Macho, Myths, and Stuck in the Middle: Traditional Masculinity and Victim Blame in New York City Middle School Students

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B.A. in Sociology, May 2013, Grove City College

A Thesis submitted to

The Faculty of
The Columbian College of Arts and Sciences
of The George Washington University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts

May 15, 2016

Thesis directed by

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Abstract of Thesis

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Sexual harassment and dating violence in middle school students has garnered attention in recent years. Previously, studies on the topic limited their subjects to high school and college students. However, middle school has been noted to be the onset of dating, and therefore, dating violence. Past research has revealed that rape myth acceptance/tendency to victim blame and support for traditional masculinity have been linked to dating violence. Furthermore, it is contended that those who support traditional masculinity are more likely to victim blame. Our study addresses this relationship in middle school students. Utilizing survey data conducted by Bruce Taylor, Nan D. Stein, Dan Woods, and Elizabeth Mumford, which examined domestic violence and harassment in New York City middle school students, we created two new variables measuring support for traditional masculinity and a tendency to victim blame. After conducting a regression analysis, we found a significant, positive, and moderate relationship between masculinity and victim blame. We also looked at the effects of gender and ethnicity. Results indicate some variation in victim blame beliefs and masculinity by ethnic groups. Gender also has an effect on victim blame and masculinity.

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INTRODUCTION

Middle school is a trying time for adolescents. During their two to three years spent on those academic grounds, students face many transitions- both emotionally and hormonally. “As young people move into adolescence, they begin to explore gender roles. Finding their way through this potential minefield is complicated and challenging for middle school students” (Kommer 2006). Previously blurred gender roles are identified and solidified. Vulnerabilities such as body image and self-esteem issues come to light and are intensified (Kommer 2006). Pressure to conform to societal expectations is particularly severe. The consequence of not conforming is to be bullied (Brinkman et al. 2012). Furthermore, middle school is noted to be the onset of dating relationships. With dating relationships, sex becomes a large question. Unfortunately, sex is often overlooked in students of such a young age and the discussion is reserved for older, high school aged students. Leaving questions about sex unanswered can have devastating results. Without learning a concrete definition of consensual sex, students are left to create their own based on their limited experiences and resources. Their only resources are often their peers: “It is through interactions with peers that adolescents learn about dating and sexual relations, conflict, mutual problem-solving, and what they want and do not want in their relationships” (Elias-Lambert 2014: 845-846, Ashford and LeCroy 2010).

Little research has been done specifically in middle schools examining sexual harassment and dating violence, leaving a potentially dangerous gap in our understanding of these crimes. It is difficult to gain access to middle schools- the students are minors, and permission must be gained from both the school boards and parents. What has been

done has been limited to questions of frequency in an attempt to implement school-wide prevention programs (Taylor et al. 2011). This neglects how personal identity plays a role in sexual harassment and dating violence. Additionally, it fails to address how students perceive cases of dating violence. Do they find specific cases justifiable? Do they make excuses? Because middle school students are in an intense period of transition, they are especially malleable when it comes to their ideas of gender role expectations, sexual identity, and appropriate dating behavior. This paper begs to examine the correlation between gender roles and victim blaming in regards to sexual assault. The question this paper wishes to tackle is: How does support for traditional masculinity affect rape myth acceptance in middle school students?

The Purpose of This Study

The purpose of this study is to add to the minimal, but growing, knowledge of dating violence in middle school students. Given that research is typically limited to high school students and college undergraduates, it is necessary to contribute more to the field in order to advance understanding of this growing epidemic in adolescents. Particularly, we wish to focus on the relationship between support for stereotypical gender roles and the tendency to victim blame or accept rape myths in sixth and seventh grade students. Because previous research indicates a relationship between the two in adult respondents (Johnson et al. 1997), we are looking for early onset of those beliefs and how they affect one another in younger respondents. Previous study has alluded to disagreement in how sex and gender affect rape myth acceptance and support for hyper-masculinity. We plan to contribute to this understanding by investigating the differences within middle school

students. Our research questions are as follows:

Research Question 1: How does support for traditional masculinity affect respondents' tendency to victim blame?

Research Question 2: How does support for traditional masculinity differ by ethnicity?

Research Question 3: How does support for traditional masculinity differ by gender?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dating Violence in Adolescents: A Lacking Body of Research and Mediocre Definition

In recent years, the idea of sexual harassment and dating violence as a serious issue among adolescents has garnered recognition. Previously, the majority of studies examining dating violence were performed at the college level with limited research dedicated to middle and high schools because of the difficulty in obtaining access to minors as subjects (Taylor et al. 2001; Epps et al. 1993). However, it is essential to start researching dating violence in younger subjects. Herman (1990) hypothesized that adolescence is a critical stage in the development of sexually predatory behavior (Epps et al. 1993; Messerschmidt 2000). The National Survey of Adolescents uncovered that while twelve year olds did not report incidents of serious dating violence, thirteen year olds indicated victimization (Jouriles et al. 2009; Wilitzky-Taylor et al. 2008). This signifies an onset of dating violence in middle school aged students. However, conducted studies on adolescents have been constrained to focusing on teenagers, eliminating middle school students as subjects. This means that while there is evidence suggesting that investigating middle school dating violence as warranted, it is severely understudied. With few exceptions, such as Taylor's work on 6th and 7th graders in Cleveland and New York, which examined the success of dating violence prevention programs, quantitative research on adolescents has focused on studying those in the 8th grade and older.

As adolescents transition into adulthood, dating proves to be complex and confusing. The definition of "dating" changes throughout the course of adolescence, as does "dating partner" (Jouriles et al. 2009). Adolescents are forced to "learn new skills in relating to a partner, such as defining limits, expressing affection, exploring intimacy, and

balancing dependency/individuality" (Reeves and Orphinas 2012: 1678). The development of these skills is not always favorable and can differ from what is conducive to a healthy relationship: one third of seventh graders in dating relationships admit to using forms of aggressive behavior toward their partners (Sears et al. 2007). Additionally, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey estimates that 7.4% of adolescents have been forced into having sexual intercourse (Eaton et al. 2010; Young et al. 2011). Furthermore, the 2005 National Survey of Adolescents indicates that 1.6% of those respondents between ages 12 and 17 reported "serious dating violence" (Jouriles et al. 2009; Wolitzky-Taylor et al. 2008).

Defining the specificities of "dating violence" has been little agreed upon by researchers. The National Survey of Adolescents defines serious dating violence "as experiencing one or more of the following forms of violence from a dating partner: physical violence (badly injured, beaten up, or threatened with a knife or gun), sexual violence (forced anal, vaginal, or oral sex; forced penetration with a digit or object; forced touching of genitalia), or drug/alcohol-facilitated rape" (Jouriles et al. 2009: 4). Other sources provide more broad definitions including psychological/emotional abuse along with physical and sexual violence (Coker et al. 2014; Taylor et al. 2011; Reyes and Foshee 2013). Some argue that these definitions are still restrictive. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention express that with the abundance and advancements in technology, cyber stalking is a form of teen dating violence, as well (Coker et al. 2014). Even more, sexual coercion among adolescent dating partners has been linked to a pattern of future victimization (Young et al. 2012); however, longitudinal data following subjects through adolescence into adulthood are scarce (Catalano et al. 2001; Jouriles et al. 2009).

Surveys have been the primary way of gathering data on dating violence. This method in itself is controversial among researchers. When questions are limited to the frequency of violent acts, the motivation- whether predatory or defensive- is often lost by using only surveys to gather information (Taylor et al. 2011; Wolfe et al. 2009). While some studies have tried to incorporate brief interviews or laboratory assessments, most research is restricted to single-time administered surveys (Jouriles et al. 2009). Furthermore, surveys appear to focus mainly on heterosexual relationships, ignoring adolescent dating violence among same-sex romantic partners (Jouriles et al. 2009). Other issues with surveys come about with the location of the study. Localized studies found a larger prevalence of dating violence in comparison to national studies. This could be in part because localized studies tend to be administered better and more extensive in their questioning, designing their surveys to be attuned to area-specific issues and phrasing questions multiple ways. (Taylor et al. 2001; Jouriles et al. 2009).

Dating Violence in Adolescents: The Consequences

Limiting the definition of dating violence to specifically physical acts of violence also limits the expected consequences to visible outcomes: bruising, broken bones, blood loss, etc. Outside of physical violence, dating violence produces psychological distress. Depression, substance abuse, and posttraumatic stress are common developments following victimization (Young et al. 2012; Hedtke et al. 2008; Wolitzky-Taylor et al. 2008; Mueller et al. 2013). Levels of trauma may be exasperated depending on how society approaches victimization (Lee, Pomeroy, Yoo and Rheinbolt 2005). This means that the psychological effects of victimization may be more severe in cultures that appear

to be less sympathetic toward victims. For instance, suicide is higher in cultures that discourage reporting and hold female virginity in high esteem (Lee, Pomeroy, Yoo and Rheinbolt 2005).

Young et al. (2012) found an increase in certain internalizing and externalizing symptoms as a result of peer dating violence. Internalizing symptoms are comprised of those representing distress, including but not limited to: depression, low self-esteem, hopelessness, and anxiety (Young et al. 2012; Foshee et al. 2004; Vezina and Hebert 2007). Externalizing symptoms consist of conduct problems. These include destructive actions like arguing, stealing, or destroying property. Students who exhibit these symptoms are more likely to have friends and aggressive dating partners whom exhibit the same anti-social tendencies (Young et al. 2012; Vezina and Hebert 2007; Capaldi and Crosby 1997; and Capaldi et al. 2001). This means that students are likely to receive support from their peers in maintaining these damaging symptoms. In perpetrators, this aggressive behavior can carry over into adult dating relationships (Mueller et al. 2013). This means that dating violence in adolescence has severe implications for both the physical and mental well-being of both victims and perpetrators, and can negatively impact individuals in the future.

Dating Violence in Adolescents: Risks for Victimization and Perpetration

To quote Arriaga and Foshee, "How do adolescents become perpetrators and victims of dating violence" (2004: 163)? Their 2004 study drew from Bandura's Social Learning Theory (1986) and Thibault and Kelley's Interdependence Theory (1959) to examine how parental and friend influence work as predicators of adolescent dating

violence. Exposure to violence, both in and outside the family, has been linked to victimization (Jouriles et al. 2009; Gagne et al. 2005). Catalano et al. validated this discovery in their 2012 study, which found higher rates of victimization in women who grew up witnessing domestic violence between parents or were victims of childhood maltreatment. Additionally, Foshee et al. (2005) exposed a correlation between Black adolescents who grew up in domestic abuse households and future perpetration of dating violence. Providing controversy, Arriaga and Foshee's (2004) study revealed that although both friend dating violence and interparental violence exhibited associations with perpetration and victimization, only friend violence was able to consistently predict future data violence.

Young et al. (2012) addressed that another risk of victimization is sexual behavior. There is evidence that adolescents with an earlier introduction to sexual relationships are more likely to fall victim of sexual predators (Young et al. 2012; Jouriles et al. 2009; Howard et al. 2007). Likelihood of victimization also increases with the number of dating partners (Young et al. 2012; Jouriles et al. 2009; Halpern et al 2001). For adolescents who are new to dating, assertiveness and a sense of healthy sexual behaviors are still developing. This makes them exceptionally vulnerable targets to perpetrators (Young et al. 2012). These adolescents are more at risk for sexual coercion due to pressure to engage in romantic relationships (Lacasse and Mendelson 2007). Further, dating violence occurs between adolescents who are in more serious dating relationships than casual ones (Jouriles et al. 2009).

There is also a correlation between substance abuse and dating violence (Young et al. 2012; Jouriles 2009; Lacasse and Mendelson 2007). In a study conducted by Howard

et al. (2003), they note that "male and female adolescents exposed to peer-drinking activities within the past 30 days (e.g. 'Hanging out with friends who drank') were victimized more often than their counterparts who were not exposed to such activities" (Jouriles 2009: 5). Alcohol consumption impairs an individual's ability to detect risk, increasing the possibility of victimization (Young et al. 2012). Young et al. (2012) also mention that, as found in adults, alcohol is often used as a copying mechanism for dealing with negative emotions. This means that individuals struggling with depression and anxiety often resort to using alcohol, increasing their likelihood to end up in potentially dangerous situations.

Young et al. (2012) investigated various other factors that increase the risk of peer sexual coercion. They also looked into how victimization in terms affects these factors, creating a feedback loop. The internalizing and externalizing symptoms often exacerbated by sexual coercion are typically present in the victims prior to the offense. Internalizing symptoms, such as depression or anxiety, may present the individual as vulnerable and a suitable target for victimization (Young et al. 2012). While the association between dating violence and psychological distress assumes a causal relationship between the victimization and distressed behavior, it is feasible that an individual's psychological wellbeing affects who they choose to befriend and date, and therefore affects their likelihood of interacting with future perpetrators (Howard et al. 2007; Molidor and Tolman 1998; Jouriles et al. 2009). Even more, those who exhibit internalizing symptoms, like romantic anxiousness, are likely to view sexual behavior as a way to increase intimacy and self-validation (Young et al. 2012). In the face of coercion, confusion about intimacy increases, which leads to more self-doubt. This

increase in self-doubt may encourage a willingness to engage in unwanted sexual activities to please a partner (Young et al. 2012). Although Young et al.'s (2012) results did not find a significant change in romantic anxiety following sexual coercion, they emphasize that "it remains possible that continued experiences of sexual coercion and the accumulation of other negative romantic experiences may produce an intensification of romantic anxiety or avoidance over time" (Young et al 2012: 568). In support of Young et al. (2012), Lacasse and Mendelson (2007) reported that female victims tend to have lower self-esteem than non-victims.

Those who exhibit externalizing symptoms, like arguing or other conduct problems, often have friend groups that are tolerant towards sexual coercive behaviors, putting them at greater risk for future victimization or acceptance of perpetration (Young et al. 2012). Jouriles et al. argue the same: "In addition, simply having antisocial friends increases risk for victimization. For example, females who associate with violent or victimized peers appear to be at increased risk for dating violence victimization" (2009:5). Additionally, impulsivity is often linked to sexually aggressive behavior (Mouilso et al. 2013).

Adding to studies examining peer groups, Schwartz and Nogrady (1996) found that men who are victimizers are more likely to associate with men who act similarly. Specifically, they found that victimizers were more likely than nonvictimizers to have friends who would "approve of getting a woman drunk for the purpose of having sex with here" (1996: 156). This technique is not unique among groups of men, Lacasse and Mendelson (2007) attested while referencing Kosson, Kelly, and White's (1997) study which found that 21% of men offered drugs and alcohol to women to hinder their senses.

Schwartz and DeKeseredy (2013) further developed this method in their theory of male peer support. One component of their theory is that justification for sexual violence on college campuses is nurtured and supported within certain all-male campus groups- like fraternities and sports teams (DeKeseredy and Schwartz 2013). “Men who belong to these all-male, patriarchal, homosocial networks are more likely than nonmembers to be motivated to abuse women sexually” (Schwartz et al. 2001: 628). This means that friend groups, especially those in support of hyper-masculinity through sexual prowess, can exacerbate and encourage behavior which perpetuates dating violence in order to receive credence from their peers. Likewise, Bohner, Sieber, and Schmelcher (2006) found that rape proclivity in men was determined by perceived rape myth acceptance in others. In combination with the studies by Young et al. (2012) and Jouriles et al. (2009), it can be argued that peer groups make an impact on perpetration of victimization as well as likelihood of victimization.

Also correlated with perpetration is the belief that dating violence is justifiable. “Riggs and O’Leary’s (1989) background-situational model of courtship aggression posits that teens who develop beliefs that relationship violence is acceptable (e.g. for gaining control over the situation) are more likely to perpetrate dating violence” (Mueller et al. 2013: 437). This is a controversial area to study because the opposite can be true, as well: perpetration of violence could later be defended by the offender using victim blaming tendencies. Adolescents alter beliefs in order to reduce cognitive dissonance (Mueller et al. 2013; Festinger 1962).

Demographic Differences in Dating Violence: Gender, Age, Race

While Taylor et al. (2010) noted several studies which indicate that 40-60% of all adolescents experience teenage dating violence (Foshee et al 1996; Hickman et al. 2004; Jouriles et al. 2009), the specific experiences of male and female subjects vary (Taylor et al. 2011). Most report that female adolescents experience more dating violence than their male counterparts (Wolitzky-Taylor 2008). Some studies, on the other hand, express no difference in victimization based on gender (Molidor and Tolman 1998). Upon a more narrowed investigation, though, focusing on sexual and severe violent victimization, they found that females not only experience more victimization, but also sustain more severe injuries as a result of abuse and internalize more fear about future abuse than men (Taylor et al. 2011; Molidar and Tolman 1998).

Response to physical altercations differs between male and female students. Molidar and Tolman's (1998) results showed that the majority of boys responded that they laughed after experiencing a physical altercation, but female respondents did not approach violence so lightheartedly: they defended themselves by fighting back; attempted to talk things out with their partner; or submitted to their violent partner's request. In addition, to guard themselves from physical violence, female respondents reported using violence as a way to defend themselves from controlling behavior: "Girls sometimes used physical violence as a way to respond to boys' attempts to control or diminish them through cheating, flirting with other girls, verbal ridicule, and physical intimidation (e.g. 'getting in my face')" (Lopez et al. 2012: 686). Reyes and Foshee (2012) argued that female adolescents perpetrate sexual dating violence at a rate far less than their male counterparts. Whereas Lacasse and Mendelson (2007) noted Davis, Peck, and Storment's 1993 study, which found that over one half of high school boys reported

that it was acceptable to fore girls into having sex in certain situations. Some of the discrepancies in reporting may be in part because females over-report their own perpetration to take responsibility, while males have a tendency to underreport, denying their own aggressive behavior (Taylor et al. 2011).

Results show that the results for dating violence victimization increases with age (Wolitzky-Taylor 2008). This increase includes physical, psychological, and sexual dating violence (Jouriles et al. 2009). This could be linked to the changing definitions of dating relationships and romantic partners over time. Furthermore, as adolescents grow older, risk-taking behavior increases while parental supervision decreases, putting students at greater risk for victimization. Again, these results emphasize the necessity of longitudinal work, beginning in adolescence to note the onset of attitudes and behaviors of dating.

Race has also been a topic of interest in regards to dating violence with inconsistent results (Reeves and Orphinas 2012). While some studies have found that Black adolescents are more likely than White adolescents to experience dating violence (Jouriles et al. 2009; Howard et al. 2007), others argue that there is no statistically significant difference (Wolitzky-Taylor 2008). Reeves and Orphinas attribute that the differences between racial groups "may be due to varying cultural expectations, socioeconomic status (SES), and early-life exposure" (2012: 1679).

Studies that have investigated race and dating violence have mainly examined the differences between African American and White respondents, often overlooking rates within Asian groups. However, there is evidence of underreporting in Asian respondents (Lee, Pomeroy, Yoo and Rheinbolt 2005). In Asian communities, sexual abuse is labelled

a private matter. In comparison to White, African American, and Hispanic groups, Asian victims are less likely to report their victimization to the authorities. Asian victims also show greater quantities of hopelessness, shame, and embarrassment following rape than their White counterparts. Because of the strong stigmatization that comes with victimization, the tendency to report is less while the negative repercussions are greater (Lee, Pomeroy, Yoo and Rheinbolt 2005).

Rape Myth Acceptance and Adolescent Dating Violence

M.R. Burt coined the term "rape myth" in 1980 to describe prejudice beliefs used to justify male sexual violence against women. These beliefs trivialize the experience of the victim while rationalizing the perpetrator's actions (Craig et al. 2009; Sawyer et al. 2002; Talbot et al. 2010). These beliefs include falsehoods such as "victims enjoy rape… only bad girls get raped… any healthy woman can resist a rapist if she really wants to… and women ask for it" (Craig et al. 2009: 877-878). Other myths comment on a woman's physical appearance, putting emphasis on her clothing choices or sexual history as an attempt to portray her as loose and willing to engage in sex despite her lack of consent (Herbe and Mallet 2011). McMahon (2010) found that some respondents do not directly blame the victims for their assault, but insist that the victim put herself in a bad situation by how she dressed, drinking alcohol, or flirting.

Rape myths are generally false, but widely held and perpetuated (Malo-Juvera 2014). Loughnan et al. (2013) argue that when we do not feel a more concern towards someone, we do not care how they are treated. Unfortunately, such myths have carried over into the legal system. Schwartz et al. (2001) contend that these beliefs and messages

convince many criminal justice offenders, bystanders, and victims that anything that does not qualify as violent stranger rape is not a crime at all. Support of these myths in the criminal justice system "sends a larger message to society that such myths are worthy of relying upon and that they are, for all intents and purposes, true. This is detrimental to all women in the long run" (Mandhane 2001: 209). In his 1996 study, Kershner found that adolescent boys and girls adhere to these rape myths much like their adult counterparts (Herbe and Mallet 2011; Kershner 1996). This emphasizes the importance of approaching the subject in middle school students before the onset of perpetration.

While these points of view are more commonly held by men (Hockett et al. 2009), they are reported in women, as well (Boxley, Lawrance and Gruchow 1995; Johnson, Kuck and Schander 1997). Female victims often perceive their attack as their own responsibility, holding to rape myth acceptance beliefs more strongly than non-victims (Lacasse and Mendelson 2007). "Schwartz and Legget (1999) … found that 23 percent of women who reported being victims of forcible rape and attempted rape said they were completely to blame for the event" (Schwartz et al. 2001: 630). Non-victim females uphold these beliefs as a mechanism of distancing themselves from victims, denying their own vulnerability (Johnson, Kuck and Schander 1997). This means that non-victims attempt to paint themselves as incapable of experiencing the same abuse as their victim counterparts by emphasizing an obscure detail as the rationale behind the attack. Victim blame creates a sense of security in women (Talbot et al. 2010). For instance, if the reason the perpetrator attacked the woman was her clothing, the non-victim will feel less vulnerable if she dresses in a way different from the victim.

Differences in rape myth beliefs have been investigated across racial categories, as well. Johnson, Kuck and Schander (1997) cite that rape myth acceptance is more commonly held in Black respondents. They liken this to other variables that could potentially be associated with support for these beliefs, like religion or sexual mores. However, other studies did not find the same correlation, claiming no statistically significant difference between White and Non-White middle school students in regards to victim blaming (Boxley, Lawrance and Gruchow 1995; Carmody 2001). Disagreement in this area stresses the necessity of further study.

Gender Role Stereotyping and Rape Myth Acceptance

The perpetuation of sexist roles in society propagates the idea that sexual assault is justifiable in various situations. Boxley, Lawrance, and Gruchow (1995) found middle school boys to be more in favor of traditional gender roles, with nearly twice as many male respondents as female respondents answering in favor of encouraging women to focus on being good mothers; and encouraging future sons to attend college over their daughters. Johnson, Kuck and Schander (1997) noted that there is a correlation between gender role stereotyping and victim blame. Lacasse and Mendelson strengthened this finding with their own: rationale like "boys will be boys" and "girls say no when they really mean yes" is used to excuse away responsibility of perpetration (2007). Talbot et al. (2010) urge that sexual violence is a result of society's idea that men must be aggressive while women are supposed to be submissive; therefore, sexual violence is an issue of power. "This aggressive-passive nature of intimate heterosexual relationships often makes distinguishing abnormal and normal heterosexual behavior difficult. This

inability to recognize abnormal behavior supports the existence of rape myths (Burt, 1980)" (Talbot et al. 2010: 172).

Xenos and Smith (2001) elaborate that friends, society, and peers influence the definition of appropriate sexual behavior across genders, and these beliefs "have been associated with adherence to traditional masculine and feminine sexual stereotypes" (2007: 1104). Consumption of sexist and violence media has been correlated with acceptance of rape myths in middle school students (Kaestle et al. 2007). "Berkowitz (1992) reported that men who subscribe to traditional gender roles involving male sexual dominance and who were raised in an atmosphere that encouraged violent and coercive behavior and supported the objectification of women, were more likely to engage in sexually coercive and violent behavior, such as sexual assault and rape" (Talbot et al. 2010: 173). This indicates that exposure to sexist norms negatively influences how men perceive women. Loughnan et al. (2013) agree that objectification of women transforms outsider perception of sexual assault victims, attributing more responsibility to the victim.

Because of the association between support for traditional gender roles and rape myth acceptance, it is assumed that convicted adult rapists would more strongly hold these beliefs than non-offenders. Instead, Epps, Hayworth and Swaffer (1993) found no difference between adolescents convicted of sexual assault and those without an abusive history when it came to their attitudes toward women. However, they urge more investigation into the topic, suggesting that the outdated language of the Attitude Towards Women Scale could have led to their results, creating confusion in the respondents. Further, the number of students who declined to participate in the investigation might have swayed the results (Epps, Hayworth and Swaffer 1993). Lacasse

and Mendelson's (2007) later study found the opposite: that male perpetrators had a higher tendency to support sexist attitudes. This disagreement lends the question: does support for traditional masculinity affect perpetration of domestic violence?

METHODS

This study utilized data gathered by Bruce Taylor, Nan D. Stein, Dan Woods, and Elizabeth Mumford. Their year-long experiment, funded by the United States Department of Justice, was conducted over the course of the 2009-2010 school year. The purpose of their experiment was to evaluate the effectiveness of various dating and sexual violence prevention interventions. Their sample was drawn from thirty, randomly selected public New York City middle schools. Within those schools, there were 117 sixth and seventh grade classrooms (n= 1266 sixth grade students and n= 1388 seventh grade students) which were randomly assigned to one of the intervention techniques. Students were administered a pre-test and two post-tests (one immediately after completion of the intervention and one as a six-month follow-up). These tests were designed to examine knowledge about laws relating to dating violence; attitudes about violence and harassment; behavioral intentions to avoid committing acts and intervening when witnessing acts; individual behavior relating to victimization and perpetration; and other demographic items. Taylor et al. were looking for changes in these items, showing a lasting effectiveness in their intervention strategies.

For the purpose of our experiment, we used only data from the pre-test questionnaire, before any school-wide intervention techniques were implemented. This allowed us to understand students' perspectives on masculinity and victim blaming before the addition of potentially transformative alternative education.

SAMPLE

Taylor et al.'s sample of middle school students was split fairly evenly between sixth and seventh graders, with a slightly higher number of seventh grade participants. The ages of the students ranged from 11 years to 15 years, but 94.5% of respondents fell between 11 and 13 years of age. According to Taylor et al., the ethnic distribution of students reflected the overall breakdown of New York City students (34% Hispanic, 31% African American, 16% Asian, 13% White, and the remaining 6% within the "Other" category).

Because of our specific interest in masculinity, victim blame, gender, and ethnicity, we limited our sample to only respondents who had answered all of the questionnaire items dealing with these subject matters. To ensure this, we conducted a listwise deletion. By doing this deletion, we created a consistent sample which could be used across all our analyses.

Beginning with ethnicity: we were interested in two of Taylor et al.'s items: "What is your race?" and "Are you Hispanic or Latino?" Taylor et al.'s race question categorized responses into Asian, Black or African American, White, Other/Multiracial, Don't Want to Answer, and Missing. Their question examining Hispanic ethnicity was divided into "Yes," "No" and Missing. Any respondents who were missing data in one of these two categories was eliminated from our sample. Next, we needed to create a new ethnicity variable. Previous research often examined Hispanic/Latino responses in comparison to other ethnic categories. Because Taylor et al.'s original race variable does not include a Hispanic/Latino category, it was necessary for us to use their "Are you Hispanic or Latino?" question to supplement their race variable. Those who answered

"Yes" to the "Are you Hispanic or Latino?" question were categorized as "Hispanic/Latino." This allowed us to include those that answered the race question with "Do Not Want to Answer," but responded "Yes" to the Hispanic question. Those who answered "No" to the Hispanic question, but "Asian" to the race question were categorized as "Non-Hispanic Asian." Those who answered "No" to the Hispanic question, but "Black/African American" to the race question were categorized as "Non-Hispanic Black/African American." Those who answered "No" to the Hispanic question, but "White" to the race question were categorized as "Non-Hispanic White." Those who answered "No" to the Hispanic question and "Other/Multiracial" were categorized as "Non-Hispanic Other/Multiracial." Finally, those who answered "No" to the Hispanic question and "Don't Want to Answer" were categorized as "Missing." The "Missing" respondents were eliminated from our study.

Next, we were concerned with gender. Taylor et al. divided their gender category into "Male" and "Female." The respondents who did not answer the gender question were eliminated from our study.

Finally, because we intended to use Taylor et al.'s questionnaire items examining various masculinity and victim blame tendencies to create new variables focused on support for traditional masculinity and support for victim blame mindset, it was necessary to eliminate respondents who failed to answer all these items (see Tables 1 and 2). We coded those who responded with "I do not know" as missing, as well, and they were excluded from the analyses.

Our sample consisted of 156 respondents. Of those, 83 (53.2%) identified as female, while 73 (46.8%) identified as male. 53 (34%) of respondents reported being in

the sixth grade, while the remaining 103 (66%) students were in the seventh. 53 students (34%) identified as Hispanic, 15 (9.6%) as Non-Hispanic Asian, 58 (37.2%) as Non-Hispanic Black/African American, 23 (14.7%) as Non-Hispanic White, and 7 (4.5%) as Non-Hispanic Other/Multiracial.

PROCEDURE

Prior to beginning our analyses on masculinity and victim blame, we were required to create two new variables from Taylor et al.'s questionnaire. The variables on Taylor et al.'s test were written as a Likert scale. Our first created variable "Masculinity" combined various items from the questionnaire testing belief in traditional, masculine roles. These items were recoded to ensure they were measuring strength in the same direction. This means that the responses that agreed with traditional masculinity were given the higher numeric score while those that were not in favor were given a lower score. For example, the item "I think it is important for a boy to talk about his feelings, even if people might laugh at him" was originally coded so that "Strongly Agree" was given a score of 1, "Agree" a score of 2, "Disagree" a score of 3, and "Strongly Disagree" a score of 4. In this case, responding with the answer "Strongly Disagree" implies the strongest feelings favoring traditional masculinity. Because Taylor et al.'s original coding attributed the lowest score to the response most aligned with support for traditional masculinity, this variable had to be reverse coded so that "Strongly Agree" received a score of 4, "Agree" a score of 3, "Disagree" a score of 2, and "Strongly Disagree" a score of 1 before continuing with the creation of the new "Masculinity" variable.

We extracted and recoded sixteen items specific to masculinity from Taylor et al.'s questionnaire before beginning our analysis. See Chart 1 in the Appendix for the list of items that were under consideration. To ensure internal consistency among the items, we conducted a reliability analysis. Of the sixteen, thirteen showed the highest reliability with a Cronbach's alpha of .783, implying an acceptable amount of internal consistency. The items "GIRLBODY," "GIRLASK," and "NOTHIT" were excluded. Using the

Compute method in SPSS, the thirteen items were combined to create a new variable: Masculinity. Each of the individual variables examined students' perceptions about traditionally masculine values, whereas the new variable examines the strength of students' overall support for these beliefs. The higher the score, the more likely the student was to uphold traditional beliefs about masculine roles. The lowest possible score was a 13, indicating the least support for traditional masculinity. The highest possible score was a 52, which would indicate the greatest support for traditional masculinity. Of our sample of 156 students, the lowest score was a 16 and the highest score was a 46. The average score was 28.8397 with a standard deviation of 5.9639. Table 1 breaks down the average masculinity scores by ethnicity and gender.

We used the same method in creating the new variable "VictimBlame." We identified a total of seven items from the original survey which examined respondents' acceptance of rape myths. (See Chart 2 in the Appendix). Like with our new "Masculinity" variable, we had to make sure that the victim blame items were measuring responses in the same direction and that the numerical scores increased along with the strength of victim blame. For instance, for Taylor et al.'s original item "Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with 'when a girl says no, she really means yes, or maybe, or later'" the response "Strongly Agree" was given a value label of 1, "Agree" a score of 2, "Disagree" a score of 3, and "Strongly Disagree" a value of 4. In this case, a respondent answer "Strongly Agree" corresponds with highest tendency to victim blame. Because we want a higher numerical value to indicate stronger feelings of victim blame, the original item was reverse coded. All seven of the items went through the recoding process. Following this scrutiny, a reliability analysis was conducted to verify internal

consistency. The reliability score was the highest among the seven variables, giving us a Cronbach's alpha of .648. This is lower than the widely accepted value of .7 or higher. However, Lance et al. (2006) argue that this ideal value is arbitrary and in need of further study, citing that many researchers who accept this value as ideal will still use data with slightly lower reliabilities. So while Cronbach's alpha = .648 is lower than the ideal, it was accepted for the purpose of this study. The seven items were combined into a new variable "VictimBlame" by using the Compute method in SPSS. The stronger the support for victim blaming techniques, the higher the score of the new variable. The lowest possible score was a 7, indicating the least support for victim blaming tendencies. The highest score possible was a 28, which implies the most support for victim blaming tendencies. Out of our 156 respondents, the minimum score was a 7 and the maximum score was a 26. The average score was a 15.1346 with a standard deviation of 3.7089. Table 1 breaks down the VictimBlame average scores by ethnicity and gender.

Using our new variables of Masculinity and VictimBlame, we chose to run a bivariate regression analysis to examine the relationship between the two. We identified VictimBlame as the independent variable and Masculinity as the dependent variable. We also chose to examine the effects gender and ethnicity have on victim blame. Following this analysis, we performed analyses of variance on masculinity, examining whether support for traditional masculinity varies by ethnicity and gender.

Table 1. Frequency Distributions for new Victim Blame and Masculinity Variables

Case Summaries: Victim Blame and Masculinity by Ethnicity and Gender

ETHNICITY	GENDER		VICTIMBLAME	MASCULINITY
Hispanic	Female	Mean	13.5758	25.7879
		N	33	33
	Male	Mean	17.9000	32.4500
		N	20	20
	Total	Mean	15.2075	28.3019
		N	53	53
Asian	Female	Mean	15.0000	24.6667
		N	9	9
	Male	Mean	14.5000	29.6667
		N	6	6
	Total	Mean	14.8000	26.6667
		N	15	15
Black/African American	Female	Mean	13.9167	27.1250
		N	24	24
	Male	Mean	15.9118	32.2353
		N	34	34

	Total	Mean	15.0862	30.1207
		N	58	58
White	Female	Mean	13.6923	25.2308
		N	13	13
	Male	Mean	17.8000	29.7000
		N	10	10
	Total	Mean	15.4783	27.1739
		N	23	23
Other/Multiracial	Female	Mean	14.5000	31.0000
		N	4	4
	Male	Mean	14.6667	34.3333
		N	3	3
	Total	Mean	14.5714	32.4286
		N	7	7
Total	Female	Mean	13.8916	26.2169
		N	83	83
	Male	Mean	16.5479	31.8219
		N	73	73
	Total	Mean	15.1346	28.8397
		N	156	156

RESULTS

Hypothesis I: Students Who Show Favoritism Towards Traditional Masculinity will be More Likely to Victim Blame

In order to test our hypothesis *students who show favoritism towards traditional masculinity will be more likely to victim blame*, we used SPSS to perform a bivariate regression analysis. In our analysis, we identified the new variable "VictimBlame" as the dependent variable and "Masculinity" as the independent variable.

Before beginning our analysis, it was necessary to check certain assumptions. First, we began by examining linearity between Masculinity and VictimBlame. Our scatterplot confirmed a visual linearity between our independent and dependent variable. Our histogram revealed a relatively normal distribution, with all respondents within +/- 3 standard deviations of the mean. Therefore, there were no outliers. Further analysis of the VictimBlame variable revealed normality with no relevant skewness (statistic = .414; standard error = .194) or kurtosis (statistic = .167; standard error = .386). Also, in examining a scatterplot of the residuals against the dependent variable, we found our data to have homoscedasticity, meaning that "the conditional distribution of y has constant standard deviation throughout the range of values of the explanatory values" (Agresti and Finlay 2009:448).

In conducting a linear regression analysis, we were hoping to answer three questions: 1) Does a relationship exist between support for traditional masculinity and a tendency to victim blame?; 2) If it exists, how strong is this relationship?; and 3)What is the direction of the relationship?

Our results showed a significant, positive, moderate relationship between Masculinity and VictimBlame. In this case, Pearson's R was .555 (p = .000). The adjusted coefficient of determination was .303. This means that 30.3% of the variation in tendency to victim blame was explained by support for traditional masculinity. Our regression analysis revealed a constant of 5.188 and a slope of .345. In studies with human subjects, a slope of .345 is fairly high. Comparatively, in Hockett et al.'s 2009 investigation of rape myth acceptance and attitudes toward rape victims, they obtained a significant slope of .306 when predicting rape myth acceptance by sexual prejudice, and a significant slope of .260 when predicting rape myth acceptance by hostile sexism. Our results give us the linear regression model of VictimBlame = 5.188 + .345x where x is support for traditional masculinity. This predicts that for every one-unit increase in support for traditional masculinity, the tendency to victim blame increases by .345. This supports our original hypothesis that students who show favoritism towards traditional masculinity will be more likely to victim blame. (See Model 1 in Table 2.)

Because previous research indicates that race and gender could potentially affect the outcome of our variables, we chose to perform a multiple regression analysis, which looked specifically at our variables of ethnicity and gender. This allowed us to observe the effect that support for traditional masculinity had on tendency to victim blame while controlling for ethnicity and gender, as well as giving us the opportunity to observe variation in victim blaming across gender and ethnic categories. Since our two additional variables were categorical, we were required to create dummy variables before proceeding with our investigation.

Our first dummy variable, “Gender,” was coded so that male respondents were given the value of 1 and female respondents were given the value of 0. This means that for our analysis, females were used as the reference group. Our variable “Ethnicity” had five categories: Hispanic/Latino, Non-Hispanic Asians, Non-Hispanic Black/African Americans, Non-Hispanic Whites; and Non-Hispanic Other/Multiracial. We used Non-Hispanic Whites as our reference and created four dummy variables to represent the other ethnic categories.

Again, in examining our scatterplot, our relationship is linear. The distribution appears to be normal with no outliers and homoscedastic. Further, in examining the Variation Inflation Factor, multicollinearity does not appear to be an issue (VIF for variable Masculinity: 1.355; and Dummy variables: Asian: 1.494; Black: 2.275; Hispanic: 2.203; Other: 1.292; Gender: 1.318).

In running a multiple regression analysis, we are interested in seeing the combined effects of all the independent variables on our dependent variable. Our results indicate a significant, positive, moderate relationship between our independent variables and a tendency to Victim Blame ($R = .592$, $p = .000$). The adjusted coefficient of determination was .325. This means that 32.5% of the variation in tendency to victim blame was explained by our independent variables: support for traditional masculinity, ethnicity, and victim blame. The very minimal improvement, 30.3% of the variation to 32.5% of the variation in this indicator, could be in part because of the dummy variables Non-Hispanic Black ($p < .05$) and the Non-Hispanic Other ($p < .05$) ethnic variables, which each showed a significant impact on the dependent variable. The other variables do not indicate significance in the regression analysis. However, even with controlling for

ethnicity and gender, masculinity is still a significant predictor in victim blaming tendencies ($p = .000$). Furthermore, the R and adjusted coefficient of determination increase only slightly with the addition of the dummy variables as shown in Model 2 of Table 2.

Examining our dummy variables, we found some significant difference from our reference variables, as well. Two of our ethnicity variables differ from the reference variable. According to our results, Non-Hispanic Black/African American respondents were estimated to victim blame 1.520 units less than their Non-Hispanic White counterparts, controlling for gender and masculinity ($p < .05$). Additionally, Non-Hispanic Other/Multiracial respondents were estimated to victim blame 2.657 units less than the Non-Hispanic White reference group ($p < .05$). If we chose to accept an alpha = .10, we could assess that the tendency to victim blame varies by gender ($p < .10$). This represents the difference between the estimated support for victim blaming tendencies for men and women controlling for ethnicity and support for traditional masculinity. Our coefficient ($\beta = .947$) indicates that the estimated tendency to victim blame is .947 units higher for men than women at each level of support for masculinity.

Table 2. Regression Analyses for Victim Blame and Masculinity

Model Summary: Victim Blame x Masculinity

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.555[a]	.308	.303	3.09631
2	.592[b]	.351	.325	3.04792

Coefficients for Predicting Victim Blame Scores

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	5.188	1.228		4.225	.000
	MASCULINITY	.345	.042	.555	8.270	.000
2	(Constant)	6.932	1.604		4.322	.000
	MASCULINITY	.334	.048	.537	6.995	.000
	ASIAN	-.476	1.012	-.038	-.470	.639
	BLACK/AFRICANAM	-1.520	.762	-.199	-1.996	.048
	HISPANIC	-.593	.765	-.076	-.776	.439
	OTHER/MULTI	-2.657	1.340	-.149	-1.983	.049
	GENDER	.947	.562	.128	1.686	.094

Hypothesis II: Support for Traditional Masculinity will differ by Ethnicity

In order to test the hypothesis that *support for traditional masculinity will differ by ethnicity*, a One-way ANOVA test was performed looking at how our new masculinity variable varies by our new ethnicity variable. ANOVA assumes that each of the samples are independent and random, the populations are normally distributed, and that the population variances are equal. We were able to test the population variances by using Levene's test. If Levene's test was significant then we could assume that the variances are significantly different from one another. In this case, there was not enough evidence to suggest a difference in population variances (Levene Statistic = 1.592; p. = .179). Therefore, we were able to proceed with the ANOVA test. This test examined the means of each category in comparison to one another, to see if the means came from the same population or if at least one categorical mean differs from the others. The null hypothesis was that all population means are the same, whereas the alternative was that at least one population mean was different. According to the One-way ANOVA test, at least one of the ethnic categories was significantly different from the others ($F = 2.445$; $p < .05$) with an eta-squared value of .061. According to our results, we would reject the null hypothesis that the average support for masculinity is the same across all ethnic categories in favor of the alternative hypothesis. The eta-square value means that 6.1% of the variation in support of traditional masculinity is explained by ethnicity.

ANOVA is limited in that the alternative hypothesis only determines that there is a difference among categories; it cannot explain which categories are different. In order to make multiple comparisons among the means of the different ethnic categories, we conducted a post hoc examination. Since homogeneity of variances was met, for the

purpose of this examination, we chose to use the Scheffe's post hoc test. Our Scheffe's post hoc exam did not reveal any significant differences between the individual ethnic categories. There are many reasons why no differences appeared. For instance, it could be because of different sample sizes or variability in the individual categories. Further, the ANOVA is examining differences among all the levels, whereas the post-hoc is comparing the individual levels, so they are investigating two different research questions. Although our Scheffe's test did not find any significant differences in support of masculinity between the individual ethnic categories, from our ANOVA examination, we know that at least one of the categories is different from the whole. Therefore, future research is necessary to determine which ethnic groups vary.

Hypothesis III: Support for Traditional Masculinity will differ by Gender

To test our hypothesis that *support for traditional masculinity will differ by gender*, we performed a One-way ANOVA. Again, we ran Levene's test in order to test the population variances. Levene's test was not significant (Levene's statistic = .544; p = .462). Because this test was not significant, we could assume that the variances are statistically different from one another. The null hypothesis was that all the population means were the same and the alternative was that at least one population mean differs. In this case, we are looking at the means of two categories: male and female respondents. According to our results, we would reject the null hypothesis. There is a difference between male and female respondents in regards to support for masculinity (F = 43.774; p = 000) with an eta-square of .221. The eta-square value means that 22.1% of the variation in support of traditional masculinity is explained by gender.

The average score for support of traditional masculinity in female respondents was 26.2169 and the average score for support of traditional masculinity in male respondents was 31.8219. The average score for support for traditional masculinity was 28.8397. From this, we were able to determine that male respondents were more likely to support traditional masculinity than female respondents.

Table 3. One-way ANOVA: Does support for traditional masculinity vary by ethnicity and gender?

ANOVA: Masculinity varies by Ethnicity

MASCULINITY

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	335.317	4	83.829	2.445	.049
Within Groups	5177.677	151	34.289		
Total	5512.994	155			

ANOVA: Masculinity varies by Gender

MASCULINITY

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1220.212	1	1220.212	43.774	.000
Within Groups	4292.781	154	27.875		
Total	5512.994	155			

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSIONS

To review, from previous research we developed three research questions specific to victim blaming tendencies and support for traditional masculinity in middle school students. Our research questions were the following:

Research Question 1: How does support for traditional masculinity affect respondents' tendency to victim blame?

Research Question 2: How does support for traditional masculinity differ by ethnicity?

Research Question 3: How does support for traditional masculinity differ by gender?

To test these questions, we utilized Taylor et al.'s 2009 study done in New York middle schools. After performing a listwise deletion, removing the respondents who did not answer the questions on masculinity, victim blame, gender, or race, we were left with a sample of 156 students. To test our research questions, we had to compute the new variables "Masculinity" and "VictimBlame," which were created from Taylor et al.'s original dataset. We also had to supplement Taylor et al.'s race variable with respondents from their "Are you Hispanic or Latino?" variable.

We hypothesized that *students who show favoritism towards traditionally masculinity will be more likely to victim blame.* Our results supported our hypothesis. According to the results from our linear regression model, Pearson's R was .555 ($p = .000$). This indicates a significant, positive, moderate relationship between Masculinity and Victim Blame, meaning that as support for traditional masculinity increases, the

tendency to victim blame increases, as well. Further, the slope of our regression model was positive (β= .345; p = .000), which predicts that for every one-unit increase in support for traditional masculinity, the tendency to victim blame will increase by .345 units in our respondents with a constant of 5.188.

We were also interested in the effect ethnicity and gender have on this relationship. In order to examine this, we performed a multilinear regression analysis. Our analysis revealed a significant, positive, moderate relationship between our independent variables and the dependent variable of "VictimBlame" (R = .592; p = .000). The adjusted coefficient of determination was .325. This was a very minimal increase from the previous model, indicating that little was gained with the addition of the gender and ethnicity dependent variables. This added more support to our original hypothesis that students who show favoritism towards traditionally masculinity will be more likely to victim blame.

Our results dovetail with the previous research done on victim blame and support for traditional masculinity. Talbot et al. (2010) argued that society's definition of masculinity includes an expectation of aggressive behavior from men, which leads to difficulty in distinguishing abnormal, abusive behaviors in relationships. Therefore, rape myths are often supported in those that place stronger value on traditional masculine roles. Lacasse and Mendelson (2007) regarded that excuses such as "boys will be boys" and "girls mean yes when they say no" were often used to excuse away dating violence. This implies that because boys are supposed to be more aggressive than their female counterparts, sexual abuse is justifiable. Our results agree with these analyses and add validation to the results of preceding research.

Analysis of the dummy variables in the regression revealed variety in the independent variable by certain dependent variables. For instance, our Non-Hispanic Black/African American dummy variable had a $\beta = -1.520$ ($p < .01$). This indicates that while controlling for the other dependent variables, the estimated tendency to victim blame is 1.520 units lower at each level of support for traditional masculinity than the reference group- Non-Hispanic White respondents. Interestingly, previous studies (Johnson, Kuck and Schander 1997; Boxley, Lawrance and Gruchow 1995; Carmody 2001) have debated on whether rape myths are more widely held in Black respondents than their White counterparts to little agreement. While they have found that Black respondents are more likely to believe rape myths, or that there is no difference between Black and White respondents, the finding that Black respondents are less likely than the White reference group to resort to victim blame as justification for sexual abuse is new. This finding, especially in such a young sample, stresses the necessity to continue researching this topic.

The dummy variable Non-Hispanic Other/Multiracial was also found to be significant ($\beta = -2.657$; $p < .01$). Like with the Non-Hispanic African America/Black variable, this result indicates that while controlling for the other dependent variables, the estimated tendency for Non-Hispanic Other/Multiracial respondents to victim blame is 2.657 units lower than the Non-Hispanic White reference category. This is a unique finding in that multiracial respondents are not usually the focus when comparing victim blame among ethnic groups. Of course, our sample of multiracial students was small ($N = 7$), so future research with a larger portrayal of multiracial students could yield different results. Further, Johnson, Kuck and Schander (1997) likened that cultural differences

within race categories like religion or sexual mores attribute to victim blame. While survey questions can be conducted to reveal some of these cultural differences within ethnic groups, multiracial groups are more difficult to define. “Multiracial” implies that the respondent identifies as more than one ethnic category, but it does not specify which or if the respondent views being multiracial as its own ethnicity. Therefore, qualitative work, such as interviews, could help to better reveal these differences in beliefs in multiracial students, while taking into consideration how the cultural differences of varying ethnicities affect beliefs towards victim blame.

Our last significant result was found in the gender dummy variable. While the significance here is low ($\beta = .947$; $p < .10$), we are choosing to draw attention to it to urge further investigation in the future. Controlling for the other dependent variables, our analysis indicates that the estimated tendency to victim blame is .947 units higher for male respondents than the reference female category.

We hypothesized that *support for traditional masculinity will differ by ethnicity.* We conducted a One-way ANOVA using our created ethnicity and masculinity variables to test this hypothesis. Our results supported our hypothesis ($F = 2.445$; $p < .05$). Because our results were significant, we had to reject the null hypothesis that all population means of “support for traditional masculinity” would be the same in support of the alternative hypothesis: at least one population mean is different. We conducted a Scheffe’s post-hoc test to examine the differences among the categories, however, this test did not reveal any significant differences between our individual ethnic categories. From our frequency distribution, we observed that the overall average of support for traditional masculinity was 28.8397. The averages of the other categories are as follows: Hispanic: 28.3019;

Asian: 26.6667; Black: 30.1207; White: 27.1739; and Other/Multiracial: 32.4286. While One-way ANOVA is limited in that it cannot reveal to us which categories are significantly different, we are able to use the frequency distribution to get a general idea. While we cannot claim that Asian respondents and Multiracial respondents differ significantly from the average, we can urge future research in these areas. In support of this, Lee, Pomeroy, Yoo and Rheinbolt (2005) have emphasized the lack of research done in Asian subjects in general, so our results reveal a gap in the current data.

Our last hypothesis was *support for traditional masculinity will differ by gender.* We conducted a One-way ANOVA to examine this hypothesis. The results supported our assumption ($F = 43.774$; $p = 000$) that male respondents differ from female respondents. The average values of support for traditional masculinity revealed that male participants responded showing more favor towards traditional masculinity than their female counterparts.

DISCUSSION

As of present, Taylor et al.'s research has not been utilized for much academic research. With the exception of Ethan Levine's (2015) article "Sexual Violence Among Middle School Students: The Effects of Gender and Dating Experience," the publications of this dataset have been written by Taylor et al., focused specifically on the results of their prevention program. Levine (2015) used the large dataset to study exclusively the prevalence of unwanted sexual contact, peer on peer, in students attending New York City public middle schools. His study revealed that "while boys' violence towards girls comprises a substantial proportion of sexual violence in this population, same-sex violence and girls' violence towards boys are also prevalent" (Levine 2015: 1).

We are not aware of any other research gleaning Taylor et al.'s dataset to study the relationship between support for traditional masculinity and the tendency to victim blame in middle school students. Because research in dating violence in adolescents is already limited, it is our hope that this study will contribute some understanding to this field and open the doors for new research opportunities. Furthermore, the link between support for traditional masculinity and victim blame reveals the need to redefine masculinity, starting as early as middle school.

Limitations

This study has several limitations, which will hopefully be addressed in future research. First, Taylor et al. addressed that one of the limitations of their research was the use of self-reports through the use of surveys. Their rationale is that this fails to capture the intensity and the context of violent dating behavior and sexual harassment (Taylor et

al. 2009; Wolfe et al. 2009). Although our research does not focus specifically on dating violence or harassment, this limitation does carry over in the observations of support for traditional masculinity and victim blame, as well. Previous research indicates that peer groups (DeKeserdy and Schwartz 2013) and cultural differences (Johnson, Kuck and Schander 1997), like religion or ideas of sexual mores, often shape the respondents' ideas of masculinity and victim blame. Unfortunately, surveys are limited in that they cannot reveal the complexities in how culture shapes these beliefs in the same way qualitative research- like interviews or focus groups- can.

Further, as with any survey, there was the potential for underreporting or biased reporting. In responding to questions of masculinity or victim blame, students may have deliberately reported a different behavior because of what they believed to be the expected answer instead of answering the question honestly.

In addition to underreporting or biased reporting, not responding was also a major limitation in this study. Although, Taylor et al. boasted a 93% response rate of the baseline survey (the survey we used for our research), the completion of the surveys was severely lacking. We performed a listwise deletion to create our sample, only including respondents who answered all the items we were including in our study. While the original survey was administered to over 2500 students, only 156 completed all the items we used in our investigation. Future research needs to approach this issue before beginning another study. It is necessary to figure out why students failed to answer the questions. Was it a lack of incentive to complete the 12-page survey? Were they disinterested? Did they have trouble understanding the language used? Were they uncomfortable with the material? In order to gain the best sample possible, researchers

need to eliminate the possibility that students will refuse to answer questionnaire items as much as possible.

Implications for Future Research

Our research was focused on the relationships between masculinity, victim blame, ethnicity, and gender in middle school students. We chose middle school students because middle school is considered the onset of dating violence (Jouriles et al. 2009; Wilitzky-Taylor et al. 2008). A longitudinal study, examining how the respondents' answers change as they grow older, is warranted. Further, in conjunction with DeKeseredy and Schwartz's (2013) theory on male peer support, the researcher may want to include survey items on peer groups in a longitudinal study. This way, they can examine not only how responses change as students age, but also how the addition of specific peer groups affects their responses.

Taylor et al. did not discuss how family affects dating violence and harassment in middle school students. Given that previous research reveals that those who observe violence in and outside the family have been linked to victimization (Jouriles et al. 2009; Gagne et al. 2005) and Black adolescents who grew up in domestic abuse households are more likely to perpetrate dating violence (Foshee et al. 2005), it is not a stretch to investigate how family structure affects perception of masculinity and victim blame.

Further, as indicated by our results on ethnicity in regards to victim blame and masculinity, it is apparent that more culture specific questions need to be asked. How do ethnic groups vary culturally and how do these differences affect perceptions of masculinity and victim blame?

While our inter-reliability analysis suggested that the thirteen masculinity items included in our variable were reliable indicators of one another, future research might consider examining each individually to see if there are particular gender stereotypes more commonly associated with victim blame. Further, some of our masculinity items were more relationship specific (example: “In dating relationships between males and females, males should be the leaders and decision-makers”) while others were more focused on masculinity in general (ex: “It’s important for a boy to act like nothing is wrong, even when something is”). Therefore, creation of two new masculinity items (one focused on traditional masculinity in dating relationships and another focused on society-accepted views on male emotion) could potentially yield different results in terms of support for victim blame.

Lastly, it is necessary to apply these ideas of masculinity and victim blaming to victimization and perpetration of dating violence. How do support for traditional masculinity and victim blame affect victimization and perpetration of dating violence in middle school students? Additionally, how do support for traditional masculinity and victim blame change following victimization and perpetration of dating violence?

It is our hope that our research provides a stepping stone to furthering the understanding masculinity and victim blaming in middle school students. Also, that through additional research, this knowledge continues to grow, as do potential solutions and better formulated prevention programs.

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Appendix

Chart 1: Masculinity Items from Taylor et al.'s Questionnaire

Masculinity Items		
Survey Question	Variable Label	Description
7A	GIRLBODY	Girls' bodies are the only things that matter to most boys
7B	BOYTELLS	A boy who tells his girlfriend who she can hang out with is being too controlling
7C	MALELDR	In dating relationships between males and females, males should be the leaders and decision-makers
7D	BOYSISSY	A boy who claims he has been sexually harassed is a nerd, wimp, sissy, or wuss
7E	GIRLASK	It is all right for a girl to ask a boy out on a date
17A	NOTHWRNG	It's important for a boy to act like nothing is wrong, even when something is
17B	BGETWAY	In a good dating relationship, the boy gets his way most of the time
17C	DONTFGHT	I can respect a boy who backs down from a fight
17D	BSAYNO	It's okay for a boy to say no to sex
17E	DONTSHOW	Boys should not let it show when their feelings are hurt
17F	NOTHIT	A boy never needs to hit another boy to get respect
17G	TELLWEAK	If a boy tells people his worries, he will look weak
17H	GOAFTER	I think it's important for a boy to go after what he wants, even if it means hurting other people's feelings
17I	ACTSEX	I think it is important for a boy to act like he is sexually active even if he is not
17K	BASKHELP	It's embarrassing for a boy when he needs to ask for help
17L	SAYLAUGH	I think it is important for a boy to talk about his feelings, even is people might laugh at him

Chart 2: Victim Blame Items from Taylor et al.'s Questionnaire

Victim Blame Items		
Survey Question	Variable Label	Description
8A	NOMSNO	Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with 'when a girl says no, she really means yes or maybe or later.'
8E	HAVEFUN	Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with 'sexual harassment is just having fun.'
8F	FLIRTNC	Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with 'if I have flirted with a person in the past, then I am encouraging sexual harassment by them.'
9A	COMPLI	Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with 'when boys make comments and suggestions about girls' bodies, girls should take it as a compliment.'
9B	NONEBUS	Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with 'if I see a guy and his girlfriend physically fighting at school, it's none of my business.'
9D	DESERVE	Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with 'girls are asking to be sexually harassed when they wear short skirts and tight clothes.'
9E	GIRLSLIE	Please state how strongly you agree or disagree with 'girls lie about being raped just to get back at their dates.'