

DEVELOPMENT AND EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS OF A TRAUMA-  
RELATED BLAME SCALE

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### **Abstract**

Following interpersonal trauma, survivors often experience maladaptive trauma-related blame cognitions which have relevance for psychopathology and treatment. In fact, the American Psychiatric Association has included blame as a symptom of PTSD in its most recent edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. At the present, there is a paucity of literature concerning the development, course and resolution of these cognitions. Unfortunately, this research has been stymied by the limitations of existing measures, being rooted in a single trauma type and primarily regarding self-blame. The aim of the present study was to develop a trauma-related blame scale for survivors which could be employed to assess blame in any type of interpersonal traumatic experience and would include subscales for various blame typologies. Trauma-related blame items were developed to target attributions about the self, trauma-perpetrators, other victims, trauma-related others, higher-power entities, or no-one at all. Following the generation of 767 items, feedback from subject matter experts, and necessary modifications to the measure after content analysis, items were administered to a mixed interpersonal trauma population via a web-based crowdsourcing participant pool. Then, an exploratory factor analysis was performed on a final dataset containing responses of  $N = 458$  participants to assess the degrees to which items load on intended blame subscales, resulting in a total 89 items at final reduction and eight factors: Higher-Power-Blame, No-one, Behavioral Self-Blame, Perpetrator Intent, Characterological Perpetrator-Blame, Perpetrator-Blame, Other-Blame, and Characterological Self-Blame. The next stage of this research should examine the construct validity and further validation within clinical populations.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) recognizes trauma as exposure to an event of actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence (APA, 2013). Extant literature has linked trauma exposure to the development of various psychopathologies including major depressive disorder, dissociation, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; Gillespie et al., 2009; Green et al., 2010; Kilpatrick et al., 2003). Literature has predominantly focused on two trauma types including interpersonal (e.g., assault) and non-interpersonal traumas (e.g., hurricane, motor vehicle accidents), finding that relative to survivors of non-interpersonal traumas, survivors of interpersonal trauma are at an elevated risk for the development of PTSD (Breslau et al., 1998; Resnick et al., 1993), major depressive disorder (Maercker & Heckler, 2016), suicidality (Barter & Stanley, 2016), and substance misuse (McCauley et al., 2009; Øverup et al., 2015, Ullman & Sigurvinsdottir, 2015). In addition, interpersonal trauma survivors are more likely to experience difficulties with emotion regulation (Ehring & Quack, 2010); and survivors often report feelings of guilt (Beck et al., 2011b), shame (Budden, 2009; Dodson & Beck, 2017), and anger (e.g., Orth & Wieland, 2006; Taft et al., 2012) in the aftermath of the trauma.

Cognitive theory proposes that these psychological and emotional reactions are driven by maladaptive cognitions about the trauma and its consequences for the survivor (Beck et al., 2011a; Brewin & Holmes, 2003; Ehlers & Clark, 2000). For instance, traumatic experiences often challenge the survivor's pre-existing beliefs about the world, oneself, and other individuals (Brown et al., 2018; Janoff-Bulman, 1989). Specifically, four primary assumptions negatively impacted by victimization include a belief in personal invulnerability, a positive self-concept, the perception of the world as meaningful, and the perception of the world as a benevolent place (Janoff-Bulman, 1985;

1989). Survivors may grapple with beliefs surrounding their sense of safety, intimacy, and trust with others. For example, if an individual believes she is safe among friends and capable of defending herself and then experiences a trauma in which the perpetrator is a friend who is physically stronger than her, she may perceive that her pre-existing beliefs are challenged, resulting in potentially negative cognitions about the self (e.g., “I am weak”), world (e.g., “the world is dangerous”), and others (e.g., “people can’t be trusted”). Here survivors attempt to engage in meaning making to find their “footing in the world” (Holland et al., 2010) or understand the impact of the traumatic events (Resick et al., 2016) for their lives moving forward. According to one of the leading treatments for PTSD, these cognitions about the meaning of the trauma have roots in the survivor’s belief about why the trauma happened (Resick et al., 2016).

Another related cognitive process (Park & Folkman, 1997; Park, 2010; Park & Kennedy, 2017) involves making sense of the traumatic event itself. In other words, this process involves questioning and appraising why the trauma occurred (e.g., Holland et al., 2010; Resick et al., 2016). Unsuccessful or prolonged meaning-making attempts appear to resemble a form of rumination and may share a positive relationship with increased distress in the aftermath of a trauma (Nolen-Hoeksema & Larson, 1999). The outcome of this sense-making process may be unpleasant as well. Specifically, a negative product of this evaluative process can be self-blame cognitions (Janoff-Bulman, 1985, 1989), attributions that the traumatic event was caused by one self or past actions, thereby accepting fault for the event (Reich et al., 2014). For example, trauma survivors may tell themselves, “It is my fault for letting the abuse happen,” “I should not have been drinking,” “I should have stopped it somehow,” and so on.

As one might expect, self-blame post-trauma cognitions have been linked to increased levels of general distress and psychopathology (Koss et al., 2002), depressive symptoms (Cascardi & O’Leary, 1992; Cacciatore et al., 2013; Hoagwood, 1988;

Morrow, 1991; Regehr et al., 1998), feelings of guilt (Glenn & Beyers, 2009), anxious symptoms (Cacciatore et al., 2013), low self-esteem (Cascardi & O’Leary, 1992; Kucharska, 2016; Perilloux et al., 2011; Reich et al., 2014), and suicide attempts (Barker-Collo, 2001) among interpersonal trauma survivors. Notably, negative post-trauma cognitions are theorized to serve as primary contributors to the development and maintenance of PTSD (see Beck et al., 2011a; Brewin & Holmes, 2003; Resick et al., 2016). Primary studies have demonstrated an association between the strength of self-blame cognitions and the severity of PTSD (e.g., Arata & Burkhart, 1996; Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2018; Ullman et al., 2007; Peter-Hagene & Ullman, 2015; Koss et al., 2002; Reich et al., 2014; Oh et al., 2016). A notable exception to this trend in findings was noted by Startup et al., (2007), who reported that higher ratings of self-blame were associated with reduced risk of PTSD diagnosis and symptomology in a mixed sample of survivors with varying trauma histories. Furthermore, PTSD symptoms and negative cognitions have been shown to concurrently improve with the implementation of well-established therapies (Brown et al., 2018). Interestingly, this concurrent shift in cognition and symptom severity is observed in both cognition-focused therapies such as cognitive processing therapy as well as other non-cognition-focused therapies such as prolonged exposure therapy (Brown et al., 2018; Diehle et al., 2014).

Another potential resolution of the sense-making process is to attribute blame for the trauma to another person, people, or entity besides oneself. For example, a survivor might believe something like “If only my commander would have listened to me, then my friend would still be alive,” “She shouldn’t have left me alone with the man who raped me,” “The organization created the kind of environment where this sort of things is going to happen” and so on. Excessive externalized blame or other-blame cognitions are also theorized to predict and maintain negative health outcomes (Resick et al., 2016) and may be correlated with impaired emotional well-being (Tennen & Affleck, 1990).

Few studies have examined external blame targets and psychological wellbeing. Among non-interpersonal trauma samples, other-blame cognitions have been linked to increased PTSD symptoms among motor vehicle accident survivors (Delahanty et al. 1997) and burn survivors (Lambert et al., 2004). Similarly, in samples of child sexual abuse survivors, externalized blame was associated with higher rates of self-reported trauma-relevant symptoms (Ullman, 1997). Though societal blame has not shown an association with adjustment in survivors of sexual assault (Meyer & Taylor, 1986), higher degrees of perpetrator-blame share an association with increased levels of personal distress (Frazier, 2003a). Moreover, while other literature has noted no association between perpetrator directed blame and long-term adjustment in samples of childhood sexual abuse survivors, family directed blame has been linked to self-reported interpersonal anxiety and increased chances of having a maltreated child in adulthood (McMillen & Zuravin, 1997). At the current time, it is unknown whether these discrepancies truly represent nuance due to specific trauma type or if they might reflect different methodologies and measures.

Recognizing the link between internalized (self) and externalized (other) blame and PTSD symptoms, the American Psychiatric Association (2013) has now included blame as a symptom of PTSD in its most recent edition of its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual. However, existing literature has largely assessed the influences of self-blame on mental health outcomes resulting in unaddressed theoretical and empirical lacunae in terms of understanding other-blame in such respects (Tennen & Affleck, 1990).

### **Theoretical Blame Processes**

**Cognitive Processing Theory.** A steadily growing body of theoretical and empirical literature in the field of cognitive processing theory has contributed greatly to the current understanding of maladaptive post-trauma cognitions as they relate to psychopathology, outcomes, and treatment. This literature has predominantly focused on Resick and

Schnicke's (1993) framework involving the processes of assimilation and accommodation. According to this theory, when an individual is confronted with new information that runs counter to a pre-existing schema, the individual either incorporates new event-relevant information into pre-existing schemata (assimilation), reworks the pre-existing schemata so as to account for such information (accommodation), or reworks pre-existing schemata in inaccurate or overgeneralized ways (overaccommodation). Both the overaccommodative and assimilative processes may serve as vehicles through which maladaptive post-trauma cognitions are formed. Overaccommodate beliefs often involve maladaptive thoughts about the self (e.g., "I am a monster"), the world ("the world is dangerous"), and others ("people can't be trusted"). Of particular importance to the present study, however, are the means by which survivors develop negative cognitions via assimilation.

The development of negative cognitions can occur via assimilation in that the newly acquired and discrepant information can be adapted for the purposes of maintaining pre-existing beliefs (Sobel et al., 2009). Notably, if prior to experiencing a trauma, one subscribed to just-world-beliefs (Lerner, 1980)—the belief that good things happen to good people and bad things happen to bad people—such preconceptions could have important implications for how the survivor views the self post-trauma. The assimilative process could result in the survivor adopting the belief that the traumatic event occurred because he or she is a bad person or behaved in a bad manner as a means to preserve the belief in a just world (e.g. "If bad things only happen to bad people, I must be bad or in some way deserving."). In this case, the survivor identifies the self as the causal mechanism, ultimately integrating the traumatic event into the survivor's pre-existing just-world beliefs. On a related note, assimilation may also result in exaggerated other-blame in that the survivor may adopt the concept that other individuals in the survivor's life are to blame due to the fact that they failed to prevent the trauma from occurring. The

efficacy of cognitive processing therapy (CPT), a therapeutic modality with the goal of replacing maladaptive assimilated and overaccommodated beliefs with healthy accommodated views, would seem to support Resick and Schnicke's (1993) framework. Specifically, research has shown that increases in healthy accommodative statements reported by survivors not only share an association with significant decreases in maladaptive assimilated and overaccommodated statements but also symptom reductions in PTSD (Sobel et al., 2009).

**The Path Model of Blame.** In addition to the propositions offered by cognitive processing theorists, other theoretical conceptions of attribution have been developed to elucidate the process by which people arrive at conclusions regarding degrees of blame. Such conceptualizations apply more broadly to blame in general and were not developed for trauma specifically. Malle and colleagues' (2014) Path Model of Blame presents blame attributions as involving cognitive processes consisting of a hierarchy of necessary preconditions incumbent on the attributor or "social perceiver" to establish prior to an ascription of blame (Malle et al., 2014, p. 151; see Figure 1). Specifically, the model first provides that, for a blame attribution to occur, the social perceiver must detect that an event has violated a social norm. For the purposes of the current study, the norm violation has been framed as a traumatic event. In addition to the former prerequisite, the perceiver must arrive at the conclusion that an "agent" or social actor has caused the event, as blame is recognized by the authors as requiring a target individual. Though Malle and colleagues do not apply this model to trauma, the trauma literature would suggest causal agents in this context might include the perpetrator, the victim, bystanders, and authority figures.

In the event that the perceiver has both identified an event as norm violating and as involving agent causality, the perceiver must next determine whether the agent's actions were likely intentional or not (Malle et al., 2014). As depicted in Figure 1, the structure of

the model includes a bifurcation of information-processing paths which account for situations involving either intentional or unintentional norm-violations. Provided that intentionality is established, the perceiver next considers intention-congruent reasons or justifications for the agent's actions. A consideration of the agent's reasons to act in a norm-violating manner serve the purposes of satisfying moral perception via provisioning meaning to the agent's behavior (Malle, 2004). For example, intimate partner violence survivors might rationalize their abusers' actions as being the result of work-related stress (Lim et al., 2015). Upon establishing the underlying reason(s) for the agent's norm-violating behavior, the perceiver may then determine the degree of blame attributable to the agent. Although this conceptualization of blame ascription was developed to apply more broadly to unspecified norm violations, the Path Model conceptualization may accurately describe the underlying processes by which trauma survivors arrive at conclusions regarding degrees of blame for their perpetrators.

Conversely, Malle et al. (2014) assert that if the violation is viewed as unintentional, an alternative information-processing path is employed, wherein the perceiver then looks to determine whether the agent had an obligation and capacity to prevent the norm-violating event from occurring. Obligations concern whether the agent associated with the event *ought to* have acted in a means to prevent the norm violating event from occurring. Perceptible obligations to which one might look to when processing event-salient content include the norm-violating agent's role or relationship to the perceiver as well as the context surrounding the norm-violation. Capacity concerns the degree to which one *could* have prevented a norm-violation and includes both the physical and cognitive faculties necessary to carry out preventative measures. Thus, in the case of an unintentional norm-violation, a degree of blame is established exclusively under the circumstances that the perceiver arrives at the conclusion that an agent retained both an obligation and the capacity to prevent a norm-violation from occurring.

The structural process described in the Path Model of Blame (Malle et al., 2014) has been supported by experimental investigations which have shown that people seek information to satisfy the necessary preconditions of the Path Model process prior to arriving at an ascription of blame (Guglielmo, 2012; Guglielmo & Malle, 2014). Specifically, the authors assessed processing speeds of participants after the inclusion of data necessitating either a switch from a prior attributional conclusion or the maintenance of a blame ascription. Results indicated that those prompted to switch paths were slower to update blame ascriptions than were those introduced to the path-maintenance information. Notably, this evidence pertains exclusively to the process by which outside observers' process information to ascribe degrees of blame to non-trauma scenarios. Thus, the Path Model has yet to be successfully applied to the circumstances and perspectives of trauma survivors. This model is interesting and its elements (agency, intentionality, and preventability) may have some parallels with dimensions of blame attributions.

### **Theoretical Dimensions of Blame**

**Internal versus External.** Attribution theory may be important to our understanding of the post-trauma experience (Hall et al., 2003; Hawkins et al., 2017; Littleton et al., 2007; Neal & Edwards, 2017; Witte, 2006). Early theoretical paradigms framed the attribution process as one involving a consideration of person and situation-based variables to arrive at a conclusive ascription of causality (Kelley, 1960; 1967; 1973). Thus, this lens recognizes post-trauma attributions as beliefs about why an event occurred as well as who is to blame for the event's occurrence. Further, it is theorized that a trauma survivor is more likely to self-blame when the traumatic experience is novel, perceived as likely to happen again in the future, and when it is perceptible that the trauma does not commonly happen with others (Shaver, 1985). Attributional literature regarding blame ascription has largely assessed the degrees to which survivors of trauma

attribute blame to themselves relative to external sources such as the perpetrator or situations surrounding the traumatic event (Donde, 2017). Evidence of self-blame as a modal attributional response in cases of trauma have been inconsistent, with some findings indicating more frequent self-blame attributions (Lim et al., 2015) and others showing higher rates of external attributions such as perpetrator blame (Frazier, 1990; Littleton et al., 2007). Investigations into external attributions following a traumatic experience have highlighted the ascription of blame to various potential sources including godly or supernatural entities (Ray et al., 2015), society (Donde, 2017), the government (Malhotra & Kuo, 2008), and other individuals not immediately involved with the circumstances of the trauma (Lim et al., 2015). Thus, potential attributional targets for blame include a varied body of perceptible causal sources.

**Controllable versus Uncontrollable.** Some theorists have presented self-blame as means through which a sense of perceived control can be regained post-trauma (Walster, 1966). If the survivor blames the trauma on one's own action, the survivor retains a sense of control over what happened to them as well as a sense of control to prevent the trauma from reoccurring by simply avoiding similar actions in the future (Abramson et al., 1978; Janoff-Bulman, 1989; Walster, 1966). For example, a survivor might think "If I hadn't burned his dinner, he wouldn't have been so angry and hit me, so I'll be careful not to do that again." Contemporary models have proposed perceived control as varying along a temporal dimension, wherein post-trauma adjustment is determined according to whether one seeks to acquire a sense of past-control, present-control, or future-control (Frazier et al, 2011; Frazier 2014). Relevant to the current study, past-control refers to perceived control over the previously experienced stressful event and has actually been linked to greater personal distress (Frazier et al., 2002) and poorer mental health outcomes (Frazier, 2011). Others have suggested that damage to strong pre-trauma beliefs in perceived control may act as a diathesis for PTSD (Nanney et al., 2018). Notably,

directing blame at perpetrators of trauma has also been shown to share an association with poorer prognostic outcomes, potentially due to the fact that trauma survivors who tend to blame the perpetrator focus attention away from currently controllable aspects of the trauma (Frazier, 2003a). Consistent with theories of perceived control, these findings suggest that survivor outcomes are to some degree reliant on the temporal aspects of perceived control post-trauma, as well as the strength of pre-trauma perceived control lost at the onset of the traumatic event.

**Global versus Specific.** Related to the concept of post-trauma control is Janoff-Bulman's (1979) dichotomous conceptualization of the self-attributional response to trauma, wherein she presents self-blame as consisting of two distinguishable types – behavioral self-blame (i.e., specific) and characterological self-blame (i.e., global). Behavioral self-blame refers to the survivor's attribution of responsibility for the experience of a traumatic event to the survivor's own actions leading to the trauma. Thus, the survivor attributes blame to the self for having behaved in self-perceived precipitating fashion prior to the occurrence of a trauma. Behavioral self-blame has been hypothesized to function as an adaptive response to trauma since behaviors are modifiable and controllable for preventing trauma in the future, thus reducing feelings of vulnerability. Inversely, characterological self-blame ascribes fault for a traumatic event's occurrence to unchangeable and static aspects of the self (i.e., personality, character, physical appearance), thus increasing perceptions of vulnerability and future victimhood. Characterological self-blame is present-focused and implies that the individual is not capable of adaptively changing (Janoff-Bulman, 1985) and is theorized to be maladaptive since it fails to allow one to reconcile the tension between basic assumptions held prior to victimization with the traumatic event (Janoff-Bulman, 1989).

Empirical evidence in support of Janoff-Bulman's (1979) model has been inconsistent. Janoff-Bulman's (1979) assessment of rape counselors' self-blame

prevalence estimates indicated that 74% of victims blamed themselves at least to some extent for the trauma such that behavioral self-blame (69%) was found to be more common than characterological self-blame (19%) amongst survivors. Thus, Janoff-Bulman concluded that behavioral self-blame was a modal and adaptively functional response to trauma. Contemporary literature shows mixed findings, with some studies identifying internally directed blame as the modal attributional response to trauma (Donde, 2017; Lim et al., 2015; Perilloux et al., 2011) while others have found self-blame to be an uncommon response amongst others (Littleton et al., 2007). Notably, findings on the influence of blame-type have also been mixed. Some assessments of post-trauma outcomes show that both behavioral and characterological self-blame are associated with poor outcomes and increased distress (Frazier, 1990; Frazier et al., 1994; Frazier, 2000; Meyer & Taylor, 1986); However, Koss, et al. (2002) noted that among female rape victims, characterological self-blame was highly distressing and detrimental to personal health, whereas behavioral self-blame was protective against personal distress to a limited degree.

Importantly, existing literature also suggests the global-specific lens as applying to external sources to explain traumatic events (Lim et al., 2015). Most prominently, qualitative findings have identified victim perceptions of global traits in perpetrators as primarily consisting of such factors as one's cultural up-bringing as well as dispositional qualities such as trait aggression, pervasive romantic insecurity, and chronic jealousy. Specific traumatic qualities of the perpetrator include the perpetrator's drinking behaviors and violent responses to personal stressors (i.e. verbal domestic disputes, periods of financial strain). Although limited, these data so appear to indicate that global-specific assessments of interpersonal trauma are not aimed exclusively toward the self, but also to other trauma-relevant parties.

## Limitations of Existing Literature

Although extant literature has provided insight to the extent, nature, and underlying mechanisms of post-trauma attributions, there exists several notable gaps in the literature regarding post-trauma blame ascriptions. For example, a considerable body of empirical work has focused on blame ascription in the aftermath of sexual assault (Frazier, 2003; DePrince et al., 2010) and abuse (Reich et al., 2014; Lim et al., 2015; ), leaving other forms of interpersonal trauma (i.e. muggings, robbery, shootings) relatively unnoted in the literature. Furthermore, the investigation of underlying theoretical blame dimensions (i.e. behavioral and characterological blame) have largely been stymied by a paucity of measures existing outside of the circumstances of sexual violence. A measure developed to apply to a wider range of traumatic events would not only facilitate the exploration of such theoretical frameworks across trauma types but may also allow for the assessment of conceptual validity of such dimensions. Finally, a considerable body of theoretical and empirical literature has largely focused on self-blame (Janoff-Bulman, 1979, 1985, 1989, 1992), with little emphasis placed on external parties (Tennen & Affleck, 1990; Lim et al., 2015). The present study would allow us to assess the degrees to which trauma survivors attribute blame to those directly and indirectly involved with the experience. Thus, the impetus of the current study was to perform an initial validation on a measure, which would allow us to address the aforementioned empirical and theoretical lacunae identified in the literature.

For the purposes of the present studies, we collated and examined an extensive list of existing measures utilized in the literature to assess trauma-related blame (see Table 1). As can be seen, of the 28 measures, 75% assessed self-blame, 36% perpetrator-blame, 43% other-blame, and 7% supernatural-blame. When subscales for different blame targets were included, they rarely (21%) included distinctions related to dimensions hypothesized in the literature such as behavioral and characterological blame. Also, 61%

were established specifically for trauma-related blame. Of those measures, 46% include items specific to sexual assault or abuse, 18% contain items regarding childhood sexual abuse, 7% include items relevant to interpersonal trauma, and 7% include items specific to accidents and personal injury. Inversely, 39% were not trauma-specific. In fact, many of the measures in use have not been validated and were created by researchers for the use in a single study (39%). Notably, none of the measures found and reviewed could be used for research across multiple trauma types and didn't include multiple blame targets. These measures are also incapable of assessing blame types across dimensions of blame (e.g., global-specific).

### **The Current Study**

The purpose of the following studies was to develop and perform the initial validation for a measure of trauma-related blame which can be administered to survivors of varying types of interpersonal traumas and collect data pertaining to different targets and dimensions of trauma-related blame. Measurement development was conducted in light of the aforementioned literature regarding blame process (Malle et al., 2014; Resick and Schnicke, 1993), dimensionality (Kelley, 1960; 1967; 1973; Walster, 1966; Janoff-Bulman, 1979), and commonly identified targets (Lim et al., 2015). Previous interview-based studies (Lim et al., 2015) have indicated that survivors of trauma identify various distinct blame targets (i.e., self, perpetrator, other, higher-power entities, or no one). Following item development, the first phase of research assessed content validity of scale items, and the second phase of this research involved analyzing the factor structure of the proposed subscales.

## Chapter 2

### Item Development and Content Validity Method

#### Item Development

Items in the measure were created in light of existing theory (Kelley, 1960; 1967; 1973; Janoff-Bulman, 1979) and primary literature (Lim et al., 2015) with subscales ultimately reflecting common blame targets identified in the literature (e.g., self-blame, perpetrator blame, other blame, supernatural blame, and no-blame situations). Construct definitions for these potential factors are available in Table 2 along with corresponding sample items. The definitions guided the creation of additional items. Items from previously published scales were also examined to see if any might be modified and adopted (see Table 1). A seven-point scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) was selected because gains in reliability have been found to diminish after seven scale points (Bandalos & Enders, 1996; Enders & Bandalos, 1999).

All items were reviewed by a researcher experienced in test construction (Dr. Gargi Sawhney, PhD) to check for double-barreled and other poorly constructed items. A panel of subject matter experts with clinical and/or research experience working with different trauma populations was asked to review all items and provide feedback. Expert reviewers included the following individuals: a nationally certified trainer for Cognitive Processing Therapy for PTSD with experience treating military combat and military sexual trauma among other traumas (Dr. Stephanie Sacks, PhD); an expert in posttraumatic responses to trauma with extensive experience conducting clinical research with intimate partner violence survivors (Dr. Gayle Beck, PhD); a childhood sexual abuse and complex trauma researcher (Dr. Viann Nguyen-Feng, PhD); an expert in bereavement following traumatic losses such as suicide and homicide (Dr. Robert Neimeyer, PhD), and an expert in the field of victim responses to torture and captivity (Dr. Jessica Esala, PhD). These experts were specifically asked to note any items that might not make sense, might be perceived

as insensitive, or if common expressions of blame for a trauma type were missing for their respective trauma population. To account for heterogeneity of religious beliefs and cultural nuances within trauma populations and the representativeness of items, a scholar of Eastern Religions (Dr. Jeffery Long, PhD) reviewed the higher-power-blame subscale. In addition, Dr. Viann Nguyen-Feng, reviewed items from a multicultural lens. In light of suggestions provided by experts in these fields, items were modified accordingly. A summary of the feedback and modifications made to the scale is provided in the results section below. The item development phase began with a total of 767 items and ended with a total of 333 items.

### **Content Validity Sample**

After the expert panel reviewed each of the proposed blame construct definitions and items, content validity was examined by enlisting a sample of participants to rate the representativeness of each item in the scale with each of the proposed construct definitions. Participants were English-literate adults residing in the U.S. recruited via Amazon's Mechanical Turk® (MTurk®), an online crowdsourcing system that allows for a rapid and wide administration of surveys, questionnaires, and other data acquisition methods. A total of 69 participants were recruited for the content validation process. Out of these 69 participants, 25 were excluded from statistical analysis due to incorrectly responding to attention checks items embedded throughout the task, resulting in a final sample of 44 participants.

### **Content Validity Procedure**

All procedures were approved by the IRB prior to data collection. Participants were recruited via MTurk® and informed consent (see Appendix A) was acquired prior to participation in any of the procedures. Participants reviewed the definition of each blame target (e.g., higher-power blame) and then rated how much each of the 333 items in the

scale matched each of the 6 definitions on a seven-point scale from 1 (*not at all representative*) to 7 (*completely representative*) for a total of 1,998 ratings. Provided the time-consuming nature of participation, the task was broken into three sections in which participants rated each item for two of the blame constructs. To prevent participant fatigue from diminishing the quality of the data, following completion of sections one and two participants were forced to take an hour break and were not granted access to the next section until the hour delay had passed. In addition, instructive attention check items (e.g., “For this item, please select not at all representative”) were embedded throughout all three sections to ensure accurate responding. Qualtrics was programmed so that failure of any one attention check resulted in immediate withdrawal from the study. Participants were compensated \$25 for completing all three sections of the task.

## Chapter 3

### Item Development and Content Validity Results

#### Item Development

Following the items development procedures listed above, a total of 767 items across scales were initially constructed. Experts provided feedback which included suggestions that changes be made to blame definitions to better clarify the subject or target of the subscale for non-self-blame sources and adding additional potential sources of blame to the operationalization of “other-blame.” (i.e., animals, media, institutions). An additional subscale of “other-victim blame” was also constructed in light of expert suggestions that the self-, perpetrator-, other-, higher-power-, and non-blame subscales did not account for scenarios in which trauma survivors were not the direct target (e.g., when the survivor is a witness to a life threatening event; DSM-5 Criteria 2), or traumatic events in which the respondent is not the only direct victim (e.g., comrades in military combat). Importantly, expert feedback suggested the scale was not fit for suicide bereavement due to references to “perpetrator” which is less applicable and potentially offensive for this population.

As suggested by the religious studies expert, the term “supernatural-blame” was renamed “higher-power blame.” This was suggested because “supernatural” has roots in St. Augustine’s notion of God being outside of nature, which is specific to Christian tradition, whereas “Higher Power” would be more inclusive to traditions like Hinduism and Buddhism, where higher forces are still seen as part of the natural order. Likewise, items making reference to cosmic forces (e.g., karma) were modified to account for more secular or non-denominational interpretations of such concepts.

At the level of individual items, reviewers indicated redundant items and provided suggestions for omission. They also indicated vague items, items that were incompatible with specific trauma populations, and suggested additional items to be added to the scale

to account for themes that were not represented in existing items. Based on suggestions provided by the multiculturalist expert, items and definitions were modified to avoid a reliance on cultural-specific idioms and to make the scale more widely applicable across a culturally diverse population. Following expert review of scale items and in light of suggestions to delete redundant or nongeneralizable items, total item count was reduced from 767 items to 333 items.

### **Content Validity**

Content validity ratings provided by the MTurk sample for each of the 333 items were analyzed via the Hinkin and Tracey's (1999) method to eliminate items. This process employed one-way ANOVAs to compare item mean relevance ratings for a target blame definition relative to relevance ratings on other definitions. If items have good content validity, mean ratings for the items are significantly higher on the expected blame construct than on other constructs. A Bonferroni adjustment was made to account for alpha inflation. Items were retained only if analyses indicated significance at the  $p < .05$  level (see Table 3). Items in which mean ratings for the intended subscale definition were not significantly higher than each of the other 5 definitions were cut from the scale. Following content analysis, a total of 298 items were retained.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Factor Analysis Method**

#### **Participants**

As with study 1, a sample of MTurk workers were recruited. MTurk® was particularly relevant to study 2 in that it has shown to be successful in the acquisition of data from diverse populations of individuals which tend to be more representative of the general population in terms of geographic location and demographics such as age (Casler et al., 2013; Paolacci, & Chandler, 2014), thus promoting a higher degree of external validity. Given cultural and legal variations in terms of how certain traumas are conceptualized in other nations and regions, as well as the limited degree to which the sample size would allow for a model of cultural variation, the study restricted the administration of the scale to U.S. residents.

A total of 1201 MTurk workers were recruited and screened for the study. Out of that group, 760 participants completed the study, as 319 respondents screened as ineligible for further participation for not personally experiencing or witnessing an interpersonal Criterion-A trauma and an additional 122 participants were excluded from participation due to failure of an initial instructional attention check item embedded within the LEC-5. Out of the 760 respondents who were eligible, 101 participant responses were removed from analyses due to incomplete data. An additional 201 participants were excluded from analyses for a failure to pass two of three attention check items embedded within the scale. Participants who only failed one attention check were retained to maintain a sample size large enough to conduct subsequent analyses. Eligible participants who successfully completed the Trauma-Related Blame Scale to its entirety were compensated \$4 for their efforts.

Demographic information is presented in Table 4. The final participant sample ( $N = 458$ ) had slightly more male workers (58.1%) and the mean age of participants was

38.93 years ( $SD = 10.16$ ). In addition, a majority of participants identified as White or European-American (65.9%), and heterosexual (75.8%). Most participants were married (60.5%), employed full-time (79.7%), held a bachelor's degree (52.5%), and were born in the United States (98%).

Religious beliefs were also assessed due to the inclusion of items assessing trauma-related blame to a higher power. A majority of participants identified as Christian (68.3%), and the mean religiosity rating for the sample on a scale from 1 (*not at all important*) to 5 (*very important*) indicated that on average participants viewed religion and spirituality to be moderately important to them ( $M = 3.39$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ). Likewise, mean ratings of the sample's belief in a higher power on a scale from 1 (*not at all true*) to 5 (*very true*) indicated that on average, participants believed in the existence of a higher power to a moderate degree ( $M = 3.56$ ,  $SD = 1.48$ ).

The frequency of participant lifetime exposure to interpersonal trauma types is presented in Table 5. The interpersonal trauma most frequently endorsed by participants was the personal experience of physical assault (41%), which was followed by personally witnessing physical assault (33.6%). Participant were also asked to rate their "worst" stressful life event. A majority of participants (37.6%) indicated physical assault as their most distressing traumatic experience, followed by sexual assault or other unwanted sexual experiences (30.8%), assault with a weapon (12.9%), witnessing homicide (9.8%), captivity (5%), and combat exposure (3.9%). Shown in Table 6, the most common responses indicated the trauma had occurred a single time more than 5 years ago and involved a single perpetrator.

Participants were also asked to answer questions regarding their experience with help-seeking behaviors following their traumatic experience. Approximately 35.6% of participants held a diagnosis of posttraumatic stress disorder or acute stress disorder. Almost half of participants (44.5%) sought help from a mental health professional for

distress related to their traumatic event and almost half (44.3%) were prescribed psychoactive medications following their experience. Just under half of participants (46.5%) screened positive for PTSD based on the threshold of the PC-PTSD-5 at the time of participation.

### **Procedure**

All procedures were approved by the IRB and informed consent (see Appendix B) was acquired prior to participation in any procedures. Participants were first administered the Life Events Checklist for DSM-5 and Criterion A (LEC-5; Weathers et al., 2013) to assess eligibility for further participation. Participants were excluded if they screened negative for experiencing any criterion-A interpersonal traumas (events involving actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence; APA, 2013) or for failing the initial attention check item. Participants then provided information about demographics and the index trauma. The full scale was then administered to eligible participants. Relevant clinical resources were provided in the header of the survey for participants who may have felt distressed or psychologically triggered in the process of completing the scale. Three additional attention check items were embedded in the scale, with the first two items consisting of bogus attention checks (i.e., “snow is very hot”, “my birthday is February 30<sup>th</sup>”) and the third consisting of an instructional item (“please select ‘strongly agree’”). Participants who failed two or more attention checks within the scale following LEC administration were allowed to continue and were compensated but excluded from analyses. Following the completion of the scale, participants were debriefed and paid. Debriefing included a brief explanation of the goals of the study as well as relevant resources for participants who may have felt distressed by the content of the questionnaire.

## Measures

To screen for interpersonal trauma exposure, participants were administered the Life Events Checklist for DSM-5 and Criterion A (LEC-5; Weathers et al., 2013; see Appendix C). The LEC-5 is a 17-item brief-screening instrument used to assess exposure to various potentially traumatic events (e.g. sexual and physical assault, accidents, natural disasters, and combat exposure) and employs five nominal responses: “*happened to me*”, “*witnessed it*”, “*learned about it*”, “*not sure*”, and “*does not apply.*” Internal consistency reliability of the LEC-5 is not a necessary psychometric property of the checklist in that trauma exposure as a theoretical construct is not unidirectional (Netland, 2001).

Many trauma survivors have experienced multiple traumas. Therefore, participants were asked to identify an index trauma and provide information about that specific trauma, to which responses for the Trauma-Related Blame Scale were anchored. Participants were first asked (1) which event bothers them the most (i.e., the index trauma; and if they could not decide, they were asked to pick one); (2) how much time has passed since the index trauma; (3) whether the index trauma was a single incident event or part of chronic experience; and (4) the number of trauma-relevant perpetrators involved in the index trauma. Participants were also asked if they have ever seen a mental health professional, whether they have been diagnosed with PTSD from a qualified provider, and whether they have received treatment or been prescribed medication for this diagnosis or other trauma-related symptoms. Lastly, participants were asked to answer questions regarding their experience of trauma-relevant symptomology in the previous month, via questions adapted from the 5-item Primary Care PTSD Screener for DSM-5 (PC-PTSD-5; Prins et al., 2015), an instrument used to screen for posttraumatic stress disorder. An endorsement of three or more items on the scale

indicates a positive screen for PTSD. The measure, which was developed for use in a primary care setting, has demonstrated good diagnostic sensitivity (Prins et al., 2016).

For the purposes of describing the characteristics of the population under study, participants were requested to complete a brief demographic questionnaire (see Appendix D). The questionnaire also included items addressing the gender, age, race/ethnicity, religiosity, national origin, sexual orientation, relationship status, education level, and employment status.

Both instructional (e.g. “Please select ‘not sure’ for this one”, “Please select ‘strongly disagree’”) rated on a Likert scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*) and bogus (“Snow is very hot”, “I was born February 30<sup>th</sup>”) attention checks rated on a Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*) were included in the Trauma-Related Blame Scale to detect and exclude careless responders. Likewise, an attention check item (e.g., “please select ‘not sure’ for this one”) was included in the LEC-5.

## Chapter 5

### Factor Analysis Results

#### Preliminary Analyses

Prior to factor analysis, cases with missing data or participants who failed two or more attention check items were removed from the dataset. Data were also examined for the presence of univariate outliers. Outliers were found within a subsample of  $N = 7$  participants on a single item (i.e., “The traumatic event happened because the perpetrator is to blame”). Preliminary factor analytic procedures were conducted on the sample with and without outlier values transformed. Comparative analyses indicated that the presence of outliers did not impact principle factors analysis of the subscales, and so original values for the seven responses were retained.

Next, skewness of items was explored. Approximately 24.1% of the 79 proposed self-blame items were shown to exhibit positive skew, whereas 20.3% of items from the subset exhibited negative skew. Within the intended perpetrator-blame subscale, 90.3% of the 72 proposed items were significant for negative skew. Of the 37 other-victim-blame items included in preliminary analyses, 29.7% of items were significant for negative skew. Of the 41 other-blame scale items proposed, 7.31% items showed significant positive skew. A total of 92.1% of the 38 proposed higher-power-blame items showed significant positive skew. Lastly, of the 31 proposed no-one to blame subscale items, 6.5% and 3.2% of items showed significant positive and negative skew respectively. For the purpose of this analysis, no transformations were made as skewness for these items was felt to accurately reflect the underlying construct (e.g., blaming the perp is the norm and blaming a godly higher power is less common).

### **Factor Analysis Strategy**

To assess the dimensionality of different blame types, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis via the Principle factor analysis (PFA) with the Promax rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test statistic was acquired for the purposes of identifying common variance amongst scale items. Eigenvalues were acquired, and scree-plots were analyzed to determine the number of factors identified such that any factor with an eigenvalue greater than 1 was retained for further analysis. Items determined to have a factor loading below .5 for the intended subscale were deleted. Items determined to have excessive cross loading (those with secondary loadings within .30 of another factor loading (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2019) were deleted. PFA was rerun and items deleted until all items met these thresholds. Following deletion of poor items, a PFA was conducted once again to assess factor structure. Internal consistency reliability for each subscale was assessed via Cronbach's alpha and each item was assessed for its contribution to reliability and items were deleted if they were shown to substantially contribute to lower reliability.

### **Factor Analyses of Each Intended Subscale**

As an essential preliminary step, separate principle factors analyses were conducted for each of the five original intended subscales independently. Factors explained a substantial proportion of inter-item variance (self-blame = 66.84%; perpetrator-blame = 64.58%; other-blame = 71.97%; higher-power-blame = 78.42%; no-one to blame = 69.82% respectively). Item loadings were assessed, and any loadings below .50 were excluded from further analysis. Although a single factor was expected for each of the proposed subscales, this was not always the case. Therefore, cross-loadings of .30 across more than one factor were also excluded from further analyses. For each subscale, the PFA was rerun until all cross-loadings were eliminated and all items had a loading of at least .5. Following these criteria, a total of 131 items were cut from the scale

(self-blame = 38; perpetrator-blame = 45; other-blame = 29; higher-power-blame = 7; no-one to blame = 12). The final independent analysis of each intended subscale resulted in the following factors per intended subscale: self-blame = 2; perpetrator-blame = 5; other-blame = 2; higher-power-blame = 1; no-one to blame = 2, as indicated by eigenvalues above one and through examination of the scree plot.

### **Exploratory Factor Analysis**

All Trauma-Related Blame Scale items that remained from the previous analyses for five of the intended subscales were simultaneously evaluated in a full PFA. The initial analysis resulted in a 13-factor solution with eigenvalues greater than 1 which accounted for 72.34% of inter-item variance. As with previous preliminary independent analyses, procedures were rerun until all items failing to meet the threshold of a .5 factor loading or those that exceeded the cross-loading cutoff of .30 were eliminated from analyses. The final PFA indicated an 8-factor solution in which eigenvalues exceeded 1 and accounted for 71.4% of inter-item variance, though examination of the scree plot may suggest a 5-factor solution (see Figure 2). A parallel analysis conducted on 5,000 random samplings of the data arrived at a 7-factor solution in which eigenvalues were greater than 1. However, high factor loadings were observed for the items on the eighth factor and this factor is of theoretical significance as the items appear to measure characterological self-blame, an essential theoretical construct identified within the trauma literature (Janoff-Bulman, 1979).

A total of 89 items were ultimately retained following analyses. Loadings for each of the items on the eight factors are presented in Table 7. The first factor, which was labeled “Higher-Power-Blame” accounted for 43.38% of inter-item variance and exhibited adequate internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .99$ ). The second factor, labeled “No-one” accounted for approximately 9.48% of variance between items and also exhibited a high internal consistency estimate (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .96$ ). Factor 3,

labeled “Behavioral Self-Blame”, explained approximately 5.24% of inter-item variance, with analyses indicating favorable internal consistency (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .93$ ). The fourth factor, “Perpetrator Intent” accounted for approximately 4.77% of interitem variance also showed adequate internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .90$ ). Factor five, labeled “Characterological Perpetrator Blame” explained 3.04% of the variance and showed adequate internal consistency (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .92$ ). The sixth factor, labeled “Perpetrator Blame”, accounted for approximately 2.03% of variance and showed favorable internal consistency (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .83$ ). Factor seven, labeled “Other-Blame” and accounted for 2.03% of variance between items and showed a high internal consistency estimate (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .91$ ). Factor eight, which was labeled “Characterological Self-Blame”, accounted for 1.42% of inter-item variance and also exhibited high internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .95$ ). A list of items that were deleted following EFA are available in Appendix E.

### **Other-Victim Blame Items**

Notably, however, other-victims-blame items were excluded from the full EFA analysis due to insufficient sample size for this subset of items. Specifically, the sample of respondents to other-victim-blame items was small ( $N = 149$ ), because only participants whose traumatic experience involved another victim in addition to themselves were provided access to respond to this proposed subscale items. Recommendations for factor analysis sample size suggest five participants per item and a minimum of 150 participants (Gorsuch, 1983). Therefore, this subsample ( $N = 149$ ) was insufficient for the items of the full set of 126 items at once.

Independent principle factors analysis of the 37 “other-victim blame” items only indicated the presence of a single factor with eigenvalues greater than 1 which, when taken altogether, explained 67.41% of the variance, which was consistent with the scree plot also.

### **Qualitative Feedback**

In addition to providing responses to subscale items, participants were also asked to indicate additional blame targets if they felt previous items did not address targets they felt were responsible for their traumatic experience via a text entry option that was available at the end of the Trauma-Related Blame Scale. This was a mandatory field they could not skip. A majority of respondents (85.8%) indicated that they could not identify any other targets responsible for their trauma. A portion of the sample indicated targets that seemingly should have been captured by scale items: oneself (3.1%), friends, family, and previous or current significant others (2.2%), the perpetrator (2.4%), others peripherally involved in their experience (i.e., the family of the perpetrator, previous victims who remained silent, teachers and school officials, police, courts, the criminal justice system, the United States government, and the healthcare system; 2.4%), higher-power sources (0.4%), or no one (0.4%). These comments were not specific and since participants sometimes used this open field to share their trauma narrative or provide feedback about their experience in the study, it is ambiguous whether participants were thinking of uncaptured causal factors or simply rehashing the most salient part of their experience in the study in these instances.

A few contextual factors were noted by participants as absent from the scale. For example, one respondent noted the contribution of alcohol. In addition, although higher-power targets were addressed, another qualitative responder suggested that the experience of a trauma served as an instance in which a higher-power allowed the respondent to become more “headstrong” and “prepared for the world we live in.” Another participant suggested that perhaps their soul has been cursed.

## Chapter 6

### Discussion

The purpose of this research was to develop and conduct the initial validation for a scale to assess trauma-related blame attributions in survivors of varying types of interpersonal trauma. The first phase of this research involved item development based on frequently endorsed distinct targets of trauma-related blame that have been noted within the literature, including the self (Janoff-Bulman, 1979, 1985), perpetrators (Frazier, 2003, Martin et al., 2013), peripherally involved others (Branscombe et al., 2003), higher-power entities (Ray et al., 2015), and no one (Lim et al., 2015). Scale construction, which involved tailoring and reducing subscale items according to feedback provided by subject matter experts resulted in a total of 333 items across subscales. Per the suggestion of subject matter experts, items for a sixth blame target were developed, as it was theorized to address situations in which the respondent was not the only victim of a given traumatic experience (e.g., active shooter situations) or in which the trauma was witnessed by the respondent (e.g., homicide). In the second phase of this project, a sample of 44 participants provided ratings to items regarding the degrees to which the items accurately represented definitions for six blame constructs (i.e., self-blame, perpetrator-blame, other-victims-blame, other-blame, higher-power-blame, and no-one to blame). Content analysis of participant responses revealed participants largely saw items as representing intended blame definitions and 298 items were retained. In the third phase of this research, a mixed sample of trauma survivors were administered the remaining 298 items and were asked to identify the degrees to which each statement represented their beliefs about their traumatic experience. Exploratory factor analyses were then conducted on responses from a final sample of 498 participant respondents. Analyses resulted in the retention of a total of 89 items across scales and revealed a total of eight factors: “Higher-Power-Blame”, “No-one to Blame”, “Behavioral Self-Blame”,

“Perpetrator Intent”, “Characterological Perpetrator Blame”, Perpetrator Blame”, “Other-Blame”, and “Characterological Self-Blame”. Responses to the other-victim-blame subscale were excluded from analyses due to sample size restrictions.

Consistent with the literature (Lim et al., 2015), the results of the present studies suggest that survivors of interpersonal trauma identify multiple distinct sources of trauma-related blame. Moreover, factor analytic procedures produced results which appear to support the presence of multiple blame typologies identified in both theoretical and primary literature including self-blame (Janoff-Bulman, 1979, 1985) and perpetrator-blame (Frazier, 2003a), as well as other forms including blame towards indirectly-involved others, higher-power blame, and attribution to non-agentic sources (Lim et al., 2015). Furthermore, factor analysis supported the presence of dimensionally nuanced blame variants hypothesized in the literature including behavioral and characterological subtypes (Janoff-Bulman, 1979, 1985, 1989, 1992). Notably, present analyses indicate that behavioral and characterological subvariants appeared to apply beyond self-blame, as behavioral and characterological forms of self- and perpetrator-blame resulted in distinct factors. These findings appear to support the notion that behavioral and characterological blame dimensions operate beyond the context of self-blame.

Notably, the findings show that blame attributions are more complex and nuanced than a single factor, and in fact, survivors distinguish in greater complexity than distinguishing between internal targets and those external to the self. These results suggest that the products of the meaning making process appear to be more nuanced than the products described in causal attribution theory, which consist of simple internal and external attributions (Kelley, 1960; 1967; 1973). For example, the findings indicate that when making external attributions, survivors are able to discriminate between perpetrators directly responsible for the trauma, and other external blame sources including peripherally involved others and higher-power entities and phenomena. This

nuance is congruent with qualitative findings regarding IPV attributions (Lim et al., 2015). Furthermore, analyses of blame attributions extended toward perpetrators resulted in three distinct subvariants of perpetrator blame as opposed to a single perpetrator blame factor. These results may indicate that, when ascribing blame to perpetrators, participants engaged in distinct processes to arrive at conclusions regarding the perpetrator's character, intent at the time of the trauma, or degree of blame.

Although the resulting factor structure did not coincide with the initially proposed five-factor solution, these initial constructive procedures were successful in determining that trauma survivors make nuanced and complex attributional judgements across and within categorically distinct blame targets. Notably, the experience of trauma is not the fault of the survivor, however, survivors appear to search for agency in what they can control (i.e., behavior) moving forward from a traumatic experience (Walster, 1966). For example, if a trauma survivor developed blame attributions directed specifically toward the perpetrator of a traumatic experience, they may be more likely to avoid the individual in the future or report the experience to the authorities to avoid risk for potential revictimization. Therefore, the findings of the factor analysis may be suggestive of a survival value inherent in specific causal attributions as opposed to generalized and non-specific internal or external attributions. Specifically, because non-threatening daily life-events have little significance on an individual's behavior or assumptions about oneself, others, or the world, the products of the meaning-making process may be more simplistic. Inversely, in the context of an interpersonal trauma, a more nuanced causal explanation may serve as a means of adapting one's behavior and assumptions to account for such situations, to acquire a sense of control over potential future encounters, and avoid them in the future. Trauma survivor's who take broader or more simplistic views of causal attribution may be less likely to avoid similar traumatic experiences in the future. Ultimately, the highly nuanced attributions made by survivors of the study may suggest

that they were accounting for aspects of trauma that were especially significant to their attempts to explain and adaptively alter conduct and assumptions about themselves, others, and the world around them.

### **Limitations**

Importantly, this project was not devoid of limitations. First, it is recommended that when conducting a factor analysis that a sample size provides for a minimum of five respondents per item (Gorsuch, 1983). Due to budgetary constraints, final analyses were limited to responses from a sample of  $N = 458$  participants. Therefore, the stability of the findings at this time is questionable. Likewise, the small sample size of respondents to other-victim-blame subscale items placed limits on analyses, as factor analytic procedures were not possible when the subscale items were included for full analysis. Provided a larger subsample of respondents to other-victim-blame items, analyses may likely result in a solution different from the current eight-factor solution.

Another limiting factor of the conclusiveness of the study involves the relative degree of religious homogeneity of the sample which is of importance for the “Higher Power” items, since the sample largely consisted of those who identified as Christian. Therefore, the external validity of findings with respect to the higher-power-blame subscale may be limited, as the sentiments of respondents of other religious or spiritual faiths or affiliations may not be represented in this sample. Therefore, to ensure representation of diverse trauma-salient religious and spiritual beliefs, the subscale should be administered to a more religiously diverse sample of respondents.

Importantly, another limitation involves the absence of a “Not Applicable” option as a response choice for respondents who felt that items did not accurately represent elements of their traumatic event rather than not being representative of their blame attributions. One of the expert reviewers suggested an N/A option may be helpful for inclusion of items like “My trauma happened because my partner didn’t really love me.”

However, there was concern over the implications of a large number of participants selecting an N/A option within subscales, as the sample size may not have allowed for a full analysis across subscales. Furthermore, a primary purpose for this scale was to develop items that are applicable to a variety of interpersonal traumas. Therefore, only items that were applicable regardless of trauma type were retained. It remains that the available response options (i.e., 1 “*Strongly Disagree*” to 7 “*Strongly Agree*”) may not have accurately represented respondent sentiments of those who felt specific items did not apply to their experience and some items may have been omitted that might have captured their experience of blame well for a particular trauma type.

For the purposes of retaining a sample large enough to conduct factor analysis, participants were retained for full analysis if they accurately responded to two of three attention checks embedded throughout the survey. Although this approach resulted in the avoidance of a drastically reduced sample and ultimately allowed for a sample size large enough to allow for a factor analysis on the dataset, there are concerns over the validity of those who failed attention checks, as the accuracy and degree of attentive responding to items in the scale is otherwise unverifiable.

### **Future Directions**

The development and initial validation of this Trauma-Related Blame Scale has laid a foundation for other potential areas of future research. To address the above-mentioned limitations of sample size, future research should first focus on acquiring data to meet the minimum sample requirements of a valid factor analysis. Reanalyzing a larger sample may contribute to an alteration in the factor structure, especially given that the other-victim-blame subscale was excluded from final analysis for the purposes of this project due to restricted sample size. Moreover, to address the construct validity of subscales and underlying subscale dimensions, future research could involve confirmatory factor analysis of the Trauma-Related Blame scale. Construct validity of the

scale should also be assessed via cross-validation with related or distinct trauma measures. Predictive validity should also be assessed with respect to the scale's ability to predict trauma-salient emotional states associated with specific blame types (e.g., anger in cases of perpetrator blame, guilt in cases of self-blame). Lastly, comparisons and normative data for clinical and non-clinical samples would be helpful. Such a well-validated measure would allow for examinations of patterns of trauma-related blame for both internal and the various external typologies to further understand how these cognitions develop, change over the course of time and treatment, and under what conditions they are best reduced. Ultimately, this line of work could result in knowledge about maintenance factors of psychopathology and refinement of treatment strategies, which would improve the quality of care provided to trauma survivors. In addition, the broad nature of the scale would also allow for comparisons between different interpersonal trauma experiences.

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**Table 1***Previously Used Post-Trauma Cognition Measures*

Scale	Description	Sample item	Self	Perp.	Other	Supernatural	Event
Brief COPE Scale Carver (1997)	28-items regarding frequency of coping strategy use rated on a 4 -point Likert-scale 1( <i>I haven't been doing this at all</i> ) to 4 ( <i>I've been doing this a lot</i> )	<i>"I've been blaming myself for things that happened"</i>	Yes	No	No	No	Stressful life events
Modified Catastrophic Cognitions Questionnaire (CCQ-M) Khawaja, Oei, & Baglioni Jr. (1994)	21-items in assessing catastrophized cognitions rated on a 5-point Likert scale 1 ( <i>Not at all dangerous</i> ) to 5 ( <i>Extremely dangerous</i> )	<i>"Being attacked"</i>	No	No	No	No	Scenarios of personal distress (e.g. feeling edgy) or imminent danger (e.g. being attacked)

Catastrophic Cognition Questionnaire (CCQ) Khawaja & Oei (1992)	50 item questionnaire catastrophized cognitions rated on a 5-point Likert scale <i>1(not at all) to 5 (extremely dangerous)</i>	<i>“Being helpless”</i>	No	No	No	No	Scenarios of personal distress (e.g. being frightened) or imminent danger (e.g. being suffocated)
COPE Scale Carver et al., (1989)	60-item inventory regarding coping strategies rated on a 5-point Likert scale <i>1(I usually don't do this at all) to 5 (I usually do this a lot)</i>	<i>“I make sure not to make matters worse by acting too soon.”</i>	No	No	No	No	Stressful life events
Child Post-Traumatic Cognitions Inventory (CPTCI) Meiser-Stedman et al., (2009)	25-item questionnaire assessing child post-traumatic cognitions rated on a 4-point Likert scale <i>1(Don't agree at all) to (Agree a lot)</i>	<i>“I can't cope when things get tough”</i>	No	No	No	No	Childhood sexual assault

Children's Impact of Traumatic Events Scale – Revised (CITE-R) Wolfe et al., (1991)	78-item scale assessing post-trauma attributions anchored to 3 ratings (“not true”, “Somewhat true”, and “very true”)	“This happened to me because I acted in a way that caused it to happen.”	Yes	Yes	No	No	Childhood sexual assault
World Assumptions scale (WAS) Janoff-Bulman (1989)	22-item questionnaire assessing post-trauma world assumptions rated on a 6-point scale 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 6 (Strongly Agree)	“Most people cannot be trusted.”	No	No	No	No	Trauma (sexual assault)
Ways of Coping Questionnaire (WCQ) Folkman & Lazarus (1988)	66-item questionnaire which assesses coping strategy use in stressful situations rated on a 4-point Likert scale 0 (does not apply or not used) to 3 (used a great deal)	“I realized that I brought the problem on myself”	Yes	No	No	No	Stressful life event
Internality, Powerful Others, and Chance Scale Levenson (1981)	24-item scale regarding personal control, chance, and the influence of powerful others on life events rated on a 6-point scale -3 (Strongly disagree) to +3 (Strongly agree)	“I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life”	Yes	No	Yes	No	Favorable and unfavorable life-changing events

Posttraumatic Maladaptive Beliefs Scale Voigt et al., (2012)	15 Item scale regarding post-trauma cognitions rated on a 7-point Likert scale 1 ( <i>not at all true for you</i> ) to 7 ( <i>completely true for you</i> )	<i>“The world is very dangerous”</i>	No	No	No	No	Personal trauma (Unspecified)
Posttraumatic Cognitions Inventory (PTCI) Foa et al., (1999)	36-item inventory regarding post-trauma cognitions rated on a 7-point Likert scale 1 ( <i>Totally disagree</i> ) to 7 ( <i>Totally agree</i> )	<i>“There is something wrong with me as a person.”</i>	Yes	No	No	No	Personal trauma (Unspecified)
Trauma Appraisal Questionnaire (TAQ) DePrince et al., (2010)	54-item questionnaire regarding post-trauma cognitions rated on a 5-point Likert Scale 1 ( <i>strongly disagree</i> ) to 5 ( <i>strongly agree</i> )	<i>“If the person really cared about me that person would not have done what they did.”</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Interpersonal trauma or sexual assault/rape
Trauma Related Guilt Inventory (TRGI) Kubany et al., (1996)	32-item inventory regarding post-trauma guilt rated on a 5-point scale ( <i>not at all true</i> - <i>extremely true</i> )	<i>“I should have known better.”</i>	Yes	No	No	No	Interpersonal trauma or sexual assault/rape
Abuse Attribution Inventory (AAI) Feiring et al., (2002)	21-item scale regarding attribution, shame and symptom development rated on a 3-point Likert scale 1 ( <i>not true</i> ) to 3 ( <i>very true</i> )	<i>“This happened to me because I was not smart enough to stop it from happening.”</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Sexual assault/abuse

RCOPE Paragement et al. (2000)	105-item measure regarding religious attributions and explanations for the experience of negative events rated on a 4-point Likert scale 0 (not at all) to 3 (a great deal)	<i>“Wondered whether God was punishing me because of my lack of faith.”</i>	No	No	No	Yes	Stressful life event
The Attribution of Problem Cause and Solution Scale (APCSS) Stepleman et al., (2005)	55 items assessing responsibility for problem cause and problem solution rated on a 7-point, Likert scale 1 = very strongly disagree and 7 = very strongly agree)	<i>“My personal qualities are what cause my problem.”</i>	Yes	No	Yes	No	Problem cause and problem solution
The Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (CERQ) Garnefski & Kraaij (2002)	36 item questionnaire assessing cognitive responses to threatening and stressful life on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always).	<i>“I feel that others are to blame for it.”</i>	Yes	No	Yes	No	Threatening and/or stressful life events
The Rape Attributions Questionnaire Frazier (2003)	25-item questionnaire regarding post-rape attributions rated on a 5-point Likert scale 1 (never) to 5 (very often)	<i>“I should have been more cautious.”</i>	Yes –	Yes	Yes	No	Sexual assault/rape
			Characterological and Behavioral subscales				

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 Additional Measures Utilized in the Literature Lacking Psychometric Evaluation
 

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Attributional Blame Questionnaire (ABQ) Tilghman-Osborne et al., (2008)	10-item scale anchored to 4 hypothetical scenarios	<i>"I should have studied harder!"</i>	Yes – Characterological and Behavioral subscales	No	No	No	Hypothetical education vignettes
Attributions of Blame and Responsibility Scale McMillien & Zuravin (1997)	40-items regarding survivor's blame beliefs	<i>"I blame myself for causing the sexual contact"</i>	Yes – Characterological and Behavioral subscales	Yes	Yes – Family subscales	No	Childhood Sexual Assault
The Attributional Style Questionnaire Peterson et al., (1982)	12-item measure regarding causal attribution in positive and negative events <i>Totally due to other people or circumstances 1 2 3 4 5 6 7</i> <i>Totally due to me</i>	<i>"You go out on a date and it goes badly"</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Good/Bad affiliation Good/Bad Achievement

Measure of Attributions for Rape Meyer & Taylor (1986)	3-item inventory assessing post-rape attributions	<i>"People are too scared to get involved"</i>	Yes	No	Yes	No	Sexual assault/rape
Williams McPearl Belief Scale Williams (1992)	3-Item subscale and 2-item subscale assessing self-blame, perpetrator blame, and fate blame respectively on a 4-point scale	<i>"I am to blame for my abuse as a child and as an adult."</i>	Yes	Yes	No	Yes – Karma	Childhood sexual assault
Coffey, Leitenberg, Henning et al., (1996)	18-item questionnaire assessing perceived stigma, betrayal, powerlessness, and self-blame rated on a 7-point Likert scale 1 (not at all) to 7 (very much so)	<i>"How much do you feel to blame for this sexual experience occurring because you were not able to modify or change it more than you did?"</i>	Yes	No	No	No	Childhood sexual assault
Hill & Zautra, (1989)	24-item questionnaire regarding frequency of self-blame attributions rated on a 5-point Likert scale 1 (never) to 5 (most of the time)	<i>"I put myself in a situation I couldn't get out of."</i>	Yes – Characterological and Behavioral subscales	No	No	No	Sexual assault/rape

Blame Attribution Questionnaire (BAQ) Hart et al., (2003)	8-item scale assessing self and other blame rated on a 6-point Likert scale 0 ( <i>not at all</i> ) to 5 ( <i>completely</i> ) and by assigning percentage of blame to four variables: yourself, other people, the environment, and chance	<i>“How much do you blame yourself for your injury?”</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Traumatic Brain Injury
Janoff-Bulman & Wortman (1977)	5 item subscales regarding blame ascription rated by assigning percentage of attribution to different casual factor and rated on a 6-point Likert scale 0 ( <i>not at all</i> ) to 5 ( <i>completely</i> )	<i>“To what extent do you believe you could have avoided what happened?”</i>	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Severe accident
Ullman (1997)	4-item subscale assessing post-trauma blame attributions rated on a 4-point Likert scale 1 ( <i>not at all</i> ) to 4 ( <i>very much</i> )	<i>“Thinking back on this experience, how much do you feel that each of the following are to blame for your experience?”</i>	Yes- own behavior, own personal character	Yes	Yes	No	Sexual assault/rape

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*Note.* Table 1 denotes existing measures used to assess post-trauma blame attributions. Measures designated as lacking psychometric evaluation are those that have yet to be established as valid measures of post-trauma blame.

**Table 2***Blame-Type Definitions and Sample Items***Posttraumatic Blame**

The degree to which the trauma survivor attributes causal responsibility for the occurrence of the trauma to one or more of the following agents:

<b>Self</b>	<b>Perpetrator</b>	<b>Other Victim</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Supernatural</b>	<b>No One</b>
The survivor's perception that he or she had the obligation and/or capacity to prevent the trauma from occurring.	An individual or individuals (e.g., murderer, aggressor, rapist, sex offender, captor, kidnapper, enemy combatant, suicidal individual) whose violent behavior or threat of violent behavior is the basis for the traumatic event whether the perpetrator(s) intended the traumatic event to occur or not. The perpetrator by definition is not the survivor regardless of the survivors' sense of self-blame.	This could be any individual who received or was threatened with violence or unwanted sexual contact during the worst traumatic/stressful event you indicated earlier. This does not include witnesses, the perpetrator(s), or yourself. For example, a mass shooting with multiple victims or when the traumatic/stressful event involves witnessing harm or threat of harm to another person or people.	Trauma-relevant Non-perpetrators (e.g., bystanders or witnesses) or organizational system or entities (e.g., government, military, school, work, religious). They did not directly cause the violent behavior but are perceived as causal contributors of the traumatic event by virtue of a failure to fulfill an obligation and/or capacity to prevent the trauma. By definition, this individual is not the perpetrator of the trauma.	Any godly, demonic, spiritual figure, or cosmic force as a causal agent bringing about the traumatic event either through intentional intervention, indifference, or by willfully permitting the trauma to happen.	The absence of a causal agent leaving perceptions of the trauma to be attributed to chance or random factors.

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Note. Table 2 denotes operationalizations for the proposed blame constructs.

**Table 3***Means and ANOVAs for Content Validity Analysis of Item Relevance for Blame Target Definitions*

Item	Blame Target Means						<i>F</i> (1, 43)
	Self	Perpetrator	Other-Victim	Others	Higher-Power	No-one	
1 ... it was my fault.	<b>6.84</b>	1.61	1.36	1.32	1.25	1.23	328.29*
2 ... I let someone dangerous get too emotionally close.	<b>5.52</b>	<b>2.95</b>	1.89	1.80	1.18	1.25	99.37*
3 ... I acted impulsively.	<b>5.64</b>	1.66	1.45	1.20	1.18	1.39	75.48*
4 ... I brought it on myself.	<b>6.55</b>	1.61	1.32	1.16	1.39	1.32	349.63*
5 ... I let someone dangerous get too physically close.	<b>5.45</b>	<b>2.86</b>	2.05	1.82	1.16	1.23	96.21*
6 ... I could have prevented what happened but didn't.	<b>6.20</b>	1.70	1.50	1.39	1.32	1.30	83.45*
7 ... I did something wrong.	<b>6.50</b>	1.57	1.34	1.18	1.39	1.25	174.51*
8 ... I didn't do enough to please the perpetrator.	<b>5.34</b>	<b>2.66</b>	1.45	1.39	1.18	1.30	60.29*
9 ... I didn't do enough to protect myself. <sup>1</sup>	<b>5.75</b>	1.93	1.55	1.27	1.27	1.39	106.98*

10	... I let someone have too much control over me.	<b>5.39</b>	<b>2.64</b>	2.16	2.00	1.70	1.27	52.23*
11	... I didn't do enough to stop it.	<b>6.25</b>	2.00	1.50	1.32	1.30	1.39	185.18*
12	...I got myself into that situation.	<b>6.48</b>	2.02	1.66	1.36	1.25	1.43	197.33*
13	... I am to blame.	<b>6.77</b>	1.73	1.39	1.27	1.43	1.25	173.88*
14	... I had feelings I should not have had at the time.	<b>5.20</b>	1.68	1.32	1.27	1.32	1.34	45.46*
15	... I showed poor judgement.	<b>5.98</b>	1.84	1.61	1.32	1.30	1.39	115.65*
16	... I was naïve or lacking life experience.	<b>5.30</b>	1.75	1.68	1.43	1.39	1.50	49.88*
17	... I ignored the warning signs of it happening.	<b>5.73</b>	1.86	1.61	1.50	1.48	1.36	55.16*
18	... I let it happen.	<b>6.50</b>	1.82	1.39	1.39	1.36	1.25	143.67*
19	... I made a mistake.	<b>6.25</b>	1.98	1.39	1.36	1.36	1.41	97.03*
20	... I made a poor decision.	<b>6.25</b>	1.95	1.48	1.20	1.39	1.30	144.82*
21	... I am responsible.	<b>6.50</b>	1.64	1.48	1.20	1.23	1.20	155.35*
22	... I misjudged the situation.	<b>5.89</b>	1.95	1.68	1.50	1.30	1.32	113.62*
23	... I overestimated my safety.	<b>5.50</b>	1.91	1.64	1.36	1.14	1.18	110.33*
24	... I provoked the situation.	<b>6.16</b>	1.86	1.57	1.25	1.34	1.23	143.63*
25	... I put faith in the wrong person or people.	<b>5.36</b>	<b>2.89</b>	<b>2.55</b>	<b>2.84</b>	2.14	1.25	95.56*
26	... I should have fought harder.	<b>5.61</b>	1.93	1.43	1.25	1.16	1.25	65.88*
27	... I didn't protest hard enough.	<b>5.52</b>	1.70	1.52	1.23	1.18	1.25	50.07*

28	... I should have known better than to get myself in that situation.	<b>6.09</b>	1.61	1.64	1.23	1.20	1.36	119.65*
29	... I was too trusting.	<b>5.70</b>	2.14	1.75	1.52	1.48	1.23	62.93*
30	... I was unable to control my emotions.	<b>5.43</b>	1.70	1.39	1.32	1.34	1.41	43.88*
31	... I was not in the right state of mind to stop it.	<b>4.98</b>	1.89	1.48	1.23	1.41	1.59	36.38*
32	... I wasn't careful enough.	<b>5.86</b>	1.86	1.50	1.36	1.07	1.41	123.97*
33	... I went against my intuition or instincts.	<b>5.43</b>	1.75	1.61	1.25	1.55	1.45	49.18*
34	... of my behavior at the time.	<b>6.20</b>	1.50	1.55	1.14	1.32	1.25	141.52*
35	... I was somewhere I should not have been. <sup>2</sup>	<b>5.64</b>	1.89	1.82	1.48	1.36	1.41	39.51*
36	... I was not in control of myself.	<b>5.07</b>	1.77	1.59	1.32	1.61	1.59	23.21*
37	<b>... I couldn't have done anything to stop it.</b>	2.84	2.11	1.75	1.61	1.82	2.48	2.65
38	... I did not know how to handle what was going on.	<b>4.32</b>	2.00	1.55	1.18	1.34	1.80	28.77*
39	... I didn't anticipate the consequences of my actions.	<b>5.25</b>	1.86	1.55	1.41	1.27	1.75	66.98*
40	... I failed to protect someone else.	<b>5.14</b>	1.75	2.02	1.48	1.18	1.23	32.85*
41	... I failed to uphold my responsibilities.	<b>5.82</b>	1.80	1.70	1.39	1.25	1.16	94.12*
42	... I was too weak to stop it.	<b>5.57</b>	2.11	1.57	1.32	1.34	1.55	46.95*

43	... I failed to do something I should have.	<b>6.09</b>	1.64	1.55	1.25	1.48	1.32	76.26*
44	... I abandoned my morals.	<b>5.16</b>	1.57	1.43	1.11	1.95	1.50	62.18*
45	<b>... I was acting toward the benefits or interests of all people.</b>	<b>3.59</b>	1.66	<b>2.61</b>	<b>2.36</b>	1.23	1.50	17.58*
46	<b>... I was acting in self-defense.</b>	<b>3.59</b>	<b>2.14</b>	1.64	1.39	1.11	1.43	19.49*
47	... I acted in an unjust or unfair manner.	<b>5.36</b>	1.64	1.39	1.30	1.41	1.14	53.97*
48	... I knew better than to do what I did. <sup>3</sup>	<b>5.64</b>	1.77	1.39	1.27	1.41	1.25	64.34*
49	... I made necessary choices in a difficult situation.	<b>3.14</b>	1.89	1.77	1.80	1.30	1.93	6.75*
50	<b>... I made the only choices available to me.</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>2.02</b>	1.80	1.73	1.23	<b>2.27</b>	14.01*
51	... of what I represent or the people I associate with.	<b>4.91</b>	2.18	2.57	<b>2.50</b>	1.36	1.34	29.37*
52	... I was feeling violent or looking for violence.	<b>5.25</b>	1.95	1.39	1.27	1.16	1.25	37.55*
53	... I wanted to be close to someone.	<b>4.41</b>	1.95	2.16	1.86	1.25	1.20	27.06*
54	... I am not as savvy or knowledgeable as others.	<b>4.75</b>	1.61	1.55	1.91	1.27	1.34	31.51*
55	... I am the victim type.	<b>4.57</b>	1.84	1.27	1.39	1.30	1.34	15.80*
56	... I am a failure.	<b>5.36</b>	1.66	1.32	1.16	1.20	1.16	35.35*
57	... I'm foolish.	<b>5.75</b>	1.75	1.41	1.30	1.27	1.20	49.55*
58	... of me.	<b>6.43</b>	1.68	1.45	1.39	1.27	1.20	83.31*

59	... of something to do with my appearance.	<b>4.52</b>	1.86	1.32	1.39	1.32	1.50	19.43*
60	... of something to do with my group identity (gender, race, military, etc.).	<b>4.14</b>	2.02	1.45	2.07	1.43	1.57	13.68*
61	... of who I am.	<b>5.30</b>	1.80	1.23	1.32	1.43	1.32	48.56*
62	... there is something about me that attracts these situations.	<b>5.09</b>	2.07	1.27	1.41	1.34	1.59	41.94*
63	... I am not very smart.	<b>5.25</b>	1.59	1.32	1.18	1.25	1.23	36.04*
64	... there is something wrong with me.	<b>5.59</b>	1.57	1.25	1.23	1.39	1.27	32.42*
65	... I am a poor judge of character. <sup>4</sup>	<b>5.66</b>	<b>2.14</b>	1.73	1.52	1.14	1.20	141.56*
66	... I am irresponsible.	<b>5.93</b>	1.75	1.43	1.34	1.34	1.11	107.22*
67	... I am too trusting. <sup>5</sup>	<b>5.77</b>	<b>2.23</b>	1.75	1.52	1.25	1.16	73.66*
68	... I lack an important skill or ability to prevent things like this.	<b>4.98</b>	1.68	1.39	1.36	1.20	1.23	39.70*
69	... I lack common sense.	<b>5.52</b>	1.55	1.30	1.23	1.25	1.11	54.03*
70	... I lack worldly knowledge or “street smarts”.	<b>5.00</b>	1.86	1.39	1.64	1.25	1.32	41.63*
71	... I thought I was invincible.	<b>5.02</b>	1.80	1.48	1.36	1.32	1.23	32.01*
72	... I’m gullible or believe others too easily.	<b>5.50</b>	<b>2.25</b>	1.70	1.77	1.23	1.14	76.49*
73	... I am too weak to defend myself.	<b>5.41</b>	2.05	1.41	1.32	1.25	1.25	42.15*

74	... I am a coward. <sup>6</sup>	<b>5.66</b>	1.50	1.36	1.25	1.23	1.14	64.25*
75	... I am a bad person.	<b>5.86</b>	1.61	1.32	1.27	1.55	1.16	54.05*
76	... I deserve it.	<b>6.11</b>	1.68	1.34	1.25	1.66	1.30	40.92*
77	... I am risky, careless, or reckless.	<b>5.82</b>	1.84	1.34	1.32	1.23	1.32	77.55*
78	... I tend to stir up trouble.	<b>5.07</b>	1.70	1.36	1.36	1.18	1.23	33.91*
79	... I tend to think of myself before others.	<b>5.07</b>	1.70	1.75	1.59	1.30	1.16	54.03*
80	... I should have had different thoughts during the traumatic event.	<b>4.64</b>	1.57	1.36	1.25	1.52	1.25	24.64*
81	... my body should have responded differently.	<b>4.57</b>	1.86	1.45	1.36	1.30	1.32	18.55*
82	... I didn't listen when others said not to get involved in the situation.	<b>5.61</b>	1.91	2.14	2.36	1.32	1.41	72.58*
83	... I became involved with the wrong people.	<b>4.48</b>	<b>2.91</b>	<b>2.73</b>	<b>2.95</b>	1.34	1.41	58.17*
84	... the perpetrator is to blame.	1.61	<b>6.84</b>	1.73	1.48	1.36	1.11	186.03*
85	... the perpetrator hid their true intentions well.	2.23	<b>6.36</b>	1.93	1.52	1.25	1.14	225.54*
86	... of the perpetrator's behavior at the time.	2.00	<b>6.64</b>	1.91	1.52	1.30	1.11	202.52*
87	... the perpetrator thought I or the victim deserved it.	<b>2.59</b>	<b>5.84</b>	2.23	1.52	1.36	1.14	67.61*
88	... the perpetrator wanted a rush or thrill.	1.98	<b>6.66</b>	1.75	1.61	1.18	1.20	302.32*

89	... the perpetrator wanted to feel power over someone.	2.16	<b>6.57</b>	1.80	1.66	1.55	1.25	127.46*
90	... the perpetrator did not know any better.	1.68	<b>4.86</b>	1.59	1.84	1.34	1.52	21.88*
91	... the perpetrator didn't notice they were causing someone to suffer.	1.80	<b>4.89</b>	1.80	1.70	1.20	1.48	29.89*
92	... the perpetrator lost control of their emotions.	1.73	<b>5.52</b>	1.66	1.68	1.41	1.41	31.41*
93	... the perpetrator created the circumstances leading up to it.	1.91	<b>6.18</b>	1.73	1.75	1.34	1.25	57.91*
94	... the perpetrator acted without thinking.	1.80	<b>5.57</b>	1.80	1.77	1.41	1.41	36.03*
95	... the perpetrator believed they were entitled to what happened.	2.02	<b>6.25</b>	1.57	1.73	1.30	1.20	111.54*
96	... the perpetrator betrayed me or someone else.	2.20	<b>6.43</b>	2.16	1.91	1.27	1.14	213.32*
97	... the perpetrator did not have thoughts or feelings that they should have had.	1.89	<b>5.84</b>	1.70	1.61	1.34	1.27	84.28*
98	... the perpetrator did not see their victim(s) as a human being.	1.80	<b>6.09</b>	1.93	1.82	1.39	1.43	80.89*
99	... the perpetrator did the wrong thing.	1.80	<b>6.64</b>	1.61	1.73	1.48	1.25	116.30*
100	... the perpetrator didn't care.	1.77	<b>6.59</b>	1.73	1.73	1.39	1.20	273.01*

101 ... the perpetrator had a grudge or ill feelings.	2.05	<b>6.30</b>	1.75	1.61	1.18	1.18	132.98*
102 ... the perpetrator had thoughts or feelings they should not have had.	1.80	<b>6.20</b>	1.82	1.50	1.66	1.25	120.06*
103 ... the perpetrator is responsible.	1.73	<b>6.68</b>	1.75	1.66	1.27	1.18	146.57*
104 ... the perpetrator made an inexcusable mistake.	1.80	<b>5.98</b>	1.70	1.75	1.34	1.30	60.82*
105 ... the perpetrator planned it.	1.89	<b>6.66</b>	1.75	1.59	1.30	1.20	191.43*
106 ... the perpetrator didn't care about the consequences.	1.93	<b>6.59</b>	1.70	1.80	1.39	1.20	107.05*
107 ... the perpetrator was looking to direct their anger toward someone.	2.02	<b>6.36</b>	2.07	1.84	1.32	1.32	74.65*
108 ... the perpetrator thought they could do whatever they wanted.	1.86	<b>6.52</b>	1.57	1.80	1.39	1.27	66.95*
109 ... the perpetrator thought they could escape punishment.	1.75	<b>6.32</b>	1.66	1.91	1.41	1.27	122.86*
110 ... the perpetrator took advantage of me or someone else.	2.52	<b>6.50</b>	2.45	1.89	1.32	1.18	150.31*
111 ... the perpetrator took advantage of the situation.	2.16	<b>6.52</b>	1.89	1.68	1.41	1.36	87.20*

112 ... the perpetrator wanted to hurt me or someone else.	2.32	<b>6.66</b>	2.36	1.98	1.34	1.18	154.31*
113 ... the perpetrator wanted to humiliate me or someone else.	2.45	<b>6.64</b>	2.36	1.93	1.25	1.16	279.07*
114 ... the perpetrator wanted to send a message.	2.14	<b>6.25</b>	1.95	1.70	1.43	1.18	92.40*
115 ... the perpetrator wanted revenge.	2.20	<b>6.59</b>	1.98	1.73	1.23	1.16	169.44*
116 ... the perpetrator was acting out of hate.	1.61	<b>6.57</b>	1.82	1.77	1.32	1.18	173.08*
117 ... <b>the perpetrator was justified in their actions.</b>	<b>3.43</b>	<b>4.27</b>	1.68	1.80	1.30	1.34	31.18*
118 ... the perpetrator was manipulative.	2.23	<b>6.32</b>	1.75	1.64	1.25	1.11	176.91*
119 ... the perpetrator enjoyed it.	2.00	<b>6.27</b>	1.77	1.70	1.34	1.18	77.12*
120 ... the perpetrator wanted to feel powerful.	1.80	<b>6.39</b>	1.84	1.70	1.34	1.27	88.01*
121 ... the perpetrator thought they had good reasons for their actions.	1.98	<b>5.39</b>	1.68	1.73	1.55	1.34	28.92*
122 ... the perpetrator knew they could overpower me or someone else.	<b>3.00</b>	<b>6.27</b>	<b>2.25</b>	1.89	1.32	1.16	97.54*
123 ... the perpetrator was determined to make it happen.	1.98	<b>6.61</b>	1.57	1.55	1.36	1.20	182.17*
124 ... the perpetrator abused their power.	1.89	<b>6.64</b>	1.59	1.75	1.39	1.23	145.18*

125 ... the perpetrator didn't have the maturity or life-knowledge to cope differently.	1.89	<b>4.91</b>	1.59	1.95	1.32	1.48	24.96*
126 ... the perpetrator is an entitled person.	1.82	<b>5.66</b>	1.55	1.66	1.32	1.11	61.16*
127 ... the perpetrator is an angry person.	1.80	<b>6.30</b>	1.77	1.48	1.34	1.18	145.60*
128 ... the perpetrator is a powerful person.	1.80	<b>6.18</b>	1.70	1.68	1.48	1.25	141.78*
129 ... <b>the perpetrator was raised or taught not to respect people like their victim.</b>	1.98	<b>5.18</b>	1.91	<b>3.61</b>	1.34	1.20	39.14*
130 ... <b>the perpetrator was raised or taught to be violent.</b>	1.82	<b>5.20</b>	1.68	<b>3.73</b>	1.25	1.39	43.92*
131 ... the perpetrator was physically stronger than the victim.	2.43	<b>5.75</b>	2.00	1.57	1.34	1.23	90.30*
132 ... of the perpetrator's character.	1.91	<b>6.23</b>	1.66	1.52	1.43	1.36	82.10*
133 ... the perpetrator is cold or uncaring.	1.82	<b>6.20</b>	1.70	1.45	1.27	1.25	82.41*
134 ... of some personality characteristic of the perpetrator.	1.89	<b>6.11</b>	1.61	1.59	1.30	1.39	115.97*
135 ... the perpetrator has resources that made them powerful.	1.80	<b>5.59</b>	1.57	2.05	1.50	1.11	85.50*
136 ... the perpetrator is not very smart.	1.64	<b>4.98</b>	1.50	1.66	1.20	1.34	39.84*

137 ... the perpetrator is “sick” or mentally ill and needed help.	2.05	<b>4.82</b>	1.75	2.27	1.43	2.09	21.85*
138 ... the perpetrator had unfair beliefs or prejudiced beliefs.	1.61	<b>6.09</b>	1.57	1.89	1.73	1.30	105.15*
139 ... the perpetrator takes delight in causing pain.	1.86	<b>6.66</b>	1.82	1.70	1.32	1.30	139.80*
140 ... the perpetrator didn’t see me as a person.	<b>3.23</b>	<b>6.32</b>	1.59	1.57	1.36	1.18	152.68*
141 ... the perpetrator cannot control how they behave.	2.00	<b>4.52</b>	1.57	1.59	1.59	1.66	13.04*
142 ... the perpetrator does not understand right from wrong.	2.07	<b>4.55</b>	1.61	1.93	1.50	1.89	13.51*
143 ... the perpetrator is bad/evil/not a good person.	1.84	<b>6.48</b>	1.61	1.64	2.05	1.32	115.30*
144 ... the perpetrator is cold-hearted or uncaring.	1.86	<b>6.64</b>	1.57	1.61	1.25	1.16	338.07*
145 ... the perpetrator is cruel.	1.89	<b>6.70</b>	1.61	1.50	1.34	1.20	472.36*
146 ... the perpetrator is hateful.	1.77	<b>6.43</b>	1.57	1.64	1.34	1.20	92.15*
147 ... the perpetrator is immoral.	1.77	<b>6.43</b>	1.75	1.59	1.77	1.27	121.02*
148 ... the perpetrator is deceitful.	1.59	<b>6.36</b>	1.70	1.70	1.41	1.23	141.72*
149 ... the perpetrator is selfish.	1.73	<b>6.32</b>	1.66	1.66	1.39	1.25	112.30*
150 ... the perpetrator has destructive tendencies.	1.70	<b>6.41</b>	1.61	1.66	1.41	1.16	190.29*

151 ... the perpetrator is indifferent to causing others pain.	1.82	<b>6.36</b>	1.80	1.75	1.41	1.27	109.90*
152 ... the perpetrator is manipulative.	1.86	<b>6.32</b>	1.66	1.64	1.36	1.18	66.34*
153 ... the perpetrator enjoys inflicting pain.	1.77	<b>6.66</b>	1.66	1.70	1.39	1.27	106.63*
154 ... the perpetrator abuses their power.	1.77	<b>6.50</b>	1.73	1.80	1.41	1.23	118.89*
155 ... the perpetrator has a drug or alcohol problem.	1.93	<b>5.00</b>	1.55	2.18	1.45	1.50	25.71*
156 ... the perpetrator is a monster.	1.91	<b>6.45</b>	1.64	1.64	1.52	1.32	65.03*
157 ... the perpetrator was trying to make a name for themselves.	1.52	<b>5.82</b>	1.50	1.66	1.25	1.16	78.25*
158 ... <b>I got caught between two opposing sides.</b>	<b>3.27</b>	<b>3.50</b>	2.32	2.50	1.41	1.77	12.09*
159 ... <b>the perpetrator didn't love me.</b>	<b>3.52</b>	<b>4.34</b>	1.34	1.70	1.27	1.30	43.71*
160 ... it was the perpetrator's fault.	1.82	<b>6.84</b>	1.64	1.43	1.27	1.18	328.06*
161 ... it was their fault.	<b>3.59</b>	<b>3.45</b>	<b>5.95</b>	<b>3.43</b>	1.59	1.18	52.14*
162 ... they let someone get too emotionally close.	<b>3.39</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>5.80</b>	<b>3.36</b>	1.34	1.39	59.50*
163 ... they let someone get too physically close.	<b>3.45</b>	<b>2.48</b>	<b>5.57</b>	<b>3.52</b>	1.25	1.39	63.85*
164 ... they behaved irresponsibly.	<b>3.52</b>	<b>3.07</b>	<b>5.91</b>	<b>3.07</b>	1.25	1.36	54.55*
165 ... they made a poor decision.	<b>3.30</b>	<b>3.00</b>	<b>6.07</b>	<b>3.20</b>	1.34	1.32	54.84*

166 ... they didn't have the resources (e.g., family, friends, financial) they needed.	<b>2.61</b>	2.30	<b>4.59</b>	<b>4.00</b>	1.32	1.55	41.20*
167 ... they put faith in the wrong person or people.	<b>3.30</b>	<b>2.95</b>	<b>5.27</b>	<b>4.14</b>	2.25	1.27	26.79*
168 ... they should have been more careful and weren't.	<b>3.43</b>	2.32	<b>5.61</b>	<b>3.16</b>	1.34	1.34	30.26*
169 ... they should have fought harder.	<b>3.45</b>	2.30	<b>5.41</b>	2.86	1.34	1.32	32.56*
170 ... they were not in the right state of mind to stop the situation.	<b>3.02</b>	2.27	<b>5.00</b>	2.89	1.27	1.41	31.74*
171 ... they lacked common sense.	<b>3.16</b>	2.30	<b>5.30</b>	2.91	1.27	1.59	29.56*
172 ... they thought they were invincible.	3.02	2.52	<b>5.39</b>	2.89	1.45	1.41	29.08*
173 ... they abandoned their morals.	<b>3.02</b>	<b>2.82</b>	<b>5.23</b>	3.00	2.32	1.25	22.42*
174 ... of their behavior at the time.	<b>3.43</b>	2.93	<b>5.73</b>	2.84	1.59	1.34	40.87*
175 ... they were at the wrong place at the wrong time.	<b>2.80</b>	<b>2.45</b>	<b>4.57</b>	<b>2.91</b>	1.39	2.57	13.79*
176 ... they did something wrong.	<b>3.32</b>	2.82	<b>5.66</b>	3.02	1.61	1.32	31.04*
177 ... they didn't take their task/job seriously.	2.80	2.18	<b>5.02</b>	<b>3.20</b>	1.30	1.39	25.57*
178 ... they were to blame.	<b>3.43</b>	<b>2.91</b>	<b>5.91</b>	<b>3.09</b>	1.70	1.14	60.88*
179 ... they made a mistake	<b>3.25</b>	2.70	<b>5.57</b>	<b>3.32</b>	1.34	1.27	41.74*

180 ... they encouraged it to happen.	<b>3.36</b>	<b>2.57</b>	<b>5.75</b>	<b>3.23</b>	1.30	1.18	49.42*
181 ... they are at least partially responsible.	<b>3.30</b>	<b>2.80</b>	<b>5.64</b>	<b>3.25</b>	1.64	1.32	43.00*
182 ... they made necessary choices in a difficult situation.	<b>2.57</b>	<b>2.61</b>	<b>3.91</b>	2.52	1.27	2.05	11.95*
183 ... <b>they made the only choices available.</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>2.59</b>	<b>3.59</b>	<b>2.75</b>	1.30	<b>2.57</b>	19.19*
184 ... <b>they were acting toward the common good.</b>	<b>2.48</b>	1.91	<b>3.55</b>	<b>3.23</b>	1.43	1.75	13.62*
185 ... they are risky, careless, or reckless.	<b>3.39</b>	2.80	<b>5.82</b>	2.98	1.34	1.41	43.02*
186 ... <b>they didn't seek help when they should have.</b>	<b>3.30</b>	<b>2.43</b>	<b>5.39</b>	3.02	1.41	1.39	36.56*
187 ... they shouldn't have been there in the first place.	<b>3.34</b>	2.36	<b>5.52</b>	3.00	1.39	1.55	42.53*
188 ... they got themselves into the situation.	<b>3.68</b>	2.57	<b>5.84</b>	<b>3.05</b>	1.30	1.34	51.21*
189 ... they didn't do enough to stop it.	<b>3.36</b>	<b>2.57</b>	<b>5.55</b>	<b>3.30</b>	1.41	1.20	43.22*
190 ... they misjudged the situation.	<b>3.16</b>	<b>2.61</b>	<b>5.36</b>	<b>3.27</b>	1.27	1.57	30.94*
191 ... <b>they should have known better than to get themselves into that situation.</b>	<b>3.48</b>	2.57	<b>5.39</b>	<b>3.14</b>	1.34	1.34	31.60*
192 ... <b>there was nothing they could have done to stop it.</b>	2.64	2.30	<b>3.55</b>	2.43	1.55	2.32	5.19*
193 ... <b>they did not know how to handle what was going on.</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>2.16</b>	<b>4.57</b>	<b>3.02</b>	1.20	1.59	32.52*

194 ... they were acting in self-defense.	<b>2.59</b>	<b>2.55</b>	<b>3.98</b>	<b>2.61</b>	1.36	1.48	19.32*
195 ... they didn't try to stop it.	<b>3.43</b>	2.34	<b>5.45</b>	<b>3.32</b>	1.41	1.41	31.07*
196 ... they did nothing to prevent it.	<b>3.41</b>	<b>2.50</b>	<b>5.45</b>	<b>3.25</b>	1.41	1.36	34.92*
197 ... they failed to see the warning signs.	<b>3.27</b>	2.23	<b>5.50</b>	<b>3.52</b>	1.27	1.48	43.28*
198 ... they allowed it to happen.	<b>3.50</b>	2.50	<b>5.73</b>	<b>3.45</b>	1.36	1.39	31.99*
199 ... they didn't do enough to protect against it.	<b>3.45</b>	2.34	<b>5.43</b>	3.20	1.45	1.45	29.85*
200 ... they should have anticipated a situation like it.	<b>3.23</b>	2.02	<b>5.23</b>	3.00	1.34	1.43	24.71*
201 ... they didn't listen when others said to avoid the situation.	<b>3.48</b>	2.20	<b>5.48</b>	<b>3.45</b>	1.20	1.50	61.00*
202 ... they were too afraid to stop it.	<b>3.20</b>	<b>2.16</b>	<b>5.23</b>	<b>3.23</b>	1.16	1.45	50.92*
203 ... of something to do with their appearance.	<b>2.55</b>	<b>2.45</b>	<b>4.11</b>	<b>2.61</b>	1.50	1.77	12.12*
204 ... of something to do with their group identity (gender, race, military, etc.).	2.34	<b>2.66</b>	<b>4.00</b>	<b>3.05</b>	1.55	1.77	15.21*
205 ... of what they represent or who they associate with.	<b>3.07</b>	<b>2.36</b>	<b>4.64</b>	<b>3.57</b>	1.64	1.27	30.48*
206 ... of who they were.	<b>3.02</b>	2.89	<b>4.95</b>	2.68	1.45	1.59	20.71*
207 ... they were an irresponsible person.	<b>3.45</b>	<b>2.27</b>	<b>5.57</b>	2.77	1.27	1.41	30.91*

208 ... <b>they were too trusting.</b>	<b>3.52</b>	2.23	<b>5.36</b>	2.86	1.36	1.34	35.22*
209 ... <b>they were not very smart.</b>	<b>3.32</b>	<b>2.02</b>	<b>5.16</b>	<b>2.77</b>	1.27	1.52	36.98*
210 ... <b>they were the victim type.</b>	<b>3.23</b>	2.16	<b>5.07</b>	2.61	1.39	1.43	27.27*
211 ... they were a neglectful person.	<b>3.34</b>	2.25	<b>5.32</b>	2.95	1.32	1.36	29.96*
212 ... they had a poor personality.	<b>2.91</b>	2.20	<b>4.95</b>	2.84	1.34	1.39	20.50*
213 ... they are/ were a gullible person.	<b>3.43</b>	<b>2.11</b>	<b>5.52</b>	2.91	1.27	1.39	39.28*
214 ... <b>they deserve it.</b>	<b>3.45</b>	1.82	<b>5.20</b>	<b>2.73</b>	1.52	1.39	21.13*
215 ... <b>they were a coward.</b>	<b>3.34</b>	1.82	<b>4.93</b>	2.80	1.32	1.30	25.61*
216 ... <b>they were a bad person.</b>	<b>3.27</b>	<b>2.55</b>	<b>5.14</b>	<b>2.91</b>	1.57	1.23	24.48*
217 ... they had loose morals.	3.11	2.18	<b>5.16</b>	2.80	1.98	1.30	22.74*
218 ... <b>they were too weak-willed to prevent it.</b>	<b>3.43</b>	2.18	<b>5.27</b>	2.80	1.52	1.39	21.10*
219 ... <b>they were too foolish to stop the situation.</b>	<b>3.43</b>	2.05	<b>5.30</b>	<b>3.09</b>	1.25	1.36	39.00*
220 ... <b>they were too stubborn to avoid it.</b>	<b>3.50</b>	1.95	<b>5.45</b>	<b>2.66</b>	1.30	1.32	38.18*
221 ... they were ignorant to warning signs.	<b>3.48</b>	2.16	<b>5.57</b>	<b>3.32</b>	1.36	1.39	37.59*
222 ... others are responsible.	1.82	2.50	<b>4.41</b>	<b>6.59</b>	1.77	1.14	133.47*
223 ... others didn't care.	1.75	2.27	<b>4.05</b>	<b>6.20</b>	1.50	1.11	98.33*
224 ... others taught the perpetrator to act this way.	1.86	<b>3.34</b>	<b>3.32</b>	<b>6.14</b>	1.45	1.32	81.53*
225 ... others raised the perpetrator to think it was ok.	1.98	<b>3.39</b>	<b>3.20</b>	<b>6.07</b>	1.61	1.41	46.23*

226 ... social or political forces created the conditions for the situation.	1.80	2.18	2.50	<b>6.32</b>	1.55	1.84	74.15*
227 ... others were too afraid to get involved to stop it.	2.07	2.14	<b>3.61</b>	<b>6.16</b>	1.34	1.39	81.52*
228 ... others were too weak to make a difference.	1.89	2.16	<b>3.69</b>	<b>5.95</b>	1.30	1.61	66.23*
229 ... others were incompetent.	<b>2.00</b>	1.95	<b>3.73</b>	<b>6.32</b>	1.27	1.36	114.97*
230 ... others should have done more to make sure that this kind of thing doesn't happen.	1.89	1.93	<b>3.84</b>	<b>6.14</b>	1.45	1.32	81.00*
231 ... others failed to see the warning signs.	2.09	2.16	<b>4.11</b>	<b>6.34</b>	1.52	1.52	60.48*
232 ... others made a mistake.	1.70	1.89	<b>4.07</b>	<b>6.20</b>	1.41	1.48	56.26*
233 ... others ignore this kind of thing.	1.84	2.02	<b>3.59</b>	<b>6.02</b>	1.55	1.55	34.07*
234 ... others didn't know it was happening but should have.	1.86	2.07	<b>3.61</b>	<b>6.00</b>	1.43	1.59	67.54*
235 ... others created the situation.	1.95	1.95	<b>4.00</b>	<b>6.23</b>	1.66	1.27	55.25*
236 ... an institution or system didn't do enough to protect against it.	1.82	1.95	<b>3.02</b>	<b>6.09</b>	1.34	1.57	63.18*
237 ... someone with good intentions made matters worse.	1.84	1.75	<b>3.39</b>	<b>5.32</b>	1.55	1.52	32.37*
238 ... others let it happen.	1.84	2.07	<b>3.98</b>	<b>6.25</b>	1.91	1.32	56.02*

239 ... others are at fault.	1.80	2.27	<b>4.00</b>	<b>6.34</b>	1.77	1.20	103.75*
240 ... others should have anticipated it.	1.84	2.02	<b>4.02</b>	<b>6.07</b>	1.55	1.41	48.93*
241 ... others encouraged the perpetrator.	2.02	<b>3.05</b>	<b>3.84</b>	<b>6.14</b>	1.64	1.30	43.95*
242 ... others are to blame.	2.05	1.80	<b>4.07</b>	<b>6.48</b>	1.89	1.34	74.63*
243 ... media encourages violence.	1.66	1.82	2.80	<b>6.05</b>	1.39	1.45	59.99*
244 ... powerful people decided it didn't matter.	1.68	1.84	2.70	<b>5.93</b>	1.66	1.32	46.42*
245 ... society doesn't do enough to prevent violence.	2.02	1.93	2.80	<b>6.02</b>	1.45	1.61	43.16*
246 ... society promotes violence.	1.70	2.02	2.89	<b>5.98</b>	1.61	1.59	40.92*
247 ... society protects perpetrators.	1.73	2.48	2.59	<b>5.95</b>	1.43	1.59	56.78*
248 ... others were on the perpetrator's side.	1.84	<b>2.66</b>	<b>3.18</b>	<b>6.16</b>	1.36	1.25	91.03*
249 ... other prioritized their own wellbeing above mine.	1.86	1.86	<b>3.82</b>	<b>6.05</b>	1.45	1.23	75.30*
250 ... others betrayed me.	2.18	2.05	<b>3.95</b>	<b>6.07</b>	1.57	1.36	39.45*
251 ... others were not around when I needed them most.	2.20	1.89	<b>3.41</b>	<b>5.95</b>	1.59	1.32	40.80*
252 ... others let me down.	2.18	1.86	<b>3.66</b>	<b>6.02</b>	1.77	1.27	46.29*
253 ... others enjoyed seeing me suffer.	2.30	1.89	<b>3.75</b>	<b>5.93</b>	1.48	1.16	52.80*
254 ... others acted immorally.	1.80	2.27	<b>3.73</b>	<b>6.02</b>	2.23	1.34	54.37*

255 ... others abandoned me.	2.16	1.86	<b>3.64</b>	<b>5.95</b>	1.86	1.27	57.13*
256 ... others didn't see it as their problem.	2.11	2.09	<b>3.61</b>	<b>6.05</b>	1.61	1.32	53.46*
257 ... a system or institution is flawed or corrupt.	1.80	2.00	2.59	<b>6.20</b>	1.45	1.68	71.37*
258 ... others do not care if these types of things happen.	1.91	1.86	<b>3.48</b>	<b>6.05</b>	1.70	1.39	50.31*
259 ... society is accepting of violence.	2.00	2.02	2.84	<b>5.98</b>	1.57	1.48	49.78*
260 ... <b>others are greedy.</b>	1.68	1.89	<b>3.50</b>	<b>5.50</b>	1.48	1.20	39.78*
261 ... others are deceitful.	1.61	1.98	<b>3.64</b>	<b>5.77</b>	1.59	1.16	64.95*
262 ... others are neglectful.	1.77	2.09	<b>3.75</b>	<b>5.93</b>	1.55	1.34	43.16*
263 ... others are prejudiced	1.50	1.84	<b>3.52</b>	<b>5.89</b>	1.45	1.27	41.85*
264 ... others are a poor judge of character.	1.70	1.93	<b>3.68</b>	<b>5.68</b>	1.39	1.39	52.85*
265 ... a higher power is to blame.	1.73	1.32	1.82	<b>3.39</b>	<b>6.91</b>	1.16	302.36*
266 ... evil forces caused it.	1.55	1.64	1.80	<b>3.50</b>	<b>6.61</b>	1.30	158.04*
267 ... a higher power decided not to intervene.	1.64	1.50	1.66	3.00	<b>6.52</b>	1.50	105.61*
268 ... a higher power allowed it.	1.52	1.50	1.77	<b>3.18</b>	<b>6.66</b>	1.32	195.42*
269 ... a higher power did not protect me.	1.98	1.52	1.77	<b>3.09</b>	<b>6.59</b>	1.20	266.58*
270 ... a higher power did not give me the strength to prevent it from happening.	2.64	1.43	1.68	3.00	<b>6.20</b>	1.50	66.01*

271 ... a higher power betrayed me.	2.14	1.39	1.77	<b>3.23</b>	<b>6.55</b>	1.16	172.52*
272 ... a higher power abandoned me.	2.11	1.48	1.75	<b>3.14</b>	<b>6.50</b>	1.25	147.67*
273 ... a higher power did not care about me.	2.34	1.48	1.66	3.09	<b>6.48</b>	1.48	115.76*
274 ... a higher power is at fault.	1.57	1.30	1.68	<b>3.30</b>	<b>6.80</b>	1.39	174.20*
275 ... a higher power had a greater purpose.	1.70	1.32	1.61	<b>3.09</b>	<b>6.05</b>	1.20	61.89*
276 ... a higher power decided I needed to experience something terrible.	2.73	1.57	1.75	3.05	<b>6.27</b>	1.25	76.69*
277 ... a higher power ignored my struggle.	2.16	1.39	1.61	<b>3.07</b>	<b>6.25</b>	1.41	103.31*
278 ... a higher power ignored my prayers.	2.20	1.36	1.73	2.95	<b>6.05</b>	1.41	65.51*
279 ... a higher power was testing me.	2.68	1.43	1.66	2.95	<b>6.32</b>	1.30	74.82*
280 ... a higher power let me down.	2.07	1.36	1.52	3.07	<b>6.25</b>	1.41	69.61*
281 ... a higher power treated me unfairly.	2.20	1.39	1.59	<b>2.95</b>	<b>6.27</b>	1.16	173.35*
282 ... a higher power wanted it to happen.	1.86	1.41	1.68	<b>3.30</b>	<b>6.70</b>	1.36	139.81*
283 ... a higher power wanted to punish me.	<b>3.05</b>	1.45	1.73	<b>3.20</b>	<b>6.52</b>	1.32	77.53*
284 ... a higher power wanted to strengthen me.	2.52	1.41	1.57	2.93	<b>6.05</b>	1.36	50.35*
285 ... a higher power was angered by my lack of devotion.	<b>3.61</b>	1.34	1.57	<b>2.95</b>	<b>6.27</b>	1.27	95.94*
286 ... a higher power was on the perpetrators side.	1.89	2.34	1.59	<b>3.41</b>	<b>6.30</b>	1.25	87.98*

287 ... a higher power is responsible.	1.61	1.36	1.77	<b>3.36</b>	<b>6.77</b>	1.25	176.33*
288 ... an evil force wanted to corrupt me.	2.09	1.86	1.61	<b>3.18</b>	<b>6.32</b>	1.16	175.98*
289 ... forces of evil acted through the perpetrator.	1.50	2.77	1.66	<b>3.36</b>	<b>6.32</b>	1.27	101.53*
290 ... evil forces were at work.	1.48	2.00	1.66	<b>3.41</b>	<b>6.36</b>	1.23	115.48*
291 ... a higher power decided I deserved what happened.	<b>3.64</b>	1.39	1.66	<b>3.14</b>	<b>6.39</b>	1.30	92.91*
292 ... a higher power is too passive to intervene.	2.02	1.30	1.57	3.09	<b>5.75</b>	1.41	52.36*
293 ... a higher power condones violence.	1.43	1.30	1.59	<b>3.25</b>	<b>6.07</b>	1.25	70.85*
294 ... a higher power has a plan.	1.84	1.34	1.64	3.20	<b>6.11</b>	1.34	61.94*
295 ... a higher power doesn't love me.	<b>3.07</b>	1.34	1.59	2.93	<b>5.95</b>	1.25	63.74*
296 ... a higher power enjoys these things.	1.66	1.45	1.50	<b>3.14</b>	<b>6.27</b>	1.30	90.95*
297 ... a higher power is cruel.	1.43	1.30	1.64	<b>3.09</b>	<b>6.18</b>	1.36	66.97*
298 ... a higher power doesn't care about human suffering.	1.41	1.39	1.61	3.09	<b>5.95</b>	1.45	46.44*
299 ... a higher power was angry or vengeful.	1.89	1.23	1.55	<b>3.14</b>	<b>6.34</b>	1.25	86.51*
300 ... a higher power allows injustice.	1.50	1.23	1.61	<b>3.18</b>	<b>6.23</b>	1.39	96.81*
301 ... it was the will of a higher power.	2.02	1.32	1.80	<b>3.30</b>	<b>6.55</b>	1.34	133.54*
302 ... it was karmic justice.	<b>3.09</b>	1.55	2.00	2.89	<b>5.75</b>	2.11	36.27*

303 ... of a fluke.	1.34	1.52	1.39	1.68	1.75	<b>6.68</b>	232.04*
304 ... things just didn't work out in my favor.	2.82	1.68	1.59	1.57	1.70	<b>6.30</b>	99.98*
305 ... it's just the way things lined up.	2.18	1.61	1.73	1.73	2.23	<b>6.52</b>	90.68*
306 ... I happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time.	<b>3.50</b>	2.18	1.80	1.68	2.11	<b>6.23</b>	60.14*
307 ...of chance.	1.93	1.64	1.52	1.77	2.25	<b>6.75</b>	117.76*
308 ... it was bad luck.	1.98	1.66	1.43	1.86	2.34	<b>6.52</b>	111.11*
309 ... life is a matter of fortune.	1.82	1.59	1.48	1.70	2.23	<b>6.41</b>	71.79*
310 ... an unpredictable chain of events led to it.	1.70	1.77	1.89	1.98	1.84	<b>6.41</b>	103.70*
311 ... it was just bad timing.	1.91	1.86	1.80	1.70	1.70	<b>6.52</b>	118.94*
312 ... no-one could have known it would happen.	1.61	1.43	1.70	1.48	1.82	<b>6.41</b>	85.41*
313 ... no-one could have prevented it.	1.91	1.61	1.57	1.66	1.64	<b>6.39</b>	118.68*
314 ... it was beyond anyone's control.	1.89	1.50	1.61	1.73	2.09	<b>6.55</b>	123.55*
315 ... of a random series of events.	1.64	1.61	1.82	1.68	1.95	<b>6.68</b>	151.11*
316 ... it just happened, and no-one was at fault.	1.55	1.45	1.61	1.59	1.86	<b>6.86</b>	242.66*
317 ... anyone can experience a bad event.	1.75	1.66	1.84	1.50	1.66	<b>6.36</b>	79.54*
318 ... bad things like this are just a part of life. <sup>7</sup>	1.70	1.59	1.64	1.64	1.89	<b>6.20</b>	56.92*

319 ... life is random.	1.68	1.64	1.55	1.55	1.52	<b>6.61</b>	84.42*
320 ... no-one can stop these sorts of things.	1.75	1.66	1.59	1.64	1.86	<b>6.50</b>	112.41*
321 ... these things are bound to happen to someone.	1.77	1.52	1.70	1.75	1.75	<b>6.41</b>	123.80*
322 ... it's just the kind of world we live in.	1.68	1.75	1.59	1.93	1.93	<b>6.05</b>	43.19*
323 ... things like this happen at random. <sup>8</sup>	1.48	1.50	1.59	1.59	1.57	<b>6.61</b>	155.63*
324 ... life is chaotic.	1.61	1.59	1.48	1.59	1.91	<b>6.20</b>	50.51*
325 ... it was a chaotic situation.	1.64	1.73	1.57	1.70	1.68	<b>6.23</b>	57.01*
326 ... life is unpredictable.	1.68	1.66	1.48	1.59	1.73	<b>6.45</b>	163.68*
327 ... it was a matter of fate.	2.05	1.73	1.57	1.50	<b>3.66</b>	<b>6.02</b>	60.83*
328 ... whatever is going to happen, will happen.	1.73	1.43	1.43	1.48	2.45	<b>6.14</b>	64.48*
329 ... you can never really know what is going to happen in your life.	1.77	1.61	1.57	1.48	2.07	<b>6.34</b>	49.56*
330 ... it was inevitable.	2.09	1.48	1.30	1.59	2.30	<b>6.05</b>	51.36*
331 ... it was bound to happen eventually.	2.16	1.59	1.41	1.55	2.09	<b>5.91</b>	51.51*
332 ... life is not fair. <sup>9</sup>	1.59	1.59	1.39	1.57	1.98	<b>6.00</b>	56.51*
333 ... these things just happen for no good reason.	1.75	1.75	1.36	1.52	1.95	<b>6.59</b>	90.40*

*Note.* The final sample size consisted of a total of  $N = 44$  participant responders. Each item was preceded by the statement “The traumatic event happened because...”.

<sup>1, 7, 8</sup>Items adopted from Frazier (2003b). <sup>2</sup>Item adapted verbatim from Hill & Zautra (1989). <sup>3</sup>Item adapted verbatim from Kubany et al., (1996). <sup>4, 5</sup>Items adapted verbatim from Meyer & Taylor (1986). <sup>6, 9</sup>Items adapted verbatim from Meiser-Stedman et al., (2009).

\* $p < .001$ ; Bolded phrases denote items removed after content analysis.

**Table 4***Factor Analysis Sample Demographic Information*

Characteristic	Overall Sample N(%)
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>	
Christian	313(68.3)
Jewish	6(1.3)
Muslim	5(1.1)
Buddhist	5(1.1)
Hindu	5(1.1)
Agnostic	33(7.2)
Spiritual, not religious	24(5.2)
Atheist	62(13.5)
Other	5(1.1)
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>	
Hispanic or Latino	33(7.2)
Black or African American	97(21.2)
Native-American or Alaska Native	22(4.8)
Asian-American or Pacific Islander	26(5.7)
White or European-American	302(65.9)
Preferred not to answer	3(0.7)
<b>Country of Origin</b>	
United States of America	459(98.0)
Canada	1(0.2)
Australia	2(0.4)
India	1(0.2)
Kenya	1(0.2)
Nepal	1(0.2)
Philippines	1(0.2)
Samoa	1(0.2)
Viet Nam	1(0.2)
<b>Sexual Orientation</b>	
Heterosexual	347(75.8)
Gay/Lesbian	17(3.7)
Bisexual	88(19.2)
Queer	1(0.2)
Other	5(1.1)
<b>Relationship Status</b>	
Married	277(60.5)

Single	127(27.7)
Cohabiting	34(7.4)
Separated or divorced	16(3.5)
Widowed	3(0.7)
Preferred not to answer	1(0.2)
Employment Status	
Full-time	365(79.7)
Part-time	49(10.7)
Unemployed	26(5.7)
Homemaker	6(1.3)
On disability	7(1.5)
Retired	1(0.2)
Preferred not to answer	4(0.9)
Years of Education	
High school diploma or GED	30(6.6)
Some college, but no degree	46(10)
Trade school certification	3(0.7)
Associates Degree (For example: AA or AS)	33(7.2)
Bachelor's Degree (For example: BA, BBA, or BS)	240(52.5)
Master's Degree (For example: MA, MS, Meng)	96(21)
Professional Degree (For example: MD, DDS, and JD)	8(1.7)
Doctorate (For example: PhD, EdD)	2(.4)

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**Table 5***Factor Analysis Sample LEC-5 Interpersonal Trauma Exposure*

Interpersonal Trauma Type	Overall Sample N(%)
Physical Assault (for example, being attacked, hit, slapped, kicked, beaten up)	
Happened to me	188(41)
Witnessed it	154(33.6)
Assault with a weapon (for example, being shot, stabbed, threatened with a knife, gun, bomb)	
Happened to me	63(13.7)
Witnessed it	110(24)
Sexual assault (rape, attempted rape, made to perform any type of sexual act through force or threat of harm)	
Happened to me	112(24.5)
Witnessed it	77(16.8)
Other unwanted or uncomfortable sexual experience	
Happened to me	140(30.6)
Witnessed it	80(17.5)
Combat or exposure to a warzone (in the military or as a civilian)	
Happened to me	14(3.1)
Witnessed it	74(16.2)
Captivity (for example, being kidnapped, abducted, held hostage. Prisoner of war)	
Happened to me	27(5.9)
Witnessed it	81(17.7)
Sudden violent death - homicide	
Witnessed it	86(18.8)

*Note.* Percentage of the sample who experienced each interpersonal Criterion-A traumatic event based on LEC-5 responses.

**Table 6***Factor Analysis Sample Index Trauma Characteristic Information*

Characteristics	Overall Sample N(%)
Time of the traumatic event	
Within the last month	16(3.5)
Within the last 6 months	75(16.4)
Within the last year	96(21)
Within the last 5 years	88(19.2)
More than 5 years ago	183(40)
Number of perpetrators involved in the trauma	
1	222(48.5)
2-5	202(44.1)
5+	34(7.4)
Number of times the event has occurred in one's lifetime	
1	210(45.9)
2	122(26.6)
3	57(12.4)
4	19(4.1)
5+	50(10.9)

**Table 7**

*Factor Loadings from an Exploratory Factor Analysis with a Promax Rotation for 89 items of the Trauma-Related Blame Scale*

Items <sup>a</sup>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
... a higher power abandoned me.	.97							
... a higher power decided not to intervene.	.97							
... a higher power ignored my struggle.	.95							
... a higher power is at fault.	.95							
... a higher power did not care about me.	.94							
... a higher power treated me unfairly.	.93							
... a higher power is to blame.	.93							
... a higher power did not protect me.	.93							
... a higher power betrayed me.	.92							
... a higher power let me down.	.92							
... a higher power is cruel.	.91							
... a higher power ignored my prayers.	.91							

... a higher power doesn't love me.	.91
... a higher power allows injustice.	.90
... a higher power enjoys these things.	.89
... a higher power decided I deserved what happened.	.88
... a higher power condones violence.	.88
... a higher power is responsible.	.87
... a higher power doesn't care about human suffering.	.86
... a higher power was on the perpetrators side.	.86
... a higher power wanted to punish me.	.82
... forces of evil acted through the perpetrator.	.82
... a higher power was angered by my lack of devotion.	.81
... a higher power had a greater purpose.	.81
... a higher power was angry or vengeful.	.81
... a higher power is too passive to intervene.	.80
... evil forces caused it.	.79
... a higher power wanted to strengthen me.	.77

... it was karmic justice.	.76
... life is chaotic.	.90
... life is unpredictable.	.88
... you can never really know what is going to happen in your life.	.87
... anyone can experience a bad event.	.86
... bad things like this are just a part of life.	.84
... it's just the kind of world we live in.	.82
... it was a chaotic situation.	.79
... these things just happen for no good reason.	.78
... it was just bad timing.	.71
... life is not fair.	.64
... it was inevitable.	.63
... no one can stop these sorts of things.	.62
... I happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time.	.59
... it was a matter of fate.	.59

... it was bound to happen eventually.	.57
... I made a poor decision.	.89
... I got myself into that situation.	.80
... I wasn't careful enough.	.79
... I showed poor judgment.	.77
... I made a mistake.	.75
... I should have known better than to get myself in that situation.	.74
... I misjudged the situation.	.71
... I didn't do enough to protect myself.	.63
... the perpetrator was looking to direct their anger toward someone.	.81
... the perpetrator had a grudge or ill feelings.	.79
... the perpetrator wanted to send a message.	.75
... the perpetrator wanted revenge.	.73
... the perpetrator was acting out of hate.	.70
... the perpetrator is an angry person.	.64
... the perpetrator wanted to hurt me or someone else.	.60

... the perpetrator thought I or the victim deserved it.	.55
... the perpetrator wanted to humiliate me or someone else.	.54
... the perpetrator is bad/evil/not a good person.	.80
... the perpetrator is immoral.	.80
... the perpetrator is cold-hearted or uncaring.	.77
... the perpetrator is a monster.	.74
... the perpetrator is cruel.	.72
... the perpetrator is hateful.	.68
... the perpetrator is cold or uncaring.	.68
... the perpetrator is indifferent about causing others pain.	.61
... of the perpetrator's behavior at the time.	.79
... the perpetrator is to blame.	.76
... the perpetrator did the wrong thing.	.65
... it was the perpetrators fault.	.63
... the perpetrator is responsible.	.62

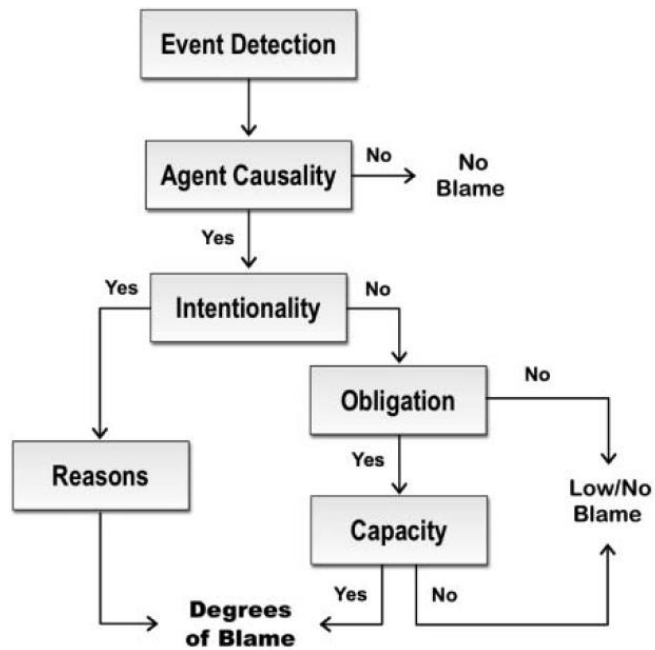
... others are responsible.	.71
... others are to blame.	.71
... others let me down.	.67
... others created the situation.	.67
... others always ignore this kind of thing.	.65
... others were not around when I needed them the most.	.61
... there is something wrong with me.	.73
... I am a coward.	.69
... I'm a failure.	.68
... I am not very smart.	.63
... I am not as savvy or knowledgeable as others.	.62
... there is something about me that attracts these situations.	.61
... my body should have responded differently.	.55
... of who I am.	.55
... I should have had different thoughts during the traumatic event.	.50

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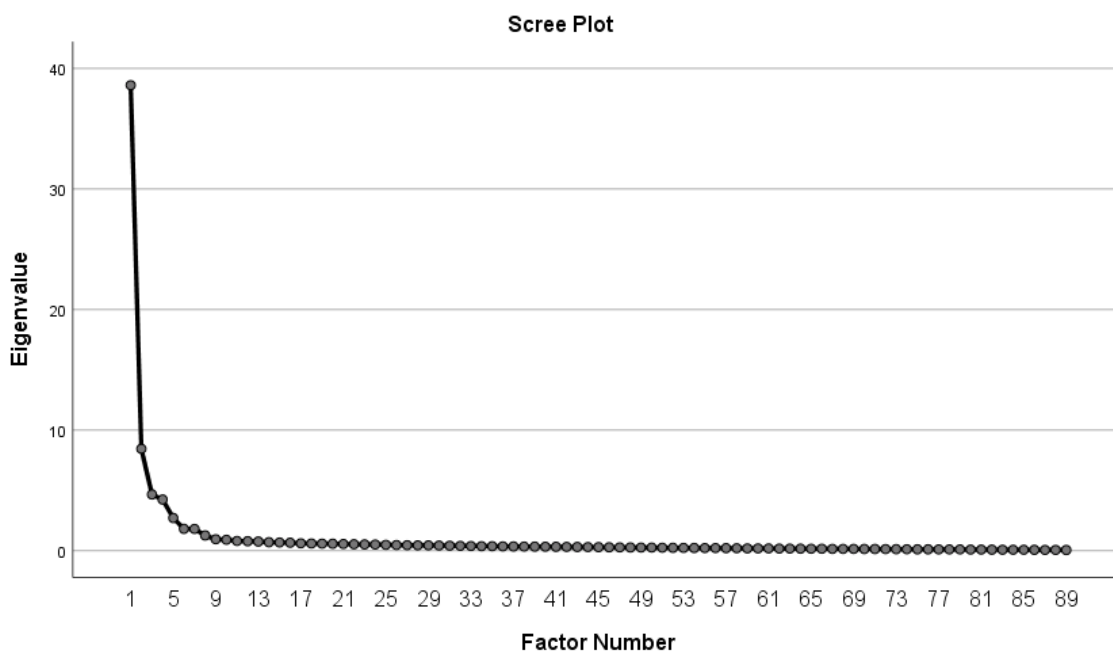
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*Note.* The final sample size for full analysis was  $N = 458$ . All cross loadings were below an absolute value of .30. Numbers listed in the header denote the following factors: 1 = Higher-Power-Blame; 2 = No-one; 3 = Behavioral Self-Blame; 4 = Perpetrator Intent; 5 = Characterological Perpetrator-Blame; Perpetrator-Blame; Other-Blame; Characterological Self-Blame.

<sup>a</sup>Each item was preceded by the statement “The traumatic event happened because...”.

**Figure 1***The Path Model of Blame*

*Note.* Causal pathways of the path model of blame (Malle, Gulielmo, & Monroe, 2014).

**Figure 2***Scree Plot of Post-Analysis Factors*

*Note.* Scree plot of factors after a final exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the original five subscales.

## Appendix A

### Consent Form

**Title of Research Study:** Establishing Content Validity of a Trauma Related Blame Scale

**Investigator Team Contact Information:**

For questions about research appointments, the research study, research results, or other concerns, call the study team at:

Investigator Name: Catherine M. Reich Psychology Department Phone Number: 218-726-7420 Email Address: cmreich@d.umn.edu	Student Investigator Name: Jeremy D. Jamieson Email Address: jamie065@d.umn.edu
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**Supported By:** This research is supported by the University of Minnesota Duluth.

### ***Key Information About This Research Study***

The following is a short summary to help you decide whether or not to be a part of this research study. More detailed information is listed later on in this form.

**What is research?**

- The goal of research is to learn new things in order to help people in the future. Investigators learn things by following the same plan with a number of participants, so they do not usually make changes to the plan for individual research participants. You, as an individual, may or may not be helped by volunteering for a research study.

**Why am I being invited to take part in this research study?**

We are asking you to take part in this research study because you have an active MTurk worker account.

**What should I know about a research study?**

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

**Why is this research being done?**

This research is being done to evaluate the accuracy of items representing different forms of trauma-related blame. Your response will be used to help establish content validity for a measure we are developing. Your responses will help us develop and refine this measure to better captures a range of blaming reactions to trauma and remove poorly written items. After it is developed and validated, we hope to use this measure in future research to learn more about the nature, course, and importance of these types of post-trauma blaming

## Consent Form

cognitions for trauma survivors.

### How long will the research last?

We expect that you will be in this research study for approximately 3.5 hours.

### What will I need to do to participate?

You will be asked to read definitions of different types of trauma-related blame and then rate how well items of trauma-related blame matches each of those definitions using a 7-point scale. A sample item includes "The traumatic event happened because I did something wrong. Attention check items will be imbedded throughout. You do not need to be a trauma survivor to participate.

### Is there any way that being in this study could be bad for me?

The questions on this survey could be uncomfortable, distressing, and/or psychologically triggering for some people.

### Will being in this study help me in any way?

This study will not directly benefit you.

### What happens if I do not want to be in this research?

You can leave the research at any time and it will not be held against you. You do not have to participate in this research.

## ***Detailed Information About This Research Study***

The following is more detailed information about this study in addition to the information listed above.

### How many people will be studied?

We expect 50 participants to complete this study.

### What happens if I say "Yes, I want to be in this research"?

- You will be asked to rate how representative 350 blame-related items are of 6 specific types of trauma-related blame. This means you will make 2,100 ratings all together.
- This task will be divided across 3 separate sessions and must be completed within 48 hours of beginning.
- A 1-hour break is required between each of the 3 sections to ensure rating quality. You will be asked to provide an active email address at the end of each section. This will allow us to send you an invitation for the next section. Your email will not be used for any other purpose and will be deleted once the survey is closed.
- Attention check questions will be embedded throughout.

### Will it cost me anything to participate in this research study?

No

## Consent Form

### What happens to the information collected for the research?

Results in the form of presentations or publications will be a summary of participant data and will not be identifiable for any one particular participant. Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete confidentiality. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the committee that provides ethical and regulatory oversight of research, and other representatives of this institution, including those that have responsibilities for monitoring or ensuring compliance.

### Whom do I contact if I have questions, concerns or feedback about my experience?

This research has been reviewed and approved by an IRB within the Human Research Protections Program (HRPP). To share feedback privately with the HRPP about your research experience, call the Research Participants' Advocate Line at 612-625-1650 or go to <https://research.umn.edu/units/hrpp/research-participants/questions-concerns>. You are encouraged to contact the HRPP if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

### Will I have a chance to provide feedback after the study is over?

The HRPP may ask you to complete a survey that asks about your experience as a research participant. You do not have to complete the survey if you do not want to. If you do choose to complete the survey, your responses will be anonymous. If you are not asked to complete a survey, but you would like to share feedback, please contact the study team or the HRPP. See the "Investigator Contact Information" of this form for study team contact information and "Whom do I contact if I have questions, concerns or feedback about my experience?" of this form for HRPP contact information.

### Can I be removed from the research?

The person in charge of the research study or the sponsor can remove your data from the research study without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include incorrectly answering attention check questions during the study. A warning will appear to tell you if you have answered an attention check question incorrectly. If you fail an attention check question, you will not be compensated.

*Will I be compensated for my participation?* Note that only participants who pass attention checks and complete all 3 sections within 48 hours will be compensated \$25.

### Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Yes, I agree to participate in this study.

**Consent Form**

No, I do not agree to participate in this study.

## Appendix B

### Consent Form

**Title of Research Study:** *Post-Trauma Beliefs*

**Investigator Team Contact Information:**

For questions about research appointments, the research study, research results, or other concerns, call the study team at:

Investigator Name: Catherine M. Reich Psychology Department Phone Number: 218-726-7420 Email Address: cmreich@d.umn.edu	Student Investigator Name: Jeremy D. Jamieson Email Address: jamie065@d.umn.edu
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**Why am I being invited to take part in this research study?** We are asking you to take part in this research study because you have an active TurkPrime worker account.

**What should I know about a research study?**

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You can choose not to take part.
- You can agree to take part and later change your mind.
- Your decision will not be held against you.
- You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.

**Why is this research being done?** The purpose of this study is to examine blame-related beliefs of trauma survivors. You do not have to have posttraumatic stress disorder or be bothered by your trauma to be helpful in this research. We are asking participants to answer 302 of questions regarding their beliefs about why their traumatic experience occurred. This research will help us develop and refine a measure which better captures a range of reactions to trauma. We hope to use this measure in future research to learn more about the nature, course, and importance of these types of reactions.

**How long will the research last?** After completing this consent form, we expect that the questionnaire will take about 30 minutes to complete.

**What will I need to do to participate?** Not everyone is eligible for this research. First you will be asked to complete a brief checklist of stressful life events you've experienced to determine if you are eligible. If you are eligible, you will be asked to answer questions about yourself, the traumatic event, and 302 of questions regarding why you believe your trauma occurred. These questions will ask about whether you place blame on yourself or others for the event.

**Is there any way that being in this study could be bad for me?** The questions on this survey may be uncomfortable, distressing, and/or psychologically triggering for some people. More specifically, items might be expected to bring up feelings of guilt, shame, or anger related to the trauma, oneself, the world, and others. On each page of the survey you will find hotlines/chat options at the top of the screen should you

## Consent Form

become distress.

**What happens if I do not want to be in this research?** All aspects of this study are voluntary. You can leave the study at any time and it will not be held against you.

**Will being in this study help me in any way?** This study will not directly benefit you.

**How many people will be studied?** We expect 1200 participants to participate in this study.

**What happens if I say “Yes, I want to be in this research”?**

- You will be asked to respond to 17 items regarding life experiences (e.g., hurricane, physical violence).
- If you are eligible, you will then be asked to provide information about traumatic/stressful experiences you’ve had (e.g., how long ago did it happen?) as well as basic demographic information about yourself (e.g., age).
- You will be asked to respond to 302 items about beliefs surrounding why the trauma happened. These include questions regarding blame you may or may not place on yourself, a perpetrator, other people, and higher powers (e.g., God). A sample questions include “The traumatic event happened because... I did something wrong” and “The traumatic event happened because the perpetrator wanted to feel powerful.” Each item will be on a 7-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. You will also complete attention check questions and receive feedback about failed attention checks.

**Will it cost me anything to participate in this research study?** No

**What happens to the information collected for the research?** Efforts will be made to limit the use and disclosure of your personal information, including research study, to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete confidentiality. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the committee that provides ethical and regulatory oversight of research, and other representatives of this institution, including those that have responsibilities for monitoring or ensuring compliance.

**Whom do I contact if I have questions, concerns or feedback about my experience?**

This research has been reviewed and approved by an IRB within the Human Research Protections Program (HRPP). To share feedback privately with the HRPP about your research experience, call the Research Participants’ Advocate Line at 612-625-1650 or go to <https://research.umn.edu/units/hrpp/research-participants/questions-concerns>. You are encouraged to contact the HRPP if:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You have questions about your rights as a research participant.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

**Will I have a chance to provide feedback after the study is over?** The HRPP may ask you to complete a survey that asks about your experience as a research participant. You do not have to complete the survey if you do not want to. If you do choose to complete the survey, your responses will be anonymous. If

### Consent Form

you are not asked to complete a survey, but you would like to share feedback, please contact the study team or the HRPP. See the "Investigator Contact Information" of this form for study team contact information and "Whom do I contact if I have questions, concerns or feedback about my experience?" of this form for HRPP contact information.

**Can I be removed from the research?** The person in charge of the research study or the sponsor can remove your data from the research study without your approval. Possible reasons for removal include incorrectly answering attention check questions during the study. A warning will appear to tell you if you have answered an attention check question incorrectly. Regardless, if you are eligible and participate in the study, you will still be compensated.

**Will I be compensated for my participation?** If you are eligible and complete this research study, we will pay you \$4 for your time and effort. If you complete the 17-item checklist and are ineligible, you will not be able to complete the study and will not be compensated.

### Consent Comprehension

Are there risks involved in participating in this study?

- Yes
- No

*\*If participant responds "no", they will receive this notification:*

That is INCORRECT. The questions on this survey may be uncomfortable, distressing, and/or psychologically triggering for some people. More specifically, items might be expected to bring up feelings of guilt, shame, or anger related to the trauma, oneself, the world, and others. On each page of the survey you will find hotlines/chat options at the top of the screen should you become distress. You may stop at any time by simply closing the browser.

Can you stop the study once you begin?

- Yes
- No

*\*If participant responds "no", they will receive this notification:*

That is INCORRECT. Participation in this research is voluntary. You may stop at any time by simply closing the browser.

### Statement of Consent

I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

**Consent Form**

- Yes, I agree to participate in this study.
- No, I do not agree to participate in this study.

## Appendix C

### LEC-5 Standard

**Instructions:** Listed below are a number of difficult or stressful things that sometimes happen to people. For each event check one or more of the boxes to the right to indicate that: (a) it happened to you personally; (b) you witnessed it happen to someone else; (c) you learned about it happening to a close family member or close friend; (d) you were exposed to it as part of your job (for example, paramedic, police, military, or other first responder); (e) you're not sure if it fits; or (f) it doesn't apply to you.

Be sure to consider your *entire life* (growing up as well as adulthood) as you go through the list of events.

Event	Happened to me	Witnessed it	Learned about it	Part of my job	Not sure	Doesn't apply
1. Natural disaster (for example, flood, hurricane, tornado, earthquake)						
2. Fire or explosion						
3. Transportation accident (for example, car accident, boat accident, train wreck, plane crash)						
4. Serious accident at work, home, or during recreational activity						
5. Exposure to toxic substance (for example, dangerous chemicals, radiation)						
6. Physical assault (for example, being attacked, hit, slapped, kicked, beaten up)						
7. Assault with a weapon (for example, being shot, stabbed, threatened with a knife, gun, bomb)						
8. Sexual assault (rape, attempted rape, made to perform any type of sexual act through force or threat of harm)						
9. Other unwanted or uncomfortable sexual experience						
10. Combat or exposure to a war-zone (in the military or as a civilian)						
11. Captivity (for example, being kidnapped, abducted, held hostage, prisoner of war)						
12. Life-threatening illness or injury						
13. Severe human suffering						
14. Sudden violent death (for example, homicide, suicide)						
15. Sudden accidental death						
16. Serious injury, harm, or death you caused to someone else						
17. Any other very stressful event or experience						

## Appendix D

### Additional Screening and Demographic Questions:

1. If you selected more than one event, which event bothers you the the most? (If you cannot decide please pick one to refer to for the remainder of this study.)
2. How long ago did this trauma occur?
3. How many perpetrators were involved in this trauma?
4. How many times altogether has this type of event occurred in your lifetime?
  - a. Once
  - b. More than once (please specify or estimate the total number of times you have had this experience\_\_\_\_\_)
5. Have you ever seen a mental health professional for distress related to the traumatic event?
6. Have you ever been diagnosed with posttraumatic stress disorder or acute stress disorder from a qualified provider?
7. Have you ever received counseling, treatment, or been prescribed medication for trauma-related symptoms or experiences?
8. In the past month have you....
  - (1) Had nightmares about the event(s) or thought about the event(s) when you did not want to?  
YES / NO
  - (2) Tried hard not to think about the event(s) or went out of your way to avoid situations that reminded you of the event(s)?  
YES / NO
  - (3) Been constantly on guard, watchful, or easily startled?  
YES / NO
  - (4) Felt numb or detached from people, activities, or your surroundings?  
YES / NO
  - (5) Felt guilty or unable to stop blaming yourself or others for the event(s) or any problems the event(s) may have caused?  
YES / NO
9. What is your age?
10. How important is religion or spirituality in your life?
  - (1) Not at all important
  - (2)
  - (3)
  - (4)
  - (5) Very Important
11. How frequently do you attend religious services?
  - (1) Not at all
  - (2)

- (3)
  - (4)
  - (5) Very Frequently
12. I believe that god or a higher power exists.
- (1) Not at all true
  - (2)
  - (3)
  - (4)
  - (5) Very True
13. What is your religious affiliation?
- a. Christian
  - b. Jewish
  - c. Muslim
  - d. Buddhist
  - e. Hindu
  - f. Atheist
  - g. Agnostic
  - h. Other
14. What is your gender identity?
- a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Other
  - d. Prefer not to answer
15. What is your race/ethnicity (check all that apply)?
- a. Hispanic or Latino
  - b. Black or African-American
  - c. Native-American or Alaska Native
  - d. Asian-American or Pacific Islander
  - e. White or European-American
  - f. Prefer not to answer
16. National origin
- a. Dropdown menu with United states and all other countries in alphabetical order
17. Sexual orientation
- a. \_\_\_\_\_ Heterosexual (Straight)
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_ Gay
  - c. \_\_\_\_\_ Lesbian
  - d. \_\_\_\_\_ Bisexual
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_ Queer
  - f. \_\_\_\_\_ Unlabeled
  - g. \_\_\_\_\_ Don't know or prefer not to answer
  - h. \_\_\_\_\_ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_
18. Relationship status

- a. Married
- b. Single
- c. Cohabiting
- d. Separated or divorced
- e. Widowed
- f. Prefer not to answer

19. Employment status

- a. Full time
- b. Part time
- c. Unemployed
- d. Homemaker
- e. On disability
- f. Retired
- g. Prefer not to answer

20. Including elementary school, how many years of education have you received?

21. Following the scaled portion of the Trauma Related Blame Scale: Is there anyone else or anything else that you think is responsible for the trauma?

## Appendix E

### Items Eliminated via Principle Factor Analysis

- 1 I knew better than to do what I did.
- 2 I provoked the situation.
- 3 I was not in control of myself.
- 4 of me.
- 5 I was not in the right state of mind to stop it.
- 6 I am responsible.
- 7 I brought it on myself.
- 8 I let it happen.
- 9 of my behavior at the time.
- 10 I was naïve or lacking life experience.
- 11 I was somewhere I should not have been.
- 12 it was my fault.
- 13 I acted impulsively.
- 14 I did something wrong.
- 15 I ignored the warning signs of it happening.
- 16 I went against my intuition or instincts.
- 17 I let someone dangerous get too physically close.
- 18 I'm foolish.
- 19 I am to blame.
- 20 I failed to do something I should have.
- 21 I let someone dangerous get too emotionally close.
- 22 I'm gullible or believe others too easily.
- 23 I became involved with the wrong people.
- 24 I let someone have too much control over me.
- 25 I am a poor judge of character.
- 26 I didn't do enough to stop it.
- 27 I should have fought harder.
- 28 I am too weak to defend myself.
- 29 I was too weak to stop it.
- 30 I lack worldly knowledge or "street smarts".
- 31 I didn't protest hard enough.
- 32 I did not know how to handle what was going on.
- 33 I didn't anticipate the consequences of my actions.
- 34 I could have prevented what happened but didn't.
- 35 I put faith in the wrong person or people.
- 36 I overestimated my safety.
- 37 I was feeling violent or looking for violence.
- 38 I didn't do enough to please the perpetrator.
- 39 I failed to protect someone else.
- 40 I had feelings I should not have had at the time.
- 41 of what I represent or the people I associate myself with.

- 42 I am risky, careless, or reckless.  
43 I lack common sense.  
44 I tend to stir up trouble.  
45 I am irresponsible.  
46 of something to do with my appearance.  
47 I lack an important skill or ability to prevent things like this.  
48 I tend to think of myself before others.  
49 I am the victim type.  
50 of something to do with my group identity (gender, race, military, etc).  
51 I thought I was invincible.  
52 I didn't listen when others said not to get involved in the situation.  
53 I made necessary choices in a difficult situation.  
54 I failed to uphold my responsibilities.  
55 I wanted to be close to someone.  
56 I was too trusting.  
57 I am too trusting.  
58 I abandoned my morals.  
59 I acted in an unjust or unfair manner.  
60 I was unable to control my emotions.  
61 I deserve it.  
62 I am a bad person.  
63 the perpetrator created the circumstances leading up to it.  
64 the perpetrator didn't care about the consequences.  
65 of the perpetrators character.  
66 the perpetrator wanted to feel power over someone.  
67 the perpetrator thought they could do whatever they wanted.  
68 the perpetrator didn't care.  
69 of some personality characteristic of the perpetrator.  
70 the perpetrator has destructive tendencies.  
71 the perpetrator thought they could escape punishment.  
72 the perpetrator takes delight in causing pain.  
73 the perpetrator enjoys inflicting pain.  
74 the perpetrator wanted to feel powerful.  
75 the perpetrator didn't have the maturity or life-knowledge to cope differently.  
76 the perpetrator lost control of their emotions.  
77 the perpetrator thought they had good reasons for their actions.  
78 the perpetrator has a drug or alcohol problem.  
79 the perpetrator was trying to make a name for themselves.  
80 the perpetrator was deceitful.  
81 the perpetrator took advantage of me or someone else.  
82 the perpetrator took advantage of the situation.  
83 the perpetrator is selfish.  
84 the perpetrator wanted a rush or thrill.  
85 the perpetrator enjoyed it.  
86 the perpetrator is an entitled person.  
87 the perpetrator is a powerful person.

- 88 the perpetrator has resources that made them powerful.  
89 the perpetrator was determined to make it happen.  
90 the perpetrator didn't see me as a person.  
91 the perpetrator did not see their victim(s) as a human being.  
92 the perpetrator is not very smart.  
93 the perpetrator was "sick" or mentally ill and needed help.  
94 the perpetrator had unfair beliefs or prejudiced beliefs.  
95 the perpetrator made an inexcusable mistake.  
96 the perpetrator believed they were entitled to what happened.  
97 the perpetrator had thoughts or feelings they should not have had.  
98 the perpetrator did not have thoughts or feelings that they should have had.  
99 the perpetrator betrayed me or someone else.  
100 the perpetrator planned it.  
101 the perpetrator abuses their power.  
102 the perpetrator abused their power.  
103 the perpetrator hid their true intentions well.  
104 the perpetrator knew they could overpower me or someone else.  
105 the perpetrator was physically stronger than the victim.  
106 the perpetrator is manipulative.  
107 the perpetrator was manipulative.  
108 the perpetrator acted without thinking.  
109 the perpetrator does not understand right from wrong.  
110 the perpetrator didn't notice they were causing someone to suffer.  
111 the perpetrator did not know any better.  
112 the perpetrator cannot control how they behave.  
113 social or political forces created the conditions for the situation.  
114 others do not care if these types of things happen.  
115 others failed to see the warning signs.  
116 others didn't know it was happening but should have.  
117 others are a poor judge of character.  
118 others are neglectful.  
119 others abandoned me.  
120 others prioritized their own wellbeing above mine.  
121 others didn't see it as their problem.  
122 others should have anticipated it.  
123 others should have done more to make sure that this kind of thing doesn't happen.  
124 others taught the perpetrator to act this way.  
125 others were too weak to make a difference.  
126 others raised the perpetrator to think it was ok.  
127 an institution or system didn't do enough to protect against it.  
128 others let it happen.  
129 others were too afraid to get involved to stop it.  
130 others betrayed me.  
131 someone with good intentions made matters worse.  
132 others didn't care.

133 others are deceitful.  
134 others acted immorally.  
135 others encouraged the perpetrator.  
136 others enjoyed seeing me suffer.  
137 others made a mistake.  
138 others were on the perpetrators side.  
139 others were incompetent.  
140 powerful people decided it didn't matter.  
141 others are prejudiced.  
142 society protects perpetrators.  
143 society doesn't do enough to prevent violence.  
144 media encourages violence.  
145 a system or institution is flawed or corrupt.  
146 society promotes violence.  
147 society is accepting of violence.  
148 a higher power did not give me the strength to prevent it from happening.  
149 a higher power wanted it to happen.  
150 an evil force wanted to corrupt me.  
151 a higher power was testing me.  
152 it was the will of a higher power.  
153 a higher power allowed it.  
154 a higher power decided I needed to experience something terrible.  
155 evil forces were at work.  
156 a higher power has a plan.  
157 these things are bound to happen to someone.  
158 whatever is going to happen, will happen.  
159 life is a matter of fortune.  
160 things just didn't work out in my favor.  
161 it's just the way things lined up.  
162 of a random series of events.  
163 an unpredictable chain of events led to it.  
164 of chance.  
165 it was just bad luck.  
166 no one could have known it would happen.  
167 things like this happen at random.  
168 life is random.  
169 of a fluke.  
170 it just happened, and no one was at fault.  
171 it was beyond anyone's control.  
172 no one could have prevented it.