



Bachelor Thesis

Flirting behavior in the MeToo era

The effects of gender roles and sexual scripts on differences between males and females in perceptions of and behavior in flirtatious situations and consequently on the #MeToo movement

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Abstract

The 2017 MeToo discussion has shed a light on many very serious issues, including the high rates of rape and sexual harassment, that had not been properly addressed before. Today, nearly two years later, great progress has already been made just by it being a topic of public discourse. However, the next step is to identify and eliminate – insofar as this is possible – the underlying structures that made the MeToo discussion necessary in the first place. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the role of heterosexual gender roles and sexual scripts on the differences between males and females in perception of and behavior in flirtatious interactions (and consequently to the MeToo discussion). Already-existing literature on the topics was combined with the data from semi-structured interviews, eventually leading to the conclusion that there do indeed seem to be a number of problematic dynamics within male and female gender roles and sexual scripts.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context and background information

On October 15, 2017, Alyssa Milano started what could arguably be called a global revolution. She posted a tweet with the following request: 'If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted, write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet'. What inspired Milano to tweet this were a number of sexual assault allegations made against Hollywood produced Harvey Weinstein. She was aware of the seriousness of the issue, but not quite of its magnitude and the way in which people would turn out to be invested in the topic (Sayej, 2017). There were two main streams that came forward from #MeToo: one of them being workplace harassment, the other being harassment in the entertainment industry; actresses, models, singers and the like coming forward about sexual intimidation and abuse. That the latter gained so much momentum is something that the original founder of the 'MeToo.' movement, Tarana Burke, feels conflicted about. Burke founded the movement in 2006 to empower survivors of sexual assault, especially focusing on young black women and girls from low socioeconomic status (MeToo., n.d.). The movement was in no way excluding people that do not fit this description, but since the black community had not yet been given a platform for this - while they have a higher-than-average risk to become victims of sexual harassment (National Organization for Women, n.d.) - Burke felt it was important that she created one for them.

In this thesis, the focus will only be on heterosexual practices. This is not to say that there are no problems that arise from homosexual sexual scripts or that such issues are not relevant to the MeToo discussion. However, since the former is the main topic of this thesis, the theories and literature that will be discussed below are mainly concerned with this.

There is a fundamental contradiction within women's gender roles and sexual scripts that makes it difficult for them to refuse sexual encounters initiated by men. Gender roles consist of social and behavioral norms that are considered to be appropriate for individuals of a specific sex (European Institute for Gender Equality, n.d.). Sexual scripts instruct people how to understand and act in sexual situations (Masters et al., 2013).

The contradiction between them consists of firstly, the idea that women are the ones responsible for declaring their (des-)interest in sexual advances, since they are assigned to role of 'gatekeepers' of their sexuality. This also partially explains where the notion of playing 'hard to get' comes from; even if a woman is interested, she is expected to first hold off a little bit, so she does not come across as being too eager. (Dai, Dong & Jia, 2013) The second part of the contradiction includes the idea that women should be agreeable, polite, and accommodating (Pugh & Becker, 2018). This means that women are simultaneously expected to tell of men and to be agreeable. At the same time, men's gender roles and sexual scripts encourage them to initiate sexual encounters. It seems

plausible that the high prevalence of sexual intimidation, harassment and coercion are partially caused by a combination of the contradiction within women's gender roles and sexual scripts and the conflicting expectations put on men and women.

In this research, several terms have already been used to refer to these subjects that are all related and quite similar to each other. Still, definitions will be provided to avoid any confusion. The United States Department of Justice defines sexual assault as 'any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient' (Miller, 2017). Sexual harassment is defined as 'form of gender-based violence encompassing acts of unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct of a sexual nature, which have a purpose or effect of violating the victim's dignity and creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment' (European Institute for Gender Equality n.d.). Lastly, sexual coercion is defined as 'unwanted sexual activity that happens when you are pressured, tricked, threatened, or forced in a non-physical way' (Office on Women's Health, n.d.). Basically, the outcome of these three is the same, namely that one party forces the other to engage in activities that the latter was not interested in. What slightly differs between them is the means of achieving that forcing. From this point onward, the term sexual assault will be adopted for referring to the types of behavior described in this paragraph.

There are numerous ways in which the MeToo discussion has affected the public discourse. For example, the conversation concerning workplace harassment has resulted in two types of strategies: on the one side, it has inspired a myriad of initiatives being proposed and installed in a large number of companies. An example of this is that roughly two-third of manager and employees in America have received or will receive training on how to, amongst others, respond to sexual harassment complaints and on what kind of behaviors cross the line (Lucas, 2019). No exact numbers of this are available for European countries, but anti-harassment policies of many European institutions have been evaluated and additional measures have been added to such policies, like awareness raising, workplace risk assessment and mandatory training (Banks, 2019) On the other side, there are also people (especially men) who have become afraid of possible repercussions and consequently consider hiring women as a risk (Parker, 2018). The conversation around workplace harassment is particularly tricky since many people actually meet their spouse at work. It is thought that approximately 15% of people get into a relationship with someone they met at work (Emery, 2018).

Since the MeToo discussion gained global attention in 2017, a lot of progress has already been made. Perhaps the most notable change was that the topic was made public, giving victims of sexual assault the chance to share their experiences. Though this in itself did not do much for the prevention of future assault rates, for many victims it had the effect

of making them feel less alone and less ashamed, less stigmatized. Another consequence was an increase in the amount of rapes and a broader category of sex crimes (including groping and forcible touching) that were actually reported; from only one in five instances being reported just before the 2017 MeToo discussion to two in five in the following year (Southall, 2019). Besides that, several initiatives have been installed, like the Time's Up Legal Defense Fund, funding legal assistance for people who suffered abuse, harassment or assault at work (Seales, 2018).

Though these accomplishments are all positive consequences of the MeToo discussion, there has also been some backlash. Concerns were raised by the current president of the United States, Donald Trump, who said: *'it's a very scare time for young men in America... My whole life, I've heard you're innocent until proven guilty... but now you're guilty until proven innocent'* (Kettrey, 2019). This seems to fit the narrative of the MeToo discussion becoming a witch-hunt (Wakefield, 2018). Burke, the original founder of the MeToo movement, raised the same concern; she feels like some people now consider the movement to be a vindictive plot against men.

1.2 Research question, relevance and research objectives

There are a number of factors that contribute to the relevance of this research. Firstly, the topic is still very popular and much discussed. It taps into an issue that many people have been dealing with for years upon years without really being able to speak out about it. Therefore, it makes sense that now that it finally became a topic a public conversation, people are trying to use it in their fight against the systems and mentalities that made it so hard for them to speak up in the first place.

Another sign of the relevance of this research is the fact that even though this discussion has received an enormous amount of attention in America, it has not been as widely discussed in the Netherlands.

In this research, focus will be on the experiences and views of male and female students. There are two reasons why this demographic is particularly important; firstly, because adolescents and young adults are disproportionately sexually victimized (Humphrey & White, 2000). Besides that, it is important to pay special attention to the perceptions of students with regards to topics like sexual assault and harassment, since these are the people that will be joining the workforce sometime in the next 5 years. They will, to a great extent, decide what is seen as appropriate and what will be seen as unacceptable, and with that they have the power to make a lot of positive changes. However, this will only happen under one condition; that they actually have a more progressive view on the situation than many people currently do.

The aim of the current research is to examine how traditional gender roles and sexual scripts contribute to today's 'flirting climate', and how this in turn contributed to the coming into existence of the MeToo discussion. Focus will be on if people are aware of these and

whether they are consciously influenced by them, on the self-reported difference of these between men and women, and on if this consequently influences people's perceptions of and behaviors in flirting in going out situations.

This will be done by comparing the well-established traditional gender roles and sexual script theory with people's personal views and experiences by means of semi-structured interviews. For this, the research question reads as follows: *How do the gender roles and sexual scripts of males and females contribute to differences in their perceptions of and behavior in flirtatious situations (and consequently to the #MeToo discussion) in going out settings among Dutch students?*

1.3 Outline of information

The next chapter (chapter 2) will consist of three separate sections. In the first one, most of the context in which this problem came to life will be discussed; this includes both Burke's MeToo. movement and Milano's MeToo hashtag, responses to both, and follow-up movements and hashtags. The focus of the second section is on definitions of a number of important terms and also the context under which they emerged, the history of sexual assault and harassment and people's view on these throughout time, and prevalence rates. The conscious decision was made to present the sections in this order (definitions only appearing at a later point) because in this case, it is useful to first have some background- and contextual information on the topic before diving into the exact definitions. Besides that, the terms are general enough for people to already have a sufficient understanding of them, which is all that is needed for the first section. The last section of chapter 2 consists of the theoretical framework on which many of the interview questions were based; in it, the notion of traditional gender roles and sexual script theory will be discussed extensively.

In chapter 3, the methodology of the research will be discussed. It will include the research question, sub-questions, expectations, and the chosen research design. Furthermore, it includes the motivation for type of participants, as well as a description of how the interview will be carried out.

Chapter 4 will consist of the results obtained from the interviews. In it, expectations will either be confirmed or dismissed, and general (common) findings will be presented. Lastly, recommendations for future research will be given.

In chapter 5, the research data will be discussed in light of the literature review as presented in chapter 2.

Lastly, chapter 6 consists of the conclusion, limitations and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2: literature review and theoretical framework

2.1 Burke's movement and Milano's hashtag

Though the majority of the people probably learned about the existence of the MeToo hashtag and the meaning behind it over the last two years, the 'me too.' movement was already founded in 2006 by Tarana Burke. On the official 'me too.' movement's website, Burke tells the story of how she was inspired to found the movement. It goes back to when she was a youth worker; one of the girls at the youth camp came up to Burke and asked to speak with her privately. The girl, named Heaven, proceeded to tell Burke her story of being sexually abused by her stepdad. At some point, Burke could not take it anymore, upon which she directed Heaven to another female counselor. As Burke says herself on the website, *'I could not muster the energy to tell her that I understood, that I connected, that I could feel her pain. [...] I watched her put her mask back on and go back into the world like she was all alone and I couldn't even bring myself to whisper... me too.'* (Me Too, n.d.). In a later interview with Advance Local, she told that in this moment these words did not seem to be enough, though she later realized that that phrase was the one thing that Heaven needed to hear. Burke says that she felt guilty for years after this incident, which is part of the reason that she considers this moment to have been crucial in the founding of the 'me too.' movement (Stuart, 2019).

Burke's initial goal with the movement was to help survivors of sexual violence. It has quite a specific target audience: black women and girls and other young women of color, from low wealth communities (Me Too, n.d.). An important current goal of the movement is to reframe the global conversation around sexual violence, a big part of which consists of speaking to the needs of a broader audience; queer, trans, and disabled people, and all communities of color. These are exactly the groups that are disproportionately impacted by sexual violence in the U.S. (National Organization for Women, n.d.). Besides that, 'me too.' aims for the implementation of strategies that will sustain long-term, systematic change (Me Too, n.d.), though it does not specify what kind of strategies this would include, nor does it describe the particular systematic change it wishes to achieve.

The MeToo movement was popularized in October 2017 in America by Alissa Milano, an American actress, on Twitter. At the time, she was not aware of the 'me too.' movement that was founded a decade prior by Burke. On 15 October 2017, Milano posted a tweet that read *'if you've been sexually harassed or assaulted, write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet'*. She used the online platform in an attempt to show the magnitude of the problem, as well as redirecting the attention from the perpetrators to the victims (Shugerman, 2017). With regards to the latter goal, something could be said both for and against it. On the one hand, the hashtag allowed millions of women, who might have been too afraid or ashamed to do so before, to share their experiences. In this sense, the attention was fully

on the victims and their experiences, with perpetrators hardly being discussed or mentioned. However, on the other hand an argument could be made that in the whole #MeToo discussion, the person who was mentioned and discussed most was Harvey Weinstein. In this sense, a lot of attention actually went to this particular perpetrator; most people know who he is and what he is accused of, while it is likely that not all of these people know about each of his alleged victims.

What caused Milano to tweet this 'request' in the first place is that she had been reading multiple articles about the sexual harassment and sexual assault allegations against Harvey Weinstein. Harvey Weinstein is co-founder of The Weinstein Company, an independent film studio (IMDb, n.d.). In October 2017, a few women came forward about allegedly being mistreated by Weinstein.

Since then he has been accused by at least 85 women of inappropriate to criminal behavior (Moniuszko & Kelly, 2018). The New York Police Department revealed in May of 2018 that Weinstein was charged for incidents involving two separate women, one of which being singer Lucia Evans, the other whose identity remains unknown. Charges include those of (amongst others) rape and sex abuse. He pleaded not guilty to all charges in court (Bekiempis, 2019). In July of 2018, Weinstein was charged with allegedly committing a forcible sexual act against a third woman, whose identity also remains unknown. Harvey pleaded not guilty to these new charges as well (Reilly, 2018). The trial was supposed to start June 3, but it was recently announced that it has been postponed until September, as both the prosecution and the defense requested more time (Sisak, 2019).

When asked how she feels about the new use of the 'me too' phrase (as initiated by Milano), Burke answered that she feels like it has now been taken over by 'pretty girls and Hollywood'. According to her, there has been a shift of attention from the original survivors – young black and brown girls in urban communities – to white, middle-class women (Riley, 2018). Though she realizes that the attention and media coverage she received after Milano popularized the hashtag was something she probably could not have accomplished herself, she is now left with the job of making sure that black women are not shut out of the 'Me Too' movement. She acknowledges that the issue at hand is a human rights issue, but she argues that it should not be ignored or denied that it is largely a racial justice issue (MeToo, n.d.). Besides the shift in attention from black women and girls from low-wealth communities to white middle-class women, another development has taken place since the popularization of the MeToo hashtag; many media outlets have put the MeToo movement in such a light that it is now considered by many to be anti-male. Kay (2018) notes that since the popularization of the MeToo hashtag, the number of people in America that think that false allegations are a bigger problem than unreported or unpunished sexual assault has risen from 13% of the population to 18% of

the population. Though it is unlikely that this is solely the result of the MeToo movement, it is likely that it did contribute the increase.

Burke is not the only one who had something to say about the MeToo hashtag as initiated by Milano; several follow-up hashtags and movements have appeared in response. One such movement is the #HowIWillChange movement, which was brought to life with the intention of engaging men and boys in the discussion about sexual violence (PettyJohn, 2018). This particular hashtag was initiated by Benjamin Law, an Australian journalist, who first used it as a means of publicly announcing his support for and commitment to the #MeToo movement. The underlying idea was that men have more influence over other men's behavior than do women, suggesting that men may have a bigger role in prevention efforts regarding sexual violence perpetrated by men against women. Although engaging men in the prevention of (sexual) violence has been an increasingly popular method, critiques have emerged as well; the opposition argues that this method still does not address systemic inequalities between the sexes and that by overemphasizing the importance of men, the experiences of women are still ignored (PettyJohn, 2018). In addition to critiques on the methods employed by the #HowIWillChange hashtag, others took the opportunity to use it as a means of resisting social change. Amongst others, this group consisted of people arguing that men are being treated unfairly, as the actions of a specific group of men are being generalized to the entirety of men. In even more extreme instances, #HowIWillChange was actually used as a means of hostile resistance. People who fall under this category posted tweets containing language that describes violent and threatening sexual acts meant to be degrading towards women

This development is similar (though contextually different) to the backlash the hashtag received in the workplace - a topic that was already briefly introduced in the introduction. Examples of this are the fact that since the MeToo discussion, American men actually became less convinced that sexual harassment in the workplace is a major problem, and both men and women are increasingly inclined to perceive people as being overly sensitive about workplace harassment (Bauman, 2019). More broadly, the percentage of both men and women that believe that 'false accusations of sexual assault are a bigger problem than unreported assaults' has increased since 2017 (The Economist, 2018). A NPR-Ipsos poll also shows that 40 percent of Americans feel like the movement has gone too far. The reasons for saying so were generally that unproven accusations could possibly ruin peoples' careers and reputations and that some claims of sexual misconduct did not actually reach that level.

2.2 Context, definitions and prevalence

It is important to provide some additional information about the background against which 'rape laws' began to take form, as many of these were based on a very traditional and often obsolete notion of gender roles.

In the introduction, definitions of several terms have already been provided. To quickly recap; sexual assault is a broad term that basically refers to sexual acts that happen without consent. This also applies to sexual harassment, except that this definition usually also includes some concept of that it is gender-based and there is a more explicit focus on malicious intent of the perpetrator (Miller, 2017 & European Institute for Gender Equality, n.d.). Sexual violence can be thought of as an umbrella-term under which all the other definitions fall.

It is important to look at the changing climate in which these different definitions of rape, sexual assault, coercion and the like emerged, because it illustrates how deeply gender roles are ingrained in society. One of the earliest British legal texts is based on the idea that without a woman's consent, she would not be able to conceive - basically implying that it could not have been rape if it results in pregnancy (Eichelberger, 2012). Jumping forward to the 18th century; according to the American law, which is based on English common law, it was not possible for a husband to rape his wife, since they 'are one person in the law'. The idea that it is impossible for one spouse to rape the other would stay unchanged (at least legally) until the 1970s (Bishop, 2018). Around this time, black women were also still excluded from rape laws. This was the reality of both free and enslaved black women until at the earliest 1861 (Feimster, 2018).

Much of the changes with regards to women's rights in general and changes in rape laws was a result of second-wave feminism; women started to really participate in the workforce, traditional gender roles were being questioned, the contraceptive pill was introduced and made accessible to many women, and in 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in favor of *Roe v. Wade*, which made safe and legal abortion a constitutional right (CNN, 2019). The same chain of events took place in the Netherlands around that time, though abortion was not legalized until the Termination of Pregnancy Act was enacted in 1981 (Goenee et al., 2014).

A noteworthy change of definition is that of rape. Though obviously part of the #MeToo discussion, it will not be discussed extensively in this paper, but it does raise an important issue with regards to gender roles that will be discussed later on. The former definition of rape was *'the carnal knowledge of a female body forcibly and against her will'* (FBI:UCR, 2013). This definition had been in place and unchanged since 1927, until the Department of Justice announced in 2012 that this definition would be changed to *'the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim'* (Department of Justice

Archives, 2012). The new definition went into effect on the first of January, 2013. There are a number of severe issues with the former definition. Firstly, according to that definition, it was impossible for a person to be raped by their spouse. Secondly, since the definition explicitly mentions women, it did not apply to men. This prevented both married people and men in general to undertake legal action against someone who had raped them, because this was simply 'not possible'. Though the new definition does consider this to be possible, not everyone has changed their perceptions on the matter accordingly. This partly explains the stigma around sexually abused men; their gender role is incompatible with the idea of victimhood (Hlavka, 2016), and therefore men who come forward with stories of being sexually abused are often disregarded. The consequences of traditional gender roles of both men and women on such issues will be discussed in greater detail later on.

The majority of European countries - almost 75 percent - do not include an absence of consent in their legal definition of rape, despite the fact that the Istanbul Convention (a treaty on preventing and combating violence against women) compels the criminalization of all non-consensual sexual acts (Bluś, 2018). The importance of including the notion of a lack of consent in legal definitions is that the alternative is a culture of victim-blaming (Batha, 2018). However, a recent change can be seen in many European countries in this regard; for example, Greece has recently changed its definition of rape, which now does include a lack of consent (Amnesty International, 2019), and the Dutch government is planning on implementing a new legislation that says you can be punished both if you know or if you could have known that the other person did not want to have sex (Pieters, 2019).

Statistics on sexual violence are hard to come by due to the fact that there are significant differences in prevalence rates across different sources. This is likely attributable to the fact that different factors are used to either rule in or rule out something as being 'sexually violent' (Mellins et al., 2017). Though most sources agree on the statistic that one in five women will be victim of rape in their lifetime and almost half of women will experience some form of sexual violence (Breiding et al., 2014), there is less consensus regarding the percentage male victims of rape and sexual violence. For example, some sources report that one in four men experienced sexual violence other than rape during their lifetime (Breiding et al., 2014), while other sources report that this will be the case for 'only' one to two in ten men (Association of Alberta Sexual Assault Services, n.d.).

Another factor that causes confusion on these numbers is the fact that 3 out of 4 instances of rape and sexual assault go unreported (RAINN, n.d.). There are a number of reasons as to why victims would refrain from officially reporting these instances. Most of them are afraid of retaliation, either from the perpetrator or from society as a whole. Others feel like

the police would not do anything to help and thus they don't see the point of reporting it (Kimble & Chettiar, 2018). Another critical reason is related to feelings of shame that occur as a consequence of being a victim of sexual assault or rape. It is an emotion that often goes hand in hand with feelings of dishonor, a negative evaluation of the self, and regret (Lamia, 2011); 'women who experience rape often feel dirty or disgusted afterwards or blame themselves for their assaults' (Weiss, 2010). The impact and value of the #MeToo discussion can really be seen when looking at sexual assault reports; victims were much more likely to report sexual assault or rape in 2017 than in previous years (Milligan, 2018); there was an increase of almost 20 percent of such crimes being reported to the police between 2016 and 2017.

Notice that the legal definition of both sexual assault and rape include the condition that it is done without the *consent* of the victim. But despite the importance of consent, the concept is actually rather enigmatic; literature on sexual consent is scarce, and even within the existing literature scholars do not seem to agree on what type of agreement constitutes consent (Beres, 2007). Some argue that in giving consent, it suffices if the 'receiver' did not tell of the initiator. Others say that only a literal, verbal 'yes' indicates consent. This latter view is also referred to as 'freely given consent'; voluntary approval of what is done or proposed (Beres, 2007). In a study conducted by Muehlenhard et al. (2016), communications of consent among heterosexual college students was examined, with a special focus on gender differences in consent. This sample (college students) is an important one, as college women appear to be at an increased risk of experiencing sexual assault (compared to women in general). There are several factors that contribute to this. The first one is that instead of being properly educated about sex, students are exposed to the popular culture view, which suggest that sexual communication is unnecessary or even impossible in the face of strong passion. Besides that, college students have gendered sexual expectations. The effect of gender roles will be discussed in greater detail later on, but for now it is sufficient to know that men and women are taught different messages about sexuality and that instead of these messages being complementary, they are contradictory in many regards. Lastly, many students live in what is called a 'party culture' which is to some extent sexist itself (e.g. for themed parties, women are often required to wear sexy clothing). Besides that, alcohol is often involved, and sexual assaults usually involve alcohol consumption by the victim, perpetrator, or by both (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006). The combination of these factors leads up to many students being less well able to communicate consent, which in turn puts them at an increased risk of being sexually assaulted (Muehlenhard et al, 2016). The above-mentioned reasons explain the finding that most sexual activity takes place without consent being communicated at all. In instances where consent is actually given, it usually happens non-verbally, even though nonverbal indicators are generally perceived as being less clear than verbal statements (Humphreys, 2007).

2.3 Theoretical framework: gender roles and sexual script theory

The following was already briefly mentioned in the introduction, but it is important to once more explicitly mention that the MeToo discussion is not restricted to male-female interactions, to heterosexual practices, or to gender roles and sexual scripts. Every single person, regardless of their gender, age, sexual orientation etc. might have fallen victim to practices related to the MeToo discussion, and there are many more mechanisms at play than only gender roles and sexual scripts. That being said, the focus of this thesis is on heterosexual male-female interactions and in consequence their gender roles and sexual scripts. So though the following section might not represent all people or mechanisms equally, it does cover the relevant aspects for this thesis.

Though topics like sexual assault, rape and the like are all very important in the MeToo discussion, it also consists of more seemingly 'innocent' behaviors that are ingrained in many male-female interactions and can thus be committed by basically everyone. This is partly due to the expectations and standards that societies and cultures set for how men and women are supposed to behave. The behaviors, beliefs, expectations, limitations etc. that are put on men and women are often united in what is referred to as 'gender roles'. These, in turn, are important in determining sexual scripts. Both concepts will be discussed in the following part, as well as how they both might contribute to unwanted flirting, the overstepping of boundaries, sexual coercion, etc.

A gender role is basically a set of rules that states how males and females are expected to act, speak, dress, and behave based upon their sex. Generally, 'feminine' gender roles include being polite, accommodating, nurturing, and agreeable, whereas 'masculine' gender roles include being strong, aggressive and bold. In terms of social orientation feminine gender roles emphasize closeness and solidarity, while masculine gender roles emphasize power and status (Ickes, 1993). This aspect of a woman's gender role is especially important since it is to a large extent in contradiction with the female sexual script. Though the latter will be discussed more elaborately in a later section, its contribution to the contradiction is that women are expected to limit sexual interactions initiated by men, a view that is shared by both men and women (Bartoli & Clark, 2006). This means that women are concurrently expected to be polite and agreeable whilst at the same time dismissing sexual advances made by men.

The process of gender role socialization already starts at a very young age. It consists of a large number of activities, encouragements, discouragements and opportunities (Witt, 1997). There are a number of ways in which parents - whether it being aware or unaware - contribute to children's future display of gender roles. For example, the allocation of household-labor is a significant factor in this process. Another example that might seem quite innocent but that actually also influences gender roles is the fact that parents provide

different toys for their sons and daughters. In addition, the majority of parents reward gender-typical play and punish gender-atypical play (Etaugh & Liss, 1992). Interesting to mention is that children's gender roles are largely formed by the same-sex parent, meaning that mothers have more influence on shaping the gender roles of their daughters, while fathers have more influence on shaping the gender roles of their sons (Cunningham, 2001). Though gender script socialization for the most part happens through parental influence, it is later often reinforced by friends, school experience, and television and media (Etaugh & Liss, 1992).

The mass media also play a big role in reinforcing these already existing gender roles; it often portrays women as merely sexy or attractive, thereby objectifying the female body (Thukral, 2016). Besides that, TV characters relatively often engage in casual sex; it portrays significantly less sexual references of intercourse between married couples than between unmarried people (compared to people in real life), which might paint the picture that people (especially women) are more willing to do this than they actually are.

However, not only Hollywood productions have the tendency to portray men and women in a very stereotypical way. Disney movies in particular have been criticized for their stereotypical depictions of gender; for Disney heroines, focus was mostly on their sexuality and them being 'exotic' (England, Descartes & Collier-Meek, 2011). Since Disney's aim is to have children personally identify with the characters (this will make them more likely to purchase associated products) it seems very plausible that young girls will go on aspiring to be like those Disney heroines. Of course, the same goes for the numerous Disney princesses, but the former example was even more shocking, since the definition of a heroine is that she is characterized by courageousness or nobility, not by her small waist and full breasts.

According to 'social cognitive theory', human beings have the tendency to model the behavior, attitudes, and beliefs of other people (Timmermans & Bulck, 2018). This can be people they personally know, or people they see on television or in magazines. In the United States, young people spend an average of 6 to 7 hours each day on some form of social media (Brown, 2002). Though the majority of the content they see probably does not involve sexual interactions, sexual talks and displays of sexual interaction are increasing. Currently, gaming is the main online activity of children. Among children, 11 to 14 year old boys are the ones who play the most video games. Since, according to social cognitive theory, gender conceptions and role behavior are the result of a broad network of social influences encountered in day-to-day life (Bussey & Bandura, 1999), it seems like such instances also significantly contribute to the development of gender-role perceptions. Traditional gender roles are still very much prevalent in video games: Male characters are more likely than female characters to be portrayed as aggressive.

Furthermore, females are much more likely than male characters to be portrayed as sexualized (Dill & Thill, 2007).

Also important when discussing (the portrayal of) gender roles in mass media is the Bechdel test (also sometimes referred to as the Bechdel-Wallace test). This is used as an indication of the active presence of women in movies, as well as calling attention to gender inequality in the movie business. A movie passes the Bechdel test if it includes a scene with at least two (named) female characters, whose entire conversation does not include talk about any man (The Bechdel Test Fest, n.d.). Though the test is mainly used to highlight how male-dominated the movie industry really is, it also reveals the stereotypical image what is often painted of women.

Most of the concepts discussed in the previous paragraphs are not only relevant for the concept of gender roles, but also for script theory. A script is a construct that consists of a sequence of actions or events that are required to achieve a certain goal (Learning Theories, n.d.). The most well-known example of a script is that of a restaurant script; when you go to a restaurant, you find a free spot, sit, wait for the waiter to take your order, and finally you eat your meal. Everyone involved (the waiter, cook, etc.) are behaving in accordance with this script and thus carry out their assigned roles (Abelson, 1981). As this example already demonstrates, scripts are not merely mental constructs; they work on the basis of moving a person toward rewarding affect and away from punishing affect (The Tomkins Institute, n.d.). This causes the mental aspect of them to result in social interactions, which in turn can either reinforce or weaken a certain script.

Besides these more general scripts, people also have what is called *sexual scripts*. These define the possibilities of sexual behavior and depict the sequence in which the behaviors are expected to occur (Byers, 2008). Though these scripts play a big role, the personality of the individual and the context must not be underestimated; it is likely that people sometimes improvise and adjust to the specific situation they find themselves in.

Individuals form their sexual script through socialization. This is the process through which one becomes a 'successful' member in the society that he or she is part of, by adopting societal norms, expectations, beliefs, and values. However, there is more to socialization than this; it also includes parent-child interactions, role modeling, reinforcement of desired behavior or punishment of undesired behaviors, one's friends group, peers, fellow students, and (social) media (Witt, 1997). In terms of sexual interaction, men are typically socialized to be the initiators of sexual encounters, actively pushing for sexual intimacy. In contrast, women are socialized to be guardians of their sexuality, meaning that they have to set limits. According to script theory, scripts have the potential for long-term significance (Carlson & Carlson, 1984), implying that these scripts are structural and systematic. This also means that the fundamentals of the sexual scripts

that a person develops during his or her childhood and teenage years will likely stay the same during adulthood.

Marked differences have been found between men and women in Western cultures with regards to their sexual scripts. The explanations for these differences usually fall under either biological and evolutionary explanations, or socialization and cultural explanations (Wiederman, 2005), though it seems likely that the cultural reasons are to a large extent a consequence of the biological ones.

According to their sexual script, men have strong sexual needs, while women are seen as having little sexual needs. Besides that, the perceived worth and status of a woman decreases as her sexual experience increases, while this would increase the worth and status of a man. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, men are seen as the initiators of sexual interactions, while women are expected to limit these initiations. This causes crucial problem: *'Even when they are interested in engaging in sexual activity, women are expected to offer at least initial token resistance to the man's advances ... On the other hand, men are expected to try to remove women's restrictions to enhance their own worth and meet their own sexual needs.'* (Byers, 2008). So even though sexual scripts are supposed to provide guidance by creating a sense of predictability with regards the person in question should feel and behave, they often fail to do so, which is caused by the fact that male and female sexual scripts are so fundamentally different.

In the literature, script theory is often linked to a concept referred to as 'theory of mind' or 'mentalizing'; one's ability to explain and predict the behavior of other people, by attributing them to independent mental states like beliefs and desires (Gallagher & Frith, 2003). It requires recognizing that other people have a different perspective than you do, and that in order to understand their behavior you have to consider their perspective in combination with the state of the world - the latter being judged from your own perspective. If men and women would both master this ability, then maybe the fundamental differences in sexual scripts would not pose such a big problem. Unfortunately, it turns out that it's quite a rare talent, which leaves many people with the difficult task of having to be able to separate and compare the two perspectives (Gallagher & Frith, 2003). The expectations that we form about the other person and their future behavior are based on our general knowledge of the world, our knowledge of that specific person, and our observations of what he or she is doing. These abilities form a fundamental role in many social situations and communicative interactions, allowing for - if done properly - successful and mutual exchanges of information (Bradford, Jentsch & Gomez, 2015). However, we have seen that people's scripts are to a large extent gendered, meaning that these differ quite significantly between men and women. This might make it hard for a man to predict a woman's behavior or beliefs as this required him to temporarily internalize her female-gendered script. The same goes for women trying to internalize a

man's gendered script. Though merely speculative, it could be that some of the misunderstandings that arise during flirting and dating are a consequence of the faulty internalization of the other sexes' script.

Besides the sex differences in sexual scripts, sex differences have also been found in men's and women's ability to 'mentalize'; women are generally better at identifying another person's emotions and thoughts, which makes it easier to accurately predict that person's behavior. Men are generally better at analyzing and constructing systems, which does allow them to more accurately predict the 'behavior' of a system. However, this lacks a connection to the social world, meaning that it is harder for men to predict the behavior of other people in social situations (Baron-Cohen, 2002).

Chapter 3: Methodology

The following chapter is dedicated to explaining what method was used for the collection of the data, the reason for choosing this particular method, the rationale behind choosing the participants, and in what way the data will be analyzed to eventually get to the research findings as presented in chapter 4.

The research question, as mentioned in the introduction, is *'how do the gender roles and sexual scripts of males and females contribute to differences in their perceptions of and behavior in flirtatious situations (and consequently to the #MeToo discussion) in going out settings among Dutch students?'*

3.1 Research method

The next step in the process is gathering research data. Based on the research question, a qualitative method is considered to be the most appropriate way to collect data, since this allows for describing and contextualizing a specific phenomenon (in this case; perceptions of and behavior in flirtatious situations). Instead of choosing a fully structured interview, which does not allow for deviating from the predetermined questions, the interview will be semi-structured. This will allow for the opportunity to go into more detail with certain topics, which will eventually result in the deepest level of insight on the topic. The predetermined questions are based on the literature review and the theoretical framework. Some were designed to find out whether the participants' answers would confirm or contradict the existing literature, others were instead included because either not much research on it has been done or because the research is outdated (the latter was the case with the literature on the role of parental upbringing on gender role socialization; virtually all academic sources on this topic are over two decades old).

The interviews were structured in such a way that they would take approximately thirty minutes to conduct. This eventually turned out to be quite accurate; the overall average time of the nine interviews was 26 minutes. They were all tape-recorded using an iPhone.

3.2 Research population

The main criterion that was used for selecting participants was that they should either be university or HBO (higher professional education) students. The reason for this is that students are disproportionately victims of rape, sexual assault and harassment. Though the focus in the interviews is not on these topics, it seems plausible that these high rates translate to students also enduring more persistent flirtatious advances than others. Another important factor in selecting participants was that the male-to-female ratio should ideally be equal, and otherwise as close to that as possible. This eventually resulted in five female and four male participants, of which seven are university students (5 female,

2 male) and two are HBO students (2 male). Participants were selected through a method of stratified sampling, meaning that the population was divided into subgroups who all share a similar characteristic (in this case, male and female students), as this allows for the results of the subgroups to be compared (Barratt, 2009). In two of these instances, snowball sampling was coincidentally 'used', as two of the participants provided another participant.

The following schema includes information about each participant's gender, age, and educational attainment:

#	Gender	Age	Education attainment
Participant 1	Female	22	University
Participant 2	Female	22	University
Participant 3	Female	25	University
Participant 4	Female	22	University
Participant 5	Female	22	University
Participant 6	Male	22	University
Participant 7	Male	23	HBO
Participant 8	Male	27	University
Participant 9	Male	19	HBO

For the semi-structured interviews, four different versions were used; two of which in English, and two of which in Dutch. The content of these is exactly the same, with the only different being the language. The interviews that were conducted in Dutch were later transcribed and translated into English.

All participants are of Dutch nationality. The reason for conducting some of the interviews in English and others in Dutch is that some of the participants were not sure whether they would be able to fully express themselves if they had to do so in English. Since four of the participants (1 female, 3 male) indicated that they would rather be interviewed in Dutch, these additional Dutch versions were created so that a language barrier would not interfere with obtaining the most accurate data.

Besides that, some questions from the female version of the interview were altered to be more accurate and fitting for male participants. Eventually, there are two predetermined questions that were only asked to male participants. This is not because they were not relevant for female participants. Rather, the interviews with female participants were conducted before those with male participants, and these particular questions were not considered at the time the interviews with female participants were conducted. Besides that, there is one question that was only asked to female participants (this question was regarding communicating one's limit to people in positions of power).

With the exception of these slight modifications and additional questions, the predetermined questions for male and female participants were exactly the same. The form including the predetermined interview questions can be found in the appendix, pages

41-42. Only the initial female version is included in the appendix, since the few differences between this version and the male version is already described above

3.3 Data analysis approach

Each interview was tape-recorded and thereafter manually transcribed. The interviews that were conducted in Dutch were, after being transcribed, translated into English, so that the transcribed versions of the interviews are all in English. The transcribed versions of the interviews are not included in this thesis. However, they can be attained by sending a request to the Liberal Arts Secretary.

Content analysis was then used as a method of analyzing the data. Within content analysis, there are three types that can be employed, depending on the way in which the data is interpreted and whether the focus is on certain words, concepts, recurrent statements, etc. (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The chosen method within content analysis is conventional content analysis, which enables the researcher to derive categories from the data during the data analysis itself (instead of determining the coding scheme beforehand, as is the case with directed content analysis).

Once all interviews were conducted and transcribed, they were all read multiple times to gain a better understanding of them and to see whether noteworthy findings already came to the fore. After that, code were created based on the main concepts that were recurrent in the majority (if not all) of the interviews. This was done by color-coding the words, sentences and concepts that were considered to be representative of a particular category. All answers that are part of a single category were then compared to each other, in order to eventually be able to draw conclusions from them.

3.4 Ethical considerations

All participants were made aware before the interview started that if at any point they felt uncomfortable with a question or would prefer not to answer it this would not be a problem. Besides that, they were made attentive both before the interview and at the beginning of the interview that it would be tape-recorded, for which all participants gave consent. Personal information is treated with care and will not be linked to the answers that were given during the interviews.

Chapter 4: Analysis

The following chapter is concerned with the qualitative analysis of the transcribed interviews, in an attempt to see whether there is indeed, as the research question suggests, a difference in the perception and behavior regarding flirtatious situations between males and females as a consequence of their gender roles and sexual scripts. The findings derived from the data are divided into 5 sections, which each are further divided into sub-sections. Since the interview was semi-structured, there are many topics that are recurrent in the majority (if not all) of the interviews. However, not all topics that were discussed during the interviews will be analyzed; rather, the focus will only be on findings that are considered to be 'relevant'. There are multiple rationales for considering something to be relevant. For example, the data from the interviews is deemed to be relevant when it seems to either confirm or contradict existing literature on the topic, when participants give a unanimous response to a certain question or all have similar beliefs or attitudes towards a certain idea or phenomenon, or when a certain response completely stands out from the rest.

4.1 Flirting

The following section consists of the data that was collected with regards to flirtatious behavior. This data has been further classified into three sub-sections: whether participants feel like there is a difference in how people flirt in everyday settings compared to going out settings, what according to them constitutes good and bad flirting situations, and what their standpoint is on females initiating the flirtatious interaction.

4.1.1 Difference in flirting

All participants were asked to address the difference in flirting between 'normal', everyday settings like at work or at school compared to in going out settings. They all recognize that there is indeed a difference between the two. The most notable finding here is that all female participants attributed (in part) the difference in flirting to the use of alcohol in going out settings, while none of the male participants mentioned anything about alcohol having an influence on differences in flirting. According to the female participants, alcohol causes this difference because it makes people act more freely and relaxed, more audacious, and more physical in their interactions with others. One male participant did also notice this difference of people being more physical in going out settings, but he did not attribute this to the use of alcohol. Rather, the majority of males attributed the difference to the fact that flirting is one of the main activities of going out, making it more normal and accepted to flirt with someone in a bar than at work or at school.

'when you are in a bar ... often you get the impression that people are there to, uhm, that it's one of the main activities of going out...' - Male, interview 7

'... I have friends who can just go out and target. And you know, they go and say 'yeah tonight I want to flirt with a chick and go home with her.' – Male, interview 8

4.1.2 Good versus bad flirting

There was consensus among participants about what constitutes 'good' flirting circumstances. The main points that came forward are having good, interesting conversations, a relaxed and natural feeling about the other person or the situation, having a laugh with the other person, and the other person being their type.

For bad flirting situations, responses were more divided. For example, the majority of female participants mentioned that they do not like it when males use cliché pick-up lines, while none of the males mentioned anything about disliking when females use pick-up lines. This is likely due to the fact that males are generally the ones pursuing the female and therefore they are more often in a position where they have to make use of pick-up lines. Another example of a bad flirting situation that was mentioned often is when people get physical immediately, though females seem to be bothered by this more than males. A possible explanation for this is given by a number of participants; namely that males are generally physically stronger and therefore come across as more harmful, while females are seen as not being able to do much harm, possibly making it less intimidating when they get physical in their flirting.

'And of course they [females] have to feel vulnerable faster, because yeah, if a guy wants to do something with a girl, the girl is not going to do much, you know? He's just going to do whatever he wants because she's weaker than him.' – Female, interview 1

4.1.3 Girls initiating flirting

The last subsection is concerned with how males and females feel about the latter initiating flirtatious interactions. Two of the females actually mentioned that males do not really initiate flirting that much anymore. One of them attributes the declining rate at which males initiate flirtatious interactions to social media. It certainly seems plausibly that social media – as well as online dating apps – are making people more inhibited when it comes to approaching people in real life.

'... yeah, I feel like men don't really approach women anymore, or say anything ... nowadays, they do not really make an effort anymore, so that's why girls have to take the first step.' - Female, interview 3

'... people mostly just come up to you on social media or something, it doesn't really happen anymore when you're out in bars...' - Female, interview 1

However, if females are increasingly put in the position where they have to take the first step, this could prove to get problematic, due to the fact that this goes against a female's sexual script (according to which a female has to be the guardian of her sexuality). Not acting in accordance with one's script can raise some resistance, since the 'rules' of gender roles and sexual scripts are usually deeply ingrained in society. The participants do indeed have quite opposing views with regards to females initiating flirtatious interaction, but perhaps in an unexpected way; females seem to have a more negative stance on this than males.

'...at least I feel like that as a girl, if you're in a club and you take the first step and kiss a boy ... that's really desperate' - female, interview 3

'... I kind of view it as guys having to pursue girls actually' - female, interview 2

However, another female participant expresses a more positive viewpoint with regards to females initiating contact and the way males react to this, which might indicate that this aspect of sexual scripts is actually changing. This seems to be more in line with what male participants had to say about the matter; all male participants indicated that they do like it when a female initiates the interaction, and it did not seem to have any negative connotation for them. The main reason that males gave for perceiving it as something positive is that by initiating the interaction, the female gives off a sign of being interested.

'... I think they [males] generally do like it when you're that proactive...' - female, interview 5

'... and when the girl approaches you she, you know she is interested, because otherwise she wouldn't do that. So that's kind of a confidence boost I would say.' – Male, interview 6

4.2 Communication of interest and limit

In the following section, data relating to the respondents' way of communicating both their interest and limit to other people will be analyzed. Marked differences were found in the way females would communicate their limit to people in going out settings compared to people in positions of power, both of which will be discussed in separate subsections below. Besides that, participants were also asked to try to infer why some people (male or female) can sometimes be very persistent in their flirtatious attempts.

4.2.1 Verbal or non-verbal

A quick recap of the literature on people's communication of consent as discussed in chapter 2 is that most sexual activity takes place without consent being communicated, and in occasions where it is communicated, this usually happens non-verbally (Humphreys, 2007). Though the interview did not include a question about whether participants communicate consent about sexual activity, there was a question about

whether participants would communicate verbally or non-verbally that they are interested in someone (which can be considered to be something potentially leading up to sexual interaction). The majority of the female participants indicated that they communicate their interest in a non-verbal manner, most commonly by making eye-contact with the person they are interested in.

Only one female participant indicated that she would verbally indicate that she is interested in the other person, as was already shown in section I.III.

When participants were asked if and how they would communicate to someone who is flirting with them that they are not interested, all participants indicated that they would do so verbally. However, the majority of the female participants did express that they have a hard time doing this, as they recognize that it must take some courage from males to initiate this interaction and they do not want to hurt that person's feelings. This leads some of the female participants to use excuses when rejecting someone, for example by telling the other person that they have a boyfriend (a technique used by two female participants who, at the time of the interview, were not actually in a relationship). Besides this excuse making a rejection less personal or harsh towards the pursuer, it might also be a more effective technique than 'simply' telling that you are not interested. This could possibly be attributed to the notion that it is harder, if not impossible, to change one's sexuality or the fact that one is in a relationship than it is to convince them to be interested in you.

"Yeah sorry, I already have a boyfriend", or 'I'm into girls' ... As long as it's not about that person. I always hate hurting people like that.' – Female, interview 3

4.2.2 Communicating limit to people in positions of power

Though power relations were not explicitly discussed in the literature review, it is still a relevant aspect of the MeToo discussion. For that reason, one of the interview questions was whether females would find it more difficult to communicate their limit to people in positions of power, like their boss or teacher (compared to communicating their limit to a person in a regular flirtatious situation) – even though it is not really accepted for a boss or teacher to make flirtatious advances towards someone who works for them or is their student. So, when considered from this point of view, it would actually make sense that it would be easier for people to communicate their limit to people in such positions. Females' responses to this question made it clear that the latter is not the case; each female participant indicated that she would be more reluctant communicating her limit to her boss. The main reason that was given for this is that they were more worried about misinterpreting cues and that they would therefore wait longer, until it reached a point where they were absolutely sure that their boss was overstepping a boundary. They also indicated that the stakes are higher in these situations, since one is dependent on their boss for their income and job. This could explain why some people in positions of power

– like Harvey Weinstein – are able to get away with this behavior for such a long time; people were reluctant to confront him because he held so much power over them.

‘Yeah that’s actually so ridiculous. Because I didn’t realize it until you asked the question. But that’s actually true, I would be like, oh maybe I misinterpreted it... And I would be doubting myself. While in a going out setting I would be like ‘dude, cut it out’. – Female, interview 4

‘... I guess the point at which you uh, would like, like set your clear boundary, I think that point would just come a bit later when it’s someone like a boss.’ – Female, interview 5

4.2.3 Reasons for being persistent

Participants were asked about why they think other people are sometimes so persistent in their flirting attempts, even when the person at the receiving end has indicated that he or she is not interested. Three main reasons came forward, with no noteworthy difference in answers between male and female participants. The first reason that participants gave for people being persistent is that they actually do not realize that the other person is not interested. This could be due to people not communicating their limits clearly enough, though, as discussed in section II.I, all participants indicated that they usually tell people off verbally, and that they do this very clearly.

‘...so with some people I feel like they just genuinely don’t understand it.’ – Male, interview 9

The other two reasons that the majority of the participants gave for people being very persistent is that they do not want to own up to being rejected or that they feel like the other person can still be persuaded. These both seem to be more problematic than the previous reason, because in that case people would not mean any harm, while for the last two reasons, they would be to some extent aware of the fact that they are trying to convince someone who is not interested in them. However, a possibility is that the concept of ‘playing hard to get’ makes it confusing for people to know when someone is actually not interested and when they just want you to put in more effort. However, the above-mentioned reasons for being persistent mainly apply to males, as they are in line with their gender roles and sexual scripts. Males are not the only ones who engage in such behavior though; participants indicated that females can be persistent too at times.

‘But usually they just stop and get kind of mean or something, that’s usually the next step. When you’re really showing that you’re not interested then they’re like ‘oh yeah well, I wasn’t interested in you either...’
Female, interview 1

‘I think they’ll be like, oh in the end she’ll turn They think they’ll be able to persuade someone in the end.’ – Female, interview 4

4.3 Double standard

The next section is concerned with whether or not participants feel like there is a double standard between males and females. All participants were asked if according to either themselves or from a more societal perspective there are things that males are allowed to do while females are not and vice versa. *Allowed* here does not refer to whether one would be legally allowed to do something, rather it refers to whether people (or more broadly, society) perceive it as acceptable behavior. Participants were subsequently asked whether or not they felt like there was a double standard, based on their answers to the previous questions.

4.3.1 Things males are 'allowed' to do that females are not

The most recurrent answer that participants gave to the question whether there are things that males are 'allowed' to do while females are not is that males will be seen as cool or 'the man' if they kiss or have sex with a lot of girls, while if a girl kisses or has sex with a lot of guys, she will be seen as being easy, or even as a 'slut'. 7 out of 9 participants gave an answer along those lines. However, participants felt like males are not necessarily the ones who are more judgmental when it comes to one's number of bed-partners; some participants indicated that they feel like females are harsher than males when it comes to judging other females who have slept with 'many' people.

'... society like, keeps telling girls that it's not good to hook up with a lot of guys.' - Female, interview 4

'But I always feel like women are harsher with that, you know. Or are just more likely to call someone a slut than boys would.' Male, interview 8

Another point was raised by a female participant who lived in the United States for one year and went to high school there. She mentioned that girls who went to school there would get 'dress-coded' for wearing certain pieces of clothing, which meant they either had to cover up more or go home. The rationale behind this was that students might get aroused from girls dressing in a certain way (like wearing yoga-pants or having their shoulders exposed). There seems to be a link between this idea and the notion of females sometimes being told that 'they were asking for it' after being harassed; instead of tackling the issue on the side of the perpetrator, females are instructed to refrain from displaying certain behaviors or – in this case – dressing in a certain manner. Though it seems plausible that there are different sexual scripts at play in this example due to cultural and/or societal differences, this participant's answer appears to be similar to that of another female participant, who mentioned that females, unlike males, are sometimes 'slut-shamed' for the kind of clothes they wear.

'Uhm, but no, there was nothing like that [dress-codes] for boys. So that was really, yeah, just for girls.' – Female, interview 5

'Well, and I think that girls are, uhm, also like slut-shamed for the clothes that they are wearing while going out. Like 'oh no, but you wanted it, look at your skirt', you know?' – Female, interview 4

4.3.2 Things females are 'allowed' to do that males are not

There seems to be less consensus among participants about things that females are 'allowed' to do while males are not. Four of the participants do seem to agree that female can get more physical during flirtatious interactions than men can. It is relevant to mention that the majority of participants who gave this answer are male, because this might suggest that there is a difference in perception between males and females. Though this is only speculative, maybe males feel like females are 'allowed' to be physical more because this is actually helpful to them in deciding whether or not the female is interested in him; by giving physical cues, a female would indeed seem to confirm her interest. Two participants mentioned that it is more accepted for a female to be harsher in rejecting or cutting males off than the other way around. This seems to make sense when looking at females' gender roles and sexual scripts, because those include the notion that a female is the one who should limit sexual intimacy attempts made by males.

'Well, I think that girls can maybe get a little more physical with boys, because boys are usually more open to that.' – Male, interview 9

4.3.3 Double standard

Eight of the participants said that they feel there is a double standard with regards to flirting, kissing, and hooking up. Some of the participants mentioned that the double standard exists on the societal level but that they themselves do not feel that way or agree with it, while others acknowledge that they have partially internalized this double standard.

'Sometimes I'm like...why would it be strange if a girl approaches a guy? But then if it actually happens I'm like, why is that girl approaching that guy, that's kind of embarrassing.' – Female, interview 3

Another participant was skeptical about people actually having a problem with the fact that there is a double standard. She feels like people want to get rid of the part of the double standard that is not beneficial to them personally but that they do want to hold on to the parts that do benefit them. This might be explained by the fact that many aspects of gender roles do not seem to be semantically related on the surface, meaning that people are unaware of the relation between them (and thus of their own hypocrisy) unless they think about it more in-depth.

'But I also feel like there's a lot of people complaining about this double standard, but then don't want to give it up ... so guys will be like 'oh I don't want to pay on the first date' but then they don't accept the other side of that equality ... that women are not sluts when they sleep around.' - Female, interview 5

4.4 Role upbringing

Participants were also asked about the role their upbringing played when it comes to their perceptions of and behavior in situations that involve flirting. Three main subsections arise from that, which are the influence of parental upbringing, the role one's friends or friend-group and the role of movies and TV shows. The focus for the latter one was mainly on Hollywood and Disney movies.

4.4.1 Parents

All participants agreed that their upbringing contributed to how they feel about and act in flirtatious situations, and also to how they feel about other people who they see engaging in flirtatious interactions. Noteworthy is that all male participants answered that their parents taught them to always respect other people and their opinions, while none of the female participants specifically mentioned anything along those lines.

'... we were always taught that you uhm, should treat other people with respect, so if someone lets you know in any way that they do not like what you are doing, then you immediately stop doing that...' Male, interview 7

Instead, female participants gave much more diverse answers. A noticeable overlap between their answers was that they mainly mentioned things they were taught that are more related to their gender. For example, they mentioned being taught things about relationships with boys, or to be careful in certain situations.

Another question related to parental upbringing is whether participants feel like their siblings of the other sex (if they have one) were raised differently based on their sex. Two participants said that there was no difference at all between how their parents raised them compared to their sibling of the other sex. For the rest of the participants, there was general consensus among those who had a sibling of the other sex that parents are more protective of daughters than of sons.

'... my parents were very strict with my sister, like when you get home you have to let us know, or you should be home by then and then ... and with us [sons] that did not really matter, because we were boys and yeah, nothing will happen you know.' - Male, interview 7

4.4.2 Friends

Only male participants were asked whether their friends also played a role in their perceptions or behaviors regarding flirtatious situations (the reason for this is, as

mentioned in chapter 3, that the question was not yet considered at the time that the interviews with female participants were conducted). They all indicate that this is not the case, which contradicts the literature on the topic.

'... because if I look at my friends like, they certainly have different views on this than I do ... if they feel comfortable with themselves that way than they should just do that, and if I feel comfortable this way than that's fine as well...' – Male, interview 7

4.4.3 TV influences

The last factor that was thought to contribute to people's perceptions about and behaviors in flirtatious interactions is that of movies and TV shows. This idea is based on social cognitive theory (Timmermans & Bulck, 2018), which states that human beings have a tendency of modelling the behavior, attitudes and beliefs of other people (which includes people they see on television). Both male and female participants were first asked how they felt men and women are typically portrayed in movies. Recurring answers were that male characters are often either portrayed as the hero or the bad guy and that they occupy high positions. For female characters, this image was completely different; based on the participants' responses they are portrayed as beautiful and the emphasis is mostly on their appearance.

'... yeah kind of like 'the man', or how do you say that, I don't know, maybe as the superior race or something' - Female, interview 3

'... you have the directors and then you have the pretty secretary, you know, with blue eyes and blonde hair ... women are definitely portrayed a bit inferior to men' - Female, interview 5

These examples above are from two different female participants, one of which uses the word 'superior' to describe how men are portrayed in movies, the other of which uses the word 'inferior' to describe how women are portrayed in movies. These examples show the potential danger of social cognitive theory, because if people indeed model beliefs of characters they see on TV, this could mean that people might actually start to believe that women are worth less than men, solely based on them being portrayed as such in movies and TV shows.

This makes the answers of participants to the question whether the portrayals of male and female characters affected them when growing up even more important. All female participants who were asked this question (one was not asked due to time limits) said that the portrayal of males and females on TV did influence them. However, all male participants said that it did not influence them, which might be attributable to males answering the questions from a more 'in the present' mindset (this could also explain males' disavowing answers to the question whether the behavior and perceptions of their friends had an influence on them).

'Uh, you want to be like the fun and flirty girl and you want to be cute and you want to be nice and uh, yeah, of course also live up to the physical image of them, or course.' – Female, interview 2

4.5 MeToo discussion

The next section includes several topics that were discussed during the interviews with regards to the MeToo discussion, including how people became familiar with the discussion, whether they feel like it could be a form of support for people who experienced sexual assault, and whether the MeToo discussion would have made them more likely to share their own experience if something of that nature had happened to them. In a number of interviews, negative consequences of the discussion also came up, which will be discussed in a separate subsection. Lastly, male participants were asked whether their ways of flirting have changed since the MeToo discussion became so popular.

4.5.1 Familiarity with MeToo

Asking participants whether they are familiar with the MeToo discussion and what they already knew about it was initially just meant to be a transitional question into that topic. However, something came forward that is worth mentioning. In Chapter 2, Burke's opinion about Milano's MeToo movement was mentioned, namely that she feels like it has now been taken over by 'pretty girls and Hollywood'. It seems like her concern might indeed be justified, since four participants explicitly mentioned Harvey Weinstein, the movie industry, or famous people, while none of the participants mentioned anything about Burke or her intentions for founding the movement (helping young black girls in urban communities).

'... people who blamed famous people for being uh, yeah too touchy ... too much physical contact, stuff like that.' – Male, interview 6

4.5.2 MeToo support and sharing

Next up, participants were asked whether they feel like the existence of the MeToo movement would be a support for people who experienced something of that nature. Additionally, they were asked whether they feel like, if something of that nature had happened to them, the existence of the MeToo discussion would have made them more likely to share their own experience. Though participants were generally optimistic with regards to it providing some form of support (making victims feel less ashamed and like they are not alone), they were more skeptical about whether it would have made them more likely to share their own experience. Some agreed that although it would not make them more likely to share their story online, they would be more inclined to open up to their family or friends about it. This seems to be related to the fact that, based on their answers to the previous question, they would feel less ashamed about it.

However, other participants were skeptical about people ‘suddenly’ sharing their personal experiences after the movement was popularized.

‘... or go to your family, or go to friends, and tell it to them, because they can help you personally. If you put it on Facebook, or any other social media, people read it but they won’t help you.’ – Male, interview 6

‘... I think it also has a turning point where I would not want to be one of those stories that people are at some point going to reject or refute because I’m one of the so many people that suddenly starts sharing it.’ – Female, interview 2

‘I can imagine, but I just think it’s a bit strange ... that one person came forward about it and suddenly the entire world has experienced the same thing, you know.’ Male, interview 9

4.5.3 Repercussions of the MeToo discussion

So, there are basically two categories of skeptical responses to the MeToo discussion. The first one, as demonstrated above, is that some of the participants find it curious that since the MeToo discussion was popularized so many people came forward with stories about their personal experiences. The second one is related to some of the participants feeling like the discussion has turned against men, and that the behavior of a few men is being generalized onto the entirety of men. This seems to be in line with the finding shown in chapter 2 that two in five of Americans feel like the movement has gone too far. So, in that regard, it seems like the discussion – or at least people’s reaction to it – has taken a similar course in America and the Netherlands.

‘At some point you start questioning it so much because you feel like, maybe they just perceived it that way, but you can’t just uhm, put everyone on the spot like that’. – Female, interview 2

‘So I think the downside is only like, uhm, a part of the people that go to the extreme, and just generalize it on to all men...’ Female, interview 4

4.5.4 Changes in flirting since the MeToo discussion

All male participants were asked whether their ways of flirting have changed since the MeToo discussion (again, this question was not asked to female participants because the question had not yet been considered at that point). The similarity in their answers is quite striking; every male participant said that his ways of flirting have not changed, because he did not display any ‘MeToo-related behavior’ beforehand, so there was not really anything to change. Though the following is only an assumption, it seems like there is a link between males’ answers to this question and their answers to the question about whether their upbringing contributed to how they feel about and act in flirtatious situations (where all men said that they were taught ‘general respect’). A possible conception of this might be that these seem to be socially acceptable answers. However, all of them also indicated that they have not seen a change in their environment of people treating each

other differently, and based on that it does indeed seem like the MeToo discussion has not had a notable impact on people's behavior in going-out situations (at least for this research sample). This is not to say that the discussion had no impact at all; one of the participants mentioned that he feels like the impact was perhaps more noticeable in the workplace

'... I think it had a bigger impact in the professional field you know, than on personal flirt situations.' –
Male, interview 8

Chapter 5: Discussion

In the following chapter, the research findings will be discussed in light of the theoretical framework as presented in chapter 2. There are three reasons for a certain finding to be discussed in this chapter. The first one is that it was remarkably in line with the existing literature. It might sometimes be considered to be redundant to mention such findings, but the reason for still including them is that most of the literature used in chapter 2 is from American sources. So rather than merely confirming the literature and theories, the purpose is to see which of those are generalizable to the sample of Dutch students used in this thesis. Secondly, findings that are in contradiction with or deviate from the existing literature will be discussed, since these could either indicate that the American literature and theories are not generalizable onto this research sample, or that a change is taking place and that therefore some of the research or theories are getting outdated. Lastly, findings that are not yet (extensively) discussed in the existing literature will be mentioned, as they possibly suggest that there is a research gap or that a shift is taking place that has not yet been widely considered.

With regards to flirtatious behavior, the general idea that came forward in the literature review is that males are the ones who are ‘supposed’ to initiate flirting. This is considered to be part of their gender role, in which they are seen as the ones who have to pursue the female (Byers, 2008). However, according to two female participants, males do not initiate flirting anymore in real life (at least not as much as they used to). Literature on the topic does seem to confirm this; traditional locations for meeting singles (like bars) have been partially displaced by dating apps (Hobbs, Owen & Gerber, 2016). As a consequence, they are also sometimes put into the position to approach males. According to the literature on sexual scripts, this would cause ambivalence, as females would therefore be expected to act against their sexual scripts. However, another possibility is that sexual scripts are actually slowly changing and adopting to a number of recent developments, for example but not limited to the wide-spread use of dating apps nowadays. This second option also seems to be more in line with male participant’s positive viewpoints on females initiating flirtatious interactions (which is notable since this goes against the idea that females have to offer initial resistance to a male’s flirtatious advances).

Females who do not actively initiate flirtatious interactions – which was still the case for the majority of them – said that they would (pre-interaction) make it clear to a male if she is interested in him, most commonly by making eye-contact. Though contextually slightly different, this seems to be complimentary to the literature on consent; ‘in instances where consent is actually given, it usually happens non-verbally...’ (Humphreys, 2007).

The majority of female participants expressed having a hard time verbally indicating that they are not interested in someone. A possible explanation for this is that it is a consequence of women being more agreeable according to their gender role (Bartoli & Clark, 2006). However, a particular outcome of this ‘conflict’ between rejecting someone and being agreeable, which has not yet received much attention in research concerning flirting, was mentioned by two female participants; they indicated that they would make

up excuses for rejecting someone, by for example saying that they are already in a relationship or that they are into girls (even though this was not actually the case).

During the literature review, the notion of people being persistent in their flirtatious advances also came forward. The literature predicts that males are more likely to be persistent, as this is in accordance with their gender roles and sexual scripts; 'even if a woman is interested, she is expected to first hold off a little bit, so she does not come across as being too eager' (Dai, Dong & Jia, 2013). Besides that, according to the literature men are generally not good at mentalizing (the ability to explain and predict the behavior of other people), which would imply that it's more difficult for them to recognize the difference between a female genuinely not being interested and them playing 'hard to get' (Gallagher & Frith, 2003). However, participants indicated that both males and females can be persistent in their flirtatious interactions. Since the literature provides no motive for females to be persistent based on their gender role or sexual script, it could be possible that it has more to do with contextual factors. However, this is merely speculative and it requires further research. Another possibility is that females can sometimes be so persistent exactly because this option is absent from their gender roles and sexual scripts (as this would make them more oblivious to the possibility that their behavior might be considered to be persistent by others).

Another research finding that seems to be supported by the literature is that females are judged much more harshly when it comes to kissing or having sex with a lot of people than males are; '... the perceived worth and status of a woman decreases as her sexual experience increases, while this would increase the status of a man' (Byers, 2008). Noteworthy here is that some participants actually indicated that they feel like females are harsher than males when it comes to judging other females who have slept with 'many' people, while there is no mention of this in the literature.

With regards to the influence that one's environment has had on their perceptions of and behavior in flirtatious situations, all male participants indicated that their friends did not have an influence on them in this domain. This seems to go against the finding discussed in chapter 2 with regards to gender role and sexual script socialization, namely that friends do have an influence on this (Witt, 1997). A possible explanation for this is that the ability to resist peer influence increases with age; it reaches its peak at around age 18 and stays relatively stable from that point onward (Steinberg & Monahan, 2007). So the inconsistency between the literature and the responses may be explained by a combination of the fact that all participants are older than 18 (and thus relatively good at resisting peer influences) and the assumption that they answered the question from a viewpoint focused more on the present than on when they were younger.

According to social cognitive theory, human beings have a tendency of modelling the behavior, attitudes and beliefs of other people. This principle also applies to TV characters one is exposed to (Timmermans & Bluck, 2018). The responses of all female participants seem to confirm this, as they indicated that the portrayal of males and females on TV did influence them (especially when they were younger). However, contrary to what this theory poses, all male participants indicated the opposite. No explanation is provided for

this in the literature. Again, the same possibility that is mentioned in the previous paragraph might be applicable here; that male participants answered questions from a mindset that was more focused on the present.

Lastly, regarding the MeToo discussion, participants indicated that the existence of the discussion would probably have made them feel less ashamed if something of that nature had happened to them. This could explain a trend that started right after the MeToo discussion was popularized; that the number of rape and sexual assault instances that were reported increased with about 20% in America (Southall, 2019), and even with approximately 30% in the Netherlands (Bremmer, 2018).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The aim of this research was to identify the effects of gender roles and sexual script theory on differences between males and females in perception of and behavior in flirtatious situations and in consequence to the MeToo discussion. This question arose from the literature review, in which focus was on gender roles and sexuality script theory, along with a description of the MeToo movement and the context under which it arose. In addition, research data was collected by means of semi-structured interviews, during which participants were asked about their perceptions of and experiences with flirting (with a main focus on going-out situations), the means they employ for communicating their interest or limit to others, whether they feel like there is a double standard (from a societal perspective), if their upbringing played a role in all of this, and what their opinion is on several topics regarding the MeToo discussion. The combination of the literature review and the data collected by means of the interviews eventually led to the analysis as presented in chapter 4 as well as to the discussion in the previous chapter. The following chapter consists of the final conclusion in the form of a concise answer to the research question, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

6.1 Conclusion

Gender roles and sexual scripts do indeed seem to play a role in the perception of and behavior in flirtatious behavior between males and females (at least in this research sample). They do so in a number of ways. In discussing this, the structure as used in chapter 4 will be retained, meaning that the order is not reflective of their importance or relevance.

Firstly, there does seem to be general consensus among females that males should be the pursuers of flirtatious interactions. This causes them to be more passive than males generally are and it makes them more likely to be judgmental about other females who do initiate contact. However, males do not seem to share this view; they are rather appreciative of females initiating interactions. One possible explanation for this is that female gender role socialization is enforced more than male gender role socialization. Another possibility is that males actually dislike the part of their gender role and sexual script that tells them to be the pursuer, as this goes hand in hand with also being the one that is rejected more. Therefore, they might have a more positive mindset about females occasionally taking this role upon themselves.

Next, due to males generally being responsible for pursuing females, the latter are expected to communicate their limit. This poses a problem for many of them due to the fact that their gender role simultaneously instructs them to be agreeable. This conflict was clearly demonstrated in the fact that the majority of female participants indicated that they

have a hard time rejecting someone who is being persistent, as they do not want to hurt that person's feelings. Some of them solve this issue by using excuses for their disinterest, so that instead of being disagreeable – which would be in contrast with their gender role – they ascribe it to external circumstances.

Participants gave three main reasons for why they felt like people can sometimes be very persistent in their flirting. One of these seems to fit especially well with the relevant gender roles and sexual scripts on this matter, which revolve around the idea that the persistent person feels they might still be able to convince the other person. As shown in the literature review, females are expected to initially offer resistance while males are expected to attempt to remove this resistance. However, the literature only provides an explanation as to why males can (and are even encouraged) to be persistent, while it does not explained why females can be persistent at times. A possibility is that females consider themselves to be less harmful, which would make their continuous flirtatious attempts less intimidating.

Another way that sexual scripts contribute to differences in perception and behavior between males and females is the fact that it clearly includes a double standard when it comes to engaging in sexual interaction. The literature suggested that as the number of sexual interactions increase, the perceived worth and status of a man increase, while those of a female decrease. The vast majority of the participants mentioned this exact phenomenon; when a male has sex with a lot of females he is seen as a hero or 'the man', while a female will be seen as easy or even as a slut when has sex with a lot of males – not only by persons of the other sex, but also by same-sex individuals. A possible implication of this is that it inhibits females and pushes males to engage in certain (sexual) acts, making the difference between them significantly bigger than it would have been without the existence of this particular part of their sexual scripts.

The question now remains how this contributed to the MeToo discussion. Due to the relatively small research sample no conclusions can be drawn from this and it might not be representative for the entirety of the Dutch population. Rather, it is just the main finding that came forward during the interviews. Based on the data, it seems possible that all of the above-mentioned mechanisms contributed to a degree, but the most significant one seems to be that it was a combination of the notion that 1) females, even when interested, should offer initial resistance to a male's flirtatious advances, and 2) the notion that males should attempt to eliminate this resistance. Even if this is indeed the case, the severity of this problem is much smaller than that of rape or sexual harassment, which are the main focus of the MeToo discussion. Still, its contribution might well have been quite big, due to the scope of the problem and the fact that virtually anyone has at some point experienced another person being very persistent with them and not taking 'no' for an answer.

Lastly, some findings from the data seem to suggest that the influence that gender roles and sexual scripts have on people's behavior and perceptions is actually declining. For example, two female participants indicated that they noticed a decline in males approaching them when going out. The potential explanation that was initially given for this is the relatively recent development of dating apps. However, the finding that all male participants like it when females are the ones initiating the flirtatious interaction (which is in contrast with what their gender role instructs) seems to suggest that there might indeed be a shift in people's perspective regarding this. Additionally, the MeToo discussion presumably made people more aware of the existence and impact that gender roles and sexual scripts have on their daily lives, and this awareness itself might cause people to start moving away from the parts of gender roles and sexual scripts that are to a certain degree harmful or repressive. Though it is still too early to tell now, as the MeToo discussion was only globally popularized less than two years ago, it might eventually prove to surpass its initial goal of raising awareness for and fighting against instances of rape and sexual assault by rectifying the inherent inequality between male and female gender roles and sexual scripts that made the discussion necessary in the first place.

6.2 Limitations and recommendations for future research

A number of limitations came up throughout the process of writing this thesis that will act as the basis of the recommendations for future research on the topic. The first one is the size and the homogeneity of the sample. While it was a conscious decision to have a sample of only HBO and university students, the results would likely be more generalizable if they were based on a more diverse and bigger sample. Future research could also investigate whether there are notable differences between various population groups – especially between older and newer generations, to see whether there is actually a shift going in gender roles and sexual scripts.

Another limitation that was already mentioned in chapter 3 relates to the slight differences between the predetermined interview questions for males and females. One of the main objectives of this research was to investigate whether there were certain differences between males and females, and for the particular questions that were only asked to one or the other this was not possible, meaning that their possible implications were more speculative than was the case with other questions.

In future research, more attention could also be paid to the role of social media and dating apps on the behavior of males and females in flirtatious situations, and on what the potential impact of these is on gender roles and sexual scripts.

Another limitation is related to the fact that power relations have not been considered enough in the literature review and interview questions. Though it is true that the mechanisms underlying the MeToo discussion can largely be attributed to gender roles

and sexual scripts, the effect of power relations must not be underestimated and should thus be examined further in future research.

Lastly, as suggested in the conclusion, there possibly is a shift going on in gender roles and sexual scripts. Further research into this topic could investigate whether this is actually the case, what causes this shift and what its implications are for the behavior and perceptions of males and females in flirtatious interactions.

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Appendix

Form predetermined interview questions (Female version)

Introduction

First of all, thank you very much for your participation. I am conducting this interview as part of my thesis. During it, I will be asking you several questions regarding my topic, which is mainly the #MeToo discussion and gender roles.

Some practical information: I will be tape recording this interview, as I am required to write it out to include in my thesis. However, this will be done completely anonymous. Your name or any other personal information will not be included, meaning that it is in no way possible to detect who I conducted these interviews with. Also, I might be taking some notes during this interview. If I do, I will immediately get rid of these once the interview is finished.

The interview will likely be around 30 minutes long, but it might be shorter or longer depending on how fast we go through the questions. Some of the questions may require you to think back of certain situations. Take your time for this!

Lastly, some of these questions might be personal in nature. If you do not feel comfortable answering any of these questions that is not a problem; just let me know and we will move on to the next question.

If you have no further questions at this point, we will move on to the interview.

Questions

- 1. What is your relationship status?** Are you currently married, dating, single etc.?
→ If not single, ask them to answer (some of) these questions from the perspective of when they were still single.
- 2. Do you ever go out?** In what kind of settings? Bars, clubs, just dinner, etc.
- 3. Do you feel like there is a difference between how people flirt with you in a bar/club or more 'everyday' scenarios?** If so, what is the main difference? Which do you like better?
- 4. Are you a person that actively flirts or do you kind of let it happen to you?** In case of the former, what are ways in which you would flirt? How do people generally respond to this? **Are you also someone who would walk up to someone? Or do you only start flirting once someone else has made the first move?**
- 5. Can you describe a typical situation of a boy flirting with you?**
- 6. Can you describe an 'ideal' flirting scenario versus a bad one?** What is it that makes the biggest difference?
- 7. Have you ever experienced someone being very persistent in their flirting, even though you have made it clear that you are not interested?** If so, how did you make this clear? Also, how did it make you feel?
- 8. Perspective-taking: If you try to understand where the man was coming from in that situation, what do you think went through his mind or were his intentions?** That you were just playing hard to get? Or that you could still be convinced?

9. **Do you feel like there are things that boys are ‘allowed’ to do that you are not?**
10. **Do you feel there are things that you, as a girl, are ‘allowed’ to do that boys are not?**
11. **Do you feel like there is a double standard when it comes to flirting, hooking up, and casual sex? Or do you feel like these are natural differences that are the result from men and women being ‘different’?** If the former, what causes this double standard?
12. **Do you feel like your upbringing contributed to how you act in the kind of situations that we have discussed?** If so, how?
13. **If you have any brothers (or, for people with children; a son and a daughter) do you feel like you / they were taught different things regarding this matter?** Do you feel like this was fair, or that it should have been otherwise?
14. **According to you, how are men and women often portrayed in mass media?** Aka. What is the stereotypical image that mass media (especially movies, TV shows) paints of men and women?
15. **Do you feel like this has affected you when growing up?** For example; that you refrained from undertaking certain activities because they were only for boys?
16. **Are you at all familiar with the MeToo discussion?** If so, what do you know about it?
17. **If you see anything being posted on social media about the MeToo discussion, what kind of messages are these usually?** Are they from online papers, news sites, people you know personally?
18. **Do you feel like it is a necessary discussion that was unavoidable?** Also, do you feel like there are also downsides to the discussion?
19. **Speculative: If something like this would have happened to you, would this discussion have helped you, and would it have made it more likely for you to share this story?**
20. **Part of the discussion is about the grey area between someone being friendly and them overstepping a boundary. Therefore, women are forced to set certain limits. Do you find it hard to communicate your limit with boys?** Also think of other situations, like your boss.
21. **Do you communicate this limit verbally or non-verbally?**
22. **Is there anything you regret?** Like a situation in which you wanted to speak up but you didn’t? Or that you went home with someone while you were not completely sure about this?