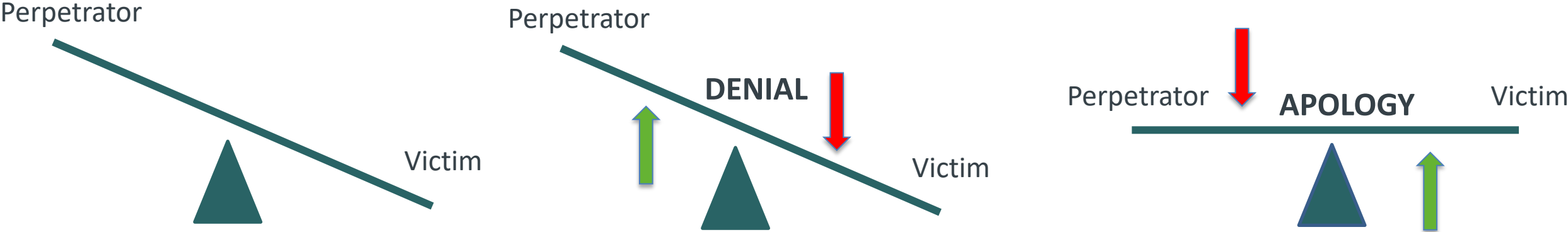


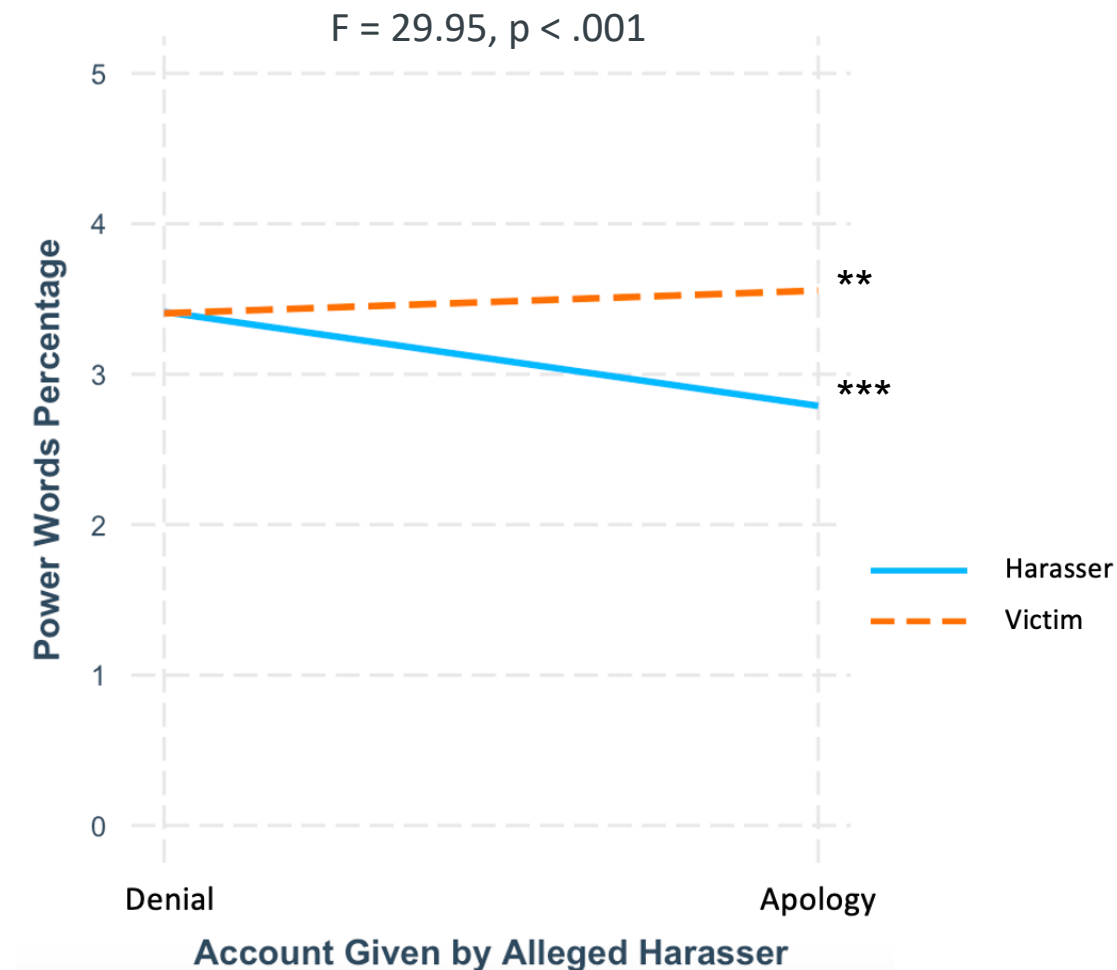
# Sexual Misconduct Apologies Transfer Power from the Victimizer to the Victimized

Samantha J. Dodson, Rachael D. Goodwin, & Kristina A. Diekmann



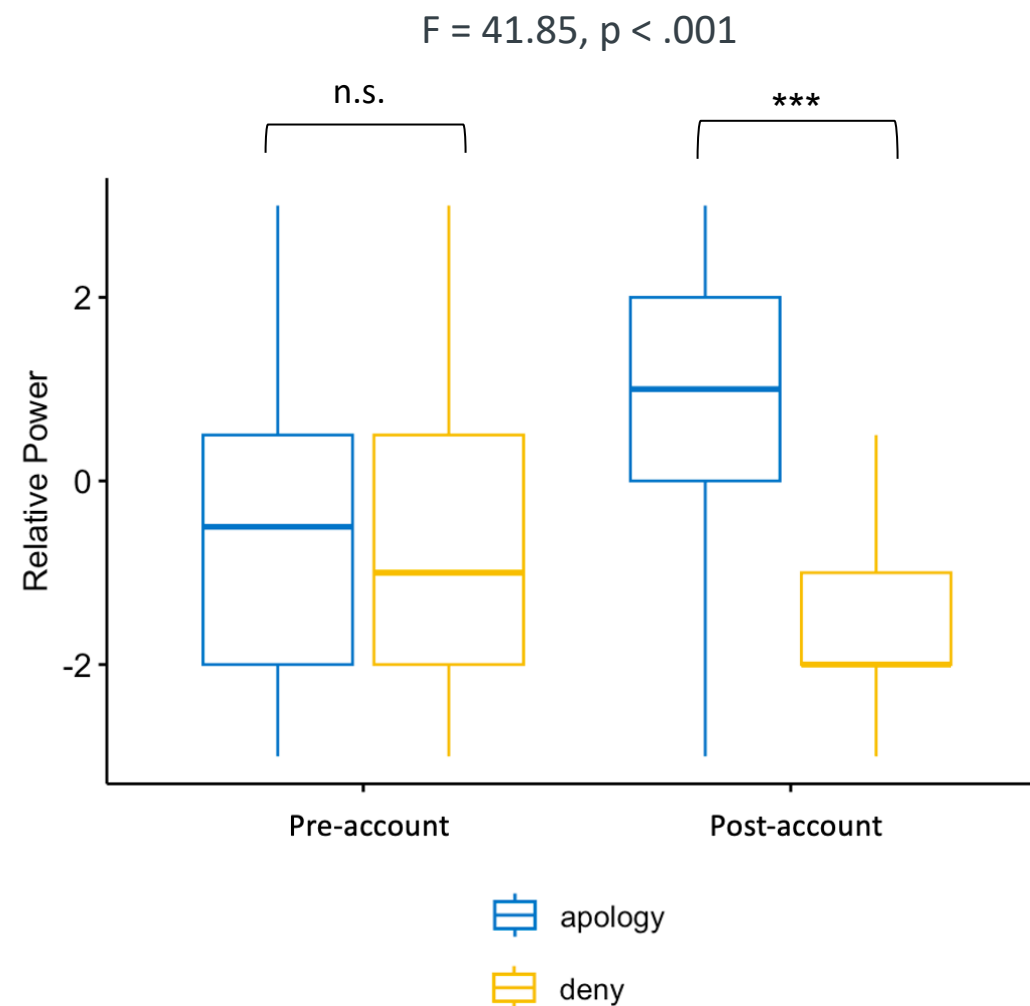
# Study 1 Method

- Data: Tweets directed toward alleging victims (N = 43,275) and accused harassers (N = 228,030) during the #MeToo movement
- IV: Account given by alleged harasser (0 = denial, 1 = apology)
- DV: % of power words/total words in each tweet
- For harassers, apologies were associated with significantly **less** power words than denials (B = -.67, p < .001)
- For victims, apologies were associated with significantly **more** power words than denials (B = .30, p = .02)



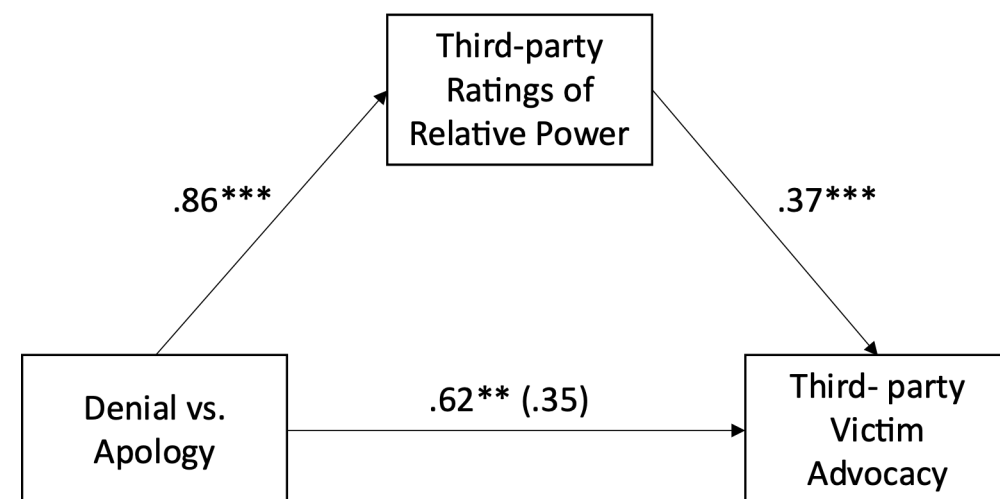
# Study 2 Method

- Participants & Procedure: 211 online participants read a vignette where a CEO harassed his administrative assistant
- IV: Account given by alleged perpetrator (0 = denial, 1 = apology)
- DV: Relative power (2 items, binary -3 to 3 scale)
  - **Measured before and after account**
- Following an apology, the accusing victim was perceived as **more** powerful than the alleged harasser ( $M = .80, SD = 1.45$ ) than before the account
- Following a denial, the accused victim was seen as **less** powerful than the alleged harasser ( $M = -1.43, SD = 1.26$ ) than before the account



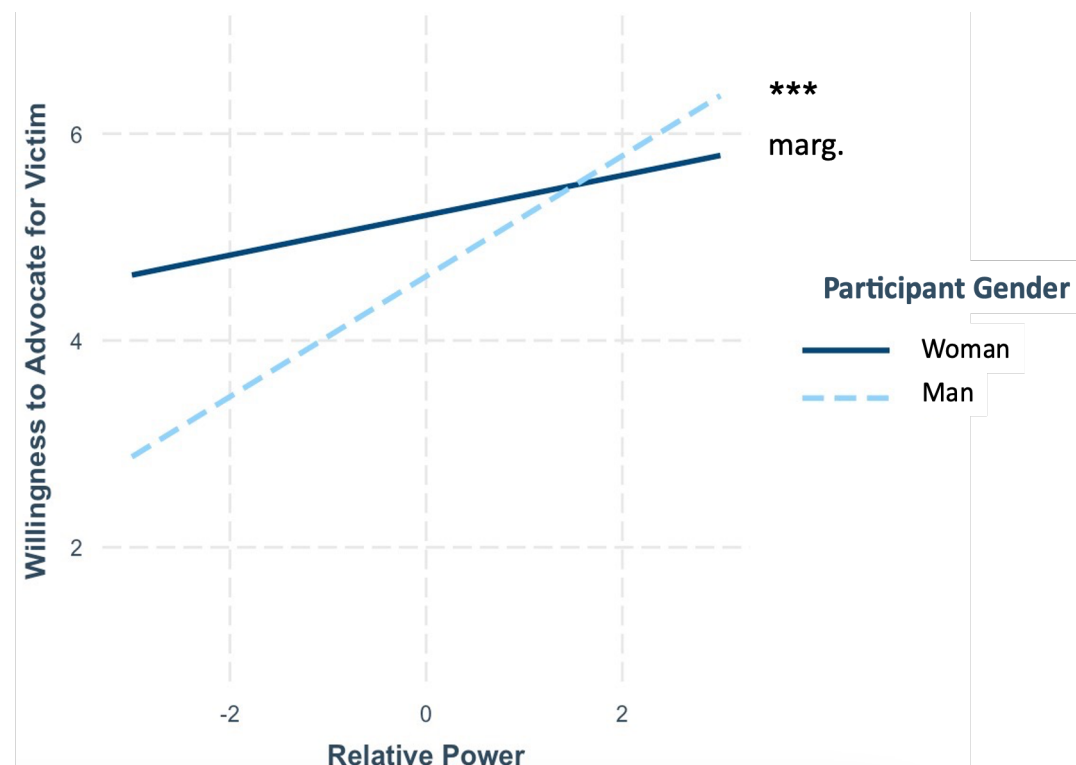
# Study 3 Method

- Participants & Procedure: 198 online participants were told they were interacting with one male and one female, which were actually pre-programmed responses. The female accused the male of sexually harassing her while the participant was not in the group chat.
- IV: Account given by the alleged perpetrator (0 = denial, 1 = apology)
- Mediator: Relative power
- Moderator: Participant gender (0 = man, 1 = woman)
- DV: Likelihood of advocating for victim (4 items, 7-point Likert scale)
- Relative power mediated the relationship between account and third-party advocacy (Ind. effect = .27, 95% CI [.12, .47])



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- Relative power mediated the relationship between account and third-party advocacy (Ind. effect = .27, 95% CI [.12, .47])
- Relative power increased men’s likelihood of advocacy ( $B = .58, p < .001$ ) to a greater extent than women ( $B = .19, p = .06$ )



# Research Question

During the #MeToo Movement, victims attempted to take back their power by making public allegations against their harassers.

Can allegations restore the victim's power in the eyes of others?

It might depend on the perpetrator's response...

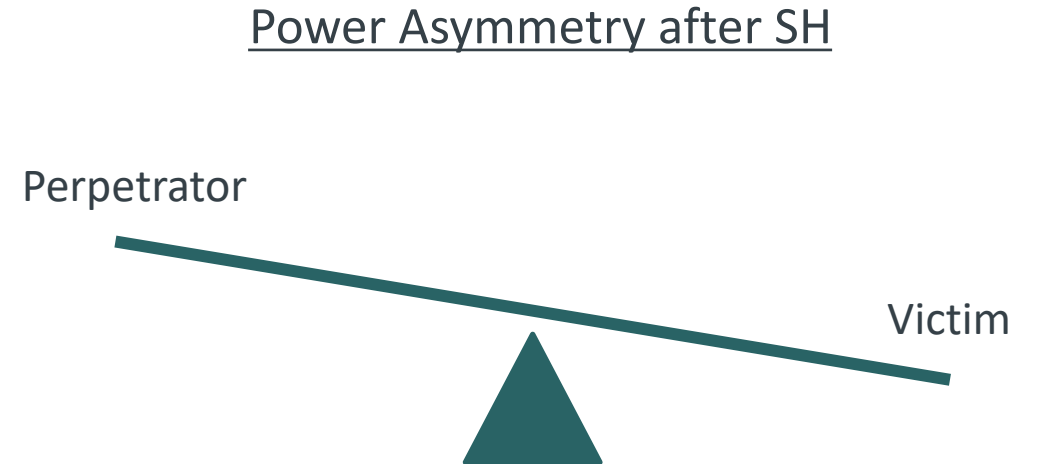


# Power and Sexual Harassment

- Power is an individual's ability to exert their will and influence outcomes in others' lives
- Power is a relative capacity, in that it is defined in comparison to the power held, or perceived to be held, by others
- Sexual harassment is an organizational issue of power that can arise when one individual seeks to exercise their will over another
- Power has been used to explain why people sexually harass and the contextual and relationship dynamics that increase the likelihood of sexual harassment
  - For instance, having positional or interpersonal power can increase the tendency to abuse, objectify, and denigrate others at work

# Power and Sexual Harassment

- Not only can a power imbalance lead to harassing behavior....
- We posit that alleged harassers are perceived by third parties to have significantly more power after they are alleged of sexual harassment
- We believe this might be the case because in making an allegation, an accusing victim concedes that the perpetrator ostensibly and unilaterally forced their will upon the victim
- Can the power rebalance in the eyes of others?





# Restoring Power via Ally Behavior

- Ally behavior is intentional, extra-role behaviors enacted by organizational actors with relative social power and privilege meant to support organizational employees who identify as belonging to relatively disadvantaged social groups
  - Relational ally behavior is non-reciprocal
  - The organizational actor sacrifices privileged resources for a socially disadvantaged employee(s)
- Disrupting power imbalances is necessary to move toward equity
- An “exchange of power [is] inherent in true allyship” (Erskine & Bilimoria, 2019)
- “To reduce inequity, dominant group members must be willing to share—and in certain cases even surrender—some of their own power” (Knowlton et al., 2022)

# Apologies as Ally Behavior

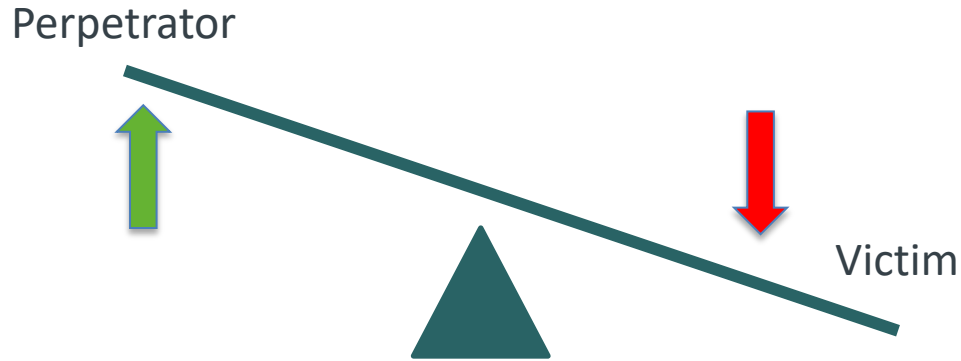
- We argue that one ally behavior that could help close the power gap between alleged harassers and their accusing victims is a **public apology**
  - Statement whereby the alleged harasser acknowledges their actions, shows remorse, and takes blame and responsibility
- “What makes an apology work is the exchange of...power between the offender and the offended...” (Lazare, 1995, p. 42)
  - Apologies concede to the victim’s concerns and express humility
  - Thus, apologies should close the perceived power gap

# Apologies as Ally Behavior

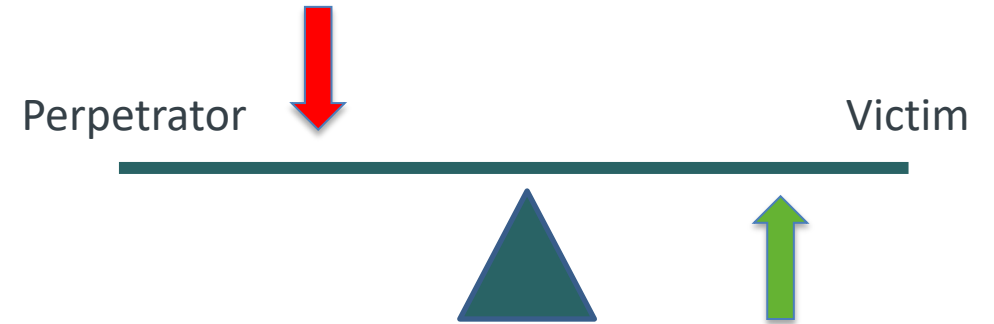
- In contrast, **denials** often act as a vehicle to shame and discredit alleging victims
  - A statement whereby an allegation is explicitly declared untrue, acknowledging no regret or responsibility
  - Most common response to sexual harassment allegations
- Denials continue to force the alleged harasser's will upon the accusing victim by denying her reconciliation
  - Thus, denials might widen the perceived power gap

# Apologies & Denials in the #MeToo Era: Victim Power

Power Asymmetry after Denial



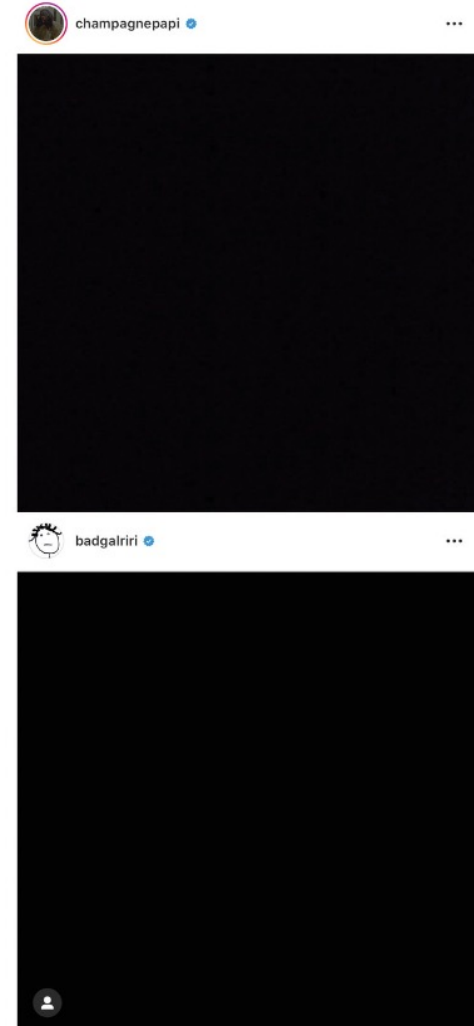
Power Asymmetry after Apology



*Hypothesis 1.* Apologies will increase, and denials will decrease, third-party perceptions of the accusing victim's power relative to the accused harasser.

# Consequences of Power Shifts

- We theorize that ally behavior might be contagious (e.g., #BlackLivesMatter squares), in that others are more willing to engage in ally work when they see others do so
- Hypothesis 2. Third-party ratings of the victim's power relative to the alleged harasser will positively mediate the relationship between the account given by the harasser (apology vs. denial) and third-party willingness to advocate for the victim.



# Consequences of Power Shifts

- Women tend to side with the victim, and are more likely to engage in supportive behaviors toward female victims
- Men can be more hesitant to engage in gender-based allyship and even interact with women colleagues, especially when sexual harassment allegations are involved
- Hypothesis 3. Third-party gender will moderate the relationship between ratings of the victim's power relative to the harasser and their willingness to advocate for the victim, such that the positive relationship between relative power and willingness to advocate for the victim will be stronger for men than women.

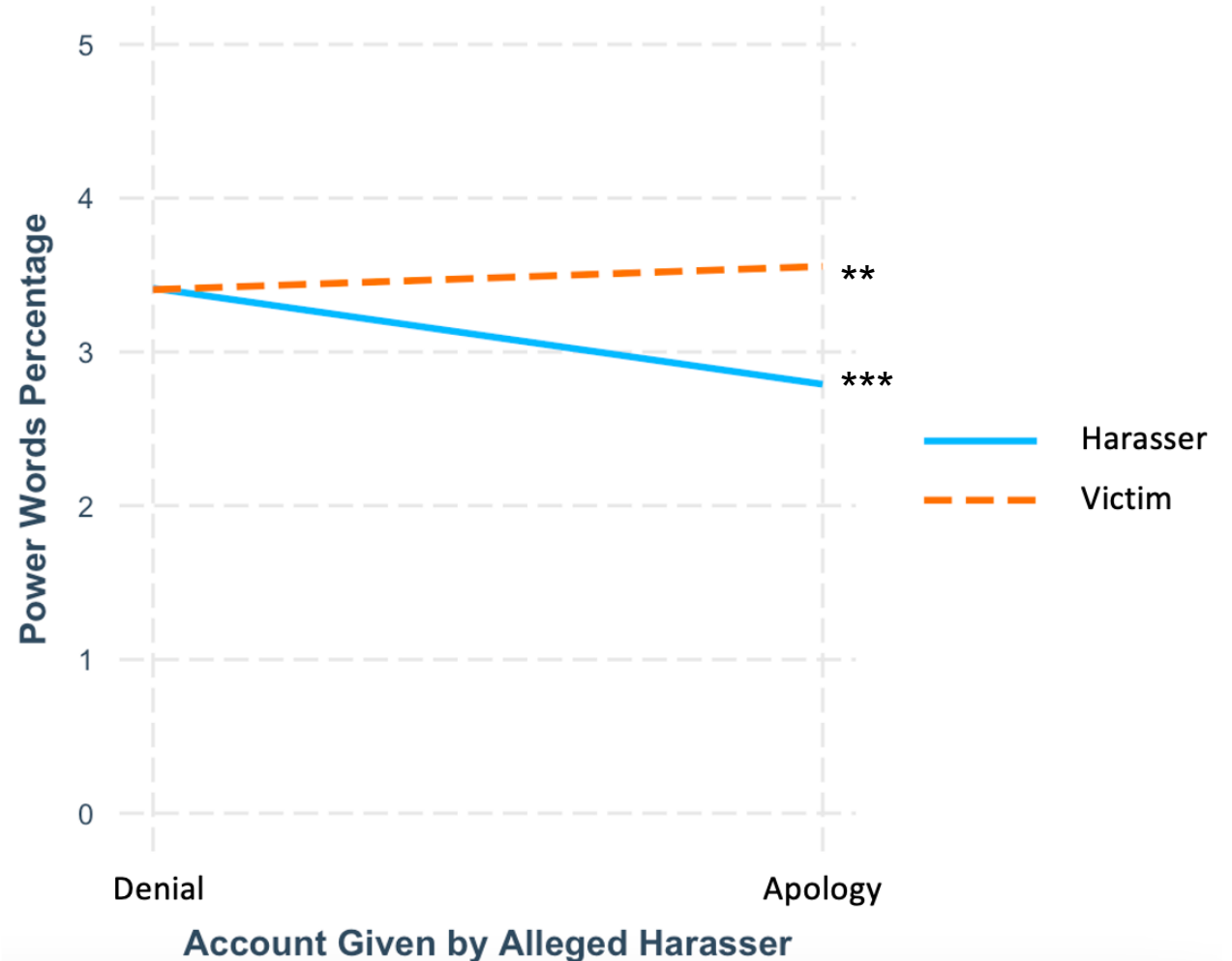
# Study 1 Method

- Utilized existing dataset of tweets directed toward victims who made allegations and perpetrators who were accused during the #MeToo movement (October 2017-June 2018)
  - N = 228,030 tweets toward alleged perpetrators, 43,275 tweets toward accusing victims
- IV: Account given by the alleged perpetrator (0 = denial, 1 = apology)
- DV: % of power words/total words in each tweet
  - Coded for power language in tweets using the Harvard IV power dictionary (624 words suggestive of power, status, and influence)
  - LIWC program was used to calculate percentages
- Controls: Power of the accused over the victim, harassment severity, repeat harassment, tweet target gender, media coverage



# Study 1 Results

- 2 (denial vs. apology) x 2 (victim vs. perpetrator) ANCOVA revealed a significant interaction ( $F = 29.95, p < .001$ )
- For perpetrators, apologies were associated with significantly **fewer** power words than denials ( $B = -.67, SE = .04, p < .001$ )
- For victims, apologies were associated with significantly **more** power words than denials ( $B = .30, SE = .12, p = .02$ )
- Because the tweets don't capture relative power, this isn't a direct hypothesis test. However, the results support the idea that a transfer of power is occurring.



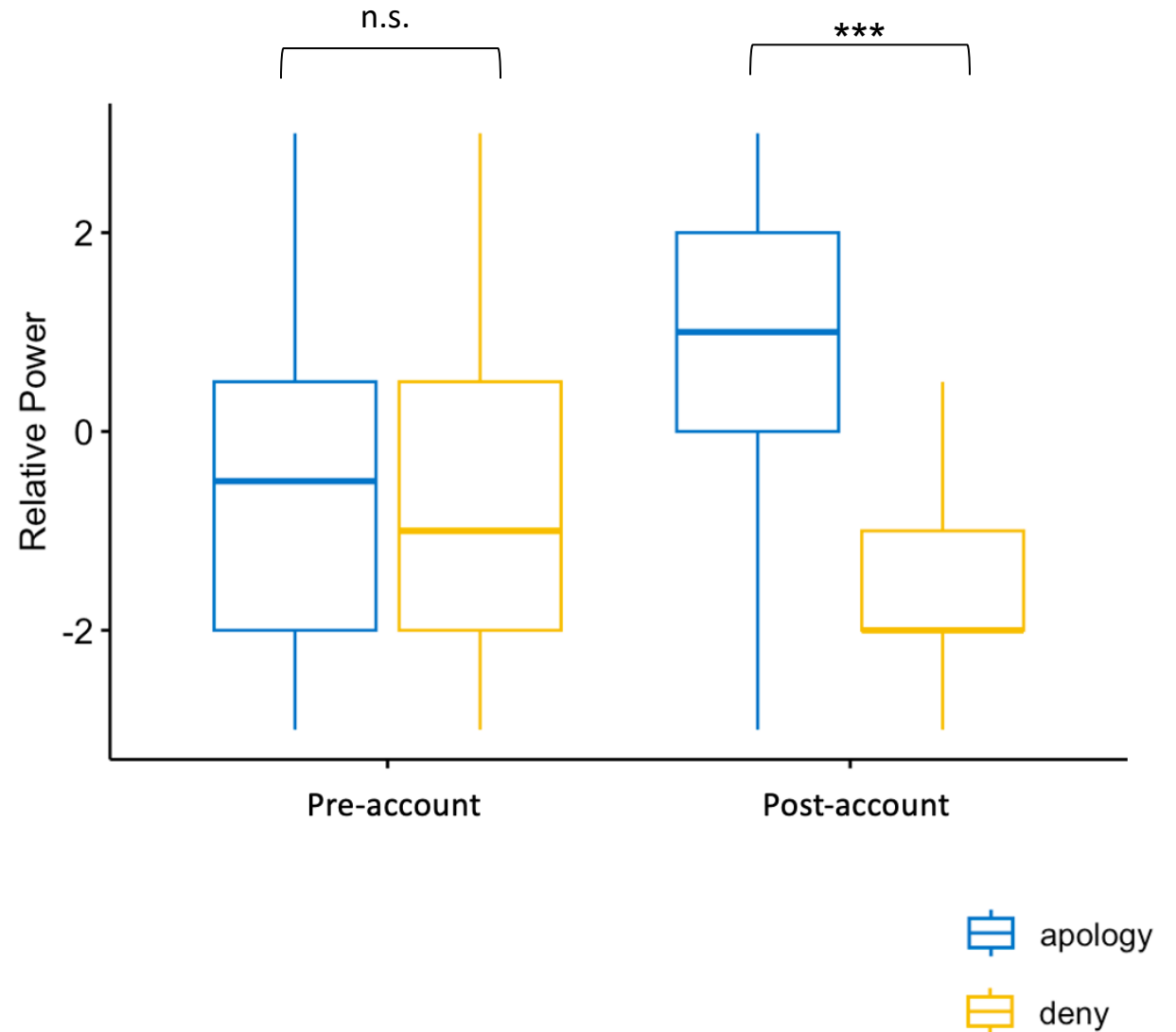


# Study 2 Method

- Participants: 211 participants from Academic Prolific after exclusions
- Procedure: Participants read a vignette where a CEO harassed his administrative assistant (modeled after Cuomo allegations).
- IV: Account given by the alleged perpetrator (0 = denial, 1 = apology)
- DV: Relative power
  - Two binary items on a scale from -3 to 3
  - ([Accusing victim] is weak/strong relative to [Alleged harasser], ([Accusing victim] is little control/lots of control relative to [Alleged harasser])
  - Captured before and after the account was given

# Study 2 Results

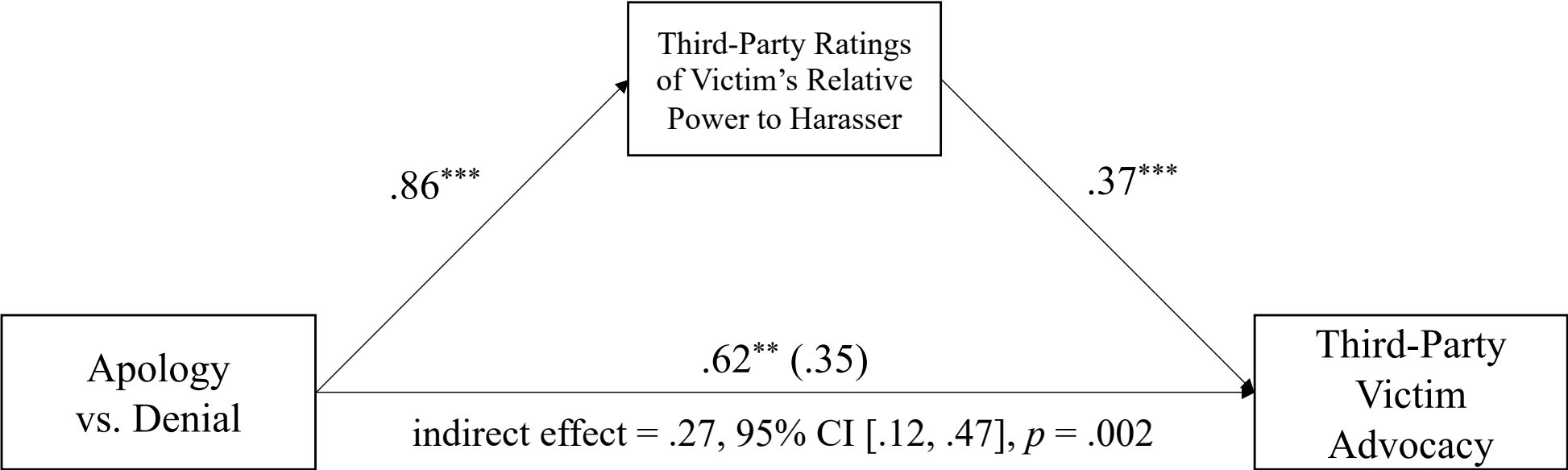
- Two-way repeated measures ANOVA of relative power before and after account was significant ( $F = 41.85, p < .001$ )
- Relative power scores differed after the account ( $t(202.89) = 11.92, p < .001$ )
- Following an apology, the accusing victim was perceived as **more** powerful than the alleged harasser ( $M = .80, SD = 1.45$ )
- Following a denial, the accused victim was seen as **even less** powerful than the alleged harasser ( $M = -1.43, SD = 1.26$ )
- **Hypothesis 1 was supported**



# Study 3 Method

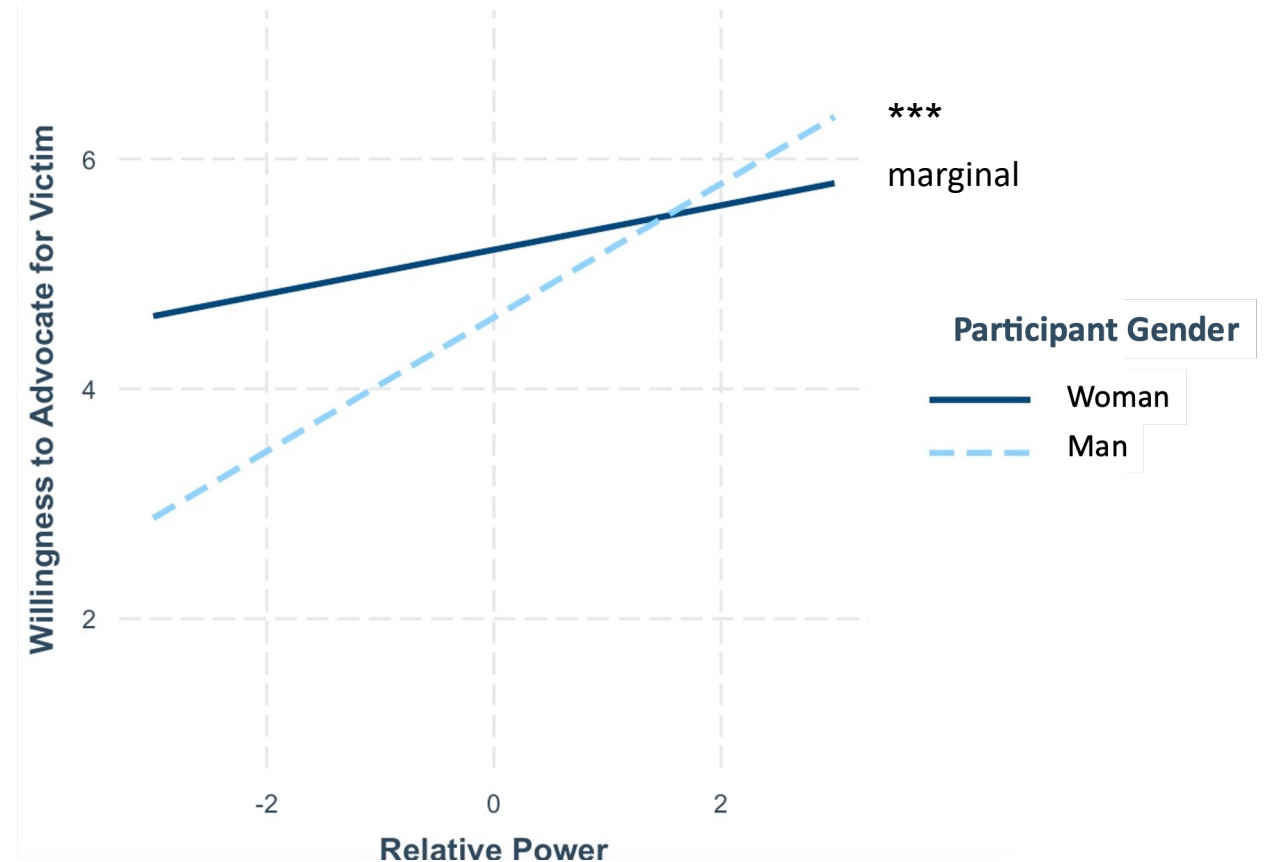
- Participants: 198 participants from Academic Prolific after exclusions
- Procedure: Participants were told they were interacting with two individuals (one male, one female), but they were actually computer “confederates.” The female confederate accused the male of sexually harassing her when the two were privately chatting while the participant was not present.
- IV: Account given by the alleged perpetrator (0 = denial, 1 = apology)
- Mediator: Relative power (added two additional items to Study 2 measure)
- Moderator: Participant gender (0 = man, 1 = woman)
- DV: Likelihood of advocating for victim
  - Four items of advocacy behaviors; captured likelihood to engage (1 = Not at all, 7 = Very likely)
  - Example: Would you stand up for [the victim] against other team members if necessary?

# Study 3 Results



# Study 3 Results

- Participant gender moderated the relationship between relative power and advocacy ( $B = -.39$ ,  $SE = .15$ ,  $p = .01$ )
- Relative power led to the likelihood of advocacy for men ( $B = .58$ ,  $SE = .11$ ,  $p < .001$ ) to a greater extent than for women ( $B = .19$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $p = .06$ )
- **Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were supported**



Thank you!

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