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The Impact Of Victim Age And Religious Affiliation On Perceptions Of Cleric Sex Offenders

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THE IMPACT OF VICTIM AGE AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION ON
PERCEPTIONS OF CLERIC SEX OFFENDERS

by

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Bachelor of Arts, Ohio University, 2012

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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This thesis, submitted by Kaylee A. Stone in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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Kaylee A. Stone
June 15, 2015

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined perceptions of sex offenders using a 2 (victim age: 11-year-old vs. 15-year-old) X 2 (type of sexual offense: rape vs. statutory rape) X 3 (affiliation of the perpetrator: public school teacher vs. Catholic priest teacher vs. Lutheran pastor teacher) factorial design. Participants (N = 286) were asked to read one of 12 vignettes describing charges of improper sexual activity between a male teacher and his male student. Results indicated that participants recommended a shorter sentence and registry level, attributed more blame to the victim and less to the offender, and found the victim more mentally unstable when the offense was statutory rape. Participants believed that the offender was mentally unstable, should be convicted at a higher rate, and attributed less blame to the victim when the victim was 11. Participants also recommended lengthier sentences to the Lutheran pastor when the offense was rape. Implications are discussed.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Cleric sexual abuse (i.e., a sexual offense committed by a religious leader while in a religious role) was presented and publicized by the media in the past decade due to the notorious Roman Catholic scandal reported by *The Boston Globe* in 2002. This investigation not only concerned sexual abuse by Roman Catholic priests in Boston, but it provided evidence that Catholic Church officials ignored the allegations and tried to cover them up. Because of the initial reports administered to the public by this newspaper alone, victims filed lawsuits against other clergy members around the world. This led to a national Catholicism catastrophe revealing the extent and intensity of sexual abuse in this population (Boston Globe Investigative Staff, 2002; Cimboric & Cartor, 2006; McGlone, 2003; Plante, 2003, 2004; Plante & Daniels, 2004).

The media made a significant impact on how the public perceives clergy members. Although cleric sexual abuse can occur in any religion, the media has focused largely on those within the Catholic Church. It has been reported in other religious groups, as well as in other professions where an authority figure works closely with children. In addition to associating priests with sexual abuse, there are numerous myths the media portrayed that are inconsistent with current research regarding this topic.

Sexual Offenses

Since the media focused on high profile rape cases of cleric sex offenders with 100s of victims, it is possible that the public generalized this to all clergy members accused of sexual

abuse. Although rape cases occurred, only a minority of Roman Catholic priests were involved. In reality, the most common form of sexual abuse among cleric sex offenders was genital fondling without penetration with an average of 8.5 victims per offender (Plante, 2003). Although the amount of cleric sex offender victims is significantly lower than the 100s of victims disclosed by the media, a sex offender with multiple victims would still be considered a high-risk offender. Although these criteria may differ across states, a high-risk sex offender most likely committed multiple offenses, refused to be proactive with treatment, displayed behaviors that would put them at an increased risk, or is more likely to recidivate (State of North Dakota Office of Attorney General, n.d.). High-risk offenders are usually required to register as a sex offender for life.

Depending on the crime of conviction and sentence length of each cleric sex offender, he or she might not even be categorized as a Tier 1 on the sex offender registry. There are three tier levels in categorizing sex offenders to help promote public safety. The level indicates the length of sex offender registration and the extent in which the community is notified of the offender. Each tier requires the individual to annually register as a sex offender. A Tier 1 offender has to register for 15 years, followed by a Tier 2 offender for 25 years. A Tier 3 offender has to register for the rest of his or her life. This system was created as a result of the Adam Walsh Act [AWA] (2006), which was put into legislation after the kidnapping and murder of a Florida child resident, Adam Walsh. Title I of the AWA includes the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA), which requires all states to standardize registration and community notifications based on a three-tier system (AWA, 2006). Sex offenders who commit misdemeanor offenses are classified in Tier 1. This type of offense will only result in less than a

year in prison. Tiers 2 and 3 are more serious offenses, which require over a year of imprisonment. The difference between a Tier 2 and Tier 3 categorization is the nature of the sexual offense, although both include sexual felony offenses. Tier 2 includes offenses that are more severe than Tier 1, but not as severe as a Tier 3, such as using a minor to commit a sexual act. Tier 3 offenses are the most severe sexual felonies, such as aggravated sexual abuse (Freeman & Sadler, 2010). Additional crimes under Tier 3 include, but are not limited to, rape in the third and second degree, criminal sexual acts in the third and second degree, sexual abuse in the first and second degree, and forcible touching (Freeman & Sadler, 2010). In general, the severity and type of sexual offense will determine the sex offender's tier classification.

Rape vs. Statutory Rape

There are many types of sexual behaviors that constitute sexual assault, which are characterized by both physical and sexual violence (Masters et al., 2011). Sexual violence is not limited to one definite crime, but covers a range of crimes. This includes sexual intercourse by force with vaginal, anal, and/or oral penetration and also using foreign objects or weapons to inflict sexual harm to the victim (Masters et al., 2011). For the purpose of this study, the two types of sexual assault that were of particular interest were rape and statutory rape.

In 2012, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI, 2013) altered the Uniform Crime Report's (UCR) definition for "rape." The word "forcible" was abandoned from the original definition and changed to the phrase, "penetration no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim" (FBI, 2013). This new definition is more detailed, and it includes the use of objects, anatomy of both genders, and other types of sexual assault where force is not used.

Although the number of “forcible” rapes has dropped in 2013, the number of rapes increased from 13, 242 during the first half of 2012 to 14,400 in 2013 with the newly adopted definition (Long, 2014). This is likely due to expanding the definition of rape. Adjustments made to the definition of rape acknowledge that men can also be rape victims. It is estimated that 1 in every 33 American men have experienced a completed or attempted rape in their lifetime (3%), while 1 out of every 6 American women have experienced one or the other (17%). Additionally, 15% of sexual assault and rape victims are children under the age of 12, and 44% are under the age of 18 (RAINN, 2009).

Under the current definition of rape, agencies are not able to classify statutory rape as rape (FBI, 2013). Statutory rape does not have one clear definition, and depending on the state, the specific terminology may not be used. It can also be considered sexual assault, sexual abuse of a minor, or other related terms. Overall, the general description is sexual relations with an individual who is willing, but not legally old enough to consent to the sexual act (Troup-Leasure & Snyder, 2005). It is age dependent, and the law differs across states. If it were not for the ages of the sexual partners, their relationship would be considered legal. There are a number of ways states differ on this issue. The age of consent, punishment for offense, and age difference between sexual partners varies from state to state (Troup-Leasure & Snyder, 2005). A few differences exist between what was called “forcible” rape and statutory rape, too. In most cases, “forcible” rapes involved the use of a weapon, and around one fifth of the “forcible” rapes involved a physically harmed victim (Troup-Leasure & Snyder, 2005). According to the U.S. Department of Justice article from Troup-Leasure and Snyder (2005), around 4% of statutory rapes between the ages of 7 and 17 involved female victims, while 5% involved male victims.

Additionally, 70% of the offenders of male victims were 21 years of age or older, which was an overwhelming majority compared to that of female victims. Close to 50% of the statutory rapes with male victims involved offenders over the age of 24.

Although both rape and statutory rape are considered sexual assault, blame is attributed differently. With female acquaintance rape cases, individuals perceive the victim and perpetrator as having a mutual relationship, and as a result, the behavior appears to be more acceptable (Bostwick & DeLucia, 1992). Participants found rape victims more deserving of the blame when they knew their offender, regardless of gender (White & Yamawaki, 2009). Because victims in statutory rape cases are familiar with the offender, and the sexual act is considered mutual, it is possible that more blame would be attributed to the victim. In addition to classifying the type of crime committed (i.e., rape vs. statutory rape), it is important to recognize the offender type and the age of the victim.

Pedophilia vs. Ephebophilia

In order to understand the characteristics of cleric sex offenders, their sex offender classification, and risk for recidivism, it is important to first distinguish between pedophilia and ephebophilia. Pedophilia is the term used to describe any individual who is sexually attracted to and prefers prepubescent children. The American Psychiatric Association [APA] (2013) states that pedophilia is a type of paraphilia, which is defined as “any intense and persistent sexual interest other than sexual interest in genital stimulation or preparatory fondling with phenotypically normal, physically mature, consenting human partners” (p. 685). There are some instances in which the phrase “intense and persistent” are not applicable, and as a result, paraphilia may be defined as “any sexual interest greater than or equal to normophilic sexual

interests” (p. 685). The DSM-IV-TR included pedophilia as a mental disorder, but this recently changed as of May 2013 because of the introduction of the DSM-V. Currently, pedophilic disorder replaced the previous term, and it is now included under the category of paraphilic disorders in the newest edition of the manual.

According to the DSM-V (APA, 2013), a paraphilic disorder is a paraphilia in which the individual experiences distress or impairment presently or a paraphilia whose fulfillment has caused, imposed, or has the potential risk to impose personal harm or harm to others. Suffering from a paraphilia is not sufficient to hospitalize an individual for intervention, but it is essential to have a paraphilia when diagnosed with paraphilic disorder. The DSM-V characterizes pedophilic disorder as an anomalous target preferences group, meaning this disorder is directed towards other individuals. The diagnostic criteria for pedophilic disorder requires that the individual experience recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child or children for a duration of six months (APA, 2013). Typically, the child or children are 13 years old or younger. The individual has either acted out his or her sexual urges, or the sexual urges or fantasies cause marked distress or interpersonal difficulty. It is necessary that the individual is at least 16 years old and at least five years older than the child or children involved. The DSM-V does not include individuals in late adolescence who have current and continuous sexual relationships with 12 or 13 years olds. Individuals could have pedophilic disorder with specified types, such as exclusive type (attracted only to children), nonexclusive type, sexually attracted to males, sexually attracted to females, sexually attracted to both, and limited to incest (APA, 2013). Although the prevalence rate for pedophilic disorder is unknown, the approximate estimate of males with this disorder is 3-5%

(APA, 2013). Because men have much higher prevalence rates, this specific population may be more appealing to researchers. This is true for the cleric population, as well, since very few women obtain religious leader roles.

For adult men, the pedophilic interests for children develop during puberty. It is important for clinicians to be cautious when diagnosing pedophilic disorder during the first signs of sexual interest in children because of the slight discrepancy in age for adolescents. This is why the minimum age requirement is 16 years old. Although pedophilia is considered a permanent condition, pedophilic disorder includes other factors that may or may not change over time with or without treatment (APA, 2013). Individuals with this disorder are likely to have comorbid disorders, such as substance use disorders, depressive, bipolar, and anxiety disorders, antisocial personality disorder, and other paraphilic disorders (APA, 2013).

In contrast to pedophilia, ephebophilia is the term used to describe individuals who prefer post-pubescent teens between the ages of 15 to 19 years old (Plante, 2004). Other sources indicate that ephebophiles are specifically attracted to pubescent or post-pubescent males, and hebephiles are specifically attracted to pubescent or post-pubescent females (Cimboic & Cartor, 2006). There is no classification in the DSM-V for individuals who sexually abuse children in this age range, unless they are categorized under other specified paraphilic disorder or unspecified paraphilic disorder. It has been suggested that ephebophilia be incorporated into the DSM because individuals who sexually abuse this age group have unique predictor variables and outcomes for treatment. This comes from the idea that there is a clear fundamental difference between the offender who is attracted to a child with no adult physical characteristics and the offender who is attracted to a child whose physical appearance represents an adult (Cimboic &

Cartor, 2006). The distinction between non-clergy sex offenders and clergy sex offenders lies within the differences between pedophilia and ephebophilia. Catholic Church officials have even recognized that there is a characteristic that discriminates them from other child sex offenders.

There are several studies that highlight very important differences between ephebophiles and pedophiles. In comparison to pedophiles, ephebophiles appeared to be more psychosexually mature and tended to have a better prognosis with treatment. The sexual behavior of ephebophiles was more likely to occur as a result of stressful situations. Their offending styles differed, as well. While pedophiles identify as a fixated offender, ephebophiles are characterized as a regressed offender. A fixated offender has an enduring attraction to children without any intentions of forming a relationship with an adult, whereas a regressed offender's attraction to children is a departure from a more characteristic attraction to adults (Cimboic & Cartor, 2006). Also, fixated offenders are psychologically at the same stage as children (emotionally immature and socially inept), which make children more attractive to these particular individuals. Children appear as more identifiable and relatable to this offender subtype. The importance of distinguishing offender types is that regressed offenders sexually offend as a consequence of experiencing external stress, and their prognosis is often better than fixated offenders. According to Cimboic and Cartor (2006), they believe there is evidence that supports that pedophilia and ephebophilia represent two "different and distinct sexual disorders," which have different etiologies, prognoses, and ultimately different treatments (p. 351).

The same national study uncovered details regarding victim age group and gender. This study discovered that 64% of the accused priests molested only boys. A huge proportion of the alleged victims were between the ages of 11 and 17 years old, constituting 81.8% of the victims

in this age group. In the 11 to 17 age group, over 85% of the allegations involved male victims. Although the 8 to 10 age group constituted over a 70% majority of sexual offenses against male victims, the 1 to 7 age group had a 58% majority of female victims. The underlying message of these prevalence rates is that cleric sex offenders victimized the females at the youngest age group, and males were victimized at the higher age groups. When Catholic priests sexually offended, they overwhelmingly chose the age group that contains the older children. In contrast to a point made earlier, Cimbolic and Cartor (2006) did not see an explanation for more access to teenage boys compared to teenage girls. Therefore, they concluded that these sexual offenses were based on the sexual preference of the individuals. Since the majority of these cleric offenders did not offend in the pedophile age group, they would not be diagnosed with a mental disorder because of failure to meet diagnostic criterion.

Furthermore, some distinct cleric sexual offender characteristics were found in ephebophiles. Cleric sex offenders, who were considered to be ephebophiles, had a lower mean age of their first offense in comparison to the pedophile sex offending clergy members. The former mean age was reported to be 36.3 years old, and the latter mean age was 43.3 years old. On average, the ephebophiles sexually offended for a longer amount of time (6.81 years) than the pedophiles (5.15 years), beginning with the first day of the first offense until the last day of their last offense. Generally, ephebophiles were more likely to have a substance abuse problem. For this reason alone, it is not a surprise that these offenders were more likely to be under the influence at the time of the offense and more likely to intoxicate their victims in comparison to pedophile offenders (Cartor, Cimbolic, & Tallon, 2008).

The types of offenses committed by ephebophiles and pedophiles also differed. Victims of ephebophiles reported more instances of verbal sexual behavior (sex talk), sexual touching under the clothes of the offender, viewing pornographic videos, mutual masturbation, and oral/genital contact where the victim performed the sexual act (fellatio/cunnilingus). The victims of pedophiles reported more manual (finger) penetration of the vagina or anus and the use of a foreign object for penetration (sexual aid) (Cartor, Cimbolic, & Tallon, 2008). Victims of ephebophiles were coerced into more sexual acts that were participatory, and it made the victims look like they wanted and were willing to participate in the sexual acts. Pedophiles were more likely to use threats and intimidating and dominating means to get their victims to participate. Of the cleric sexual abuse sample used, the most common of the alleged acts of abuse by Catholic priests was touching over the victim's clothes (52.6%), followed by touching under the victim's clothes (44.9%). The least common of the offenses was group sex or coerced sex with others at 0.3%. Although there was not a significant gender difference in the kinds of sex acts that were committed against the victims, there was an 8.5 times greater likelihood of mutual masturbation occurring if the victim was a male (Cimbolic & Cartor, 2006). Masturbation was two times more likely to occur when the victim was a male compared to female victims, and hugging and kissing of the victim was two times more likely when the victim was a female compared to male victims. More than half of the victims were abused multiple times.

Since the amount of psychological distress and impairment increases with the frequency of sexual abuse, it is appropriate to assume that the majority of these victims experienced a tremendous amount of trauma. The amount of priest sexual abuse allegations did not make the victims more likely to report these incidents to authorities. This was true for types of alleged

sexual acts that were committed, too. Victims were not more likely to report if it was a direct sexual contact offense (oral sex, penetration, or masturbation) compared to an indirect sexual contact offense (hugging or kissing). Regardless of type of sexual contact, charges were only filed 5% of the time (Cimbolic & Cartor, 2006). There are many reasons victims choose not to report recurrent sexual offenses. In some cases involving the Roman Catholic priests scandal in Boston, many parents went to the parish to report these accusations involving their children. Some priests and religious leaders denied ever witnessing these complaints, or told the victims' parents to keep it a secret and that it would be absolved. When members of their own church refused to believe the victims' parents, it was hard to receive justice. Cleric members who had 10 or more sexual offense allegations were no more likely to be charged than cleric members who had fewer allegations (Cimbolic & Cartor, 2006). They were actually one third less likely to have any kind of contact with the authorities than cleric members with fewer allegations. All in all, reports of sexual abuse by priests are highly underreported. This is one explanation for the lack of research in this area.

Myths of Cleric Sex Offenders

One of the biggest misconceptions about cleric sexual abuse is that Catholic priests are highly likely to be pedophiles, which is inaccurate. A national study conducted by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice (2004) used a total of 4,392 cleric surveys and 10,667 victim surveys to examine allegations of sexual abuse of minors between the years of 1950 and 2002. This was the largest study conducted on this offender type, and it included 195 out of the 202 dioceses. They concluded that about 4% of the 109,694 active Catholic clergy members were accused of sexual abuse of a minor (John Jay College, 2004). As in most cases of sexual assault, it is likely

that prevalence rates are highly underestimated due to the low reporting rates. The results of this study are inconsistent with the myth that priests are associated with sexual abuse. Only a minority of Catholic priests are involved in these incidents. Another result of this study showed that the majority of these victims were between the ages of 11 and 17, specifically a total of 81.8% (John Jay College, 2004). The target victims for this offender group were pubescent or post-pubescent male victims.

Earlier studies estimated that less than 6% of Roman Catholic priests have had sexual experiences with a minor (Plante & Daniels, 2004). Since there are relatively 60,000 Catholic priests in the United States, including active and retired priests, this suggests that 4,000 have sexually offended a minor. According to Sipe (1990, 1995), 2% of priest sex offenders were considered pedophiles, whereas 4% were considered ephebophiles. Pedophiles are described as individuals who show sexual interest in children, usually 13 years old or younger (APA, 2013), whereas ephebophiles show sexual interest in post-pubescent children, especially males (Plante & Daniels, 2004). The majority of the victims of cleric sex offenders are post-pubescent adolescent boys and not latency-aged children or young girls, which suggests that pedophilia is less common and ephebophilia is more typical (Plante & Daniels, 2004). However, it has been argued that this is an inflated estimation (Loftus & Camargo, 1993; Sipe, 1990, 1995;). Others have reported less than 1% of Catholic priests have had sexual relations with a minor (Goodstein, 2003; Jenkins, 2001). Rossetti (2002) reported a total of 2% of sexual abuse among Catholic priests, describing 1% as sexual experiences with children and an additional 1% for sexual experiences with adolescents. Although there are conflicting percentages reported, the reported

range is between 2 to 6% with the majority most often being ephebophiles rather than pedophiles.

Another myth regarding priest sex offenders is that marriage would eliminate sexual abuse in the clergy (Plante & Daniels, 2004). The media could have perpetuated this myth since other religions are more open to marriage compared to the Roman Catholic religion. For instance, Lutheran pastors are able to marry, and celibacy is not required. Since priests are expected to remain celibate after they are ordained, some believe that the sexual frustration or lack of intimacy may cause them to sexually offend. This is not the case for various reasons. Individuals who have the opportunity to marry are no less likely to sexually offend minors in comparison to priests. In reality, sex offenders are often married or in relationships, and they are not sexually frustrated men (Sanghara & Wilson, 2006). Even if priests were allowed to marry, it would not eliminate those who sexually abuse children. It would increase the amount of applicants for priesthood, but the sex offenders who are married or in a relationship would still exist. Also, just because priests are prohibited from having sexual relationships does not mean that children become the object of their desire (Plante & Daniels, 2004). In a study reviewed by McGlone (2003), only 64% of priests used in the sample were truly celibate clergy members. The remaining percentage of priests described themselves as having both current and past sexual relations.

In addition to discontinuing the tradition of celibacy of Catholic priests, another myth is that gay priests are at fault for the sexual abuse crisis of male children. People may place blame on gay priests due to some bishops who made public statements saying that these individuals are partially at fault. Offenders in the Catholic Church have even adopted the description “pedophile

priest.” Although gay individuals are not allowed to be ordained as priests in the Roman Catholic Church, it is estimated that around 30-50% of Catholic priests and seminarians would identify their sexual status as gay (Cozzens, 2002; Plante & Daniels, 2004; Wills, 2000). In fact, gay men who are sexually active during the seminary before priesthood are asked to leave. The Catholic Church even forbids ordaining celibate gay men. The lack of acceptance of homosexuality within Catholicism has created a quiet gay subculture like a “don’t ask don’t tell” policy (Sipe, 1990). Other priests within the religious community recognize that a gay subculture exists. Alternate religions might not have a hidden gay subculture because of their less stringent guidelines in becoming ordained. The Lutheran religion is more accepting of ordained gay pastors compared to the Catholic religion. For example, as recent as of 2013, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America elected their very first openly gay bishop (Merica & Burke, 2013). In a survey conducted in 2002, over 50% of a sample of 1,200 priests recognized the presence of a gay subculture within the Catholic Church (Plante & Daniels, 2004). It is problematic for the public to assume that there is a causal relationship between gay priests and sexual abuse of male children. There is no research present to support that gay men are more likely to sexually offend minors than heterosexual men. Even though some priests are sexually offending young boys, this does not mean they identify as gay. Ironically, most men who sexually offend minors identify themselves as heterosexual (Hoge, 2002). There are few explanations as to why a heterosexual priest would sexually offend male victims instead of female victims. According to Plante (2003), explanations include their access to teenage boys, uneasiness with women, and concern about pregnancy. Some priests exclusively identify themselves as pedophiles; some also identify as gay and therefore are more likely to choose male victims. However, not all gay priests are pedophiles

and therefore it is incorrect to assume that male children are at a significantly higher risk to be sexual abuse victims from contact with gay men, especially since there is no research to support this accusation.

Furthermore, it has been postulated that the only solution is to eliminate sex offending priests by defrocking and firing them from the Catholic Church. This misperception originates from the idea that eliminating the offender from the setting will resolve the problem, but this ignores the need to protect the victims. If a zero-tolerance policy were implemented within the church to decrease current and future victimizations, the goal of protecting the victims would not be accomplished (Plante & Daniels, 2004). It is possible some priests would be forced to return to a secular society without any supervision, which could increase the likelihood of recidivism. Allowing priests to keep their role in the church and practice their vow of obedience is another solution that seems to be more effective than them living on their own in society, assuming they will not reside in prison for their offense. Remaining in the church does not mean that priests would have contact with potential victims. If they are assessed to be high-risk offenders, they could be sent to an appropriate location, such as a convent, church infirmary, or a monastery (Plante & Daniels, 2004). This allows for closer supervision within the religious community. Also, the public does not acknowledge that sex offenders can be rehabilitated, especially sex offending priests. Not every sex offender is the same, and as a result, some may be more successful with treatment implications. The media accentuates the repeat sex offending priests who have over hundreds of victims over a period of time. These individuals may be less amenable to treatment and have a higher relapse rate. Multiple studies have reported relapse rates as low as 4% when specifically treating sex offending clergy members (Rossetti, 2002). Along

with the complexity of finding the most suitable solution for priest sex offenders, the psychopathology of these individuals is important. According to Bryant (1999), an estimated 66% of sex offending priests have been victims of sexual abuse themselves. A select group of clergy sex offenders experience higher rates of depression, addiction problems, overcontrolled hostility, defensive coping, neuropsychological problems, and constricted ranges of emotions (Miller, 2013). There is a presence of other issues, including brain damage in the frontal-temporal lobe leading to poor impulse control and judgment, alcoholism, personality disorders, and other severe psychiatric and medical conditions (Bryant, 1999; Lothstein, 1999; Plante & Daniels, 2004). This suggests that there is more that needs to be done than abolishing priests from the Catholic Church. The comorbidities of other psychiatric and medical disorders, along with the history of sexual abuse, may intensify their likelihood of reoffending in secular society.

Given the media focus on Catholic cleric sexual abuse, most of the blame was placed on cardinals, bishops, and the Catholic Church. People viewed religious leaders as incompetent in resolving the issue, especially those who chose to keep the abuses hidden from the public. The myth that all religious leaders handled the situation poorly still exists, even though the majority of bishops and religious leaders handled these matters ethically (Plante, 2004). There are over 300 bishops total in the United State alone. A few bishops responded poorly, and as a consequence, it tarnished the reputation of other bishops and the Catholic Church. Each individual bishop and cardinal responds to the Vatican regarding any kind of crisis. Unlike other larger organizations, the Catholic Church is described as a flat structure where middle management positions are essentially nonexistent. This means that each individual bishop and cardinal has the power to manage child sexual abuse accusations as he sees fit. Although

Cardinal Law in Boston handled this inappropriately and received the most media attention, he does not reflect the choices made by all provinces and dioceses (Plante & Daniels, 2004).

Priests are not the only religious leaders who are guilty of child sexual abuse. The largest cleric abuse settlement was actually within the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and resulted in 16 victims being awarded a total of \$69 million (Moll, 2004). It is particularly interesting as to why there is an array of myths surrounding the Catholic Church specifically. There are a few explanations as to why this religion was targeted and acknowledged nationally. Approximately 19.1% of the American population identifies themselves as being Catholic, according to the 2010 U.S. Religion Census (Grammich et al., 2010). Since it is one of the largest religious denominations in the United States, news regarding this religion affects an immense subset of the American population. Therefore, it is very possible that a generous portion of Americans will be in contact with priests at some point in their lives. Additionally, the Catholic Church has been known for acting and responding negatively and defensively to child sexual abuse allegations. Whether the allegations were true or false, some bishops handled the situations poorly, which made victims and their families even more furious (Plante & Daniels, 2004). Catholicism is recognized for its strict demands regarding sexual behavior, too. Typically, those who practice Catholicism do not approve of premarital sexual activity, contraception use, homosexuality, and divorce. With these austere principles, sex crimes committed by a priest refute concrete beliefs the Catholic Church preaches. Catholic followers may feel betrayed, lose trust in all priests, or question their faith. Priests are supposed to be heterosexual and keep their two promises of obedience and celibacy. Although these are strict guidelines, they are required when they are ordained. When a priest abandons his vows with such sinful behavior, followers of

the church might take it personally, especially since they are held to such high standards themselves. Lastly, there are some individuals who identify themselves as Catholic, but have mixed beliefs regarding its practice. The standards for Catholic followers are high, and many individuals may feel as though they are inadequate. One conjecture about the media attention is that it was used to get back at the Catholic Church organization for making Catholics feel inept (Plante & Daniels, 2004).

All of these myths suggested by the media can lead to faulty attributions in such cases. For example, blame can be attributed more or less to the victim or perpetrator depending on how an individual perceives a situation. Attributions of blame are especially important when determining whether an individual is guilty of a crime or deciding the length of sentencing upon conviction.

Attribution Theories

Individuals use a set of thought processes, known as attributions, to explain causes of their own and others' behavior (Kalat, 2008). This topic is especially important in cases involving sexual assault, where individuals can attribute blame and responsibility to the victim or perpetrator. According to Heider (1958), there are two types of attributions: internal (dispositional) and external (situational). Internal attributions are based on the individual's personal characteristics, such as his or her personality, whereas external attributions are based on situations that could influence all individuals. Although they can be perceived as logical opposites (Heider, 1958), there is some evidence that suggests that internal and external attributions are not (Kashima, 2001; Li et al., 2012). For instance, just because an individual makes an internal attribution does not mean he or she is discounting situation factors completely.

When making internal or external attributions for behavior, Kelley (1967) believes individuals evaluate three types of information. The first is consensus information, where individuals assess a person's behavior in comparison to other people's behavior. External attributions can be made when people believe that anyone would respond to that particular situation in the same way. In contrast, internal attributions can be made when an individual's behavior is atypical in comparison to the majority of others' behavior. In addition, consistency information explains how an individual's behavior can change over time. Internal attributions can be made if a behavior is consistent with that individual's personality, whereas external attributions can be made if the behavior is inconsistent with the individual's personality and is due to a situational factor. Lastly, distinctiveness explains how behavior is situation dependent.

When making attributions, errors and biased beliefs are inevitable. One of the most common errors is the fundamental attribution error, also known as the correspondence bias. This error is made when individuals make internal attributions for another's behavior when there is a clear external attribution for the behavior (Ross, 1977). The dispositional factors for behavior are overrepresented. Also, the fundamental attribution error is affected by an individual's culture (Kalat, 2008). In one study conducted by Li et al. (2011) examining differences in attributions between religions, they concluded that Protestants tend to make more internal attributions for behavior in comparison to Catholics. This suggests that differences in religion can affect judgments. Li et al. (2011) explained this by assessing Protestants' belief in a soul, which mediated the effect of being dispositionally biased.

In addition to the fundamental attribution error, the defensive-attribution hypothesis contributes to victim and perpetrator responsibility. Elaine Walster introduced the foundation of

defensive attributions. Walster (1966) had her participants rate the responsibility of a young man who was in an accident by manipulating the severity of the accident consequences (mild vs. severe). Results of the study indicated that the severity of the accident influenced participants' judgments (Walster, 1966). Although participants were sympathetic to the individual suffering from a small misfortune, sympathy decreased as the situation appeared as more severe. When the magnitude of the unfortunate event increases, it becomes more uncomfortable for individuals to potentially believe that this event could happen to them, too. They want to believe that this event could not possibly happen to them, so they separate themselves from the individual. If the individual is at fault, then it is reassuring to the participants. In conclusion, participants assigned more responsibility to the individual when the situation was severe in comparison to the mild situation.

Shortly after Walster's experiment, Kelly Shaver discovered the tendency for participants to protect themselves, which she called a defensive attribution (Shaver, 1970). In her experiments, she kept the severity of the situations the same across conditions, but she examined the personal similarities between the observer and the perpetrator. Avoidance of blame for the observers was more important to the participants in comparison to avoidance of occurrence (Shaver, 1970). When increased personal similarity and situational similarity existed between the participant and the person at fault, participants did not attribute responsibility to the person at fault, but attributed it to chance. This was due to the participants' nature to avoid possible blame. Overall, Shaver proposed two very important concepts related to the defensive attribution hypothesis: harm avoidance and blame avoidance. Harm avoidance refers to an individual's ability to defend one's self against the possibility of being in a similar situation, whereas blame

avoidance describes an individual's motivation to defend one's self from being held responsible when placed in a similar situation (Muller, Caldwell, & Hunter, 1994; Shaver, 1970).

While Shaver kept severity of the situation constant in her experiment, Chaikin and Darley (1973) manipulated both the severity of the situation and the possibility of being either situationally relevant to the perpetrator or victim. As a result, they found that perpetrator-relevant participants used self-protective blame avoidance when attributing blame for the accident, whereas victim-relevant participants used harm avoidance. When consequence severity increased, less responsibility was attributed to chance (Chaikin & Darley, 1973). Additionally, participants who were more relevant to the perpetrator derogated the victim when the accident was considered severe.

In a meta-analysis of the defensive-attribution hypothesis, Burger (1981) discovered that participants who are both situationally and personally similar to the perpetrator attributed less responsibility to the perpetrator when it was perceived as a severe accident. Although there has been a variety of research completed on this topic, Burger (1981) concluded it is still unclear which factors are influencing attribution of responsibility the most. Regardless, it is proposed that severity of the misfortune, similarity to the situation, and similarity to the perpetrator and/or victim may influence one's attribution of blame. Since sexual offenses are viewed as high severity situations and sex offenders are generally repulsed by society (Sanghara & Wilson, 2006), it is possible that both harm avoidance and blame avoidance can be applicable.

In addition to the defensive-attribution hypothesis, individuals can attribute blame according to the just world hypothesis. Under this approach, individuals believe the world is a fair and just place, and people get what they deserve (Grubb & Harrower, 2009). To believe

anything other than this interrupts an individual's self-control and effectiveness of the community. When there is a belief that unfortunate events happen only to bad people, it maintains stability and security. For individuals to perceive the victim as the blame for the occurrence of an unfortunate situation, it reestablishes a sense of comfort that the world is a fair place. Both the defensive-attribution and the just world hypothesis focus on "motivational and ego defensiveness processes," which cause victim blaming in rape cases (Grubb & Harrower, 2009, p. 65).

Although some results of the defensive-attribution hypothesis and just world hypothesis conclude that victims are more likely to be derogated, depending on the severity of the situation and perceived similarities, it is possible that the opposite can occur. For example, Grubb and Harrower (2009) concluded that participants who identified with the perpetrator did not place more blame on the victim, especially for males. Although male participants could have viewed the offender as more similar to them in comparison to the victim, it is possible they were hesitant to place more blame on the victim. Being harsher on the victim could imply that the participant is associated with rape and rapists. Cleric sex offenses are one of the many situations in which it is important to consider perceptions of the perpetrator and the victim. Also, perceptions of sexual offenders can differ depending on the age of the victim (i.e., whether the offender is a pedophile or an ephebophile).

Purpose

The purpose of the present study was to examine participants' perceptions of sex offenders based on victim age (11-year-old male victim vs. 15-year-old male victim), type of sexual offense (rape vs. statutory rape), and affiliation of the perpetrator (public school teacher

vs. Catholic priest teacher vs. Lutheran pastor teacher). Since there are so few female religious leaders, especially in the Roman Catholic Church, the main focus was on male cleric sex offenders. Overall, it was expected that participants would attribute less blame to the 11-year-old victim than the 15-year-old victim. According to the statutory rape literature, participants tend to show more sympathy towards younger victims in comparison to older victims, and therefore, should attribute more blame to older victims (Bottoms, Davis, & Epstein, 2004; Back & Lips, 1998; Nightingale, 1993). Adolescents are more likely to engage in promiscuous behavior, and 15 is close to the age of consent in the majority of states (Koon-Magnin & Ruback, 2013). Fifteen is also close to the age that is associated with gaining more responsibility (e.g., obtaining one's driver's license and dating). This responsibility may extend to sexual relationships.

It was also hypothesized that individuals would view offenders as less responsible in the statutory rape condition. Previous research (White & Yamawaki, 2009) has shown that in statutory rape scenarios there is less sympathy for victims, leading to actions being perceived as more acceptable by the perpetrator. As a result, victims may be blamed more for the occurrence, and therefore offenders may receive more lenient punishments (i.e., shorter prison sentence, only have to register as a Tier 1 sex offender, etc.). In addition to the nature of statutory rape itself, society's in-group biases, male rape myths (Turchik & Edwards, 2011), and the public's homophobic attitudes, it was expected that blame for the victims would be highest in that condition. Alternatively, it was expected that participants would be less likely to convict the alleged offender, suggest a shorter prison sentence, and be less likely to have him register as a sex offender when the situation was described as statutory rape versus rape.

It was hypothesized that Catholic priests would have the highest conviction rate, the

longest prison sentence, and be put on the sex offender registry as a result of the persisting and notorious media footage concerning cleric sex offenders in the Catholic Church (Boston Globe Investigative Staff, 2002; Plante, 2003; Plante, 2004). This could also be explained by the high standards of the Catholic Church. In comparison with the public school teacher, it was expected that teachers with a religious affiliation (priest or pastor) would be convicted, sentenced to prison for a longer amount of time, and suggested to register as a sex offender because of the expected standards within a religious culture. According to the defensive attribution theory (Chaikin & Darley, 1973; Burger, 1981; Shaver, 1970; Walster, 1966), participants should attribute blame differently if they see the victim, perpetrator, or situation as relevant to themselves. Depending on the similarities between the participant and the victim and/or the perpetrator, he or she should implement a “self-protective distortion,” which can either be harm avoidance or blame avoidance (Shaw & McMartin, 1973). Additionally, it was hypothesized that there would be an interaction between type of sexual offense and victim age. Specifically, it was expected that participants would find offenders less deserving of punishments (i.e., sentencing, convicting, registering as a sex offender, etc.) when the sexual offense was statutory rape and the victim was 15. Even though participants are usually more critical of older perpetrators in comparison to younger perpetrators, condemnation ratings of sexual offenders are known to decrease as the victim age increases (Koon-Magnin & Ruback, 2013).

CHAPTER II

METHOD

Participants

Participants included 286 (50.7% male, 48.3% female, 1% other) individuals recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). A total of 338 responses was obtained, however 46 participants failed the manipulation check two times and/or did not complete the study, four participants indicated that they had been convicted of a felony, and two participants indicated they were under the age of 18. For these reasons, their data were not used in the current study. Of the remaining participants (N = 286), their ages ranged from 18 to 77, with a mean age of 34.61. Self-reported racial/ethnic categories included 73.8% European American/White, 8.7% Asian American, 6.6% mixed (identifying as more than one racial/ethnic category), 5.9% African American/Black, 3.5% Hispanic, 1% prefer not to say, and .3% Native American. Concerning sexual orientation, participants self-reported as 85.7% heterosexual (straight), 8.4% bisexual, 2.1% lesbian, 1.4% gay, 1.4% other, and 1% prefer not to say. Among participants, self-reported religious denomination consisted of 24.1% Christian-other, 20.3% Atheist, 17.8% Agnostic, 15.7% Catholic, 9.1% Non-Christian, 8% prefer not to say, and 4.9% Lutheran. Education level of the participants consisted of 30.8% completed a bachelor's degree, 25.9% completed some college, 11.9% graduated high school, 9.8% completed an associate's degree or certificate program, 9.4% completed a master's degree, 5.6% currently undergraduate college student, 2.8%

completed a doctoral degree, 2.1% currently a graduate student, 1% other, .3% prefer not to say, and .3% did not graduate high school (Appendix A).

Materials/Questionnaires

Demographics

Participants were asked to provide the following information: age, gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious denomination and level of education (Appendix B).

Private Beliefs Rating Scales

This measure assessed participants' personal beliefs on conviction, sentence length, and the level of sex offender registration regarding the teacher in the scenario. Conviction responses were indicated on a -5 to +5 Likert-type scale. Participants selected one of the provided options for responses of sentence length and level of sex offender registration (Appendix C).

Victim Blame

Participants responded to these items on a scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). This 10-item scale assessed victim blame attributed to the student in the scenario (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$). Items included: "The student is partly to blame for the actions of the teacher," "The teacher's actions are the results of the student's behavior," "The teacher's actions were reasonable," "The student should know to be more careful in interactions with certain teacher," "The teacher's actions were the result of unwanted attention from the student," "The teacher was provoked," "The teacher's actions were justified," "The student deserved it," "Any reasonable person would have acted the same as the teacher," and "The student should know better than to engage in such behavior with the teacher (Appendix D)."

Perpetrator Blame

Participants responded to this item on a scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). This item was used to assess blame attributed to the teacher in the scenario (i.e., “The teacher is solely to blame for the events that took place”) (Appendix E).

Mental Stability of Teacher

Participants responded to this item on a scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). This item was used to assess participants’ beliefs about mental stability of the teacher in the scenario (i.e., “The teacher is mentally unstable”) (Appendix F).

Mental Stability of Student

Participants responded to this item on a scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). This item was used to assess participants’ beliefs about the mental stability of the student in the scenario (i.e., “The student is mentally unstable”) (Appendix G).

Procedure

Participants signed up for the study online using MTurk. They were directed to the online study on Qualtrics. They were required to read the directions and informed consent, and agreed to participate before they gained access to begin the study. Each participant was randomly assigned to one of the 12 conditions stemming from a 2 (victim age: 11-year-old male victim vs. 15-year-old male victim) X 2 (type of sexual offense: rape vs. statutory rape) X 3 (affiliation of the perpetrator: public school teacher vs. Catholic priest teacher vs. Lutheran pastor teacher) factorial design. After participants were randomly assigned, they began to read one of the 12 newspaper vignettes describing charges of improper sexual activity between a male teacher and his male student (Appendix H).

After participants read one of the vignettes, a manipulation check was executed to ensure the intended manipulations were understood with each vignette (Appendix I). They were given two chances to answer each of the manipulation checks correctly. If they failed to answer each of the manipulation check questions correctly the second time, participants were directed to the end of the survey and thanked for their participation (i.e., they did not respond to the survey questions). When participants answered the manipulation check questions correctly, they were directed to the questionnaires after reading the vignette. Upon completion of the measures, participants were thanked for their participation and compensated \$0.25 for their time. The current study was approved by the IRB and all prevailing ethical principles were adhered to.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Conviction Ratings

A 2 (victim age: 11-year-old male victim vs. 15-year-old male victim) X 2 (type of sexual offense: rape vs. statutory rape) X 3 (affiliation of the perpetrator: public school teacher vs. Catholic priest teacher vs. Lutheran pastor teacher) analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted for conviction ratings. Results indicated a significant main effect for victim age of the male victim, $F(1, 274) = 6.142, p = .01, \eta^2 = .02$, such that participants believed more strongly the teacher should be convicted when the male victim was 11 years old ($M = 3.88, SD = 1.82$) versus when the male victim was 15 years old ($M = 3.24, SD = 2.46$). No main effect was found for type of sexual offense, $F(1, 274) = .17, ns$, or for affiliation of the perpetrator, $F(2, 274) = .10, ns$. There was no significant interaction between victim age and type of sexual offense, $F(1, 274) = 1.71, ns$. There was no significant interaction between victim age and affiliation of the perpetrator, $F(2, 274) = .33, ns$. There was no significant interaction between type of sexual offense and affiliation of the perpetrator, $F(2, 274) = .28, ns$. There was no significant three-way interaction between victim age, type of sexual offense, and affiliation of the perpetrator, $F(2, 274) = .33, ns$.

Sentence Length

A 2 (victim age: 11-year-old male victim vs. 15-year-old male victim) X 2 (type of sexual offense: rape vs. statutory rape) X 3 (affiliation of the perpetrator: public school teacher vs.

Catholic priest teacher vs. Lutheran pastor teacher) ANOVA was conducted for sentence length ratings. Results indicated a significant main effect for type of sexual offense, $F(1, 273) = 4.17, p = .04, \eta^2 = .02$, such that participants gave lengthier sentence recommendations when the type of sexual offense was described as rape ($M = 4.81, SD = 2.15$) compared to statutory rape ($M = 4.30, SD = 2.0$). This main effect was qualified by a significant interaction between type of sexual offense and affiliation of the perpetrator, $F(2, 273) = 3.22, p = .04, \eta^2 = .02$. Simple effects analyses of type of sexual offense at each level of affiliation of the perpetrator revealed significance for when the affiliation of the perpetrator was a Lutheran pastor teacher, $F(1, 279) = 6.65, p = .01$, such that when the perpetrator was a Lutheran pastor and the type of sexual offense was rape, participants gave lengthier sentence recommendations ($M = 5.28, SD = 2.32$) than when the perpetrator was a Lutheran pastor and the type of sexual offense was statutory rape ($M = 4.17, SD = 1.81$). See Figure 1. No main effect was found for affiliation of the perpetrator, $F(2, 273) = .64, ns$, or for victim age, $F(1, 273) = .23, ns$. There was no significant interaction between type of sexual offense and victim age, $F(1, 273) = .74, ns$. There was no significant interaction between affiliation of the perpetrator and victim age, $F(2, 273) = .95, ns$. There was no significant three-way interaction between type of sexual offense, affiliation of the perpetrator, and victim age, $F(2, 273) = .64, ns$.

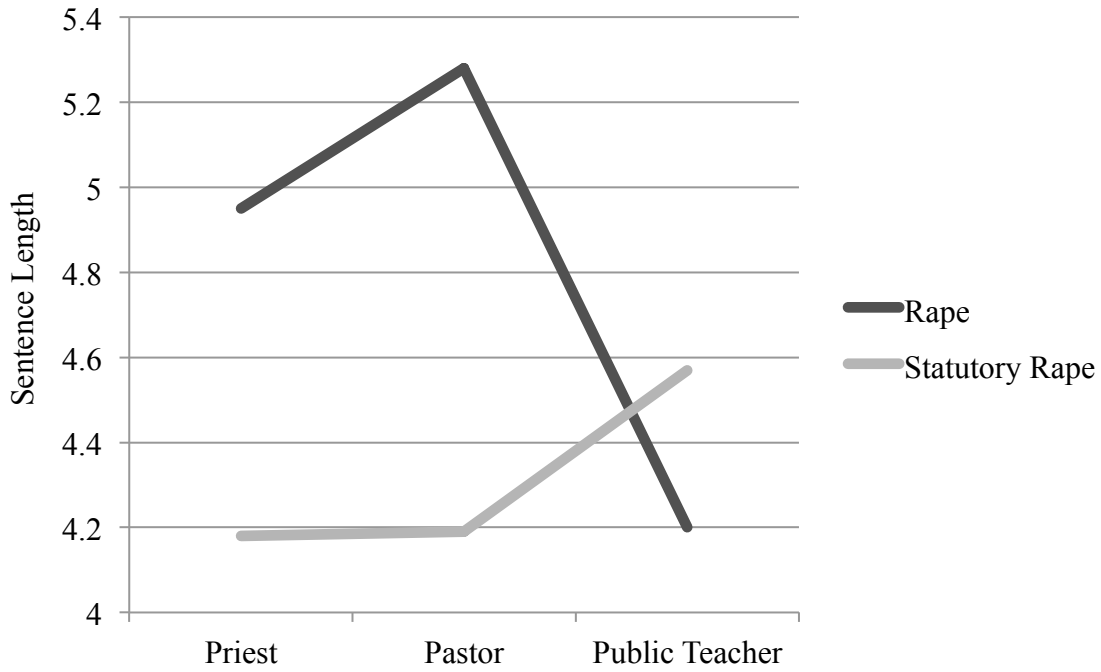


Figure 1. Sentence Length Ratings: Type of Sexual Offense by Affiliation of Perpetrator Interaction.

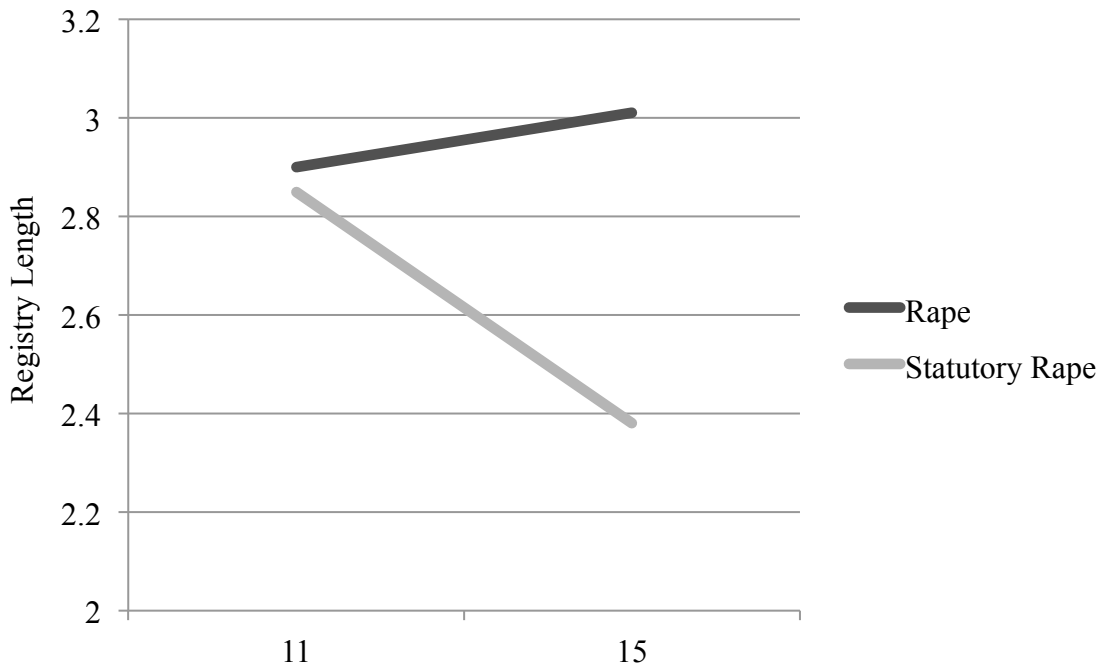


Figure 2. Registry Length: Type of Sexual Offense at Each Level of Victim Age Interaction.

Registration

A 2 (victim age: 11-year-old male victim vs. 15-year-old male victim) X 2 (type of sexual offense: rape vs. statutory rape) X 3 (affiliation of the perpetrator: public school teacher vs. Catholic priest teacher vs. Lutheran pastor teacher) ANOVA was conducted for registration level recommendations. Results indicated a significant main effect for type of sexual offense, $F(1, 274) = 7.47, p < .01, \eta^2 = .03$, such that participants gave a higher registration level recommendation when the type of sexual offense was described as rape ($M = 3.01, SD = 1.02$) compared to when the type of sexual offense was described as statutory rape ($M = 2.38, SD = 1.02$). This main effect was qualified by a significant interaction between type of sexual offense and victim age, $F(1, 274) = 6.27, p = .01, \eta^2 = .02$. Simple effects analyses of type of sexual offense at each level of victim age revealed significance for when the victim age was 15 years old, $F(1, 282) = 12.94, p < .001$, such that when the victim was 15 years old, participants recommended a higher registration level for the offender when the type of sexual offense was rape ($M = 2.95, SD = 1.08$) than when the type of sexual offense was statutory rape ($M = 2.62, SD = 1.04$). See Figure 2. No main effect was found for affiliation of the perpetrator, $F(2, 274) = 2.26, ns$, or for victim age, $F(1, 274) = 1.58, ns$. There was no significant interaction between type of sexual offense and affiliation of the perpetrator, $F(2, 274) = 2.5, ns$. There was no significant interaction between affiliation of the perpetrator and victim age, $F(2, 274) = .54, ns$. There was no significant three-way interaction between type of sexual offense, affiliation of the perpetrator, or victim age, $F(2, 274) = .32, ns$.

Victim Blame

A 2 (victim age: 11-year-old male victim vs. 15-year-old male victim) X 2 (type of sexual offense: rape vs. statutory rape) X 3 (affiliation of the perpetrator: public school teacher vs. Catholic priest teacher vs. Lutheran pastor teacher) ANOVA was conducted for victim blame. Results indicated a significant main effect for type of sexual offense, $F(1, 274) = 19.14, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07$, such that participants blamed the student more when the sexual offense was described as statutory rape ($M = 2.27, SD = 1.08$) compared to rape ($M = 1.72, SD = 1.0$). A significant main effect was found for victim age, $F(1, 274) = 5.0, p = .03, \eta^2 = .02$, such that participants blamed the student more when the victim was 15 years old ($M = 2.13, SD = 1.16$) compared to 11 years old ($M = 1.86, SD = .97$). No main effect was found for affiliation of the perpetrator, $F(2, 274) = 1.03, ns$. There was no significant interaction between type of sexual offense and affiliation of the perpetrator, $F(2, 274) = .43, ns$. There was no significant interaction between type of sexual offense and victim age, $F(1, 274) = .75, ns$. There was no significant interaction between affiliation of the perpetrator and victim age, $F(2, 174) = .06, ns$. There was no significant three-way interaction between type of sexual offense, affiliation of the perpetrator, and victim age, $F(2, 274) = .70, ns$.

Perpetrator Blame

A 2 (victim age: 11-year-old male victim vs. 15-year-old male victim) X 2 (type of sexual offense: rape vs. statutory rape) X 3 (affiliation of the perpetrator: public school teacher vs. Catholic priest teacher vs. Lutheran pastor teacher) ANOVA was conducted for perpetrator blame. Results indicated a significant main effect for type of sexual offense, $F(1, 274) = 14.49, p < .01, \eta^2 = .05$, such that participants blamed the teacher more when the offense was described

as rape ($M = 5.46$, $SD = 1.24$) compared to statutory rape ($M = 4.79$, $SD = 1.65$). No main effect was found for affiliation of the perpetrator, $F(2, 274) = .32$, *ns*, or for victim age, $F(1, 274) = 3.45$, *ns*. There was no significant interaction between type of sexual offense and affiliation of the perpetrator, $F(2, 274) = .21$, *ns*. There was no significant interaction between type of sexual offense and victim age, $F(1, 274) = 1.70$, *ns*. There was no significant interaction between affiliation of the perpetrator and victim age, $F(2, 274) = 1.26$, *ns*. There was no significant three-way interaction between type of sexual offense, affiliation of the perpetrator, and victim age, $F(2, 274) = .12$, *ns*.

Mental Stability of the Teacher

A 2 (victim age: 11-year-old male victim vs. 15-year-old male victim) X 2 (type of sexual offense: rape vs. statutory rape) X 3 (affiliation of the perpetrator: public school teacher vs. Catholic priest teacher vs. Lutheran pastor teacher) ANOVA was conducted for mental stability of the teacher. Results indicated a significant main effect for victim age, $F(1, 274) = 4.36$, $p = .04$, $\eta^2 = .02$, such that participants viewed the teacher as more mentally unstable when the victim age was 11 years old ($M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.73$) compared to 15 years old ($M = 3.88$, $SD = 1.75$). No main effect was found for type of sexual offense, $F(1, 274) = 3.84$, *ns*, or affiliation of the perpetrator, $F(2, 274) = .69$, *ns*. There was no significant interaction between type of sexual offense and affiliation of the perpetrator, $F(2, 274) = 1.91$, *ns*. There was no significant interaction between type of sexual offense and victim age, $F(1, 274) = 1.18$, *ns*. There was no significant interaction between affiliation of the perpetrator and victim age, $F(2, 274) = .43$, *ns*. There was no significant three-way interaction between type of sexual offense, affiliation of the perpetrator, and victim age, $F(2, 274) = 1.63$, *ns*.

Mental Stability of the Student

A 2 (victim age: 11-year-old male victim vs. 15-year-old male victim) X 2 (type of sexual offense: rape vs. statutory rape) X 3 (affiliation of the perpetrator: public school teacher vs. Catholic priest teacher vs. Lutheran pastor teacher) ANOVA was conducted for mental stability of the student. Results indicated a significant main effect for type of sexual offense, $F(1, 274) = 50.13, p < .001, \eta^2 = .16$, such that participants viewed the student as more mentally unstable when the type of sexual offense was described as statutory rape ($M = 2.48, SD = 2.00$) compared to rape ($M = .98, SD = 1.49$). No main effect was found for affiliation of the perpetrator, $F(2, 274) = .52, ns$, or victim age, $F(1, 274) = 1.29, ns$. There was no significant interaction between type of sexual offense and affiliation of the perpetrator, $F(2, 274) = .40, ns$. There was no significant interaction between type of sexual offense and victim age, $F(1, 274) = .57, ns$. There was no significant interaction between affiliation of the perpetrator and victim age, $F(2, 274) = .05, ns$. There was no significant three-way interaction between type of sexual offense, affiliation of the perpetrator, or victim age, $F(2, 274) = 1.56, ns$.

CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

The present study investigated the perception of sex offenders and the impact of victim age, type of sexual offense, and religious affiliation of the perpetrator. Although various studies have focused on victim age and offense type when considering perceptions of sex offenders, researchers have not explored religious affiliation of the perpetrator in this area. This addition is relevant with the number of cleric sex offenders accused of sexual offenses in the past 15 years, especially within the Catholic Church. This study aimed to contribute to the extensive sexual offense literature, as well as explore the role of religious affiliation of the perpetrator.

The hypotheses of the current study were moderately supported. Overall, these findings supported the hypothesis that participants would view rape as a more punishable sexual offense in comparison to statutory rape. Participants gave lengthier sentence and registration level recommendations when the type of offense was described as rape compared to statutory rape. Registration level ratings for the rape condition indicated that the teacher should be on the sex offender registry for 25 years (Tier 2), whereas the teacher was only recommended for 15 years (Tier 1) when the condition was statutory rape. This implies that participants viewed the rape offender as more dangerous in comparison to the statutory rape offender. However, this did not have an impact on conviction ratings. This is interesting to note because it indicates that participants were more willing to provide lengthy sentence and registry recommendations for the offender than to convict him. Sentencing the offender for a greater length of time and deciding

that the teacher should be on the sex offender registry for more years, shows that participants perceived the crime as severe and deserving of punishments, even if they did not support a criminal conviction.

Even though the word “forcible” has been removed from the previous definition of rape, these findings suggest that rape is still considered more forcible in nature compared to statutory rape. It also challenges male rape myths, since the gender of the victim in the vignettes was male. This suggests that participants believed that men could be raped (Turchik & Edwards, 2011). Findings supported the hypothesis that participants would attribute more blame to the victim when the offense was described as statutory rape. This finding was consistent with statutory rape literature, which suggests that less sympathy is given to the victims in these instances (White & Yamawaki, 2009). It also provided an explanation for a more lenient sentence length and registration level recommendations of the perpetrator in this condition because less blame was attributed to the perpetrator. Statutory rape is often viewed as a mutual or “consensual” relationship, and as a result, less blame is associated with the perpetrator for his or her behavior (Bostwick & DeLucia, 1992). Since society tends to have homophobic attitudes and statutory rape is considered consensual, this may explain why participants offered less sympathy to the victim in this condition (Wakelin & Long, 2003). Additionally, the victim and perpetrator were familiar with one another due to the school environment. White and Yamawaki (2009) reported that participants found rape victims more deserving of blame when they knew the perpetrator, regardless of gender.

In terms of perpetrator blame, the hypothesis was supported that participants were more likely to attribute blame to the perpetrator when the teacher committed rape in comparison to

statutory rape. More specifically, participants gave higher ratings on the item stating that the teacher was solely to blame for the events that took place in the rape condition. This shows that when the sexual offense is described as a rape, victims were not held as accountable for the act that occurred. Since more blame was attributed to the perpetrator in the rape condition, this helps to explain why participants gave lengthier sentence and registration level recommendations.

Not only did participants attribute more blame to victims in the statutory rape condition, but they also viewed them as more mentally unstable. Although this was not a stated hypothesis, it can offer an explanation for higher victim blame in the statutory rape condition. It can be inferred that participants viewed the “consensual” nature of the relationship as inappropriate, which made the victim appear less worthy of sympathy.

Findings from the current study partially supported the hypothesis concerning victim age. The teacher was more likely to be convicted of a sexual offense when the male victim was 11 years old in comparison to 15 years old, although there was no difference in regards to sentence length and registration level recommendations. Past research has found that participants will give lengthier sentence recommendations when there is a large age gap between the victim and offender (Sahl & Keene, 2012). It is possible that the age gaps between the victims were too similar to find a difference for sentencing and registry level recommendations. One explanation for convicting the teacher with the younger victim is the perception of his mental stability. Participants viewed the teacher as more mentally unstable when the victim was an 11-year-old in comparison to a 15-year-old. This implies that participants considered the teacher a pedophile, which is a diagnosable psychological disorder. Sexually offending a 15-year-old adolescent does not constitute a mental illness. These offenders are only considered ephebophiles, which is

currently not in the DSM. Since pedophilia is one of the most stigmatized mental disorders (Imhoff, 2015), perhaps this contributed to the teacher's conviction ratings.

Another explanation focuses on the expectations of adolescents. The results suggest that perpetrators with child victims are more likely to be convicted in comparison to perpetrators with adolescent victims. This is consistent with past research on adolescent rape victims. Even though 15 is not the age of consent in all areas of the world, individuals in this age range are considered "quasi-adults" who understand the meaning of sex, know when they should or should not consent, and are capable of resisting unwanted sexual activity (Back & Lips, 1998; Burt & Estep, 1981; Davies, Rogers, & Whiteleg, 2009). Teenagers are more likely to engage in promiscuous behavior, and age 15 is close to the age of consent in most states (Koon-Magnin & Ruback, 2013). Fifteen is also an age where adolescents are close to gaining more responsibilities, such as dating and obtaining a driver's license. These responsibilities may extend to sexual relationships, as well. Since 15 year olds are viewed as capable of decision-making and 11 year olds are not, the offender may be viewed as less deceitful/manipulative of the situation. These reasons provide explanations for lower conviction ratings for their offenders, but they also explain why older victims are blamed more for their sexual abuse. The present study supported this hypothesis for higher victim blame ratings among 15-year-old victims, as well. Unfortunately, this suggests that defendants accused of a sexual offense with an older victim are less likely to receive a conviction, and the victims are more likely to be blamed.

Although registration level recommendations did not vary across conditions, the combination of offense type and victim age interacted. Participants recommended higher registry levels when the victim was 15 years old, and the offense was rape in comparison to statutory

rape. This suggests that adolescents are given a little more sympathy when the sexual offense is forceful in nature. It is interesting to note that this condition did not result in lengthier sentence recommendations in conjunction with a higher registry level. Participants might feel that the offender deserves some form of punishment (e.g., register as a sex offender), but not deserving of a prison sentence. There is a great difference between having to register as a sex offender for a certain amount of years and serving time in prison. Even though participants recommended a higher level on the sex offender registry, it is important to recognize that they only suggested a Tier 1 level. This level only requires sex offenders to stay on the registry for a maximum of 15 years in comparison to other tiers that require much longer (i.e., Tier 2 is 25 years and Tier 3 is life).

The majority of the hypotheses regarding the affiliation of the perpetrator were not supported in the current study. It was hypothesized that Catholic priests would receive the highest conviction rate, the longest prison sentence, and be put on the sex offender registry for a longer amount of time, as a result of the extensive media footage concerning cleric sex offenders in the Catholic Church. This hypothesis was not supported. It was also expected that teachers with a religious affiliation (i.e., priest or pastor) would receive higher repercussions in comparison to the public school teacher with no religious affiliation description. This hypothesis was not supported, although offense type and religious affiliation interacted. The current study found that when the teacher was described as a Lutheran pastor and the offense was rape, participants gave lengthier sentence recommendations than when the teacher was a Lutheran pastor and the offense was statutory rape. Although there was not a statistical difference for the

offense type and affiliation for Catholic priest teachers, it was very close. If a larger sample size was used, perhaps it would have been significant.

There are a few explanations for what the current study found about affiliation. First, it is possible that the idea of a religious leader committing rape is too heinous of a crime to go unpunished. Victim gender was held constant throughout the vignettes, so it is possible that the rape of a young male victim is considered deserving of incarceration. If the sexual offense was statutory rape, then the public is more apt to believe that both the perpetrator and the victim were at fault because the relationship was consensual. Second, it is possible that participants reading about the Lutheran pastor offender did not find it any different than participants reading about the Catholic priest offender. Perhaps if participants were directly comparing the Lutheran and Catholic religions, a difference in affiliation would exist. This could explain why Catholic priests were not reprimanded more harshly than Lutheran pastors. Future studies should explore this recommendation.

Since the offense type and affiliation of the perpetrator condition for the Catholic priest was just shy of significance, sentencing of religious leaders can be affected, in general. There was no difference between ratings for these crimes for public school teachers. Similar sentencing recommendations were given. However, there was a difference in the way participants were rating the offenses for religious leaders. It is possible participants were more forgiving with religious leaders in the statutory rape conditions because a relationship is implied. Forceful and violent are not words typically used to describe a religious leader, which makes the act of rape inexcusable. Lastly, participants did not endorse the myths associated with cleric sex offenders, as analyzed by a questionnaire. Most of the literature concerning these myths is related to

Catholic priests (Boston Globe Investigative Staff, 2002; Cimbolio & Cartor, 2006; McGlone, 2003; Plante, 2003, 2004; Plante & Daniels, 2004).

Religious affiliation of the perpetrator was assessed for more than one reason. The current study aimed to explore the implications of the defensive-attribution hypothesis, which states that blame is attributed differently depending on participants' perceived similarity to the perpetrator or victim (Burger, 1981). The perceived similarity was supposed to be explored by assessing participants' religious affiliation with the demographic information. Only 15.7% of participants identified as Catholic, and 4.9% of participants identified as Lutheran. Since the sample used in this study did not have a normal representation of Catholic and Lutheran participants, it was not possible to analyze this hypothesis.

The participant sample could have been more religiously diverse. In order to explore the defensive-attribution hypothesis, the present study needed more participants who identified as Catholic or Lutheran. Less than 5% of the sample identified as Lutheran, which skewed the sample. In addition, almost half of the participants chose the options atheist, agnostic, or prefer not to say. Future studies should attempt to collect data in specific areas with a greater Catholic and Lutheran religious distribution, instead of using an online national participant pool. The current sample was predominantly heterosexual (85.7%), also. Given that heterosexual people are more likely to have homophobic attitudes (Whitley, 2001), it is possible that the results would have been different with participants of different sexual orientations. This could have been true for the statutory rape condition, especially since the offender and victim gender were held constant throughout the vignettes. Additionally, future research could explore urban versus rural settings, since individuals in these areas may perceive statutory rape differently.

Another limitation included the ability to generalize the results to a courtroom setting, where sentencing, registry level, and conviction recommendations are discussed among jurors. Participants were chosen based on their jury qualifications (i.e., 18 years and older and must not have a felony conviction), but were not able to have a true juror experience (e.g., influence of other jurors). However, Bornstein (1999) concluded that there are few differences between jury manipulation studies and mock jury studies concerning ecological validity. Participants were presented with a short paragraph, similar to one presented in a newspaper, describing the sexual offense that took place. It is possible that participants needed more information in order to assess the situation.

The results of the current study show that different factors can affect the perception of sex offenders and their victims, such as offense type, victim age, and affiliation of the perpetrator. This study supports statutory rape literature. When a sexual offense is described as rape, the offender is perceived as more dangerous than someone accused of statutory rape. As a result, potential jurors may find offenders of rape more blameworthy and deserving of harsher punishments than statutory rape offenders. Because of the implied consensual nature of statutory rape, victims are often blamed more and viewed more negatively. If prosecutors are aware of this information, it is possible they could clarify any misperceptions concerning statutory rape to properly educate jurors. Additionally, this study shows that when the offender is portrayed as a religious leader, potential jurors are more punitive when the offense is rape. This suggests that offenders in authority positions are able to get away with statutory rape by receiving less punitive charges. Their actions appear to be forgivable, as long as the crime is not too heinous.

In addition, this study acknowledges the battle adolescents might endure if they are victims of statutory rape. Participants were more likely to convict the teacher and find him more mentally unstable when the offense was rape. However, less sympathy was given to older victims, possibly since they are approaching adulthood and given more responsibilities during this age. Registration level recommendations were higher when the victim was 15, and the offense was rape. This indicates that rape should be a punishable crime, despite the age of the victim. It also suggests that statutory rape is taken less seriously. In statutory rape cases, prosecutors should educate the jurors on victim blaming, especially when the victim is an adolescent.

APPENDICES

Appendix A Consent Form

The purpose of this study is to investigate beliefs of adults across the United States. Your participation in this study will take approximately 5 to 10 minutes and will consist of reading a scenario and completing multiple questionnaires. If you choose to participate in this study, you are free to skip any questions that you would prefer not to answer. There are minimal risks associated with this study, but some of the questions might cause discomfort. If you would like to talk to someone about your feelings regarding this study, you are encouraged to contact The National Sexual Assault Hotline at (800) 666-4673. If you are a University of North Dakota student, you are encouraged to contact the University of North Dakota's Counseling Center at (701) 777-2127, which provides counseling services to UND students at no charge. Additionally, the Psychological Services Center for Survivor's of Sexual Assault & Violence provides individual and group therapy sessions for students for \$5.00 per session. They can be contacted at (701) 777-3691 or by email at psc.ssav@gmail.com.

You may benefit from this study in terms of increased awareness of your own views on certain topics. If you choose to complete this study through Mechanical Turk (MTurk), you will be awarded \$0.25 as compensation for your participation. If you choose to complete this study for course credit as a University of North Dakota student, you will be awarded research credit for your undergraduate psychology course. The University of North Dakota and the research team are receiving no payments from other organizations, agencies, or companies to conduct this study.

Your responses are completely anonymous, and you will not be asked to include any personal information with your responses. Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, or you may discontinue your participation at any time during the study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your decision about participating in this research study will not affect your current or future relations with the University of North Dakota.

The researcher conducting this study is Kaylee Stone and Dr. Karyn Plumm. If you have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research, please contact Kaylee Stone or Dr. Plumm by email: ks159508@gmail.com, karyn.plumm@email.und.edu. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may contact the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279.

You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study.

Completion of the questionnaires implies that you have read the information in this form and consent to participate in the research.

Please keep this form for your records or future reference.

Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

Please provide the following information:

Age: _____

Gender:

- _____ Woman
- _____ Man
- _____ Transgender Man
- _____ Transgender Woman
- _____ Other: _____
- _____ Prefer not to say

Race/Ethnicity: (please check all that apply)

- _____ African American / Black
- _____ Asian American
- _____ European American / White
- _____ Hispanic
- _____ Native American
- _____ Other: _____
- _____ Prefer not to say

Sexual Orientation:

- _____ Heterosexual (Straight)
- _____ Gay man
- _____ Lesbian
- _____ Bisexual
- _____ Other: _____
- _____ Prefer not to say

Religious Denomination:

- _____ Catholic
- _____ Lutheran
- _____ Christian-other: _____
- _____ Non-Christian: _____
- _____ Atheist
- _____ Agnostic
- _____ Prefer not to say

Level of Education:

___ Did not graduate high school; ___ Graduated high school; ___ Completed some college;
___ Currently an undergraduate college student; ___ Completed an associate degree or
certificate program; ___ Currently a graduate student; ___ Completed a bachelor's degree;
___ Completed a master's degree; ___ Completed a doctoral degree; ___ Other; ___ Prefer
not to say

How often do you attend church?

___ Once a week
___ More than once a week
___ I only go on holidays
___ I do not go at all

Have you ever had a romantic relationship with someone much older or younger (more than a 5
year age difference) than you?

___ Yes ___ No

Have you been exposed to any news media outlets (e.g., newspaper articles, online articles, news
on televisions, etc.) concerning religious related sex offenders?

___ Yes ___ No

If you have been exposed to any news media outlets (e.g., newspaper articles, online articles,
news on televisions, etc.) concerning religious related sex offenders, please indicate when this
took place. Choose all that apply.

___ In the past 3 months
___ In the past year
___ More than a year ago
___ I have never been exposed to news media concerning religious related sex
offenders

Have you known anyone who has ever had a romantic relationship with someone much older or
younger (more than a 5 year age difference) than they are?

___ Yes ___ No

Have you known anyone who has been accused of statutory rape?

___ Yes ___ No

Have you known anyone who has been charged with statutory rape?

___ Yes ___ No

Have you known anyone who has been the victim of statutory rape?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Have you ever been the victim of statutory rape?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Have you ever been the victim of sexual assault?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Have you ever been accused of sexual assault?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Appendix C
Private Belief Rating Scales

Private Belief Rating Scale (Conviction)

With this questionnaire, you are being asked to circle the one number that best describes your private belief that Connor should or should not be **convicted as a sex offender**. You are not being asked to state whether you believe there is sufficient evidence to convict in a court of law. Rather, it is asking about your personal and private belief.

Please circle one number that best describes your private belief about whether Connor should or should not be convicted.

-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4	+5
Certain Connor						Certain Connor				
Should NOT BE						SHOULD BE				
Convicted						Convicted				

Private Belief Rating Scale (Sentencing)

How long should the teacher's sentence be? *Please select only one response.*

- 1) No time spent _____
- 2) 1 year or less _____
- 3) 1 – 5 years _____
- 4) 5 – 10 years _____
- 5) 10 – 15 years _____
- 6) 15 – 20 years _____
- 7) 20 – 25 years _____
- 8) 25+ years _____

Private Belief Rating Scale (Recidivism)

The teacher will commit the same offense again. *Please select only one response.*

Strongly Disagree				Neither Agree Nor Disagree				Strongly Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5	6		

Private Belief Rating Scale (Registry Length)

Should Connor have to register as a sex offender? If so, for how long should Connor's name appear on the sex offender registry? *Please select only one response.*

- 1) No, should not have to register _____
- 2) Tier 1 (15 years) _____
- 3) Tier 2 (25 years) _____
- 4) Tier 3 (Life) _____

Appendix D Victim Blame Scale

Given the following rating scale, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree			Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Strongly Agree	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

- ____ 1. The student is partly to blame for the actions of the teacher.
- ____ 2. The teacher's actions are the results of the student's behavior.
- ____ 3. The teacher's actions were reasonable.
- ____ 4. The student should know to be more careful in interactions with certain teachers.
- ____ 5. The teacher's actions were the result of unwanted attention from the student.
- ____ 6. The teacher was provoked.
- ____ 7. The teacher's actions were justified.
- ____ 8. The student deserved it.
- ____ 9. Any reasonable person would have acted the same as the teacher.
- ____ 10. The student should know better than to engage in such behavior with the teacher.

Appendix E Perpetrator Blame Scale

Given the following rating scale, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree			Neither Agree Nor Disagree		Strongly Agree	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6

____1. The teacher is solely to blame for the events that took place.

Appendix F
Mental Stability of Teacher Scale

Given the following rating scale, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree				Neither Agree Nor Disagree				Strongly Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5	6		

____ 1. The teacher is mentally unstable.

Appendix G
Mental Stability of Student Scale

Given the following rating scale, please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

Strongly Disagree				Neither Agree Nor Disagree				Strongly Agree
0	1	2	3	4	5	6		

____ 1. The student is mentally unstable.

Appendix H Vignettes

Rape/Priest/11-year-old:

Local Priest and Teacher Suspended Following Sexual Abuse Allegations of 11-Year-Old Male Victim

Father David Connor, a 43-year-old local priest and teacher at St. Joseph's Catholic School was arrested and charged today with gross sexual imposition of an 11-year-old male student. The name of the alleged victim is being withheld because he is a minor. The victim reported the incidents to his parents, alleging that Father Connor forcefully removed his clothing and touched his genitals in the classroom upon being asked to assist him with a task after class. The victim stated that he felt victimized, and that the incidents in question, among others, were not mutual. The school has suspended Connor pending investigation.

Rape/Priest/15-year-old:

Local Priest and Teacher Suspended Following Sexual Abuse Allegations of 15-Year-Old Male Victim

Father David Connor, a 43-year-old local priest and teacher at St. Joseph's Catholic School was arrested and charged today with sexual assault of a 15-year-old male student. The name of the alleged victim is being withheld because he is a minor. The victim reported the incidents to his parents, alleging that Father Connor forcefully removed his clothing and touched his genitals in the classroom upon being asked to assist him with a task after class. The victim stated that he felt victimized, and that the incidents in question, among others, were not mutual. The school has suspended Connor pending investigation.

Rape/Pastor/11-year-old:

Local Pastor and Teacher Suspended Following Sexual Abuse Allegations of 11-Year-Old Male Victim

Pastor David Connor, a 43-year-old local pastor and teacher at Valley Lutheran School was arrested and charged today with gross sexual imposition of an 11-year-old male student. The name of the alleged victim is being withheld because he is a minor. The victim reported the incidents to his parents, alleging that Pastor Connor forcefully removed his clothing and touched his genitals in the classroom upon being asked to assist him with a task after class. The victim stated that he felt victimized, and that the incidents in question, among others, were not mutual. The school has suspended Connor pending investigation.

Rape/Pastor/15-year-old:

Local Pastor and Teacher Suspended Following Sexual Abuse Allegations of 15-Year-Old Male Victim

Pastor David Connor, a 43-year-old local pastor and teacher at Valley Lutheran School was arrested and charged today with sexual assault of a 15-year-old male student. The name of the alleged victim is being withheld because he is a minor. The victim reported the incidents to his parents, alleging that Pastor Connor forcefully removed his clothing and touched his genitals in the classroom upon being asked to assist him with a task after class. The victim stated that he felt victimized, and that the incidents in question, among others, were not mutual. The school has suspended Connor pending investigation.

Rape/Public School Teacher/11-year-old:

Local Teacher Suspended Following Sexual Abuse Allegations of 11-Year-Old Male Victim

David Connor, a 43-year-old local teacher at Brown Public School was arrested and charged today with gross sexual imposition of an 11-year-old male student. The name of the alleged victim is being withheld because he is a minor. The victim reported the incidents to his parents, alleging that Mr. Connor forcefully removed his clothing and touched his genitals in the classroom upon being asked to assist him with a task after class. The victim stated that he felt victimized, and that the incidents in question, among others, were not mutual. The school has suspended Connor pending investigation.

Rape/Public School Teacher/15-year-old:

Local Teacher Suspended Following Sexual Abuse Allegations of 15-Year-Old Male Victim

David Connor, a 43-year-old local teacher at Brown Public School was arrested and charged today with sexual assault of a 15-year-old male student. The name of the alleged victim is being withheld because he is a minor. The victim reported the incidents to his parents, alleging that Mr. Connor forcefully removed his clothing and touched his genitals in the classroom upon being asked to assist him with a task after class. The victim stated that he felt victimized, and that the incidents in question, among others, were not mutual. The school has suspended Connor pending investigation.

Statutory Rape/Priest/11-year-old:

Local Priest and Teacher Suspended Following Sexual Abuse Allegations of 11-Year-Old Male Victim

Father David Connor, a 43-year-old local priest and teacher at St. Joseph's Catholic School was arrested and charged today with gross sexual imposition of an 11-year-old male student. The name of the alleged victim is being withheld because he is a minor. The victim's parents reported

against their son's wishes, alleging that Father Connor forcefully removed his clothing and touched his genitals in the classroom upon being asked to assist him with a task after class. The victim stated that he did not feel victimized, and that the incidents in question, among others, were mutual. The school has suspended Connor pending investigation.

Statutory Rape/Priest/15-year-old:

Local Priest and Teacher Suspended Following Sexual Abuse Allegations of 15-Year-Old Male Victim

Father David Connor, a 43-year-old local priest and teacher at St. Joseph's Catholic School was arrested and charged today with sexual assault of a 15-year-old male student. The name of the alleged victim is being withheld because he is a minor. The victim's parents reported against their son's wishes, alleging that Father Connor forcefully removed his clothing and touched his genitals in the classroom upon being asked to assist him with a task after class. The victim stated that he did not feel victimized, and that the incidents in question, among others, were mutual. The school has suspended Connor pending investigation.

Statutory Rape/Pastor/11-year-old:

Local Pastor and Teacher Suspended Following Sexual Abuse Allegations of 11-Year-Old Male Victim

Pastor David Connor, a 43-year-old local pastor and teacher at Valley Lutheran School was arrested and charged today with gross sexual imposition of an 11-year-old male student. The name of the alleged victim is being withheld because he is a minor. The victim's parents reported against their son's wishes, alleging that Pastor Connor forcefully removed his clothing and touched his genitals in the classroom upon being asked to assist him with a task after class. The victim stated that he did not feel victimized, and that the incidents in question, among others, were mutual. The school has suspended Connor pending investigation.

Statutory Rape/Pastor/15-year-old:

Local Pastor and Teacher Suspended Following Sexual Abuse Allegations of 15-Year-Old Male Victim

Pastor David Connor, a 43-year-old local pastor and teacher at Valley Lutheran School was arrested and charged today with sexual assault of a 15-year-old male student. The name of the alleged victim is being withheld because he is a minor. The victim's parents reported against their son's wishes, alleging that Pastor Connor forcefully removed his clothing and touched his genitals in the classroom upon being asked to assist him with a task after class. The victim stated that he did not feel victimized, and that the incidents in question, among others, were mutual. The school has suspended Connor pending investigation.

Statutory Rape/Public School Teacher/11-year-old:

Local Teacher Suspended Following Sexual Abuse Allegations of 11-Year-Old Male Victim

David Connor, a 43-year-old local teacher at Brown Public School was arrested and charged today with gross sexual imposition of an 11-year-old male student. The name of the alleged victim is being withheld because he is a minor. The victim's parents reported against their son's wishes, alleging that Mr. Connor forcefully removed his clothing and touched his genitals in the classroom upon being asked to assist him with a task after class. The victim stated that he did not feel victimized, and that the incidents in question, among others, were mutual. The school has suspended Connor pending investigation.

Statutory Rape/Public School Teacher/15-year-old:

Local Teacher Suspended Following Sexual Abuse Allegations of 15-Year-Old Male Victim

David Connor, a 43-year-old local teacher at Brown Public School was arrested and charged today with sexual assault of a 15-year-old male student. The name of the alleged victim is being withheld because he is a minor. The victim's parents reported against their son's wishes, alleging that Mr. Connor forcefully removed his clothing and touched his genitals in the classroom upon being asked to assist him with a task after class. The victim stated that he did not feel victimized, and that the incidents in question, among others, were mutual. The school has suspended Connor pending investigation.

Appendix I
Manipulation Check Questions

About the case you read:

Did the victim state the alleged incidents were mutual?

☐ YES
☐ NO

What is the name of the school the teacher works at?

☐ BROWN PUBLIC SCHOOL
☐ VALLEY LUTHERAN SCHOOL
☐ ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL

How old was the male victim in the given scenario?

☐ 11 YEARS OLD
☐ 15 YEARS OLD

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