



# Overview of DARVO: Deny, Attack, Reverse Victim/Offender

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- Coined by Dr. Jennifer Freyd, "DARVO" (Deny, Attack, and Reverse Victim and Offender) refers to a reaction perpetrators of wrong doing, particularly sexual offenders, may display in response to being held accountable for their behavior.<sup>1</sup>
- Individual DARVO occurs when an actually guilty perpetrator assumes the role of "falsely accused" and attacks the accuser's credibility and blames the accuser of being the perpetrator of a false accusation.<sup>1, 2</sup>
- Through denying, minimizing, attacking the victim, and claiming to be merely misunderstood (possibly with hopes to be cast in a victimized light), perpetrators aim to compel their victims to doubt their own evaluations of the abuse and promote confusion surrounding its very occurrence.<sup>1, 2</sup>
- Institutional DARVO occurs when DARVO is committed by an institution (or with institutional complicity) as when an institution minimizes the harms done to victims (or that the abusive behavior occurred at all) and frames alleged perpetrations as misunderstandings or behaviors for which victims are partly to blame.<sup>1, 3</sup>
- Examples of institutional DARVO might include institutional leaders responding to disclosures by suggesting that victims are "making a big deal" about abusive behavior, are mistaken about a perpetrator's motives for abuse (e.g., there was a miscommunication), or that the victim "asked" for the abuse (e.g., through attire, behavior, etc.).
- Institutional DARVO has been shown to be especially harmful to victims and exacerbate trauma symptoms.<sup>3</sup>

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## References

1. Freyd, J. (2018). What is DARVO. Retrieved from [www.dynamic.ucoregon.edu/jjf/defineDARVO.html](http://www.dynamic.ucoregon.edu/jjf/defineDARVO.html)
2. Harsey, S.J., Zurbriggen, E.L., & Freyd, J.L. (2017). Perpetrator responses to victim confrontation: DARVO and victim self-blame. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment, & Trauma*, 26(6), 644-663.
3. Smith, C.P., & Freyd, J. (2013). Safe havens: Institutional betrayal exacerbates sexual trauma. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 26, 119-124.