

**THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER NORM VIOLATION ON SECONDARY
VICTIMIZATION**

An Undergraduate Research Scholars Thesis

by

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ABSTRACT

The Influence of Gender Norm Violation on Secondary Victimization. (May 2015)

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Victim blaming is an act of holding someone responsible for a negative outcome or harm they have experienced. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether describing a woman as racially stereotypical or counter-stereotypical influences whether or not she is likely to be victim blamed. Victim-blaming is typically associated with sexual assault, but has been shown to occur in a wide variety of scenarios such as physical assault, robbery or mugging, illness, and accidents (Hafer & Begue, 2005; Rieck, Hicks, & Kim, 2014). Seventy-four participants read different fictional newspaper articles about a woman that was victimized during a robbery and was described with traits that were stereotypical (or counter-stereotypical) of her racial group. Participants then completed questions about victim-blaming and system justification. Our results showed that participants were the least likely to derogate Keisha (Black), but most likely to derogate Claire (White), when they were described as being counter-stereotypical.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Victim blaming is generally an act of holding someone responsible for a negative outcome or harm they've experienced. When we think they are responsible, we're less likely to empathize with them or think they are entitled to justice and often distance ourselves from their situation. Women who are a victim of a rape are often asked if they have been acting a certain way that might be perceived suggestively and are regarded in less positive light if they are (Muehlenhard & MacNaughton, 1998). Victim-blaming is typically associated with sexual assault, but has been shown to occur in a wide variety of scenarios such as physical assault, robbery or mugging, illness, and accidents (Hafer & Begue, 2005; Rieck, Hicks, & Kim, 2014). According to past research, "benevolent sexists attribute more blame to acquaintance rape victims because those victims are judged to violate gender stereotypes" (Masser, Lee, MicKimmie, 2009). Benevolent sexists would assign greater blame to a victim who violated gender stereotypes than one who did not, even when that violation occurred in a context unrelated to the sexual assault. Women who violate gender stereotypes and are victims of rape tend to be victim blamed more than those who do not violate the norms (Stahl, Eek, & Kazemi, 2010). It is unknown if the particular stereotype is what causes a victim to be blamed less or not. While certain stereotypes might be regarded in harsher ways, a study shows that "exposure to counter-stereotypical media content regarding African-Americans increased positive attitudes toward this group" (Oliver & Ramasubramanian, 2007). Those results might help explain in our research if any person counter-stereotypical to their race is victim blamed less.

We have yet to find research that explicitly considers how victim-blaming responses vary when people are evaluating individuals who belong to groups that are marginalized or otherwise marked as "different". This not only includes people who may defy our general expectations (counter-stereotypical), but may also include racial/ethnic minorities. By considering different racial/ethnic categories, we can examine the intersection of multiple ways of confirming or disconfirming a gendered stereotype. We wish to find out if describing a woman as stereotypical or counter-stereotypical of her race-based gender group, influences whether or not she is likely to be victim blamed?

Investigating the factors that influence victim-blaming can also have broader implications for social justice. For example, in cases that garner national attention, media representations of crime victims may be subtly influencing public perceptions of how much a victim is to blame.

Understanding the underlying processes and factors that influence victim-blaming may lead to interventions that can reduce the barriers to justice for victims.

CHAPTER II

PILOT DATA METHODS

Participants

Ninety-four (74 female, 19 male, 1 prefer not to answer) students enrolled in an introductory psychology course at Texas A&M University participated for partial fulfillment of a course requirement. Ages ranged from 18-22 ($M= 18.60$; $SD= 1.02$; two participants not reporting). Reported racial/ethnic backgrounds included: 71.3% European American, 10.6% Asian American, 9.6% Hispanic/Latino, 1.1% African American/Black, and 7.4% indicated that their race/ethnicity was not listed.

Materials and Procedure

Participants completed the study in a private computer cubicle administered in a social psychology laboratory.

Assumptions about Racial Group Membership

Participants responded to the following question: “To what extent do you think a woman with each FIRST name below would be seen as a member of these groups?” Participants indicated which racial group they believed *Keisha*, *Latoya*, *Gabriella*, *Juanita*, *Meredith*, *Claire*, *Ling*, and *Mei* was most likely to belong to (i.e., White/Caucasian, Black/African American, Chinese/Chinese American, Latina/Hispanic). Participants could select more than one group.

Confirming Name-based Racial Stereotypes

Participants were also given certain phrases (e.g. “Loud, independent and tough”) and asked to indicate on a scale from 0 to 100 the extent to which they believed that phrase might describe or

be associated with different racial groups (i.e., White, Black, Latina, Asian). These phrases were generated in a prior study where participants indicated what came to mind when they thought of each racial group.

Results and Discussion

Pilot study results confirm that a majority of the participants associated the name Keisha with a Black racial/ethnic background (95.7%), while only a small minority associated the name Claire with a Black racial/ethnic background (8.5%), $\chi^2(1, N = 94) = 143.32, p < .001$. Every participant associated the name Claire with a White racial/ethnic background (100%) while only a small minority of participants associated the name Claire with a Black racial/ethnic background (6.4%), $\chi^2(1, N = 94) = 165.44, p < .001$.

Paired- samples *t*-test results confirmed that the phrase “Loud, independent and tough” was believed to be more likely to be descriptive of Black women ($M=85.70, SD=12.50$) than White women ($M=58.31, SD=22.65$), $t(79)=9.13, p < .001$. In addition, participants indicated that the phrase “educated, high society, and upper class” was more likely to be more descriptive of White women ($M=86.42, SD=13.03$) than Black women ($M=47.04, SD=23.42$), $t(77)=12.91, p < .001$.

The names and descriptions from the pilot study were used to construct the study materials for Study 1.

CHAPTER III

STUDY 1 METHODS

Participants

For the main study, the sample consisted of 74 undergraduate students (49 female, 20 male, 5 missing) from Texas A&M University. Participants were selected by being required to fulfill Psychology 107 credits by participating in a study. Ages ranged from 18-22. Reported racial/ethnic backgrounds included: 52.7% European American, 9.5% Asian American, 16.2% Hispanic/Latino, 6.8% African American/Black, and 9.5% indicated that their were multiracial.

Materials and Procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions consistent with a 2 (*description*: stereotypical, counter-stereotypical) X 2 (*racial group*: White, Black) design. After reading the vignette, participants completed questions about victim-blaming, system justification, and provided demographic information (see Appendix A).

Vignettes

Participants read different fictional newspaper stories about a woman that was victimized during a robbery (Figure 1). Each vignette contained information about the woman that highlighted phrases correlating with the stereotypes collected from the pilot study. For instance, this included information such as a Black woman being associated with the stereotype of being “loud, independent and tough”. See Appendix B for each vignette’s text. No race was given in the vignettes, only names that people have associated with a certain race in prior research (Milkman, Akinola, & Chugh, 2012). Keisha was associated with African Americans and Claire was

associated with Caucasian (also see pilot data).



Figure 1. An example of the image used to display each fictional newspaper vignette.

Victim-Blaming

After the participants read one of the fictional stories, they were asked a series of questions about victim blaming (Hafer, 2000; Goldenberge & Forgas, 2011). We used three subscales, one for derogation, blame-worthiness, and distancing. For derogation, there were five items where participants rated traits of the target on a 5-point scale (e.g., intelligent =1 and unintelligent =5). Blame-worthiness comprised of six items and participants rated items of the target on a 5 point also (e.g., responsible for the accident =1 and not responsible for the accident =5). Distancing had ten items and participants rated the items of the target on a 5 point scale (e.g., how similar are you to Keisha/Claire =1 and how un-similar are you to Keisha/Claire =5).

System Justification

Participants indicated on a 7-point scale (1= Strongly Disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree) their agreement with 17 items from the system justification scale (Jost & Hunyady, 2002). System justification was measured with items such as, “If people work hard, they almost always get what they want” and responses were averaged to create a composite score.

CHAPTER IV

STUDY 1 RESULTS

Primary Results

A one way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted to compare the effect of describing the targets as stereotypical or counter-stereotypical on Distancing, Blame Worthiness and Derogation. Table 1 shows the individual means and standard deviations for each condition.

There was a significant effect of the manipulation on derogation at the $p < .05$ level for the four conditions [$F_{(3, 66)} = 7.52, p = .000$]. Post hoc comparisons using Tukeys HSD indicated that participant's significantly derogated Keisha less when neighbors described her in ways that were counter-stereotypical ($M = 2.57, SD = 1.04$) of her racial background than when Claire was counter-stereotypical ($M = 3.82, SD = .47$), when Keisha was stereotypical ($M = 3.38, SD = .86$), or when Claire was stereotypical ($M = 3.28, SD = .77$).

Table 1

	Condition			
	Keisha (Black)		Claire (White)	
	Stereotypical	Counter-Stereotypical	Stereotypical	Counter-Stereotypical
Victim-blaming				
Derogation	3.38 (0.86) _{a,b}	2.57(1.04) _a	3.28(0.77) _{a,b}	3.82(0.47) _b
Blame-worthiness	1.50 (0.56) _a	1.46 (0.66) _a	1.69 (0 .53) _a	1.47(0 .57) _a
Distancing	4.83(1.18) _a	4.85(1.07) _a	4.52(0.75) _a	4.35(0.84) _a

Note: Within each row, means with different subscripts are significantly different using the Tukey Honestly Significant Difference test ($p < .05$). Numbers in parentheses are standard deviations.

There were no significant differences of stereotyping on distancing [$F_{(3, 66)}=1.12, p=.347$] or blame worthiness [$F_{(3, 66)}=.517, p=.672$]. Participants were equally likely to blame or distance (Keisha/Claire) whether or not they were described with stereotypical or counter-stereotypical traits.

Exploratory Analyses

In light of the primary ANOVA tests, I conducted an exploratory regression analysis to examine whether the effect of target descriptions on victim derogation varied based on participants' personal endorsement of system justification. In this analysis the main effects of target (Keisha =0, Claire =1), description (stereotypical=0, counter-stereotypical = 1), and system justification (mean centered) were entered separately on the first step, two-way interactions entered on the second step, and the three-way interaction entered on the third step (Aiken & West, 1991).

Regression results revealed a significant three way interaction, $\beta = -0.420, t(62) = -2.11, p = .04$.

To examine this significant 3-way interaction, I plotted the categorical predictors with the continuous system justification predictor variable at values one standard deviation above and below the mean. I utilized a web-based computational tool for probing interactions (See Figure 1; Preacher, Curran, & Bauer, 2006).

Taken together, these results suggest that changing the name and stereotypical characteristics of a mugging victim did not matter on the dimensions of distancing or blame worthiness. However, when I examined derogation it did matter whether or not Keisha and Claire were described as stereotypical or counter-stereotypical. When described as counter-stereotypical to her race, Keisha received *less* derogation than if she was described as stereotypical. When Claire was

described as counter-stereotypical to her race, she received more derogation than if she was described as stereotypical. As suggested by Figure 2, it was the Participants who ranked low on endorsement of system justification that derogated Keisha the least when she was counter-stereotypical. It seems both low and high system justifiers derogated Claire when she was counter-stereotypical, but high system justifiers derogated Claire less when she was stereotypical than did low system justifiers.

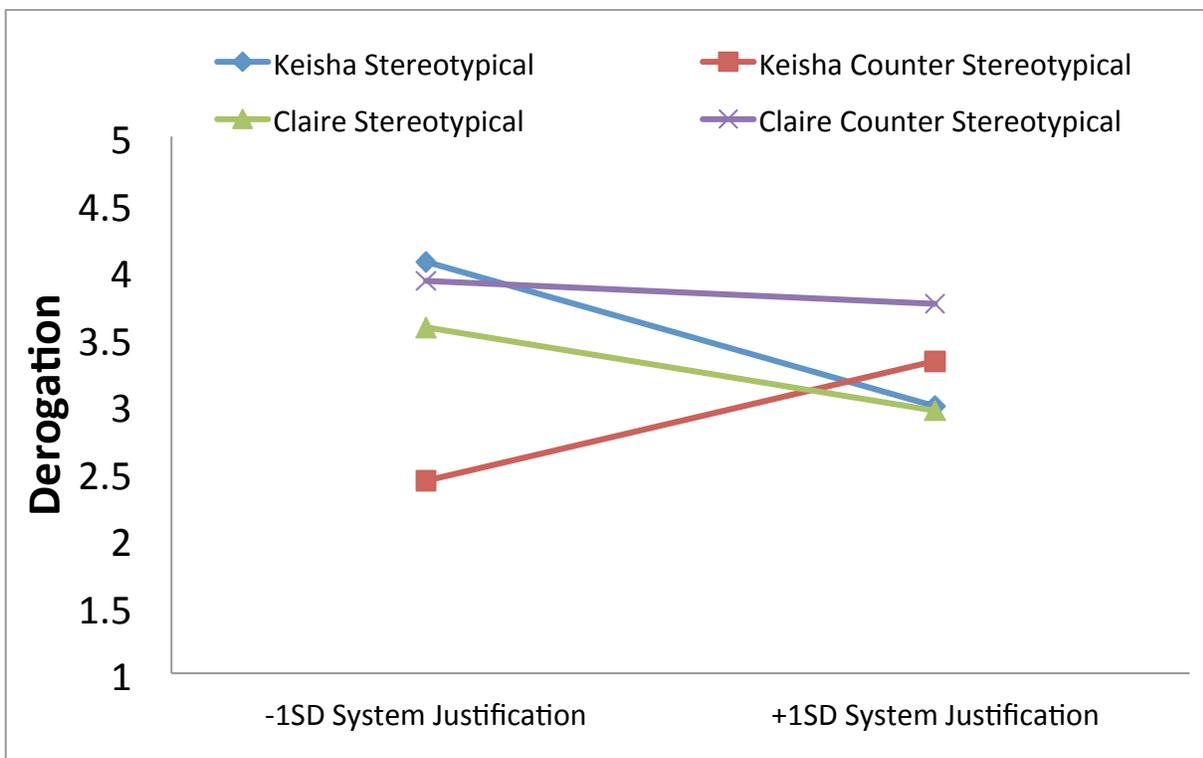


Figure 2. The interaction between target (Keisha/Claire), description (stereotypical/counter-stereotypical), and system justification on victim derogation.

CHAPTER V

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Implications of Results

The results show that changing the name and stereotypical characteristics of a mugging victim did not matter for the dimensions of distancing or blame worthiness. Participants did not significantly blame/distance more or less whether or not the victim was counter-stereotypical or stereotypical of her race. With regards to derogation, it did matter whether or not the victim was counter-stereotypical. When described as counter-stereotypical to her race Keisha was derogated less than if she was described as stereotypical. This coincides with the previous research of (Oliver & Ramasubramanian, 2007) when they found that people had more positive attitudes towards African Americans when they were acting counter-stereotypical. With Keisha's stereotype being "loud, independent, and tough", it was predicted she would be less victim blamed or viewed with more positive attitudes if described as not "loud, independent and tough".

System justification is the idea that people are motivated to defend and justify the fairness of what happens to our overall system and us. In the study, participants that ranked lowest on the system justification scale, meaning they think the system is unfair, blamed Keisha the least when she was described as counter-stereotypical. When Keisha is not acting stereotypical to her race, meaning she is not behaving as how society sees her, low system justifiers might blame her the least since she is going against the race-based gender norm. Low system justifiers would see Keisha when she is being counter-stereotypical to her race as someone similar to them, then thus likely to derogate her. Participants who ranked low on the system justification scale might have been more inclined to call Keisha smarter when being counter-stereotypical than stereotypical.

With Claire, participants' system justification scores did not impact their judgments on Claire. Both low and high system justifiers seemed to derogate her.

Limitations and future directions

Limitations on this study include a limited sample size of undergraduates from the same university, and a lack of racial diversity with over half of the participants being white.

Participants might sympathize more with their own race than with someone who doesn't share their race. They also might victim blame the person even more if they don't share the same race.

The study also only includes examples of Keisha (black) and Claire (white), instead of multiple races. By adding other races, the results might extend to other types of stereotypes. A limitation, but also a chance for further research, is having either Keisha or Claire described with each other's stereotype. In the current study, when describing either Keisha or Claire they were only said to not have the stereotypical characteristics of their race. It would be interesting to know whether Keisha would still be derogated less if she were described as "educated, high society, and upper class".

Future research should consider other forms of victim-blaming (e.g., theft/mugging, illness, and domestic violence). By considering various contexts in which victim-blaming may occur, this work can also speak towards whether the tendency to blame women who violate stereotypes is a generalized effect or specific to a sexual assault context.

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APPENDIX A

Demographics

1. Sex:

- Male
- Female

2. Age: _____

3. Year in school (*select one*):

- 1st year (Freshman)
- 2nd year (Sophomore)
- 3rd year (Junior)
- 4th year (Senior)
- 5th year
- 6th year or higher

4. Race/Ethnicity (*Check all that apply*)

- Asian/Asian American
- Black/African American
- Latino/Hispanic
- Native American
- White
- Other: _____

5. Are you a transfer student into A&M from another college system or junior college? (*select one*)

- Yes
- No

6. What is your (your parents') total annual income? (*select one*)

- Less than 20,000
- 20,000 – 29,000
- \$30,000 – \$39,000
- \$40,000 – \$49,999
- \$50,000 – \$59,999
- \$60,000 – \$69,000
- \$70,000 – \$79,000
- \$80,000 – \$89,000
- \$90,000 – \$99,000
- \$100,000 or more
- I don't know

7. How would you describe your political party preference? (*select one*)
- Strong Democrat
 - Weak Democrat
 - Independent/ Lean Democrat
 - Independent
 - Independent/Lean Republican
 - Weak Republican
 - Strong Republican
8. How would you describe your political outlook with respect to **economic issues**? (*select one*)
- Very liberal
 - Liberal
 - Slightly liberal
 - Moderate
 - Slightly conservative
 - Conservative
 - Very conservative
9. How would you describe your political outlook with respect to **social issues**? (*select one*)
- Very liberal
 - Liberal
 - Slightly liberal
 - Moderate
 - Slightly conservative
 - Conservative
 - Very conservative
10. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
- Did not finish high school
 - High school/GED
 - Some college
 - Associate's degree/professional degree
 - Bachelor's degree
 - Master's degree
 - Doctorate (e.g., Ph.D., J.D., M.D., DVM, DDS)

We'd like for you to think about what you just read. Specifically we'd like for you think about (Keisha/Claire). For the questions below, please evaluate Ted/Tina/X in terms of how responsible he/she/X is for the incident.

1. How much could Ted/Tina/X have prevented the incident?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Completely could not have prevented	Mostly could not have prevented	Somewhat could not have prevented	Not sure	Somewhat could have prevented	Mostly could have prevented	Completely could have prevented

2. How responsible is Keisha/Claire for the incident?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not responsible at all	Mostly not responsible	Somewhat not responsible	Neither responsible nor not responsible	Somewhat responsible	Mostly responsible	Completely responsible

3. How much is Keisha/Claire's behavior to blame for the incident?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Not to blame at all	Mostly not to blame	Somewhat not to blame	Neither to blame nor not to blame	Somewhat to blame	Mostly to blame	Completely to blame

How much do you agree with the following statements?

4. Keisha/Claire could have prevented the incident.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

5. Keisha/Claire is responsible for the incident.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

6. Keisha/Claire's behavior is to blame for the incident.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

We'd like for you to continue to think about what you read and about Keisha/Claire. Now, we'd like for you to evaluate Keisha/Claire as a person. Using the below scales, please describe your impressions of what Keisha/Claire is like.

Keisha/Claire is...

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Intelligent								Not Intelligent
Competent								Incompetent
Likeable								Unlikeable
Responsible								Irresponsible
Careful								Careless

We'd like for you to continue to think about what you read and about Keisha/Claire. This time, we'd like for you to think about how similar you are to Keisha/Claire.

1. Would you have behaved in the same way as Keisha/Claire?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Completely not the same	Mostly not the same	Somewhat not the same	Not sure	Somewhat the same	Mostly the same	Completely the same

2. Could this incident have happened to a personal friend?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely could not happen to a friend			Might or might not happen to a friend			Definitely could happen to a friend

3. In general, how similar are you to Keisha/Claire?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Completely similar	Similar	Somewhat Similar	Not Sure	Somewhat Dissimilar	Dissimilar	Completely Dissimilar

4. How much do you identify with Keisha/Claire?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly identify	Identify	Somewhat Identify	Neither Identify nor Not Identify	Somewhat do not identify	Do Not Identify	Strongly Do Not Identify

How much do you agree with the following statements?

5. I would have behaved in the same way as Keisha/Claire.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

6. This incident could happen to me or a close friend.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

7. In general, I am similar to Keisha/Claire.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

8. I identify with Keisha/Claire .

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

9. I have experienced an incident similar to the one described.

1	2	3
Yes	No	I would prefer not to say

10. A friend or family member has experienced an incident similar to Keisha's (Claire's).

1	2	3
Yes	No	I would prefer not to say

1. Most people who don't succeed in life are just plain lazy.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

2. People who fail at a job have usually not tried hard enough

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

3. If people work hard enough they are likely to make a good life for themselves

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

4. Anyone who is willing and able to work hard has a good chance of succeeding

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

Please indicate your agreement with the following statements using the following scale:

1	2	3	4	5		7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Not Sure	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

1. If people work hard, they almost always get what they want.
2. The existence of widespread economic differences does not mean that they are inevitable.
3. Laws of nature are responsible for differences in wealth in society.
4. There are many reasons to think that the economic system is unfair.
5. It is virtually impossible to eliminate poverty.
6. Poor people are not essentially different from rich people.
7. Most people who don't get ahead in our society should not blame the system; they have only themselves to blame.
8. Equal distribution of resources is a possibility for our society.
9. Social class differences reflect differences in the natural order of things.
10. Economic differences in the society reflect an illegitimate distribution of resources
11. There will always be poor people, because there will never be enough jobs for everyone.
12. Economic positions are legitimate reflections of people's achievement.
13. If people wanted to change the economic system to make things equal, they could.
14. Equal distribution of resources is unnatural.
15. It is unfair to have an economic system which produces extreme wealth and extreme poverty at the same time.
16. There is no point in trying to make incomes more equal.
17. There are no inherent differences between rich and poor; it is purely a matter of the circumstances into which you are born.

APPENDIX B

Study 1 Vignettes

Vignette 1: Claire Stereotypical

Claire Roberts, 33, was on her way to her appointment for an annual physical exam when she was mugged in the elevator. The victim reported she was left alone with a male in the elevator when he pushed the emergency stop button, grabbed her from behind, putting his hand to her throat. He pushed her to the ground violently, slapping and kicking her repeatedly. The mugger took all of her jewelry, took her purse, and other valuables on her. Claire reported when she tried to fight back, he threatened to kill her. After he was done completing the crime, he got off on the next floor and ran away. Officials say they still have not caught the man. When asked about the victim's background, one neighbor said that Claire was the "educated, high society, and upper class" type of woman.

Vignette 2: Claire Counter-stereotypical

Claire Roberts, 33, was on her way to her appointment for an annual physical exam when she was mugged in the elevator. The victim reported she was left alone with a male in the elevator when he pushed the emergency stop button, grabbed her from behind, putting his hand to her throat. He pushed her to the ground violently, slapping and kicking her repeatedly. The mugger took all of her jewelry, took her purse, and other valuables on her. Claire reported when she tried to fight back, he threatened to kill her. After he was done completing the crime, he got off on the next floor and ran away. Officials say they still have not caught the man. When asked about the victim's background, one neighbor said that Claire wasn't the "educated, high society, and upper class" type of woman.

Vignette 3: Keisha Stereotypical

Keisha Washington, 33, was on her way to her appointment for an annual physical exam when she was mugged in the elevator. The victim reported she was left alone with a male in the elevator when he pushed the emergency stop button, grabbed her from behind, putting his hand to her throat. He pushed her to the ground violently, slapping and kicking her repeatedly. The mugger took all of her jewelry, took her purse, and other valuables on her. Keisha reported when she tried to fight back, he threatened to kill her. After he was done completing the crime, he got off on the next floor and ran away. Officials say they still have not caught the man. When asked about the victim's background, one neighbor said that Keisha was the "loud, independent, and tough" type of woman.

Vignette 4: Keisha Counter-stereotypical

Keisha Washington, 33, was on her way to her appointment for an annual physical exam when she was mugged in the elevator. The victim reported she was left alone with a male in the elevator when he pushed the emergency stop button, grabbed her from behind, putting his hand to her throat. He pushed her to the ground violently, slapping and kicking her repeatedly. The mugger took all of her jewelry, took her purse, and other valuables on her. Keisha reported when she tried to fight back, he threatened to kill her. After he was done completing the crime, he got off on the next floor and ran away. Officials say they still have not caught the man. When asked

about the victim's background, one neighbor said that Keisha wasn't the "loud, independent, and tough" type of woman.