Third party's blaming attributions towards male victims of female-perpetrated rape:

The influence of victims' sexual orientation, third party's gender and endorsement of male rape myth acceptance, hostility towards men and belief in a just world

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Abstract

Male rape victims are known to experience negative and blaming reactions from third parties. Research suggests third party's male rape victim blaming is influenced by the third party's gender and victims' sexual orientation. Yet, it remains unclear whether other factors significantly affect third party's attitudes towards male rape victims. In an online study, participants (N = 264, 50.4% female) read a hypothetical scenario depicting the rape of an adult man by a woman, in which victim's sexual orientation (heterosexual, homosexual) differed between subjects. Participants completed a questionnaire assessing their level of victim blaming and endorsement of male rape myth acceptance, hostility towards men and belief in a just world. An analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to test whether participants' victim blaming differed for participants' gender and victims' sexual orientation. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was run to test the influence of participants' male rape myth acceptance, hostility towards men and belief in a just world on their victim blaming. Results revealed men to show more victim blaming than women, whilst both men and women blamed the heterosexual victim more than the homosexual victim. Only participants' endorsement of male rape myth acceptance was found to predict victim blaming. These findings further confirm the influence of third party's male rape myth acceptance on victim blaming, and the existence of the sexual preference effect. The discussion examines the findings in light of defensive attributions and traditional (hegemonic) gender roles. Practical implications for criminal justice systems and mental health services are addressed.

Keywords: sexual violence, male victims, victim blaming, male rape myth acceptance, hostility towards men, just world belief.

1. Introduction

In society today, the male perpetrator - female victim paradigm still dominates media and scientific research on sexual victimization (Stemple & Meyer, 2014). The recent #MeToo movement has led many women to come forward and share their experiences with sexual harassment and/or violence, whilst a substantially smaller proportion of men have spoken out about their experiences (Effting & Stoffelen, 2018a). Although this may well reflect the differing frequency in occurrence between male and female sexual victimization, the sexual victimization of men is nonetheless a prominent issue deserving of more attention, especially as rape has serious and enduring psychological effects on victims; including poor psychological functioning, self-worth and self-esteem (Walker, Archer, & Davies, 2005a).

According to the U.S. National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey 2015 Data Brief, 2.6% of men experienced a (completed or attempted) rape, whilst 7.1% (1 in 14 men) were made to penetrate another person (completed or attempted; Smith et al., 2018).[1] Although these numbers are substantial, the exact prevalence of male rape remains underestimated (as is also the case for female rape; Allroggen et al., 2016; Stemple & Meyer, 2014; Rumney, 2009; Russel & Hand, 2017). This is perhaps due to victims' underreporting; male rape victims are known to be less likely and willing to report their experiences to the police than female rape victims (e.g. Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2008; Davies, Smith, & Rogers, 2009; Javaid, 2015a; Larsen & Hilden, 2016; Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, 2006; Spruin & Reilly, 2018; Stemple, Flores, & Meyer, 2016; Walker, Archer, & Davies, 2005b; Weiss, 2010), and have difficulty acknowledging their victimization (Artime, McCallum, & Peterson, 2014).

Victims' underreporting may be caused by fear of negative reactions from third parties, such as being disbelieved, blamed or regarded responsible (Davies et al., 2009; Hlavka, 2017; Sable et al., 2006; Walker et al., 2005b). The event of rape may challenge victims' masculinity, and they may subsequently experience feelings of shame, guilt and embarrassment, which may further enhance underreporting (Davies et al., 2009; Sable et al., 2006; Weiss, 2010). Consequently, male victims may not receive the required professional help (Javaid, 2015a; Walker et al., 2005b), both from the police, mental health services and other related professionals. Especially since police workers were found to hold negative and sexist attitudes towards male rape, which are potentially affected by victims' sexual

[1] For the purpose of the current study, cases in which a man is 'made to penetrate' another person are considered rape and are included when referring to male rape.

orientation (Davies & Rogers, 2006; Davies et al., 2009; Javaid, 2015a; Page, 2010; Rumney, 2009). Subsequently, secondary victimization may arise (Campbell & Raja, 1999), which Javaid (2017a, p. 338) refers to as "attitudes and behaviours of state and voluntary agencies, social services, and societies that are insensitive and 'victim-blaming'". In addition, third party's negative and victim blaming sentiments may negatively influence victims' well-being by causing a lack of social support, which is known to further predict psycho-pathological outcomes (Ullman & Peter-Hagane, 2014; Walker et al., 2005a). Therefore, it is of importance that victims' feel able to report and share their experiences, and receive the required professional help and social support.

Third party reactions to rape victims have been widely studied in the US and UK, but a plethora of this research has focused on the male perpetrator - female victim paradigm (Javaid, 2016a; Graham, 2006; Kassing, Beesley, & Frey, 2005). More recent attention has been directed towards male victims of male perpetrators (e.g. Davies, Rogers, & Bates, 2008; Javaid, 2016a; Sleath & Bull, 2010; White & Yamawaki, 2009). Hitherto, inquiry concerning male victims of female perpetrators is scarce. Perhaps since it is still unjustly believed that female-perpetrated rape is unusual or nonexistent (Stemple & Meyer, 2014). This belief may persist, because female-perpetrated rape challenges the dominant discourse surrounding sexual victimization by contradicting the idea of 'real rape': a physically forced stranger rape of a woman by a man (Graham, 2006; Levy & Adam, 2018).

Contrary to the unjustified beliefs regarding its prevalence, sexual victimization of men by women is not rare (Stemple et al., 2016). In light of Shia LaBeouf's victimization, it is apparent that awareness of male victims of female-perpetrated rape is necessary. LaBeouf revealed he was raped by a female visitor at his silent performance during an art project (Beaumont-Thomas, 2014). An astounding majority (55%) of online comments to an article reporting on his experience, were found to express negative and victim blaming sentiments, undermining LaBeouf's credibility (Levy & Adam, 2018). Therefore, the current study will examine third party's victim and perpetrator blaming sentiments in a case of female-perpetrated male rape. Male victims with different sexual orientations were included as victims' sexual orientation may influence third party's victim blaming sentiments (e.g. Davies, Pollard, & Archer, 2006; Davies & Boden, 2012), as will be addressed in the following section.

1.1. Victim and Perpetrator Blaming

In cases of rape, one would expect the perpetrator to be blamed. Whilst this occurs frequently (e.g. Ayala, Kotary, & Hetz, 2018; Grubb & Harrower, 2009; Pedersen & Strömwall, 2013; Strömwall, Alfredsson, & Landström, 2013a, 2013b), third party's perspectives of victims are not always favorable. Research has demonstrated that third parties have a tendency to show blaming sentiments towards rape victims, whilst reducing the perpetrator's blameworthiness (e.g. Suarez & Gadalla, 2010). These sentiments are more apparent in cases of acquaintance than stranger rape, the latter of which, although less prevalent, is often deemed 'real rape' (e.g. Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003; Grubb & Harrower, 2009; Persson, Dhingra, & Grogan, 2018).

Third party characteristics may influence third party's levels of victim and perpetrator blaming (van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014). These characteristics include, amongst others, the third party's gender, age (e.g. Suarez & Gadalla, 2010) or immigration status (e.g. Sjöberg & Sarwar, 2017). For the current scope, only the well-founded influence of the third party's gender will be further addressed. Negative and victim blaming sentiments, regarding both male and female victims, have been stated to be more prevalent in men than women (e.g. Anderson & Quinn, 2009; Ben-David & Schneider, 2005; Grubb & Harrower, 2009; Russell & Hand, 2017; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010; Wakelin & Long, 2003). Men also tend to attribute less blame to perpetrators than women, regardless of the perpetrators' gender (Gerber, Cronin, & Steigman, 2004; Wakelin & Long, 2003).

Furthermore, several victim and perpetrator characteristics may affect third party's levels of victim and perpetrator blaming (van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014), such as the victims' and perpetrators' gender (e.g. Davies et al., 2006) or immigration status (e.g. Sjöberg & Sarwar, 2017), the victims' age (e.g. Strömwall et al., 2013a), resistance (e.g. Davies et al., 2008), sexual orientation (e.g. Davies & Boden, 2012), familiarity with the perpetrator (e.g. Strömwall et al., 2013b) and so on. Yet, only the influence of the victims' and perpetrators' gender and the victims' sexual orientation will be further addressed.

As aforementioned, studies on male rape victims remain scarce, specifically female-perpetrated male rape remains marginalized and understudied (Javaid, 2016a; Graham, 2006). This is remarkable given that male victims receive most victim blaming sentiments; in general, male victims have been regarded more negatively and blamed more than female victims, principally by men (e.g. Davies, Pollard, & Archer, 2001; Davies et al., 2006, 2008; Gerber et al., 2004; Whatley & Riggio, 1993; White & Kurpius, 2002). In particular, male victims of female perpetrators were blamed more in comparison to both female and male victims of male perpetrators, specifically by men; they were taken less seriously, attributed

more responsibility, and regarded as having encouraged and received pleasure from the event (e.g. Ayala et al., 2018; Davies & Boden, 2012; Davies, Gilston, & Rogers, 2012; Davies et al., 2006; Smith, Pine, & Hawley, 1988). The results of the only Dutch study evaluating third party perspectives of male victims of female-perpetrated sexual coercion were similar; male victims were attributed more responsibility and pleasure, less distress, and taken less seriously, expressly by men (Huitema & Vanwesenbeeck, 2016). In addition, when solely considering the perpetrator's gender, female perpetrators were considered more favorable, less responsible and blamed less than male perpetrators, again, especially by men (Davies et al., 2006; Huitema & Vanwesenbeeck, 2016; Studzinska & Hilton, 2017).

Regarding victims' sexual orientation, homosexual male victims of male perpetrators were found to be blamed more than heterosexual male victims, in particular, by (heterosexual) men (e.g. Davies & Boden, 2012; Davies et al., 2001, 2006; Davies & Hudson, 2011; Davies & McCartney, 2003; Wakelin & Long, 2003; White & Yamawaki, 2009). Research on the influence of victims' sexual orientation in cases of female-perpetrated male rape appears scarce; to the author's knowledge, only Davies et al. (2006) and Davies and Boden (2012) have studied this. In these studies, heterosexual male victims of female perpetrators were found to be blamed more than their homosexual counterparts and heterosexual victims of male perpetrators (Davies et al., 2006; Davies & Boden, 2012). This sexual preference effect (Davies et al., 2006) appears to be in line with Wakelin and Long's (2003) sexual attraction hypothesis, which states that third parties will blame the victim more when they perceive a potential for sexual attraction between the victim and perpetrator, as the victim would be regarded as (subconsciously) having desired, to be sexually assaulted (Morrison & Pedersen, 2020).

Overall, third party, victim and perpetrator characteristics impact third party's sentiments towards male rape victims. Male victims of female-perpetrated rape (particularly if heterosexual) appear to be viewed more negatively and blamed more, compared to female and male victims of male-perpetrators, specifically by men. Whereas, female perpetrators appear to be blamed less and regarded more favorably. Although a sexual preference effect seemingly occurs, Davies et al (2006) and Davies and Boden's (2012) findings may be influenced by other factors. Third party's beliefs regarding justice, rape and gender may play a role in their negative and blaming sentiments towards male rape victims. Therefore, the potential influence of third party's belief in a just world, male rape myth acceptance and hostility towards men will be further addressed.

1.2. Belief in a Just World

As highlighted in the previous section, third parties may hold negative and blaming sentiments towards rape victims and regard them as deserving of and blameworthy for their own victimization. These attitudes may be influenced by third party's belief in a just world (BJW). Lerner (1965, 1980) proposed the just-world hypothesis, which states "people need to believe in a just world in which everyone gets what they deserve and deserves what they get" (Dalbert, 2009, p. 288). This belief is adaptive as it provides people with a sense of stability and orderliness (and thus control and safety; Hayes, Lorenz, & Bell, 2013) of their social surroundings (Dalbert, 2009; Lerner, 1965, 1980). Due to their BJW, people believe that, briefly stated, "good things happen to good people, and bad things happen to bad people" (Hammond, Berry, & Rodriguez, 2011, p. 244). This would imply innocent victims do not exist, as such an injustice would threaten people's BJW (Dalbert, 2009). As a consequence of injustice, people unconsciously feel the need to defend and restore their BJW, and hence, justice, by cognitively reevaluating the event (Dalbert, 2009; Lerner, 1980).

Research has shown that people who endorse a BJW to a greater degree have a tendency to justify events by assigning responsibility and blame to victims (e.g. Hafer & Bègue, 2005); this tendency follows from an attempt to preserve the BJW as a consequence of injustice (Dalbert, 2009; Levy & Adam, 2018). Other strategies may consist of making the injustice more tolerable by minimizing the victimization or restoring justice by showing punitiveness towards the offender (Hayes et al., 2013; Lodewijkx, Wildschut, Nijstad, Savenije, & Smit, 2001).

Therefore, third party's victim blaming sentiments towards rape victims may follow from an attempt to preserve their BJW; to justify an act, which appears unjustifiable to many. Recent literature has studied the association between BJW and victim blaming. Although, some found non-significant associations (Culda, Opre, & Dobrin, 2018; Hammond et al., 2011; Pedersen & Strömwall, 2013; Sleath & Bull, 2010), most found higher levels of BJW to significantly predict higher victim and lower perpetrator blaming (Hayes et al., 2013; Landström, Strömwall, & Alfredsson, 2016; Strömwall et al., 2013a, 2013b; Strömwall, Landström, & Alfredsson, 2014; Whatley & Riggio, 1993).[2] Unfortunately, the main focus of the aforementioned studies has been on the association between BJW and the blaming of female victims of sexual violence; research considering male victims appears scarce (except

[2] Yet, it must be stated that the scenarios in the research studies often address (stranger) rapes, in which the victims' innocence is highlighted. Therefore, one's BJW is threatened to a greater degree, and consequently, a greater need exists to preserve it.

for Strömwall et al., 2013a). Nevertheless, the association may be similar for male victims. Hence, BJW may (partly) explain third party's negative and blaming sentiments towards male victims.

1.3. Male Rape Myth Acceptance

A belief in a just world may not be the only factor to influence third party's tendency to attribute responsibility or blame to male rape victims. Higher levels of BJW have been found to be positively related to rape myth acceptance (Hayes et al., 2013), which may be another factor to influence third party's sentiments towards male victims. Third parties may exhibit negative attitudes towards rape victims because they have implicitly or explicitly learned of, or were exposed to, negative sentiments or rape myths, and consequently, consider them appropriate (Brown, 2019). Rape myths are defined as "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists which serve to create a climate that is hostile to rape victims" (Burt, 1980, p. 217). Rape myths hence influence people's definitions of sexual violence and 'credible' victims (Walfield, 2018). Individuals' acceptance of rape myths may serve to attribute responsibility and blame to the victim for the event and diminish perpetrators' responsibility in situations that are non-conforming to the rape myths (Bohner et al., 1998; Sleath & Bull, 2010; Walfield, 2018).

The study of rape myths has its origins in feminist theory (Brownmiller, 1975; Persson et al., 2018) and, hence, was initially focused on female rape myths, such as "women ask for it" (Burt, 1980, p. 217; Melanson, 1998). Attention to male rape myths, however, has been continuously growing (Graham, 2006). Male rape myths differ from female rape myths in their themes, by focusing on personal factors, such as men's invulnerability, masculinity and sexual insatiability, in comparison to female rape myths, which address women's credibility or actions, such as drinking alcohol, way of dressing or going home with a man (Burt, 1980; Turchik & Edwards, 2012).

In the case of female-perpetrated male rape, many male rape myths may be incited. An example of which is "men cannot be raped", or ""real" men can defend themselves against rape" (Turchik & Edwards, 2012, p. 211-212). In this sense, men are considered unable to be overpowered and forced into sex by women, as they, by virtue of their physical size and power, should be able to escape (Fisher & Pina, 2013; Kassing et al., 2005; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992). Hence, if men are regarded passive or insufficiently resistant, additional rape myths may be activated, such as "[m]ost men who are raped by a woman are somewhat to blame for not escaping or fighting off the woman"

(Melanson, 1998, p. 158). Research shows that male rape victims who were deemed to insufficiently resist, are blamed more by third parties (Davies et al., 2001; Davies et al., 2008; Davies & Rogers, 2006; Levy & Adam, 2018). Related to this is another often-believed male rape myth, "[a] man who has been raped lost his manhood" (Melanson, 1998, p. 158). Male rape victims are considered to have "failed in their masculine duty to protect themselves" (Hlavka, 2017, p. 485) and are hence perceived as less of a man (Davies et al., 2012; Mulder, Pemberton, & Vingerhoets, 2020; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992; Turchik & Edwards, 2012). As a consequence, men may refuse to acknowledge their victimization (Artime et al., 2014), as 'real men' cannot be raped (Weiss, 2010).

Moreover, a belief still rather persistent in current society is that women are unable to rape men (Graham, 2006; Melanson, 1998; Turchik & Edwards, 2012). Whilst awareness of female-perpetrated male rape appears to be growing, rape myths may further enhance this belief, namely "[a] man can enjoy sex even if it is being forced upon him" (Melanson, 1998, p. 158). Thereby addressing men's supposed sexual insatiability (Turchik & Edwards, 2012), as rape by a woman would be every man's dream (Davies et al., 2006). If men do not like this, they do not conform to the masculine stereotype of sexual insatiability, as it is believed men "should always take, rather than resist, any opportunity of sex with a woman" (Davies & Boden, 2012, p. 137; Davies et al., 2006). This further relates to the belief that "if a victim physically responds to an assault, he must have wanted it" (Turchik & Edwards, 2012, p. 212). As will be addressed in Section 4.3.2., if a man has an erection or ejaculates during rape, it does not signify pleasure; it is merely an involuntary physiological response, which can be activated in situations of duress or anxiety (Fuchs, 2004; Walfield, 2018).

Consequently, third parties may have negative attitudes towards male rape victims who do not adhere to these rape myths. Generally, male rape myth acceptance has been shown to be higher in men than women (e.g. Ayala et al., 2018; Davies & McCartney, 2003; Hammond et al., 2011; Kassing et al., 2005; Sleath & Bull, 2010; Walfield, 2018), particularly in case of female perpetrators (Chapleau et al., 2008; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992). (Male) rape myth acceptance may hence be influenced by contextual factors. Notably, male rape myth acceptance was found to be a predictor of victim and perpetrator blaming, with rape myth acceptance being positively related to victim blaming and negatively related to perpetrator blaming (Ayala et al., 2018; Davies et al., 2012; Hammond et al., 2011; Sleath & Bull, 2010).

Henceforth, clear indications of associations between male rape myth acceptance and third party's victim and perpetrator blaming exist. Nonetheless, research on (male) rape myth

acceptance and victim and perpetrator blaming regarding male victims of female-perpetrated rape (with differing sexual orientations), remains scarce.

1.4. Hostility Towards Men

As seen in the male rape myths, male rape challenges the dominant discourse: the female victim – male perpetrator paradigm. Therefore, people's sentiments concerning gender roles may also influence their perceptions towards rape victims (Ben-David & Schneider, 2009; Kassing et al., 2005; White & Yamawaki, 2009). People may display gender-related prejudices or stereotypes, towards both men and women. Originally, Glick and Fiske (1996) coined the concept of ambivalent sexism, which describes ambivalence regarding traditional gender beliefs towards women. Ambivalent sexism consists of two opposite, yet interrelated, forms of gender prejudice: hostile sexism and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hostile sexism justifies men's power by resenting women who do not follow traditional gender roles and are seen as trying to control men or usurp men's power (e.g. feminists). Benevolent sexism is a seemingly positive, yet patronizing sentiment towards women who conform to traditional gender roles (e.g. housewives) by viewing them as 'weak' and requiring male protection (Glick & Fiske, 1999; Glick & Whitehead, 2010).

People may hold similarly ambivalent attitudes towards men. Hostility towards men is an expression of resentment towards men who exhibit stereotypical masculine traits, such as dominance, unwillingness to see women as equals and being likely to sexually harass; whilst benevolence towards men is seemingly positive by regarding men as protective and providing, but requiring domestic care by women (Glick & Fiske, 1999; Glick & Whitehead, 2010). As the current study focuses on more explicit negative sentiments, further attention will be paid to hostile sexism and hostility towards men.

These negative sentiments may contribute to people's views of rape victims, especially as Burt (1980, p. 229) stated: "rape attitudes are strongly connected to other deeply held and pervasive attitudes such as sex role stereotyping". Hostile sexism has been found to be related to acceptance of female rape myths (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2007; Rollero & Tartaglia, 2019; Spruin & Reilly, 2018), rape proclivity (Abrams et al., 2003) and victim blaming (Davies et al., 2012; Persson et al., 2018), primarily by men.

As hostile sexism appears to influence victim blaming in cases of male-perpetrated female rape, it can be expected that hostility towards men will influence victim blaming in cases of female-perpetrated male rape. Unfortunately, hostility towards men has not been studied in this context. Some studies reviewed the association between hostility towards men

and male rape myth acceptance without significant results (Chapleau et al., 2008; Spruin & Reilly, 2018), whilst another study found hostility towards men to be both positively related to male rape myth acceptance and victim blaming in an event of male-perpetrated male rape (Davies et al., 2012). As research appears scarce and inconsistent, it seems valuable to study the association of victim and perpetrator blaming and hostility towards men in a case of female-perpetrated male rape; a situation that doubly counters traditional gender stereotypes.

1.5. The Current Study

In conclusion, associations between victims' sexual orientation and third party's level of victim and perpetrator blaming have been indicated in female-perpetrated male rape (Davies et al., 2006; Davies & Boden, 2012). Moreover, associations have been found regarding third party's level of male rape myth acceptance and their level of victim and perpetrator blaming (e.g. Ayala et al., 2018; Sleath & Bull, 2010), but also regarding their level of belief in a just world and victim and perpetrator blaming (e.g. Strömwall et al., 2013a, 2013b). Additionally, an association between hostility towards men and victim and perpetrator blaming is deduced (e.g. Davies et al., 2012).

The current study will be the first to further address these associations in a case of female-perpetrated male rape in which the victims' sexual orientation differs. Subsequently, the current experimental study aims to explore third party's level of victim and perpetrator blaming in a case of female-perpetrated male rape, and the effect of victim's sexual orientation, third party's gender and endorsement of male rape myth acceptance, hostility towards men and belief in a just world in a sample of English-speaking participants in the Netherlands.

The aforementioned associations lead to the following research question: how do the victim's sexual orientation and third party's gender influence third party's victim and perpetrator blaming in female-perpetrated male rape? As the role of victims' sexual orientation appears to have only been studied twice, a replication of Davies et al (2006) and Davies & Boden (2012) findings would be valuable. It is, therefore, hypothesized that respondents show higher levels of victim blaming and lower levels of perpetrator blaming towards the heterosexual victim compared to the homosexual victim (Hypothesis 1). Moreover, it is hypothesized that, following the discussed literature and sexual preference effect (e.g. Davies et al., 2006; Davies & Boden, 2012), the level of victim blaming will be significantly higher and perpetrator blaming significantly lower for male rather than female respondents (Hypothesis 2a), especially for the heterosexual victim (Hypothesis 2b).

Secondly, can the third party's level of victim and perpetrator blaming be explained by their levels of male rape myth acceptance, hostility towards men and belief in a just world? Based on the aforementioned literature, it is expected each variable partly explains the third party's level of victim and perpetrator blaming. It is hypothesized that male rape myth acceptance, hostility towards men and belief in a just world are all significantly positively related to victim blaming and significantly negatively related to perpetrator blaming, i.e. the higher the male rape myth acceptance, hostility towards men and belief in a just world, the higher the victim blaming and lower the perpetrator blaming (Hypothesis 3). Moreover, it is expected, based on previous literature, that these associations are significantly higher for male rather than female respondents (Hypothesis 4a). With the exception of hostility towards men, which is expected to be significantly higher for female respondents (Hypothesis 4b; Glick & Fiske, 1999; Rollero, Glick, & Tartaglia, 2014; Rollero & Tartaglia, 2019).

The results of this study may aid in increasing awareness regarding female-perpetrated male rape and third party's tendencies to blame male victims by virtue of victims' sexual orientation, and third party's own level of male rape myth acceptance, hostility towards men and belief in a just world. Furthermore, this study may provide victims with potential explanations for the victim blaming responses they may fear and receive. Consequences and implications may arise for legislation and the criminal justice system, but also for involved professionals and the general public; especially, in light of the negative consequences of victim blaming, such as secondary victimization, victims' underreporting and the barriers for male victims in finding help.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

Participants were recruited with snowball sampling through social media and a participant pool at the Psychology Bachelor of Tilburg University (TiU). Eligibility criteria for participation required participants to (1) be 18 to 30 years old and (2) understand English adequately for comprehending the information statement, informed consent form and questionnaire. In exchange for their participation, participants were offered participation credit (only for the TiU Psychology Bachelor students) or could opt to provide their e-mail to be entered into a randomized draw to win one of five bol.com gift cards, worth €10. The budget for the gift cards (€50) came from a fund of Alice Bosma and Eva Mulder, provided by Fonds Slachtofferhulp.

The sample size was guided by the sample size calculation provided by G*Power (N = 269, with F = .25, α = .05, Power = .8, Numerator df = 10; Faul, Erdfelder, Lang, & Buchner, 2007). The initial sample consisted of 376 participants. However, after excluding participants for unfinished responses (Progress < 90%; N = 78), refusal of informed consent (N = 3), gender being 'other' (N = 1),[3] failing the manipulation check (N = 24) and/or social desirability check (N = 8),[4] the study was conducted with a final sample of 264 participants. The final sample contained 133 females (50.4%) and 131 males (49.6%) aged 18 to 30 (M = 20.76, SD = 2.51). The majority had a Dutch nationality (69.7%), followed by German (12.1%) and Italian (3.8%). The sample's sexual orientation was primarily heterosexuality (87.1%), followed by bisexuality (9.1%) and homosexuality (2.3%). Overall, most participants stated secondary education (76.5%) as their highest finished education, and subsequently Bachelor's (14.8%) and Master's (7.2%). The sample consisted mainly of Psychology students, as a consequence of the sampling method.

2.2. Design

The current experimental study had a 2 (victim sexual orientation [heterosexual, homosexual]) x 2 (participant gender [male, female]) randomized, between-subjects design with victim and perpetrator blaming as the dependent (outcome) variables.

2.3. Measures

[3] As the sample size of participants who identified their gender as 'other' was too small to provide for telling results (N = 1), this participant was excluded from the analysis.
[4] Two participants failed both the manipulation check and social desirability and were included in both N values.

2.3.1. Vignettes. The current study used two vignettes (see Appendix 1A), adapted from Morrison and Pederson (2020), which depict the rape of a fictional man named Mark, by a fictional female acquaintance named Julie. The vignettes describe Mark going to a friend's house party, where he meets Julie. At the end of the party, and after talking the whole night, Julie invites him to her apartment. Whilst at her apartment, Julie makes sexual advances towards Mark, at which point he states that he wants her to stop. Still, Julie continues and rapes Mark.

The two vignettes were similar, apart from Mark's sexual orientation, which was explicitly specified as either heterosexual or homosexual. Mark's sexual orientation was further made salient by describing his volunteering activity at his local animal shelter (if Mark was heterosexual) or LGBT support center (if Mark was homosexual). In the vignettes, the words 'rape' and 'sexual assault' were not used as they may influence or bias participants' answers (Davies & Rogers, 2006; Landström et al., 2016).

Participants were asked to identify Mark's sexual orientation, the location of his volunteering activities and his city of residence. The first two questions served as manipulation checks to test whether participants were aware of the manipulation of sexual orientation. The city of residence question was added as a distractor and was not analyzed. Participants who wrongly answered both questions, the sexual orientation question, or had contradicting answers regarding Mark's sexual orientation and the location of his volunteering activities, were excluded from the sample.

2.3.2. Victim and perpetrator blaming. To assess the level of blame and responsibility the participants ascribe to the victim and their reactions to the perpetrator, the Reaction to Assault Questionnaire was used (RAQ; Davies et al., 2006). The RAQ is a self-report questionnaire that consists of a 11-item Victim Blame scale and a 5-item Reaction to the Perpetrator scale. The questionnaire was adapted to match the current study by changing the subjects' names to Mark and Julie and the location to Julie's house (see Appendix 1B).

The Victim Blame scale uses a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all;* pro-victim) to 7 (*to a great extent;* anti-victim) and determines participants' beliefs regarding victim's responsibility concerning the event, the perceived event severity, and the extent of trauma the victim will experience. The summed total scores range from 11 (*no victim blame*) to 77 (*severe victim blame)*. Questions 3, 5, 7 and 9 were reverse-coded. Example questions include "How much sympathy do you feel for Mark in this situation?" In previous research,

the Victim Blame scale showed good reliability with Cronbach's α's of .88 and .92 (Davies et al., 2006; Morrison & Pedersen, 2020). In the current study Cronbach's α was .88.

Although the author is aware of the fact that the Victim Blaming scale does not merely measure victim blaming but also related factors, such as trivialization of the event, the term 'victim blaming' will continue to be used for simplicity.

The Reaction to the Perpetrator scale uses a similar 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all;* pro-victim) to 7 (*to a great extent;* anti-victim), to gauge the participants' perceptions of and punitiveness towards the perpetrator. The summed total scores spread from 5 (*negative perpetrator perception*) to 35 (*positive perpetrator perception*). Questions 1 and 2 were reverse-coded. An example (reverse-coded) question is "Should Julie be punished for what she did to Mark?" In previous research, the Reaction to the Perpetrator scale was reported to have sufficient to good reliability with Cronbach's α's of .72 and .75 (Davies et al., 2006; Morrison & Pedersen, 2020). In the current study Cronbach's α was .78.

2.3.3. Extra question. An extra question was added after the RAQ, which was separately analyzed. The question gauged participants' positions towards police reporting. Participants were asked to indicate whether, if they were Mark, they would report the incident to the police (*yes* or *no*).

2.3.4. Male rape myth acceptance. The first independent continuous variable, participants' level of male rape myth acceptance, was measured with the Male Rape Myth Scale (MRMS; Melanson, 1998). The MRMS is a 22-item self-report questionnaire measuring beliefs influenced by stereotypes and prejudices concerning male rape. The items are answered on a 6-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The summed total scores range from 22 to 132 with higher scores indicating higher male rape myth acceptance. Items 1, 6 and 19 were reverse-coded. An example item is "No self-respecting man would admit to being raped".

The MRMS was previously shown to have high internal reliability with Cronbach's α's ranging between .85 and .99 (Davies et al., 2012; Melanson, 1998; Sleath & Bull, 2010; Walfield, 2018). In addition, the MRMS was stated to have high convergent validity (Kassing et al., 2005; Melanson, 1998) and test-retest reliability (t = 0.89; Melanson, 1998). In the current study Cronbach's α was .92.

2.3.5. Hostility towards men. To assess hostile sexism towards men, the second independent continuous variable, the Hostility toward Men (HM) scale of the short version of the Ambivalence Towards Men Inventory was used (S-AMI; Glick & Fiske, 1999; Glick & Whitehead, 2010). The S-AMI is a 12-item self-report questionnaire that discerns hostile and benevolent prejudices and stereotypes towards men (Glick & Fiske, 1999). The S-AMI consists of two main scales consisting each of 6 items; the 'Hostility towards Men' (HM; items 2, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12) and the 'Benevolence towards Men' (BM; items 1, 3, 4, 7, 9, 11) scales. In the current study, only the HM scale was used. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the statements on a 6-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 6 (*agree strongly*). Summed total scores range from 6 to 36 with higher scores reflecting more hostility towards men. Example items include "Men act like babies when they are sick".

The S-AMI was shown to have good factor structure and sufficient internal reliability, with the HM subscale having Cronbach's α's ranging between .75 and .79 (Glick & Whitehead, 2010; Rollero et al., 2014; Rollero & Tartaglia, 2019). In the current study Cronbach's α was .80.

2.3.6. Belief in a just world. To measure the third independent continuous variable, participants' level of belief that the world in general is a just place, the General Belief in a Just World measure was used (GBJW; Dalbert, Montada, & Schmitt, 1987; Dalbert, 1999). The GBJW is a 6-item self-report questionnaire which includes items such as: "I am confident that justice always prevails over injustice". Participants rated their agreement with the statements on a 6-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The summed total scores range from 6 to 36 with higher scores representing a greater general belief in a just world.

The GBJW was reported to have satisfactory to good internal reliability (Dalbert, 2000), with Cronbach's α's ranging between .66 and .88 (Dalbert, 1993; Montada, Schmitt, & Dalbert, 1986). Other psychometric properties, such as convergent validity, were conveyed to be satisfactory (Dalbert, 2000; Lipkus, Dalbert, & Siegler, 1996). In the current study Cronbach's α was .74.

2.3.7. Social desirability. To check whether participants showed signs of socially desirable responding, the Social Desirability-Gamma Short Scale was used (KSE-G; Kemper, Beierlein, Bensch, Kovaleva, & Rammstedt, 2012; Nießen, Partsch, Kemper, & Rammstedt,

2019). The KSE-G measures two Gamma factor aspects of socially desirable responding. It is a 6-item self-report questionnaire, consisting of two scales: Exaggerating Positive Qualities (PQ+; items 1, 2, 3) and Minimizing Negative Qualities (NQ-; items 4, 5, 6). Respondents were asked to rate the personal applicability of the statements on a 5-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 (*does not apply at all)* to 5 (*applies completely)*. Mean subscale total scores range from 1 (indicating no exaggeration of positive qualities (PQ+ scale) or high minimization of negative qualities (NQ- scale)) to 5 (reflecting high exaggeration of positive qualities (PQ+ scale) or no minimization of negative qualities (NQ- scale)). Example items include "In an argument, I always remain objective and stick to the facts". Participants were excluded if their mean subscales scores deviated more than one standard deviation from the sample's subscale mean: ≥ 4.33 for the PQ+ scale (M = 3.73, SD = .60) and ≤ 1.26 for the NQ- scale (M = 1.90, SD = .64).

The KSE-G was found to be sufficiently reliable with the PQ+ and NQ- subscales having Cronbach's α's of .65 and .79 respectively (Nießen et al., 2019). Moreover, the scale had sufficient to good content-related, factorial and construct validity (Nießen et al., 2019). In the current study, the PQ+ and NQ- subscales showed Cronbach's α's of .45 and .41 respectively.

2.3.8. Demographic questions. Lastly, participants were asked demographic questions, including their age, gender (male, female, other), sexual orientation, nationality, highest level of education and (past) field of study.

2.4. Procedure

The study took the shape of an online questionnaire (see Appendix 2) using Qualtrics (Qualtrics.com) survey software, licensed to TiU. Participants either opened the questionnaire through a link or via the SONA-portal (a system for the experimental participation requirement for TiU Psychology Bachelor students). Through this portal, participants could read information regarding available studies and sign up. Following their sign-up, participants were briefed with an information statement regarding the study content and directed to the questionnaire.

After obtaining informed consent from the participants, they were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (heterosexual vs. homosexual victim). The participants read a vignette, which depicted a scenario of nonconsensual sex (rape) of a fictional male by a

female acquaintance. Subsequently, participants answered the previously stated questionnaires. The study took 15 to 20 minutes to complete.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

The study gained ethical approval from the Tilburg Law School Ethics Review Board. Participants were made aware that their data would be pseudonymized and confidential. They were informed they could freely withdraw from the study at any time without providing a reason. Data was kept pseudonymized and secure on university-approved software. As the study content could be perceived as being of sensitive nature, participants were debriefed and provided with contact details of support organizations for sexual assault victims.

2.6. Data-analysis

The data was obtained through Qualtrics and analyzed in IBM SPSS 26. Missing data were avoided with forced entry in the questionnaire. Prior to testing the hypotheses, several preliminary and preparatory analyses were completed. Firstly, the data were organized for analyses, by (re)naming the variables, reverse-scoring negative-coherent items and calculating, where necessary, the total (summed or mean) scores. Secondly, the result of the manipulation check was determined, and the KSE-G was assessed to evaluate the sample's level of socially desirable responding, after which the necessary exclusions were made. Thirdly, the data was checked for outliers with boxplots, and normality with skewness and kurtosis *z*-scores. Fourthly, after checking for multicollinearity, a factor analysis, using principal axis factoring and varimax rotation, was conducted on the RAQ items to study the factor structure (and latent constructs) regarding the Victim Blaming and Reactions to the Perpetrator scales (Field, 2013). Fifthly, the internal reliability (Cronbach's α) were calculated. Sixthly, descriptive data were obtained to depict the sample characteristics. Seventhly, explorative correlational analyses were completed regarding the main variables to gauge inter-variable relations. Eighthly, the relations between the dependent (Victim Blaming) and the independent continuous variables (Male Rape Myth Acceptance, Hostility Towards Men, Belief in a Just World) were explored. Ninthly, the gender differences for the main independent and dependent variables were examined. Lastly, the extra question on reporting was analyzed with chi-square tests to check for differences as regards participant gender and victim's sexual orientation (hereinafter, the sexual orientation condition).

Subsequently, the main analyses were completed to test the hypotheses. To answer the first research question, a 2 (victim sexual orientation [heterosexual, homosexual]) x 2

(participant gender [male, female]) (two-way) between-groups analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) with victim blaming and perpetrator blaming as the dependent variables, was run to check whether the influence of the victims' sexual orientation on participants' level of victim and perpetrator blaming differed for the participant gender. After the initial exploration of the (statistical significance of the) relations between the independent continuous and dependent variables, it was decided whether to include Male Rape Myth Acceptance, Hostility Towards Men and Belief in a Just World as covariates.

Moreover, to answer the second research question, the effect of participants' level of male rape myth acceptance, hostility towards men and belief in a just world on their level of victim and perpetrator blaming was studied with a hierarchical multiple regression. The hierarchical multiple regression was conducted with participant gender and the sexual orientation condition as control variables in step 1 and Male Rape Myth Acceptance, Hostility Towards Men and/or Belief in a Just World as predictors in step 2. In addition, in step 3, interactions between the continuous (Male Rape Myth Acceptance, Hostility Towards Men, Belief in a Just World) and the control variables (participant gender and the sexual orientation condition) were added.

3. Results

3.1. Preliminary Analyses

3.1.1. RAQ factor analysis. To examine whether the Victim Blame and Reaction to the Perpetrator subscales of the RAQ were truly two separate constructs, a factor analysis was conducted on all the RAQ items. In preliminary analyses, the data suitability for the factor analysis was assessed. The correlation matrix was inspected, which revealed no multicollinearity above .8. Correlation coefficients of below .3 were found, occurring consistently with item 11 of the Victim Blaming subscale (What happened at Julie's house was Mark's fault because he had been drinking. How much do you agree with this statement?) and item 3 of the Reaction to the Perpetrator subscale (Julie would not have behaved this way if she wasn't drunk. How much do you agree?). Therefore, these items were excluded from the analysis. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure verified the sampling adequacy, KMO = .90, thereby exceeding the recommended value of .6 (Field, 2013; Pallant, 2016). Moreover, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity showed statistical significance ($p < .000$), indicating factorability of the correlation matrix (Pallant, 2016). Therefore, no further items were excluded.

Principal axis factoring analysis revealed three factors with eigenvalues above 1, which respectively explained 45.40%, 9.81%, and 7.69% of the variance. The scree plot was convergent only on the first factor; hence, only the first factor was retained (Pallant, 2016). Considering the rotated factor loadings (see Table 1), no clear pattern arose following previous expectations, based on the subscales and their content. What seemingly emerged were statements directly stating Mark's blame loading on Factor 2 and indirect statements of Mark's blame loading on Factor 1. Yet, these items still address (elements of) victim blaming. Therefore, it was chosen to retain all items (apart from those previously excluded) in one scale as a latent construct representing victim blaming, or as stated in the RAQ, pro- to anti-victim, for the further analyses.

Table 1

Results for the Rotated Factor Loadings of the RAQ Factor Analysis

	Rotated Factor Loadings	
RAQ Items	Factor 1	Factor 2
Victim Blaming 1	.344	.658
Victim Blaming 2	.440	.352
Victim Blaming 3	.642	.463
Victim Blaming 4	.239	.839
Victim Blaming 5	.387	.508
Victim Blaming 6	.436	.248
Victim Blaming 7	.759	.217
Victim Blaming 8	.272	.747
Victim Blaming 9	.766	.175
Victim Blaming 10	.225	.605
Reaction to the Perpetrator 1	.640	.318
Reaction to the Perpetrator 2	.710	.285
Reaction to the Perpetrator 4	.465	.238
Reaction to the Perpetrator 5	.459	.227

3.1.2. Data assumptions. After calculating the summed total scores, the data was checked for outliers by boxplots. Five outliers were found for the summed score of the General Belief in a Just World measure. To evaluate whether these outliers would be problematic, the 5% trimmed mean was compared to the mean value (Pallant, 2016). As the two mean values were near similar, 19.75 and 19.61 respectively, in addition to the fact that the values were not divergent to the distribution, it was chosen to retain the cases (Pallant, 2016). Furthermore, two outliers were found for the summed score of the Victim Blaming measure. Yet, as the 5% trimmed mean was rather similar to the mean value, 34.50 and 35.22 respectively, and the values were not divergent to the distribution, it was again chosen to retain the cases.

As a consequence of the larger sample size, the normality of the data was evaluated with skewness and kurtosis *z*-scores, rather than Kolmogorov-Smirnov or Shapiro-Wilk tests

(Kim, 2013; Pallant, 2016). The used cut-off points were -3.29 to 3.29 (Kim, 2013). The measures of Hostility Towards Men and General Belief in a Just World appeared normally distributed. Whilst the Male Rape Myth Acceptance and Victim Blaming measure were positively skewed ($z_{skewness}$ = 4.01, $z_{skewness}$ = 4.80). These normality violations were further considered by using Spearman's Rank Order Correlation and additional evaluations in the later analyses. Therefore, no preliminary transformations were conducted.

3.1.3. Variable inter-correlations. Explorative correlations were conducted between the main variables (see Table 2). As a consequence of the normality problems, Spearman's Rank Order Correlation was applied. As expected, significant positive correlations were found between Victim Blaming and Male Rape Myth Acceptance. In addition, similar to the Davies et al. (2012), a significant positive correlation was shown between Male Rape Myth Acceptance and Hostility Towards Men.

Table 2

Intercorrelations Between the Main Variables

Measure	1	2	3	4	5
1 Victim Blaming	1	**.760****	-.012	.053	.028
2 Male Rape Myth Acceptance	**.760****	1	.056	**.209****	-.087
3 General Belief in a Just World	-.012	.056	1	.056	-.089
4 Hostility Towards Men	.053	**.209****	.056	1	-.029
5 Age	.028	-.087	-.089	-.029	1

Note. ** = $p \leq .01$ (2-tailed)

3.1.4. Explorative multiple regression analysis. A multiple linear regression was conducted to explore whether participants' level of male rape myth acceptance, hostility towards men and/or general belief in a just world predicted their level of victim blaming and to evaluate which of these variables to add as covariates or predictor variables in the later analyses. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violations to the assumptions of normality (by means of P-P Plots), linearity, multicollinearity (Tolerance > .10, VIF < 10), homoscedasticity and independence of residuals.

After entry of Male Rape Myth Acceptance, Hostility Towards Men and General Belief in a Just World, the total variance explained by the model was 58.0%, F (3, 260) =

119.50, $p < .000$. The only variables found to be statistically significant were Male Rape Myth Acceptance ($\beta = .77$, $p < .000$) and Hostility Towards Men ($\beta = -.09$, $p = .024$). Thereby, indicating that participants' level of male rape myth acceptance and hostility towards men significantly and positively predicted their level of victim blaming (see Table 3). Therefore, in the following two-way ANCOVA and multiple hierarchical regression analysis, the variables Male Rape Myth Acceptance and Hostility Towards Men were added as covariates and predictor variables respectively.

Table 3

Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Victim Blaming (N = 264)

		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients				
Step	Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*p*	R^2	*F*	*p*
1						**.580**	119.50	<.000
	Male Rape Myth Acceptance	.70	.04	**.772**	**<.000**			
	Hostility Towards Men	-.23	.10	**-.093**	**.024**			
	General Belief in a Just World	-.17	.12	-.061	.133			

3.1.5. Gender differences. To examine the gender differences in the third party's level of victim blaming, male rape myth acceptance, hostility towards men and general belief in a just world, independent-samples *t*-tests were performed. The assumptions of equality of variances was violated for the measures of Male Rape Myth Acceptance and Victim Blaming, following the results of Levene's *F*-test with $p = .015$ and .001 respectively. Therefore, the information for these measures was retrieved from the 'Equal variances not assumed' column. Although the independent-samples *t*-test is a robust statistical test against violations of normality (Field, 2013; Pallant, 2016), a bootstrap ($N = 1000$, CI = 95%) was conducted.

Significant gender differences were found for Male Rape Myth Acceptance and Victim Blaming, in which men scored significantly higher than women, but also for Hostility Towards Men, in which women scored significantly higher than men (see Table 4).

Table 4

Mean Scores, Standard Deviations and the Results of the Independent-Samples T-tests on Gender for the Main Variables.

Variable		Total Sample (N = 264)		Females (N = 133)			Males (N = 131)					
	α	M	SD	M	SD	SE	M	SD	SE	*t*	*df*	*p*
Victim Blaming	.90	35.22	13.94	**29.64**	11.42	.99	**40.88**	14.02	1.22	7.14	250.22	**<.000**
Male Rape Myth Acceptance	.92	46.48	15.41	**41.91**	13.17	1.14	**51.13**	16.16	1.41	5.08	250.30	**<.000**
Hostility Towards Men	.80	15.69	5.70	**17.29**	5.57	.48	**14.06**	5.38	.47	-4.78	262	**<.000**
General Belief in a Just World	.74	19.61	4.89	20.05	4.82	.42	19.15	4.94	.43	-1.50	262	.135

Note. M, SD, and SE represent the Mean, Standard Deviation and Standard Error respectively. df stands for degrees of freedom.

3.1.6. Differences in reporting. Descriptive analyses showed that 50% of the sample stated they would report the event to the police if they were Mark. To analyze whether differences existed regarding participant gender in participants' willingness to report, a chi-square test was conducted. The chi-square test showed significant gender differences, with men being significantly less likely to report the event to the police than women (X2 (1, N = 264) = 9.47, p = .002); 59.5% of men stated they would not report the event to the police compared to 40.6% of women.

In addition, to check whether differences existed regarding the sexual orientation condition in the participants' willingness to report, a chi-square test was conducted. The chi-square test showed participants in the heterosexual condition to be less likely to report the event to the police than participants in the homosexual condition (X2 (1, N = 264) = 3.88, p = .049); 56.2% of participants in the heterosexual condition stated they would not report the event to the police compared to 44.0% of participants in the homosexual condition.

Lastly, to analyze whether an interaction effect existed between participant gender and the sexual orientation condition for participants' willingness to report the event, a chi-square test was conducted including both participant gender and the sexual orientation condition. Significant differences for the interaction effect in those willing to report (Answer = Yes; X2 (1, N = 132) = 7.99, p =.005) and those unwilling to report (Answer = No; X2 (1, N = 132) = 4.36, p = .037) were highlighted. It appears men were more unwilling to report the event to the police in the heterosexual condition compared to the homosexual condition (Answer = No; 76.6% and 43.3%, respectively). Women seemed to be less unwilling to report the event in both the heterosexual and homosexual condition (Answer = No; 36.4% and 44.8%, respectively). This difference in reporting between men and women in the heterosexual condition is notable.

3.2. Main Analyses

3.2.1. Two-way ANCOVA. A two-way ANCOVA was conducted to assess whether participants' victim blaming differed by virtue of participant gender and the sexual orientation condition. Based on the previous analyses, the variables Male Rape Myth Acceptance and Hostility Towards Men were added as covariates. Preliminary checks were conducted to safeguard no violations of linearity, homogeneity of variances (Levene's F-test: F (3, 260) = 2.26, p = .082), homogeneity of regression slopes (no significant interactions between the covariates and the dependent variable), covariate multicollinearity ($\rho < .80$) and

reliability of the covariate ($\alpha > .70$). As ANCOVAs are rather robust against violations of normality in cases of larger sample sizes (>30), no further adjustments for the previously stated normality violations were undertaken (Pallant, 2016).

After adjusting for the covariates, no significant interaction effect emerged between participant gender and the sexual orientation condition: F (1, 258) = 3.13, p = .078. This implies men and women were not found to respond significantly different to the sexual orientation conditions. Therefore, no support was found for hypothesis 2b.

Both main effects, however, were significant, participant gender: F (1, 258) = 21.12, p = <.000, with a medium effect size (partial η^2 = .08); and sexual orientation condition: F (1, 258) = 19.29, p = < .000, with a medium effect size (partial η^2 = .07) (see Table 5). This indicates that participants' level of victim blaming differs depending on participant gender and the sexual orientation condition (see Table 6). In other words, men showed higher levels of victim blaming than women (M = 40.88, SD = 14.02 vs. M = 29.64, SD = 11.42). Moreover, participants blamed the heterosexual victim more than the homosexual victim (M = 38.25, SD = 14.07 vs. M = 32.27, SD = 13.21). These findings support hypotheses 1 and 2a.

In addition, the main effect of the covariate Male Rape Myth Acceptance was found to be significant: F (1, 258) = 275.38, p = <.000, with a large effect size (partial η^2 = .52). This suggests a relationship between male rape myth acceptance and victim blaming, which will be addressed in the further analyses.

Two separate two-way ANCOVA's were run with the initial two separate RAQ scales (Victim Blaming and Reactions to the Perpetrator) as dependent variables, for additional exploration of the data. The ANCOVA including the Victim Blaming scale showed similar results to the previous ANCOVA and is therefore not further addressed. The ANCOVA including the Reaction to the Perpetrator scale, after careful consideration of the data and the exclusion of outliers, showed a violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variances (Levene's F-test: p < .000). Therefore, the results could not be reliably interpreted. As a consequence, it was decided to continue the further analyses with the previously combined measure of Victim Blaming.

Table 5

Two-way ANCOVA Results for Victim Blaming

Predictor	Sum of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*	Partial η^2
(Intercept)	900.98	1	900.98	12.45	.000	.05
Male Rape Myth Acceptance	19937.06	1	19937.06	275.38	**.000**	**.52**
Hostility Towards Men	18.93	1	18.93	.261	.610	.00
Sexual Orientation Condition	1396.67	1	1396.67	19.29	**.000**	**.07**
Participant Gender	1528.96	1	1528.96	21.12	**.000**	**.08**
Sexual Orientation Condition x Participant Gender	226.88	1	226.88	3.13	.078	.01
Error	18678.91	258	72.399			

Note. $R^2 = .635$ (Adjusted $R^2 = .627$)

Table 6

Two-way ANCOVA Descriptive Statistics for Victim Blaming by Participant Gender and the Sexual Orientation Condition

Predictor	Unadjusted Mean	Adjusted Mean	SD	N
Participant Gender				
Male	40.88	37.99	14.02	131
Female	29.64	32.57	11.42	133
Sexual Orientation Condition				
Heterosexuality	38.25	37.59	14.07	130
Homosexuality	32.27	32.97	13.21	134

3.2.2. Hierarchical multiple regression analysis. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess whether the variables Male Rape Myth Acceptance and Hostility Towards Men predicted the participants' level of victim blaming, after controlling for the influence of participant gender and the sexual orientation condition. Preliminary analyses were conducted to ensure no violations to the assumptions of normality (by means of P-P Plots), linearity, multicollinearity (Tolerance > .10, VIF < 10), homoscedasticity and independence of residuals. The participant gender and sexual orientation condition were entered at step 1, explaining 21.1% of the variance in victim blaming. After entry of Male Rape Myth Acceptance and Hostility Towards Men at step 2, the total variance explained by the model was 63.0%, F (4, 259) = 110.30, $p < .000$. The two control variables explained an additional 41.9% of the variance in victim blaming, after controlling for participant gender and the sexual orientation condition: R^2 change = .42, F change (2, 259) = 146.83, $p < .000$ (see Table 7).

In the initial multiple hierarchical regression analyses, interaction terms were added in step 3, namely participant gender x Male Rape Myth Acceptance, participant gender x Hostility Towards Men, sexual orientation condition x Male Rape Myth Acceptance and sexual orientation condition x Hostility Towards Men, and in step 4: Male Rape Myth Acceptance x Hostility Towards Men. Although the interaction terms were centered, they failed to meet the preliminary requirements for multicollinearity (with Tolerance < .10 and VIF > 10) and homoscedasticity (high Mahalanobis distances). Hence, due to failure to meet these statistical assumptions, it was decided to exclude the interaction terms from the analysis. Therefore, the analysis was conducted with the variables described in step 1 and 2.

In the final model, which included all variables added in step 1 and 2, the variables found to be statistically significant were participant gender (β = -.19, $p < .000$), the sexual orientation condition (β = -.17, $p < .001$) and Male Rape Myth Acceptance (β = .69, $p < .000$). Thereby, indicating that male rape myth acceptance, participant gender and the sexual orientation condition significantly predicted participants' level of victim blaming (see Table 7). In other words, a higher level of the participants' male rape myth acceptance predicted a higher level of victim blaming. Therefore, partial support for hypothesis 3 was found, as only participants' level of male rape myth acceptance was significantly and positively related to victim blaming. In addition, participants' level of victim blaming was significantly higher for the heterosexual male victim than for the homosexual male victim. Furthermore, men showed significantly higher levels of victim blaming than women. Thus, additional support is shown for hypothesis 1 and 2a.

Due to the aforementioned exclusion of the interaction terms following the failure to meet statistical assumptions, additional analyses were conducted to assess whether the effect of Male Rape Myth Acceptance and Hostility Towards Men on Victim Blaming differed for participant gender and the sexual orientation condition. The data file was split for participant gender and a multiple hierarchical regression analysis, similar to the previous analysis, was completed. As this analysis did not provide additional insights, it will not be reported upon. Alternatively, the data file was split for the sexual orientation condition and again a similar multiple hierarchical regression analysis was completed, the results of which are described in Appendix 3.

Table 7

Summary of Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Victim Blaming (N = 264)

Step	Predictor	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		R^2	R^2 change	F	p
		B	*SE B*	*β*	*p*				
1						**.211**	.211	34.84	**<.000**
	Participant Gender	-11.29	1.53	-.406	**<.000**				
	Sexual Orientation Condition	-6.07	1.53	-.218	**<.000**				
2						**.630**	**.419**	110.30	**<.000**
	Participant Gender	-5.32	1.18	-.191	**<.000**				
	Sexual Orientation Condition	-4.60	1.06	-.165	**<.000**				
	Male Rape Myth Acceptance	.62	.04	.688	**<.000**				
	Hostility Towards Men	-.07	.10	-.027	.516				

4. Discussion

4.1. Summary of the Findings

The aim of this study was to extend the literature on the blaming of male rape victims by examining whether victims' sexual orientation and third party's gender affect third party's attributions of blame towards victims in cases of female-perpetrated male rape. The present study was the first to explore the effect of third party's endorsement of male rape myth acceptance, hostility towards men and belief in a just world on their level of victim blaming.

Prior to discussing the results in light of the hypotheses, it must to be highlighted that third party's perpetrator blaming, as stated in the hypotheses, could not be assessed. This is because, as stated in section 3.1.1., no clear measure of perpetrator blaming was established following a factor analysis of the Reaction to Assault Questionnaire. Therefore, only the combined measure of third party's victim blaming is discussed. Nevertheless, the inclusion of a reliable measure of perpetrator blaming is recommended for future research.

Overall, similarly to previous research (e.g. Strömwall et al., 2013a, 2013b), the results show third party's level of victim blaming to be rather low. However, the present study found support for hypothesis 1: that the heterosexual victim would be blamed significantly more than the homosexual victim. Both male and female respondents, indeed, showed higher levels of victim blaming for the heterosexual rather than the homosexual victim. Support was also found for hypothesis 2a: men showed significantly higher levels of victim blaming than women. No support was found for hypothesis 2b: that men would blame the heterosexual victim significantly more than women, since no interaction effect was observed between the third party's gender and victim's sexual orientation. These findings replicate Davies et al. (2006) and Davies and Boden's (2012) findings that heterosexual male victims of female perpetrators are blamed more than homosexual male victims.

Furthermore, partial support was found for hypothesis 3: that third party's endorsement of male rape myth acceptance, hostility towards men and belief in a just world are significantly positively related to victim blaming. Only male rape myth acceptance was found to positively predict third party's level of victim blaming. Without controlling for the third party's gender and victims' sexual orientation, hostility towards men was found to be a predictor of victim blaming, but after controlling for these variables, no significant relationship was found. Lastly, no answers can be provided with respect to hypothesis 4a and 4b: that the effect of third party's endorsement of male rape myth acceptance and belief in a just world on third party's victim blaming was significantly higher for men (hypothesis 4a), whilst the effect of third party's endorsement of hostility towards men on third party's level

of victim blaming would be significantly higher for women (hypothesis 4b). Since the interaction effect between third party's gender and these variables could, as a consequence of statistical errors, not be studied (see section 3.2.2.), no answer can be provided as regards hypothesis 4. Still, in light of hypothesis 4, it is notable that the analyses showed men to have a higher endorsement of male rape myth acceptance, whereas women showed higher levels of hostility towards men. Overall, in order to make sense of the findings, the results will be further explained in a theoretical context.

4.2. The Theoretical Framework of Victim Blaming

As mentioned previously, Davies et al. (2006) and Davies and Boden's (2012) research shows that compared to a homosexual male victim, the heterosexual male victim of a female perpetrator is blamed significantly more. These findings were replicated in the present study, and therefore, are in line with Wakelin and Long's (2003) sexual attraction hypothesis and Davies et al.'s (2006) sexual preference effect; the idea that third parties tend to blame victims more when there exists a potential for sexual attraction between the victim and perpetrator, which would occur when "victims are raped in line with their sexuality" (Wakelin & Long, 2003, p. 479). This follows from the perception that victims may subconsciously desire and derive pleasure from sexual victimization (Wakelin & Long, 2003; Morrison & Pedersen, 2020). As regards previous research, it appears that the sexual preference effect applies to both heterosexual and homosexual, and male and female victims; in comparison to lesbian victims, heterosexual female victims of male perpetrators were shown to be blamed significantly more (Davies et al., 2006; Wakelin & Long, 2003), whilst homosexual male victims, rather than heterosexual male victims, of male perpetrators were blamed significantly more (Davies et al., 2006; Davies et al., 2011; Wakelin & Long, 2003). Unfortunately, third party's victim blaming has, to the extent of the author's knowledge, not been studied in the context of female victims of female perpetrators. Therefore, it remains unknown whether the sexual preference effect would also lead the higher victim blaming in lesbian rather than heterosexual female victims of female perpetrators. Accordingly, this points towards a key area of future research.

The question remains, however, what causes this sexual preference effect to occur. A frequently used theory to explain victim blaming in general is Shaver's (1970) defensive attribution hypothesis. In his defensive attribution hypothesis, Shaver (1970) asserts that individuals are more likely to blame those who they view as dissimilar to themselves, whilst seeing individuals who are considered as similar to themselves, in a more positive and

empathic light. This is potentially related to the fear of being blamed if they were to experience a similar event (Shaver, 1970). In the current study, men were found to blame both the homosexual and heterosexual male rape victim more than women. This may stem from the tendency that reading about male rape threatens men's invulnerability, and thereby triggers defensive attributions (Pinciotti & Orcutt, 2019). Men may feel the need to protect their masculinity and avoid identification, or perceived similarity, with the (feminized) victim (Mulder et al., 2020; Munsch & Willer, 2012). Thereby, eliciting blame towards both the heterosexual and homosexual male victim. Yet, the defensive attribution theory only partly explains the sexual preference effect. Whilst women can be expected to perceive personal dissimilarity with the victim, one may presume that (heterosexual) men identify more with (heterosexual) male rape victims, based on this personal similarity. In the present study, with the majority of the sample identifying as heterosexual, male (and female) participants blamed the heterosexual male victim more than the homosexual male victim. Therefore, in the present study, personal similarity does not appear to mitigate and explain third party's level of victim blaming in female-perpetrated male rape. Still, in light of the dominant cultural discourse regarding rape, one's experiential or situational similarity may be of influence (Pinciotti & Orcutt, 2019).

The cultural discourse surrounding rape, and dominant rape scripts, shape individuals' perceptions of rape, which may help in explaining the sexual preference effect. Gavey (2005) highlights hegemonic cultural discourse, which hold heteronormative views on rape and sexuality. In these heteronormative views on rape or rape scripts, men are characterized as aggressive and sexually insatiable, whereas women are described as acquiescent and sexually passive (Gavey, 2005). In a patriarchal (and hegemonic) cultural context, these dominant heteronormative rape scripts act as a cultural scaffolding for rape, in and from which people make sense of the rape (Gavey, 2005). To this end, if a case of rape fails to match these dominant rape scripts, it is minimized and regarded as 'just sex' (Gavey, 2005). The dominant rape script follows the male perpetrator – female victim paradigm, describing the (violent) stranger rape of a woman by a man. In order to make sense of one's experience and share it with others, victims have to resort to using the dominant rape script, which further supports the use of this script and elicits victim blaming (Brown, 2013). However, most cases of rape fail to match this script; female-perpetrated male rape counters the heteronormative rape script. In the current study, the woman can be regarded as sexually aggressive and the man as acquiescent and sexually passive. Therefore, in case of female-perpetrated male rape, victims cannot make use of the rape scripts to share their experience. In addition, third parties

cannot use the rape scripts to make sense of the event, and hence, may not regard the event as rape, but as 'just sex', and potentially blame the victim more.

To make further sense of the pattern of victim blaming seen in the present study, following the sexual preference effect, victimization has to be seen in light of these heteronormative rape scripts, gender norms and male rape myths (Davies et al., 2006; Davies et al., 2011; Davies & Boden, 2012; Morrison & Pedersen, 2020; Wakelin & Long, 2003). Whilst the current study found third party's male rape myth acceptance to significantly predict victim blaming for both sexual orientation conditions, the interaction between victims' sexual orientation and third party's male rape myth acceptance could not be studied. Still, additional analyses showed that the predictive value of male rape myth acceptance regarding victim blaming to be slightly greater in the homosexual condition (see Appendix 7.3.) Although male rape myth acceptance may thus not be able to explain the sexual preference effect by itself, it may aid in explaining third party's victim blaming patterns, in light of the hegemonic cultural discourse described by Gavey (2005). The event of female-perpetrated male rape is not only inconsistent with the hegemonic cultural discourse regarding rape, but also with (heteronormative) male rape myths. This may affect third party's victim blaming, given that rape myth inconsistency is related to victim blaming (Hockett, Smith, Klausing, & Saucier, 2016).

This rape myth inconsistency can be exemplified with a common rape myth, namely that (heterosexual) men should always enjoy sex with a woman (Chapleau et al., 2008; McKeever, 2019; Stemple & Meyer, 2014; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992; Turchik & Edwards, 2012). This appears to stem from views (or norms) regarding traditional gender roles, since men's sexual insatiability is a theme in hegemonic masculinity (Davies et al., 2006; Davies & Boden, 2012; Graham, 2006). In this sense, third parties may blame the heterosexual rather than the homosexual male victim of a female perpetrator more, as the heterosexual victim 'should have enjoyed' it. Another relevant male rape myth states that 'real' men are always able to defend themselves and/or resist rape (Chapleau et al., 2008; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992; Turchik & Edwards, 2012). This rape myth may also find its origins in societal norms regarding traditional gender roles whereby, in accordance with hegemonic masculinity, men are expected to show traits such as aggressiveness and dominance, and not feminine traits such as passivity, compliance or submissiveness (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Doherty & Anderson, 2004; Javaid, 2015a, 2015b; Turchik & Edwards, 2012). Traditionally, homosexual men are stereotypically regarded as feminine (and not masculine) and are rated lower on traits like aggressiveness

(Fingerhut & Peplau, 2006). Therefore, homosexual male victims may be considered less likely to (be able to) resist rape in the first place, and hence, may be blamed less than heterosexual male victims. Since heterosexual men are expected to violently resist rape and not be able to be overpowered by women, heterosexual male victims of female perpetrators, who, in third party's eyes, fail to explicitly resist, may be expected to be blamed more than homosexual male rape victims (Davies et al., 2008; Davies et al., 2009). This may, therefore, explain why heterosexual victims were found to be blamed more than homosexual victims in the present study since a vignette without explicit violent resistance was used.

In addition, inconsistency with the male rape myth that 'real' men cannot be raped (by a woman) may counter men's sense of invulnerability (Turchik & Edwards, 2012). The event of female-perpetrated male rape threatens heterosexual victims' hegemonic masculinity, as 'real' men cannot be raped (by a woman) (Munsch & Willer, 2012; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992; Turchik & Edwards, 2012; Weiss, 2010). As Weiss (2010, p. 277) stated "[(heterosexual)] men's victimization undermines the dominant ideals of masculinity", in other words, "male rape essentially challenges and threatens men's manliness and sexuality" (Javaid, 2015b, p. 288-289). Third parties may, consequently, believe that heterosexual victims have lost their masculinity and are less of a man (e.g. Kassing et al., 2005; Munsch & Willer, 2012; Spruin, 2018), especially since they failed to defend themselves (Doherty & Anderson, 2004; Hlavka, 2017). Therefore, male victims may be perceived as more feminine (Mulder et al., 2020). Given that homosexual men may already be seen as more feminine, third parties may not regard them as having lost their masculinity. This may provide an explanation for why heterosexual victims are blamed more than homosexual victims in the present study.

Overall, it appears that the sexual preference effect is related to the hegemonic cultural discourse surrounding rape and the (heteronormative and hegemonic) societal norms regarding traditional gender roles, which underlie male rape myths. As male rape myth acceptance was found to predict victim blaming, the acceptance of rape myths in combination with (hegemonic and heteronormative) societal norms regarding gender, may elicit the sexual preference effect. These findings have implications for the criminal justice system, mental health services and society as a whole, as is addressed next.

4.3. Implications

4.3.1. Legislation. As a consequence of the present findings, i.e. that third party's male rape myth acceptance predicted their level of victim blaming, with victim blaming

being higher for the heterosexual male victim of female-perpetrated rape than for the homosexual victim. It can be asserted implications arise for the treatment of male rape victims in criminal justice systems. Especially as it was made apparent in the present study that men tended to refrain from reporting the victimization to the police, particularly in the heterosexual condition, with 76.6% of men compared to 36.4% of women, stating they would not report.

This underreporting may come as a presumption of the fact that even for (male) victims that do report their victimization to the police, it may not bring them justice. In legal systems, the heteronormative and hegemonic cultural discourse Gavey (2005) describes, may affect what is identified as rape (Ehrlich, 2019). In order for victims to have a chance at finding justice, it is pivotal that legislation regarding sexual victimization is up-to-date and all-encompassing, considering gender and the act itself (Fisher & Pina, 2013). Yet, in some countries (e.g. the UK; Sexual Offences Act 2003), gender-biased rape laws still persevere, in which only men, or individuals with a penis, can complete the act of rape (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020; Fisher & Pina, 2013); in gender-biased rape laws female perpetrators are, thus, excluded and unrecognized. There gendered laws are problematic, nonetheless, impetus to make rape laws gender-neutral can be increasingly seen (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020; Javaid, 2014; Page, 2010; Rumney, 2007; Stemple & Meyer, 2014). It follows that gender-neutral rape laws would allow for both men and women to be perpetrators and victims (Stemple & Meyer, 2014).

Notably, even in countries with gender-neutral laws, the problem at hand persists. Given that these laws, in some cases, fail to be sufficiently comprehensive, as they require a woman to penetrate a man in order to constitute rape (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020). Cases in which a man is ‘made to penetrate’ a woman (i.e. forced penetration) are not often considered rape, but considered sexual assault, with a lesser sentence as a consequence (Effting & Stoffelen, 2018b; European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020; McKeever, 2019; Stemple & Meyer, 2014). It is noteworthy that in this regard, victims may experience such an event as rape, by virtue of the act of sex being similar (Weare, 2017; Weare, 2018a). The only difference is, in the author’s view, that it does not follow the ‘standard’ directionality of rape and goes against the hegemonic cultural discourse and heteronormative rape scripts (the male perpetrator – female victim paradigm). The lack of inclusion of forced penetration cases in rape legislation is significant, as it disproportionately affects men (Smith et al., 2018; Stemple & Meyer, 2014). The inclusion of forced penetration cases in legislation is further

desirable as it would support gender neutrality and may provide more accurate reporting and crime statistics (Stemple & Meyer, 2014).

As the present study was conducted in the Netherlands, and described a case of forced penetration, Dutch rape laws will be shortly discussed. Prins and Hondema (2017) have highlighted that forced penetration is not covered in the Dutch gender-neutral definition of rape, as provided by Article 242 of the Dutch Criminal Code, but regarded as falling under Article 246. Article 242 Dutch Criminal Codes states: "*He who, by force or another factuality, or by threat of violence or another factuality, compels someone to be* ***subjected*** *to actions consisting of or also consisting of the sexual penetration of the body […]*" (bold emphasis added; English translation by European Institute for Gender Equality, 2020).[5] The exclusion of forced penetration is elicited by the word 'subjected' ('ondergaan'); in using this terminology, it follows that forcing someone to commit rather than be subjected to sexual penetration is excluded (Prins & Hondema, 2017). It is undesirable that the exclusion of forced penetration from the concept of rape in Dutch law may signal that it is less serious or severe than rape, whilst it is a serious event that affects victims' autonomy, personal and sexual integrity (McKeever, 2019; Prins & Hondema, 2017; Weare, 2018b). Moreover, forced penetration has significant consequences for victims' mental and physical health, with men being able to contract sexually-transmitted diseases, penile injuries or psychopathology, including symptoms of PTSD, depression and anxiety (Bicanic & van Minnen, 2019; McKeever, 2019; Walker, 2005a; Weare, 2018a, 2018b). Therefore, based on the terminology used in Norwegian and German criminal law, Prins & Hondema (2017) suggest a reformulation of Article 242 of the Dutch Criminal Code to include forced penetration, to: "*He who, by force or another factuality, or by threat of violence or another factuality, compels someone to be* ***subjected to or perform*** *actions consisting of or also consisting of the sexual penetration of the body […]"* (English translation and bold emphasis added by author; Prins & Hondema, 2017, p. 2170).[6] By including the possibility of being compelled to perform sexual penetration, cases of forced penetration are included, thereby opening the pathway for men to report their victimization to the police and receive justice, but also to

[5] In Dutch: "Hij die door geweld of een andere feitelijkheid of bedreiging met geweld of een andere feitelijkheid iemand dwingt tot het ondergaan van handelingen die bestaan uit of mede bestaan uit het seksueel binnendringen van het lichaam, wordt als schuldig aan verkrachting gestraft" (Artikel 239 Wetboek van Strafrecht).

[6] In Dutch: 'Hij die door geweld of een andere feitelijkheid of bedreiging met geweld of een andere feitelijkheid iemand dwingt tot het ondergaan of verrichten van handelingen die bestaan uit of mede bestaan uit het seksueel binnendringen van het lichaam [...]' (Prins & Hondema, 2017, p. 2170).

tackle persistent male rape myths and to communicate to victims that their victimization is not viewed as 'just sex' (Prins & Hondema, 2017; Bicanic & van Minnen, 2019).[7]

Unfortunately, hitherto, it does not appear that the suggestion has been taken up by the Dutch legislator. Therefore, one may consider addressing the matter at an international level. However, international documents that specifically and explicitly target male victims of sexual violence, or in particular forced penetration, appear absent. Nonetheless, the Council of Europe, in the 2011 Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women (hereinafter, the Istanbul Convention) may be able to provide a required nudge for countries to create gender-neutral rape laws and include forced penetration as rape. States that have ratified the Convention are legally bound to follow its standards in targeting gender-based violence, including victim protection and punishment of perpetrators (Council of Europe, 2011a, 2011b). Hence, if the Istanbul Convention were to explicitly include male victims and forced penetration as rape in their explanatory report, this may help in decreasing the inequality experienced by and raise awareness of male victims. In addition, explicitly including male victims and forced penetration as rape, may help to "[e]radicate harmful and discriminatory gender stereotypes around sexual violence", which was deemed an important aim by Šimonovic et al. (2019) in the joint call by the Platform of Independent United Nations and Regional Expert Mechanisms on Violence Against Women and Women's Rights. This may encourage Member States to adapt their rape legislation to further match the Istanbul Convention's demands.[8] Overall, this may encourage victims to come forward and report their experiences to the police. Yet, a lack of legislation may not be the only (structural) barrier male rape victims may experience in finding help.

4.3.2. Police and the criminal justice system. The lack of legal recognition of male victims of female perpetrators, especially in forced penetration cases, may further enhance

[7] This may decrease the 'downstream orientation' (Frohmann, 1997) as described by Venema (2019), which states that individuals' perceptions are created from predictions of other individuals' responses to the situation. As Venema (2019) argued, this may be especially relevant for police officers, since the perceptions of other officers 'downstream', may influence one's perceptions of the (legitimacy of the) case and behavior. As cases of forced penetration are currently not recognized as rape and are subject to rape myths and traditional gender norms, they may be considered as less legitimate by 'downstream' police officers, and may affect police officers' responding. Therefore, by providing the legitimacy for forced penetration in law, and potentially providing training for police officers, police officers will have similar response tendencies to cases, and this 'downstream orientation' may have less of an effect.

[8] Still, the Istanbul Convention provides Member States with considerable discretion regarding its application (Council of Europe, 2011b). Therefore, the author shares De Vido's (2017) view, whereby Article 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union would provide for a suitable legal basis from which the European Union may enact secondary law to allow for the harmonization of rape laws amongst its Member States, including a uniform and inclusive definition of rape.

negative and victim blaming attitudes, and thereby victims' underreporting. Male rape victims are known to be less willing and likely to report their victimization to the police (e.g. Chapleau et al., 2008; Sable et al., 2005; Stemple et al., 2016; Walker et al., 2005b; Weiss, 2010), as also resulted from the present study. This may be understood as a consequence of (heteronormative and hegemonic) societal norms regarding gender roles and the acceptance of male rape myths. Since the subsequent fear of third party's scrutiny and blaming attitudes may discourage men to report their victimization to the police and encourage the marginalization of male rape (Doherty & Anderson, 2004; Hlavka, 2017; Kassing et al., 2005; Pino & Meier, 1999). To this end, another (structural) barrier for victims' recognition by law enforcement may be of influence (Page, 2010; Rumney, 2009), namely the embeddedness of male rape myths in police forces and courts.

Police officers are found to hold negative and sexist attitudes towards male rape victims, and show (male) rape myth acceptance (Davies et al., 2009; Javaid 2015a; Hine & Murphy, 2019; Murphy & Hine, 2019; Page, 2010; Parratt & Pina, 2017; Rumney, 2009; Sleath & Bull, 2012; Venema, 2019). Although the overall levels of rape myth acceptance in police officers are low (Sleath & Bull, 2015, 2017), police's male rape myth acceptance can be problematic as it predicts victim blaming and can affect the way they handle victims. Victims may experience complications in reporting and court procedures, particularly if they showed no resistance or 'froze' (Davies et al., 2012) or if they had an erection or ejaculated (Fuchs, 2004). The experience of erections and ejaculations during victimization is not uncommon for male rape victims (Bullock & Beckson, 2011; Fuchs, 2004); it may occur involuntarily during times of duress and anxiety, whilst sexual pleasure is absent (Bullock & Beckson, 2011; Burrow, Isom Scott, & Mikell, 2019; Fuchs, 2004; Walfield, 2018). Still, this may pose a problem for male victims in the criminal justice system, as members of the judicial system may be unaware of the nature of erections and ejaculations (Coxell & King, 2010). They may believe that "[i]f a man obtained an erection while being raped it probably means that he started to enjoy it" (Melanson, 1998, p. 158). Erections and ejaculations may be considered sexual arousal, and thereby, proof of consent (Fuchs, 2004; Kassing et al., 2005; Turchik & Edwards, 2012). This misconception may lead courts to refuse legal remedies or to disbelieve or discredit victims, which may be especially problematic in jury systems (Bullock & Beckson, 2011; Fuchs, 2004). As Fuchs (2004, p. 94) described: "many would respond to this scenario by saying '[w]hat's your problem? How could you *not* have liked this?'". In this light, it is believed men "should always take, rather than resist, any opportunity of sex with a woman" (Davies & Boden, 2012, p. 137; Davies et al., 2006).

These beliefs are in line with the male rape myth that men should always enjoy having sex with a woman (e.g. Turchik & Edwards, 2012), and the *lucky boy* phenomenon (the idea that a man should be happy to have sex with a woman; Weare, 2018b). Therefore, (heterosexual) male rape victims may be blamed or not taken seriously by the police or in court. The same would not apply for homosexual male rape victims, who by virtue of their sexual orientation would not be considered lucky or to have enjoyed having sex with a woman. In this light, the sexual preference effect may exert an influence in police officers and courts.

The effect of male rape myth acceptance in police officers goes further than victim blaming, since police officers are influential in and responsible for the decision-making processes and handling of rape cases (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Murphy & Hine, 2019). Police officers are regarded as the gatekeepers of the criminal justice system (Sleath & Bull, 2015). Male rape myth acceptance and blaming attitudes may, thereby, affect police officers' verdicts and handling of the cases (Davies et al., 2009; Sleath & Bull, 2012, 2015). To this end, blaming attitudes from police officers may cause secondary victimization (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Campbell & Raja, 1999; Javaid, 2017a), and contribute to victims' withdrawal from the investigation and attrition (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Parratt & Pina, 2017). As victims do not experience support, they may minimize their own experiences and not deem the event as rape (McKeever, 2019), but following the dominant heteronormative and hegemonic rape scripts, as 'just sex' (Gavey, 2005).

As male rape myth acceptance is found to predict victim blaming, it may be beneficial to train police officers' as regards to their beliefs regarding rape and the appropriate treatment of victims (Weare, 2018a), in order to avoid secondary victimization. Although, literature on effectiveness of training is mixed (Anderson & Whiston, 2005; Darwinkel, Powell, & Tidmarsh, 2013; Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2012; Lonsway, Welch, & Fitzgerald, 2001; Sleath & Bull, 2012), providing education on the factors that underlie police officer's attitudes towards victims, such as male rape myth acceptance and endorsement of (hegemonic) societal norms on traditional gender roles (Aosved & Long, 2006; Murphy & Hine, 2019; Parrat & Pina, 2017), may have positive effects. Hence, educating police officers on these factors may provide male rape victims with more comfort in reporting their experience to the police.

Thus, notwithstanding the traumatic event of rape itself, the lack of legal recognition and difficulties with police reporting may have negative consequences for male victims, who refrain from reporting out of fear of negative and blaming attitudes from the police. But even if they do report, they might experience structural barriers in finding help and pull out of the investigation, thereby enhancing the underreporting and underestimation of prevalence rates

(Javaid, 2017a; Turchik & Edwards, 2012). This further allows for the lack of societal recognition of male rape victims. Therefore, increasing the understanding of how male rape victims are perceived, and the effect of male rape myths on third party's attitudes towards victims is pivotal.

4.3.3. Mental health professionals and society. Whilst male victims of rape are known to be less willing to report or share their experiences with the police, this may extend to mental health professionals, family and friends as well. Feelings of shame can hold victims back from sharing their experience, especially for heterosexual male victims of female perpetrators who may feel that they do not meet the heteronormative rape scripts and gender norms, as they have failed their masculine duties of protecting themselves and feel like less of a man. Third parties may blame the heterosexual male victim more than the homosexual victim, perhaps after picking up on victims' shame. If third parties believe the dominant hegemonic cultural discourse surrounding rape, they may view female-perpetrated male rape as 'just sex' and minimize victims' suffering, which may lead to victims being deemed as not needing support (Gavey, 2005; Studzinka & Hilton, 2017; Walker et al., 2005b). As a consequence, victims may avoid or struggle finding (suitable) help (Fisher & Pina, 2013; Javaid, 2019; Larsen & Hilden, 2016; Page, 2010; Walker et al., 2005b). Furthermore, the underreporting and lack of legal recognition may contribute to service provisions being deemed unnecessary, and thus, remaining underdeveloped and untailored to the victim's needs (Javaid, 2016b; Javaid, 2017a, 2017b; Lowe & Rogers, 2017).

Male victims, however, do need support, given that a lack of support after sexual victimization is known to significantly predict psychopathology (Ullman & Peter-Hagane, 2014), as well as leading to the experience of more blame (Andersons & Lyons, 2005). After their victimization, men subjected to forced penetration may experience feelings of shame, isolation and mistrust of women (Weare, 2018a); support is vital for their recovery. As male rape victims already experience shame and embarrassment (e.g. Davies et al., 2009; Walker et al., 2005b; Weare, 2018a), the lack of legal recognition and third party's negative and blaming sentiments may further enhance their self-blame (Fuchs, 2004; Ullman, Filipas, Townsend & Starzynski, 2007). In this respect, self-blame is known to be associated with symptoms of PTSD, depression and anxiety (Hassija & Gray, 2013; Weare, 2018a). Victims may experience self-blame as a consequence of their physical response during the sexual victimization, such as a lack of resistance or freezing response, and penile physical responses. As previously stated, having an erection or ejaculating during sexual victimization may be

perceived by others as compliance and pleasure, whilst it can occur involuntarily during times of duress and anxiety, without sexual pleasure (Bicanic & van Minnen, 2019; Bullock & Beckson, 2011; Burrow et al., 2019; Fuchs, 2004; Walfield, 2018). This may cause victims to feel confusion, as their body and mind are not in line (Bicanic & van Minnen, 2019). Therefore, it is important for victims to receive support and psychoeducation on their physiological responses from (mental health) professionals (Bicanic & van Minnen, 2019).

Support, however, may not be present or always have positive effects. Medical students were found to have more negative and stereotypical views regarding male victims than female victims (Anderson & Quinn, 2009). In addition, voluntary agency practitioners were found to have insufficient knowledge of male rape and to showcase norms regarding traditional gender roles towards male victims (Javaid, 2019). Therefore, it is important to tackle male rape myths and societal norms regarding traditional gender roles in the training of medical and mental health professionals too, since this may help victims' in finding treatment and counselling that meet their needs (Fisher & Pina, 2013; Javaid, 2015b, 2016b, 2017a, 2017b, 2019). Overall, this would allow victims to "feel they can seek the treatment and support necessary after sexual assault, and be reassured that they will be treated with sensitivity" (Fisher & Pina, 2013, p. 60).

Overall, a negative feedback loop occurs; the lack of legal recognition and third party's negative and victim blaming sentiments inherently contribute to the 'dark figure' of male rape victims (Graham, 2006), by influencing the social recognition of male rape victims and victims' well-being. Thus, it is necessary to tackle male rape myths and societal norms regarding traditional gender roles, which promote an environment of victim blaming (Gravelin, Biernat, & Bucher, 2019; Spruin & Reilly, 2018). Perhaps raising awareness in the media may be a vehicle for societal change, given that the media generally has credibility and authority, and therefore, the ability to change societal attitudes towards male rape (Cohen, 2014). In this way, the prevention of the 'silent discourse' and taboo surrounding male rape, which further nurtures rape myths, can be mitigated (Javaid, 2017a; Larsen & Hilden, 2016; Walfield, 2018).

4.4. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

In the present study, certain limitations are evident. Firstly, the sample may not be fully generalizable to the whole population. Since the current sample consisted primarily of Psychology Bachelor students from TiU, with ages ranging from 18 to 30; the sample may, thus, suffer from homogeneity. Still, it remains important to understand the blame attributions

of students in this age group, as the majority of male rape victims appear to be below 25 years old (e.g. the 2015 U.S. National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey showed 65.5% of male rape victims to be below 25 years old; Smith et al., 2018).

In addition, a selection bias may have existed, as the individuals willing to partake in a study addressing sexual victimization, may be more at ease with the topic and have fewer negative attitudes towards victims (Morrison & Pedersen, 2020; Strassberg & Lowe, 1995). This may contribute to the generally low level of victim blaming that was established in this study. Furthermore, this may also be affected by virtue of the fact that the participants' (past) field of study was primarily psychology. As students who have received courses on victimology, a field closely related to psychology, may show less victim blaming than those that do not have knowledge on victimology (Fox & Cook, 2011).

Moreover, since 24 participants were excluded for failing the manipulation check, the sexual orientation manipulation may not have been sufficiently salient. Perhaps in future research, participants could be asked to indicate their level of certainty of their answers or the manipulation of victims' sexual orientation could be further enhanced. Furthermore, as a consequence of the methodology, the study may lack ecological validity, since vignettes only represent a hypothetical situation of male rape. Still, vignettes are considered a valid and reliable methodology for this type of study and remain widely used (van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014).

Additionally, as no control condition without specification of the victims' sexual orientation was used in the current study, it is recommended to add this in future research to establish the baseline of participants' victim blaming. Lastly, hypothesis 4 was not studied due to the failure to meet the statistical assumptions necessary for the analysis. Therefore, it is recommended in future research to further delve into the interactions between sexual orientation and male rape myth acceptance, and participant gender and male rape myth acceptance, to assess the influence on victim blaming.

Subsequently, other topics for future research can be distinguished. Currently perpetrator blaming was not clearly measured, hence it is of interest to study this in future research, as studies have indicated perpetrator blaming to be significantly different for the perpetrators' gender (Davies et al., 2006; Huitema & Vanwesenbeeck, 2016). Moreover, the current study focused on a general measure of victim blaming, which included factors related to victim blaming. Hence, it may be worthwhile to study whether victim blaming is related to the victim's personality (characterological blame) or behavior (behavioral blame) (Janoff-Bulman, 1979). Especially since Anderson (1999) found men and women to show different

attributions of blame towards male and female victims. As male and female rape myths differ in their themes, with male rape myths focusing more on characterological factors and female rape myths focusing on behavioral factors (Burt, 1980; Turchik & Edwards, 2012), it may be expected that depending on third party's level of female and male rape myth acceptance, the type of blaming attributed to victims may diverge too.

In addition, it may be of interest to study other types of (negative) reactions to victims, including the expression of negative emotions and derogation, as Mulder and Bohner (2020) found these to be expressed more towards victims than nonvictims. Besides, the role of homophobia, which is another negative reaction to victims, may be of interest to study. Previous research has shown that, in the case of male-perpetrated male rape, individuals who showed higher levels of homophobia, were found to blame the homosexual victim more than the heterosexual victim (White & Yamawaki, 2009). It appears that the effect of homophobia occurs specifically in situations of male-perpetrated male rape, as the event would elicit homophobic sentiments, particularly in heterosexual men who sympathize with the heterosexual victim (Davies et al., 2001; Davies & McCartney, 2003; Davies & Rogers, 2006). Yet, as is the case in the present study, the heterosexual victim is blamed more than the homosexual victim, one may, therefore, doubt whether homophobia plays a role here. Perhaps since the perpetrator was a woman and did not anally rape the victim, the third party's homophobic sentiments were not triggered. In future research, a potential situation should be studied in which a female perpetrator anally rapes a heterosexual and homosexual man, to assess whether this triggers homophobic sentiments and contributes to victim blaming.

Furthermore, it would be of interest to further study the sexual preference effect and the defensive attribution hypothesis, but also the underlying mechanisms contributing to victim blaming, including male rape myth acceptance and (hegemonic) norms regarding traditional gender roles and the hegemonic cultural discourse regarding rape. As these relations are currently not wholly clear, it is of pivotal importance to confirm these associations, and perhaps develop a theoretical framework, since it may contribute to the targeting of (male) victim blaming.

Lastly, the evidence on the sexual preference effect ought to be extended, since female victims of female perpetrators have not been studied in the context of victim blaming, but also victims with sexual orientations such as bisexuality or pansexuality often remain unexplored. In the only study researching the role of bisexuality in female rape victim blaming, no significantly different levels of victim blaming were found for the bisexual rape

victim, compared to a heterosexual or lesbian victim (Morrison & Pedersen, 2020). Still, additional research into victim blaming of male and female rape victims with different sexual orientations may be of value to further establish the sexual preference effect, perhaps by also adding the third party's sexual orientation into the equation.

5. Conclusion

This study suggests a difference exists in third party's attribution of blame towards heterosexual and homosexual male victims of female-perpetrated rape. As expected, following the sexual preference effect (Davies et al., 2006), the current study found heterosexual men to be blamed more for their victimization than homosexual men. Furthermore, the significant influence of third party's endorsement of male rape myth acceptance on their attributions of blame towards victims was highlighted. Currently, due to the theoretical fragmentation in victim blaming research, with studies often focusing on one theoretical explanation (e.g. Shaver's defensive attribution theory), no clear and comprehensive theoretical framework exists as regards the sexual preference effect and victim blaming in general. Therefore, more research is desired to study the potential role of (male) rape myth acceptance, adherence to (hegemonic) societal norms regarding traditional gender roles and the hegemonic cultural discourse regarding rape in third party's victim blaming. This would enable a better understanding of third party's attitudes towards (male) rape victims, which can be used in the provision of training to directly involved professionals (e.g. mental health professionals and police officers) and raise awareness in society.

Although the overall level of victim blaming was found to be low in the present study, it is pivotal to be aware that the consequences of victim blaming for victims may remain profound, such as not wanting to report to the police and not finding help for the victimization's consequences on victims' physical and/or mental health. Therefore, it is of pivotal importance to raise awareness and provide education regarding male sexual victimization and the influence of third party's negative and blaming attitudes, as well as their endorsement of male rape myth acceptance. This may aid victims in reaching out and receiving help that meet their needs.

In the criminal justice system, male rape myths and victim blaming can be challenged by training police officers, and altering rape laws to be gender-neutral and include forced penetration. By informing mental health professionals, friends and family of the influence of male rape myths and victim blaming on male rape victims, victims may be able to receive the supportive environments they need. Lastly, the 'silent discourse' on male rape myths and victim blaming ought to be tackled on a broader societal level, to incite greater societal recognition regarding male rape and male rape myths. As Melanson (1998, p. 89) argues: "to the extent that [...] individuals continue to believe and perpetuate myths about male rape

victims, male victims will continue to be discouraged from reporting their assaults or seeking treatment for their physical and psychological injuries".

Concludingly, since the present study found third party's male rape myth acceptance to predict victim blaming, it follows that a reduction in third party's male rape myth acceptance coupled with further awareness on the factors underlying the sexual preference effect, may decrease third party's victim blaming. Ultimately, this may allow male rape victims to be more comfortable with reporting, sharing their story and finding help. In this way, the risk of secondary victimization could be substantially reduced. What is important now, however, is the need for future research on the very factors that elicit the victim blaming of male rape victims in light of the sexual preference effect. For the reason that as this research has repeatedly shown, the understanding of the dynamics involved in this regard, are of a complex nature and as such, demand the attention of researchers, legislators and policy-makers.

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7. Appendices

7.1. Appendix 1 – Vignette and Reaction to Assault Questionnaire

7.1.1. Appendix 1A – Vignette

Mark is a single, [heterosexual/homosexual], man in his twenties. He works at a recruitment agency and resides in Amsterdam. He lives alone with his dog George, in a one-bedroom apartment in the city center. He enjoys sports, eating out, walking his dog, and volunteering at his local [animal shelter/LGBT support center].

One evening, Mark arrives at a house party hosted by his friend Anne, where Anne introduces him to Julie. Julie just moved to Amsterdam and asks Mark many questions about local hotspots and activities. They appear to have a lot in common and are both amazed that they had attended the same high school but graduated a couple of years apart. The remainder of the house party, Mark and Julie keep talking. Mark feels at ease and comfortable with Julie and finds himself discussing his job, family and his recently ended long-time relationship.

When the party is nearing its end, Julie invites Mark over to her place two blocks away for some more drinks. Mark agrees and goes with Julie. Julie, after making some drinks, sits down on her couch next to Mark. Julie starts to make sexual advances towards Mark, who states he is not interested in having sexual relations with her and tells her to stop. Julie then tries to undress Mark and begins to kiss him and touches his penis. At this point, Mark asks Julie again to stop and says he wants to leave. Julie becomes angry and sits on top of Mark. She pulls down his pants and underwear and advances to have sex with him. After Mark ejaculates, she gets dressed and goes into her kitchen, whilst Mark quickly leaves her house.

7.1.2. Appendix 1B – Reaction to Assault Questionnaire

The following questions address your reaction to the event that took place in the story. Please answer the questions on a scale from 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*To a great extent*).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part 1:

1. How responsible do you think Mark was for what happened at Julie's house?
2. Even though Mark was upset by what Julie did, how much sexual pleasure do you think he actually derived from it?
3. How much sympathy do you feel for Mark in this situation?

4. Do you think that Mark was to blame for what happened because he didn't try hard enough to escape?
5. Mark cannot be blamed for what happened to him. He was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. How much do you agree?
6. How surprised were you that Mark was upset by what Julie did to him?
7. How much do you think that Mark will be traumatized by what happened at Julie's house?
8. Do you think that Mark can be blamed for what happened because he didn't put up much of a fight?
9. How much do you think that Mark's life will be adversely affected by what Julie did at her house?
10. How much do you think that Mark's behavior was to blame for what Julie did at her house?
11. What happened at Julie's house was Mark's fault because he had been drinking. How much do you agree with this statement?

Part 2:

1. Should Julie be punished for what she did to Mark?
2. If you were Mark, how upset would you be by this event?
3. Julie would not have behaved this way if she wasn't drunk. How much do you agree?
4. Even though you don't know very much about Julie how much do you think you would like her?
5. Julie did not mean to upset Mark, she just got carried away. How much do you agree?

7.2. Appendix 2 - Full Online Questionnaire

Participant Information Statement

'The influence of victim characteristics on third-party perspectives'

Dear (potential) participant,

Thank you for considering participating in this study. Please read this information statement carefully, as it contains all the necessary information for deciding to participate in this study.

The Study Itself

The study 'The influence of victims' characteristics on third-party perspectives' aims to research the perspectives of third parties on an event of unwanted and non-consensual sexual behavior. This topic of study is contemporary and relevant as third-party perspectives may influence victim's feelings towards their experience and their willingness to come forward about their experiences and seek the necessary help. An example is the #MeToo-movement, in which more and more individuals came forward about their experiences with unwanted and non-consensual sexual behavior, as their predecessors received encouraging and supportive feedback.

Participating in This Study

To participate in this study, participants ought to be 18-30 years old and have a proficient level in the English language. Participation will be possible from February to April 2020.

In the study, you will be asked to carefully read a short fictional story about unwanted and non-consensual sexual behavior. Subsequently, you will be asked to answer several short questionnaires related to the story, but also on your personal opinions on related topics.

The study will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. There are no directly foreseeable disadvantages or risks connected to participating in this study. Although participants should be aware of the sensitive nature of the story (unwanted and non-consensual sexual behavior), which may be confronting or upsetting to some.

By participating in this study, you will be able to voice your opinion on a contemporary topic of study and contribute to the researchers' Master thesis and the existing body of research, with implications for practice.

Information Regarding Participation.

Participation in this study is fully voluntary. You can withdraw at any moment by closing the internet browser. This will not have negative consequences and you do not have to provide a reason or explanation for your withdrawal.

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential. The data will, in line with the GDPR, be pseudonymized and stored safely in SURFdrive licensed to Tilburg University and processed with IBM SPSS 26. Due to the pseudonymization, it will not be possible to link your answers to you as a person. If you wish, you can access or withdraw your personal data from the study at any moment without it having negative consequences or having to provide a reason.

The data will be used for the researcher's Master thesis and possible publications in scientific journals. In any publication, information will be provided in such a way that you cannot be identified. The data will be stored for a period of 10 years after publication of the researchers' Master thesis. The study has gained ethical approval by the Tilburg Law School Ethics Review Board.

Participants from the Psychology department at Tilburg University may participate through their SONA-system and receive participation credit upon completing the study. Other participants who complete the study can choose to be entered into a draw to win one of five bol.com gift cards of €10. This only applies to participants who do not participate for participation credit. If you wish to be entered into this draw, please provide your e-mail address via the link at the end of the questionnaire. You will be contacted only if you are one of the five winning participants. Your e-mail address will be stored separately from your answers to the questionnaires and will not be used for other purposes. Should you prefer not to provide your e-mail, you are under no obligation to do so.

If you have any questions regarding the study or your participation, please do not hesitate to e-mail Valérie Pijlman. If you have any remarks or complaints regarding this research, you may also contact the Ethics Review Board of Tilburg Law School.

Informed Consent Form

- I have read and understood the study information. I am aware that I can e-mail the researcher for further questions regarding the study.
- I fulfill the eligibility criteria to participate in this study.
- I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time by closing the internet browser, without it having negative consequences and without providing a reason.
- I understand and am aware that taking part in this study involves reading a short story of sensitive nature (unwanted and non-consensual sexual behavior).
- I comprehend that information I provide will be used for a Masters' thesis and potential publications in scientific journals.
- I understand that my information will be pseudonymized and kept confidential. I understand that my data will be stored safely in SURFdrive licensed to Tilburg University.
- I give permission to collect and process my data. I am aware that I can access or withdraw my personal data from the study at any time without it having negative consequences and without providing a reason.
- I give permission to share the pseudonymized data with other researchers within this field of study.
- I give permission to store my answers for a period of 10 years after the research study is publicized in the researchers' Master thesis.
- I understand that I can fill in my e-mail address in a separate questionnaire to participate in a draw to win one of five bol.com gift cards of €10.

Please fill in what applies to you:

- o Yes, I consent to participate in the study 'The influence of victim characteristics on third-party perspectives'.
- o No, I do not wish to participate.

Instructions

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study.

You will be asked to read a short fictional story and answer several short questions regarding the story and related topics. There are no right or wrong answers. Please answer the questions truthfully to ensure the accuracy of the research.

After every part of the study, you will be asked to click on the arrow to go to the next part. Please keep in mind to read and complete all questions carefully as after continuing to the next part, you will not be able to return and change your answers.

Short Story

Below you will read a short fictional story. Please read this following story carefully:

Mark is a single, [heterosexual/homosexual], professional man living in Amsterdam. He lives alone with his dog George in a one-bedroom apartment in the city center. He enjoys sports, eating out, walking his dog, and volunteering at his local [animal shelter/LGBT support center].

One evening, Mark arrived at a house party hosted by his friend Anne, where Anne introduced him to Julie. Julie just moved to Amsterdam and asked Mark many questions about local hotspots and activities. They appeared to have a lot in common and were both amazed that they had attended the same high school but graduated a couple of years apart. The remainder of the house party, Mark and Julie spent talking. Mark felt at ease and comfortable with Julie and found himself discussing his job, family and his recently ended long-time relationship.

When the party was nearing its end, Julie invited Mark over to her place two blocks away for some more drinks. Mark agreed and went with Julie. Julie, after making some drinks, sat down on her couch next to Mark. Julie started to make sexual advances towards Mark, who stated he was not interested in having sexual relations with her and told her to stop. Julie then tried to undress Mark and began kissing him and touching his penis. At this point, Mark asked Julie to stop again and said he wanted to leave. Julie became angry and sat on top of Mark. She pulled down his pants and underwear and advanced to have sex with him. After she was done and Mark ejaculated, she dressed up and went into her kitchen, whilst Mark quickly left her house.

Your Reaction to the Story

The following questions address your reaction to the event that took place in the story. Please answer the questions on a scale from 1 (*Not at all*) to 7 (*To a great extent*).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part 1:

1. How responsible do you think Mark was for what happened at Julie's house?
2. Even though Mark was upset by what Julie did, how much sexual pleasure do you think he actually derived from it?
3. How much sympathy do you feel for Mark in this situation?
4. Do you think that Mark was to blame for what happened because he didn't try hard enough to escape?
5. Mark cannot be blamed for what happened to him. He was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. How much do you agree?
6. How surprised were you that Mark was upset by what Julie did to him?
7. How much do you think that Mark will be traumatized by what happened at Julie's house?
8. Do you think that Mark can be blamed for what happened because he didn't put up much of a fight?
9. How much do you think that Mark's life will be adversely affected by what Julie did at her house?
10. How much do you think that Mark's behavior was to blame for what Julie did at her house?
11. What happened at Julie's house was Mark's fault because he had been drinking. How much do you agree with this statement?

Part 2:

1. Should Julie be punished for what she did to Mark?
2. If you were Mark, how upset would you be by this event?
3. Julie would not have behaved this way if she wasn't drunk. How much do you agree?
4. Even though you don't know very much about Julie how much do you think you would like her?
5. Julie did not mean to upset Mark, she just got carried away. How much do you agree?

Extra Question

If you were Mark, would you report the incident to the police?

- Yes
- No

Questions Relating to the Story

You have just read a short story about a man named Mark. Please answer the following questions about Mark:

1. What was Mark's sexual orientation?

2. At what place did Mark volunteer?

3. In which city did Mark reside?

General Beliefs about the World

Below you will read six statements regarding justice. Read each statement carefully and decide to what extent you personally agree or disagree with it.

1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly disagree	4 Slightly agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly agree

1. I think basically the world is a just place.
2. I believe that, by and large, people get what they deserve.
3. I am confident that justice always prevails over injustice.
4. I am convinced that in the long run people will be compensated for injustices.
5. I firmly believe that injustices in all areas of life (e.g. professional, family, politics) are the exception rather than the rule.
6. I think people try to be fair when making important decisions.

Statements Regarding Male Victims of Unwanted Sexual Behavior

Below you will find multiple statements regarding male victims of unwanted sexual behavior. Please read each statement well and note the extent to which you personally agree or disagree.

1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly disagree	4 Slightly agree	5 Agree	6 Strongly agree

1. It is a terrible experience for a man to be raped by a woman.
2. The extent of a man's resistance should be a major factor in determining if he was raped.
3. Any healthy man can successfully resist a rapist if he really wants to.
4. If a man obtained an erection while being raped it probably means that he started to enjoy it.
5. A man can enjoy sex even if it is being forced upon him.
6. Most men who are raped by a woman are very upset by the incident.
7. Many men claim rape if they have consented to homosexual relations but have changed their minds afterwards.
8. Most men who are raped by a woman are somewhat to blame for not escaping or fighting off the woman.
9. If a man engages in necking and petting and he lets things get out of hand, it is his own fault if his partner forces sex on him.
10. Male rape is usually committed by homosexuals.
11. Most men who are raped by a man are somewhat to blame for not escaping or fighting off the man.
12. A man who has been raped has lost his manhood.
13. Most men who are raped by a woman are somewhat to blame for not being more careful.
14. If a man told me that he had been raped by another man, I would suspect that he is homosexual.
15. Most men who have been raped have a history of promiscuity.
16. No self-respecting man would admit to being raped.

17. Women who rape men are sexually frustrated individuals.
18. A man who allows himself to be raped by another man is probably homosexual.
19. Most men would not enjoy being raped by a woman.
20. Men who parade around nude in a locker room are asking for trouble.
21. Male rape is more serious when the victim is heterosexual than when the victim is homosexual.
22. 1 would have a hard time believing a man who told me that he was raped by a woman.

General Questions about Yourself

The following statements may apply more or less to you personally. Please indicate to what extent they apply to you in general.

1 Does not apply at all	2 Applies a bit	3 Applies somewhat	4 Applies mostly	5 Applies completely

1. In an argument, I always remain objective and stick to the facts.
2. Even if I am feeling stressed, I am always friendly and polite to others.
3. When talking to someone, I always listen carefully to what the other person says.
4. It has happened that I have taken advantage of someone in the past.
5. I have occasionally thrown litter away in the countryside or on to the road.
6. Sometimes I only help people if I expect to get something in return.

Contemporary Relationships between Men and Women

Below you will read a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Read each statement carefully and decide to what extent you personally agree or disagree with it.

1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree somewhat	3 Slightly disagree	4 Slightly agree	5 Agree somewhat	6 Strongly agree

1. When men act to “help” women, they are often trying to prove they are better than women.
2. Men act like babies when they are sick.
3. Men will always fight to have greater control in society than women.
4. Even men who claim to be sensitive to women’s rights really want a traditional relationship at home, with the woman performing most of the housekeeping and childcare.
5. When it comes down to it, most men are really like children.
6. Most men sexually harass women, even if only in subtle ways, once they are in a position of power over them.

Demographic Questions

What is your age?

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Other

What is your nationality?

- Dutch
- Belgian
- British
- Chinese
- German
- Greek
- Spanish
- Other, namely:

What is your sexual orientation?

- Heterosexual
- Homosexual
- Bisexual
- Asexual
- Other, namely:
- I prefer not to answer this question

What is your highest level of finished education?

- High school
- Bachelor's (HBO/University)
- Master's (HBO/University)
- Doctoral/PhD
- Other, namely:

What is your past field of study?

Debriefing

Thank you for participating in this study!

The aim of the current study was to investigate the effect of victims' sexual orientation (heterosexual or homosexual) on third-party perspectives of victim and perpetrator blame in a case of a male victim of female-perpetrated sexual assault (rape). Previous research into victim blaming has shown that male victim blaming is a pertinent matter; especially heterosexual victims of female perpetrators are viewed more negatively than their homosexual counterparts. Hence, it is expected that, in line with previous research, the heterosexual victim in the current study will be blamed more for what happened. However, as male victims, regardless of their sexual orientations, are blamed more than females in general, victim, it is expected that victim blaming is high in general.

The study of victim blaming is important, as experiencing victim blame may increase victims' barriers to report their experience to others or the police but may also generate a sense of self-blame and secondary victimization.

If you have experienced sexual assault and you are looking for help or if you have questions, you can contact the Dutch Sexual Assault Center, 24/7 at 0800-0188 or chat online on https://www.centrumseksueelgeweld.nl/chatmethetcentrumseksueelgeweld/.

If you have any questions regarding the study or if you wish to be informed of the results, please do not hesitate to contact Valérie Pijlman.

If you wish to be entered into the draw to win one of 5 bol.com gift cards worth €10. Please click the following link and enter your e-mail. Please note you can only do this if you do not participate for participation credit.

https://tilburglawschool.eu.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3mHloJB0iycMZqB

7.3. Appendix 3 – Additional Analyses

Additional analyses were conducted to assess whether the effect of Male Rape Myth Acceptance and Hostility Towards Men on Victim Blaming differed for the sexual orientation condition. Therefore, the data file was split for the sexual orientation condition. Consequently, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted to assess whether the variables Male Rape Myth Acceptance and Hostility Towards Men predicted the participants' level of victim blaming, after controlling for participant gender.

Firstly, regarding the heterosexual condition (see Table 8), participant gender was entered at step 1, explaining 22.7% of the variance in victim blaming. After entry of Male Rape Myth Acceptance and Hostility Towards Men at step 2, the total variance explained by the model was 59.8%: F (3, 126) = 62.59, $p < .000$. The two control variables explained an additional 37.2% of the variance in victim blaming after controlling for participant gender: R^2 change = .372, F change (2, 126) = 58.33, $p < .000$. In the final model, which included all variables added in step 1 and 2, the variables found to be statistically significant were participant gender (β = -.27, $p < .000$) and Male Rape Myth Acceptance (β = .65, $p < .000$).

Secondly, regarding the homosexual condition (see Table 9), participant gender was entered at step 1, explaining 12.4% of the variance in victim blaming. After entry of Male Rape Myth Acceptance and Hostility Towards Men at step 2, the total variance explained by the model was 63.9%: F (3, 130) = 76.70, $p < .000$. The two control variables explained an additional 51.5% of the variance in victim blaming, after controlling for participant gender: R^2 change = .515, F change (2, 130) = 92.63, $p < .000$. In the final model, which included all variables added in step 1 and 2, the variables found to be statistically significant were participant gender (β = -.13, $p < .033$) and Male Rape Myth Acceptance (β = .76, $p < .000$).

Overall, this indicates that for both sexual orientation conditions, participant gender and participants' level of male rape myth acceptance predicted participants' level of victim blaming. In other words, a higher level of male rape myth acceptance predicted a higher level of victim blaming. Yet, it appears, based on the *beta* (β) values, that the effect of participants' male rape myth acceptance on participants' victim blaming was slightly stronger in the homosexual condition compared to the heterosexual condition. Moreover, the effect of participant gender on participants' victim blaming was slightly stronger in the heterosexual condition compared to the homosexual condition.

Table 8

Summary of Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Victim Blaming (N = 264) with Split File for Sexual Orientation Condition (Heterosexual Condition)

Step	Predictor	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		R^2	R^2 change	F	p
		B	*SE B*	*β*	*p*				
1						**.227**	.227	37.50	**<.000**
	Participant Gender	-13.35	2.18	-.476	**<.000**				
2						**.598**	**.372**	62.59	**<.000**
	Participant Gender	-7.51	1.81	-.268	**<.000**				
	Male Rape Myth Acceptance	.59	.06	.647	**<.000**				
	Hostility Towards Men	-.06	.15	-.024	.695				

Table 9

Summary of Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables Predicting Victim Blaming (N = 264) with Split File for Sexual Orientation Condition (Homosexual Condition)

Step	Predictor	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients		R^2	R^2 change	F	p
		B	*SE B*	*β*	*p*				
1						**.124**	.124	18.77	**<.000**
	Participant Gender	-9.28	2.14	-.353	**<.000**				
2						**.639**	**.515**	76.70	**<.000**
	Participant Gender	-3.31	1.53	-.126	**.033**				
	Male Rape Myth Acceptance	.65	.05	.757	**<.000**				
	Hostility Towards Men	-.05	.14	-.021	.710				