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For more information on DARVO see

- What is DARVO? <http://dynamic.uoregon.edu/jjf/defineDARVO.html>
- Freyd, J.J. (1997) [Violations of power, adaptive blindness, and betrayal trauma theory](#). *Feminism & Psychology*, 7, 22-32.
- Veldhuis, C. B., & Freyd, J. J. (1999). [Groomed for silence, groomed for betrayal](#). In M. Rivera (Ed.), *Fragment by Fragment: Feminist Perspectives on Memory and Child Sexual Abuse* (pp. 253-282). Charlottetown, PEI Canada: Gynergy Books.
- Freyd, J.J.& Birrell, P.J. (2013). [Blind to Betrayal](#). John Wiley & Sons.

Perpetrator Responses to Victim Confrontation: DARVO and Victim Self-Blame

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Introduction

Freyd (1997) proposed that perpetrators of interpersonal violence Deny allegations of abuse, Attack the credibility of the victim, and Reverse Victim and Offender roles (DARVO) when confronted. This is the first study to investigate DARVO as a unitary concept and its relation with victim self-blame.

Project goals:

- (1) Empirically assess DARVO as experienced during a confrontation
- (2) Examine whether exposure to more DARVO during a confrontation is associated with higher victim self-blame

Method

Participants were 138 undergraduate students (75.4% women) attending a large, public northwestern university, ranged in age from 18 to 33 years ($M = 19.54$), and were largely White (66.7%) and heterosexual (94.9%).

Participants completed the study through an online survey. Before responding to the measures, individuals were instructed to recall and describe a time they confronted someone over a wrong-doing.

Self-blame: a modified version of a 5-item victim blame attribution measure (Yamawaki, Ostensen, & Brown, 2009) was used to assess the extent to which respondents felt responsible for the wrong-doing (the “incident”) perpetrated against them. Items include, “*I feel I should be blamed for this incident,*” and “*I feel I provoked this incident.*” Responses were made on a 7-point Likert scale and for two time points (at time of confrontation and at time of survey).

DARVO Questionnaire: A 72-item questionnaire to measure DARVO was developed for the present study. Items consist of phrases representing each component of DARVO. Responses are made on a 5-point Likert scale and indicate the similarity between the item phrase and what respondents experienced during their reported confrontation (ranging from 1 = “*Not at all like this*” to 5 = “*Almost exactly like this*”).

- **Denial** item example: “*I don’t know what you are talking about*”
- **Attack** item example: “*You’re acting crazy*”
- **Reverse** item example: “*I’m the real victim here*”

In addition to the three subscales, apology items were included to capture phrases of remorse and apology.

Results

DARVO: Approximately 71.7% of respondents heard denial, attack, and reversal of victim and offender phrases used together during the confrontation.

Table 1. Correlations of DARVO Subscales and Apology Items

	1.	2	3
1. Deny	--		
2. Attack	.788**	--	
3. Reverse	.708**	.826**	--
4. Apology	.07	-.01	.06

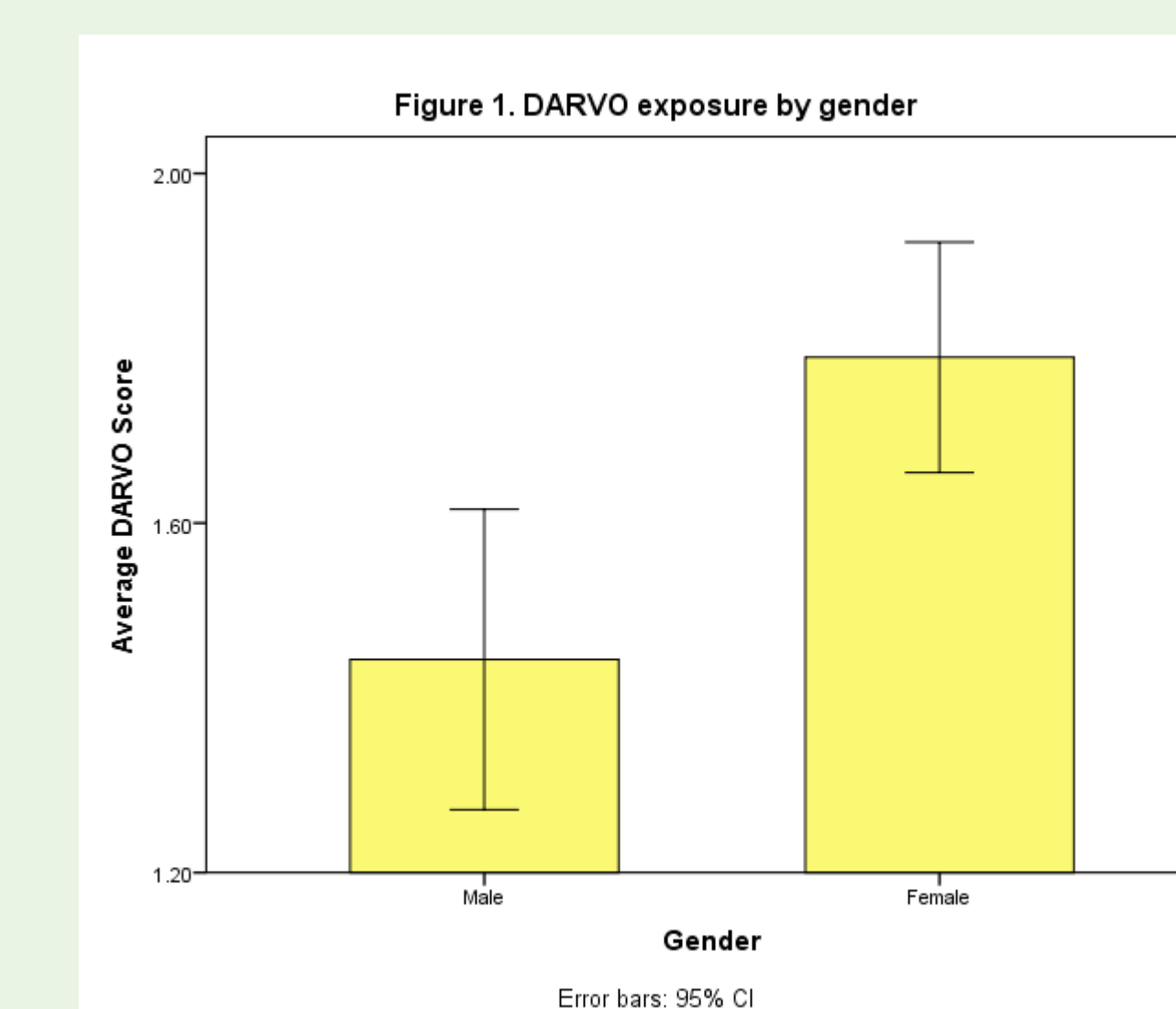
** $p < .01$

Table 1 shows the correlations among the components of DARVO. Table 2 shows the correlations between DARVO and self-blame.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation Coefficient Table for DARVO and Self-Blame

	Self-blame then	Self-blame now
Deny	.253**	.094
Attack	.321**	.171*
Reverse	.287***	.201**
Total DARVO	.312**	.168*
Apologize	-.02	-.05

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$ *** $p < .001$



A t -test also revealed women ($M = 1.78$, $SD = .67$) were exposed to more DARVO than men ($M = 1.44$, $SD = .47$), $t(71.13) = -3.15$, $p = .002$.

Discussion

Analyses suggest that DARVO is commonly experienced by those engaging in confrontations with individuals who have perpetrated a wrong-doing, including interpersonal violence. This appears to be especially true of women, perhaps reflecting perceptions that women are more easily socially influenced (Eagly & Wood, 1982).

The positive relationship between DARVO exposure and feelings of self-blame may point to a possible function of DARVO: to confuse and silence victims, as self-blame is associated with delayed or non-disclosure of abuse (Ahrens, 2006; Kellogg & Hoffman, 1997; Ullman, 2007).

Future research with DARVO should include experimental methods, samples exclusively of interpersonal violence victims, and studies examining whether DARVO is characteristic of those who are purposefully concealing perpetration.