Impact of social influence on risk recognition of sexual assault

Background
- Sexual assault (SA) on college campuses is pervasive
- Imperative to understand how people recognize the risk for SA perpetration or victimization in any given situation
  - Termed “risk recognition”
    - Captures influence on individual, social, and situational risk factors
  - Measurements:
    - Written vignettes
    - Marx and Gross (1995) audiotaped vignette

Men’s risk recognition
- Men tend to display longer reaction times (i.e., poorer risk recognition) if:
  - Individual factors
    - History of sexual aggression
    - Rape myth acceptance (mixed findings)
  - Social factors
    - Perception of token resistance
  - Situational factors
    - Consumption or expectation of alcohol

Women’s risk recognition
- Women’s response latencies appear to be related to:
  - Individual factors
    - Prior sexual victimization (mixed findings)
    - Physiological arousal
    - Psychopathology – PTSD
    - Rape myth acceptance
  - Social factors
    - Prior intimacy
  - Situational
    - Consumption or expectation of alcohol (mixed findings)
Occurrence within a social context
- Sexual assault does not occur in solitude; there is a social context
- Attempts to capture social influence
  - Manipulation of environment, intimacy, popularity impact
  - Fails to capture true influence of social variables

Importance of social influence
- Asch’s (1955) line comparison study
  - 36.8% incorrect identification
- Impact on private thoughts, public voicing when making judgments regarding responsibility for rape
- Information regarding peer arousal effective in changing arousal and affect, regardless of vignette outcome (pleasure, distress)
- No research regarding risk recognition and sexual assault

Present study
- Risk recognition has been studied in an isolated environment
  - SA does not occur in solitude; there is a social context
- The current study sought to understand how the social context impacts risk recognition
  - IV1: Gender
  - IV2: Social Context
  - DV: Risk recognition, measured as response latency (seconds)

Method
Method

Participants
- 124 undergraduate heterosexual students
- 65 men, 59 women
- Mean age = 19.68
- 50% Caucasian, 25% African American, 12.1% Latino

Measures
- Illinois Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale ($\alpha_{\text{total}} = .79$)
- Sexual Experiences Survey, Short Form Victimization
- Sexual Experiences Survey, Short Form Perpetration
- Heart rate monitored with Polar USA RS800CX system

Stimulus
- Marx and Gross (1995) audiotaped date-rape vignette

Manipulation
- Randomly assigned to complete the task with an opposite-sex confederate in a social context (38 males, 31 females) or complete the task alone (27 males, 28 females)

Results

Data cleaned and prepared for analysis
- Response latency data positively skewed → log transformation
- Experimental groups did not differ by gender, prior victimization, or prior perpetration
- Means were extracted from 7 defined heart rate samples:
  - Baseline
  - 5 stimulus segments:
    - Mutual interaction, Verbal refusals and apologies by the man, Verbal pressure and refusals, Verbal threats and adamant refusals, Forced sex
  - Follow-up
Results: Gender and social influence

- Did men and women differ in their response latencies?
  - Men (M = 154.33 seconds, SD = 75.64 seconds)
  - Women (M = 128.29 seconds, SD = 63.91 seconds)
  - t(122) = 2.06, p = .042 ✔

- Did the presence of another individual influence participants’ response latencies?
  - Social condition (M = 165.30, SD = 72.63)
  - Alone condition (M = 112.63, SD = 57.79)
  - t(122) = -4.38, p < .001 ✔

Results: Victimization history

- Did sexual victimization history have an impact on RL?
  - Nonvictims (M = 138.51, SD = 67.99)
  - Victims (M = 146.10, SD = 75.39)
  - t(122) = -.59, p = .56 ✗

- Was there an interaction between sexual victimization history and social impact?
  - ΔR² = .002, F(1, 120) = .28, p = .59 ✗

Results: Perpetration history

- Did sexual perpetration history have an impact RL?
  - Perpetrators (M = 166.59, SD = 77.36)
  - Nonperpetrators (M = 135.09, SD = 68.28)
  - t(122) = -2.06, p = .042 ✔

- Was there an interaction between sexual perpetration history and social impact?
  - ΔR² = .04, F(1, 120) = 5.27, p = .02 ✔
Results: Male perpetration history
- For men only, did sexual perpetration history have an impact on RL?
  - Nonperpetrators (M = 169.41, SD = 21.61)
  - Perpetrators (M = 174.52, SD = 17.33)
  - \( b = 80.12, \ p = .14 \)
- Was there an interaction between sexual perpetration history and social impact?
  \( \Delta R^2 = .06, \ F(1, 65) = 4.56, \ p = .03 \)

Results: RMA
- Did RMA have an impact on RL?
  - \( b = .13, \ t(122) = 1.14, \ p = .15 \)
- Was there an interaction between RMA and social impact?
  \( \Delta R^2 = .01, \ F(1, 120) = .89, \ p = .35 \)

Results: Heart rate reactivity
- Did heart rate reactivity change throughout the risk recognition task? → Repeated measures ANOVA
  - \( F(6, 636) = 16.784, \ p < .001 \)
  - Polynomial contrasts revealed a quadratic pattern, \( F(1, 106) = 21.34, \ p < .001 \)
- Was there an interaction between heart rate reactivity and social condition? → Mixed factorial ANOVA
  - \( F(6, 636) = 5.32, \ p < .001 \)
  - Polynomial contrasts revealed a quadratic pattern, \( F(1, 106) = 18.42, \ p < .001 \)
- Did heart rate reactivity change throughout the risk recognition task? → Repeated measures ANOVA
  - \( F(6, 636) = 16.784, \ p < .001 \)
  - Polynomial contrasts revealed a quadratic pattern, \( F(1, 106) = 21.34, \ p < .001 \)
  - Polynomial contrasts revealed a linear pattern, \( F(1, 106) = 4.65, \ p = .03 \)
  - There was no significant three-way interaction between heart rate segment, social group, and gender, \( F(6, 636) = .51, \ p = .80 \)
Discussion

- Continued high rates of SA perpetration and victimization, perhaps exacerbated by the lack of exhibited risk recognition abilities
- Social influence appears to have a strong impact on risk recognition
  - Implications for bystander intervention programs
  - Interaction between SA perpetration, social impact, and risk recognition

Discussion

- Patterns of physiological arousal
  - Potential disengagement from the task
  - Post-task findings – Why the increase in heart rate for individuals that completed the task with another person?
- Nonsignificant findings
  - Interaction between gender, social impact, and RL
  - Relationship between RL and victimization history
  - RMA

Discussion

- Limitations
  - Sample size
  - Complications with collection of heart rate data
  - Procedural complexities
  - College sample

Discussion

- Future directions
  - Many avenues for future research
  - Number of confederates
  - Gender of confederate
  - When/If confederate makes the risk recognition indication
  - Verbal/behavioral contributions of confederate
  - Alcohol consumption
  - LGBTQ community
  - Variations on the audiotaped vignette
Questions?