When and Why We See Victims as Responsible: The Impact of Ideology on Attitudes Toward Victims

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Abstract

Why do victims sometimes receive sympathy for their suffering and at other times scorn and blame? Here we show a powerful role for moral values in attitudes toward victims. We measured moral values associated with unconditionally prohibiting harm ("individualizing values") versus moral values associated with prohibiting behavior that destabilizes groups and relationships ("binding values": loyalty, obedience to authority, and purity). Increased endorsement of binding values predicted increased ratings of victims as contaminated (Studies 1-4); increased blame and responsibility attributed to victims, increased perceptions of victims' (versus perpetrators') behaviors as contributing to the outcome, and decreased focus on perpetrators (Studies 2-3). Patterns persisted controlling for politics, just world beliefs, and right-wing authoritarianism. Experimentally manipulating linguistic focus off of victims and onto perpetrators reduced victim blame. Both binding values and focus modulated victim blame through victim responsibility attributions. Findings indicate the important role of ideology in attitudes toward victims via effects on responsibility attribution.

In the United States, we've witnessed a steady increase in public concern about the rights and dignity of victims. In the 1940s and 1950s, the notion of "victim precipitation," or how victims bring upon their own victimization, was widely accepted. Since then, we've seen developments like the creation and full roll out of "victim services" within the criminal justice system (Ben-David, 2000; Parker, 2008; M. Young & Stein, 2004). This increase in public concern about victims resonated with the rise of scholarly inquiry into how people judge others in positions of disadvantage in the context of harm. Complementing new, precise analyses of causal attributions in social contexts (e.g., Heider, 1958; Kelley, 1967; Nisbett, Caputo, Legant, & Marecek, 1973), researchers began to examine why judgments sometimes go awry, as in the case of victim derogation (e.g., Lerner & Simmons, 1966) and stigmatization (e.g., Goffman, 1963). Over the next several decades, as overt expression of hostile, prejudiced attitudes declined in the public domain (Pinker, 2011), psychological science began to examine negative attitudes at the level of implicit cognition (Banaji & Heiphetz, 2010; Fazio & Olson, 2003; Greenwald et al., 2002). In sum, trends in cognitive and social psychology have mirrored a cultural-level expansion of empathy and sensitivity to harm and suffering.

Even though concern about victim rights and dignity has increased over the last half-century, victims still commonly fear and expect stigmatization (Quinn & Chaudoir, 2009), with many reporting persistent feelings of contamination and taint as well as self-blame (Badour, Feldner, Blumenthal, & Bujarski, 2013; Fairbrother, Newth, & Rachman, 2005). Being a victim may mean facing additional burdens such as social quarantining and blame (Niemi, in press). Indeed, the moral scrutiny of victims is often covered in the popular press. For example, in 2014, a media stir resulted when the Dean of Student Affairs at Patrick Henry College responded to a student's sexual assault complaint as follows: "You are in part responsible for what happened, because you put yourself in a compromising situation. . . . Actions have consequences" (Feldman, 2014; Niemi & Young, 2014). More recently, psychologists have warned academic audiences (Haslam, 2016) and the general public (Christakis &

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Christakis, 2012; Haidt & Haslam, 2016; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2015) about what they perceive as a rise in illegitimate claims of suffering and a new culture of victimhood stemming from expansion of the concept of harm (i.e., "concept creep"). The claims that victims are being coddled or overindulged suggest pushback against the cultural-level expansion of empathy that has characterized the greater part of the last century.

The opposing views on victimhood—(a) concern that victims continue to unjustly face blame and condemnation (e.g., Niemi & Young, 2014, 2016; Rini, 2015) and (b) concern that society is on a slippery slope toward low accountability and victim culture (e.g., Haslam, 2016)—have been suggested to reflect a fundamental divide in political ideology. Increased identification of victims has been described as part of a liberal agenda in the lay public and in psychological science (Duarte et al., 2015; Haslam, 2016). By contrast, scrutiny of victims' obligations and responsibility for their own experiences (as in the incident at the evangelical Christian institution, Patrick Henry College, discussed above) seems to be tied to conservatism (e.g., Anderson, Cooper, & Okamura, 1997). Intractable controversy about victimhood and its apparent mapping onto politics suggest that individual differences in negative judgments of victims may be rooted in differences in ideology.

An alternative approach is to zero in on the possible impact of language and basic cognition. Prior work reveals that inputs to blame and condemnation (Cushman, 2008; Malle, Guglielmo, & Munroe, 2014)—namely, judgments of force, causal responsibility, and intentionality—can be altered via subtle changes in language that shift participants' focus. For example, in one study, participants read descriptions in which one agent forces another to commit a transgression—when descriptions focused on the "forcer," participants rated the "forcer" as having forced the "forcee" to transgress significantly more than when focus was on the "forcee" (L. Young & Phillips, 2011). In other work, increased focus on victims placed in the role of grammatical subject through the use of the passive voice (e.g., *X was assaulted by Y*) corresponded with increased perception of victims' causal responsibility (Bohner, 2001). Complementarily, an automatic intentionality bias was observed for syntactic subjects (Strickland, Fisher, Keil, & Knobe, 2014): When participants made speeded judgments of intentionality for agents in the subject role for interpersonal events indicating little if any intentionality (e.g., *X came upon Y*), participants attributed significantly higher levels of intentionality to the subject, compared with when they gave the event careful thought. Together, these findings invite the question of whether links between ideology and attitudes toward victims might be accounted for by more basic factors like cognitive focus as manipulated via language use and subsequent effects on perceptions of responsibility. Complicating this question though is other work establishing that a number of nonmoral perceptions are in turn influenced by moral judgments (e.g., Alicke, 1992;

Knobe, 2006). For example, norm-violating agents are rated as more causally responsible than norm-adhering agents for identical acts (Alicke, 1992). These findings have led researchers to propose that moral judgment might skew how people assess "nonmoral" features of agents and events, including causal responsibility (Alicke, 1992, 2000).

No work so far has attempted to sort out how these factors—(a) individual-level ideological commitments (i.e., political orientation, moral values) and (b) stimulus-bound features including the focus of language as well as the nature of the victimization (sexual or nonsexual)—might predict negative attitudes toward victims. At the broadest level, the current work investigates whether any observed effects of ideology are driven by differences in more basic cognition, that is, effects of focus of language. Alternatively, these factors might combine in an additive manner to influence attitudes toward victims.

In these studies, we test the following specific hypotheses. First, political orientation may lead people to condemn victims, and only in politically relevant cases. For example, conservatives have been accused of carrying out a "war on women," and prior work has linked conservatism to blame of rape victims specifically (e.g., Anderson et al., 1997). This theorizing predicts a direct link from political conservatism to negative evaluation of victims of sexual but not nonsexual crimes.

An alternative hypothesis, which we favor, is that the content of a person's moral values will predict attitudes toward victims, independent of political orientation as well the nature of the crime—sexual or nonsexual. This hypothesis builds on prior work showing that victim derogation can result from a belief in a just world in which people get what they deserve (i.e., BJW; Dalbert, 2009; Lerner & Miller, 1978). What this prior work overlooks is that ideological commitments may constrain the legitimacy of just world beliefs and therefore may represent the true driver of victim derogation and blame. Specifically, moral values that focus on unconditionally prohibiting harm and promoting impartial care—referred to as "individualizing values" in prior work (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Graham et al., 2011)—are broadly inconsistent with a belief that some people *deserve* harm. Moreover, individualizing values fit well with one prominent account of moral psychology: "dyadic morality" (Gray, Young, & Waytz, 2012; Schein, Goranson, & Gray, 2015; Schein & Gray, 2015), which argues that people generally view immoral actions as events in which an agent (perpetrator) harms a patient (victim). According to this *agent-harms-patient* template, moral judgment is straightforward: agents are blameworthy, and patients are not (Gray et al., 2012; Gray & Wegner, 2009, 2011; Schein et al., 2015; Schein & Gray, 2015). Therefore, we expect endorsement of individualizing values to protect against negative attitudes toward victims. Importantly, individualizing values and binding values are often in tension. Binding values do not focus on prohibiting harm; binding violations are

perceived as immoral not because they are perceived as harmful but because they are perceived as disloyal, disrespectful, or impure. Often, clear victims are lacking in the case of binding violations, for example, flag burning, and consensual incest. To the extent that people endorse binding values and perceive victimless violations as immoral, they may be less sensitive to the *agent-harms-patient* template and therefore less sensitive to victim suffering.

In addition to testing these primary hypotheses, we examined the contributions of "right-wing authoritarianism" (RWA; Altemeyer, 1998) as well as political orientation. RWA is a set of attitudes about the proper role of government in dealing with people who challenge traditional conservative values. While RWA is associated with endorsement of binding values (Graham et al., 2011), recent work has found that binding values and RWA dissociate when predicting other outcomes (i.e., moralization of self-control; Graham & Mooijman, 2015). We used regression analyses in which binding and individualizing values were entered together with politics (and also gender and religiosity, which have also been found to predict moral values in prior work; for example, Graham et al., 2011; and RWA in Study 4) to test the role of moral values in attitudes toward victims above and beyond these associated factors. Moreover, these analyses allowed us to determine whether *increased* binding values, *reduced* individualizing values, or both combined predict negative attitudes toward victims.

In the current work, we conducted four studies to uncover the sources of negative attitudes toward victims. In Studies 1 to 4, we examine how moral values relate to stigmatizing judgments of minimally described victims of sexual and nonsexual crimes as "contaminated" or "tainted" as opposed to judgments of victims as "injured." In Studies 2 to 3, we examine how moral values relate to evaluations of victims and perpetrators in vignettes as responsible and blameworthy, across crime types (rape and robbery: Study 2, rape: Study 3). Moreover, we measure focus on victims versus perpetrators in Studies 2 to 3, and we manipulate focus on victims versus perpetrators in the language of the vignettes in Study 3. In Study 4, we additionally measure just world beliefs and RWA to examine their contribution alongside moral values to judgments of victims as "contaminated" versus "injured." To foreshadow our results, we find a role for *both* moral values and cognitive focus in negative attitudes toward victims, as well as a shared mediating role for judgments of victims as responsible.

Study 1

In Study 1, we tested our hypothesis that binding values are linked with victim stigmatization, whereas individualizing values are linked with sensitivity to victim suffering.[1] We investigated victim stigmatization by measuring participants' judgments of victims as contaminated and tainted. The use of these ratings follows work characterizing stigmatization as

disgust-driven (Pryor, Reeder, Yeadon, & Hesson-McLnnis, 2004) and definitions of stigma as involving a "stain" or "mark of disgrace" (Oxford English Dictionary). To investigate sensitivity to victim suffering, we measured participants' judgments of victims as injured and wounded.

Method

Participants were 310 individuals who completed the study online via Amazon's Mechanical Turk for a small payment. A total of 82 participants were excluded for not completing the study (*n* = 43), previously taking one of the pilot studies (*n* = 20), or failing attention checks[2] (*n* = 19). The resulting sample of 228 included 105 male and 123 female participants, $M (SD)_{age}$ = 35.79 (13.06).

Ethics statement. The institutional review board at Boston College approved the ethics of all of the following studies. Informed consent was obtained via an online form from all participants.

Measurement of stigmatization versus sensitivity toward victims. We used minimal descriptions of victims that did not specify victim gender or provide any details about the crime. Participants were prompted, "Please consider the following hypothetical crime victim: A VICTIM OF {*crime*}." Crimes included two sexual crimes (molestation, rape) and two nonsexual crimes (strangling, stabbing). To measure stigmatization, we asked, "How much has this person been contaminated/tainted?" To measure sensitivity to victim suffering, we asked, "How much has this person been injured/wounded?" The order of items was counterbalanced, and participants used a sliding scale from 0 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*) to indicate their responses. In addition, for each crime, participants were asked, "How severe is the offense: {*crime*}? Please rate the severity." Participants used a sliding scale labeled 0 to 7 (see Supplementary Material for severity results). We created composite variables of average ratings of sexual and nonsexual crime victims as contaminated and injured (i.e., Sex Contam, Nonsex Contam, Sex Injured, Nonsex Injured).

Measurement of moral values. Moral values in the five foundations (caring, fairness, ingroup loyalty, authority, and purity) were assessed using the 30-item Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ; Graham et al., 2011). Example items from these foundations include (a) caring: "Compassion for those who are suffering is the most crucial virtue"; (b) fairness: "Justice is the most important requirement for a society"; (c) ingroup loyalty: "It is more important to be a team player than to express oneself"; (d) authority: "If I were a soldier and disagreed with my commanding officer's orders, I would obey anyway because that is my duty"; and (e) purity: "I would call some acts wrong on the grounds that they are unnatural." Individualizing values represent the extent of endorsement of caring and fairness values. Binding

Table 1. Factor Loadings for Binding and Individualizing Values Based on Principal Components Analyses of the Five Moral Values Measured in Studies 1 to 4.

	Study 1		Study 2		Study 3		Study 4	
	Factor 1: Binding	Factor 2: Individualizing	Factor 1: Binding	Factor 2: Individualizing	Factor 1: Binding	Factor 2: Individualizing	Factor 1: Binding	Factor 2: Individualizing
Ingroup loyalty	.851		.870		.841		.804	
Authority	.909		.906		.910		.878	
Purity	.855		.861		.869		.797	
Caring		.889		.876		.920		.916
Fairness		.900		.889		.921		.919
Eigenvalue	2.45	1.47	2.38	1.53	2.35	1.65	2.06	1.69
% total variance	48.98	29.47	47.50	30.63	46.98	32.95	41.25	33.71
Total variance		78.45		78.12		79.94		74.95

Note. Varimax rotation applied. Loadings < .15 suppressed. Study 1: *N* = 228; Study 2: *N* = 254; Study 3: *N* = 343; Study 4: *N* = 169.

values represent the extent of endorsement of ingroup loyalty, authority, and purity values. Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted (Table 1) to test the validity of our use of a variable "individualizing values" (comprised of average endorsement of caring and fairness values) and a variable "binding values" (comprised of average endorsement of ingroup loyalty, authority, and purity values). We extracted principal components based on eigenvalues over one (no preset number of factors was specified); varimax rotation was applied. Finally, participants provided demographic information (e.g., politics, gender, religiosity). Our primary analyses involved a series of simultaneous regression analyses to determine whether higher endorsement of individualizing values and/or lower endorsement of binding values predicted reduced ratings of victims as contaminated and increased ratings of victims as injured—regardless of the sexual or nonsexual nature of the crime and demographic factors previously found to be related to these moral values (i.e., politics, gender, religiosity; Graham et al., 2011).

Results

First, as shown in Table 1, factor analyses confirm the validity of our use of a variable representing "binding values" (Cronbach's α = .83) and a variable representing "individualizing values" (Cronbach's α = .75). Principal components analysis produced a two-factor solution with Factor 1 representing binding values (48.98% of variance; high loadings for ingroup loyalty, authority, and purity values and low loadings for caring and fairness values) and Factor 2 representing individualizing values (29.47% of variance; high loadings for caring and fairness values and low loadings for ingroup loyalty, authority, and purity values).

Second, in Table 2, we report the intercorrelations among individualizing and binding values, demographic factors (politics, gender, religiosity), and ratings of victims (Sex Contam, Nonsex Contam, Sex Injured, Nonsex

Injured). As found in prior work (e.g., Graham et al., 2011; Niemi & Young, 2013), binding values were associated with political conservatism and religiosity, whereas individualizing values were associated with liberal politics and gender (higher in women). Notably, in the case of sexual crimes, contamination ratings were inversely correlated with injury ratings ($r = -.280$, $p < .001$). In other words, the more people viewed victims of sexual crimes as contaminated/tainted the less they view them as having been injured/wounded.

The results of our primary analyses (Table 3) supported our hypotheses: Increased endorsement of binding values predicted higher ratings of victims as contaminated across crime types, and increased endorsement of individualizing values predicted higher ratings of victims as injured across crime types—even taking into account politics, gender and religiosity. A role for gender in ratings of sexual crime victims was also observed: Being female was associated with considering sexual crime victims less contaminated and more injured. By and large, however, moral values predicted attitudes toward victims regardless of demographic factors (i.e., politics, gender, religiosity).

Summary

The results of Study 1 support hypothesized links between binding values and victim stigmatization (i.e., judgments of victims as contaminated/tainted) on one hand, and individualizing values and sensitivity to victim injury on the other hand. Higher endorsement of binding values predicted victim stigmatization, regardless of crime type, politics, and religiosity. Gender factored into attitudes related to sexual crime victimization: Women considered sexual crime victims less contaminated and more injured. These findings rule out the alternative hypothesis that political conservatism, although correlated with binding values, drives victim stigmatization.

Table 2. Intercorrelations Among Individualizing and Binding Values, Politics, Gender, Religiosity, Ratings of Victims in Studies 1 to 4, and BJW and RWA in Study 4.

	Study	Binding	Individualizing	Politics	Gender	Religiosity	Contaminated-sex	Contaminated-nonsex	Injured-sex	Injured-nonsex	BJW
Binding											
Individualizing	1	.18**									
	2	.10									
	3	.10									
	4	.03									
Politics[a]	1	−.49***	.25***								
	2	−.47***	.34***								
	3	−.45***	.28***								
	4	−.48***	.38***								
Gender[b]	1	.13	.17**	.09							
male = 0; female = 1	2	.01	.27***	.10							
	3	.06	.19***	.04							
	4	.13	.25***	.06							
Religiosity	1	.60***	−.07	−.36***	.11						
	2	.52***	−.05	−.43***	.06						
	3	.60***	−.04	−.36***	.09						
	4	.57***	.12	−.33***	.19*						
Contaminated-sex	1	.33***	−.04	−.15*	−.13	.20**					
	2	.42***	−.03	−.24***	−.09	.24***					
	3	.33***	.01	−.25***	.00	.16**					
	4	.39***	−.01	−.22**	−.15	.20*					
Contaminated-nonsex	1	.29***	.07	−.14*	−.01	.21**	.59***				
	2	.32***	−.16**	−.16**	−.06	.19**	.61***				
	3	.33***	.01	−.22***	.03	.22***	.71***				
	4	.32***	.02	−.16*	−.08	.24**	.68***				
Injured-sex	1	.00	.22***	.01	.17**	−.06	−.28***	−.09			
	2	−.10	.16*	.16*	.29***	−.08	−.24***	−.08			
	3	−.07	.11*	.13*	.16**	.04	−.21***	−.01			
	4	−.07	.28***	.02	.13	−.01	−.15	.02			
Injured-nonsex	1	.13*	.24***	−.04	.11	.01	.00	−.02	.30***		
	2	.03	.16*	.16*	.07	−.11	−.03	−.19**	.38***		
	3	−.08	.21***	.04	.16**	−.04	−.06	−.13*	.36***		
	4	.08	.18*	−.04	.07	.04	.16*	−.04	.31***		
BJW	4	.40***	.03	−.23**	−.00	.17*	.22**	.18*	−.06	.02	
RWA	4	.71***	−.15	−.61***	.05	.58***	.34***	.25***	−.17*	.04	.30***

Note. BJW = belief in a just world; RWA = right-wing authoritarianism.
[a]Anchors: Very conservative = 0, very liberal = 7.
[b]Male = 0; female = 1.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Study 2

Study 1 showed that people higher in binding values were more likely to judge victims of sexual and nonsexual crimes as contaminated and tainted, regardless of politics. Study 1 used minimal stimuli, asking people to rate, for example, "a victim of rape." In Study 2, we introduced vignettes describing specific cases of rape and robbery to determine whether the association between binding values and attitudes toward victims would extend to elaborated events.

Importantly, in Study 2, we also investigated whether people high in binding values not only consider victims more contaminated, but also assign greater responsibility to victims. In addition to victim and perpetrator responsibility

ratings, we also assessed participants' focus on perpetrators versus victims in counterfactual thinking (e.g., Branscombe, Owen, Garstka, & Coleman, 1996; Roese, 1997) with the open-ended question, "How could the outcome of this situation have been different?" Answers were coded for references to victims' and perpetrators' behaviors. Participants also rated the extent to which victims' and perpetrators' actions made a difference to the outcome ("difference-making," henceforth). To explore the scope of the links between moral values and attitudes toward victims and perpetrators, we collected a number of other related attributions (e.g., attributions of avoidability and control to victims, and criminal liability to perpetrators, reported in Supplementary Material Table S3).

Table 3. Results of Regression Analyses Predicting Ratings of Sexual and Nonsexual Crime Victims as Contaminated and Injured in Studies 1 to 4.

	Contaminated		Injured	
	Sex	Nonsex	Sex	Nonsex
Study 1				
Binding	.42***	.26**	−.10	.08
Individualizing	−.11	.04	.23**	.22**
Politics	.09	.00	−.12	−.08
Gender	−.17*	−.06	.16*	.07
Religiosity	−.01	.06	−.05	−.06
R^2	.15	.09	.08	.07
Study 2				
Binding	.41***	.33***	−.08	.12
Individualizing	−.05	−.11	.13	.22**
Politics	−.01	.05	.04	.09
Gender	−.08	−.04	.25***	.00
Religiosity	.03	.05	−.03	−.13
R^2	.19	.11	.11	.09
Study 3				
Binding	.31***	.27***	−.14	−.16*
Individualizing	.02	.02	.09	.23***
Politics	−.15*	−.10	.10	−.10
Gender	−.01	.01	.13*	.13*
Religiosity	−.07	.02	.14*	.02
R^2	.13	.12	.06	.07
Study 4 (analyses of ratings collected 16-35 months after predictors)				
Binding	.42***	.27**	−.16	.15
Individualizing	−.10	−.03	.25**	.15
Politics	−.07	.03	−.13	−.11
Gender	−.17*	−.11	.07	.01
Religiosity	−.08	.05	.05	−.09
R^2	.19	.09	.06	.06

Note. Standardized beta values displayed. Study 1: $N = 228$; Study 2: $N = 254$; Study 3: $N = 343$; Study 4: $N = 169$. Gender: (0 = *male*; 1 = *female*).
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

Method

Participants were 300 individuals who completed the study online via Amazon's Mechanical Turk for a small payment. A total of 46 participants were excluded for previously taking a related study ($n = 26$) or failing attention checks ($n = 20$) as in Study 1. The resulting sample of 254 included 116 male and 138 female participants, $M (SD)_{age} = 34.28 (11.55)$.

Measurement of stigmatization versus sensitivity toward victims and moral values. Participants completed the same measure of stigmatization versus sensitivity for victims of sexual and nonsexual crimes as in Study 1: They rated how contaminated/tainted and injured/wounded they considered "A VICTIM OF {*crime*}"; crimes included two sexual crimes (molestation, rape), and two nonsexual crimes (strangling, stabbing). To assess moral values, participants again

completed the 30-item MFQ (Graham et al., 2011). Finally, participants provided demographic information (e.g., politics, gender, and religiosity).

Measurement of attributions to victims and perpetrators. Participants read two vignettes (Table 4; for example, see Supplementary Material for full text of vignettes) in randomized order involving a sexual assault and a robbery of a woman by a man described as an acquaintance.

Each vignette was followed by two items in counterbalanced order assessing attribution of responsibility to the victim and perpetrator: "How much do you think {*victim/perpetrator*} is responsible for the incident?" Responses were provided using Likert-type scales anchored at 1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*. Additional items (e.g., attributions of avoidability and control to victims, and criminal liability to perpetrators; reported in the Supplementary Material) followed. After these items, participants were re-presented with each vignette and prompted, "Earlier, you read the following scenario: {*vignette*}. Many factors lead to the outcome of a situation. How could the outcome of this situation have been different?" Participants typed their responses into a text box. Responses describing alternative actions victims and perpetrators could have taken ("counterfactual statements") were tallied. Statements not addressing victim or perpetrator behavior were extremely rare and not analyzed. An example of one participant's response coded as three victim-directed counterfactual statements follows: (a) "Heather could have not invited Paul because she didn't know him." (b) "She could have not gone upstairs." (c) "She could have fought back more aggressively and tried to make as much noise as possible." We compared the number of victim-directed counterfactual statements and perpetrator-directed counterfactual statements. Participants also answered two scale items—"difference-making" items, henceforth—in counterbalanced order (using a Likert-type scale, 1 = *not at all*, 6 = *very much*) to assess the extent to which they perceived the victim's and perpetrator's actions as making a difference to the outcome: "To what extent could a change in {*victim/perpetrator*}'s actions have changed the outcome?"

Results

First, as shown in Table 1, factor analyses conducted as in Study 1 again confirmed the validity of our use of a variable representing "binding values" (Cronbach's α = .83; 47.5% of variance) and a variable representing "individualizing values" (Cronbach's α = .71, 30.6% of variance). Second, as shown in Table 2, intercorrelations were again observed among individualizing and binding values, demographic factors (politics, gender, religiosity), and ratings of victims (Sex Contam, Nonsex Contam, Sex Injured, Nonsex Injured). Again, as found in prior work (e.g., Graham et al., 2011; Niemi & Young, 2013), binding values were associated with political conservatism and religiosity, whereas individualizing values were associated with

Table 4. Example Vignette From Study 2.

Heather was hosting a party with friends and family to celebrate a recent business deal. A friend of Heather's wanted to bring along his old college roommate, Paul. Although Heather didn't know Paul personally, she extended her invitation to him and treated him like any other guest. At one point during the party, however, Heather noticed Paul sneak away upstairs. Suspicious as to why he would be upstairs, she followed him shortly after. Upon finding Paul in her bedroom upstairs,
[SEXUAL ASSAULT]
[. . .] she asked him what he was doing there. Paul locked the door behind him and started kissing Heather. When Paul tried to go further, she pushed him away. Paul got aggressive, and although Heather tried to fend him off, he forced sexual intercourse with her.
[ROBBERY]
[. . .] she saw him taking some of her valuable jewelry from her dresser and putting it in his pocket. She confronted him, and when he denied taking it, she tried to retrieve the jewelry from his pocket. Paul pushed her hand away, knocked her aside and ran downstairs. He immediately ran out the door with her jewelry.

Table 5. Results of Regression Analyses Predicting Judgments of Victims and Perpetrators in Studies 2 to 3.

	Responsibility		Difference-making		Counterfactual statements		Blame		More info	Force
	Victim	Perpetrator	Victim	Perpetrator	Victim	Perpetrator	Victim	Perpetrator		
Study 2										
Binding	.30***	−.08	.38***	−.24***	.05	−.21**				
Individualizing	−.20**	.09	−.15*	.18*	−.02	.13				
Politics	.01	.11	−.11	.03	−.24**	.10				
Gender	−.04	.04	.08	−.00	.10	.00				
Religiosity	−.00	.13	−.18*	.14	−.00	−.04				
Total R^2	.12	.04	.16	.07	.08	.11				
Study 3										
Step 1										
Binding	.35***	−.36***	.28***	−.20**	.07	−.24***	.25***	−.28***	−.16*	−.30***
Individualizing	−.05	.23***	.00	.21***	−.07	.04	−.10	.09	.17**	.18**
Politics	−.05	−.13*	.14*	.00	−.06	.07	−.04	.06	−.02	−.01
Gender	−.06	.04	−.06	.07	−.00	.06	−.07	.09	.08	.04
Religiosity	−.02	.10	−.05	.06	−.02	.01	−.01	.07	−.02	.07
R^2 change	.14	.10	.12	.07	.01	.08	.08	.09	.06	.09
Step 2										
Focus condition	−.18***	.07	−.09	−.00	−.16**	−.02	−.13*	.08	−.06	.28***
R^2 change	.03	.01	.01	.00	.03	.00	.02	.01	.00	.08
Total R^2	.17	.11	.12	.07	.04	.08	.10	.09	.06	.17

Note. Standardized beta values displayed. Study 2: $N = 254$; Study 3: $N = 343$. Gender: 0 = *male*; 1 = *female*. Focus condition: 0 = *victim*, 1 = *perpetrator*.
*$p < .05$. **$p < .01$. ***$p < .001$.

liberal politics and gender (higher in women). Notably, contamination ratings were inversely correlated with injury ratings in the case of sexual crimes and, this time, also nonsexual crimes (Table 2). Third, replicating Study 1, simultaneous regression analyses (Table 3) indicated that increased endorsement of binding values predicted higher ratings of victims as contaminated across crime types. Increased endorsement of individualizing values predicted higher ratings of victims as injured in the case of nonsexual crimes. A role for gender in ratings of sexual crime victims as injured was observed (ratings of injury of sexual crime victims were best predicted by being female this time). By and large, however, moral values were the best predictors of ratings of victims regardless of demographic factors (i.e., politics, gender, religiosity), as in Study 1.

Next, we report analyses of measures new to Study 2 (Table 5). Aligning with hypotheses, regression analyses revealed that victim responsibility and victim difference-making judgments were positively predicted by binding values and negatively predicted by individualizing values; and, perpetrator difference-making judgments were negatively predicted by binding values and positively predicted by individualizing values. Victim-directed counterfactual statements were unrelated to moral values, but were more frequent in more conservative participants, whereas perpetrator-directed counterfactual statements were negatively predicted by binding values. By and large, these results indicate that moral values were the best predictors of attributions of responsibility and difference-making to victims, and these

Table 6. Example Vignettes From Study 3.

Victim-focus	Perpetrator-focus
1A. Lisa, a woman working as a sales clerk, is approached by Dan, a freelance modeling agent. He tells her that he thinks she is an excellent prospect to become a successful model. Lisa accompanies him to his studio, where he asks her to have sex with him. She tells him she "doesn't want to do that stuff." She is continually asked and eventually, starts to get scared. She ends up engaging in sexual relations with him.	1B. Dan, a freelance modeling agent, approaches a woman, Lisa, working as a sales clerk. He tells her that he thinks she is an excellent prospect to become a successful model. Dan takes her to his studio, where he asks her to have sex with him. She tells her she "doesn't want to do that stuff." He continues to ask her, scaring her. He ends up engaging in sexual relations with her.

key effects were not accounted for by politics, gender, and religiosity.

Summary

First, Study 2 replicated results from Study 1 showing that moral values were the best predictors of stigmatization versus sensitivity toward victims: Binding values positively predicted ratings of victims as contaminated across crime types and regardless of politics, gender, and religiosity; and, individualizing values positively predicted ratings of victims of nonsexual crimes as injured (Table 3). Second, Study 2 revealed that moral values were also the best predictors of attributions of responsibility and difference-making to victims when people judged vignettes describing specific cases of rape and robbery. The higher participants were in binding values and the lower they were in individualizing values, the more they judged victims as responsible and as having made a difference to the outcome (Table 5). By contrast, the lower participants were in binding values and the higher they were in individualizing values, the more they judged perpetrators as having made a difference to the outcome. Lower binding values also predicted increased counterfactual focus on perpetrators. These effects persisted above and beyond sporadic contributions of politics and religiosity. The findings indicate that binding values are linked not only to stigmatizing attitudes toward minimally described victims, but also to increased perceptions of victims as responsible difference-makers in more elaborated vignettes.

Study 3

In Study 3, we aimed to again replicate correlations among moral values and victim stigmatization observed in Studies 1 to 2, and to replicate correlations among moral values and judgments of responsibility, difference-making, and counterfactual statements observed in Study 2. In addition, as we found that people higher in binding values focused less on perpetrators in their freely generated counterfactual statements in Study 2, and, as discussed in the introduction, as prior work has shown a role for cognitive focus in moral judgment, we examined the role of focus more closely in Study 3. First, we introduced a new measure of focus—an item gauging information-seeking about the victim and perpetrator. Second, we directly manipulated focus on the

victim versus the perpetrator in the language of the vignettes. Finally, new to Study 3, we measured explicit blame of victims by collecting percentages of blame ascribed to victims and perpetrators.

Method

Participants were 444 individuals who completed the study online via Amazon's Mechanical Turk for a small payment. We excluded participants for previously taking a related study ($n = 18$), failing attention checks ($n = 57$), or not completing the study ($n = 26$) as in Studies 1 to 2. The resulting sample of 343 included 131 male and 210 female participants, and two who selected other, $M (SD)_{age} = 36.38 (12.73)$.

Measurement of stigmatization versus sensitivity toward victims and moral values. Participants completed the same measure of stigmatization versus sensitivity for victims of sexual and nonsexual crimes as in Studies 1 to 2: They rated how contaminated/tainted and injured/wounded they considered "A VICTIM OF {*crime*}," crimes included two sexual crimes (molestation, rape), and two nonsexual crimes (strangling, stabbing). To assess moral values, participants again completed the 30-item MFQ (Graham et al., 2011). Finally, participants provided demographic information (e.g., politics, gender, and religiosity).

Measurement of attributions to victims and perpetrators, and the focus manipulation. Participants read four vignettes in randomized order that described sexual assault (Haugen, 2012-2014; see Table 6 for example; Supplementary Material for full text of vignettes). Genders of the victims and perpetrators were varied by including vignettes involving a man and woman (two vignettes), two women (one vignette), and two men (one vignette). To manipulate focus, we varied descriptions of the events such that either the perpetrator or the victim was the subject of the majority (~75%) of the sentences, following prior work (L. Young & Phillips, 2011). Each participant read all four vignettes focused on the victim (Victim-Focus: $n = 169$; Vignettes 1A-4A in Supplementary Material) or all four vignettes focused on the perpetrator (Perpetrator-Focus: $n = 174$; 1B-4B in Supplementary Material).

Each vignette was followed by a series of questions in a fixed order.[3] To assess attribution of responsibility, participants first rated, in counterbalanced order, "How much was

[*victim/perpetrator*] responsible for what happened?" using a scale from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *very much*. Counterfactual statements and ratings of victims' and perpetrators' difference-making were collected as in Study 2. For the measure of blame, participants were asked, "How much do you blame each of the following factors for the event? Please designate a percentage of blame for each factor to total 100%." Participants entered a value into a text box for each protagonist (i.e., *victim, perpetrator*) and to circumstances. Following the blame item, participants were asked (wording varied between-subjects): "Was [*victim*] forced by [*perpetrator*] to have sexual relations?"/"Did [*perpetrator*] force [*victim*] to have sexual relations?" (response scale from 1 = *not at all* to 7 = *absolutely*). We did not find differences in force ratings based on wording; therefore, responses were combined into a composite variable.[4] Finally, to determine whether participants focused moral cognition primarily on the victim or the perpetrator, participants were asked: "If you could have more information about only one of the people in the scenario in order to answer these questions, which one would you pick?" and selected between protagonists (responses coded 0 = *victim*, 1 = *perpetrator*).

Results

First, as shown in Table 1, factor analyses conducted identically to Studies 1 to 2 again confirmed the validity of our use of a variable representing "binding values" (Cronbach's α = .83, 47.50% of variance) and a variable representing "individualizing values" (Cronbach's α = .82, 30.63% of variance). Second, as shown in Table 2, patterns of intercorrelations replicated Studies 1 to 2. Victim contamination ratings were again inversely correlated with injury ratings in the case of sexual crimes (i.e., rape, molestation) and, as in Study 2, also nonsexual crimes (i.e., stabbing, strangling; Table 2). Third, as in Studies 1 to 2, regression analyses on these ratings of minimally described victims of sexual and nonsexual crimes (see Table 3) indicated that increased endorsement of binding values predicted higher ratings of victims as contaminated across crime types. Increased endorsement of individualizing values predicted higher ratings of victims as injured in the case of nonsexual crimes. In addition, reduced binding values predicted higher injury ratings in the case of nonsexual crimes, female gender predicted higher injury ratings across crimes types, and religiosity predicted higher injury ratings in the case of sexual crimes. By and large, however, contributions of demographic factors to attitudes about victims were sporadic and the most notable finding was the third instance of the effect of binding values on stigmatizing judgments of victims as contaminated.

Next, we report the analyses of attribution measures (Table 5). Aligning with hypotheses, regression analyses revealed that victim responsibility and victim difference-making judgments were positively predicted by binding values, whereas perpetrator difference-making judgments and

perpetrator-directed counterfactual statements were negatively predicted by binding values, replicating the role of binding values in these judgments observed in Study 2. Perpetrator responsibility judgments were also negatively predicted by binding values this time as well. Higher individualizing values also contributed to increased perpetrator difference-making judgments as in Study 2 and also to increased perpetrator responsibility judgments this time.

For measures new to Study 3, binding values positively predicted percentages of blame ascribed to victims and negatively predicted percentages of blame ascribed to perpetrators; binding values also negatively predicted perceptions of force and positively predicted information-seeking about victims over perpetrators. Individualizing values contributed to increased perceptions of force and more information-seeking about perpetrators rather than victims. The effects of moral values on judgments about victims and perpetrators in Study 3 persisted above and beyond sporadic effects of politics, as in Study 2. To sum up, the results indicate that binding values are not only linked with stigmatizing attitudes toward minimally described victims, and increased judgments of victims as responsible difference-makers, and decreased judgments of perpetrators as responsible difference-makers in vignettes, but binding values are also linked with increased cognitive focus on victims (more information-seeking) and decreased focus on perpetrators (fewer perpetrator-directed counterfactual statements).

Focus manipulation. As shown in Table 5, entering focus condition (0 = *victim-focus*, 1 = *perpetrator-focus*) into the second step in regression analyses revealed that the focus manipulation affected victim responsibility judgments, victim blame percentages, and force ratings in addition to the effects of binding values on these variables. The focus manipulation alone affected the number of counterfactual statements directed at victims—focus on the victim rather than the perpetrator increased victim-directed counterfactual statements.

We conducted a series of independent samples *t* tests to determine how the focus manipulation affected these variables. As shown in Figure 1, focus on the perpetrator versus the victim significantly reduced blame to victims, $t(341) = 2.23$, $p = .026$, confidence interval (CI) = [.39, 6.12], $d = .24$, reduced ratings of victim responsibility, $t(341) = 3.02$, $p = .003$, CI = [.154, .726], $d = .33$, and reduced victim-directed counterfactual statements, $t(338) = 2.91$, $p = .004$, CI = [.07, .35], $d = .31$. Focus on the perpetrator versus the victim increased perceived force of the perpetrator, $t(341) = -5.33$, $p < .001$, CI = [−.992, −.457], $d = .58$.

Mediators of effects of focus and moral values on blame of victims. To determine whether effects of the focus manipulation and binding values on victim blame were mediated by perceptions of responsibility or force (both of which were also
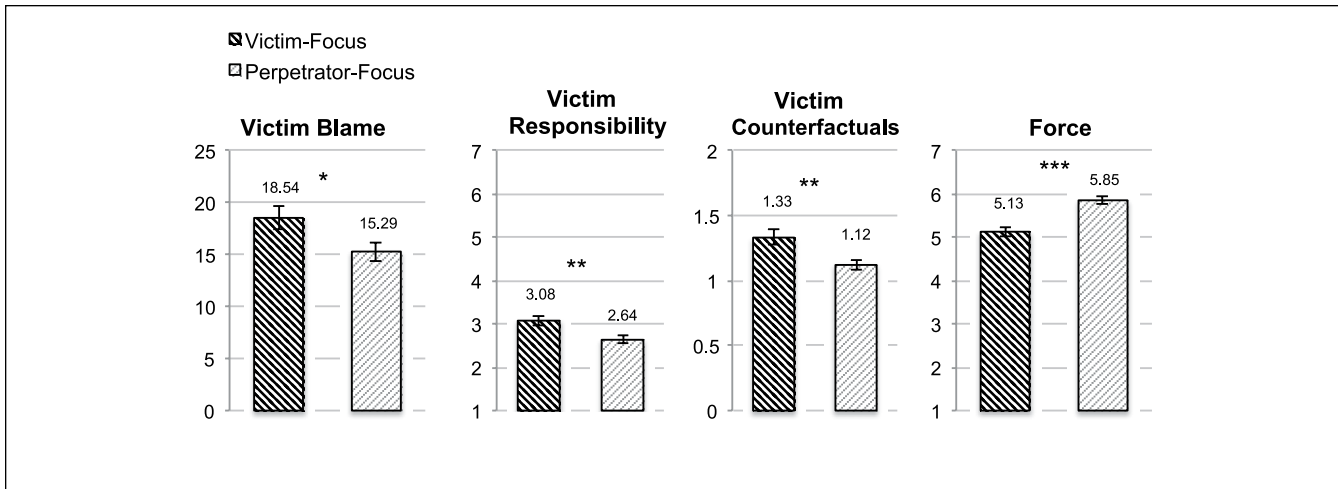
Figure 1. Effects of the focus manipulation on victim blame, victim responsibility, victim-directed counterfactuals, and perceptions of force.
Note. Means displayed; error bars indicate standard error of the mean (SEM).
Significant differences between conditions indicated: *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.
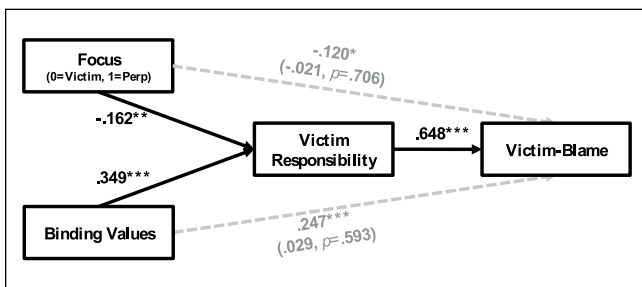
Figure 2. Experimentally manipulating focus of vignettes onto victims and increased binding values predicted increased victim blame via increased judgments of victim responsibility.
Note. Standardized regression coefficients are shown. In parentheses are the standardized regression coefficients and p values controlling for victim responsibility.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

correlated with binding values and affected by the focus manipulation), we conducted mediation analyses. Only victim responsibility ratings fully mediated *both* the relationship between the focus manipulation and victim blame, and the relationship between binding values and victim blame (Figure 2). Reverse-mediation was not observed, that is, victim blame did not mediate ratings of responsibility. Thus, both directing focus onto the victim and off of the perpetrator in language as well as increased endorsement of binding values increase victim blame by increasing judgments of victims as responsible. This suggests that people high in binding values do not necessarily bring their attributions of responsibility in line with their judgments of blame and condemnation; rather, they appear to base their blame of victims on "nonmoral" assessments related to causal contribution. Additional causation-relevant mediators of the focus manipulation on victim blame were victim-directed counterfactual

statements and perceptions of force (see Supplementary Material: Figure S3).

Summary

First, Study 3 replicated results from Studies 1 to 2 showing that moral values were the best predictors of stigmatization versus sensitivity toward minimally described victims: Binding values positively predicted ratings of victims as contaminated across crime types, above and beyond politics, gender, and religiosity, and individualizing values positively predicted ratings of victims of nonsexual crimes as injured (Table 3). Second, Study 3 replicated patterns observed in Study 2 showing that moral values were also the best predictors of attributions across the perpetrator–victim dyad when people judged vignettes describing specific cases of sexual assault. The higher participants were in binding values, the more they judged victims as responsible and as having made a difference to the outcome (Table 5). By contrast, the lower participants were in binding values and the higher they were in individualizing values, the more they judged perpetrators as having made a difference to the outcome and the more they rated perpetrators as responsible. Lower binding values also predicted increased counterfactual focus on perpetrators. These effects persisted above and beyond small, sporadic contributions of politics. The findings indicate that binding values are linked not only to stigmatizing attitudes toward minimally described victims, but also to increased perceptions of victims as responsible difference-makers in more elaborated vignettes.

Study 3 also targeted ascriptions of blame, perceptions of force, and information-seeking about the victim versus the perpetrator. As predicted, the more participants endorsed binding values, the more they blamed victims, and the less

they blamed perpetrators. Binding values also predicted reduced perceptions of force and less focus on perpetrators in information-seeking. Individualizing values, by contrast, predicted increased perceptions of force, and more focus on perpetrators in information-seeking. These effects were not explained by demographic factors.

Finally, experimentally shifting participants' focus to the perpetrator from the victim through changes to the language of the vignettes reduced attributions of responsibility and blame to victims, reduced victim-directed counterfactual statements, and increased perceptions of force. However, effects of the experimental manipulation were small in comparison with binding values. Importantly, effects of both the focus manipulation and binding values on victim blame were fully mediated by judgments of victim responsibility.

Study 4

In Studies 1 to 3, we measured moral values before we collected ratings of victims as contaminated and injured. This design may have led participants to bring their ratings of victims in line with the moral values they just reported. To address this potential task demand, Study 4 examined whether ratings of victims were still predicted by moral values when collected at separate times. In addition, we tested whether broader beliefs about the world (i.e., BJW; Dalbert, 2009; Lerner & Miller, 1978) and about the role of the government (i.e., RWA; Altemeyer, 1998) accounted for the effects of binding values on attitudes toward victims.

Method

Participants were 221 individuals who completed the study online via Amazon's Mechanical Turk for a small payment. We recruited participants by emailing a study link to participants who had taken Study 1, 2, or 3 (in May and July 2013 and December 2014, respectively). In Studies 1 to 3, participants provided their moral values by completing the MFQ *before* victim ratings. If moral values collected at the time of Studies 1 to 3 predicted ratings of victims collected years later in Study 4 (April 2016), then this would constitute strong evidence that the relationship between binding values and attitudes toward victims is not explained by task demands involving measurement of moral values. We excluded participants for failing attention checks (identical to Studies 1 to 3; $n = 11$) or not completing the study ($n = 41$). The resulting sample of 169 included 76 male and 93 female participants, $M (SD)_{age} = 43.11 (13.51)$.

Measurement of stigmatization versus sensitivity toward victims, moral values, BJW and RWA. Participants completed the same measure of stigmatization versus sensitivity for victims of sexual and nonsexual crimes as in Studies 1 to 3: They rated how contaminated/tainted and injured/wounded they considered "A VICTIM OF {*crime*}"; crimes included two sexual crimes (molestation, rape), and two nonsexual crimes (strangling, stabbing). After providing ratings of victims, participants completed a six-item measure of BJW (Dalbert, Montada, & Schmitt, 1987) and a 30-item measure of RWA (Altemeyer, 1998), in random order (see Supplementary Material for BJW and RWA items). Next, participants completed the 30-item MFQ (Graham et al., 2011), as in Studies 1 to 3. Finally, participants provided demographic information (e.g., politics, gender, and religiosity).

Data analysis. To verify that the relationships between moral values and victim ratings in Studies 1 to 3 were not the result of task demands stemming from measuring moral values prior to collecting victim ratings in the same experiment, Study 4 assessed victim ratings in relation to predictor variables (binding values, individualizing values, demographics) collected years prior in one of the previous Studies 1 to 3. After verifying that the relationships between moral values and victim ratings were robust, we next conducted regression analyses as in Studies 1 to 3 controlling for BJW and RWA.

Results

First, as shown in Table 1, factor analyses conducted as in Studies 1 to 3 again confirmed the validity of our use of a variable representing "binding values" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .76$, 41.25% of variance) and a variable representing "individualizing values" (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$, 33.71% of variance). Second, as shown in Table 2, patterns of intercorrelations replicated Studies 1 to 3. Unlike Studies 1 to 3, contamination ratings were not inversely correlated with injury ratings.

Crucially, replicating Studies 1 to 3, regression analyses indicated that increased endorsement of binding values predicted higher ratings of victims as contaminated, across crime types (see Table 3). It is striking that binding values measured years prior remained the most robust predictor of stigmatization of victims as contaminated. Increased endorsement of individualizing values (also measured years prior) predicted higher ratings of victims of sexual crimes as injured, as found in Study 1. In addition, gender (being female) was linked to reduced ratings of sexual crime victims as contaminated. These results indicate that task demands cannot explain the results of Studies 1 to 3. Moral values are the most robust predictors of stigmatization versus sensitivity to victims, even when measured years apart.

Next, we aimed to determine whether BJW and/or RWA accounted for relationships between moral values and ratings of victims. Binding values, BJW and RWA were intercorrelated, and BJW and RWA each were correlated with ratings of victims as contaminated (Table 2). However, when entered into a regression model along with moral values and demographic factors to predict ratings of victims as contaminated (Table 7), BJW and RWA were no longer significant predictors. Critically, as in Studies 1 to 3, ratings of victims

Table 7. Results of Regression Analyses Predicting Attitudes Toward Sexual and Nonsexual Crime Victims (Averaged) as Contaminated and Injured in Study 4.

	Contaminated (Contam)	Injured
Binding	.32**	.01
Individualizing	.03	.34***
BJW	.05	−.04
RWA	.08	−.22
Politics	.01	−.27**
Gender (0 = *male*; 1 = *female*)	−.19*	.06
Religiosity	.03	.00
R^2	.19	.14

Note. Standardized beta values displayed. BJW = belief in a just world; RWA = right-wing authoritarianism.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

as contaminated were best predicted by increased binding values. Ratings of victims as injured were predicted by increased individualizing values and liberal politics, consistent with the results of Studies 1 to 3.

Meta-Analyses

We used meta-analyses (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001) to determine the mean effect sizes of the moral values predictors—individualizing values and binding values—on ratings of victims as injured and contaminated in Studies 1 to 4; and on judgments of victims and perpetrators in the scenarios in Studies 2 to 3. First, we calculated mean effect sizes for the effects of individualizing values on (a) ratings of victims as injured across Studies 1 to 4 and (b) judgments of the extent to which a change in perpetrators' behaviors could have changed the outcomes (perpetrator difference-making) across Studies 2 to 3. Next, we calculated mean effect sizes for the effects of binding values on (a) perpetrator difference-making, (b) victim difference-making, (c) number of counterfactual statements about perpetrator behavior, and (d) judgments of victims as responsible across Studies 2 to 3, as well as (e) ratings of victims as contaminated across Studies 1 to 4. Mean β value effect sizes and CIs are displayed in Figure 3.

Medium to large effect sizes were observed between binding values and ratings of victims of contaminated (β = .39, 95% CI = [.32, .46]), and judgments of victims as responsible (β = .32, 95% CI = [.24, .40]) and victim difference-making (β = .33, 95% CI = [.25, .41]). Medium effect sizes were observed between binding values and judgments of perpetrator difference-making (β = −.22, 95% CI = [−.30, −.14]) and perpetrator-directed counterfactual statements (β = −.23, 95% CI = [−.31, −.15]); and between individualizing values and perpetrator difference-making (β = .20, 95% CI = [.12, .28]) and ratings of victims as injured (β = .24, 95% CI = [.18, .30]; see Figure 3).

General Discussion

In this work, we asked, "Why do victims sometimes receive sympathy and sometimes receive blame?" Prior work on victim derogation suggests that one reason people may blame victims is their BJW where people get what they deserve (e.g., Dalbert, 2009; Lerner & Miller, 1978). Other work in moral psychology has focused on mechanisms behind moral judgment, revealing that judgments of blame and punishment hinge on perceptions that a person causally contributed to the bad event (Cushman, 2008; Malle et al., 2014). Both of these approaches have overlooked the role of an evaluator's moral values on attitudes toward victims. However, the belief that people could deserve harm—part of BJW—may itself be constrained by the content of moral values, and moral commitments have been found to affect representations of causation. In the current work, we aimed to sort out whether and how (a) individual-level ideological commitments—moral values and (b) stimulus-bound features including the focus of language and its downstream effects on representation of causal responsibility, predict negative attitudes toward victims. Taking the results of the four studies together, we conclude that although intervening on representations of causal responsibility via the focus of language alters people's attributions of responsibility and blame to victims and perpetrators, individual-level ideological commitments—moral values—explain most of the variance in attitudes toward victims. These results were not accounted for by political orientation. Although binding values are reliably linked to political conservatism, nothing prevents liberals from adopting these values, and our results indicate that when they do they are just as likely to scorn and scrutinize victims.

In these studies we tested specific hypotheses about how the content of moral values should relate to attitudes toward victims, building on prior work linking derogation of victims to just world beliefs (i.e., BJW; Dalbert, 2009; Lerner & Miller, 1978). We expected endorsement of individualizing values to protect against negative attitudes toward victims, for two main reasons. First, as individualizing values unconditionally prohibit harm and promote impartiality, they are inconsistent with the notion that some people simply *deserve* harm. Second, individualizing values are consistent with a common characterization of immoral events as adhering to an *agent-harms-patient* template (i.e., dyadic morality; Gray et al., 2012; Schein et al., 2015; Schein & Gray, 2015). Moral judgment in this case is straightforward: agents (perpetrators) are blameworthy, and patients (victims) are not (Gray et al., 2012; Gray & Wegner, 2009, 2011; Schein et al., 2015; Schein & Gray, 2015). This line of theorizing predicts that the more that people endorse individualizing values, the more straightforward their moral judgments of victims and perpetrators will be: Perpetrators, and not victims, will be blameworthy. The current results are consistent with this pattern. Across the four studies, individualizing values predicted
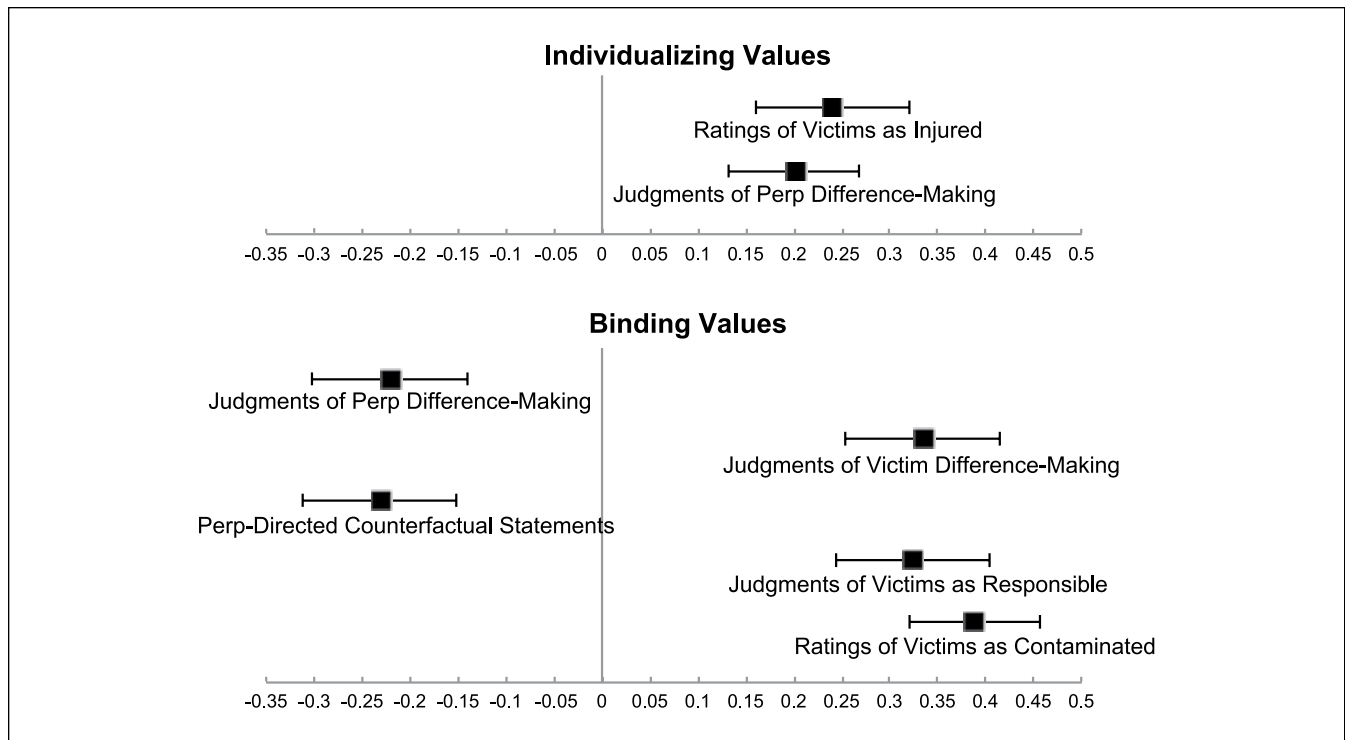
Figure 3. Meta-analytic effect size estimates for effects of moral values on ratings of victims as injured and contaminated across Studies 1 to 4 and on attributions to victims and perpetrators across Studies 2 to 3.
Note. Error bars indicate confidence intervals.

sensitivity to victim suffering (victim injury ratings; meta-analytic effect size = .24) and perceptions of perpetrators' actions as making a difference to the outcomes (meta-analytic effect size = .20).

However, our results related to another cluster of moral values—binding values—underscore that moral judgment does not always unfold in the straightforward manner that dyadic morality predicts. In the present research, the more that people endorsed binding values, the more likely they were to shift responsibility and blame from perpetrators onto victims, and endorse stigmatizing attitudes toward victims. Binding values robustly predicted stigmatization of victims as contaminated (meta-analytic effect size = .39), increased judgments of victims as responsible (meta-analytic effect size = .32), increased judgments of victims as difference-makers (meta-analytic effect size = .33), reduced judgments of perpetrators as difference-makers (meta-analytic effect size = −.22), and reduced perpetrator-directed counterfactual statements (meta-analytic effect size = −.23). Results were robust controlling for politics, just world beliefs, and RWA. Why might endorsement of binding values be correlated with this host of negative attitudes toward victims (and relatively lenient attitudes toward perpetrators)? In contrast to individualizing values that focus on prohibiting harming victims, binding values focus on prohibiting behavior that destabilizes groups and relational ties: disloyalty,

disobedience to authority, and behavior reflecting spiritual and sexual impurity. The more a person endorses binding values, the more they should deviate from the typical pattern of moral judgment focused on events fitting an *agent-harms-patient* template. Indeed, we found that binding values are uniquely powerful predictors of "inverted" moral judgment—whereby victims are seen as relatively more blameworthy and perpetrators are afforded leniency. Furthermore, in contrast to individualizing values, which promote impartiality, upholding binding values often involves treating people differently depending on their group or individual status. Therefore, in many instances, binding values are compatible with harming others. Harming an outgroup member may be compatible with moral valuation of loyalty or authority; harming or exiling a group member who has brought dishonor on the group may be compatible with moral valuation of purity (e.g., honor killing). Therefore, binding values may predict insensitivity to victim suffering and therefore victim derogation.

Notably, we also observed a link between binding values and BJW (correlation between BJW and binding values; see Table 2, Study 4: $r = .40$). Can BJW account for the link between binding values and victim derogation? We found no evidence for this account: BJW was unrelated to ratings of victims as contaminated when entered alongside binding values in the regression model (Table 7). Instead, binding values predicted blame of

victims via judgments of victim responsibility (Figure 2). This result suggests that binding values do not affect judgment of victims through BJW, but through a path involving effects on causal representation (Malle et al., 2014).

The current results also contribute to a growing body of work on the relationship between moral and nonmoral judgments. This work has shown that moral judgments, and sometimes a desire to blame, influence "nonmoral" judgments including judgments about causal responsibility and agents' control over the outcome (Alicke, 1992, 2000; Alicke, Mandel, Hilton, Gerstenberg, & Lagnado, 2015; Kominsky, Phillips, Gerstenberg, Lagnado, & Knobe, 2015; Knobe, 2006). The present findings suggest that moral *values* also predict nonmoral judgments of responsibility.[5] Notably, though, judgments of responsibility were also correlated with moral *judgments* of blame. Might certain moral values increase moral judgments of blame, which then increase nonmoral judgments of responsibility (cf. Alicke, 1992; Knobe, 2006)? Or, might moral values increase blame assigned to victims first by increasing nonmoral judgments of responsibility (cf. Cushman, 2008; Malle et al., 2014)? Mediation analyses provide support for the latter account. The relationship between moral values and moral judgment (victim blame) was fully mediated by nonmoral judgments of victim responsibility. We found no evidence for the reverse mediation: The relationship between moral values and nonmoral judgments of victim responsibility was unaltered when controlling for moral judgments of blame. Thus, moral *values* may have the potential to directly influence judgments of causal responsibility, which in turn may increase the assignment of blame to victims.

This research also sheds light on the role of cognitive focus in victim blame. Prior work has suggested that reduced focus on perpetrators contributes to a perception of victims as blameworthy (cf. Branscombe et al., 1996; Kahneman & Miller, 1986), and that increased focus on victims increases judgments of victims as responsible (Bohner, 2001). In line with prior work (Bohner, 2001; Branscombe et al., 1996; Kahneman & Miller, 1986; L. Young & Phillips, 2011), when participants read vignettes in which focus was shifted onto victims and off of perpetrators by placing victims in the sentence subject position in the majority of sentences, participants imbued victims with more responsibility, reported more ways that victims could have changed the outcome (counterfactual statements), and perceived victims as less forced. In the current work, shifts in these causation-relevant representations—responsibility, counterfactual possibilities, and force—each mediated the effect of focus on blame. These findings suggest that subtle alterations in the language used to describe moral transgressions have the potential to modulate moral judgment via causal representations. It may be surprising that focus on the victims did not *increase* sympathy for victims. Instead, our findings suggest that a more effective strategy for addressing victim blaming would involve increased focus on the perpetrator.

The current work also revealed that the effect of language focus on blame was small compared with contribution of moral values (except in the case of victim-directed counterfactuals, where it was the only factor found to affect their frequency). In our vignettes, the basic event structure was intended to be identical across conditions, regardless of whether the sentences themselves focused on the victim versus the perpetrator; the same chain of events unfolded across conditions. Small effects due to the linguistic manipulation are therefore not surprising.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the current work demonstrated effects across different types of interpersonal crimes (both sexual and nonsexual), we investigated judgments of sexual crime victimization most extensively. Judging blameworthiness in the context of rape may involve the activation of a specific set of generalized beliefs about men and women (e.g., rape myths; Franiuk, Seefelt, & Vandello, 2008). It is possible that people high in binding values deliver different judgments of other morally relevant transitive interpersonal events (e.g., coercion, manipulation). And, although the correlations between binding values and attributions to victims of crimes were robust controlling for demographic variables including participant gender, it is possible that alliances with agents and patients representing particular social categories factor into causal attributions for other events (e.g., Morgan, Mullen, & Skitka, 2010; Valdesolo & DeSteno, 2007). Our ongoing work investigates how hostility toward (or alliance with) people of a particular social category (e.g., men, women), in addition to moral values, relates to implicit ascription of causality to agents versus patients across a range of events (Niemi, Hartshorne, Gerstenberg, & Young, 2016).

Conclusion

This work reveals the impact of moral values on moral judgments of victims. Moral values influence judgments of victim responsibility, which then influence ascriptions of blame to victims. Moreover, experimentally shifting focus off victims and onto perpetrators reduces victim responsibility and, as a result, victim blame. Taken together, the results across four studies highlight the powerful role of personal ideology, and a subtler role for our linguistic manipulation of focus, in predicting attitudes toward victims and perpetrators. Put plainly, the results suggest that knowing a person's stances on disloyalty, disobedience, and impurity may afford a prediction of that person's perception of victims as responsible and blameworthy. Moral values constitute a core framework that organizes different psychological processes—including perceptions of contamination and injury and attributions of responsibility—into systematic patterns of condemnation and blame across the victim–perpetrator dyad.

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Declaration of Conflicting Interests

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Supplemental Material

The online supplemental material is available at http://pspb.sagepub.com/supplemental.

Notes

1. See the Supplementary Material for the results of Pilot Studies A and B replicating results, for sample size determination, and for details on a measure of sexism and a Single Category Implicit Association Test (SCIAT) used in Study 1. Participants also completed a qualitative measure assessing beliefs about contamination and injury in victims, not reported here.
2. Attention checks for all studies were catch questions embedded in the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (MFQ; responses 1 or 2 on the Likert-type scale for item "It is better to do good than bad," and 5 and 6 on the Likert-type scale for item "Whether or not someone was good at math") and completion of any of four blocks of MFQ questions in under 10 s.
3. See Supplementary Material for additional items not analyzed here.
4. Force ratings for vignettes A4 and B4 (see Supplementary Material) were excluded from analyses because vignettes used the term "forced."
5. The characterization of responsibility judgments as "nonmoral" follows from a tradition of discussion of responsibility attributions as computations tightly linked to causation (e.g., Heider, 1958) and counterfactual difference-making (i.e., the extent to which a change in an agent's actions would have made a difference to the outcome given other factors; see review: Alicke, Mandel, Hilton, Gerstenberg, & Lagnado, 2015). Researchers have also dissociated responsibility judgments from moral judgments of blame such that blame is recognized as retrospective assessment of an agent's causal role and obligations plus assessment of his or her epistemic state prior to action, for example, the degree to which the agent believed the bad outcome was likely to be true (Alicke et al., 2015; Malle, Guglielmo, & Munroe, 2014). Although people may consider attribution of responsibility to victims to be morally offensive (e.g., the public outcry resulting from the Patrick Henry College (PHC) statements

discussed in the Introduction), the current work underscores the pivotal *mechanistic* role of responsibility judgments in condemnation of victims.

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