselves and others) would behave very differently (i.e., according to principles of the experiential system) within analogous situations. For example, impressive evidence of the experiential system’s primacy comes from demonstrations of the “ratio bias” (RB) phenomenon, which describes individuals’ experiential sense that low-probability events are less probable when represented in ratios of smaller numbers (e.g., “1 in 10 chance”) than when represented in mathematically equivalent ratios of larger numbers (e.g., “10 in 100 chance”). In one RB study, Denes-Raj and Epstein (1994) offered participants the opportunity to win money for drawing a red jellybean from two bowls of primarily white jellybeans; the small bowl always contained 1 in 10 (10%) red jellybeans, while the large bowl always contained 100 jellybeans, varying from 5% to 10% red jellybeans. They found that nearly a quarter

of participants chose from the 5% large bowl rather than from the 10% small bowl, even though, when prompted, participants reported knowing that their decision had been irrational and based on *feeling*. Similar phenomenology is captured by idiosyncratic experiences of everyday life, including fear of flying compared to automobile travel, despite understanding the relative probabilistic danger of each, and “the ubiquity of religion across time and cultures [which] appeals to the experiential system through the use of narrative, metaphor, [and] emotionally engaging messages” (Epstein & Pacini, 1998, p. 467).

Epstein et al. (1992) varied vignette outcomes’ emotional intensity and found that experiential processing was preferentially evoked by situations that were highly emotion-laden (e.g., a car accident resulting in “major” rather than “minor” damage). Moreover, they demonstrated that participants’ automatically activated experiential processing influenced subsequent rational processing, a pattern temporally consistent with biased review of causal linkages in the “blame-validation” mode as described by Alicke (2000). In light of both of these models, it is presently proposed that women’s emotional reactions to their USEs will automatically and preferentially engage their experiential processing systems, which, in turn, will influence their USE explanations. As such, it is expected in the current study that women’s hindsight explanations for their USEs will reflect residual biases from experiential processing. Indeed, as Bacon (as cited in Gilbert, 1998) wrote, “human understanding is not a dry light...emotion in numerous, often imperceptible ways pervades and infects understanding” (Bacon, 1620/1994; pp. 59-60).

Puzzle Pieces of Victimization, Part III:

Phenomenology of Self-Blame

I deserved it for a lot of reasons. Like, you know, when you live in the ghetto that, you know, our people, they don't like to see one have more than the other. So it was automatically jealousy. So in the ghetto, when you get to where you start buying Cadillacs and jewelry, you're supposed to make a move out of the ghetto....So I blame that for one thing, on myself...Then I had a good woman at home, and I was dogging her, you know, pimping was involved, and uh, you know, you just can't have your cake and eat it too. And if you do wrong, you reap what you sow; I just believe that. Excerpt from participant in Bulman & Wortman (1977), p. 360

In a landmark study of traumatic spinal cord injury (SCI), blame, and coping, Bulman and Wortman (1977) interviewed patients within 1 year of injury and found that, according to treatment personnel ratings, degree of self-blame assumed by patients was related to better coping. The study authors had predicted that SCI victims would “blame those factors that are most within one's control...factors that are most readily modifiable...[and thus] would be most apt to attribute blame to his or her own behaviors” (p. 352). Indeed, as expected, SCI patients attributed “at least 50% blame” to self, others, environment, and chance at the rates of 35%, 17%, 14%, and 38%, respectively. Although Bulman and Wortman had predicted self-blame among their sample, they were surprised to discover the extent to which patients strayed from objective reality in blaming themselves. Bulman and Wortman (1977) noted:

...an obvious problem in interpreting data of this sort is that when people indicate their attributions of blame for their accident, it is difficult to separate true blameworthiness from distortion...There were many cases...in which the subject's attributions of blame seemed to bear little relation to objective blameworthiness. Of the 10 respondents who attributed at least 50% of the blame for the accident to themselves...2 had been accidentally shot, and 3 were passengers in cars. p. 356

The counterintuitive Bulman and Wortman (1977) finding that self-blame was related to positive adjustment diverged from clinical observation (Sholomskas, Steil, & Plummer, 1990), departed from learned helplessness theory and cognitive theories of depression (Hall, French, & Marteau, 2003), and theretofore was disputed (Buckelew, Baumstark, Frank, & Hewett, 1990; de Carvalho, Andrade, Tavares, & de Freitas, 1998; Nielson & MacDonald, 1998; Sholomskas et al., 1990). In an early attempt to preempt and reconcile potential controversies, Janoff-Bulman (1979) proposed that self-blame should be broken down into two distinct typologies. Whereas behavioral self-blame was described as adaptive insofar as it was control-related, modifiable, and conducive to opportunities for avoidance of future negative outcomes, characterological self-blame was described as maladaptive insofar as it was esteem-related and nonmodifiable, indicting character dispositions over which we are thought to exercise little control. Although this conceptual distinction has endured – still constituting a commonly documented point of analysis in the self-blame literature – studies have called into question the validity of the behavioral-characterological distinction (Frazier, 1990; Hall

et al., 2003; Meyer & Taylor, 1986; Thornton et al., 1988). In short, research has generally found that victims of sexual assault engage in both forms of self-blame and that both types are associated with distress (Arata, 1999). From the standpoint of attribution theory (Heider, 1958), the behavioral-characterological dichotomy may be illusive, insofar as behavior is merely an artifact of character anyway.

In a systematic review of causal attribution following serious, unexpected negative events, which included 65 studies and 588 analyses published between 1982 and 1998, Hall et al. (2003) found that, although no reliable relationships existed between attribution category (e.g., self-blame, other-blame, chance/fate-blame, environment-blame, God's will-blame) and outcome, self- and other-blame were most often associated with poorer outcomes. In particular, self-blame was 5.2 times more likely than other attribution categories to be associated with poorer outcomes. Furthermore, when behavioral self-blame and characterological self-blame were considered distinctly, neither predicted better outcomes. Characterological self-blame considered alone was associated with better outcomes in 0% of the analyses, with poorer outcomes in 49% of the analyses, and was unassociated with outcomes in 51% of the analyses. Behavioral self-blame considered alone was associated with better outcomes in 8% of the analyses, with poorer outcomes in 16% of the analyses, and was unassociated with outcomes in 76% of the analyses. Hall et al. (2003) concluded, "when the consequences of events are severe, any potential benefit conferred by self-blame may be outweighed by the severity of consequences of making these attributions" (p. 526) and, "the most plausible explanation for the strong association between characterological self-

blame and poorer outcomes is that such attributions may be more likely than behavioral self-blame to be associated with evaluations of culpability and blame and feelings of guilt and self-recrimination” (p. 527). Thus, a parsimonious conclusion seems to be that self-blame following negative, unexpected life events such as USEs is rarely adaptive and, to the extent that it incriminates stable features of the self at the cost of esteem-related emotions, self-blame is, rather, maladaptive.

Although Bulman and Wortman’s (1977) functional self-blame finding was the focus of their investigation and was the impetus behind a flurry of subsequent studies, we now know that these researchers may have hit on a lesser known finding of even greater ultimate importance. Namely, SCI patients’ *perceived avoidability*, although positively related to self-blame, was negatively related to patient coping according to treatment personnel rating. In their discussion, Bulman and Wortman (1977) cited remarks representative of SCI patients who had coped the best (e.g., “I really couldn’t have avoided it; if I didn’t dive, maybe – but I like to dive” [p. 361]) and of those who had coped the worst (e.g., “All I wish is that I had gone home with the other girl. I wish I would have had my feet on the floor. I was in the process of doing that and BANG! I wish I sat up in the seat. I would have grabbed the wheel,” “I always figure I could have taken the bus home, like I usually did” [p. 361]). From these statements, Bulman and Wortman (1977) concluded, “in retrospect, people may have an exaggerated notion of their own causal powers...[and] if the immediate cause of an accident is not avoidable or controllable, the victim may look for a prior cause that is” (p. 362). Recent research (e.g.,

Davis et al., 1996) highlights that Bulman and Wortman had therein touched on a theoretical issue of significant consequence.

Davis et al. (1996) also conducted a study of SCI patients and self-blame, and they considered in particular the role of perceived avoidability. They proposed, “in judging the extent to which they are personally to blame for severe negative outcomes, individuals not only evaluate their and others’ causal roles (as well as the role of chance and other situational factors) but also consider whether they could have done something differently to have prevented the event from occurring” (p. 559). Indeed, Davis and colleagues (1995), investigating the causal and preventability perceptions of parents who had lost an infant to sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), found that although only 20% endorsed a self-implicating *causal* theory for their child’s death, 68% affirmed self-implicating considerations of how their infant’s death might have been *avoided*. They also found that perceived avoidability in this sample was related to greater feelings of guilt and personal responsibility. Thus, in investigating the SCI sample, Davis et al. (1996) hypothesized and found that perceived avoidability predicted self-blame, after statistically controlling for patients’ self-implicating causal attributions and self-rated foreseeability. Moreover, although trained raters were equivalent to patients on the extent to which they judged that patients had *caused* their SCIs, raters attributed less *blame* to patients than the patients attributed to themselves. Davis et al. (1996) concluded:

The present study sheds additional light on how those who have experienced traumatic life events may come to blame themselves. The data suggest that even

in the absence of any reasonable causal connection, the more people think they could have avoided their accident, the more likely they are to blame themselves. Previous research (e.g., Davis et al., 1995; Dunning & Parpal, 1989; Kahneman & Miller, 1986) has demonstrated that people are more likely to focus on their own behavior when thinking about how negative outcomes might have been avoided than to focus on the behavior of others or on the situation. In focusing their avoidability thoughts on their own behaviors, people appear to be concluding that in some way they may have contributed to their injury. Although they may not have caused their accident, it remains painfully clear to many of them that, for example, had they left minutes earlier or taken a different route, they would not be disabled. That these personal actions can so easily be mutated leads people to assume greater personal responsibility and blame for their outcome. p. 565

Counterfactual Thinking as Puzzlemaster:

Piecing Together Causal Analysis, Perceived Avoidability, Emotion, and Self-Blame

Following negative outcomes, upward counterfactual thinking (i.e., “if only” simulations that highlight better possible realities; Roese, 1997) amplifies negative emotions (Kahneman & Miller, 1986) and serves a preparatory function by highlighting modes to better possible worlds and improved action plans (Markman, Gavanski, Sherman, & McMullen, 1993; Markman & McMullen, 2003; Roese, 1994, 1997). Counterfactual thinking has been demonstrated to influence both causal judgments and assignment of blame (e.g., Branscombe et al., 1996; Davis et al., 1996; Sherman &

McConnell, 1995; Wells & Gavanski, 1989). McGill (1998) explained, “people may evaluate the causal relationship between an event Y and a possible causal candidate X by asking the counterfactual question, ‘Would Y have occurred if X had not?’” (p. 70). Thus, counterfactual reasoning places relative emphasis on necessity (rather than sufficiency) information, leading to “oxygen is the cause of fires” and “women are the cause of their USEs” logical quandaries (Mandel, in press). McGill (1998) also submitted, “emphasis on causal necessity implies that one should reject a factor as an explanation if the event has occurred on many other occasions when the target factor was absent” (p. 71). Insofar as the tightest of rational analyses reveals only two undoubtedly necessary features of a heterosexual interaction – a woman’s presence and a man’s penetration – the latter explanation for a USE may be disregarded insofar as a woman considers her own background, which may include past USE(s). In other words, simply as a byproduct of her USE history, a woman may be predisposed to consider her own “causal” presence in a given USE and to discard the perpetrator’s “causal” influence. Finally, insofar as “unwanted sex” fits McGill’s (1998) description of an artificial category (i.e., one based on an arbitrary, rather than essential, defining feature; e.g., “normal sex becomes unwanted sex when it crosses this or that arbitrary line”), it may be particularly prone to post hoc definitional re-categorization (or confusion as the case may be; e.g., “did he or didn’t he cross the line, and where exactly is the line anyway?”).

Mutable event features are those easily imagined altered, with potential to have changed the outcome (Kahneman & Miller, 1986; McGill & Tenbrunsel, 2000).

Kahneman and Miller (1986), as cited in McGill and Tenbrunsel (2000), highlighted the importance of mutability in causal attributions about victims:

The idea that the actions of a focal individual are mutable may help explain the well documented tendency for victims of violence to be assigned an unreasonable degree of responsibility for their fate (Lerner & Miller, 1978). Information about a harmful act often presents the actions of the perpetrator in a way that makes them part of the presupposed background of the story, and therefore relatively immutable. Alternatives to the victim's actions are likely to be more mutable, and counterfactual scenarios in which the harm is avoided are therefore likely to be the ones that change the victim's actions but keep the aggressor's behavior essentially constant. The high availability of such counterfactual scenarios can induce the impression that the victim is responsible for her fate – at least in the sense that she could have easily altered it. p. 144

In a similar vein, Mandel (in press) notes, “counterfactual listings are more likely than generative-cause listings to focus on controllable behaviors” (p. 9). Considered as an extension of Alicke's (2000) process control, women's retrospective focus on their controllable behaviors implies spontaneous ascription of self-blame, implicit beliefs that, as Epstein's (1994) CEST model emphasizes, are not easily overcome. Consistent with the notion of process control, Davis et al. (1995) elaborated on the problems for victims related to perceived preventability:

...a victim's desire to understand how the victimization could have been avoided is more likely to focus on even trivial aspects of his or her own behavior than on

the causally more significant, but less mutable, behavior of the perpetrator. To the extent that a salient and plausible counterfactual suggests that one could have prevented the outcome, one may come to believe that one should have been able to prevent it. p. 122

Although causal and counterfactual reasoning clearly overlap, Mandel (in press) draws careful distinctions between causal selection, guided by the actuality principle (i.e., considering antecedents that played a role in *bringing about the outcome*), and counterfactual assessments, guided by the substitution principle (i.e., considering ways to *undo the outcome*). Similar to Kahneman and Miller's (1986) point about the perceived mutability of victims' behaviors, Mandel (in press) states, "it is easy to imagine ways that one could have made an outcome turn out better, and the availability of such thoughts can obscure the fact that, in foresight, success by the counterfactual course of action may have been less probable" (p. 15). This statement suggests that a counterfactual reasoning mode, although fundamental to causal reasoning, inherently shifts analyses from reasoning about generative causes to reasoning about inhibitory causes (Mandel & Lehman, 1996). An important implication of this subtle, inadvertent mental sleight of hand is that, inhibitory causes, produced by imaginings rather than by reality, are virtually infinite. For example, a woman may limitlessly consider how this move or that non-move prior to her USE might have changed her fate. Yet, although infinitesimal mental undos (e.g., painting her fingernails a different color) might seem in her imaginings to have undone her fate, their a priori probability of having prevented

the outcome actually may have been miniscule. Nevertheless, because “if-then” mental simulations resist validity checks and disconfirmation, they may *feel* 100% valid.

Kahneman and Miller (1986) posited that mental simulations, or post-outcome imaginings of counterfactual alternatives, are responsible for irrational emotional reactions. According to norm theory (NT; Kahneman & Miller, 1986), accessibility of counterfactual thoughts produces an experience of perceived event abnormality that amplifies emotional distress. Epstein et al. (1992) reported that the NT process is consistent with CEST, insofar as “concrete representations of possibilities (alternatives) in imagination are basic attributions of the experiential system” (p. 329). Accordingly, Epstein et al. (1992) found an “if only” (IO) responding trend (i.e., “foolishness” attributed to a protagonist according to heuristic principles) when participants were asked to report how *they or others* would feel in a situation (i.e., therein adopting an experiential orientation). However, the IO effect (i.e., “foolishness” attributions) was reduced when subjects were asked to respond as would a *rational* protagonist. These researchers also found that when participants were asked to first adopt a self-perspective, then a rational-perspective, sequencing effects emerged such that primary adoption of a self/experiential perspective interfered with participants’ ability to subsequently respond rationally. Epstein et al. (1992) concluded:

Imagining counterfactual alternatives is an example of thinking in the form of concrete, holistic exemplars...After an emotionally significant unfortunate outcome, the experiential system automatically (and somewhat compulsively) considers alternative ways of responding to similar situations. (“What if I did this

instead of that?") Normally, such a process is adaptive as it ensures that the individual will not ignore significant negative outcomes and will explore possible adaptive ways of responding to them. The reaction is, of course, maladaptive when the unfortunate outcomes are not contingent on the preceding behaviors, and therefore obsessing over them serves no function other than to elevate distress. p. 338

In this vein, Davis et al. (1995), found across two studies that "undoing" (i.e., counterfactual thinking) following the loss of a spouse or child to a motor vehicle accident (study 1) or the loss of a child to SIDS (study 2) was associated with greater distress. They concluded, "given an affectively charged event...people seem motivated...to search for any behavior that they could imagine performing differently, even highly 'normal' or 'routine' behaviors. This implies that undoing may be, at least partly, a distress-driven cognitive process" (p. 115).

Branscombe et al. (2003) addressed a gap in the sexual trauma literature concerning the implications of counterfactual thinking for coping and wellbeing. In particular, they questioned the preparative function of upward counterfactual thinking (e.g., Roese, 1994) for trauma victims given the inherent problem that trauma cannot be reversed. Branscombe and colleagues posited, "...in the context of rape...the preparative function of upward counterfactuals is not likely to compensate for the affective consequences that can be expected" (p. 266; see also Markman & Weary, 1996; Sanna, 1997). Branscombe et al. considered 1) research demonstrating that self-implicating counterfactuals for trauma victims are positively related to distress (Davis et al., 1995),

2) research demonstrating that people preferentially undo controllable (in)actions (e.g., Markman, Gavanski, Sherman, & McMullen, 1995; N'gbala & Branscombe, 1995), and 3) supposition that rapists' actions are uncontrollable (Wrightsmann, 1991). Consolidating these, Branscombe et al. (2003) hypothesized that degree of victims' upward counterfactual generation/endorsement would predict self-blame "because it implies that there are more ways the self might have changed the outcome" (p. 267), in turn, predicting poorer psychological well-being.

Women in Branscombe et al.'s (2003) study were asked to respond to the prompt, "have you ever been forced to have sex against your will?" Those responding in the affirmative subsequently responded to an open-ended counterfactual prompt:

...many people who have been sexually assaulted later replay the event in their minds. Frequently when people do this they think about ways in which the outcome of the attack could have been different. If you ever do this, what aspects of your actions and/or the circumstances do you imagine differently so that a different outcome occurs? p. 268

All counterfactuals produced by victims involved mutating their own behavior in order to imagine a different outcome: 14% changed the amount of alcohol consumed, 47% changed behaviors that might have reduced the assault opportunity, and 29% involved more vigorously resisting. Participants also responded to 10 behavioral statements (e.g., "I should have resisted more strongly") according to a 1 (disagree)-to-7 (agree) scale, the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI, Beck, 1967, with modified scoring), a 20-item self-esteem measure (Hoyle, 1991), a 1-item scale regarding perceived control, and 1-item

blame scales related to self, rapist, and “the power of men in society.” Results indicated that counterfactual thinking predicted self-blame, which, in turn, was a negative predictor of psychological wellbeing (combining depression, self-esteem, and perceived control).

Despite Branscombe et al.’s (2003) interesting findings, as the authors themselves discussed, methodological shortcomings require mention. Namely, women were included in the study only if they endorsed a dichotomous prompt employing terms such as “force,” “against your will,” and “attack” to describe sexual experiences of interest. As research has verified, wording such as this likely alienates a significant proportion of unacknowledged victims (Kahn & Andreoli Mathie, 2000), who may constitute a critical contingent in the study of self-blame. In the service of inclusiveness, the present study will rather assess for women’s USEs. Also, the wording of Branscombe et al.’s counterfactual prompt may have been problematic insofar as it conveyed a “typical” assault (i.e., an “attack”) and a “typical” post-assault reaction (i.e., “many people who have been sexually assaulted later replay the event in their mind...[and] think about how the attack could have been different”), standards against which women may have compared their own experiences. Arguably, prompting women to consider counterfactual alternatives at all skews data on actual prevalence and natural phenomenology. Finally, because all of Branscombe et al.’s data was gathered at a single session, causal explanations remain speculative. These methodological shortcomings notwithstanding, Branscombe et al.’s (2003) study was an important first effort at

delineating the pathogenesis and repercussions of self-blame among sexual assault victims.

Mechanism of Vulnerability:

From USE-specific Self-blame to Revictimization

*Mother, I tried, please believe me
I'm doing the best that I can
I'm ashamed of the things I've been put through
I'm ashamed of the person I am.*
Ian Curtis/Joy Division

Sexual revictimization (SRV), in its insidiousness, highlights the critical relevance of investigating post-USE attribution processes and their potential costs. Recall that the ultimate motivation behind attribution is prediction (and possibly control) of our worlds (Fiske & Taylor, 1991), and we tend to accomplish this most efficiently by making dispositional inferences based on our own and others' behavior (Gilbert, 1998). Gilbert also discussed the process of integrating dispositional inferences by forming global impressions that cohere around them. He stated that, through extensive practice with dispositional interrelationships in the real world (i.e., the foundation of implicit personality theories), we generalize from specific dispositional inferences (commonly rooted for victims, as previously discussed, in heaping self-blame; e.g., "I acted like a *slut*...") to predict same-valence traits (e.g., "...which means I'm a *bad, unlikable, hypersexual* person"), a phenomenon called the halo effect. While this example may read like an extreme, pathological case, it highlights the ease of movement with which negative self-impressions may snowball. The Joy Division lyrics above highlight this irony – as quick as one line (thought) moves to the next, feeling "ashamed of the things

I've been put through" becomes being "ashamed of the person I am." Perhaps most troubling, such self-impressions "*behave* as though they are independent of the behavioral evidence from which they were drawn" (Gilbert, p. 110). Because impressions resist disconfirmation, a woman may be left with the lingering sense that she is *bad*, *unlikable*, and *hypersexual*, but may be unable to disconfirm the veracity of this with (forgotten) behavioral "evidence."

Extant research documents that self-blame mediates psychological adjustment following sexual assault (Arata, 1999; Branscombe et al., 2003; Frazier, 1991). Arata (1999), highlighting that sexual assault victims tend to focus on themselves to the relative neglect of external causal factors, called for a prospective study to test the possibility that self-blame increases women's vulnerability to future assaults. Accordingly, Miller et al. (2005) recently found that, among adolescent USE victims, post-USE self-blame prospectively predicted SRV. Thus, despite the fact that men's behavior is *the* sufficient cause women's USEs, understanding the roles of women's post-USE attribution processes and associated negative emotion is critical. Inherently, conceptualizing a self-blame-to-SRV pathway employs the premise that post-USE self-blame signals the preexistence of, and/or drives the formation of, self-impressions that ultimately influence sexual vulnerability. It is presently proposed (see Study 1) that explanation heuristics employed by women during their USE narratives will drive their explicit formulation of post-USE self-blame as evidenced by a self-report measure that, in turn, will increase prospective SRV risk. According to this formulation, victims' self-blame regarding their USEs (i.e., perceived failure to "control" factors such as dress,

alcohol intake, flirtation, isolated circumstances) overtly mark “below the surface” yet arguably more enduring control- and esteem-related self-impressions regarding sexual interactions (e.g., “I am an incompetent sexual gatekeeper,” “Men want me for sex”). This formulation is consistent with Branscombe et al.’s (2003) findings that rape victims’ self-blame amplified depressive symptoms and depleted self-esteem and perceived control.

Expanding on Seligman’s (1975) helplessness theory of depression, Abramson and colleagues (1989, 2002) proposed that event-specific inferences (e.g., self as cause, self as unworthy, self as incompetent to control negative outcomes) predispose us to hopelessness. While helplessness and hopelessness are overlapping constructs, helplessness theory highlights in particular the importance of depleted self-efficacy (Seligman, 1975; e.g., perceived inability to control future USEs), whereas hopelessness theory emphasizes the costs of depleted self-esteem (e.g., feelings of deservedness for USEs) and increased dependency (e.g., increased reliance on others; Abramson et al., 2002). Although hopelessness is, according to Abramson et al.’s (1989) formulation, a sufficient cause for depressive symptoms, Abramson et al. (2002) carefully distinguished hopeless cognitive vulnerability (i.e., a style or trait) from episodic depression per se (i.e., a state). Accordingly, helpless/hopeless cognitive *styles* – characterized by vulnerable self-efficacy, self-esteem, and self-competency – are presently conceptualized as driving (explicit) USE-specific self-blame (e.g., “I failed to resist vigorously enough”) and (implicit) generalized, enduring self-impressions as described by Gilbert (e.g., “I am a sexual pushover”). Thus, it is presently proposed that post-USE self-blame signals the

implicit presence of negative self-impressions, hypothesized to place women at increased SRV risk. As Abramson et al. (2002) stated, “the cognitively vulnerable individual is left with the spotlight of attention fixed on relatively negative content...In turn, this attentional spotlighting of negative content also allows it to strongly influence affect and behavior” (p. 285).

The present conceptualization of SRV vulnerability is intrinsically linked to the concept of self-schemata. Markus (1977) defined self-schemata as “cognitive generalizations about the self...that organize and guide the processing of self-related information contained in an individual’s social experience” and, further, explained that schemata arise from “attempts to organize, summarize, or explain one’s own behavior in a particular domain” (p. 63). Consistent with this formulation, Markus found that self-schemata affect individuals’ processing of self-relevant information, provoke retrieval of schemata-consistent behavioral evidence, and influence persons’ expectancies about their own behavior. Generally speaking, individuals filter incoming information during emotion-laden (i.e., important) experiences based on prior domain-specific experiences, and this filtering both guides and interferes with goal-pursuit and self-regulation. In keeping with Alicke’s (2000) concept of process control, victims who blame themselves following sexual assault may inherently acknowledge perceived control failure at some point during an indeterminately long chain of events leading to the assault. To the extent that victims’ perceptions of event-specific control loss (evidenced fundamentally within their USE narratives and giving rise to explicit self-blame attributions) are internalized, they may activate a perceived-control-loss filter during future sexual predicaments.

Control typically has been defined as individuals' belief that they exert influence over life events, including aversive stimuli (Thompson, 1981). However, Rothbaum, Weisz, and Snyder (1982) delineated a two-process model of perceived control wherein "people attempt to gain control not only by bringing the environment in line with their wishes (*primary* control) but also by bringing themselves into line with environmental forces (*secondary* control)" (p. 5). Importantly, these theorists highlighted that behaviors (i.e., passivity, withdrawal, and submissiveness) typically construed as indicating perceived uncontrollability and, thus, relinquished control (e.g., Seligman, 1975) may alternately be conceptualized as efforts to avoid or prevent disappointment and, thus, to sustain control (Rothbaum et al., 1982). Particularly in cases such as USEs, when their primary control has failed, victims may adopt the principal of secondary control, for example by adjusting expectations to accommodate a failure-conducive environment.⁴ Rothbaum et al. explained, "individuals who can accurately predict uncontrollable events can thereby avoid unfulfillable expectations (i.e., disappointment) that fuel the perception of uncontrollability" (p. 16). Stated another way, by predicting primary control-loss in future sexual situations (i.e., perceived inability to avoid the aversive outcome), victims may actually be attaining a secondary sense of control by correctly predicting the uncontrollable situation.

Relinquished primary control is a fascinating conundrum for the conceptualization of SRV risk. Consider the following predicament in the case of a woman mentally reviewing her USE:

...control may be aversive when it is unsuccessful. When people expect to be

able to control a situation...and fail, they may be unprepared for the failure and be held responsible by both the self and others, thereby leading to aversive emotional states. Thus, although control generally may be beneficial for self-regulation and be especially so under stressful conditions, there are clear boundaries to this phenomenon. Certain circumstances evoke a desire to reduce one's control or to give control over to others. Fiske & Taylor, 1991, p. 204

Similarly, Markman and Tetlock (2000) discussed that control may be relinquished to prevent disparaged self-presentation following failure (e.g., Burger, 1989) and to mitigate feelings of personal responsibility for failure. These researchers found that participants were particularly likely to make "counterfactual excuses" when they expected to be held accountable for their decisions and when negative outcomes could not have been foreseen.

A woman may experience dissonance following a USE insofar as she 1) perceives her exertion of control to have been unsuccessful and 2) she expects to be perceived (or perceives herself) as the responsible party. Paradoxically, she may feel that to avoid such dyscontrol in future sexual situations, she must lower her expectation of self-efficacy (e.g., assuming the role of ineffective sexual gatekeeper) or decide that such experiences are not unwanted after all (e.g., assuming the role of sexual provocateur) – essentially deciding that she is helpless to proactively control USEs. The former concept is similar to self-handicapping (Jones & Berglas, 1978), which describes the motivation to excuse oneself for anticipated failure by assuming an area of (perhaps less pejorative) incompetence (e.g., an alcoholic falling off the wagon, preferring to be an acknowledged

drunk, compared to the self-esteem loss of anticipated inability to get a job). Women acknowledging themselves as incompetent sexual gatekeepers retain their “integrity,” nevertheless, as attractive sexual objects. Although such personas may pose a risk to self-concept, they ironically may allow women, in this role, to simultaneously retain a valued piece of social pie.

Anticipated inability to exert primary control over sexual situations offers an alternative explanation of data used to support “risk recognition” paradigms, which generally posit that sexual assault victims may have impaired aptitude for recognizing risky sexual situations (Wilson, Calhoun, & Bernat, 1999). For example, Meadows, Jaycox, Orsillo, and Foa (1997; as cited in Wilson et al., 1999) exposed women to ambiguous scenarios involving degrees of interpersonal risk and found that those with sexual assault histories indicated they would leave the situation later than did women without these histories. Yet, these researchers also found that sexual assault history did not differentiate the point at which women indicated experiencing discomfort. This latter finding could highlight the need for an alternative explanation of these overall data. That is, perhaps victims do perceive threat (i.e., discomfort) in sexual situations but, based on prior situation-specific perceived control failures and activation of control-related self-schemata, they anticipate inability to exert primary control (e.g., rapid escape) in unwanted sexual situations.

In summary, post-USE self-blame is presently conceptualized as a manifest marker of a latent, impressionistic sense of helplessness and hopelessness regarding control of unwanted sex. That is, it is posited that women generalize from specific

instances of perceived control loss following USEs to form enduring self-impressions that influence and guide them in future sexual situations. In particular, it may be that as victims encounter future situations with features matching past USEs, event-specific schemata (i.e., perceived inability to control the situation, feelings of deservedness for being in the situation) emerge and filter incoming information. Thus, victims who blame themselves following USEs may be especially vulnerable to relinquishing primary control in a paradoxical effort to protect against anticipated control failure and aversive emotional reactions that would presumably only compound self-blame. Study 1 will consider victims' USE narratives in order to shed additional light on the naturalistic phenomenology of women's post-USE self-blame and on how women's explanations, in turn, influence SRV vulnerability. Supplementing this, Study 2 will experimentally contextualize college women's USEs within a sociolegal fabric, in an effort to distill "silent," systemic forces that may inculcate victim-focused USE explanations among female undergraduates.

Study 1

Impetus

According to Wyer and Gruenfeld (1995), "much of our theoretical and empirical knowledge about social information processing has been obtained under laboratory conditions that only faintly resemble the social situation" (p. 48). However, the proverbial empirical pendulum appears to be shifting toward a call for naturalistic research, expounding on Heider's (1958) principle of naïve psychology. Along these

lines, Fiske and Taylor (1991) specified the ideal method for conducting investigations of causal explanation:

Research has made clear...that much causal inference must be understood not solely as the inner workings of the mind in attempting to impose order on ambiguity, but also as a social process by which people solicit causal explanations from others and communicate their explanations to others...[and] accompanying this trend has been a call for methods enabling researchers to cull causal explanations from natural discourse. p. 63

In this vein, the present investigation will cull women's narrative accounts in an effort to shed light on their real-life USE explanations, including self-blame, and, perhaps, the way these contribute to SRV vulnerability. Underscoring that examination of women's accounts might get most directly at the heart of their subjective causal understandings, Fiske and Taylor continued:

In providing an explanation, a speaker will volunteer only points that are informative to the listener...Essentially, the communicator defines his or her task as providing that piece of information that will explain the abnormal condition that produced the event...Causal explanations provided by one person to another or by the person to the self both seek to identify the factor that makes the difference between the target case and a counterfactual contrast case. p. 65

By this reasoning, women's implicit task in accounting their USEs should be to cut through superfluity, isolating key element(s) that "make the difference" between what happened (the USE) and counterfactual alternative(s) – imagined instance(s) in which

the USE had not occurred. In other words, hidden subtly, unobtrusively within the question *what happened* should be an invitation to explain *why* it might have happened.

The present study is interested in the phenomenology of women's negative self-attributions following unwanted heterosexual experiences in particular. In their systematic analysis of studies examining causal attributions following serious, unexpected negative life events, Hall et al. (2003) concluded, "determining which aspects of self-blame...are associated with poorer outcomes, for whom, and when should now be examined empirically" (p. 531). According to cognitive-experiential self-theory (CEST) and associated empirical data (e.g., Epstein et al., 1992), emotionally significant events automatically activate the visceral, nonrational processing of the experiential system, which influences "logical" analyses. Similarly, Alicke's (2000) culpable control model specifies that we engage in spontaneous, emotion-laden blame evaluations (i.e., "affective reactions to features of harmful events and the people involved," p. 564), which subsequently influence our causal "reasoning" about events in a blame validation mode. Both of these models emphasize that we are subject to the winds of "experiential" emotional processing, which sway our explicit interpretations of life events. Thus, a narrative methodology was selected for the present study with the goal of capturing women's naturally occurring emotions and explanations about their USEs and exploring the way that these may influence both their explicit analysis of self-blame and their SRV vulnerability.

Hypotheses

Miller et al. (2005) found that, among women endorsing adolescent USEs (Miller, 2002), post-USE self-blame prospectively predicted sexual revictimization (SRV) over a 4.2-month follow-up period. Miller's previous work with this sample has utilized data from three of four data collection phases (i.e., phases 1, 2, and 4), not including individual USE interviews conducted with each study participant (i.e., phase 3). Women's narrative accounts potentially constitute a rich explanatory data source and, thus, are presently considered with regard to USE explanations and their influence on women's post-USE self-blame and SRV risk. Hypotheses for Study 1 include the following:

1) Negative emotionality following a USE will indicate operation of experiential processing (Epstein et al., 1992), prone to irrationality (Denes-Raj & Epstein, 1994). Therefore, explicit (NE) and implicit (ED) negative emotion expressed during women's USE narratives, and self-reported distress score, is expected to inhibit women's ability to adjust spontaneous self-incriminating dispositional inferences (Gilbert, Krull, et al., 1988; Gilbert, Pelham, et al., 1988). Specifically, it is hypothesized that NE and ED expressed during women's USE narratives and self-reported distress will be positively related to post-USE self-blame and will predict greater SRV risk during a 4.2-month follow-up period.

2) Complex outcomes such as USEs demand that perceivers choose among multiple "noncommon effects" (Jones & Davis, 1965) in inferring cause. Mynatt and Allgeier (1990) found that victims of sexual coercion were more likely to make internal

attributions about their assaults to the extent that they perceived freedom in their own behavior (e.g., lacked assertiveness, succumbed to psychological force). Similarly, and consistent with Alicke's (2000) concept of process control, women's judgments of self-blameworthiness should coincide with their perceptions of relinquished control in the events leading up to their USEs. Also, accumulating empirical data on perceived avoidability and counterfactual thinking (e.g., Davis et al., 1995, 1996; Epstein et al., 1992; Epstein & Pacini, 1998; Mandel, in press; McGill & Tenbrunsel, 2000) is consistent with the hypothesis that in mentally undoing their own behaviors, therein easily imagining how they might have prevented their fate as victims, women stir an experiential sense that they are responsible for their USEs. According to Fiske and Taylor's (1991) principle of stimulus generalization, in so deciding that they have been causal factors in past USEs, women may be more likely to expect similar outcomes to occur in the future. Integrating these lines of theory and research, it is expected that women's self-blame will be positively related to their perceptions of a) self-behavioral or dispositional undesirability (UND; e.g., "I can't believe I went with him") and b) failures to utilize escape opportunities or to resist vigorously enough (ERF; e.g., "I said no, but then I just let it go"). That is, it is hypothesized that women's UND and ERF verbalizations expressed during their USE narratives will be positively related to post-USE self-blame and will place women at greater SRV risk during a 4.2-month follow-up period.

3) Women may also make self-inferences of "noncommon effects" based on consistency data. Kelley (1967) posited that people use covariation information to infer

cause, and McGill (1998) emphasized that we reject factors as necessary causes to the extent that an event has occurred in the absence of a factor. Thus, to the extent a woman focuses on her history of USE(s), she may be more likely to infer that, based on the covariation of her mere presence across events, she is the most salient cause. It is specifically hypothesized that women's narrative verbalizations indicating multiple or past USEs will be positively related to post-USE self-blame and will predict greater SRV risk during a 4.2-month follow-up period.

4) Blame and responsibility models (e.g., Alicke, 2000; Shaver, 1985) have consistently posited that perceivers hold persons to bear for negative outcomes to the extent that the outcomes were foreseeable (e.g., anticipated, desired) or intended (e.g., planned, purposeful). Along these lines, McCaul, Veltum, Boyechko, and Crawford (1990) found in a scenario study of sexual assault that participants used the same factors in augmenting blame (conceptualized in terms of foresight and intention) as they did in judging the victim to have derived sexual pleasure. A positive relationship between event foreseeability and self-blame has also been established for other victimized populations (e.g., SCI patients; Davis et al., 1996). However, neither a relationship between perceived foreseeability and self-blame, nor a relationship between derived pleasure and self-blame, has been established among a sample of sexual victims. Thus, it is presently hypothesized that women's narrative verbalizations regarding a) pleasure, desire, or liking for the male actor or the situation (PDL) and b) perceived foreseeability/anticipation into unwanted sexual experiencing (FA) will be positively related to post-

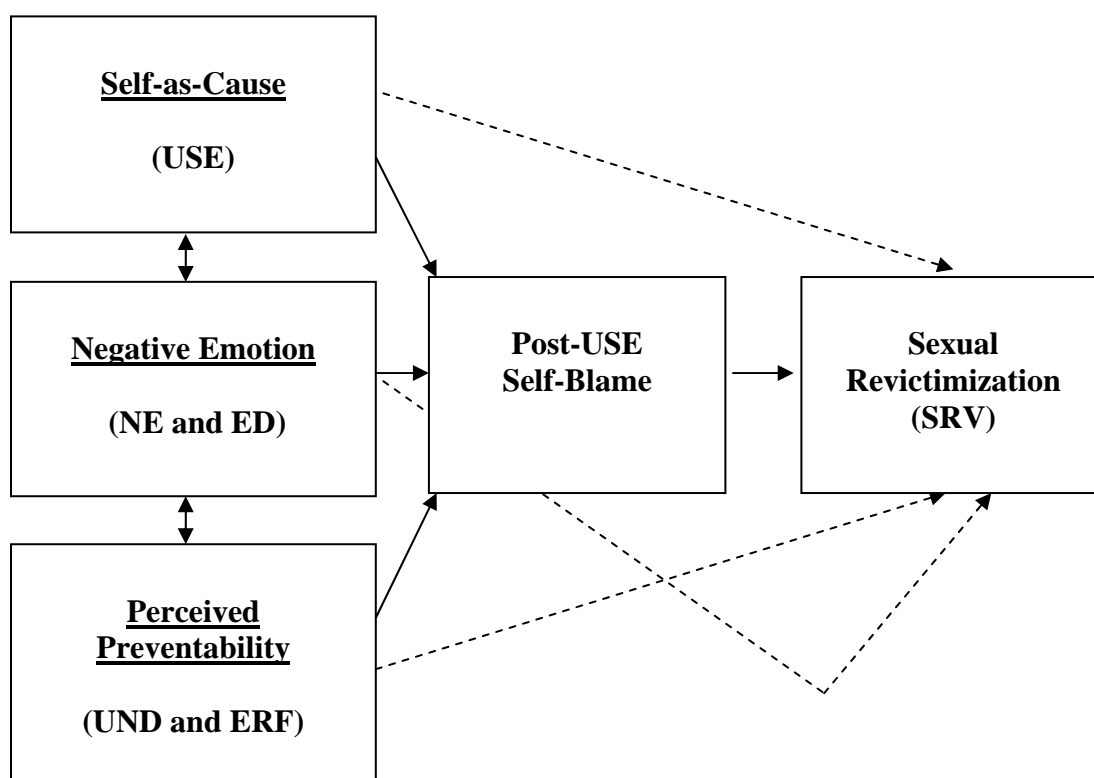
USE self-blame and will place women at greater SRV risk during a 4.2-month follow-up period.

5) Bulman and Wortman (1977) submitted that, following traumatic outcomes, individuals retrospectively exaggerate their causal impact and, “if the immediate cause of an accident is not avoidable or controllable, the victim may look for a prior cause that is” (p. 362). Indeed, one recent study found that sexual assault victims were particularly prone to considering how they might have changed their own behaviors leading to their assaults, and such considerations disposed them to self-blame (Branscombe et al., 2003). Moreover, as Davis et al. (1995) observed, victims of trauma, driven by distress, may be so motivated to imagine the outcome undone that they imagine having performed differently even “highly ‘normal’ or ‘routine’ behaviors” (p. 115). Consistent with this latter notion, it is presently hypothesized that women’s narrative focus on their own behaviors and states of being leading up to their USEs (LE) – even those that are seemingly benign – will be positively related to post-USE self-blame and will place women at greater SRV risk during a 4.2-month follow-up period.

6) Presumption of self-culpability may play a role in women’s reluctance to conceptualize their USEs in criminal terms (e.g., “sexual assault,” “rape”; Koss, 1988; Mynatt & Allgeier, 1990). Thus, it is presently hypothesized that women’s reluctance to a) label their USEs in criminal terms or b) report their USEs to authorities will more will be more likely to experience post-USE self-blame and will be at greater SRV risk during a 4.2-month follow-up period.

7) Finally, although numerous relations among the discussed variables are plausible, it is hypothesized that the Causal-Emotion-Prevention Model of SRV (Figure 1) will be supported.

Figure 1. *Causal-Emotion-Prevention Model of SRV*



Methodology

Participants

Participants in the study screening (data collection phase 1) were 601 college women at Ohio University, recruited from September 2001 through January 2002 for an experiment entitled “Women’s Social Experiences” (Miller, 2002). Women were eligible

to participate in the remainder of the study if, according to a revised version of the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES-RV; Koss & Bachar, 2001; see Appendix A), they responded in the affirmative to having had an adolescent USE (i.e., since age 14 years) resulting in vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse (i.e., questions 6-10). Specifically, the eligibility criterion was endorsement of at least one of the following USEs since age 14:

- Have you ever had sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral) when you didn't want to because you were drunk or stoned and were unable to give consent? ($n = 35$)
- Have you given in to sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral) when you didn't want to because you were overwhelmed by a man's continual arguments and pressure? ($n = 80$)
- Have you had sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral) when you didn't want to because a man used his position of authority (boss, teacher, counselor, supervisor)? ($n = 2$)
- Have you had sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral) when you didn't want to because a man gave you alcohol or drugs to prevent you from resisting? ($n = 12$)
- Have you had sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral) when you didn't want to because a man threatened or used some degree of physical force (twisting your arm, holding you down, etc.) to make you? ($n = 20$)

Of the 167 (27.8%) women who met the eligibility criterion, 82.0% were 18-19 years old, 88.1% were freshmen or sophomores, 96.4% were Caucasian, 99.4% were heterosexual, 97.6% were never married, and 93.4% were in long-term monogamous

relationships (Miller, 2002). Compared to women who did not qualify for the study, eligible women were more likely to have willingly engaged in sexual intercourse, were older at the time of their first willing intercourse, had had more consensual sex partners, and drank alcohol more often. Of these 167 women, three (1.8%) were excluded for current suicidal ideation, seven (4.3%) declined participation in data collection phase 2, and four (2.4%) were unreachable by telephone. Thus, 153 of 164 eligible women (93.3%) participated in a data collection phase 2, a questionnaire session conducted approximately 1 week following the screening. Of the 153 women who participated in the second questionnaire session, three women (2.0%) declined participation in, and one woman (0.7%) did not show to, data collection phase 3, the USE interview ($M = 8.3$ days post-screening). Thus, 149 of 153 women (97.4%) who participated in data collection phase 2 also participated in data collection phase 3. Finally, of 149 women interviewed, five women were either unavailable or did not show for data collection phase 4, constituting a return rate of 96.6% for a follow-up questionnaire session conducted approximately 4.2 months post-screening. Taken together, an impressive retention rate of 87.7% was maintained across all 4 data collection phases.

Measures

All measures administered during the large-scale study are summarized according to timeline in Table 1. Constructs germane to this study appear within the table in bold italics and within parentheses, next to the measure from which they were derived. These are further discussed below.

Table 1. *Study 1 Timeline and Measures*

<i>Phase of Study</i>	<i>Time Post-Screening</i>	<i>Measures</i>
<i>Phase 1: Screening</i> (<i>N</i> = 601)		Consent Form Background Questions Form Contact Form Demographics Questionnaire Traumatic Events Questionnaire <i>Sexual Experiences Survey-Revised (SES-RV; adolescent USEs)</i> Peritraumatic Dissociative Experiences Questionnaire (PDEQ) Peritraumatic Distress Inventory (PDI) Debriefing Form
<i>Phase 2: Questionnaire Session</i> (<i>N</i> = 157)	<i>M</i> = 1 week	Consent Form Impact of Event Scale-Revised (IES-R) Dissociative Experiences Scale-Revised-Version 2 (DES-R-2) <i>Posttraumatic Cognitions Inventory (PTCI; self-blame)</i> Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) Debriefing Form
<i>Phase 3: Interview</i> (<i>N</i> = 149)	<i>M</i> = 8.3 days	Consent Form <i>Interview Questions (all narrative constructs)</i> Debriefing Form
<i>Phase 4: Questionnaire Session</i> (<i>N</i> = 144)	<i>M</i> = 4.2 months	Consent Form <i>Sexual Experiences Survey-Revised (SES-RV; SRV during study)</i> Peritraumatic Dissociative Experiences Questionnaire (PDEQ) Peritraumatic Distress Inventory (PDI) Impact of Event Scale-Revised (IES-R) Dissociative Experiences Scale-Revised-Version 2 (DES-R-2) Posttraumatic Cognitions Inventory (PTCI) Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (PTGI) Ambiguous Scenarios Survey Debriefing Form

Study consent (phases 1-4). Each participant signed an informed consent form prior to all study phases.

Exclusion criteria (phase 1). Completed during screening, a Background Questions Form was used to determine whether participants met exclusion criteria (i.e., suicidal ideation, past psychiatric hospitalization, and/or current treatment for a serious psychiatric condition).

Participant contact (phase 1). A Contact Form was completed at the beginning of the screening session, and it described contact procedures for subsequent phases.

Demographic information (phase 1). A Demographic Questionnaire inquired into participants' age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, drinking habits, consensual dating behavior, etc. See Appendix B.

Inclusion criteria/screening for adolescent USEs (phase 1). At screening, the Sexual Experiences Survey (SES; Koss & Oros, 1982) was administered to assess for adolescent USEs (i.e., those occurring after age 14 but prior to the start of the study) resulting in vaginal, anal, or oral intercourse. The SES is a 10-item self-report instrument designed to describe USEs in behavioral terms, and it is one of the most commonly used instruments to assess history of sexual assault. The internal consistency of the SES for women is .74, and the test-retest reliability (1-week) is .93 (Koss & Gidycz, 1985). Based on recent recommendations (SES-RV; Koss & Bachar, 2001), original SES items were modified to specify types of relevant penetration (i.e., "vaginal, oral, or anal"), and a question was added concerning inability to give consent to sex due to drunkenness or intoxication. See Appendix A.

Self-blame: Explicit measure of perceived control loss regarding the adolescent USE (phase 2). Self-blame related to the USE was assessed using a subset of items from the Posttraumatic Cognitions Inventory (PTCI; Foa, Ehlers, Clark, Tolin, & Orsillo, 1999), a 36-item instrument designed to assess trauma-related thoughts and beliefs on a scale from 1 (*Totally disagree*) to 7 (*Totally agree*). PTCI items were generated by Foa et al. with the aim of including 7 types of posttraumatic cognitions, including general negative view of self, perceived permanent change, alienation from self and others, hopelessness, and self-blame. In a preliminary study with 601 adult volunteers, 392 of whom had experienced a traumatic event (e.g., accident, combat, nonsexual assault, sexual assault), Foa et al. identified 3 PTCI factors including negative cognitions about self, negative cognitions about the world, and self-blame. All factors showed moderate to strong correlations with measures of PTSD, depression, and anxiety.

PTCI items were considered for the Miller et al. (2005) analyses with theoretical deference to naturalistic research describing the nature and consequences of victims' self-blame (e.g., Branscombe et al., 2003; Davis et al., 1995, 1996). In particular, because research has documented that rape victims' self-blame is driven by thoughts of how they might have prevented or avoided their negative outcomes (conceptualized as event-specific perceived control losses), items were included in the self-blame scale if they emphasized a perception of disappointment with self regarding the *specific event* (e.g., "the event happened because of the way I acted"). Items that, rather, implicated global, negative self-impressions were excluded (e.g., "The event happened because of the sort of person I am"). That is, Miller et al. differentiated items according to the

following rationale: although perceived preventability – a counterfactual possibility of a better outcome – is implied in the former case (e.g., “if I had not acted that way, this wouldn’t have happened to me”), the counterfactual possibility of a better outcome – and thus, an *event-specific* control loss – is not clearly imagined in the latter case. “The event happened because of the sort of person I am” might as easily imply, “The event happened because I deserved it,” as it suggests, “The event happened because I failed to prevent it.” The final self-blame scale for the Miller et al. study was the mean of 5 PTCI items (#s 1, 2, 19, 22, 35), which overlap with 3 self-blame items and 2 negative self-cognitions items in the Foa et al. study. Miller et al. (2005) reported that the internal consistency of the event-specific self-blame scale among the present sample was .73 and that, according to this scale, women’s self-blame for their adolescent USEs prospectively predicted SRV during the 4.2-month follow-up period, $\beta = 1.72, p < .01$. See the PTCI in its entirety in Appendix C.

Interview (phase 3). During individual, audiotaped interviews conducted by the principle investigator, participants responded to the following questions:

- Please describe your unwanted sexual experience, from its start to its finish, in your own words.
- How has this incident impacted your life?
- In terms of the labels that society uses to describe incidents like this, what do you call what happened to you and why?
- Did you report the incident to law enforcement – why or why not?

- This is a very difficult subject for many women to talk about. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being “very comfortable” and 10 being “very upset,” how would you rate your level of comfort or distress at this moment?

With the exception of the last question (self-reported distress), these interview questions were designed to prompt participants’ spontaneous narratives concerning their USE descriptions, the impact of these events on their lives, their explanatory processes, and their responses. Beyond these prompts, participants were unencumbered in the quality or quantity of their responses. In the few cases a participant requested information about desired response content, the interviewer replied, “it’s up to you.” Interviews were transcribed and subjected to content coding procedures as described below.

Sexual revictimization during follow-up period (phase 4). The SES-RV was readministered after approximately 4.2 months to assess for SRV during the follow-up period. See Appendix A.

Study debriefing (phases 1-4). Debriefing forms were distributed to each participant following all study phases. These forms provided information concerning the purpose of the study in general terms, not to reveal specific hypotheses, professional contact information, and principal investigator contact information.

General Procedure

Questionnaire sessions were held in psychology department classrooms, and interviews were conducted in the Ohio University Psychology and Social Work Clinic. The principal investigator conducted all sessions and between-session participant contact. The screening session involved approximately 0.5-1 hour, and participants

received one study credit. The second (questionnaire) session involved approximately 1 hour, and participants received two study credits. Interview times varied in length but rarely exceeded 30 minutes, and participants received one study credit. The final (questionnaire) session lasted approximately 1 hour, and women were compensated with \$20 for completing the entire study.

At the beginning of the screening session, the principal investigator distributed identification numbers (thereafter used to maintain participants' anonymity from session to session), consent forms, contact forms, and questionnaire packets that included the demographics questionnaire and the adolescent USE version of the SES-RV. Following completion of questionnaires, participants received a debriefing form, study credit, and were reminded that they would be contacted within the next few days were they eligible to participate in the remainder of the study.

Eligible participants (i.e., those endorsing adolescent USEs and not subject to exclusion criteria) were contacted by telephone and were invited to participate in the remainder of the study. Procedures analogous to those described above were systematically conducted at each subsequent study phase: following written consent to participate, participants completed questionnaire packets or were interviewed, were compensated and debriefed, and, finally, signed up for the subsequent study phase. Consent forms specified that participants could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. One participant discontinued her interview, and one participant contacted the principal investigator following the conclusion of the entire study seeking therapy for unrelated reasons. Appropriate therapy referrals were made in both cases.

Content Coding of Interview Narratives

Interview narratives were chunked into coding units and were coded for content according to specific criteria outlined in the *Unwanted Sexual Experiences: Chunking/Content Coding Manual* (Appendix D), developed in accord with recommendations made by Bartholomew, Henderson, and Marcia (2000) and Smith (2000). Content codings used in Study 1's primary analyses were performed by the principal investigator (Bartholomew et al., 2000), blind to participants' data (e.g., self-blame, SRV). Although the principal investigator also had conducted the interviews more than 3 years earlier, time enough had elapsed that recall of individual participants during coding was implausible. Even during data collection, during which participants were identified only by numbers, the interviewer could not have been more than superficially acquainted with individual participants ($N = 149$ for the interview phase).

Interobserver reliability analyses for narrative chunkings (into coding units) and content coding of the constructs of interest were tested by comparing a randomly selected subset of codings performed by the principal coder to those independently performed on the same subset by a second coder, a postdoctoral fellow in social psychology. To begin, the second coder was instructed in the "chunking" guidelines, which prescribe a method for breaking the entire narrative into codable units (clauses). Primary-secondary coder agreement for unit breaks among 20 randomly selected narratives was 90.82%. Next, coder 2 was trained in the content coding scheme for primary constructs of interest (i.e., NE, ED, UND, ERF, USE, PDL, FA, LE, Labeling, Reporting) as well as an exploratory construct (i.e., Alcohol Myopia; AM), also outlined

in the coding manual. Training guidelines described by Bartholomew et al. (2000) were utilized in this process. Specifically, the second coder: 1) reviewed the coding manual, 2) consulted with the primary coder as needed to facilitate learning of manual guidelines, 3) studied sample narratives performed by the primary coder in order to increase comfort with the application of guidelines to narratives, 4) applied the content coding scheme to practice narratives and received feedback and periodic reliability information, and, finally, 5) independently conducted content coding on 20 randomly-selected narratives for the purpose of reliability analyses, receiving periodic feedback including reliability information to prevent coder drift. Coder 2's pre-discussion ratings were entered into the actual reliability analyses.

Several narrative constructs required only simple observation of relatively unambiguous data or counting of objective data. These included legal label (yes/no), reporting status (yes/no), total number of coding units (total count), and self-reported distress rating (1-10). Observations/ counts for each of these were conducted by both coders, with perfect intercoder agreement for labeling, reporting, and distress rating, and no more than 1 error for total count, all $ps < .001$. Specifically, coders 1 and 2 agreed that 3 of 20 participants (15%) applied a legal label to their USE, 0 of 20 participants (0%) reported their USE to law enforcement, total number of coding units was 947 for the 20 participant-sample ($M = 47.35$ per narrative), and self-reported distress score ($M = 4.28$) was recorded correctly.

The kappa statistic, an index of interobserver agreement, was conducted for all other narrative constructs. According to Bakeman, Quera, McArthur, and Robinson

(1997), computing kappa requires that two coders have independently assigned mutually exclusive and exhaustive codes (e.g., presence/absence of narrative construct) to a series of entities (e.g., coding units). Generally, kappas of .40 to .60 are regarded as fair, kappas of .60 to .75 as good, and kappas over .75 as excellent (Fleiss, 1981). However, as elaborated by Bakeman et al. (1997), no single kappa value is universally acceptable. In particular, when codes (K) are as few as 2 or 3 (presently, $K = 2$), and when their simple probabilities are skewed, “quite reasonable observer accuracy [.90]...may yield...quite low values of kappa” (p. 360). Skewness applies to the present case in terms of the following proportions of construct presence: “highly variable” equals .125, “moderately variable” equals .250, and “equiprobable” equals .50. Bakeman et al.’s (1997) kappa-accuracy correspondence modeling demonstrates that when $K = 2$ and codes are “highly variable,” “observer reliabilities near .80, .85, .90, and .95 are suggested by kappas as low as .20, .30, .44, and .65, respectively” (p. 360). Table 2 describes interobserver reliability parameters for Study 1 narrative constructs according to the Bakeman et al. (1997) model. As indicated, observer accuracy approached or exceeded .95 for all constructs, surpassing the .90 “quite reasonable” accuracy value suggested by Bakeman et al. $Kappa_n$ denotes interobserver agreement for each construct for the hypothetical case in which a kappa value of 1 were attainable, that is, a model assuming equiprobability between the presence and absence of a construct code (Robinson & Bakeman, 1998).

Finally, a tertiary reliability analysis involved having a third coder, a licensed psychologist in private clinical practice, analyze a randomly selected third ($n = 7$) of the

Table 2. *Interobserver Reliability Parameters for Study 1 Narrative Constructs*

<i>Narrative Construct (average coder1-2 20 participant- sample mean)</i>	<i>% Agreement across 947 Coding Units</i>	<i>Simple Probability (Bakeman et al., 1997)</i>	<i>Coder1-2 Kappa and Kappa_n Statistics</i>	<i>Estimated Coder Accuracy (Bakeman et al., 1997)</i>
Negative Emotion (NE; $M = 8.08$)	93.1%	Moderately- Highly Variable	Kappa = .76 Kappa _n = .86	~ .95
Emotional Defensiveness (ED; $M = 5.53$)	92.1%	Highly Variable	Kappa = .62 Kappa _n = .84	~.95
Behavioral/Self Undesirability (UND; $M = 2.83$)	95.9%	Highly Variable	Kappa = .63 Kappa _n = .92	~ .95
Escape/Resistance Failures (ERF; $M = 3.35$)	97.7%	Highly Variable	Kappa = .82 Kappa _n = .95	> .95
Unwanted Sexual Experiences (USE; $M = 0.48$)	99.3%	Highly Variable	Kappa = .63 Kappa _n = .99	~ .95
Pleasure/Desire/ Liking (PDL; $M = 2.53$)	98.2%	Highly Variable	Kappa = .82 Kappa _n = .96	> .95
Foreseeability/ Anticipation (FA; $M = 7.35$)	93.7%	Highly Variable	Kappa = .76 Kappa _n = .87	> .95
“Leading Up” Self- Focus (LE; $M = 14.87$)	93.6%	Equiprobable	Kappa = .85 Kappa _n = .87	> .95
Alcohol Myopia (AM; $M = 3.33$)	98.0%	Highly Variable	Kappa = .85 Kappa _n = .96	>.95

reliability set of narratives according to the same procedures as those described above. The tertiary analysis revealed perfect intercoder agreement for labeling, reporting, and distress rating, and 1 error for total count, all $ps < .001$. Primary-tertiary coder agreement for “chunking” unit breaks was 87.90%, and all narrative content measures achieved $Kappa_n > .80$. In all, good interobserver reliability among three independent coders was achieved for unit chunking and all narrative content coding categories as described in the *Unwanted Sexual Experiences: Chunking/Content Coding Manual*.

Results and Discussion for Independent Study 1 Hypotheses

Table 3 summarizes the descriptive characteristics of Study 1 variables (see Appendix E for bivariate correlations among narrative constructs). One participant was missing a value for self-reported distress score, because this question was inadvertently skipped during her interview. Because self-reported distress was assessed after the other interview questions, this procedural error could not have affected other variables. Hypotheses were independently analyzed utilizing linear and logistic regression procedures (hypotheses 1-5), ANOVA and Chi-square procedures (hypothesis 6), and mediation procedures (hypothesis 7):

1) It was predicted in Hypothesis 1 that explicit negative emotion (NE; e.g., “I felt so awful it was happening”) and defensiveness indicating implicit negative emotion (ED; e.g., “I was trying to pretend nothing bad was happening”) expressed during women’s USE narratives would be positively related post-USE self-blame and would predict increased SRV risk during a 4.2-month follow-up period. Because NE and ED

Table 3. *Descriptive Characteristics of Study 1 Variables*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Mean (Standard Deviation) OR Frequencies</i>	<i>Minimum – Maximum Values</i>
Total Units ($N = 149$)	$M = 44.66$ ($SD = 35.4$)	8 – 284
NE ($N = 149$)	$M = 10.99$ ($SD = 10.17$)	0 – 67
ED ($N = 149$)	$M = 6.31$ ($SD = 6.00$)	0 – 35
UND ($N = 149$)	$M = 3.13$ ($SD = 3.70$)	0 – 20
ERF ($N = 149$)	$M = 4.11$ ($SD = 4.88$)	0 – 24
USE ($N = 149$)	$M = 0.93$ ($SD = 2.03$)	0 – 14
PDL ($N = 149$)	$M = 3.19$ ($SD = 3.04$)	0 – 15
FA ($N = 149$)	$M = 8.86$ ($SD = 7.90$)	0 – 49
LE ($N = 149$)	$M = 13.34$ ($SD = 10.11$)	2 – 63
Legal Label ($N = 149$)	$Yes = 19$ (12.8%), $No = 130$	0 – 1
Report ($N = 149$)	$Yes = 2$ (1.3%), $No = 147$	0 – 1
AM ($N = 149$)	$M = 2.11$ ($SD = 3.87$)	0 – 21
Distress Rating ($N = 148$)	$M = 5.03$ ($SD = 2.08$)	1 – 10 (0-10 Scale)
Self-Blame ($N = 149$)	$M = 3.36$ ($SD = 1.20$)	0 – 6.80 (0-7 Scale)
SRV ($N = 144$)	$Yes = 40$ (26.8%), $No = 104$	0 – 1

were both theorized to reflect emotion inherent in experiential processing, and because they were as expected positively related ($r = .410, p < .001$), NE and ED were combined to create an overall NEED (negative emotion) index. Supporting Hypothesis 1, NEED was positively related to post-USE self-blame ($r = .175, p = .03$), and it predicted SRV during the 4.2-month follow-up period, $\beta = 1.03, p < .05$. Thus, NEED emerged as a

useful construct combining explicit and implicit negative emotionality evidenced during women's USE narratives.

In a secondary analysis, interview distress score (1-10 scale), which was positively related to the NEED narrative measure ($r = .264, p = .001$), was considered as a self-report analogue of the narrative NEED construct. Although, as anticipated, distress score was positively related to post-USE self-blame ($r = .138, p < .05$, one-tailed), self-reported distress score did not predict SRV, $p = .83$. Moreover, when NEED and distress score were simultaneously entered into the logistic regression model, NEED remained the unique predictor of SRV, $\beta = 1.03, p = .04$.

Results regarding Hypothesis 1 suggested that negative emotion evidenced during women's USE narratives, like self-reported distress, is positively related to post-USE self-blame. However, the NEED narrative measure emerged between the two constructs as the unique predictor of SRV. These data suggest that, relative to self-reported distress, explicit and implicit negative emotion expressed within women's interview narratives is particularly critical in signaling vulnerability to post-USE negative outcomes, including SRV risk. Overall, these findings suggest that naturalistic expression of negative emotion in particular signals compromised post-USE functioning.

2) Hypothesis 2 pertained to the theoretical notion that, to the extent women focus on negative self-judgments and perceived failings to avoid or prevent their USEs, they may implicate themselves as blameworthy. Specifically, it was anticipated that women's perceptions of a) self-behavioral or dispositional undesirability (UND) and b) incompetent sexual gatekeeping (escape-resistance failures; ERF) evidenced during their

USE narratives would be positively related to post-USE self-blame and would predict increased SRV risk during a 4.2-month follow-up period. Because UND and ERF are both constructs firmly rooted in counterfactual-preventability theory, and because they were as expected positively related ($r = .652, p < .001$), UND and ERF were combined to create an overall UNDERF (perceived preventability) index. As predicted, UNDERF was positively related to post-USE self-blame ($r = .190, p = .02$), and it predicted SRV during the 4.2-month follow-up period, $\beta = 1.05, p = .05$. Taken together, results regarding Hypothesis 2 supported that perceived prevention failures evidenced during women's USE narratives related to their post-USE self-blame and, moreover, predicted SRV.

3) It was predicted in Hypothesis 3 that, insofar as they reflect "self-as-cause" perceptions based in consistency data, women's narrative allusions to past or multiple USEs would positively relate to post-USE self-blame and would predict increased SRV risk during a 4.2-month follow-up period. However, the data did not support either of these predictions, both $ps > .389$.

Because sexual victimization history has been the most consistent risk factor yet identified by the SRV literature (Classen et al., 2005), an alternate measure of USE history was utilized to further investigate this surprising null result. Although no absolute measure of past USEs was assessed during the study, a conservative estimate of participants' number of adolescent USEs at screening was figured by noting the highest frequency of USEs endorsed in response to any single intercourse item on the SES-RV (screening). This conservative approach was taken because it is possible that participants

could have endorsed more than one SES-RV intercourse item in response to a single incident (e.g., an incident in which the participant was *both* “drunk or stoned and unable to give consent” *and* “overwhelmed by a man’s continual arguments and pressure”). The alternate USE measure was also conservative insofar as an artificial ceiling was set by the response categories, the highest referring to “4 or more” incidents. This conservative USE measure, demonstrating convergent validity with women’s narrative USE allusions ($r = .233, p < .01$), was positively related to post-USE self-blame ($r = .167, p = .042$). However, the conservative USE measure did not predict SRV during the follow-up period, $p = .367$. Given that all women in the present sample had (single or multiple) USE histories, the most parsimonious conclusion regarding Hypothesis 3 results may be that *all* participants met a threshold of vulnerability according to their USE pasts. Although number of adolescent USEs was positively related to self-blame among the present sample, this variable did not predict SRV vulnerability.

4) Premised on classic tenets of blame and responsibility models, the prediction was tested in Hypothesis 4 that women’s narrative expressions of a) pleasure, desire, or liking for the male actor or the situation (PDL) and b) perceived foreseeability into, or anticipation of, the unwanted experience (FA) would be positively related to post-USE self-blame and would predict increased SRV risk during a 4.2-month follow-up period. Both PDL and FA narrative foci were theorized to reflect women’s subjective sense that, at least as considered in retrospect, they had or should have had a “head’s up” into the possibility that a USE might have occurred. Because of their theoretical overlap, and because they were as expected positively related ($r = .248, p = .002$), PDL and FA were

combined to create an overall PDLFA “I should have/could have known” index. As predicted, the PDLFA index was positively related to post-USE self-blame ($r = .136, p < .05$, one-tailed), and it was a marginally significant predictor of SRV during the 4.2-month follow-up period, $\beta = 1.03, p = .087$, one-tailed. Taken together, results regarding Hypothesis 4 supported the hindsight “should have/could have known” effect. That is, to the extent women focused in their USE narratives on perceived foresight into and/or fondness for any aspect of the male actor or situation, they blamed themselves to a greater extent for their USEs and were marginally more likely to be sexually revictimized.

5) Davis et al. (1995) observed that victims of trauma may be so driven by distress that they “undo” their negative experiences by imagining that they performed even “highly ‘normal’ or ‘routine’ behaviors” differently (p. 115). Thus, in contrast to the pointedly self-derogating preventability focus tapped by the UNDERF index (Hypothesis 2), Hypothesis 5 tested the impact of even general self-focus leading up to and concurrent with the USE. Specifically, it was predicted that women’s narrative focus on even benign behaviors and states of being leading up to their USEs (LE) would be positively related to post-USE self-blame and would predict increased SRV risk during a 4.2-month follow-up period. Consistent with Hypothesis 5, “leading up” self-focus expressed by women during their USE narratives was positively related to post-USE self-blame, $r = .137, p < .05$, one-tailed. Contrary to prediction, however, LE did not predict SRV during the 4.2-month follow-up period, $p = .323$. The results of Hypothesis 5 suggested that, although generalized self-focus is related to women’s self-blame

following their USEs, there is no current evidence that this generalized, relatively benign self-focus places them at increased SRV risk.

6) The prediction was tested in Hypothesis 6 that women's reluctance to a) label their USEs in criminal terms and b) report their USEs to law enforcement might reflect an implicit presumption of self-culpability. Specifically, it was anticipated that women who did not label or report their experiences would be more likely to blame themselves for their USEs and would be at greater prospective SRV risk. However, data did not support this prediction, as degree of post-USE self-blame did not differ according to labeling status or reporting status, both $t_s < 1$. Also, in contrast to prediction, a marginally higher proportion of legal labelers (8 of 18) than non-labelers (32 of 126) were sexually revictimized during the 4.2-month follow-up period, $X^2(1) = 2.848, p = .091$. The hypothesis that USE reporting status would predict SRV could not be tested. That is, because only 2 of 144 women reported their USEs to law enforcement, a 5 participant-per-cell assumption was violated, and a valid Chi-square analysis could not be conducted.

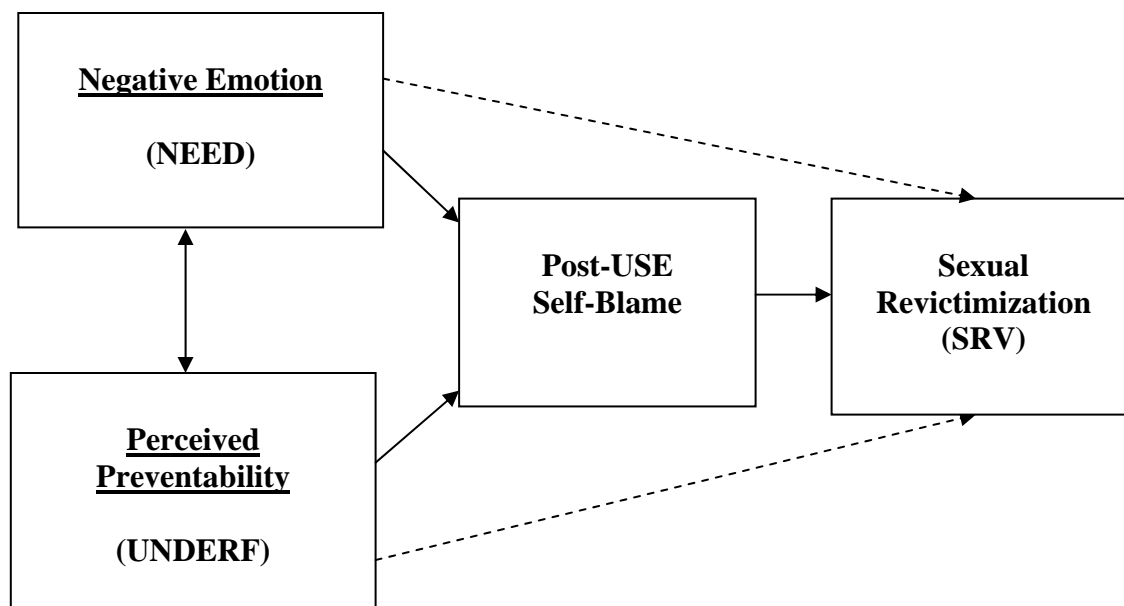
Taken together, results regarding Hypothesis 6 suggested that, at least for the present sample and within the present sociolegal climate, legal labeling or reporting is not protective against self-blame and, if anything, women who overtly conceptualize their USE in legal terms may be at marginally increased SRV risk. Interestingly, of the 19 women who applied a legal label to their USE, none reported it to law enforcement, and, vice versa, of the 2 women who reported their experiences to law enforcement, neither of them labeled their USE in legal terms. The only sense to make of these data

seems to be that legal conceptualizations and action taking rarely occur among college women with USE histories, and, moreover, when they do, labeling and reporting rarely operate, as one might expect they would, in tandem.

7) In Hypothesis 7, a modified version of the Causal-Emotion-Prevention Model of SRV was tested. In particular, the Causal component of the model (USE) was eliminated, given that neither USE narrative allusions nor number of past USEs endorsed on a survey predicted SRV among the present sample (Hypothesis 3). In keeping with the original model, NEED was entered as the Negative Emotion component (Hypothesis 1) and UNDERF was entered as the Perceived Preventability component (Hypothesis 2). In all, the revised Negative Emotion-Perceived Preventability (NEPP) Model of SRV incorporated the following variables: NEED (explicit and implicit negative emotion), UNDERF (perceived preventability), post-USE self-blame (Miller et al., 2005), and SRV (see Figure 2).

The NEPP model of SRV posited a positive relationship between Negative Emotion (NEED) and Perceived Preventability (UNDERF), based on theory and research underscoring the reciprocal influence between perceptions of avoidability/preventability and distress following negative outcomes (e.g., Alicke, 2000; Branscombe et al., 2003; Davis et al., 1995; Epstein et al., 1992; Kahneman & Miller, 1986; McGill & Tenbrunsel, 2000). As expected, NEED and UNDERF were positively related, $r = .564$, $p < .001$. The divergent validity of NEED and UNDERF was supported insofar as self-reported distress score was positively related to Negative Emotion ($r = .264$, $p = .001$) but was not related to Perceived Preventability, $p = .80$. Consistent with the

Figure 2. *Negative Emotion-Perceived Preventability Model of SRV*

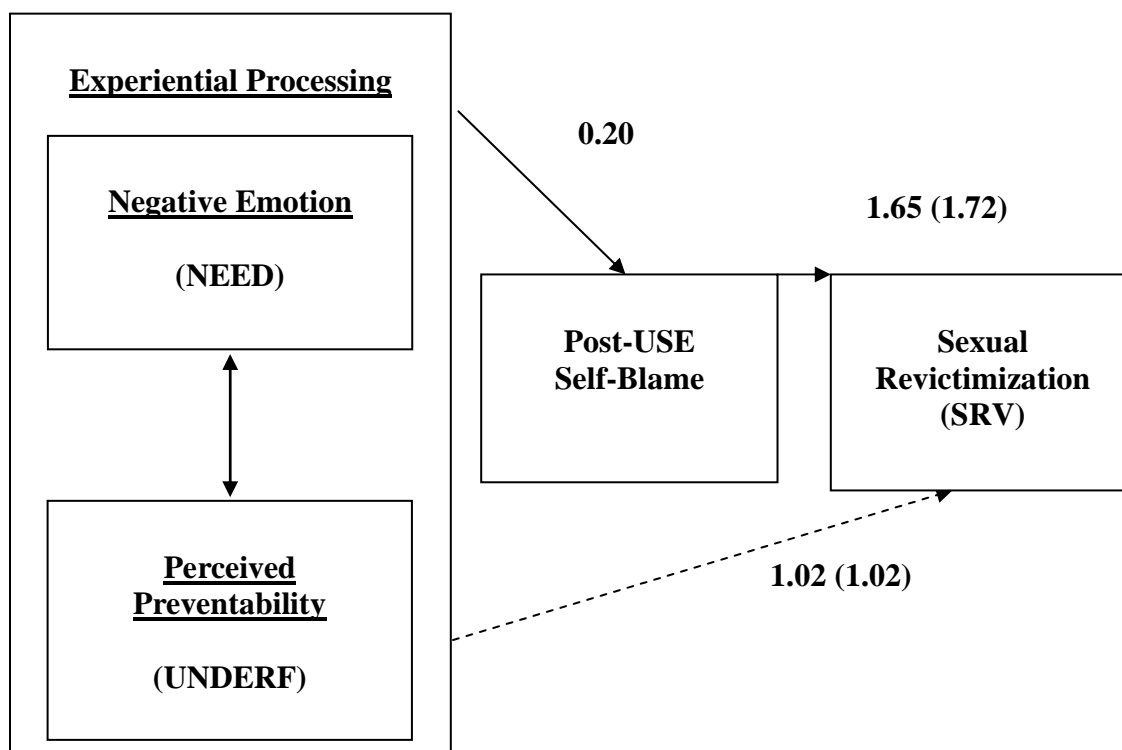


construct validity of UNDERF, women prone toward evincing Perceived Preventability during their narratives were less likely to label their USEs in legal terms ($\beta = .91$, $p < .04$, one-tailed). That is, women were less likely to call their USEs “rape,” “sexual assault” or the like to the extent they focused in their narratives on missed opportunities for self-prevention. In contrast, legal labeling was not related to NEED, $p = .83$.

Taken together, the Negative Emotion (NEED) and Perceived Preventability (UNDERF) constructs converged and diverged as would be expected in support of the notion that they are unique but highly overlapping “experiential” indicators. Moreover, the criticality for the proposed model of NEED-UNDERF construct overlap was highlighted by the fact that, when entered simultaneously into the regression model, neither NEED nor UNDERF independently predicted post-USE self-blame (both $ps >$

.18) or SRV (both $ps > .26$). This result suggested that the *shared* variance between Negative Emotion and Perceived Preventability, the experiential commonality between NEED and UNDERF, drives post-USE self-blame and, in turn, SRV. Figure 3 depicts this tweaked conceptualization in the Experiential Processing Model of SRV. In particular, the model shows that the *synergy between* Negative Emotion and Perceived Preventability drives the hypothesized SRV process, which implicates post-USE self-blame as a mediator.

Figure 3. *Experiential Processing Model of SRV*



Note. Unmediated coefficients appear in parentheses, and mediated coefficients appear without parentheses.

In accord with the Experiential Processing Model of SRV depicted above, NEED and UNDERF were combined into a single Experiential Processing variable.⁵ Mediation analysis of the hypothesized model was conducted according to the following procedures (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Judd & Kenny, 1981; MacKinnon & Dwyer, 1993; D. P. MacKinnon, personal communication, July 23, 2004):

1) *Effect of experiential processing on SRV risk.* Using a logistic regression analysis, SRV (yes [$n = 40$]; no [$n = 104$]) was independently regressed onto narrative experiential processing ($M = 24.54$, $SD = 19.28$). As hypothesized, women who evidenced greater degrees of experiential processing in their narratives were at greater SRV risk during the 4.2-month follow-up period, $\beta = 1.02$, Wald = 4.81, $p = .03$.

2) *Effect of experiential processing on post-USE self-blame.* Using a linear regression analysis, women's post-USE self-blame ($M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.20$) was independently regressed onto narrative experiential processing. As hypothesized, the more women evidenced experiential processing in their narratives, the more they blamed themselves for their USEs, $\beta = .20$, $p = .01$.⁶

3) *Effect of women's post-USE self-blame on revictimization risk.* As described by Miller et al. (2005), women who engaged in greater degrees of post-USE self-blame were at greater SRV risk during the 4.2-month follow-up period, $\beta = 1.72$, Wald = 9.88, $p = .002$.

4) *Effect of experiential processing on SRV risk, controlling for post-USE self-blame.* Using a logistic regression analysis, SRV was simultaneously regressed onto experiential processing and post-USE self-blame. As hypothesized, and demonstrating

complete mediation, experiential processing ($\beta = 1.02$, Wald = 2.83, *ns*) no longer predicted SRV while post-USE self-blame continued to predict SRV, $\beta = 1.65$, Wald = 8.17, $p < .01$.

5) *Measured reduction of the effect of experiential processing on SRV, due to the effect of post-USE self-blame.* Finally, a Sobel (1982) test was conducted and demonstrated a significant reduction in the effect of experiential processing on SRV risk in the presence of post-USE self-blame, $Z = 1.89$, $p < .03$, one-tailed. In sum, the Experiential Processing Model of SRV received strong support. Moreover, the only alternative mediation process among these variables (i.e., Experiential Processing as a mediator of the relationship between post-USE self-blame and SRV) was not supported by the data.

Discussion of the Supported Experiential Processing Model of SRV

The results of Study 1 supported the Experiential Processing Model of Sexual Revictimization. To test the model, narrative content measures (NEED and UNDERF) were combined into an Experiential Processing index, which was entered with self-blame into a logistic regression model. As predicted, this analysis indicated that post-USE self-blame mediated the prospective relationship between narrative content (Negative Emotion and Perceived Preventability) and SRV. The model also received support when 13 variables related to women's demographics (e.g., age, ethnicity) and other personal characteristics (e.g., habits related to alcohol use) were controlled, $p < .01$.

Explicit (NE) and implicit (ED) negative emotion expressed during women's USE narratives were combined into the NEED index, representing the Negative Emotion component of the model. NEs reflected instances of expressed felt negative emotions (e.g., "I felt really scared") within post-USE narratives. EDs reflected instances of emotional defensiveness or manifestations/symptoms of defense failures, driven by emotionality unrecognized, underrecognized, or otherwise guarded against by the speaker. For example, EDs included avoidance (e.g., "I don't go out anymore"), withdrawal (e.g., "I didn't come out of my room"), dissociation (e.g., "It didn't even feel like it was happening to me"), and denial (e.g., "I just told myself it didn't happen").

Perceived self-dispositional/behavioral undesirability (UND) and escape/resistance (prevention) failures (ERF) expressed during women's USE narratives were combined to form the UNDERF index, representing the Perceived Preventability component of the model. UNDs reflected instances of behavioral (e.g., "I shouldn't have had that much to drink") or dispositional (e.g., "I was weak") negative self-judgments within USE narratives. ERFs represented instances of perceived escape or resistance (prevention) failures with regard to any aspect leading up to or concurrent with unwanted sexual experiencing (e.g., "I said don't do that/but he didn't stop"; "I was too trashed to do anything about it./I shouldn't have been that trashed").

The overall model suggests that negative emotion and perceived prevention failures evidenced in women's USE narratives signal increased SRV vulnerability, a process mediated by overt self-blame. These findings are consistent with theoretical models and research underscoring the inextricable interdependence of negative emotion

and preventability perceptions (i.e., biased review of cause). For example, Epstein et al. (1992) conducted a study in which the emotional gravity (“major” vs. “minor” car damage resulting from an accident) was manipulated and found that this information influenced the way participants “rationally” processed the accident. Similarly, Alicke’s (2000) blame model suggests that negative emotion influences our assessment of causal linkages in a “blame validation” mode. Conversely, Kahneman and Miller (1986) emphasized that post-outcome imaginings of counterfactual alternatives (implicit in preventability perceptions) are responsible for irrational emotional reactions. That is, norm theory posits that accessibility of counterfactual thoughts produces an experience of perceived event abnormality that amplifies emotional distress.

Epstein et al. (1992) explained the process of experiential processing following negative outcomes:

After an emotionally significant unfortunate outcome, the experiential system automatically (and somewhat compulsively) considers alternative ways of responding to similar situations. (“What if I did this instead of that?”) Normally, such a process is adaptive as it ensures that the individual will not ignore significant negative outcomes and will explore possible adaptive ways of responding to them. The reaction is, of course, maladaptive when the unfortunate outcomes are not contingent on the preceding behaviors, and therefore obsessing over them serves no function other than to elevate distress. p. 338

According to the findings of present study, narrative factors predicting post-USE self-blame and SRV have much in common with experiential processing as set forth in the

CEST model. For example, Epstein and Pacini (1998) specified, experiential processing is “inherently compelling,” is guided by “vibes” or “subtle feelings of which people are often unaware,” and operates according to heuristics that may be sources of logical error (p. 463). In keeping with this aspect of the CEST model, the self-blame-to-SRV link among women in the present study was driven not by overt expressions of distress but, rather, by spontaneous verbalizations reflective of negative emotion and defenses against (and diagnostic of) negative emotion.

Like the victim in the classic Bulman and Wortman (1977) study who perceived he had “reaped what he had sown” by incurring a spinal cord injury after failing to escape the ghetto, women in the present study blamed themselves to the extent they perceived self-failures to escape/resist their USEs and judged they had failed to act as they wish they might have. These findings regarding perceived preventability failings are consistent with Carli’s (1999) study, which demonstrated that participants who read a scenario ending in rape (relative to those who read the same scenario without the rape ending) recalled and misremembered more rape-consistent details. Women who are necessarily aware of their USE outcomes may likewise engage in biased remembering and misremembering of rape-consistent antecedents, and this focus may contribute to women’s judgments that the USE was preventable and that self-derogation has been called for due to their own failures to prevent their USEs. Moreover, extending the findings of Goldinger et al. (2003) regarding victim-blame to the phenomenon of post-USE self-blame, USE victims, because of the emotional load they are under, may be

unable to rationally adjust negative self-inferences that are couched in mentally undoing their “undesirable” actions and inactions.

Although not tested directly, post-USE self-blame was conceptualized in the present study as a manifest marker of perceived control loss regarding unwanted sex. That is, the present model assumes that women generalize from specific instances of self-blame (perceived control loss) following USEs to form enduring self-impressions of debased ability to exert primary control during subsequent unwanted sexual situations. Future research might further explicate the model by identifying the mediators of the self-blame to SRV pathway. For example, studies could consider women’s control-related expectancies regarding future sexual situations (e.g., resistance inefficacy, feelings of deservedness) following their USEs and, moreover, follow up with these same women over time in order to assess, when appropriate, residue of these expectancies in their spontaneous post-SRV narratives.

In sum, women with adolescent USE histories in Study 1 exemplified Epstein’s experiential processing and the culpable control model of blame notion that “expectations and affective reactions [are] conflated with...assessments of personal control” (Alicke, 2000, p. 558). Spontaneous narrative content suggested that, to the extent women perceived (failed) self-expectations and experienced negative emotions, they were more likely to hold themselves responsible for their USEs. Victims who focus on having failed to escape a ghetto or an uncomfortable sexual situation are reminded in their thoughts and emotions that they should have expected to be victimized in sticking around a dangerous situation. Indeed, at least in hindsight (Carli, 1999), the situation

probably presented (or seems like it presented) numerous cues that it was unsafe or at least unsavory. So, people in ghettos or unwanted sexual predicaments are likely to blame themselves for failing to avoid or prevent their unfortunate outcomes.

But, what is it about ghettos and unwanted sexual predicaments that lend to victim self-blame? Could the implicit expectation that an environment is conducive to danger, in and of itself, exacerbate victim blame? This question is investigated next in Study 2, an important supplement to Study 1 focusing on ecological forces that may inculcate victim blame following USEs. As Classen et al. (2005) advised, empirical studies of USEs and SRV may be remiss insofar as they neglect investigation of the contexts within which these events occur.

Study 2

Impetus

Ichheiser (1949; as cited in Gilbert, 1998, p. 47) submitted, “we are not in the position to see and to evaluate correctly the dynamic meaning of the social, invisible factors in the total situation.” Similarly, Fiske and Taylor (1991) pointed out, “background factors, social context, roles, or situational pressures that may have given rise to behavior are...relatively pallid and dull and unlikely to be noticed” (p. 67). Koss (1988) wrote specifically on the sociocultural hiddenness of sexual victimization against women. Indeed, empirical studies have suggested that women are less likely to acknowledge their USEs as an assault if raped by an acquaintance (Kahn, Andreoli Mathie, & Torgler, 1994) and that less than 5% of rape/attempted rape victims report their experiences to law enforcement (Fisher et al., 2000). Moreover, studies on assailant

force and victim resistance tactics have shown that opportunistic sex frequently hinges on men's verbal pressure and coercion rather than on physical force and, similarly, women rarely resist with overt strategies such as screaming, shouting, kicking, or biting (Andreoli Mathie & Kahn, 1995).

In short, and for potentially multitudinous reasons (many of these psychological), "real-life" sexual victimization usually does not look like a scene from a horror movie. Blood-curdling screams are rarely involved, and indeed USEs often happen so quietly that a man going into a situation assuming a woman wants to have sex with him is subject to leaving that same situation without knowing his assumption has been a faulty one. Yet, rather than accommodating this "real-life" state of veiled affairs, existing legal defenses such as "reasonable belief in victim consent" arguably perpetuate the tenuous notion that it is incumbent upon women to prevent their own assaults (Berliner, 1991). As McGill (1989) pointed out, victims who live within a "political system gone awry" may be blamed for agitating the system (p. 198), and, as Kahneman and Miller (1986) stated, "information about a harmful act often presents the actions of the perpetrator in a way that makes them part of the presupposed background of the story" (p. 144). Assuming all "givens" (including the system itself and, perhaps, the behavior of males within it), what alternative do women have to focusing on themselves as they attribute blame for their USEs? Could there be an experimental way to test the social norms, situational factors, and perpetrator characteristics posited to be the "pallid field" (Fiske & Taylor, 1991) against which women attribute blame to themselves?

Study 1 assumed based on “pallid field” reasoning that invisible sociocultural factors are perceptual “givens,” and deleterious effects of women’s negative self-inferences and emotions following their USEs were demonstrated. Study 2, in turn, aims to further investigate the dynamics of the “pallid field,” as it is hypothesized that silent (extraperson) sociocultural forces exert an active influence on the sort of (intraperson) USE blame processes evidenced Study 1. This idea will be tested by experimentally manipulating elements of the perceived sociocultural field within a USE scenario paradigm. Study 2 hypotheses are founded on research suggesting that specific qualities of situational “underlying states” directly affect blame and responsibility attributed to foreground actors (McGill & Tenbrunsel, 2000). Obtaining expected results in the present study could be an important advancement in highlighting a systemic engine (context itself) promulgating women’s post-USE self-blame and, therein, SRV vulnerability.

According to Kelley’s (1972) discounting principle, an actor’s perceived causal candidacy in an outcome diminishes to the extent that alternate factors (e.g., a man’s behaviors, social context) had propensity to bring about the same outcome.⁷ In theory, women may consider alternate causal factors that compete with self-as-cause USE attributions. McGill and Tenbrunsel (2000) approached this issue of selecting among multiple conjoining factors (i.e., potential causes) to identify “the” cause in complex occurrences by considering the roles of factor mutability (changeability) and propensity. As these researchers pointed out, factors are viable causal candidates only insofar as they are perceived to be necessary factors and are compelling in their causal force (i.e.,

propensity). For example, McGill and Tenbrunsel submitted that a fire inspector might choose a failed circuit breaker over the mere presence of flammable materials and oxygen as “the” cause in a fire. Although all three factors are necessary for the fire’s occurrence, flammable materials and oxygen are relatively common features of most environments on Earth, and, thus, are less easily imagined absent in alternative instances in which the fire might not have resulted. Overall, then, these two factors are less easily perceived than the failed circuit breaker as “making the difference” in starting the blaze. Moreover, the materials and oxygen lack the failed circuit breaker’s perceived quality of causal force (propensity; McGill & Tenbrunsel, 2000).

Important to the present study, McGill and Tenbrunsel (2000) proposed that mutability and propensity *interact* to influence causal explanation processes that, in turn, “suggest which factor should take the blame” (p. 677).⁸ Specifically, they found the following in a series of studies [Note: bracketed items indicate my own extensions of their results to the phenomenology of women’s post-USE self-blame]:

...when propensity of the alternative factor increases [e.g., a forceful man], blame on the target factor [e.g., female victim] decreases, but this effect occurs only when the alternative factor is mutable [e.g., the perceived sociolegal “pallid field” suggests USEs are effectively deterred, and perpetrators are held accountable, so alternative outcomes to the USE were readily possible]. When the alternative factor is perceived to be relatively immutable [e.g., the perceived sociolegal “pallid field” suggests USEs are not deterred, and perpetrators are not held accountable, so alternative outcomes to the USE were not readily possible],

however, an increase in propensity of the alternative factor [e.g., a forceful man] may actually have the paradoxical effect of shifting greater blame to the target factor [e.g., female victim]. p. 680

Overall, McGill and Tenbrunsel found strong support for the notion that social context – the backdrop against which blame is attributed – is (though invisible as it may seem) a critical determinant of *whom* we blame. The authors noted, “there may be a tendency to blame the target factor [a USE victim] more when the contributing factor [the perpetrator] has a greater propensity to produce an event when the contributing factor [sociolegal context] is perceived to be low in mutability” (McGill & Tenbrunsel, 2000, p. 681). They added, “paradoxically, the target factor appeared to have a greater causal role when the alternative factor raised the probability that there might be a problem” (p. 687).

In their study 2, McGill and Tenbrunsel (2000) found trends consistent with the blame patterns described above for a scenario target named “Donna Hammond,” a management consultant who tends to dress “stylishly, but not flamboyantly” (p. 684). After noticing that men in the client firm flirted with her and lacked respect for her credibility as a professional, Donna was ultimately replaced by the CEO, who cited that he did not find Donna to be competent or knowledgeable. Propensity of an alternative factor in producing Donna’s job termination was cleverly manipulated in terms of the way other women dressed. In the low propensity condition, many women who dressed fashionably occupied management positions, reducing the possibility that others’ drab dress (in contrast to Donna’s dress) would promulgate Donna’s firing. In the high

propensity condition, other women dressed in dowdy suits. Mutability of social context was manipulated by locating the firm in California (a location presumably open to workplace – and dress – diversity) or Japan (a location in which American participants might stereotypically assume fixed views of women and workplace dress expectations – dowdy suits). As predicted, when an alternative factor had high propensity to produce Donna's termination (i.e., the few women in management positions wore dowdy suits), Donna was judged less causal in her job termination when employed in California (i.e., a mutable social context) than in Japan (i.e., an immutable social context). Study 3 replicated this finding and, moreover, asked subjects the extent to which they agreed with a behavioral norm suggesting that it would be Donna's responsibility to adjust to her social context (i.e., "the problem was really caused by the client, but for practical purposes Donna should have adjusted to the client's ways of doing" [McGill & Tenbrunsel, p. 685]). McGill and Tenbrunsel found that when social context was mutable (i.e., California), behavioral norm ratings did not differ based on propensity of the alternative factor (i.e., few women dressed in dowdy suits vs. many women dressed fashionably). However, when social context was immutable (i.e., Japan), Donna was expected to adjust to the social norm (i.e., other women's dress) when an alternative factor had high propensity to produce the termination (i.e., few women who wore dowdy suits).

Working from within McGill and Tenbrunsel's (2000) framework, it is presently hypothesized that the perceived mutability of middle-American culture concerning USEs should differentiate the degree to which women are blamed for men's unwanted but

sufficient sexual advances. The present study forwards the specific hypothesis that within a society embodying a relatively immutable sociolegal norm that “boys will be boys” (i.e., men will engage in opportunistic sex without sociolegal consequence), the presumptive burden shifts to women to accommodate that norm by preventing their own USEs (e.g., “no means no”). It is specifically expected that McGill and Tenbrunsel’s paradoxical effects will emerge in the present study: a woman will be blamed more and will be judged more causal in her USE when she is in the presence of a man with high propensity to bring about the USE *and* she is amidst an immutable society, perceived to be ineffective in deterring USEs and holding perpetrators to account.

Hypotheses

Consistent with the work of McGill and Tenbrunsel (2000), within a prototypic USE scenario, mutability and propensity are expected to interact to influence victim blame. Specific hypotheses are as follows:

- 1) In a *mutable* background condition (i.e., the perceived sociolegal “pallid field” deters USEs and holds perpetrators to account), propensity of a nonvictim factor (i.e., perpetrator likelihood to have previously engaged in nonconsensual sex) in bringing about a USE will “discount” (Kelley, 1972; i.e., *diminish*) victim blame (and cause) ascription.
- 2) In an *immutable* background condition (i.e., the perceived sociolegal “pallid field” does not deter USEs or hold perpetrators to account), propensity of a non-victim factor (i.e., perpetrator likelihood to have previously engaged in nonconsensual sex) in bringing about a USE will, paradoxically, augment victim blame (and cause) ascription.

3) Together, Hypotheses 1 and 2 predict a crossover interaction pattern.

However, it is also possible that a fan interaction pattern exists such that, relative to participants in a low perpetrator propensity condition, those in a high propensity condition will attribute greater victim blame to a female USE scenario target amidst an immutable sociolegal context than to a female target amidst a mutable sociolegal context. The condition of focus in this predicted interaction pattern was highlighted by McGill and Tenbrunsel (2000): “there may be a tendency to blame the target factor more when the contributing factor has a greater propensity to produce an event when the contributing factor is perceived to be low in mutability” (p. 681). Support for Hypothesis 3 would suggest that it is the condition within which the proverbial window closes simultaneously on alternative culpable selections (i.e., sociolegal context can neither be expected to deter USEs nor hold perpetrators to account *and* a man has high propensity to bring about the USE) that alternatives to the USE in the midst of the context and the perpetrator are diminished and victim blame proliferates.

4) In a control condition in which mutability of sociolegal context is not manipulated (i.e., a “real-life” sociolegal “pallid field”), effects will behave similar to an immutable background manipulation. That is, propensity of a non-victim factor (i.e., perpetrator likelihood to have previously engaged in nonconsensual sex) in bringing about a USE will augment victim blame (and cause) ascription. Taken together, these hypotheses aim to diagnose the dynamics of the “pallid field” itself, in particular the way perceptions of sociolegal mutability and perpetrator propensity toward USEs may exert an active influence on victim-blame processes.

Methodology

Participants

Participants were 124 undergraduate women at Ohio University, randomly assigned to experimental conditions. All participants volunteered for a study entitled “Perceptions of Sexual Interactions between College Students” on a psychology experiment sign-up webpage. Mean age of the sample was 18.82 years ($SD = .80$), and 97.6% of the sample was Caucasian. Thus, the Study 2 sample was demographically analogous to the Study 1 sample. Participants were offered credit toward their introductory psychology courses for participating in the study, which for each participant lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Procedure

A between subjects experiment was designed, and the entire study was conducted using Medialab computer software. All participants encountered, in turn as presented on an individual computer screen, a welcome to the experiment, instructions regarding signing an informed consent form, instructions regarding navigating the Medialab program, and instructions regarding how to ask questions of the female graduate research assistant who conducted all sessions. Next, one of three sociolegal context (USE mutability) frames, which specifically pertained to legal deterrence and perpetrator accountability, was presented. The first two of these frames constituted experimental manipulations, and the final frame aimed to simulate a “status quo” (context control) condition:

1) *Mutable Sociolegal Context*: “Although infrequent, unwanted sexual experiences occasionally occur in female college populations. The legal system is generally effective in deterring (preventing) such events, as men are likely to be held accountable in the courts, their unwanted actions clearly breaking sexual assault laws.”

2) *Immutable Sociolegal Context*: “Frequently, unwanted sexual experiences occur in female college populations. The legal system is generally ineffective in deterring (preventing) such events, as men are unlikely to be held accountable in the courts, their unwanted actions not clearly breaking sexual assault laws.”

3) *Status Quo Context*: “You will now begin the experiment. Please click continue.”

Next, the success of the mutability manipulation was checked according to an index consisting of the summed responses to the questions, “How effective is our legal system in deterring/preventing women's unwanted sexual experiences” and “When unwanted sexual experiences occur in the female college population, how likely is it that men will be held legally accountable?” Ratings for these questions, each made according to 9-point scales (ranging from 1 [*INEFFECTIVE in deterring/preventing USEs; Men are UNLIKELY to be held accountable*] to 9 [*EFFECTIVE in deterring/preventing USEs; Men are LIKELY to be held accountable*]), were positively related, $r = .442, p < .001$.

Next, all participants read a prototypical scenario describing a woman's unwanted heterosexual experience. Since innumerable aspects of actual USEs vary, significant efforts were made to ensure that the Study 2 scenario replicated commonalities of “real-life” USE narratives. In particular, several features common to

Study 1 participants and their actual USE narratives were incorporated into the Study 2 USE scenario. Specifically, Study 2 scenario content features were based on the following characteristics of Study 1 participants (with prevalence among the Study 1 sample indicated): 1) demographic characteristics of target female (100% women, 100% from medium-sized Midwestern university, 66.4% freshman); 2) USE resulting in intercourse (100%); 3) reported USE to a friend or family member (63.1%); 4) distress experienced during or just after the USE (86.2%); 5) pervasive alcohol use (e.g., 57.1% reported typically drinking at least 1-2 times per week, 85.3% reported typically drinking 1-3 times per week, 84.6% reported having been drunk at least 1-3 times during prior 2 months); 6) knew perpetrator as at least an acquaintance (94.6%); 7) pleasure-desire-liking for perpetrator mentioned at least once during USE narrative (81.9%); and, 8) perceived escape/resistance failure mentioned at least once during USE narrative (73.2%). Importantly, as in McGill and Tenbrunsel (2000)'s design, the Study 2 female scenario target's actions were designed to be controllable (i.e., attending a party, having a few drinks, going to the male target's room, kissing him), so that potential existed that she might attract blame (e.g., for "placing herself in a vulnerable position"). Some of these "risk-incurring" behaviors were similar or identical to those used by Carli (1999) in her hindsight bias study pertaining to rape and blame.

Context mutability (mutable, immutable, "status quo") and propensity (high, low) were combined factorially to create 6 scenario versions. The scenario read as follows, with bracketed items added in the high propensity version only:

Laura Watson is a freshman sociology major at a medium-sized Midwestern university. She enjoys her new college, particularly the friends she has made, her classes and professors, and the social life. Early one Sunday morning (about 1 AM) in November, Laura returned to her dorm room and woke her sleeping roommate who had stayed in that evening because she was feeling under the weather. Laura was upset – she was uncomfortable – but nevertheless managed to tell her roommate that she had just come from a party and that a guy had had sex with her and she hadn't wanted it. She explained that after she had left the dorm room with two other friends, they had all headed to a party at the house of some upperclassmen guys. She said that she had several beers, as there had been a keg at the party, and that she had hung out for a while, listening to music, dancing, and talking with people. After a couple hours, her friends had been ready to move on to a party across the street, but she was having fun and decided to stay a while (she told her friends she'd find them later).

There were a lot of people from Laura's classes at the party, including a couple of upperclassmen guys that she recognized from the sociology building - they lived there at the house. She had worn a new outfit and was getting a lot of attention from the guys, especially from this one whom she recognized (although couldn't remember where she'd seen him before) and whom she thought was particularly attractive. He introduced himself to her as Jason, and he invited Laura once her friends had left the party to his room to listen to music.

[Suddenly, she realized that she recognized Jason not from the sociology

department at all but from the university football team. It was coming back to her that this was the quarterback who had thrown the game-winning touchdown at a football game she had attended a couple weeks earlier! She had heard from her friends that he was a real lady's man - he always gets his way with girls, any girl, and whenever he wants. And Laura couldn't believe he was flirting with her!]

Laura and Jason refilled their cups with beer and headed upstairs. Laura sat on Jason's bed, and he leaned over to his stereo, playing songs from one of his favorite albums. They looked at each other and talked in a whisper. On about the third song, Jason got up to shut the bedroom door, then walked back to Laura sitting on his bed, put his hand behind her head, and moved in to kiss her. Laura knew Jason was bound to kiss her before the night was over because she could feel there was chemistry between them. They kissed...and then kept kissing, more and more passionately. But as the music continued to play, Jason was growing increasingly aggressive in a way that Laura hadn't been expecting. Jason told her that she looked incredible in her outfit but that she would look even better without it. He took her shirt off – and Laura was sort of okay with that – but then he started unbuttoning her pants. A million thoughts went through Laura's head – she liked Jason, felt very attracted to him, and wanted to kiss him, but was becoming increasingly uncomfortable with his moves and wasn't sure what to do or how to stop what was happening. Laura uttered, "I don't know about this," but Jason kept going. Before she knew it, Jason was having sex with her.

The success of the perpetrator propensity manipulation was subsequently checked according to responses to the question, “How likely is it that Jason has previously forced himself on a woman sexually, without her consent?” Ratings for this question were made on a 9-point scale (ranging from 1 [*Very UNLIKELY*] to 9 [*Very LIKELY*]).

Next, the dependent measures (victim-blame and victim-cause ratings; adapted from McGill & Tenbrunsel, 2000), were presented. The victim-blame item, as the primary focus of the present study, was presented first:

1) *Victim blame*: “In thinking about the event, to what extent is Laura (or Laura’s actions) to blame for her unwanted sexual experience?” (9-point scale ranging from 1 [*Laura/Laura’s actions were NOT AT ALL to blame*] to 9 [*Laura/Laura’s actions were COMPLETELY to blame*])

2) *Victim cause*: “In thinking about the event, to what extent is Laura (or Laura’s actions) the cause of her unwanted sexual experience?” (9-point scale ranging from 1 [*Laura/Laura’s actions were NOT AT ALL the cause*] to 9 [*Laura/Laura’s actions were COMPLETELY the cause*])

After questions assessing the outcome measures were presented, participants were asked to rate comparison information regarding its relevance to their explanations of why the USE had occurred. These were used to explore the information based on which participants made blame/cause determinations and included:

1) *Victim vs. Others*: “Ways in which LAURA acted compared with how OTHER WOMEN might have acted.” (9-point scale ranging from 1 [*Not at all relevant*] to 9 [*Completely relevant*])

2) *Victim vs. Ideal*: “Ways in which LAURA acted compared with how she COULD HAVE acted.” (9-point scale ranging from 1 [*Not at all relevant*] to 9 [*Completely relevant*])

Finally, an exploratory adjustment-to-norm (victim prevention expectation) prompt was presented, again adapted from McGill and Tenbrunsel (2000). Specifically, participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the following statement: “The unwanted sexual experience was really caused by our social-legal context (e.g., prevalence of unwanted sex, legal norms related to accountability), but for practical purposes Laura should have adjusted her own behavior to have prevented the outcome” (rated on a 9-point scale ranging from 1 [*Disagree strongly*] to 9 [*Agree strongly*]). On the last screens of the experiment, participants were prompted to enter demographic data (i.e., age, ethnicity, gender check), and debriefing information was provided.

Results and Discussion for Study 2

Manipulation Checks

Sociolegal context mutability. The mutability manipulation check index was entered into a 3 (mutability: immutable, “status quo,” mutable) x 2 (propensity: high, low) ANOVA. Verifying that the mutability manipulation was effective, this analysis revealed only a main effect of mutability, $F(2, 124) = 9.32, p < .001$ (all other F s < 1). Further, planned comparisons revealed that, as expected, participants in the mutable context condition ($M = 11.02, SD = 3.13$) believed the legal system was more effective in deterring/preventing USEs and holding perpetrators to account than did participants in either the “status quo” context condition ($M = 9.63, SD = 3.21$), $t(118) = 1.91, p = .03$,

one-tailed, or the immutable context condition ($M = 7.90$, $SD = 3.41$), $t(118) = 4.31$, $p < .001$.

A planned comparison also revealed that, unexpectedly, participants in the “status quo” context condition believed the legal system was more effective in deterring/preventing USEs and holding perpetrators to account than did participants in the immutable context condition, $t(118) = 2.38$, $p = .02$. This finding debases the assumption according to which Hypothesis 4 (i.e., victim blame patterns in a control condition would behave equivalently to those in an immutable context condition) was derived. Rather, although participants in the immutable context condition fell below the midpoint of this index, and those in the mutable context condition fell above the midpoint (both $ts > 3.04$, both $ps < .004$, as determined by single-sample t-tests), participants in the “status quo” context condition did not differ from the midpoint, $t(40) = 0.27$, *ns*. Overall, participants in the “status quo” condition did not side in one direction or the other in terms their perceptions of sociolegal effectiveness in deterring/preventing USEs and holding perpetrators to account. It is possible that, without a sociolegal context prime, participants were not thinking deeply enough about this concept to report a polar perception. Future research into this area might, rather, prompt participants to consider the sociolegal state of affairs before completing manipulation checks of mutability. Also, information about sociolegal effectiveness may not actually pervade general knowledge in such a way that laypersons, deep thinking or not, would be able to settle on a polarized perception. A middling value for the “status quo” group might also reflect ambivalence. That is, if participants perceive that the legal system is

sometimes effective and sometimes not in deterring/preventing USEs and holding perpetrators to account, they might report a compromised value reflecting this. Finally, it is possible that the assumption for Hypothesis 4 was invalid; that is, perhaps “status quo” perceptions of sociolegal effectiveness are greater than that which would be implied by this study’s immutable context prime.

Perpetrator propensity. A 3 (mutability: immutable, “status quo,” mutable) x 2 (propensity: high, low) ANOVA was conducted to assess the effectiveness of the perpetrator propensity manipulation. The pattern of means revealed that participants in the high perpetrator propensity condition reported that Jason was more likely to have previously forced nonconsensual sex ($M = 7.89$, $SD = 1.84$) than did participants in the low propensity condition ($M = 7.48$, $SD = 1.26$). Although the ANOVA analysis of the main effect of perpetrator propensity was not significant, $F(1, 124) = 2.18$, $p = .14$, a planned comparison revealed a marginally significant effect, $t(118) = 1.48$, $p = .07$, one-tailed. The ANOVA revealed no other significant main effects or interactions, all other F s < 1.93 , all other p s $> .15$. Although the manipulation was marginally effective, it was remarkable that propensity ratings were significantly above the midpoint (5) of the scale for both Jason the football player who “gets his way with girls, any girl, and whenever he wants” and Jason the seemingly “average Joe” sociology major, both t s > 12.36 , both p s $< .001$. These results suggest that undergraduate women anticipate that any male coed is likely to engage in opportunistic sex. That is, instead of actually creating a “low propensity” male target, the present results related to the “low propensity” manipulation may be more accurately interpreted in terms of a “status quo” propensity frame (i.e.,

apparently, “boys *will* be boys”). Future research may need to more strongly emphasize the sexual reticence of a male scenario target (e.g., “Suddenly, Laura realized that she recognized Jason not from the sociology department at all but from a PBS special on eunuchs!”) in order to more definitively manipulate this variable.

Post hoc inspection of condition means highlighted that effectiveness of the propensity manipulation was likely diluted by equivalent high- and low-propensity means between the “status quo” context conditions. Because only Hypothesis 4 depended on the “status quo” conditions (whereas Hypotheses 1-3 did not), the propensity manipulation check was also tested in terms a 2 (mutability: immutable, mutable) x 2 (propensity: high, low) ANOVA. As anticipated, results revealed only a main effect of perpetrator propensity such that participants in the high propensity condition reported that Jason was more likely to have previously forced nonconsensual sex ($M = 8.22$, $SD = 1.42$) than did participants in the low propensity condition ($M = 7.50$, $SD = 1.33$), $F(1, 83) = 5.76$, $p = .02$. It is possible that participants in the “status quo” context conditions, who did not differ in their high and low propensity ratings, were absent the foresight of a USE possibility compared to those who had, prior to reading the scenario, received a mutability prompt describing the sociolegal state of affairs regarding USEs and perpetrator accountability. This interpretation would suggest that, without foreshadowing regarding USEs and their perpetrators, women are unlikely to prospectively notice perpetrator characteristics such as propensity. Supporting this notion, participants in the present study were unable to return to prior computer screens once they had advanced past the USE scenario.

Victim Blame and Cause

The mutability and propensity manipulation checks were fully successful for the conditions pertaining to Hypotheses 1-3, which were tested with ANOVAs and planned comparisons as follows:

1 and 2) It was predicted in Hypothesis 1 that, within a mutable sociolegal context condition, participants would attribute greater victim blame to a female USE scenario target in the presence of a low propensity perpetrator than to a target in the presence of a high propensity perpetrator. Conversely, it was predicted in Hypothesis 2 that, within an immutable sociolegal context, participants would attribute greater victim blame to a female USE scenario target in the presence of a high propensity perpetrator than to a target in the presence of a low propensity perpetrator. This hypothesized crossover interaction was tested using a 2 (mutability: immutable, mutable) x 2 (propensity: high, low) ANOVA.

Although the results of the 2 x 2 ANOVA were not significant, $F(1, 83) = 1.36, p = .247$, the pattern of means was consistent with the above prediction (see Table 4). Specifically, in the mutable context condition, victim blame was less in the high perpetrator propensity condition than in the low perpetrator propensity condition. Conversely, in the immutable context condition, victim blame was greater in the high perpetrator propensity condition than in the low perpetrator propensity condition. This nonsignificant pattern was also revealed for the victim cause outcome measure, $F(1, 83) = 1.21, p = .275$.

Table 4. *Means (Standard Deviations) for Victim Blame and Victim Cause as a Function of Context Mutability and Perpetrator Propensity*

	Perpetrator Propensity	
	Low	High
Context Mutability		Victim Blame
Immutable	4.55 (1.99)	5.30 (2.25)
Mutable	4.55 (1.64)	4.24 (2.36)
		Victim Cause
Immutable	4.14 (1.61)	4.25 (1.94)
Mutable	4.30 (1.72)	3.52 (2.06)

3) A fan interaction pattern was predicted in Hypothesis 3. That is, relative to participants in the low perpetrator propensity conditions, those in high perpetrator propensity conditions were expected to attribute greater victim blame and cause to a female scenario target amidst an immutable sociolegal context than to a female target amidst a mutable sociolegal context. This prediction was tested using planned comparisons, which revealed a significant effect for victim blame, $t(79) = 1.63$, $p = .05$, one-tailed, but not for victim cause, $t(79) = 1.26$, $p = .11$, one-tailed. These results regarding victim blame are consistent with McGill and Tenbrunsel's (2000) paradoxical

effect, that is, “there may be a tendency to blame the target factor more when the contributing factor has a greater propensity to produce an event when the contributing factor is perceived to be low in mutability” (p. 681).

The results of Hypothesis 3 also support the basic tenet of Study 2 that, within a society embodying a relatively immutable sociolegal context that “boys will be boys” (i.e., an expectation that college men will engage in opportunistic sex and do so without sociolegal consequence), the burden of culpability to accommodate that norm by preventing their own USEs (e.g., “no means no”) shifts toward victims, as does the finger of blame. This conceptualization was further investigated by considering the relationship between the victim blame measure and 1) the victim-focused USE explanation items (i.e., the relevance of considering how “Laura Watson” acted compared to how “she could have acted” or compared to how “other women might have acted”) and 2) the victim adjustment-to-norm (victim prevention expectation) item. Supporting the theoretical foundations of post-USE victim-blame as it has been conceptualized in the current investigation, victim blame in the present sample was positively related to degree of relevance participants attributed to the “victim versus victim’s ideal” USE explanation item, $r = .21, p = .05$, and to the “victim versus other women” USE explanation item, $r = .22, p = .04$. Also, the victim blame measure was positively related to endorsement of the victim adjustment-to-norm item, “The USE was really caused by context, but for practical purposes Laura should have adjusted her behavior to have prevented the outcome,” $r = .40, p < .001$. Taken together, these victim blame relationships suggest that participants may have attributed blame to the female

scenario target insofar as they perceived her to have failed to behave as her own ideal, failed to act as other women might have behaved, and failed to adjust her own behavior to accommodate a context that may have been the real causal force behind her USE.

In a related vein, the results of Hypothesis 3 are in concert with contemporary, psychological conceptualizations of blame attribution, which submit that blame is provoked by emotion-laden events and is guided by experiential rather than rational processing (e.g., Alicke, 2000; Epstein, 1994). That is, according to the present data, victim-blame attributions were subject to the paradoxical effects related to context mutability and perpetrator propensity, whereas victim-cause attributions were not. These data also align with Study 1 results, namely that preventability perceptions evidenced in victims' narratives were critical to the experiential process driving post-USE self-blame.

4) It was predicted in Hypothesis 4 that within a “status quo” (control context) condition, in which mutability of sociolegal context was not manipulated, victim blame effects would operate in the same way as in the immutable context condition. Specifically, it was expected that, as demonstrated in Hypothesis 3 for the immutable context, when the male perpetrator had a high (vs. low) propensity to bring about a USE, participants would attribute greater blame and cause to the victim. This hypothesis was based on the notion that participants naturally perceive their sociolegal context as one in which USEs are “given” and seldom punished (i.e., immutable). However, as revealed by the analysis of the mutability manipulation-check, participants in the “status quo” context conditions rated their sociolegal context as more mutable than did those who received the immutable context manipulation. Thus, this critical assumption of

Hypothesis 4, that participants in the “status quo” and immutable conditions would rate the mutability of these contexts equally, was unmet (see possible explanations for this in the manipulation check section above). Further, as revealed by the analyses of the propensity manipulation check, participants in the “status quo” context conditions did not judge the male perpetrator as more likely to bring about USEs in the high (vs. low) propensity condition, even though this manipulation was successful in the immutable conditions (again, see possible explanations for this in the manipulation check section above). Failure of the perpetrator propensity manipulation in the “status quo” conditions leaves yet another critical assumption for Hypothesis 4 unrealized. Overall, then, the tenability of Hypothesis 4 was disconfirmed by these manipulation checks.

Although the critical assumptions that would have legitimized the results of Hypothesis 4 did not hold, the victim blame and victim cause measures were nonetheless independently analyzed in a 2 (mutability: immutable, “status quo”) x 2 (propensity: high, low) ANOVA. Analysis of the victim blame measure yielded only a Mutability x Propensity interaction (all other F s < 1), indicating that, among participants in the immutable conditions, those who received the high propensity manipulation judged the victim as more blameworthy ($M = 5.30$, $SD = 2.25$) than did those who received the low propensity manipulation ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 1.99$), whereas the opposite was true for participants in the “status quo” conditions ($M = 4.14$, $SD = 1.88$ vs. $M = 5.15$, $SD = 1.81$), $F(1, 83) = 4.06$, $p < .05$. However, analysis of the victim cause measure yielded no significant effects (all F s < 1.71 and all p s > .20). Thus, regarding the victim blame measure, predicted effects were observed in the immutable context conditions within

which the propensity manipulation was successful. However, given the propensity manipulation was unsuccessful in the “status quo” context, mean differences between propensity conditions are not interpretable.

General Discussion

Classen et al. (2005) reviewed the SRV literature and concluded that approximately 2 of 3 sexual victims are sexually revictimized. Although USE history is a well-established risk factor for SRV, Classen and colleagues emphasized that the SRV literature is yet to understand the mediators of this process. The present investigation aimed to study post-USE victim blame attributions, both among victims themselves within a naturalistic prospective research design (Study 1), and among demographically analogous observers within an experimental research design (Study 2). That is, Study 1 examined “real-life” post-USE self-blame processes, as evidenced in women’s narrative content, and Study 2 supplemented that investigation using an experimental manipulation of the sociocultural “pallid field” posited to contribute to victim-blame attributions.

This investigation was predicated overall on the theoretical integration of social cognitive theories as applied to the empirical examination of post-USE blame and SRV risk. In particular, literatures in causal attribution (e.g., Heider, 1958; Jones & Davis, 1965; Kelley, 1967) and related biases (e.g., Fischhoff, 1975; Gilbert, 1998; Trope, 1986; Quattrone, 1982), blame (e.g., Hall et al., 2003; Shaver, 1985) and its experiential asymmetries (e.g., Alicke, 2000; Epstein, 1994), perceived avoidability/preventability (e.g., Davis et al., 1995, 1996), and counterfactual thinking (e.g., Mandel & Lehman,

1996; Markman & McMullen, 2003; Roese, 1994, 1997) and its inherent dilemmas for victims (e.g., Kahneman & Miller, 1986; Mandel, in press; Sherman & McConnell, 1995) were assimilated. In addition, extant research pertaining to the phenomenology of self-blame among “real-life” victims (e.g., Bulman & Wortman, 1977; Davis et al., 1996), and in particular among sexual victims (e.g., Arata, 1999; Branscombe et al., 2003), as well as empirical work on observers’ biases in attributing blame to victims (e.g., Carli, 1999; McGill & Tenbrunsel, 2000) was reviewed. Overall, hypotheses were generated from a substantial body of work covering a multitude of sibling – though orphan – domains.

Following negative life events, victims blame themselves, and previous research suggests this is true of women who have been sexually victimized (Arata, 1999, 2000; Branscombe et al., 2003; Frazier, 1990, 1991; Janoff-Bulman, 1979, 1985). Moreover, a recent prospective analysis conducted among the present Study 1 sample found that post-USE self-blame endorsed by women according to a group of theoretically derived survey items predicted SRV (Miller et al., 2005). Davis et al. (1996) conceptualized the development of self-blame among victims as follows:

...even in the absence of any reasonable causal connection, the more people think they could have avoided their [USE], the more likely they are to blame themselves... In focusing their avoidability thoughts on their own behaviors, people appear to be concluding that they in some way may have contributed... That these personal actions can so easily be mutated leads people to assume greater personal responsibility and blame for their outcome. p. 565

As Sherman and McConnell (1995) have discussed, the process of imagining having avoided a USE (i.e., counterfactual thinking) may lead to incorrect causal inferences, exacerbated negative affect, and asymmetric blame. They wrote, “it is clearly irrational for one to take blame for behaviors that in foresight would not have reduced the probability of the event’s occurrence,” and, “the despair...from this kind of counterfactual thinking can be devastating” (Sherman & McConnell, p. 213).

Carli (1999) investigated rape victim derogation as it results from hindsight bias. She found that, after reading otherwise identical scenarios (varied only in rape vs. no-rape ending), participants who read the rape ending remembered more rape-consistent antecedents and misremembered rape-consistent antecedents that had not actually appeared in the scenario. Carli found, moreover, biased remembering contributed to retrospective assessments that the outcome had been more likely, which, in turn, contributed to greater disapproval ratings of the scenario victim’s behaviors. From this, Carli (1999) concluded, “many of the antecedents perceived by observers as leading to a victimization may never actually have occurred...They may, instead, be a fabrication, a result of the reconstructive nature of observers’ memories” (p. 978). It is possible that, not only do we (victims and observers alike) focus myopically on imagining how the victim might have prevented her USE, but we may exaggerate the extent to which mutable antecedents truly existed.

The present investigation was consistent with theoretical lines settling on the notion that perceived avoidability/preventability failures and negative emotion converge to exacerbate self-blame among victims. Specifically, the results of Study 1 supported

the Experiential Processing Model of SRV within a naturalistic research paradigm. That is, logistic regression analyses indicated that post-USE self-blame mediated the prospective relationship between narrative content (Negative Emotion and Perceived Preventability) and SRV. The NEED index combined explicit and implicit negative emotion expressed during women's USE narratives and constituted the Negative Emotion component of the model. The UNDERF index combined perceived self-dispositional/behavioral undesirability and escape/resistance (prevention) failures expressed during women's USE narratives and constituted the Perceived Preventability component of the model. The supported model suggests that, synergistically, negative emotionality and perceived avoidability/preventability propel USE victims toward self-blame and SRV vulnerability. Fiske and Taylor (1991) stated, "the communicator defines his or her task as providing that piece of information that will explain the abnormal condition that produced the event" (p.65). Perhaps women's emotional and cognitive focus on undesirable self-aspects was instrumental in their perceptions that they "made the difference" in bringing about the target outcome (USE) rather than its alternative (e.g., no USE), thus exacerbating post-USE self-blame.

Kahneman and Miller (1986), as cited in McGill and Tenbrunsel (1998), highlighted that alternative-to-victim causal candidates, such as a perpetrator's actions, diminish in focus to the extent they are the "presupposed background of the story." McGill and Tenbrunsel's (2000) work in context effects specifically identified a related paradoxical effect, "a tendency to blame the target factor more when the contributing factor has a greater propensity to produce an event when the contributing factor is

perceived to be low in mutability” (p. 681). The results of Study 2 supported this pattern regarding USE victim blame. Specifically, in a low propensity perpetrator condition, participants did not differ on their USE victim blame ratings according to context mutability, whereas, in a high perpetrator propensity condition, participants attributed less blame to a female USE scenario target when she was amidst a mutable sociolegal context than when she was amidst an immutable sociolegal context (i.e., one in which context is not conducive to deterring/preventing USEs and perpetrators are not held to account). Moreover, participants’ victim blame ratings were positively related to the extent to which they endorsed having made victim-focused counterfactual comparisons (i.e., comparing the victim’s behaviors to her ideal, comparing the victim’s behaviors to other women’s behaviors, and evaluating that the victim should have adjusted her behaviors to have prevented the USE) in arriving at their USE explanations.

Taken together, the results of Studies 1 and 2 supported the notion that USE-victim blame assignment, which, in the form of self-blame prospectively predicts SRV, is driven by the experiential, impressionistic sense that victims could have and should have avoided or prevented their fates. These results are consistent with and extend Carli’s (1999) work on rape victim derogation as attributed from an observer’s perspective. Carli wrote that, through the biased lens of hindsight, a “victim’s behaviors can be causally linked to the outcome in the mind of the observer” (p. 977). The present investigation extends this by suggesting that biased USE blame processes operate for victims and observers alike and modifies what Carli wrote by adding that the “causal links” to which she refers are likely implicit rather than explicit. That is, although we

appear to attribute blame following USEs *as though* a victim's behaviors were causally linked to her USE, Study 2 participants did not attribute cause to the female scenario target in accord with their blame assignments.

The present investigation also answers the mandate of Classen et al. (2005) to begin considering within-person factors related to SRV within a sociocultural framework. To accomplish this, Study 2 borrowed McGill and Tenbrunsel's (2000) work in dynamic context effects to demonstrate a paradoxical victim blame effect within a USE scenario paradigm. Results indicated that female undergraduates were especially likely to blame a female scenario target for her USE in a condition in which the proverbial window had closed on alternate culpable candidates. Specifically, victim blame was greatest amidst a context in which the male perpetrator of the USE was perceived as likely to have previously forced nonconsensual sex *and* the sociolegal modus operandi was ineptitude in the deterrence/prevention of USEs and in holding perpetrators to account. Thus, with a combined expectation of a laissez-faire sociolegal norm and a specific instance of a "boy who will be a boy," victim blame is exacerbated. Perhaps, within this context, with the window shut on other possibilities including society and men, victims themselves are the only immediate targets left to blame and, therein from a self-perspective, women are compelled to assume responsibility for their own USEs.

In this vein, potential consequences for victims of perceived context immutability and perpetrator ubiquity were considered by examining a single, exploratory survey item that had been administered to Study 1 participants during the original large-scale study.

According to the landmark Koss et al. (1987) study of sexual assault prevalence among college women, 54% of students reported a lifetime history of sexual assault.

Participants in Study 1 were asked near the end of the 4-part study to respond to the following survey item: “Please indicate the percentage of college women who you would estimate have experienced some form of sexual assault in their lifetimes.” Available response categories included “0-33%” (base rate under-estimators/perceivers of a USE-mutable context), “34-67%” (ballpark estimators), and “68-100%” (base rate over-estimators/perceivers of a USE-immutable context). Consistent with the notion that perceiving a USE-mutable context is related to lower post-USE self-blame among victims, results of an independent-samples t-test indicated that base rate under-estimators endorsed less post-USE self-blame ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 1.26$) than did ballpark- and base rate over-estimators combined ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.15$), $t(141) = 2.16$, $p = .03$. Also, consistent with the possibility of deleterious functional effects resulting from the perception that context is USE-immutable (i.e., USEs are inevitable or nearly so), a Chi-square analysis revealed that, whereas 27 of 112 (24.1%) ballpark- or base rate under-estimators were sexually revictimized during the course of the study, 13 of 31 (41.9%) base rate over-estimators were sexually revictimized, although this effect was not statistically significant. Measurement order precludes directional conclusions from these data – SRV may create a “sexual assault is everywhere” perception *or* a “sexual assault is everywhere perception” may exacerbate SRV vulnerability among USE victims. This notwithstanding, the “pallid field” dynamics suggested by Study 2 (e.g., implicit

perceptions of sexual assault base rates, typical male behavior, sociolegal responsiveness to USEs) are certainly worthy of future investigation.

Along these lines, an unanticipated result that is worthy of final mention concerned across-the-board inflation of perpetrator propensity ratings relative to the midpoint of the propensity scale. That is, participants rated even the “low propensity” male scenario target (an everyday sociology major), intended to suggest an individual unlikely to have previously forced nonconsensual sex, well above the midpoint on a USE propensity scale. While future research might do well to improve the strength of the propensity manipulation by more directly emphasizing the sexual reticence of the “low propensity” male scenario target, the current finding is interesting, particularly in light of data related to context effects on victim-blame. It is possible that this “common man” discrepancy from the propensity mean, in the direction of presumed sexual opportunism, is diagnostic of a perceived state of affairs (i.e., context saturation with USEs and their perpetrators). As evidenced across two studies that encompassed the present investigation, victims, unfortunately, may bear the burden of blame for failing to prevent their USEs, perhaps in part because of these contextual perceptions.

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Endnotes

¹This argument excludes cases in which a man is victim of sexual assault, which is not the focus of present consideration. See Davies (2002) for a review of the prevalence and effects of sexual assault against males.

²Generally, Study 2 will experimentally investigate sociocultural factors hypothesized to promulgate USE victim-blame. Although Study 2 considers observers' attributions of victim blame in particular, two exploratory conditions were included to test the assumption of Study 1 that self- and other-blame are equivalent. Specifically, within conditions in which context was not manipulated (i.e., "real world/status quo" context conditions), participants read about a male protagonist who was depicted either as likely or unlikely to have previously forced nonconsensual sex (i.e., perpetrator propensity manipulation). Orthogonal to this information, participants read a USE scenario culminating either in their own or another woman's USE. For example, scenarios began either "Laura Watson is a freshman sociology major..." (observer-perspective) or "You are a freshman sociology major..." (self-perspective). Results of an exploratory 2 (Protagonist Perspective) x 2 (Perpetrator Propensity) ANOVA revealed no significant effects, all $F_s < 2.53$, all $p_s > .11$. These results were consistent with the general assumption of equivalency between self- and other- blame attributions as posited in the conceptualization of Study 1. That is, there was no evidence that self- and other-blame attributions differ within a "real world" context.

³Steele and Josephs (1990) suggested that alcohol intoxication lends to myopic social information processing by 1) restricting the social cues we perceive (disposing us to

respond to the most salient, immediate cues) and 2) reducing our ability to extract meaning from the information we do perceive (leaving us ill-equipped to respond to peripheral cues and subtle meanings). Thus, the possibility was explored that women's verbalizations of alcohol use and its effects during their USE narratives (AM; coder 1-coder 2 Kappa = .85, Kappa_n = .96) would intensify predicted self-blame and SRV effects. However, linear and logistic regression procedures failed to support this hypothesis, both $ps > .84$.

⁴The proposal that failure-conducive environments play a silent role in driving victim blame attributions will be empirically tested in Study 2, insofar as college women's perceptions of sociolegal (in)effectiveness in deterring/preventing USEs and holding perpetrators accountable will be experimentally manipulated.

⁵In a secondary analysis, NE alone was included as the Negative Emotion component of the Experiential Processing Model. Results consistent with the mediation analysis described in Hypothesis 7 were obtained.

⁶This analysis reveals that experiential processing evidenced in participants USE narratives accounts for approximately 4% of the variance in post-USE self-blame as indicated on a survey measure. Although this is a significant statistical relationship and is important in the overall conceptual model presented here, an important caveat is that much remaining variance in the phenomenology of self-blame remains to be explained.

⁷McGill and Tenbrunsel (2000) specify that they use the term "propensity" similarly to Mandel and Lehman's (1996) use of "covariational criterion" but distinguish their

construct insofar as it refers to “a priori causal strength” (p. 679) or “perceived sense of causal force” as opposed to “an explicit, data-driven base” (p. 678).

⁸Similar to other research suggesting the naïve conflation of causality, responsibility, and blame (e.g., McCaul et al., 1990; N’gbala and Branscombe, 1995), McGill and Tenbrunsel (2000) found no differences between their pattern of results using participants’ blame ratings for a target factor and their ratings of the target factor as an event explanation.

APPENDIX A: Sexual Experiences Survey – RV (USE and SRV Versions)

DIRECTIONS: Please answer the following questions about your sexual experiences **from age 14 on (USE Version) OR since you last filled out this survey approximately four months ago (SRV Version).**

Have you had any of these experiences from the age of 14 on? (USE Version) OR since you last filled out this survey approximately four months ago (SRV Version).

1. Have you ever given in to sex play (fondling, kissing, or petting, but not intercourse) when you didn't want to because you were overwhelmed by a man's continual arguments and pressure?

About how many times since age 14 years? (since you last filled out this survey approximately 4 months ago?)

- | | |
|------|--------------|
| A. 0 | D. 3 |
| B. 1 | E. 4 or more |
| C. 2 | |

2. Have you had sex play (fondling, kissing, or petting, but not intercourse) when you didn't want to because a man used his authority (boss, teacher, camp counselor, supervisor) to make you?

About how many times since age 14 years? (since you last filled out this survey approximately 4 months ago?)

- | | |
|------|--------------|
| A. 0 | D. 3 |
| B. 1 | E. 4 or more |
| C. 2 | |

3. Have you had sex play (fondling, kissing, or petting, but not intercourse) when you didn't want to because a man threatened or used some degree of physical force (twisting your arm, holding you down, etc.)?

About how many times since age 14 years? (since you last filled out this survey approximately 4 months ago?)

- | | |
|------|--------------|
| A. 0 | D. 3 |
| B. 1 | E. 4 or more |
| C. 2 | |

4. Have you had a man attempt sexual intercourse (get on top of you, attempt to insert his penis) when you didn't want to by threatening or using some degree of force (twisting your arm, holding you down, etc.) but intercourse did not occur?

About how many times since age 14 years? (since you last filled out this survey approximately 4 months ago?)

- | | |
|------|--------------|
| A. 0 | D. 3 |
| B. 1 | E. 4 or more |
| C. 2 | |

5. Have you had a man attempt sexual intercourse (get on top of you, attempt to insert his penis) when you didn't want to by giving you alcohol or drugs, to prevent you from resisting, but intercourse did not occur?

About how many times since age 14 years? (since you last filled out this survey approximately 4 months ago?)

- | | |
|------|--------------|
| A. 0 | D. 3 |
| B. 1 | E. 4 or more |
| C. 2 | |

6. Have you ever had sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral) when you didn't want to because you were drunk or stoned and were unable to give consent?

About how many times since age 14 years? (since you last filled out this survey approximately 4 months ago?)

- | | |
|------|--------------|
| A. 0 | D. 3 |
| B. 1 | E. 4 or more |
| C. 2 | |

7. Have you given in to sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral) when you didn't want to because you were overwhelmed by a man's continual arguments and pressure?

About how many times since age 14 years? (since you last filled out this survey approximately 4 months ago?)

- | | |
|------|--------------|
| A. 0 | D. 3 |
| B. 1 | E. 4 or more |
| C. 2 | |

8. Have you had sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral) when you didn't want to because a man used his position of authority (boss, teacher, counselor, supervisor)?

About how many times since age 14 years? (since you last filled out this survey approximately 4 months ago?)

- | | |
|------|--------------|
| A. 0 | D. 3 |
| B. 1 | E. 4 or more |
| C. 2 | |

9. Have you had sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral) when you didn't want to because a man gave you alcohol or drugs to prevent you from resisting?

About how many times since age 14 years? (since you last filled out this survey approximately 4 months ago?)

- | | |
|------|--------------|
| A. 0 | D. 3 |
| B. 1 | E. 4 or more |
| C. 2 | |

10. Have you had sexual intercourse (vaginal, anal, or oral) when you didn't want to because a man threatened or used some degree of physical force (twisting your arm, holding you down, etc.) to make you?

About how many times since age 14 years? (since you last filled out this survey approximately 4 months ago?)

- | | |
|------|--------------|
| A. 0 | D. 3 |
| B. 1 | E. 4 or more |
| C. 2 | |

11. Look back at questions 1-10. What is the highest question number to which you answered "yes"?

- | | |
|------|-------|
| A. 1 | F. 6 |
| B. 2 | G. 7 |
| C. 3 | H. 8 |
| D. 4 | I. 9 |
| E. 5 | J. 10 |

*****For the following questions, refer to the highest question number to which you answered "yes" in items 1-10. If you have had this experience with more than one person on different occasions, refer to the most significant time this occurred.**

12. How many men did this experience involve?

- A. One man (1)
- B. Two men (2)
- C. Three or more men (3+)

13. What was your relationship to the man/men at the time? (If more than one man was involved, what was your relationship to the most significant one?)

- A. Stranger
- B. Non-romantic acquaintance (friend, neighbor, ex-husband, etc.)
- C. Casual or first date
- D. Romantic acquaintance (steady date, boyfriend, lover)
- E. Husband
- F. Father
- G. Step-father
- H. Uncle
- I. Brother

14. How well did you know him/them?

- A. Didn't know at all
- B. Slightly acquainted
- C. Moderately acquainted
- D. Very well acquainted
- E. Extremely well acquainted

15. How many times has he/they done this to you?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5 or more

16. How long ago did it happen?

- A. Less than 3 months
- B. 3-6 months
- C. 6 months to a year
- D. 1-2 years
- E. 3-5 years
- F. Over 5 years

APPENDIX B: Demographic Questionnaire

DIRECTIONS: Please use the scantron – do not write on this paper. We would like to start by asking you some general information first. Please fill in the appropriate letter on the scantron.

1. What is your age?

A. 18	C. 20	E. 22
B. 19	D. 21	F. Over age 22

2. What is your current year in school?

A. Freshman	C. Junior	E. Graduate
B. Sophomore	D. Senior	F. Other

3. What is your ethnicity?

A. Caucasian, Non-Hispanic	D. Hispanic
B. African American	E. American Indian or Alaska Native
C. Asian or Pacific Islander	F. Other

4. What is your religion?

A. Catholic	C. Jewish	E. None
B. Protestant	D. Nondenominational	F. Other

5. What is your sexual orientation?

A. Heterosexual	B. Homosexual	C. Bisexual
-----------------	---------------	-------------

6. What is your current marital status?

A. Never married	C. Married	E. Divorced
B. Co-habiting	D. Separated	F. Widowed

7. What is your current dating status?

A. I do not date.	D. I am engaged
B. I date casually.	E. I am married.
C. I am involved in a long-term monogamous relationship (duration of 6 months or longer).	

8. Have you ever willingly had sexual intercourse?

A. Yes	B. No
--------	-------

9. How old were you when you first willingly had sexual intercourse?

A. Does not apply - I have never willingly had sexual intercourse.		
B. 13 years old or younger		
C. 14	E. 16	G. 18
D. 15	F. 17	H. 19 years old or older

10. How many consensual (not forced) sexual partners have you had?
- | | | | |
|------|------|------|--------------|
| A. 0 | C. 2 | E. 4 | G. 6 |
| B. 1 | D. 3 | F. 5 | H. 7 or more |
11. How often do you drink alcohol?
- A. I never drink or have not drunk in the past year.
 - B. I drink less than once a month, but at least once in the past year.
 - C. I drink one to three times a month.
 - D. I drink one to two times a week.
 - E. I drink more than twice a week.
12. On a typical drinking occasion, how much do you usually drink? (Choose one)
- A. None
 - B. Usually no more than 3 cans of beer (or 2 glasses of wine or 2 drinks of distilled spirits)
 - C. Usually no more than 4 cans of beer (or 3 glasses of wine or 3 drinks of distilled spirits)
 - D. Usually no more than 5 or 6 cans of beer (or 4 glasses of wine or 4 drinks of distilled spirits)
 - E. Usually more than 6 cans of beer (or 5 or more glasses of wine or distilled spirits)
13. In the last two months, how often did you drink to the point of intoxication or drunkenness (that is, feeling dizzy, feeling ill, passing out, or feeling out of control? (Estimate if you are unsure. Choose one.)
- A. I have never drank to the point of being drunk.
 - B. I got drunk 1-3 times in the past two months.
 - C. I got drunk 4-5 times in the past two months.
 - D. I got drunk 6-10 times in the past two months.
 - E. I got drunk 11-15 times in the past two months.
 - F. I got drunk 16-20 times in the past two months.
 - G. I got drunk 21-25 times in the past two months.
 - H. I got drunk more than 25 times in the past two months.

APPENDIX C: Posttraumatic Cognitions Inventory

DIRECTIONS: During the screening session for this study, you indicated that you had experienced unwanted sexual activity between the age of 14 and the time of the screening session. Please answer the following questions in regard to that incident. Please read the following statements and indicate how much you AGREE or DISAGREE with each statement. Answer with respect to the most significant incident that you reported during the screening session.

People react to events in many different ways. There are no right or wrong answers to these statements. Please use the following scale:

- A. Totally disagree
- B. Disagree very much
- C. Disagree slightly
- D. Neutral
- E. Agree slightly
- F. Agree very much
- G. Totally agree

1. The event happened because of the way I acted.
2. I can't trust that I will do the right thing.
3. I am a weak person.
4. I will not be able to control my anger and will do something terrible.
5. I can't deal with even the slightest upset.
6. I used to be a happy person but now I am always miserable.
7. People can't be trusted.
8. I have to be on guard all the time.
9. I feel dead inside.
10. You can never know who will harm you.
11. I have to be especially careful because you never know what can happen next.
12. I am inadequate.

13. I will not be able to control my emotions, and something terrible will happen.
14. If I think about the event, I will not be able to handle it.
15. The event happened to me because of the sort of person I am.
16. My reactions since the event mean that I am going crazy.
17. I will never be able to feel normal emotions again.
18. The world is a dangerous place.
19. Somebody else would have stopped the event from happening.
20. I have permanently changed for the worse.
21. I feel like an object, not a person.
22. Somebody else would not have gotten into this situation.
23. I can't rely on other people.
24. I feel isolated and set apart from others.
25. I have no future.
26. I can't stop bad things from happening to me.
27. People are not what they seem.
28. My life has been destroyed by the event.
29. There is something wrong with me as a person.
30. My reactions since the event show that I am a lousy copier.
31. There is something about me that made the event happen.
32. I will not be able to tolerate my thoughts about the event, and I will fall apart.
33. I feel like I don't know myself anymore.
34. You never know when something terrible will happen.

35. I can't rely on myself.

36. Nothing good can happen to me anymore.

APPENDIX D: Unwanted Sexual Experiences: Chunking/Content Coding Manual

This manual was devised integrating guidelines and procedures from the following sources: Bartholomew, Henderson, & Marcia (2000); Smith (2000)

*The overall goal of the coder is to score *the subject's essential communication*

TRANSCRIPTION GUIDELINES

Text Unit = Transcribed interview (i.e., 4 open-ended questions)

CHUNKING GUIDELINES

Coding Unit = Main and Subordinate Clauses (i.e., those including subject and predicate)

- 2 clauses, joined by a comma, will be transcribed as 2 units (e.g., “I walked up the stairs,/and then we began kissing”)
- Words commonly indicating unit breaks include: and, but, so, because, etc.
- Speech fillers (e.g., “like”), extraneous words (e.g., incomplete thoughts), and recounting others’ single expressions, are contained within a single coding unit (e.g., “I walked up the stairs,/and then um...well um...like we began kissing/...geez this is hard” is 3 units)
- Elaborations and repetitions may constitute separate coding units (e.g., “I walked up the stairs,/ugh...I walked up the stairs and...” is 2 units).
- The coder judges whether or not an inaudible word could quickly and easily be replaced with obvious content when determining coding units (e.g., “he gave me a ___ beer” is 1 coding unit).
- The coder should use 1) linguistic cues (e.g., changes in voice) and 2) judgment regarding content disparity to determine whether the speaker implies a subject, verb, or predicate where one may not actually have been uttered (e.g., “I was thinking about birds and bees / and like how people who play the lottery are crazy, / whether whales cry” is 3 units whereas “We went out to the movies and to dinner twice” is 1 unit because list elements are easily paired based on the spoken verb “went” and based on content).

CODING GUIDELINES

- I. Negative Emotions (NE) – Expressions of *felt negative emotions* (i.e., in the moment of the verbal expression, the subject is conveying real-time, past, or future explicit negative emotion)
 - May be stated explicitly, using words such as “I *am/was* really scared” or “I *feel/felt* really scared”

- May also be explicit only within context (e.g., if speaker verbalizes, “I felt tremendous pressure from him / he’d be like “Come on, come on,” 2 NE’s would be coded, just as with, “The experience made me generally terrified to walk around by myself / I carry a knife in my back pocket now”).
- Includes past, present, or future emotions (e.g., “I *would feel awful* if I turned him in”).
- Emotions seemingly unrelated to critical content should be included (e.g., “I just feel so bad today for some reason”).
- *Do not* code reporting as an NE (e.g., “we got in a fight”) unless and until there is some indication of felt negative emotion emitted within that narration (e.g., “We got in a fight / and I felt so bad about it”). Although in this case, where getting in a fight is described *just before* the expression of negative emotion that is obviously associated with it (thus 2 NEs are coded), the line “we got in a fight” should not be coded NE if it precedes by multiple lines the expression of negative emotion (i.e., it is unclear that the negative emotion is expressed specifically about the fight).

- II. Emotional Defensiveness (ED) – Evidence of deliberate or inadvertent emotional defensiveness and/or manifestations/symptoms (i.e., defense failures) driven by implicit negative emotionality (i.e., that which is unrecognized, underrecognized, guarded against, or otherwise inaccessible to the speaker). Examples include:
- Minimization/Excuse Making (i.e., expressions indicating the perpetrator’s behavior or disposition, or the situation/event, was “not as bad as it may seem” or “not that big of a deal”)
 - Avoidance (“I don’t party anymore, and I haven’t talked to him since”; “I haven’t told anyone,” if likely the speaker is avoiding negative emotion)
 - Hypervigilance (“I’m always looking behind me when I walk home alone” “I always wondering if my boyfriend might do something like this to me”). Statements about being careful (e.g., “I’m now more careful when I drink”) are not hypervigilance unless they are judged to be irrational (e.g. “I’m now a lot more careful / I stay away from all guys / and I don’t drink at all anymore”). In the second example, 3 EDs are coded.
 - Withdrawing (“I wouldn’t come out of my room for 3 days”)
 - Dissociating (“It was like it wasn’t even happening to me”)
 - Depersonalization (e.g., “The way I was acting – it’s like it wasn’t me,” I was like on automatic pilot or something”)
 - Blocking (“I try to just block it out of my mind”)

- Denial (“I just told myself it didn’t happen”)
- Somatic Manifestations of (Latent) Emotional Symptoms (“I couldn’t eat/sleep”)
- Reexperiencing Symptoms (“Now, around guys, I just experience all these thoughts that it might happen again/so I just avoid guys now”)
- Reality Distortion (“Even though there were no signs I was pregnant/I couldn’t stop thinking about how I would go cross country with the baby and name her”).
- Note: “Worry/rumination” and “Trust” NE/ED differentials are made according to the reality grounding of the emotion. For example, the statement “I don’t trust this guy anymore” would be coded “NE,” whereas “I don’t trust anyone anymore” would be coded “NE *and* ED,” whereas “I carry a knife at all parties” (without acknowledgment of the underlying fear) is coded “ED.”

- III. Perceived Behavioral/Self Undesirability (UND) – Verbal references to behavior or dispositions in which the subject – at any point in the narrative – makes negative self-judgment(s) or perceives (actual or hypothetical) negative social judgments about herself
- A UND has 2 components that must be explicit or implicit within the unit: 1) a specific, self-focused behavior or disposition and, 2) a negative judgment.
 - In determining whether a unit is specific enough to be coded UND (rather than exclusively diffuse NE, e.g., “I feel like I could have been stronger”), the rater should consider whether or not the speaker has a mental image of the specific aspiration *within the unit itself*. That is, the above unit is coded UND only if it is obvious within context that the speaker is alluding to a mental contrast with a desirable alternative within the unit itself.
 - May include phrases with inherent negative social connotations without direct explanation of associated behavior (e.g., “I was being a slut” or “I was stupid”)
 - OR may specify the behavior being judged (e.g., “I can’t believe I was drinking that much”)
 - A behavior (e.g., “I’ve slept with a lot of people since”) is coded “UND” if contextualized negatively within the narrative (e.g., “and that was really not like me.”)
 - If the essential communication of a line is judged to be an emphasis of growth (e.g., “I’ve learned to be more careful”) or an emphasis that the perpetrator was a parasite (e.g., “he took advantage of a weak person”), *do not* code UND.

- IV. Escape/Resistance Failures (ERF) – Verbal references to perceived escape or resistance inadequacies with regard to unwanted sexual experiencing leading up to or concurrent with the specific USE
- For example, the last 2 units of the following narrative segment are coded ERF: “He started kissing me / and that was cool, / but then he stuck his hand in my pants, / and I said ‘don’t do that’ / but he didn’t stop”
 - Drunkenness/intoxication is coded ERF if the essential purpose is to describe an escape/resistance failure (e.g., “I was too trashed to do anything about it”)
- V. Verbalizations of Unwanted Sexual Experiences (USE) – Code when the unit itself refers either explicitly or with implicit language (e.g., “he sometimes/always/ frequently does this”) to past or multiple unwanted sexual experiences (including penetration)
- Temporal proximity to target experience is not important (e.g., USE would be indicated by the unit, “this has happened more than once” [past USE] and is also implied by the unit, “he forces me all the time” [concurrent USE])
 - Coding specifies a USE unit and should *NOT* be considered an approximation of the number of unwanted sexual experiences
 - Can be explicit or implicit allusion to USE
 - E.g., “When I was in 10th grade, someone raped me on my way home from school” (explicit)
 - E.g., “This wasn’t the first time I had gotten myself into this sort of thing” (implicit)
- VI. Pleasure/Desire/Liking (PDL) – Any expression of interpersonal connectedness, affinity, fondness, liking, pleasure, desire, trust, and/or reverence for the speaker’s perpetrator or situation
- May use ambivalent language (e.g., “I sort of liked it/him”)
 - May be explicit (e.g., “He was pretty cool”; coded as 1 PDL) or implicit (e.g., “we both played the piano / and he was playing a song for me / which was cool”; coded as 3 PDLs)
 - May describe any component of the scenario (e.g., “I enjoyed fooling around / but then he started going too far” – 1st unit should be coded)
 - If relationship implies affection or liking (e.g., “good friend,” “boyfriend,” “we were dating”), code PDL unless feelings otherwise noted
 - Code if subject describes a mutual behavior in which pleasure is implied (e.g., “we were kissing/flirting,” unless speaker’s pleasure is ambiguous, “he was kissing me”)

VII. Foreseeability/Anticipation (FA) – ANY expression (not coder judgment)

that implies, directly or indirectly, the speaker had foresight into, anticipated, and/or dreaded unwanted sexual experiencing *of any kind*

- Frequently, a “turn of events” in the speaker’s narrative indicates the inception of a “momentum toward unwantedness,” following which FAs proliferate until the unwanted intercourse occurs
- FA lines are very specific to the unit, each of which is taken at face value. For example, if the speaker emphasizes becoming intoxicated and then states, “I don’t know how it happened / but I ended up going home with him,” take her at face value – she did not have foresight/anticipation into what followed. However, if the same subject later states, “it wouldn’t have happened if it hadn’t been for the alcohol and pressure,” the later verbalization is coded (but not the prior verbalization), because “pressure” indicates a degree of foresight into the event.
- FA units are highly varied in content, from temporal notes (e.g., “it took him 2 hours to get me to do it”) to resistance tactics (e.g., “I told him I didn’t want to”) to personal mind states (e.g., “I couldn’t believe what was going on”) to behavioral descriptions described as occurring subsequent to the foresight/anticipation/dread (e.g., “but he kept doing it / and I just sat there not saying anything”)
- Statements of “fault” should not be assumed to imply foresight/anticipation, unless, that is, foresight/anticipation is clearly intended within the communication (e.g., “I feel like I was sort of at fault” could mean the person feels at fault for becoming intoxicated, even though she ultimately passed out and had no foresight into the USE)
- *Do not* code FA if the speaker is discussing current status or personal growth unless an essential purpose of the verbalization is emphasis of foresight/anticipation into the cited unwanted sexual experiencing. For example, code “Um, it made me realize how weak I was at the time to let someone influence that way” as FA but not “I don’t let people [pause] talk me into doing things as easily.” Although we might assume the latter statement is referring to ease of being talked into (i.e., foresight into) the cited USE, this is neither explicitly stated nor is it the essential purpose of the communication (rather, current resistance to being talked into things is the focus).

VIII. “Leading Up” Self-Focus (LE) – All verbalizations of self-focused (including mutual) circumstances, behaviors, and states of being – no matter how benign – which in real time preceded or were concurrent with the unwanted sexual experience

- Ls are often delineated by “I” or “We” as the subject of the unit

- Even circumstantial notes focusing on self (e.g., “I was 18”) are coded
- An “LE” behavior may be described following description of the unwanted event(s) (e.g., the 2nd unit of “I know it was his fault / but I really could have resisted him much more vigorously (OR) but I shouldn’t have gone over to his apartment that night” is coded L)

IX. Labels (Text Unit = Question 3 only; Dichotomous Coding)

- 1 = Any legal category/label (e.g., “sexual assault,” “rape,” “date rape”) used to describe the USE, in response to question 3
- 0 = Absence of legal category/label in response to question 3

X. Reporting to Law Enforcement (Text Unit = Question 4 only; Dichotomous Coding)

- 1 = “Yes” – Report to any law enforcement entity (e.g., university police), as evidenced in response to question 4
- 0 = Absence of reporting in response to question 4

XI. Alcohol Myopia (AM) – Includes any reference to alcohol use or its effects on the subject (e.g., “intoxicated,” “drunk,” “blacked out,” “trashed,” “didn’t know what was going on,” “I was in and out,” “don’t remember much”)

- Context is used to know whether a verbalization (e.g., “I was in and out”) is most likely referring to intoxication, rather than a non-alcohol related effect (e.g., dissociation). However, the unit itself must have a specific reference to alcohol or its effects – even if a vague allusion (e.g., “I *probably* said no,” italics added to emphasize a word which in some contexts may refer to being “too drunk to know”) – in order to be coded AM.
- Coupled lines should both be coded AM if the overall intent of the coupling is to emphasize the effect of alcohol intoxication on the subject (e.g., “cause I was totally fine/and then I don’t remember leaving,” “Like I went to the bathroom/and then the next thing I know I’m walking down the street”).

Simple Observations/Counts: Total # Units (Total Count), Self-Reported Distress Score (1-10)

APPENDIX E: Bivariate Correlations among Narrative Constructs ($N = 149$)[illegible]