

A Critical Discourse Analysis of the Language of Male Victimhood:

A Case Study of the Kavanaugh Supreme Court Nomination and Confirmation Process

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Introduction

Upon the retirement of Justice Kennedy, Judge Kavanaugh from the 4th Circuit Court of Appeals was nominated by President Trump for the ninth seat on the Supreme Court bench. Confirmation hearings in the Senate were scheduled to begin September 4, 2018. Issues surrounding documents from Kavanaugh's time with the Bush Administration¹, past legal decisions², and his association with known sexual-harasser Judge Kozinski³ were discussed in the first three days of testimony. On September 12, *The Intercept* reported that Senator Feinstein possessed a letter of a woman accusing Judge Kavanaugh of sexual assault but refused to reveal the letter to the other members of the Senate Judiciary Committee.⁴ The *Washington Post* ran a story on September 16 revealing the identity of the accuser, Dr. Christine Blasey Ford. Thus began two weeks of investigations, commentary by all members of the political field, and political maneuvering. The language of President Trump, Judge Kavanaugh, and other prominent and powerful conservatives utilized victim-ideology to elicit sympathy for Kavanaugh in order to uphold hegemonic power structures and ensure Kavanaugh's confirmation to the Supreme Court.

Background

Employing critical discourse analysis demonstrates how language supports dominant power structures. According to Salah Mohamed, "critical discourse analysis is influenced by the works of Marx and Foucault and founded on the concept that discourse is critical in upholding or providing legitimacy for inequality, injustice and oppression within a given community or

¹ Charlie Savage, "Leaked Kavanaugh Documents Discuss Abortion and Affirmative Action," *New York Times*, September 6, 2018.

² *Ibid.*

³ Stephanie Kirchgaessner, "Kavanaugh Clerk Hire Casts Light on Link to Judge Forced to Quit in #MeToo Era," *The Guardian*, October 1, 2018.

⁴ Sophie Tatum, "Brett Kavanaugh's Nomination: A Timeline," *CNN*, October 2019.

society.”⁵ Similar to Mohamed, this paper seeks to look at hegemonic power through a critical lens.

The language that Kavanaugh and his supporters utilized is reminiscent of ‘false-victim ideology,’ a term journalist Aaron Freedman coined in 2019.⁶ This ideology, Aaron states, emerges as “the feeling that once-marginalized groups — women, immigrants, people of color — are now replacing white men at the top of the social hierarchy.”⁷ This ideology is commonly used by white men who feel their high position in society is at risk of being taken by the “other”, whether it be women, people of color, or other identifiable groups.⁸ However, there is no significant academic research into the concept of “false-victim” ideology. The scholarship of Dr. Bar-Tal and his team of researchers at Tel-Aviv University explores the ideology behind both groups and individuals who perceive themselves as victims. According to Bar-Tal: “It suggests that individuals define themselves as a victim if they believe that: (1) they were harmed; (2) they were not responsible for the occurrence of the harmful act; (3) they could not prevent the harm; (4) they are morally right and suffering from injustice done to them; and (5) they deserve sympathy.”⁹ Those who perceive themselves incorrectly as victims often do so to elicit sympathy.¹⁰ Analyzing the language of those who self-identify as victims is useful in order to understand how the users uphold dominant power structures.

The power structure androcentrism is evident and pervasive in modern American society. In the case of the Kavanaugh hearings, questions about sexual violence emerged with

⁵ Salah Mohamed, “Sexual Harassment Gender, Power, Ideology and Time: A Case Study of the Hill-Thomas and Ford-Kavanaugh Senate Hearings,” AUC DAR Home, 2019.

⁶ Aaron Freedman, “Opinion: False Victimhood Is Driving Young White Men to Murder,” BuzzFeed News, BuzzFeed, April 5, 2019.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Bar-Tal, 232 as sourced in C.J. Sykes, “A Nation of Victims: The Decay of the American Character”, St. Martin’s Press: New York, 1992.

¹⁰ Ibid.

accusations of assault from Dr. Blasey-Ford. In feminist discourse, sexual violence is seen as resulting from imbalances in power among the sexes which allows men to take advantage of women. Critical discourse analysis allows us to view language as a mechanism that upholds power structures, such as androcentrism or racism. In the case of this paper, critical discourse analysis is employed as a method to understand how the language used by Kavanaugh and his supporters upholds dominant power structures of androcentrism.

Literature Review

The term “false victimhood” originated from a BuzzFeed News Article by journalist Aaron Freeman in which he uses the term to talk about a reaction by some to social movements countering hegemonic cultural values.¹¹ This term is also used to describe Trump, Kavanaugh, and other conservative figures in media with articles by journalist Drew Margry at GQ.¹² Academic work on the prominence of victim-playing and victim-making ideology in Canada and the United States has also been conducted by Dr. Gordon at the University of Ottawa.¹³ Psychological studies on “victim-playing,” a phenomenon when the aggressor refutes accusations by acting if they are the true victim, have existed for decades. However, the application of this ideology to politics by academics has become more common in the Trump era, especially in the field of political psychology. Studies and articles by Dr. Stephanie Sarkis, a renowned Ph.D. in psychology,¹⁴ and researchers, including Bar-Tal and his team at Tel-Aviv University, have conducted work on the psychological hallmarks of victim ideology in politics.¹⁵

¹¹ Freedman, “Opinion: False Victimhood”

¹² Drew Magary. “Brett Kavanaugh and the Arbiters of Victimhood,” GQ, Conde Nast, September 21, 2018.

¹³ Kelly Gordon, “Mobilizing Victimhood: Blaming and Claiming the Victim in Conservative Discourse in Canada,” PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 2018

¹⁴ Stephanie Sarkis, “Gaslighters: Aggressors Playing the Victim,” Forbes, April 27, 2019,

¹⁵ Daniel Bar-Tal et al., “A Sense of Self-Perceived Collective Victimhood in Intractable Conflicts”

The field of linguistics has also seen research on relevant topics. Mohamed conducted research on the language of the Kavanaugh and Thomas nomination hearings, arguing that the language of the two judges during the two hearings was similar because of the use of logical fallacies and literary topos.¹⁶ Other linguistic studies, such as one conducted by Dr. Magdalena Szczyrbak, reveals how the use of “Believing mental verbs (think, believe, understand) and common communication verbs (say, tell, talk)”¹⁷ reveal the degree of certainty Ford and Kavanaugh have in their accounts of the alleged assault.

Discourse analysis regarding the media coverage of the Kavanaugh confirmation process was conducted by Holly Amos to reveal use of themes “Us vs Them, Mockery and Disbelief and Reclaiming of Power”¹⁸ Other comparisons, such as one conducted by Jasmine Tirronen, also employ a discourse analysis of “Us versus Them” themes on CNN as compared to Fox News regarding the Kavanaugh nomination.¹⁹ A similar comparison between Fox and CNN, by Miriam Hinternes, analyzes the Kavanaugh nomination using a codebook in order to exemplify the differences in framing and the overall quality of the two networks.²⁰ Work by Dr. Madison Pollino in the field of communication studies reveals how the language surrounding the Kavanaugh nominations exemplified the media’s hegemonic narrative of gender that acts to codify and legitimize those in dominant positions.²¹

¹⁶ Mohamed, “Sexual Harassment Gender, Power, Ideology and Time”.

¹⁷ Magdalena Szczyrbak, “Epistemic Stance in the Kavanaugh Confirmation Hearing: Focus on Mental and Communication Verbs.” *Discourse and Interaction* 12, no. 2 (Dec. 2019): 72.

¹⁸ Holly Amos, “How in which is the Brett Kavanaugh Rape Case Discussed and Reported Throughout the Media: A Critical Discourse Analysis.” Bachelor’s Thesis, Manchester Metropolitan University, 2019, 2.

¹⁹ Jasmine Tirronen, “Wording, Semantic Fields and Othering Discourses in News Media,” *ARCADA*, 2019.

²⁰ Miriam Hinternes, “Same News, Different Stories: Framing, Valence and Journalistic Quality in US News Reporting on the Brett Kavanaugh Allegations,” *Bachelors Thesis*, University of Twente, 2019.

²¹ Madison Pollino, “(Mis)Representations of Sexual Violence: The Brett Kavanaugh and Christine Blasey Ford Testimonies,” *Journal of Critical Studies in Media Communication* 37, no. 1 (2020): 71-84.

Although work on the psychology of victimhood and victim-playing in politics has been conducted, the use of that ideology in a discourse analysis is scarce. Although Amos' work touched on victim ideology in right-wing circles, there is no scholarship that looks exclusively and in-depth at the use of language of victim-playing psychology in the Kavanaugh Supreme Court nomination. This paper will not examine the entirety of the nomination hearings, but rather a portion of all the written or spoken words of those involved in the confirmation process. In this paper, the victim ideology exemplified by Judge Kavanaugh and his supporters will be shown to be a tool used to elicit sympathy to secure his confirmation. Furthermore, this paper will show how Kavanaugh and his supporters utilized such language in order to uphold hegemonic power structures of sexism and androcentrism.

Methodology

The primary sources examined are transcripts of the nomination hearing from Senator Graham, Judge Kavanaugh, and Dr. Blasely-Ford, and videos of White House speeches, announcements, and press conferences made by President Trump. From these sources, the hallmarks of victimhood identity, as established by Bar-Tal, include:

1. A focus on perceived harms that were uncontrollable and caused by an identifiable person or group;²²
2. An emphasis on the harms being "undeserved and unjust"²³
3. A view of the behavior of the perpetrator as immoral based upon the moral code of the self-identified victim;²⁴
4. The victim is identified as one deserving of an apology or compensation from the victim and one who deserves sympathy from a wide audience.²⁵

²² Bar-Tal, 239

²³ Ibid

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid

5. A victim will show rage and will have a desire for self-pity.²⁶
6. The victim will have concern over the action occurring to another.²⁷

Speeches and statements given by supporters of Kavanaugh will be examined utilizing the above-listed traits, which will convey that that supporters of Kavanaugh utilized victimhood-ideology to elicit public sympathy for the purpose of securing the passage of his nomination to the Supreme Court.

Results

Judge Kavanaugh

Although the language of victimhood Kavanaugh used is less dramatic when compared to President Trump or Senator Graham, he also utilizes victimhood language in order to garner sympathy. His opening statement was one of the most significant and memorable moments of the confirmation process. In his opening statement for his Senate nomination hearing Kavanaugh emphasizes his opponents' immorality, focusing on the theme of rule of law. He focuses on casting his opponents and characterizing them as immoral, the theme of the rule of law, upholding his moral character, and on his losses. Kavanaugh casts his opponents as overly partisan, and thus immoral, stating:

“Since my nomination in July, there’s been a frenzy on the left to come up with something, anything to block my confirmation. Shortly after I was nominated, the Democratic Senate leader said he would “oppose me with everything he’s got.” A Democratic senator on this committee publicly referred to me as evil.”²⁸

By characterizing Blasey-Ford’s testimony as a plot by Democratic Senators, he discredits them and characterizes them as immoral. Through this characterization he begins to cast himself as a victim by defining the attacker. He continues with this theme later in his opening, stating:

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid

“This whole two-week effort has been a calculated and orchestrated political hit, fueled with apparent pent-up anger about President Trump and the 2016 election, fear that has been unfairly stoked about my judicial record, revenge on behalf of the Clintons and millions of dollars in money from outside left-wing opposition groups”²⁹

By falsely³⁰ alleging that Democrats brought forth Ford’s testimony as a political plot by the Clinton family and left-wing interest groups, he continues to cast Democrats as his enemy, allowing him to emerge as a victim of Democrat’s plotting. By focusing on Democrats rather than Ford, Kavanaugh makes this conflict one of larger power structures and interest groups rather than an interpersonal conflict between Kavanaugh and Ford. Kavanaugh and his supporters create a conflict of a large-scale proportion to allege a conspiracy to make Kavanaugh a victim on a large scale.

Kavanaugh in his opening statement also emphasizes attacks on his character as preposterous, allowing him to appear as the higher moral authority and as one deserving of an apology from his attacker and sympathy from a wider audience. Kavanaugh states, “Dr. Ford’s allegation is radically inconsistent with my record and my character from my youth to the present day”³¹ and “Listen to the people that have known me my whole life. Listen to the people that I’ve grown up with and worked with and played with and coached with and dated and taught and gone to games with and had beers with.”³² Through his casting of himself as someone of high moral character and who has possessed this high moral character for the entirety of his life, he characterizes Ford as a liar in contrast to himself as a moral person.

²⁹ Ibid

³⁰Lisa Mascaró “Kavanaugh’s ‘Revenge’ Theory Spotlights Past with Clintons,” AP NEWS, Associated Press, October 3, 2018.

³¹ Ibid

³² “Brett Kavanaugh’s Opening Statement: Full.” The New York Times, September 27, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/26/us/politics/read-brett-kavanaughs-complete-opening-statement.html>

Kavanaugh utilizes Judeo-Christian morality common among conservatives who were the largest supporters of his nomination. He states,

“I want to give you a full picture of who I was. I never had sexual intercourse or anything close to it during high school or for many years after that. In some crowds, I was probably a little outwardly shy about my inexperience. Tried to hide that. At the same time, I was also inwardly proud of it. [...] that lack of major or rampant sexual activity in high school was a matter of faith and respect”³³

By referencing his lack of sexual activity outside of marriage and during his youth, he appeals to a moral audience of Christians who value abstaining from sexual activity outside of marriage. He also appeals to a Christian and conservative audience by focusing on the effects of the accusations by Ford on Kavanaugh’s family. He states: “Your coordinated and well-funded efforts to destroy my good name and destroy my family will not drag me out. The vile threats of violence against my family will not drive me out. You may defeat me in the final vote, but you’ll never get me to quit. Never”³⁴ Through Kavanaugh’s use of language he casts himself as a protector and defender of his family against violence. This language characterizes the accuser as a physical threat and a violent immoral person and has the dual effect of casting Kavanaugh as moral and undeserving of such treatment. He encourages his audience to feel sympathy for him by emphasizing his and his family’s losses and threats.

Kavanaugh also uses the dominant theme of law and order to explain and emphasize the perceived wrongdoings as unjust and to highlight Kavanaugh’s concern over the wrongdoing occurring to another. Kavanaugh states, “But if the mere allegation, the mere assertion of an allegation, a refuted allegation from 36 years ago is enough to destroy a person’s life and career, we will have abandoned the basic principles of fairness and due process that define our legal

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Ibid

system and our country.”³⁵ Kavanaugh also makes the accusations by Ford into an act of wrongdoing not just about him and her, but about a broader audience and society. He states, “If every American who drinks beer or every American who drank beer in high school is suddenly presumed guilty of sexual assault, we’ll be in an ugly new place in this country.”³⁶ Kavanaugh not only makes the hearing about himself and the singular incident, but also about broader social norms and dominant cultural values.

President Trump

In a video of President Trump answering questions from reporters regarding the Kavanaugh nomination process, he utilizes the language of victimhood in order to aid the passage of Kavanaugh’s nomination. As President, he was among the most vocal and adamant of Kavanaugh’s supporters. President Trump allows Kavanaugh to be the victim by depicting him as fighting against an oppressor: “I thought he was fighting people who were making very tough charges against him. [...] He’s fighting very hard. For his reputation, for his family. I thought what happened was really tough. Tough stuff”³⁷ President Trump also casts Kavanaugh as the victim by moralizing him and focusing on the perceived wrongdoings: “He is an outstanding person, an outstanding man. And for his sake and for the sake of his family, I hope he does very well. I think he has been very brutally treated”.³⁸ By using “brutally” Trump focuses on the alleged wrongdoings and highlights Kavanaugh as the harmed. Trump also focused on the unjust nature of the wrongdoing by focusing on the good moral character of Kavanaugh: “I’ve been watching this stuff for a long time. I’ve never seen anything like this going on in respect to Judge Kavanaugh, who is a high-quality person, a number one student, a top intellect, he’s never

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ “President Trump: Scary time for young men in America”, CNN, YouTube. October 2, 2018.

³⁸ Ibid

gone through anything like this.”³⁹ By emphasizing how Kavanaugh had never experienced questioning of his actions or his character, Trump emphasizes his long-standing good character, eliciting sympathy from a wide audience to help secure Kavanaugh’s nomination.

President Trump also stokes fears about the false allegations of sexual assault becoming commonplace by stating, “What’s happening here has much more to do than even with a Supreme Court Justice. It really does. You can be someone who was perfect your entire life and somebody could accuse you of something [...] and you are automatically guilty”.⁴⁰ By stoking fears and presenting a future where if the wrongdoing would become commonplace, he creates a tone of sympathy for men, and others, who could be falsely accused of sexual misconduct. A reporter from the Guardian asks, “what do you say to young men” President Trump responds: “It’s a very scary time for young men in American when you can be guilty of something you are not guilty of. This is a very very difficult time”.⁴¹ By casting all men as victims, President Trump validates a hegemonic view of sexual assault by exalting a story, in which one man alleged a false allegation of sexual assault by a woman, into a commonplace narrative of women lying about sexual assault in order to gain an advantage against men.

The theme of law and order is used by President Trump to convey moral hierarchy unto Kavanaugh to show the perceived wrongdoing is immoral and the fault of one person. President Trump states,

“It’s a tough thing going on. If you can be an exemplary person for 35 years and then somebody comes and can say you did this or that and they give three witnesses and the three witnesses at this point do not corroborate what she is saying, it’s a very scary situation where you are guilty until proven innocent. My whole life, my whole life I have heard you’re innocent until proven guilty, but now you are guilty until proven innocent. That is a very very difficult standard”⁴²

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ Ibid

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Ibid

As Trump highlights the morality of Kavanaugh for the past 35 years of his life and how that morality could be stripped away by mere words of another, President Trump legitimizes Kavanaugh's status as a victim.

President Trump also utilizes the language of law and order to make Kavanaugh the symbol of victimhood for a broader audience. He states, "Guilty until proven innocent. That's one of the very very bad things taking place right now"⁴³. President Trump distorts reality to say that men are victims of legal proceedings at the fault of accusers because Kavanaugh believes this to be his status.

In a video titled *A Lot of Women are Extremely Happy*, President Trump answers questions from reporters aboard Air Force One following another day of Kavanaugh hearings. Trump focuses on the harms being done to Kavanaugh while answering reporters' questions. A reporter asks, "Are you 100% certain that Ford named the wrong person?" Trump responds by saying, "I'm 100%, no doubt"⁴⁴. This allows Kavanaugh and his supporters to target Ford as the perpetrator of the wrongdoing of accusing the incorrect person.

President Trump also exalts Kavanaugh's moral character and defines morality based upon Kavanaugh's standards. He states, "One of the reasons I chose him is because there is nobody with a squeaky-clean past like Brett Kavanaugh. He is an outstanding person."⁴⁵ In this case, Trump is utilizing his standard of morality to convey how clean Kavanaugh's past is. By utilizing this "squeaky-clean" terminology, Trump also conveys sympathy onto Kavanaugh by exalting him as a moral person undeserving of maltreatment.

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ 'A lot of women are extremely happy': Donald Trump on Brett Kavanaugh's Confirmation.' Guardian News, YouTube. October 8, 2018.

⁴⁵ Ibid

President Trump dismantles the alleged victimization of Ford in order to portray Kavanaugh as the ‘true’ victim while making this instance into an example of a common trend. He states, “We have a lot of women who are extremely happy. A tremendous number of women”⁴⁶ In doing so, President Trump takes a group commonly seen as victimized by sexual assault and lauds their support for Kavanaugh. In doing so, President Trump upholds cultural values of men deserving sympathy and support from women in contrast to the support encouraged by liberal actors of Blasey-Ford. President Trump depicts men as the group deserving of sympathy when women make false accusations.

President Trump further defines the debate between Ford and Kavanaugh as a culture war by targeting the aggressor as not only Ford, but also the Democratic Senators. Trump states “We’re very honored that he, he was able to withstand this horrible horrible horrible attack by the Democrats. A horrible attack that nobody should have to go through”⁴⁷ Here, President Trump focuses on the attack never happening to anyone else again and highlights the aggressor as the Democrats. He emphasizes the harms with “horrible” and further makes Kavanaugh the object of sympathy. By avoiding Ford’s name, Trump also further places emphasis on Kavanaugh. Targeting Ford as the aggressor too strongly could take blame off the Democratic establishment, so Trump avoids her name in order to make this about a larger cultural phenomenon rather than an interpersonal conflict.

Senator Lindsey Graham

In Senator Graham’s questioning of Kavanaugh, he portrays Democrats as sneaky and dishonest in order to portray them as the predators that made Judge Kavanaugh their victim. His testimony was among the most vocal in his support of Kavanaugh.

⁴⁶ Ibid

⁴⁷ Ibid

“GRAHAM:

Did you meet with Senator Dianne Feinstein on August 20th?

KAVANAUGH:

I did meet with Senator Feinstein...

[...]

GRAHAM:

Did you know that her and her staff had this -- allegations for over 20 days?

KAVANAUGH:

I did not know that at the time.”⁴⁸

By alleging that Democratic Senator Feinstein kept the information about Ford secret from Kavanaugh, Senator Graham portrays the Democrats as dishonest. This portrayal allows Senator Graham to focus on how Kavanaugh was the victim. By not highlighting Ford as the aggressor, Graham allows the issue to be a cultural values clash rather than an interpersonal issue. This difference allows Senator Graham to utilize the conflict as a way to uphold hegemonic cultural values about sexual assault and gender.

By portraying Democrats as dishonest, Senator Graham also emphasizes how Kavanaugh is the victim of their immorality. Graham states,

“If you wanted an FBI investigation, you could have come to us. What you want to do is destroy this guy's life, hold this seat open and hope you win in 2020. You've said that, not me. You've got nothing to apologize for. [...] This is the most unethical sham since I've been in politics. And if you really wanted to know the truth, you sure as hell wouldn't have done what you've done to this guy.”⁴⁹

By focusing on the effects of the hearing and accusations on Kavanaugh by stating that it “ruined his life”, he uplifts Kavanaugh as someone deserving of sympathy. Senator Graham also highlights the perpetrator by referring to the hearing and their questioning as an “Unethical

⁴⁸ Graham, Lindsey “Press Release: Transcript of Graham's Remarks on Kavanaugh Nomination.” The Office of Senator Lindsey Graham, September 27, 2018.

⁴⁹ Ibid

sham”. He later refers to the event as a “despicable thing”⁵⁰ and as a “hell”.⁵¹ He portrays the Democrats as power-hungry and also exalts Kavanaugh as a fighter against bad actors,

“I cannot imagine what you and your family have gone through. Boy, you all want power. God, I hope you never get it. I hope the American people can see through this sham. That you knew about it and you held it. You had no intention of protecting Dr. Ford; none”⁵²

By emphasizing what Kavanaugh and his family have been through, Senator Graham asserts his sympathy unto Kavanaugh. He also highlights Democrats as the perpetrators, taking pressure off Ford. Graham later states, “She's as much of a victim as you are”⁵³, highlighting that Kavanaugh is a victim and the perpetrator are those exalting Ford’s story - the Democrats. This has the effect of making the interpersonal conflict between Ford and Kavanaugh a public fight that upholds hegemonic androcentrism.

Senator Graham also makes Kavanaugh the victim and one deserving of an apology and sympathy by focusing on Kavanaugh’s moral character. Graham states, “His integrity is absolutely unquestioned. He is the very circumspect in his personal conduct, harbors no biases or prejudices. He's entirely ethical, is a really decent person. He is warm, friendly, unassuming. He's the nicest person”.⁵⁴ Graham, by focusing on Kavanaugh’s friendly personality and ethical decision making, makes him into someone deserving of an apology and sympathy. Graham also uses Christian-Conservative moral values, held by Kavanaugh and many conservatives in the Senate, to judge Kavanaugh’s character. He states, “The one thing I can tell you should be proud of -- Ashley, you should be proud of this -- that you raised a daughter who had the good

⁵⁰ Ibid

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid

character to pray for Dr. Ford”.⁵⁵ Senator Graham praised Kavanaugh for his wife, Ashley, and for their child-rearing skills because their child prayed for Ms. Ford. The praise for prayer and teaching children religion is also evident in Graham’s comments, an example of him using his own morality to assess the action of others.

Conclusion

During the nomination hearing for Judge Kavanaugh, the allegations made by Ford about an alleged sexual assault by Kavanaugh emerged. Although it may never be known what truly occurred between Ford and Kavanaugh, it is clear that Kavanaugh and his supporters used victim ideology in order to secure the passage of his nomination. By demonstrating the six aspects of victimhood status identified by Dr. Bar-Tal in order to project himself as a victim, Kavanaugh and his supporters received public sympathy. In the case of the Kavanaugh nomination process, those supporting Kavanaugh used this language of victimhood as a means to secure the passage of his nomination by ensuring public sympathy for Kavanaugh. This nomination process provides a case study by which victim ideology is utilized as a means to ensure the continuation of hegemonic power structure.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

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