Of Rape and Other Demons: The Impact of the Victim's Eye Size and Observer's Gender on the Attributions of Responsibility

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Abstract

This study examined the influence of the victim's eye size and observer's gender on the observers' perception of initial attraction and honesty of the victim, identification of the observer with a female target, and observers' attribution of victim's and perpetrator's responsibility for rape. A 3 (victim's eye size: small vs. normal vs. large) x 2 (observer's gender: female vs. male) experimental design was used. Participants (45 females and 45 males) observed one of three randomly assigned female faces (with eye size manipulation) and rated initial attraction, honesty, and identification. They were then asked to read a rape scenario (with a non-traditional woman) and to rate the victim's and offender's responsibility. The victim's eye size was shown a significant effect on all variables, except for perpetrator's responsibility. The female face with large eyes was perceived as more attractive and honest, elicited higher identification, and was attributed less responsibility. No significant effects were identified for observer's gender. Theoretical and practical implications were discussed.

Keywords: rape; victim's eye size, observer's gender, responsibility, attraction

Introduction

Rape is a crime with severe consequences for the victim, including the trauma of violence and social stigmatization. In fact, sexually victimized women are held more responsible than other kinds of victims (Angelone, Mitchell, & Lucente, 2012; Rebeiz & Harb, 2010). In this context, negative events often produce attributions of responsibility, "a belief that someone should have foreseen the situation, that the

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person's actions were not justified, and that the person operated under free choice" (Fiske & Taylor, 2013, p. 174). This is especially true for non-traditional women (e.g., with a career or divorced) in acquaintance rape scenarios (where the aggressor is known to the victim) (Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003; Ben-David & Schneider, 2005; Viki & Abrams, 2002).

Rape victim's blaming is usually explained by two main theories: the just world theory (Lerner & Miller, 1978) and the defensive attribution hypothesis (Shaver, 1970). The first theory argues that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get (good people are recompensed and bad people are punished). When faced with random misfortune, people try to restore their belief in a just world (and their idea of invulnerability) by re-conceptualizing the situation. In the case of rape, people who believe in a just world are more likely to blame the victim for her own situation (combating cognitive dissonance) and to believe that she deserved what she got due to inappropriate behavior (Kleinke & Meyer, 1990).

In the same way, the defensive attribution hypothesis (Shaver, 1970) states that if the observer finds some similarities between themselves and the victim, they will ascribe a lower degree of blame to the victim, perceiving it as a possible misfortune (danger avoidance) or future victimization (blame avoidance). In this case, women are more likely to assign less blame to the victim because they may perceive themselves similar to the victim in some way.

The dispositional attribution includes a cognitive process influenced by the victim's and the observer's characteristics (Grubb & Harrower, 2009; Pollard, 1992; for a review of observer's characteristics, see Ferrão & Gonçalves, 2015). Researching these characteristics has proven useful in explaining attributions of responsibility for sexual abuse and providing support for intervention programs aimed at reducing stereotypes. It may also reduce erroneous beliefs about rape victims within legal contexts and influence judicial decision-making processes (Anderson & Whiston, 2005; Grubb & Harrower, 2009).

Two variables come about when considering victim's and observer's characteristics, and they are basic aspects of social interactions: (a) the role of physical appearance in social perception, especially the predisposition to focus attention on the eyes, the central point of human face (Argyle, 1970; Geldart, Maurer, & Carney, 1999); and (b) the influence of the observer's gender on social judgments, with more positive evaluations being held towards in-group members (Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

Victim's Physical Characteristics

Interpersonal perception is based on inferences focused on the most immediate characteristics (e.g., sexual identity and physical traits) as a cue to pre-judgments. Physical appearance plays a prominent role in determining inference-making processes, and reflects the belief that "what is beautiful is good" (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972). This cognitive bias is related to initial attraction, characterized by the

willingness to interact and positivity (a positive attitude and predisposition to interact with others from the first moment), physiological reactions (level of arousal experienced towards someone), and flirting/fantasizing behaviours (a pattern of thought that stirs one's imagination and sexuality towards someone) (Rodrigues & Garcia-Marques, 2006). Attractiveness seems to be a central trait in social perception (Asch, 1946), because it prompts the attribution of additional positive traits such as intelligence (Moore, Fillippou, & Perrett, 2011).

As attractive people are believed to have desirable personality traits (Dion et al., 1972), rape perception may also be influenced by physical attractiveness biases that impair good judgment. Since the perception of a single feature may be extended from a positive trait of another, it seems likely to lead to biased positive global appraisals. Within legal contexts, some studies have shown that decision-making processes are often based on criteria tangential to the actual crime, focusing on the impact of the victim's physical attributes on rape perceptions (Hammond, Berry, & Rodríguez, 2011).

Physical attractiveness is one of the most assessed variables (Agthe, Spörrle, & Maner, 2011), leading to a bias effect that replicates the tendency to perceive an attractive person in a benevolent way (Griffin & Langlois, 2006). Attractive women are therefore perceived as more honest and are assigned less blame for a rape situation (Vrij & Firmin, 2001), whereas unattractive victims are believed to be more responsible, because they are unlikely targets unless they encouraged the situation (Gerdes, Dammann, & Heilig, 1988; Seligman, Brickman, & Koulack, 1977).

Inferences are often based on facial traits such as the eyes, the primary center of visual attention (Argyle, 1970). Eye size, particularly, is believed to be a dominant trait when assigning attributes such as attractiveness (Cunningham, Roberts, Barbee, Druen, & Wu, 1995; Gonçalves et al., 2012a; Pettijohn & Tesser, 2005) and honesty (Atoum & Al-Simadi, 2000; Paunonen, Ewan, Erathy, Lefave, & Goldberg, 1999).

Baby-faced adults (particularly with larger eyes) are actually deemed to possess more socially desirable traits, and, in turn, are more likely to trigger positive evaluations: individuals with larger eyes are perceived as more attractive, warmer (Cunningham et al., 1995; Gonçalves et al., 2012a, 2012b, 2014; Pettijohn & Tesser 2005), honest, empathetic, and intelligent (Paunonen et al., 1999). Nonetheless, the effect of the victim's eye size on rape perception is not clearly defined.

It is also worth mentioning that, in addition to physical appearance, women may be perceived according to social and cultural constructions which reflect stereotypical ideas (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Fiske, Xu, Cuddy, & Glick, 1999). In fact, women are perceived as a heterogeneous group (Vonk & Ashmore, 2003), which leads to their classification into three major subtypes: (1) traditional woman (e.g., a housewife); (2) non-traditional woman (e.g., feminist and with a career); (3) and sexual/seductive women (DeWall, Altermatt, & Thompson, 2005; Six & Eckes, 1991). When we consider the categorization of women into traditional and non-traditional subtypes, the victim who transgresses traditional roles is often

evaluated less favorably (Abrams et al., 2003; Ben-David & Schneider, 2005; Capezza & Arriaga, 2008; Viki & Abrams, 2002).

Observer's Gender

Given that rape is a crime with a higher number of female victims, women and men may differ when attributing responsibility to either the victim or the assailant (Gölge, Yavuz, Müderrisoglu, & Yavuz, 2003; Newcombe, van den Eynde, Hafner, & Jolly, 2008). Perceived similarity to others (identification) is important in explaining such differences because gender-based identification is the most common identification when other information are excluded (Grubb & Harrower, 2009). As individuals usually hold more positive attitudes toward in-group members (Tajfel et al., 1971; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), women are more likely to identify with rape victims, whereas men are more likely to identify with perpetrators. The identification with rape victims appears to be negatively correlated with victim blame (Grubb & Harrower, 2009), which may also affect the victim's perceived responsibility, since one cannot assign blame without assigning responsibility.

From a young age, women and men have different socialization processes and learn different social roles. These processes are perpetuated by different social structures (e.g., family and school) and are culturally dependent, whereas biological differences are universal (Larsen & Krumov, 2013). Sociocultural gender roles influence our behaviors and beliefs about ourselves and the world around us (Grubb & Turner, 2012; Larsen & Krumov, 2013). As a result, men are expected to be socially oriented toward independence, dominance, assertiveness, egoism and leadership, whilst women are primarily oriented toward interpersonal support, reciprocity, forgiveness, warmth, and emotional expressiveness (Ridgeway, 1992).

Nonetheless, research findings on the influence of gender on rape perceptions have revealed inconsistent effects. There is evidence that males have more negative attitudes toward rape victims, holding them more responsible for their victimization (e.g., Bendixen, Henriksen, & Nøstdahl, 2014; Durán, Moya, Megías, & Viki, 2010; Ferrão, Gonçalves, Giger, & Parreira, 2015; Gölge et al., 2003; Schneider, Mori, Lambert, & Wong, 2009; Strömwall, Landström, & Alfredsson, 2014; Yamawaki, Darby, & Queiroz, 2007), contradicting other studies which failed to detect such gender differences (e.g., Cohn, Dupuis, & Brown, 2009; Frese, Moya, & Megías, 2004; Johnson, Jackson, & Smith, 1989; Strömwall, Alfredsson, & Landström, 2013). Additionally, there is evidence that women may assign more responsibility to rape victims (e.g., Luginbuhl & Mullin, 1981; Nagel, Matsuo, McIntyre, & Morrison, 2005).

Overview and Hypotheses

Based on a literature review, we can presume that: (1) individuals with large eyes (a neotenous feature) are perceived more positively; and (2) observer's gender may be a significant element in rape perception, since this is a gendered crime and individuals usually hold more favourable attitudes toward in-group members. Therefore, this study analyzed the effects of rape victim's eye size and observer's gender on observers' attribution of victim's and perpetrator's responsibility for rape. We also examined the influence of the victim's eye size and observer's gender on initial attraction, perceived honesty, and degree of identification with the stimulus. The following hypotheses were tested: (1) The female stimulus with large eye size is perceived as more (a) attractive and (b) honest, and (c) elicits a higher degree of identification; (2) The female stimulus is considered more attractive by male observers; (3) The female stimulus is perceived as more honest and elicits a higher degree of identification in female observers; (4) If a victim has large eyes, she is held less responsible and the offender is assigned more responsibility; (5) Female observers perceive the victim as less responsible for rape and male observers perceive the perpetrator as less responsible.

Methods

Design and Participants

This study had a 3 (victim's eye size: small vs. normal vs. large) X 2 (observer's gender: male vs. female) between-subjects design, with five dependent variables: initial attraction, perceived honesty, degree of identification with a female stimulus, and rape victim's and perpetrator's responsibility. Respondents were 90 volunteers (45 women and 45 men), aged from 18 to 56 years, with a mean age of 28.29 ($M_{(female)}$=26.98, SD=9.33; $M_{(male)}$=29.60, SD=7.52), randomly assigned to one of six conditions (n=15) according to the victim's eye size and observer's gender. No statistically significant differences (p>.05) for age were found among groups. All the participants were Portuguese and most were single (70%) and undergraduate (66%).

Stimulus and Scenario

A picture with an average-looking Caucasian female face was selected from a royalty-free pictures database (where one is not required to pay royalties or license fees to use the images), in order to manipulate the victim's eye size. The picture had no distinct characteristics such as makeup or jewelry (the female had the hair pushed back). The face with the original eye size was used as the control picture (normal eye size). The manipulation decreased/increased the eye size by 20%. This procedure

was conducted by an image manipulation expert using a free software GIMP. The picture was presented to participants as a 13x9 cm portrait (in color).

The invented rape scenario (Appendix 1) involved a non-traditional victim (divorced woman with a career), which was driven home by a co-worker after a company dinner. In this scenario, the co-worker made advances toward the victim while they were alone in the car on a deserted road. Although the victim refused the advances, screamed and pushed the perpetrator, he forced himself on her and committed rape.

Measures

The data were collected through a self-report questionnaire that included: a) *Initial Attraction Index* (IAI, Rodrigues & Garcia-Marques, 2006), composed of 31 items with a 7-point response scale (1 - *nothing* to 7 - *a lot*), measuring willingness to interact/positivity (e.g., "I feel interested"; α=.94), physiological reactions (e.g., "I feel butterflies in my stomach"; α=.90), and flirting behaviour/fantasy (e.g., "I feel curiosity"; α=.91) – reliabilities of the present sample for total IAI and subscales were, respectively, .98, .94, .90, and .97; b) *Honesty Scale* (HS, Reysen, 2008), which employs a 7-point response scale (1 - *strongly disagree* to 7 - *strongly agree*) with 8 items (e.g., "This person has integrity"; α=.89). This scale was translated to Portuguese by two bilingual specialists using the back translation technique, re-evaluated and edited by field experts to ensure its validity (in this study, the internal consistency was .83); c) degree of *identification* with the stimulus picture ("To what degree do you identify yourself with the female in the picture"), with one item scored on a 7-point scale (1 - *nothing* to 7 - *a lot*); d) perceptions of *rape victim's* and *perpetrator's responsibility* from reading the rape scenario and imagining the victim was the female in the stimulus picture. These perceptions were assessed with the *Rape Responsibility Scale*, a 14-item scale (e.g., "Maria/José is responsible for the situation") developed by the authors (Appendix 2), using a 7-point scoring (1 - *nothing* to 7 - *a lot*). Two items were reversed so that higher scores indicated higher responsibility for all items (the internal consistency of the victim's and perpetrator's responsibility was .88 and .87, respectively).

Participants were also asked to indicate gender, age, nationality, education level, and marital status. Three control questions were further included, asking participants to identify the aim of the study and if they had been rape victims or knew any rape victim. A complete questionnaire pre-test was conducted in a sample of 24 individuals, which led to minor adjustments before the final version.

Procedure

The study was ethically approved by the Scientific Council of the Faculty of Human and Social Sciences (University of Algarve, Portugal). Participants were

approached in several public settings (e.g., classrooms, cafés, libraries, public streets, and other public places) and informed that the study was part of a project on human behavior. Following informed consent procedures and the assurance of the anonymity and confidentiality of the disclosed data, respondents were randomly assigned to one of three female pictures and a self-report questionnaire was applied individually (with an average duration of 15 minutes). Participants were initially asked to observe the female stimulus on the picture and answer questions about initial attraction, perceived honesty, and identification with the stimulus. They were then asked to read a rape scenario and to rate the victim's (assuming she was the female in the picture) and the rapist's responsibility. Upon completing the questionnaire, participants were fully debriefed on the specific aims of the study, and additional information was given when requested.

Results

The data were analysed with IBM SPSS (21.0). Regarding the three control questions, the aim of the study was not disclosed to the research participants and they had no previous experience with rape situations (directly or indirectly).

Initial Attraction, Honesty, and Identification

Descriptive statistics for initial attraction, honesty and identification measures (by condition) are presented in Table 1. Overall, honesty presents the highest mean value (*M*=4.40), but the mean scores for attraction (*M*=1.26) and identification with the person in the picture (*M*=1.35) are quite low.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics for Attraction, Honesty and Identification, According to Condition*

| | Gender | Eye Size | | | | | | Total | |
| | | Small | | Normal | | Large | | | |
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Attraction	Female	2.09	1.02	2.22	1.14	2.51	1.23	2.27	1.12
	Male	1.93	0.87	2.42	1.15	3.68	1.44	2.67	1.37
	Total	2.01	0.93	2.32	1.13	3.09	1.45	2.47	1.26
Honesty	Female	4.18	0.80	4.39	0.53	4.33	0.62	4.30	0.65
	Male	4.35	0.83	4.03	0.47	5.13	1.20	4.50	0.98
	Total	4.27	0.80	4.21	0.53	4.73	1.02	4.40	0.84
Identification	Female	2.20	1.01	2.93	1.33	3.07	1.16	2.73	1.21
	Male	2.07	1.39	2.53	1.41	3.27	1.49	2.62	1.48
	Total	2.13	1.20	2.73	1.36	3.17	1.32	2.68	1.35

The *initial attraction* was analyzed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for a 3 (victim's eye size: small vs. normal vs. large) X 2 (observer's

gender: female vs. male) between-subjects experiment. A main effect of victim's eye size was observed ($F_{(2, 84)}$=7.05, p=.00, μ_p^2=.14), but neither observer's gender ($F_{(1, 84)}$=2.78, p=.10, μ_p^2=.03) nor interaction ($F_{(2, 84)}$=2.68, p=.08, μ_p^2=.06) effects were found. Tukey post hoc test with α=.05 reveals significant differences for large eye size in relation to normal (p=.03) and small eye size (p=.00): the female with large eyes (M=3.09) is considered more attractive than the female with normal (M=2.32) and small eyes (M=2.01). Initial attraction dimensions follow the same pattern observed for the overall scale, with the same effect of the eye size (p<.05).

With respect to *honesty*, the main effect of the victim's eye size ($F_{(2, 84)}$=3.40, p=.02, μ_p^2=.09) as well an interaction effect ($F_{(2, 84)}$=4.15, p=.02, μ_p^2=.09) were found, while observer's gender was shown not to significantly affect this variable ($F_{(1, 84)}$=1.43, p=.24, μ_p^2=.02). Tukey HSD test indicates a significant difference between large and normal eye size (p=.03), meaning that the female with large eyes is seen as more honest (M=4.73) than the female with normal eyes (M=4.21). As for the interaction found, the Bonferroni-adjusted *t*-test (α=.02) shows that the female with large eyes (p<.00) is considered to be more honest by men (M=5.13) than by women (M=4.33) (Figure 1).

Figure 1. *Interaction Effect Eye Size X Gender on Perceived Honesty*
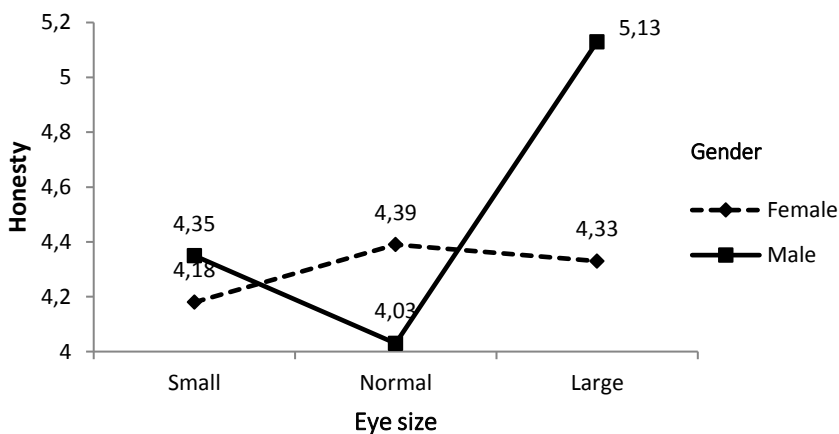
The main effect of eye size was found for the degree of *identification* with the female stimulus ($F_{(2, 84)}$=4.72, p=.01, μ_p^2=.10). However, neither effect of observer's gender ($F_{(1, 84)}$=.16, p=.69, μ_p^2=.00) nor interaction ($F_{(2, 84)}$=.40, p=.67, μ_p^2=.01) could be detected. Tukey test confirms that large and small eye size are significantly different (p=.01): the female with large eyes (M=3.17) activates a higher degree of identification than the one with small eyes (M=2.13).

Correlational analyses were also computed to test for associations between variables in different conditions. Pearson correlation coefficients range from a minimum of .52 to a maximum of .70. No correlations were found between attraction

and honesty, but identification correlates positively ($p<.05$) with honesty in several conditions: when men observed the female with small ($r=.54$), normal ($r=.63$) and large eyes ($r=.64$), and when women observed the female with large eye size ($r=.52$). Positive correlations between identification and attraction ($p<.01$) were also found when men observed the female with normal ($r=.68$) and large eye size ($r=.65$), and when women observed the female with large eyes ($r=.70$).

Rape Responsibility Scale: Exploratory Factor Analysis

The factor structure of the *Rape Responsibility Scale* (originally developed for the purpose of this study) was analyzed through reliability and exploratory factor analyses. The KMO value of the data was .86 and the Bartlett's test was significant ($\chi^2=785.66$; $df=91$; $p<.001$). All the communalities were higher than .30 (between .38 and .76) and no items were dropped from the analysis.

The exploratory factor analysis, using the principal components estimation method with varimax rotation and the criterion of eigenvalue higher than 1.00, produced a two-factor solution accounting for 61.29% of the total variance (43.62% for Factor 1 and 17.67% for Factor 2). Both factors were identified, respectively, as Perpetrator's Responsibility (PR) and Victim's Responsibility (VR). The standardized factor loadings for the 14 items composing these two factors are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Factor Analyses of the Rape Responsibility Scale*

Item	Factor 1 PR	Factor 2 VR	h^2
VR1		0.75	0.75
VR2		0.68	0.73
VR3		0.70	0.81
VR4		0.61	0.55
VR5		0.85	0.73
VR6		0.86	0.80
VR7		0.78	0.80
PR1	0.62		0.75
PR2	0.75		0.58
PR3	0.85		0.73
PR4	0.71		0.63
PR5	0.81		0.71
PR6	0.65		0.43
PR7	0.77		0.75
Variance *(%)*	43.62	17.67	
Eigenvalues	6.11	2.47	

The results regarding reliability further indicate that both factors present acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha_{(PR)}$=.87; $\alpha_{(VR)}$=.88). Concurrent validity was found via correlational tests between VR and PR, with a moderate negative relation being found between both dimensions (r=-.41, p<.001).

Attributions of Responsibility for Rape

Descriptive statistics for attributions of VR and PR by the condition are displayed in Table 3. Overall, the perpetrator was held more responsible (M=5.82) than the victim (M=2.30). The differences were calculated by the one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA).

Table 3. *Descriptive Statistics for Victim's Responsibility According to Victim's Eye Size and Observer's Gender*

Dependent variable	Gender	Victim's Eye Size						Total	
		Small		Normal		Large			
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
VR	Female	2.46	1.06	2.55	1.02	2.05	0.96	2.35	1.01
	Male	3.01	1.20	2.33	0.82	1.39	0.48	2.24	1.10
	Total	2.73	1.15	2.44	0.92	1.72	0.82	2.30	1.05
PR	Female	5.80	0.82	5.75	1.36	5.64	0.83	5.73	1.01
	Male	5.90	1.05	5.85	0.89	5.98	0.64	5.91	0.86
	Total	5.85	0.93	5.80	1.13	5.81	0.75	5.82	0.94

The main effect of victim's eye size ($F_{(2, 84)}$=9.02, p<.00, μ_p^2=.18) on VR was observed, but neither observer's gender ($F_{(1, 84)}$=.29, p=.59, μ_p^2=.00) nor interaction effects ($F_{(2, 84)}$=3.10, p=.06, μ_p^2=.06) were found. Tukey post hoc test for multiple comparisons reveals significant differences for large eye size in relation to normal (p=.01) and small eye size (p<.00): the victim with large eyes was assigned less responsibility (M=1.72) than the one with normal (M=2.44) and small eyes (M=2.73). In regard to PR, victim's eye size ($F_{(2, 84)}$=.02, p=.98, μ_p^2=.00) and observer's gender ($F_{(1, 84)}$=.77, p=.38, μ_p^2=.01) were shown not to influence this variable, and no interaction effect was found ($F_{(2, 84)}$=.17, p=.85, μ_p^2=.00). Significant negative correlations were found between VR and PR when men evaluated the victim with small (r=-.75, p=.00) and large eyes (r=-.61, p=.02), and when women evaluated the victim with large eyes (r=-.59, p=.02). Additional correlational analyses show no significant associations linking honesty and identification to attributions of responsibility (p>.05), but indicate that initial attraction (r=-.56, p=.03), positivity (r=-.65, p=.01) and fantasy (r=-.53, p=.04) are negatively correlated with PR when men observed the victim with large eyes.

Discussion

This study examined the effect of the victim's eye size and observer's gender on initial attraction, perceived honesty, identification with a female stimulus, and attributions of responsibility for rape. Overall, our study confirmed that the female with large eyes is perceived as more attractive and honest, elicits higher identification and is held less responsible. Observer's gender was found not to be relevant in the perception of the studied variables.

Perceptions on Initial Attraction, Honesty and Identification

The *first hypothesis* was confirmed, with the victim's eye size affecting (a) initial attraction, (b) perceived honesty, and (c) identification with the female stimulus. The female with large eyes is considered more attractive, probably due to the preference for expressive faces and larger facial features (Fiske & Taylor, 2013; Geldart et al., 1999). These results are supported by the evidence that adults are more likely to find women with neotenous facial features, especially large eyes, more attractive (e.g., Cunningham et al., 1995; Ferrão et al., 2015; Geldart et al., 1999; Gonçalves et al., 2012a, 2014; Pettijohn & Tesser, 2005). This is even more noteworthy when considering that eyes become smaller with age, evoking attributions of maturity (e.g., dominance or independence), while large eyes are a heuristic for youth (related to dependency, naivety or honesty), leading women with this trait to be perceived as more attractive, young, and fertile (Cunningham et al., 1995; Wade, 2010). Human morphological development also suggests the universality of this sort of perception (Keating, Randall, Kendrick, & Tesser, 2003). Even so, the overall mean scores for attraction were low, which may be due to the photo used or to the possible inappropriateness of the IAI scale for women in the study, because two of its dimensions include sexual attraction.

Our results confirm that women with neotenous characteristics are also perceived as more honest, which is consistent with other studies (e.g., Atoum & Al-Simadi, 2000; Ferrão et al., 2015; Keating et al., 2003; Paunonen et al., 1999; Zebrowitz, Voinescu, & Collins, 1996). These findings seem to be rooted in the assumption that baby-faced adults embody traits of goodness and ingenuity (Fiske & Taylor, 2013; Zebrowitz et al., 1996). Research also suggests that attractive individuals are usually perceived as more honest (Shinners, 2009), but we did not find significant correlations between both variables (possibly because this was not a relevant attribute when observing the picture).

Moreover, it is believed that the eye size influences the degree of identification with a social stimulus, which may rely on the tendency to perceive individuals with large eyes in a more positive light (Geldart et al., 1999; Gonçalves et al., 2014). Our correlational analysis provides additional support for this assumption, since identification is positively related to initial attraction and perceived honesty.

Contrary to our *second hypothesis* (*the female stimulus is considered more attractive by the male observers*) and *third hypotheses* (*the female stimulus is perceived as more honest and elicits a higher degree of identification in female observers*), observer's gender showed no effect on (a) initial attraction, (b) perceived honesty, or (c) identification with the stimulus picture. The initial attraction was expected to be gender sensitive, on account of our attraction toward the opposite gender (Griffin & Langlois, 2006). The nature of the IAI scale itself suggests the existence of two sexually oriented dimensions (i.e., physiological reactions and flirting behavior), typically associated with feelings for the opposite gender. The literature also suggests that gender may influence both honesty and identification, based on the in-group favouritism biases (Tajfel et al., 1971; Tajfel & Turner, 1986); yet, no effects were found, which may be partially explained by the methodological procedures adopted, namely the absence of real social interaction and other verbal/nonverbal cues. Nonetheless, our results are similar to research by Atoum & Al-Simadi (2000), where no gender differences concerning honesty judgments were identified, even using different stimuli presentation modality, including video format. On the other hand, the interaction found between the victim's eye size and observer's gender indicates that the female with large eyes is seen as more honest by men, giving additional support to the assumption that neotenous faces may embody features associated with ingenuity and innocence (Zebrowitz et al., 1996). This means that the observer's gender does play a role on perceived honesty but in interaction with eye size. Conceivably, the results reported are further related to the fact that honesty is one of the traits that people seek in a mate (Lippa, 2007); as the stimulus is a female, this trait may have been more prevailing for men than for women. However, an interaction between the victim's eye size and observer's gender was more likely to be expected for attraction than for honesty, given that facial attractiveness is also a trait sought by men in a mate. This question remains unclear and further studies are required for an in-depth understanding of this interaction effect.

Perceptions of Victim's and Perpetrator's Responsibility

The main effect of the victim's eye size was observed for victim`s responsibility but not for perpetrator`s responsibility, which partially confirms our *fourth hypothesis*. As stated, physical appearance may influence social perception and specific traits are assumed to be more central when judging others (Atoum & Al-Simadi, 2000; Dion et al., 1972). Assuming the eyes are the center of focus in visual examinations of human faces (Argyle, 1970), it may be inferred that this facial trait is important when judging a rape victim, reinforcing the idea that large eyes lead to more positive evaluations (Ferrão et al., 2015; Geldart et al., 1999; Gonçalves et al., 2012a). If a female with larger eyes is considered more attractive (Cunningham et al., 1995; Geldart et al., 1999; Gonçalves et al., 2012a; Pettijohn & Tesser, 2005), this may influence attributions of responsibility for rape (Ferrão et al., 2015).

Previous research has shown that less blame is assigned to attractive victims than to unattractive victims (Deitz, Littman, & Bentley, 1984; Gerdes et al., 1988; Seligman et al., 1977), possibly because the latter are less likely targets for rape. Our results partially confirm those assumptions, showing that females with large eyes are perceived as more attractive, but no associations were found between initial attraction and VR, possibly because our rape scenario is not ambiguous (Johnson et al., 1989; Jacobson & Popovich, 1983). Attraction seems to have little influence when a rape situation is unambiguous, but further studies, using diverse methodological procedures and scenarios, are required to explain the role of attraction and ambiguity on rape perception.

Research on sexual assault (e.g., Jacobson & Popovich, 1983) attests that the victim's attractiveness increases perpetrator's blame assignments, but only under ambiguous conditions (where neither rape nor victim's behavior are clear). This might explain why no effect of eye size was observed on PR. Notwithstanding, a negative correlation between attraction and PR was found when men observed the female with large eyes, which suggests that less responsibility is assigned by male observers to the perpetrator when the victim is perceived as more attractive. The fact that the victim is non-traditional may have caused a less factual interpretation of the situation and the perception of the victim as seductive (Best & Demmin, 1982). Furthermore, as rape is driven by sexual attraction (Deitz et al., 1984), men can justify the perpetrator's behavior and his lack of control over sexual instincts.

As individuals with neotenous traits are seen as more trustworthy and naive, giving rise to paternalistic and protective attitudes (Cunningham et al., 1995; Wade, 2010; Zebrowitz et al., 1996), when confronted with rape (a defenceless situation) a female with those attributes may be assigned less responsibility, because she is perceived as honest (Vrij & Firmin, 2001). In this study, large eye size affected perceived honesty, but it was not associated with attributions of responsibility, most likely due to the absence of ambiguity. Additionally, participants showed higher levels of identification with the female with large eye size, but no correlations with responsibility were found. Past research revealed contradictory results concerning this association: Grubb and Harrower (2009) confirmed that identification with the victim correlates negatively with blame assignments, but Kahn et al. (2011) reported no association between these variables. Further research should help to clarify this association, preferably by examining identification with the victim after the rape and not before, as in this study.

Individuals typically hold more favourable attitudes towards in-group members (Tajfel et al., 1971; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and Shaver's (1970) defensive attribution hypothesis posits that blame attributions depend on the perceived similarity with the victim and the probability of similar victimization (thus motivating people to avoid future blame attributions). Nevertheless, although women were expected to assign less responsibility to the victim and men to the perpetrator, observer's gender had no

effect on dispositional judgments regarding either victim or perpetrator, providing no support for our *fifth hypothesis*.

These results may be based either on an emotional closeness to the victim or on a perceived lack of moral responsibility, given that there is no evidence for a voluntary or intentional behavior underlying rape (Schneider et al., 2009). Accordingly, the perceived seriousness and unambiguity of the situation may reduce the impact of in-group biases and the inclusion of these measures is recommended in future studies. Humphreys (1993) has shown that ambiguity is a critical factor when explaining gender differences in rape perceptions, with men perceiving the ambiguous rape as more consensual than women. These data are supported by other studies (e.g., Jacobson & Popovich, 1983; Johnson et al., 1989) which suggest the importance of perceptual ambiguity on attributions of responsibility. In real rape situations, observers are also given more information and there seems to be an increasing awareness of both females and males regarding the causes and consequences of rape, mostly because mass media have a strong social and cultural impact upon society. Keeping people informed and showing the victim's perspective are effective means to reduce stigma, regardless of observer's gender, and even among those with traditional gender beliefs.

Finally, our findings do not provide support to the literature reporting that men assign more responsibility and blame to the rape victims (e.g., Bendixen et al., 2014; Deitz et al., 1984; Durán et al., 2010; Ferrão et al., 2015; Gölge et al., 2003; Mitchell, Angelone, Kohlberger, & Hirschman, 2009; Strömwall et al., 2014). On the contrary, it adds to evidence that observer's gender is not relevant in attributions of responsibility (Davies, Gilston, & Rogers, 2012; Frese et al., 2004; Gerdes et al., 1988; Johnson et al., 1989).

To sum up, eye size was shown to influence the perception of attraction, honesty and the degree of identification elicited on observers (the female with large eyes presents higher mean scores in these variables). The victim with large eyes is also held less responsible. Observer's gender does not seem to play a role in the perception of the variables included in this study. The only exception is the interaction found between the victim's eye size and observer's gender regarding perceived honesty, which shows that gender only plays a role in the perception of honesty in interaction with the eye size (the female with large eye size is perceived as more honest by men).

Implications, Limitations and Future Directions

The victim's eye size was shown to influence both the perception of positive attributes and attributions of responsibility to the victim. This represents a significant theoretical advance, as it clarifies the influence of a specific facial trait on attributions of responsibility for rape and supports the idea that gender differences are not important regarding rape perception. We believe that, as the negative connotations related to rape crimes may reduce the likelihood of reporting sexual assault, a

thorough understanding of the factors related to victim's stigmatization is important so as to develop intervention programs focused on the general community, mainstreaming institutions, and victims of sexual assault. The aim of these interventions should focus on reducing self-reported and secondary victimization, by deconstructing stereotypes that see women as active agents of the crime itself, and by removing negative self-statements and ruminative thoughts by the victim. Methodologies with greater ecological validity and involving the interpretation of real-world scenarios should further be developed in order to expand on the reported findings, as well as the approach of real actors and observers. Furthermore, the design of research-action and the evaluation of the beliefs of individuals in contact with rape victims should be considered.

As stated before, one limitation identified in this study is the lack of an ambiguous scenario and we cannot exclude the possibility that the rape scenario constructed might have influenced the assignments of responsibility. This should be considered in future research, through the manipulation of ambiguous and unambiguous scenarios, also involving an unknown rapist and a traditional woman. Research in this field can also benefit from the inclusion of descriptions in video format and measures that assess the perception of the situation as a rape scene and its seriousness. Future studies are also suggested to include larger samples and the participants' sexual orientation.

Determinants for responsibility assignments are complex, including sexist beliefs about gender roles, rape myths, empathy, belief in a just world, and other variables which equally important, leading to believe that the analysis of the constructs associated with a social perception of rape deserves more attention. Therefore, the examination of an integrated approach may be helpful and lead to a theoretical model that further identifies predictors of victim and perpetrator responsibility.

As a final recommendation, as far as we can ascertain, there are no published studies on the relationship between the social perception of rape and expression of emotions, so this association should be addressed in the future, together with other research directions such as the influence of cultural values on the social perception of rape and the comparison of these findings with those found for sexually victimized men.

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O silovanju i drugim demonima: Utjecaj veličine očiju žrtve i roda opažača na atribucije odgovornosti

Sažetak

U ovom su istraživanju ispitivani utjecaj veličine očiju žrtve i roda opažača na opažačevu percepciju inicijalne privlačnosti i čestitosti žrtve, identifikacija opažača sa ženskom metom te opažačeve atribucije žrtvine i počiniteljeve odgovornosti za silovanje. Korišten je eksperimentalni nacrt „3 x 2", pri čemu se tri odnosi na veličinu žrtvinih očiju (male, normalne, velike), a dva na rod opažača (ženski, muški). Sudionici (45 žena i 45 muškaraca) su opažali jedno od tri nasumično dodijeljena ženska lica (s manipulacijom veličine očiju) i procjenjivali inicijalnu privlačnost, čestitost i identifikaciju. Zatim se od njih tražilo da pročitaju scenarij silovanja (s ne-tradicionalnom ženom) te da procijene žrtvinu i počiniteljevu odgovornost. Veličina je očiju žrtve imala značajan utjecaj na sve varijable, osim na počiniteljevu odgovornost. Žensko lice s velikim očima percipirano je kao atraktivnije te više čestito, izazivalo je veći stupanj identifikacije te mu je atribuiran manji stupanj odgovornosti. Nisu dobiveni značajni efekti roda opažača. U radu se raspravlja o teorijskim i praktičnim implikacijama rezultata istraživanja.

Ključne riječi: silovanje, veličina očiju žrtve, rod opažača, odgovornost, privlačnost

Sobre la violación y otros demonios: influencia del tamaño de ojos de la víctima y del género del observador en la atribución de responsabilidad

Resumen

En esta investigación se ha examinado la influencia del tamaño de ojos de la víctima y del género del observador en la percepción que tiene el observador en cuanto a la atracción inicial y la decencia de la víctima, tanto como la identificación del observador con la meta femenina y la responsabilidad para la violación que atribuye a la víctima y al autor. Se ha usado un bosquejo experimental 3 (tamaño de los ojos de la víctima: pequeños, normales, grandes) x 2 (género del observador: femenino, masculino). Los participantes (45 mujeres y 45 hombres) observaban uno de tres rostros femeninos asignados al azar (con la manipulación del tamaño de los ojos) y valoraban la atracción inicial, decencia e identificación. Luego tenían que leer un guion de violación (con una mujer no tradicional) y valorar la responsabilidad de la víctima y del autor. El tamaño de los ojos tenía una influencia significativa en todas las variables, menos en la responsabilidad del autor. El rostro femenino con los ojos grandes fue percibido como más atractivo y más decente, provocaba un mayor grado de identificación y le fue atribuido un menor grado de responsabilidad. No se han conseguido efectos más significativos del género del observador. Se discuten implicaciones teóricas y prácticas.

Palabras claves: violación, tamaño de los ojos, género del observador, responsabilidad, atracción

Rape Scenario

Maria is a 32-year-old human resource manager, divorced and childless. One night, she went to a dinner at her singing school. A friend, Rita, gave her a ride to the restaurant, where everyone had a great time. Around midnight, Maria wanted to leave, but Rita wanted to stay a little longer. José, who had always been nice to her and with whom she sang some duets, offered to take her home. Along the way, they were telling jokes and laughing, when José said he wanted to show her a beautiful place. She said she preferred to go home, but he insisted and she did not reply anything to that. José left the main road and stopped the car on a deserted road near a river with a bridge. When the car stopped, he looked at Maria and said he liked her. She was silent and he tried to kiss her. She refused, said she was in a relationship and wanted to go home immediately. He kissed her neck and she continued to refuse. However, he started touching her thighs and in between her legs. She shouted that she did not want that and tried to push him away, but he continued to touch and kiss her. She kept screaming and begging him to stop, but he pulled up her skirt up, pulled down her underwear and penetrated her.