Rape Myth Acceptance:

Exploring the influences of media and the Greek-Cypriot culture

by

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Abstract

The aims of this thesis were to investigate the impact of media on Rape Myth Acceptance (RMA), and to explore the attitudes of Greek-Cypriots toward RMA and victims of rape. Chapter Two presents a systematic review of the existing literature, exploring whether seven types of mass media affect individuals' RMA. The findings show that RMA of male participants who were exposed to experimental stimuli (e.g. scenes from movies depicting sexual violence, sexually objectifying images of women in adverts) was significantly higher than male participants exposed to neutral media. This trend did not hold for females. In the vast majority of the studies, male participants scored higher on RMA scales than female participants. Implications for practice and research are discussed. Chapter Three presents a critique of the RMA scale used in the empirical study; that is, the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression scale (AMMSA; Gerger et al., 2007). The chapter presents some of the methodological issues of existing RMA measures, discusses the rationale for the development of the AMMSA and presents its main strengths and limitations. Chapter Four aimed at examining RMA of Greek-Cypriots, as well as their attributions of blame in situations depicting sexual violence. The results replicate findings from previous studies, showing that males endorse more RMA and tend to attribute more blame to the victim and less to the perpetrator, in contrast to females. Older participants and participants not acquainted with victims of sexual assault scored higher on the RMA scale. In Chapter Five, a summary of the findings is presented, followed by relevant recommendations for future research and implications for practice.

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Dedication

Without their continued support and encouragement,

I know that I wouldn't have come so far.

I wouldn't be as determined to complete this piece of work,

And start a new chapter in my life.

To my parents, words cannot describe my gratitude.

This work is also dedicated to Survivors around the world,

who suffer in silence.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

"Physical and sexual violence against girls and women is shaped by attitudes and social

norms, gendered inequalities of power, and a wide variety of other social factors."

(Flood, 2007, p.13)

The United Nations defines Violence against Women (VaW) as "any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life" (United Nations, 1994, p. 3). This clearly shows how complex the issue is and the wide-reaching consequences of it.

According to Flood and Pease (2009), in order to decrease the incidents of VaW, the factors that shape individuals' attitudes towards VaW must first be understood. Some researchers argue that the concept of "attitudes" is learned through the social context of each individual and may exercise a guiding function on thoughts and behaviours (Bassili & Brown, 2005; Kruglanski & Strobe, 2005). In other words, attitudes are socially constructed and influenced by shared knowledge that people use in order to understand the world. Thus, attitudes are situated in the socio-historical context of individuals' lives as they interact with race, class, ethnicity, age, gender, sexuality and other crosscutting social divisions (Flood & Pease, 2006).

Flood and Pease (2009) conducted a literature review to identify the factors that shape attitudes towards VaW in order to improve understanding of the causes of VaW and aid the development of policies and programmes that target this phenomenon. They concluded that

two clusters of factors related to gender and culture have a multilevel influence on individuals' attitudes. The first refers to gender and gender roles, relations and attitudes. The second refers to race, ethnicity and social class. They add that additional factors function at individual (e.g. experiencing or witnessing violence, age and development), organizational (including policies and characteristics of formal organizations and institutions), communal (e.g. peer groups, religion), or societal (e.g. mass media, social movements) levels to influence attitudes, although their influence may overlap across multiple levels. Flood and Pease (2009) argue that attitudes have a crucial impact on three domains: a) the perpetration of VaW, b) women's response to their victimization and c) the community's response to this offence. These will be discussed in more detail in relation to sexual violence below.

The current chapter introduces specific topics in relation to VaW relevant to the thesis. The area of sexual violence will be explored and a rationale for further study of sexual VaW will be provided. The outline of the thesis is provided last.

Sexual Violence

The World Health Organization (2002) defined sexual violence as "any act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work" (p.149).

Sexual violence is considered a public health problem worldwide (Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler & Viki, 2009). According to a recent Statistical Bulletin published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS, 2013), females are significantly more likely than males to have

reported being a victim of a sexual offence. The Bulletin is based on the results from Crime Surveys conducted in England and Wales (CSEW) during the years 2009-12. The aggregated data indicates that an average of 2.5% of females and 0.4% of males reported being a victim of a sexual offence (including attempted offence) in the previous 12 months. These figures represent a total of approximately 473,000 adults being victims of sexual crimes (404,000 females and 72,000 males). The self-reported experiences extend to the full spectrum of sexual offences, ranging from the most severe offences of sexual assault and rape, to other offences such as indecent exposure. The majority of incidents reported in this survey fell into the "less severe" sexual offences group.

ONS estimated that 0.5% of female respondents reported being a victim of rape or sexual assault by penetration, which equates to approximately 85,000 victims on average per year. The majority had been a victim of rape and 40% of respondents were a victim of sexual assault by penetration. In terms of male respondents, less than 0.1% (approximately 12,000 individuals) reported being a victim of the more "severe" forms of sexual offences (ONS, 2013).

As indicated in the CSEW (ONS, 2013), one in five females reported being a victim of any sexual offence since the age of 16 years. Approximately one in twenty females reported being a victim of rape or sexual assault by penetration since the age of 16 years. The vast majority of the victims (90%) of the most "severe" sexual offences knew their perpetrator, compared with less than half for the remaining sexual crimes. Of all the female respondents who reported being the victims of sexual offences, only 15% had reported the most recent incident to the police. The most frequent reasons for not reporting the crime included that "it

was embarrassing", "the incident was not worth reporting", they "did not think the police could do much", or that they "saw it as a private matter and not the police's business" (ONS, 2013).

Indeed, the low reporting rate of sexual offences is found in many countries, including the USA and Canada (Brennan & Taylor-Butts, 2008). For example, in the USA, one-fifth (18.3%) of women and one in 71 men (1.4%) reported experiencing rape at some point throughout their lives (Black et al., 2011). However, it is estimated that only 35% of these crimes are reported to the police (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2012). As Brennan and Taylor-Butts (2008) note, in Canada, less than one in ten sexual offences is reported by the victims to the police.

As indicated in surveys and research studies, every year, a significant number of women are raped and/or sexually assaulted by strangers, acquaintances, or partners. Due to the finding that victims of sexual crimes are predominantly female, research literature over the last 40 years has largely focused on the issue of rape of women perpetrated by men (Brownmiller, 1975; Koss, 1992; Strömwall, Alfredsson & Landström, 2012).

A large number of studies examining this issue have focused on the social and psychological consequences of women who were victims of rape (Nagel, Matsuo, McIntyre & Morrison, 2005). For instance, Thompson and West (1992) report that victims of rape are more likely to experience anxiety, depression and traumatic symptoms when compared to non-victims. McGee, Garavan, de Barra, Byrne and Conroy (2002) state that the most frequently reported psychological consequence for victims of sexual assault is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). As these researchers found, 25% of women who reported symptoms indicative of PTSD had experienced sexual violence at some time in their lives. Moreover,

physical health effects of rape include sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancies and gynaecological complications (McGee et al., 2002).

Williams (1984) suggests that victims of rape may also experience secondary victimization as part of the court process as they are often cross-examined and asked to describe intimate details of the case, and the authorities might hold negative attitudes towards the victim. Ward (1988) argues that examples of these attitudes include those that question the victim's credibility, blame the victim, imply that the victim deserved it and trivialize the rape experience. This may explain why a large number of victims never report the crime or retract their allegations at a later stage (George & Martinez, 2002).

Why is it important to study the factors influencing attitudes to sexual VaW?

As seen above, VaW and more specifically sexual VaW are significant issues in today's society. There are a multitude of societal attitudes relevant to the impact of sexual VaW on victims, how society views and responds to these crimes, and the low reporting rate of sexual offences. Subsequently, in order to prevent sexual violence, a crucial step is to examine the factors that impact on individuals' attitudes towards this issue. As some researchers note (e.g. Edwards, Turchik, Dardis, Reynolds & Gidycz, 2011; Flood & Pease, 2009), this is important as although violence-supportive attitudes do not necessarily shape behaviour, they are associated with the perpetration of violence at both individual and community levels.

For example, research indicates that males that adhere to rigid, traditional and misogynistic gender-role attitudes are more likely to perpetrate marital violence (Heise, 1998; O'Neil & Harway, 1997). In terms of sexual violence, Anderson, Simpson-Taylor and

Hermann (2004) suggest that young men who endorse more beliefs that support rape are more likely to have used sexually-coercive behaviours. Thus, as Flood and Pease (2009) conclude, research shows a consistent relationship between men's adherence to patriarchal, sexist and/or sexually hostile perceptions and their perpetration of VaW.

Another reason for exploring attitudes towards sexual VaW pertains to the fact that women's responses to their own victimization are influenced by their own attitudes and the society's attitudes. Women may refrain from reporting the violence due to fear of being blamed and stigmatized by individuals in their environment and worry that the Criminal Justice System (CJS) will not respond to the reporting of the crime in an appropriate manner (Felson, Messnet, Hoskin & Dean, 2002; Lievore, 2003). According to Harris, Firestone and Vega (2005), women are less likely to report abusive experiences if they adhere to traditional gender-role attitudes and if the assault did not fit the common stereotypes of "real rape".

Individuals tend to conceptualize a "real rape situation" as a situation that occurs outdoors at night, where the female victim is alone and is unexpectedly attacked by a male stranger. The victim, despite initially resisting the assault, is eventually subdued and assaulted (Williams, 1984). Wood and Rennie (1994) found that rape victims rarely defined their own experience as "rape" if it did not resemble this situation (i.e. the "stranger rape stereotype"). As noted in literature, these issues add to the low reporting rate of rape cases, as well as the low prosecution rates (Estrich, 1997; Lees, 1997).

In addition to perpetrators and victims of sexual violence, other individuals endorse attitudes and beliefs that may play a significant role in perpetuating this phenomenon. Research shows that individuals with more violence-supportive attitudes are more likely to respond with

less empathy to victims, more likely to attribute blame to victims of sexual abuse and more likely to recommend less strict penalties for the assailant (Pavlou & Knowles, 2001; West & Wandrei, 2002). Professionals working with victims and perpetrators of sexual violence may also hold certain perceptions that influence their response when they are allocated an abuse case.

For example, Nayak, Byrne, Martin and Abrahams (2003) found that attitudes towards sexual violence inhibit appropriate and effective responses from professionals to female victims. The responses of professionals to abused women who seek help may influence the likelihood of future reporting to the police (Hickman & Simpson, 2003), as well as their eventual recovery from the violence (Giles, Curreen & Adamson, 2005). Subsequently, given the importance of attitudes on the perpetuation of sexual violence and recovery of the victims, it is important to examine the factors that impact on their formation.

As a result, this thesis aims at examining factors influencing RMA of individuals. Rape myths have been defined as "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women" (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 134), and RMA pertains to the degree of agreement with these attitudes (Burt, 1980). Rape myths are considered a significant contributing factor to victim-blaming attitudes and beliefs that inhibit victims from reporting the crime and reduce the prosecution and conviction rates of these offences (Burt, 1980).

Structure of the Thesis

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This thesis is structured into five chapters. Following this Introduction Chapter, Chapter Two presents a systematic literature review exploring the impact of media on individuals' RMA. The review integrates the results from eleven studies conducted from 1981 to 2016 and examines whether certain types of media (including news headlines, a book story, music videos, mainstream films and music videos, a TV show and video games) affect the judgements of the participants. It also explored gender differences in this respect, focusing on whether male participants exposed to media stimuli scored differently than female participants exposed to the same stimuli.

Chapter Three presents a critique of the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression scale (AMMSA; Gerger, Kley, Bohner & Siebler, 2007) which is a recent tool measuring participants' RMA and used in the current study in Chapter Four. This tool was designed to measure modern stereotypes about sexual aggression, attempting to address the methodological weaknesses of previous tools examining this issue. Subsequently, the critique presents the strengths of this tool and discusses its limitations.

Chapter Four presents a culture-specific perspective of RMA, focusing on the attitudes of Greek-Cypriots. This study examines a number of different variables (i.e. gender, age, religious affiliation, knowledge of a sexual assault victim) and their relationship with RMA, as well as gender differences in attribution of blame to victims and perpetrators in 12 scenarios. In these scenarios, gender of the victim and the perpetrator (describing male-to-female or female-to-male assault), the relationship of the two individuals (reflecting stranger, dating or marital relationship) and the alcohol consumption of the two parties (both intoxicated or both sober) were manipulated.

Finally, Chapter Five provides a general discussion of the presented work, by exploring the main findings and presenting the limitations of this thesis. This chapter also presents recommendations for future research and implications for clinicians and policy-makers.

CHAPTER 2

EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF MEDIA ON MALES' AND FEMALES' RAPE

MYTH ACCEPTANCE: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW

Abstract

Rape constitutes a serious societal problem, with a high percentage of the population affected each year, either as victims of sexual assault or acquaintances of victims. Literature has highlighted the prevalence of rape myths in various forms of media, such as mainstream films and news headlines and how these contribute to "rape culture", a term used primarily by feminist theorists to describe cultural norms that excuse sexual crimes. Media forms that do not perpetuate rape myths, but contain sexual aggression or objectification of women, seem to have a significant effect on individuals' rape myth acceptance (RMA). This review aims to explore whether various forms of media (including films, music videos, advertisements, news headlines, video games, book story and crime drama) affect males' and females' attitudes and RMA in regard to women. Following the systematic literature search using keywords, data selection and quality assessment, a total of eleven studies were selected for inclusion in the review. Comparisons between male and female participants were examined using a narrative approach. Findings show that male participants exposed to the experimental stimuli scored significantly higher in RMA scales than participants who were exposed to neutral stimuli. Overall, male participants of both experimental and control conditions endorsed rape-supportive beliefs to a higher degree than female participants. Generally, no significant differences in scores were found among female participants. In fact, some studies showed that females exposed to the experimental stimuli endorsed less rape-supportive beliefs than females in the control condition. The findings indicate that media could impact on individuals' RMA, specially male's RMA, which has important implications for education programmes in this area.

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Introduction

Sexual offending is a global problem; in the USA, the National Violence Against Women Survey conducted in 1996 estimated that almost 2.5 million individuals are sexually or physically assaulted by an intimate partner annually. In the UK, it is estimated that more than 400,000 individuals are sexually assaulted every year (Rapecrisis, 2012). Further, reports suggest that one in five women has been the victim of some form of sexual violence since the age of 16 (Rapecrisis, 2012). As noted in the literature, although rape is considered to be a serious societal problem that affects a high percentage of the population, a large number of incidents do not get reported (Suarez & Gatalla, 2010). The Sexual Offences Act (2003) defines rape as a "non-consenting intentional penetration of the mouth, vagina or anus by the penis" (p. 1). The Sexual Offences Act (2003) highlights the concept of "consent" in the context of rape and states that a person should have the choice, freedom and capacity to consent to the sexual act. In addition, the law does not require the victim to have physically resisted in order to classify the act as "non-consenting".

One crucial factor that may discourage victims from reporting rape is considered to be the poor response and non-supportive reactions that they often encounter following the disclosing of the sexual assault (Suarez & Gatalla, 2010). The limited support may emerge from the social network of the victims (Ullman, 1996), from legal services (Comack & Peter, 2005), police (Campbell & Johnson, 1997) and/or health care providers (Ullman & Townsend, 2007). As a result of the poor support, victims might experience PTSD symptoms (Yamawaki, Darby, & Queiroz, 2007). One major factor that influences reporting and perceptions of rape relates to peoples' beliefs about attributions of blame in sexual assault cases. These beliefs trivialize rape by assuming that the victim was responsible for, or consented to, being raped.

Martha Burt (1980) coined the term "rape myth acceptance" (RMA) to conceptualize these beliefs. The current chapter explores areas related to these concepts, starting by discussing rape myths, cognitive distortions, and the effect of media. The majority of this chapter then presents a systematic review of the effects of media of RMA and gender differences within this context.

Rape Myths & Cognitive Distortions

Rape Myths consist of false cultural beliefs about rape and sexual assault that serve to reduce the severity of the offence and shift the blame from perpetrators to victims (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980). The myths may include blaming the victim, suggesting they were lying or exaggerating, they deserved it or asked for it. Other myths excuse the perpetrator suggesting, for example, that "he couldn't help himself" (Burt, 1980). Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) explored the functions of rape myths and concluded that men may use rape myths to justify rape, whereas women use them to minimize personal vulnerability. As a result, the understanding of the impact and effects of rape myths on the victims and the society in general has been recognised as crucial for the recovery of these victims (Moor, 2007).

Some of the most prevalent rape stereotypes relate to the idea that women are raped only in deserted places, by strangers who also physically assault them. However, strong scientific evidence directly contradicts these beliefs as 72% of rapes in the UK are committed by an acquaintance or intimate partner of the victim, 74% take place indoors, and nearly half involve no additional physical injury beyond the rape itself (Muir & Macleod, 2003).

Although scientific evidence and statistics serve to disprove the classic stereotype of "real rape", these beliefs negatively impact upon victims, legal services and the justice system. For instance, the victim is less likely to report the crime if it does not fit with the prevalent aforementioned stereotype (LaFree, 1989). If the victim does report the crime, the court tends to discount the claim if the victim's behaviour did not correspond with the stereotypic behaviour of a "real" rape victim (i.e. "she fought back", "she resisted and cried"). Subsequently, cases that are successfully prosecuted tend to conform to the classic stereotype of rape and this reinforces the public's beliefs relating to this issue (LaFree, 1989).

Rape supportive attitudes seem to be linked to a belief in a "Just World", which suggests that people get what they deserve; in case something bad happens to a person they must have deserved it in some way (Lerner, 1980). According to Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994), this belief serves as a "safety net" for society: "good" men would never commit such an act and "good" women can feel safe. Hence, "rape supportive beliefs" serve to maintain the general public's sense of invulnerability (Franiuk, Seefelt & Vandello, 2008a).

The endorsement of rape myths may serve to normalize sexual aggression for males (Bohner, Pina, Viki & Siebler, 2010). For example, Bohner and colleagues (2009) suggest that the prevalence of rape could be neutralized or even "justified" by these beliefs. Such psychological neutralizers may allow possible offenders to dismiss any sanctions against sexual abuse of women (Burt, 1980). Thus, rape myths may be seen in line with "cognitive distortions" of sex offenders, which are defined as "specific or general beliefs/attitudes that violate commonly accepted norms of rationality and are linked to the onset and maintenance of sex offending" (O´ Ciardha & Ward, 2013, p. 6). Polaschek and Ward (2002) argue that cognitive distortions play a crucial role in predisposing some men to engage in sexual violence

and in rationalizing and maintaining their offences. Therefore, there appears to be a relationship between the likelihood of raping and rape myths, as well as more general rape-related cognitive systems including acceptance of interpersonal violence against women and sex role stereotyping (Drieschner & Lange, 1999; Ward, Hudson, Johnston, & Marshall, 1997).

Polascheck and Ward (2002) suggest that rapists' cognitive distortions stem from underlying implicit theories that relate to how these offenders view the nature of their victims, themselves and the world in general. The Implicit Theories are used to explain other individuals' actions and to make predictions about the world. These researchers analysed items from questionnaires that measure rape-supporting beliefs and propose five Implicit Theories held by rapists: women are unknowable (i.e. women are different to men and should be treated with suspicion; Polaschek and Gannon (2004) later revised this as "women are dangerous"), women as sex objects (i.e. women were created to fulfil the sexual needs of men), male sex drive is uncontrollable (i.e. men cannot control their biological need for sex), entitlement (i.e. men are superior to women and they should have their needs met on demand) and dangerous world (i.e. the world is a hostile and uncaring place).

Ward (2000) argues that Implicit Theories are formed early in life, but may be altered over the course of lifetime, and that offenders tend to interpret evidence (for example, the victim's behaviour) in a way that is consistent with their Implicit Theories. According to Ward and Keenan (1999), non-offenders may also hold rape-supportive Implicit Theories that underlie their agreement to beliefs and stereotypes in relation to victims and perpetrators of sexual crimes. These Implicit Theories are developed through cultural models and social norms that impact on individuals' perception at many levels, from family influences to those transferred through institutions (e.g. schools) and the media (Bronfenbrenner, 1986).

Appreciating the existence of rape myths and cognitive distortions can therefore have ample implications for work with perpetrators and recovery for victims. That is, by further identifying how rape myths and cognitive distortions are currently used to justify sexual violence, professionals who work with perpetrators can highlight these cognitions and challenge them in the course of treatment. Clinicians working with victims can help them acknowledge the presence of these cognitions, encourage them to refrain from blaming themselves for the abuse and support them throughout the therapeutic intervention to overcome the impact of this offence (Bohner et al., 2009).

Rape represented in Media

The Oxford Dictionary defines media as "*The main means of mass communication (television, radio, and newspapers) regarded collectively*" (The Oxford Dictionary webpage, 2014). Media is considered a key disseminator of knowledge (such as print media- newspapers and magazines), entertainment (such as films, music videos) or consuming purposes (e.g. advertisements). In addition, media provides an imperative source by which to access information relating to rape and sexual assault cases which could potentially influence the outcome of ongoing trials (Franiuk et al., 2008a). As a result, it is crucial that the media objectively report individual cases of rape and accurately represent research findings on sexual assault (Franiuk et al., 2008a). According to Benedict (1992), media reports often blame the victim of rape and reduce the perpetrators' responsibility. Consequently, media may reinforce rape stereotypes and fuel public's misconceptions of sex crimes. This may, in turn, have negative effects for the victim's self-conceptions of their experience, and the criminal justice's response to sexual crimes (Benedict, 1992).

Research indicates that the media tend to report and present sexual assault cases that have features that fit with the "real rape" stereotype (Franiuk et al., 2008a; Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress, & Vandello, 2008b; Marhia, 2008). Marhia (2008) states that 54.4% of media reports describe attacks committed by strangers and 54.4% of the sexual assault cases reported in media are committed in public places. Additionally, the media often present the incident in such a way to imply that the victim precipitated the attack, or that they are making a false allegation (Cucklanz, 2000). All these claims can fuel individuals' misconceptions surrounding sexual crimes.

The most frequently endorsed rape supporting beliefs presented in media are those implying that the victim is somehow responsible for the assault or that the victim is lying. Franiuk et al. (2008b) suggest that the rape myths perpetuated in the media consist of a reflection of women's inferior status in society and the society's defensive reaction to sex crimes. Furthermore, the media tend to maintain the traditional sexual script (TSS); a perspective that imposes a sexually aggressive expectation on men and a timid, submissive expectation on women (Byers, 1996).

Hence, the implications of the media representing rape and sexual assault in a way that reinforces rape myths include a low probability of reporting the attack on behalf of the victim, lower likelihood of charging the perpetrator and lower odds that he/she will receive conviction (LaFree, 1989). Media has the power to teach rape myths to those who do not already hold them, strengthen negative attitudes towards women and triggering rape myths in those who are ready to use them (Franiuk et al., 2008b). Moreover, other forms of media, such as advertisements, music videos and films may subconsciously influence the public's opinions and attitudes towards women. On the other hand, the media can raise awareness of this serious

societal problem and can provide information to the public relating to the frequency, nature and impact of sex-related crimes (Franiuk et al., 2008b).

Mechanisms by which the media facilitates RMA

A number of theoretical approaches have been proposed to address the impact of sexually explicit and/or violent media on an individual's attitudes towards women and their subsequent behaviours.

The Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) is one of the theories proposed to explain why exposure to violence in the media, specifically sexual violence against women, may influence individuals' attitudes about sexual violence. As Bandura (2002) suggests, individuals learn how to think, feel and behave not only through direct experiences, but also in indirect ways through symbolic environments, such as media portrayals. Thus, through this vicarious learning, individuals may learn certain values and form their perceptions of reality based on what they see, read or hear in the media (Weaver, Graber, McCombs & Eyal, 1981). Fictional characters may be perceived as social models (Harris, Thai & Barlow, 2016).

This theory also proposes that characters presented in the media model certain attitudes and behaviours that may be adopted by viewers. Viewers are likely to imitate characters in the media if they perceive that they are rewarded for their actions and beliefs, as opposed to actions and beliefs that are punished (Lee, Hust & Zhang, 2011). Thus, individuals could learn information relating to the norms of sexual encounters and might model behaviours they have viewed, especially if these behaviours received positive reinforcement or reward (Emmers-Sommer, Pauley, Hanzal & Triplett, 2006). Check and Malamuth (1985a) explored

this hypothesis and found that individuals who viewed sexually explicit and/or violent material believed that the relationships portrayed in films reflect those of real life. Consequently, the viewers might adopt such behaviours themselves (Emmers-Sommer et al., 2006).

Another theory that may explain how media could perpetuate rape myths which may in turn influence the perceptions of individuals is the Cultivation Theory (Gerbner, 1998). According to this theory, heavy consumption of media (e.g. television) may lead individuals to adopt a media-influenced, distorted perception of reality. In relation to rape myths, this theory suggests that repeated exposure to media depictions of women as sexually submissive objects may influence the beliefs of the viewers as well as reinforce gender roles and stereotypes (Stermer & Burkley, 2015). Consequently, the exposure to media may create a schema of the world, gender roles and relationships that is consistent with a distorted, fictional reality in the individuals' perceptions which may subsequently impact on their relationships, thoughts, feelings and behaviours (Dill & Thill, 2007).

Although rape myths are considered to be ingrained and represented in media, and given the growth and pervasiveness of objectifying images of women and violence against women portrayed in various forms of media (Kahlor & Morrison, 2007), there is limited research focusing on the impact of media on rape-supportive beliefs. Beck, Boys, Rose and Beck (2012) conducted a preliminary search in academic databases, searching for peer-reviewed journal articles exploring the effect of negative representations of women in media on attitudes towards women, and found that very few studies have been conducted in respect of this topic. However, some argue that the media allows for the sexual stereotypes of women (e.g. rape as a form of social control) to be maintained (Donat & D'Emilio, 1992).

The current review aims to systematically examine research findings regarding the impact of various forms of media on individuals' rape supporting attitudes. The specific objectives are:

● To identify whether various forms of media increase or decrease individuals' Rape Myth Acceptance.

● To explore gender differences within this context.

Method

Scoping Exercise: Determining the Research Questions

A scoping exercise was conducted to identify the extent to which the existing literature had explored the effects of types of media on males' and females' RMA. Google Scholar, Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews and The Campbell Collaboration Library of Systematic Reviews were searched thoroughly in February 2014 in order to gain an initial understanding of research conducted in this area. The scoping exercise was repeated in April 2016. Both yielded numerous articles examining the prevalence and effect of media – predominantly pornography – on individuals' RMA.

Various researchers have examined the relationship between pornography exposure and acceptance of rape beliefs. For example, Allen, Emmers, Gebhardt and Giery (1995) conducted a meta-analysis exploring the association between RMA and exposure to pornography within non-experimental and experimental studies. They concluded that non-experimental methodology showed no effects between these variables, whereas experimental studies showed positive effects, i.e. exposure to pornography increases RMA. More recently, Hald, Malamuth and Yuen (2009) conducted another meta-analysis and found an overall positive association between pornography use and attitudes supporting sexual and non-sexual violence against women in non-experimental studies.

Subsequently, the current review attempts to explore the literature and determine whether other media forms, apart from pornography, have an impact on individuals' RMA. Even though pornography is a part of media, there is evidence of numerous other media, readily

available from a very young age which has been shown to influence one's cognition (Kirkorian, Wartella & Anderson, 2008). However, although studies that explore the link between pornography and RMA were excluded in the first stage of the search, their reference lists were used to obtain possible studies that could be used in this review, as well as potential search terms extracted from "keywords". Possible synonyms were also considered.

Search Strategy

In order to identify potential studies to be included within the current review, a search was undertaken in February 2014 (and repeated in May 2016) of the following electronic databases: PsycINFO Ovid (1975 – present), Web of Science (1975 - present), Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA) (1975 - present) and SCOPUS (1975 - present) (Appendix A). As the concept of "rape myths" was first introduced in the 1970s by sociologists (e.g., Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1974) and feminists (e.g., Brownmiller, 1975), searches were constrained to mid-1970s. As mentioned above, the term "rape myths" was first coined by Burt in 1980 who published the first social scientific examination of RMA (Payne, Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1999). Hence, it is reasonable to conclude that research exploring RMA – and more specifically its relation to media exposure- did not emerge prior to the end of 1970s.

Other limits imposed on the searches were that studies had to be published in English and had to be peer reviewed articles, in order to narrow down the initial number of studies found in the databases. Hence, studies were excluded if they included reviews, commentaries, narratives or opinion papers. Journal searches initially included peer reviewed articles, non-peer reviewed articles and articles where status was unknown, with the intention of reducing sampling bias associated with the sole inclusion of published studies. However, due to the

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large number of results obtained, only peer reviewed articles were included in the final results. Journal articles requiring translation were excluded due to time and financial constraints.

In an attempt to make the literature search encompassing, the reference lists of shortlisted articles were hand-searched to identify other potentially relevant literature. Additionally, communication was initiated via email with professionals identified through former searches as having potentially further contributed in the literature. This communication was carried out to ascertain whether these professionals had any further available published or unpublished studies and contacts for other professionals who could be accessed for further information. The professionals contacted included Dr Afroditi Pina - University of Kent, Professor Neil Malamuth – University of California and Dr Renae Franiuk, Aurora University.

The database search included the identification of relevant terms and synonyms that were mapped to subject headings to generate a list of keywords, which in turn were selected as search terms. In order to ascertain studies on the impact of media on RMA, keywords associated with RMA were used, in addition to keywords associated with types of media. Figure 1 depicts the search terms applied to each electronic database. All the search terms were applied to searches of all four databases in order to maintain consistency.
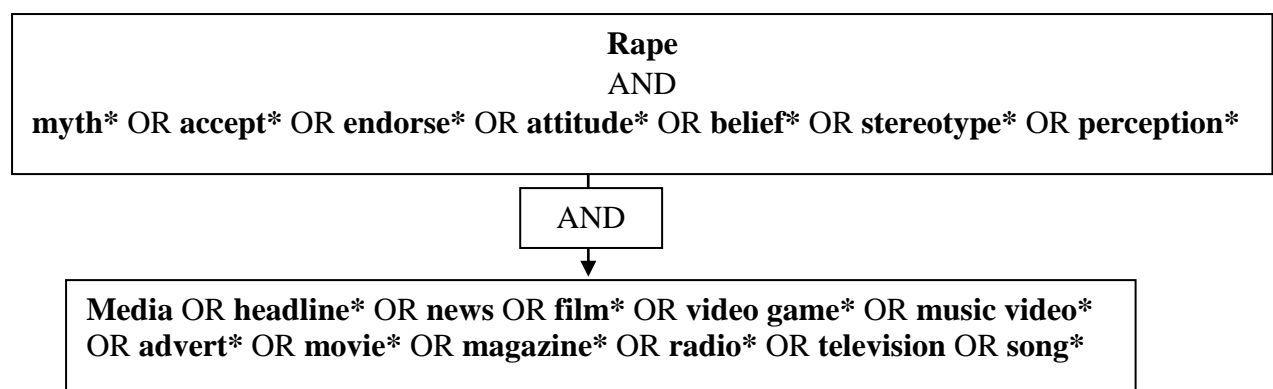
Figure 1. *Search Terms*

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To identify relevant articles for the review, the articles' titles, abstracts or the full article (if required) were hand searched and inclusion/ exclusion criteria were applied.

Table 1. *Inclusion & Exclusion Criteria*

PICOS	Inclusion	Exclusion	Comments
Population	Adult (>18) participants, male and female	Adolescents	The study should compare the attitudes of male participants VS female participants
Intervention/ Exposure	Exposure to types of media	Exposure to pornographic material	
Comparators	Exposure to media endorsing rape myths VS exposure to neutral media		
Outcomes	Measurement of RMA		
Study Design	Randomized Control Trials	Qualitative studies, quasi-experimental, case control, case cohort studies, narratives, commentaries, editorials	Participants should be randomly assigned to either focus or control group(s).
Other	Year of Publication: 1975 to 2016 Language of Publication: English Studies conducted in USA, Canada, UK, New Zealand, Australia	Unpublished studies. Studies conducted in other countries and other languages.	

The rationale for the inclusion/exclusion criteria within the Population, Intervention (in this case Exposure), Comparator and Outcome framework was as follows:

- The focus of the current review is to explore the RMA of males and females who were exposed to media containing images/scripts/lyrics that portray women in a specific way which is often degrading and objectifying. Although adolescents are exposed to media often, and their perceptions towards women and sexual abuse might be affected by them (Ward, 2005), for the purpose of this review it was deemed necessary to exclude studies that explore this area, as adolescents and adults are two distinguishable groups (Steinberg, Cauffman, Woolard, Graham & Banich, 2009). Thus, by including studies that explored RMA of adolescents exposed to media would act as a possible confounding factor.

- As indicated above, the Oxford Dictionary defines media as "*The main means of mass communication (television, radio, and newspapers) regarded collectively*" (The Oxford Dictionary webpage, 2014). The types of media that were explored for the purpose of this review include newspapers articles/headlines, TV shows, films, music videos, video games, books and advertisements.

- To assess whether specific material contained in particular types of media has an impact on RMA of individuals, the perceptions of participants exposed to media containing rape myths needed to be compared with the perceptions of individuals exposed to the same type of media, however containing neutral themes. For example, a study fulfilling these criteria should compare exposure to one type of media, such as newspaper headlines containing rape myths and exposure to neutral newspaper headlines.

- To measure the outcome, which is the RMA of participants, studies had to use a valid and reliable measure such as the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Payne et al., 1999), the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Burt, 1980) or the Acceptance of Modern Myths About

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Sexual Aggression (AMMSA) scale (Gerger et al., 2007). In case the researchers chose to use their own scale, they could construct their own measure or could adapt an already validated measure, but they should mention their scale's reliability and salient psychometric properties.

- To reduce the likelihood of Allocation Bias, the studies should use random allocation to produce comparison groups that are balanced at baseline for known confounding factors. Hence, Randomised Controlled Trials was considered to be the most appropriate study design for the purposes of this review.

- Due to the large amount of studies identified in the initial searches of the databases, it was deemed necessary to include only studies conducted in USA, Canada, UK, Australia and New Zealand, as the majority of the studies exploring this area have been conducted in these countries (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010).

Following the exclusion of duplicates, the Inclusion Criteria were applied to the 1108 remaining articles and 1061 articles were excluded based on titles or abstracts. Where a decision could not be made based on the title or the abstract, the full article was retrieved (Appendix B). Following the comprehensive assessment of the PICO framework, 11 articles remained as potentially appropriate for inclusion in the review. Figure 2 provides an account of the data selection process.

Quality Assessment

In order to limit bias in conducting the systematic review, achieve further insight into potential comparisons and guide the interpretations of findings, a quality assessment of the final studies was conducted in May 2016. The factors that warrant quality assessment are those related to specific design characteristics that affect interpretation of results, the validity of the final set of studies and the applicability of the outcomes (Higgins & Green, 2006).

According to Moher, Jadad, Nichol, Penman, Tugwell and Walsh (1995), in the context of a systematic review, the validity of a study is the extent to which its design and conduct are likely to prevent systematic errors or bias. The variation in validity can explain variation in the results of the studies included in a systematic review. Consequently, it is crucial for a review to systematically complete critical appraisal of the studies even if there is no variability in either the validity or results of the included studies, in order to ascertain the most "rigorous" studies to be analysed (Detsky, Naylor, O'Rourke, McGreer & L'Abbe, 1992). The external validity of the studies relates to the key components of the formulated questions and hypotheses. Hence, it is dependent upon the studies that were selected for the review, and on how the people, exposure and outcomes of interest were defined by the authors of these studies. As a result, validity of the included studies can be considered as one of the critical factors that affect the interpretation of the final outcomes (Higgins & Green, 2006).

The quality of studies in this review was assessed by using an adapted form that combined elements from the Quality Assessment Tool for Quantitative Studies (Effective Public Health Practice project, 1998) and the Critical Assessment Skills Programme (CASP, Public Health Resource Unit, 2006), as neither tool was entirely relevant to the selected studies. The final adapted version (Appendix C) included two screening questions to help the assessor determine whether it was worthwhile to continue assessing the study. The adapted version also

included nine detailed questions addressing methodological issues and potential biases that could affect the "quality" of the studies: selection bias, study design, blinding, confounders, data collection methods, analyses and outcomes/results.

Quality was rated according to the extent to which each of the criteria in the adapted tool was fulfilled (2 = Fully met criteria, 1 = partially met criteria; 0 = did not meet criteria/ study does not include adequate information to rate the item). The global rating was obtained by adding the scores on each item together. A higher score indicated a better quality paper, with a maximum score of 20 that could be achieved. For case of comparisons, the scores of each study were subsequently converted to percentages. The final eleven articles that fulfilled the inclusion criteria were assessed using the adapted tool. To ensure the consistency of rating, a second assessor who is a postgraduate psychology student and has experience of critical appraisal of research evidence rated three randomly selected studies. The inter-rater reliability was analysed using the Kappa Measure of Agreement. The reliability co-efficient was found to be K = .74 ($p < .05$), which represents good agreement (Peat, 2001). All studies reviewed during this stage were included in the review, as all the studies scored 80% or higher on the Quality Assessment tool.

Data Extraction

A data extraction form was used (Appendix D) in order to collect relevant information from the eleven studies and provide an overview of their quality and objectives. The information extracted included: authors and year of publication, characteristics of participants (i.e. size of sample, gender of participants, size of each group, mean age and type of

population), type of media used as a dependent variable in the study, measure used to measure

RMA and outcomes of the study (see Table 2 for an overview).

Number of Studies Identified	
ASSIA	N= 964
PsycINFO	N= 204
Web of Science	N= 203
SCOPUS	N= 73
Hand-search references	N= 42
Google Scholar	N= 23
Articles from experts	N= 1
Total	N= 1510

Narrow down document type (to include peer reviewed journal articles) (n = 24)
N = 1486

Duplicates (n = 378)
N = 1108

Excluded based on titles (n = 874)
N = 234

Excluded based on abstracts (n = 187)
N = 47

Excluded based on Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria (n = 36)
N = 11

Excluded based on Quality Assessment
N = 0

FINAL STUDIES INCLUDED
N = 11

Figure 2. *Data Selection Process*

Table 2. *Quality Assessment scores for final 11 studies included in the review*

STUDY Criteria	Beck et al. (2012)	Franiuk et al. (2008a)	Harris et al. (2016)	Kalof (1999)	Kistler & Lee (2009)	Lanis & Covell (1995)	Lee et al. (2011)	Malamuth & Check (1981)	Vance, Sutter, Perrin & Heesaker (2015)	Weisz & Earls (1995)	Wilson, Linz, Donnerstein & Stipp (1992)
Selection Bias (total)	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
Study Design	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Blinding	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Confounders	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Data Collection Methods (total)	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
Analyses	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
Outcomes (total)	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4
Total Quality Score	17	17	16	17	17	17	17	17	17	17	18
Quality Rating (%)	Strong (85%)	Strong (85%)	Strong (80%)	Strong (85%)	Strong (85%)	Strong (85%)	Strong (85%)	Strong (85%)	Strong (85%)	Strong (85%)	Strong (90%)

Data Synthesis

Table 3 summarizes the population, types of media used in the study, the RMA measure used to examine the participants' RMA following their exposure to a type of media and the overall outcomes of the study (including comparisons between the experimental and the control groups, as well as comparisons between males and females who participated in the study). There was heterogeneity between studies regarding the types of media used and the questionnaires that measured RMA. As a result, the studies were not directly comparable and the data could not be synthesized in a quantitative manner. The data was examined in a qualitative manner, using a narrative approach, to explore the outcomes and outline conclusions.

Population

The size of samples in the eleven final studies included in this review ranged from 44 (Kalof, 1999) to 1038 (Wilson et al., 1992). In five of the studies, the size of the sample ranged from 100 to 200 participants (Beck et al., 2012; Franiuk et al., 2008a; Kistler & Lee, 2009; Lee et al., 2011; Weisz & Earls, 1995). Only two studies (Kalof, 1999; Lanis & Covell, 1995) had less than 100 participants. Only one study (Wilson et al., 1992) had more than 500 participants (i.e. n=1038). The size of the total sample across all studies was 3153 (Mean = 286.67, SD = 276.06). In accordance with the inclusion criteria, all the final studies used adult populations. Of the total sample (n = 3153), 59.34% were females (n = 1871) and 40.66% (n = 1282) were males. All of the studies compared females' and males' RMA, as per the inclusion criteria.

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Table 3. *Data Summary of 11 final studies*

Authors and Year of Study (*Assessed Quality Rating*)	Population				Outcomes	
	Size of relevant sample (Males and Females)	Type of population	Type of Media (comparisons)	Measure(s) of RMA used	RQ1: Relationship between media and RMA	RQ2: Gender differences
Beck et al. (2012) (*85%*)	Total N = 141 (Males = 55) (Females= 86)	Undergraduate students	Video Games (2 conditions: a) violent video game b) neutral video game)	Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale – short form (Payne et al., 1999)	- The RMA of male participants in experimental condition increased - No significant increase in RMA of females	- Post-test, male participants had significantly higher RMA scores compared to female participants.
Franiuk et al. (2008a) (*85%*)	Total N = 154 (Males = 76) (Females= 78)	Undergraduate students	News headlines (4 conditions: a) Kobe Bryant case headlines with rape myths b) myth-endorsing headlines with no Bryant-identifying information c) headlines about sexual assault with no rape myths d) headlines unrelated to rape	Attitudes Towards Rape scale (Hinck & Thomas, 1999). (Participants also rated alleged perpetrators'– i.e. Kobe Bryant's perceived guilt)	- Male participants exposed to myth-endorsing headlines were less likely to think the accused individual was guilty than those exposed to non-myth headlines. - These individuals were more likely to hold rape supportive beliefs than those exposed to non-myth headlines.	- Male participants who were exposed to myth-endorsing headlines were more likely to hold rape-supportive beliefs than were females exposed to myth-endorsing headlines. - Overall, male participants were more likely than females to express rape supportive attitudes.

Harris et al. (2016) *(85%)*	Total N = 481 (Males = 241) (Females = 240)	Participants from general population	Erotic story from a popular book (4 conditions: a) story describing a man dominating a woman b) story describing a woman dominating a man c) no dominance story d) control story)	Abbreviated rape scale adapted from Costin's (1985) scale.	- Male participants who read the male dominance story were significantly higher in RMA than males who read the no dominance or the control story - No significant differences in RMA for women in all 4 conditions.	- Males who read the male dominance story scored significantly higher in RMA than women in male dominance and female dominance conditions.
Kalof (1999) *(85%)*	Total N= 44 (Males = 23) (Females = 21)	Undergraduate students	Music Video (2 conditions: a) music video that contained stereotyped images of gender and sexuality b) music video excluding all stereotypes)	Modified versions of Burt's (1980) scales: - Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Subscale - Sex Role Stereotyping Subscale - Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Subscale - Rape Myth Acceptance Subscale.	- Participants in experimental condition scored higher in adversarial sexual beliefs subscale than control group. - No effect found in the other three subscales.	- Females in experimental group had a greater acceptance of interpersonal violence than females in control group and males in both groups. - Males, in both conditions, scored higher than females in the other three subscales.
Kistler & Lee (2009) *(85%)*	Total N = 195 (Males = 59) (Females = 136)	Undergraduate students	Hip-hop music videos (3 conditions: a) "highly sexual" videos b) "low sexual videos"	Adapted RMAS (Burt, 1980)	- Males who watched the highly sexual videos exhibited a higher level of RMA than males in the low	- No significant differences found between males and females in all conditions.

			c) control – did not watch any videos)		sexual video condition. - No significant condition effect among female participants.	
Lanis & Covell (1995) *(85%)*	Total N = 90 (Males = 45) (Females= 45)	Undergraduate students	Advertisements (images – 3 conditions: a) 10 adverts in which women were depicted as sex objects – Group A b) 10 adverts in which women were depicted in progressive roles – Group B c) 10 product oriented adverts, with no human figures – Group C)	Sexual Attitude Survey (Burt, 1980).	- Males in group A were more likely to evidence increased sex role stereotypic and rape myth beliefs and more likely to be accepting of interpersonal violence than males in groups B and C - Females in groups A and B scored lower on the SAS than females in control group C - Exposure to progressive adverts (condition B) did not have any impact on participants' attitudes.	- Males in group A were more likely to evidence increased sex role stereotypic and rape myth beliefs and more likely to be accepting of interpersonal violence than Females in all three conditions.
Lee et al. (2011) *(85%)*	Total N = 176 (Males = 80) (Females = 96)	Undergraduate students	Crime television show (3 conditions/ groups: a) clips depicting sex violence b) clips depicting physical violence	Adapted RMAS (Burt, 1980)	- Participants in Groups 1 and 3 scored significantly lower on the RMAS than participants in Group 2.	- Overall, male participants had higher RMA scores than female participants.

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			c) control: clips with no violence)			
Malamuth & Check (1981) *(85%)*	Total N= 271 (Males = 114) (Females = 157)	Undergraduate psychology students	Mainstream Films (2 conditions: a) experimental condition: exposure to 2 films that portray violence against women as having positive consequences and normalize it b) control condition: exposure to neutral films.)	3 scales from Sexual Attitude Survey (Burt, 1980): a) Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence (AIV) b) Rape Myths Acceptance Scale (RMA). c) Adversarial Sexual Beliefs scale (ASB).	- Male participants in experimental condition scored higher than males in control group in AIV scale. - Similar tendency found in acceptance of rape myths, however it was not statistically significant.	- In all of the conditions males were more accepting of interpersonal violence, rape myths and adversarial sexual relations than females.
Vance et al. (2015) *(85%)*	Total N = 380 (Males = 88) (Females = 282) ("Other" = 10)	Undergraduate students	Advertisements (3 conditions: a) "sex objectification of women" b) "women as objects" c) control – neutral adverts)	RMAS (Burt, 1980)	- No significant differences in RMAS for all three groups.	- Male participants scored significantly higher on RMAS than women in all conditions.
Weisz & Earls (1995) *(85%)*	Total N= 193 (Males = 87) (Females = 106)	Undergraduate students	Mainstream Films (4 conditions: a) sexual aggression against a male b) sexual aggression against a female c) physical aggression d) neutral film with no explicit scenes of	a) Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence (AIV, Burt, 1980) b) Rape Myths Acceptance Scale (RMA, Burt, 1980). c) A 23-item rape trial questionnaire	- Males who viewed sexual violence against either a man or a woman obtained higher scores on AIV and RMA scales than males in the other two groups.	- In general, compared to females, males were more accepting of interpersonal violence and rape myths, less sympathetic towards the rape victim, less likely to judge the defendant

			physical or sexual aggression.)	developed by Linz, Donnerstein and Penrod (1988).	- Females were not affected by any film type.	as guilty and generally less empathic. - Males exposed to either film depicting sexual violence against a male or a female were significantly more accepting of interpersonal violence than females who viewed any film.
Wilson et al. (1992) (*90%*)	Total N = 1038 (Males = 414) (Females= 624)	Adults from four geographic regions of USA.	Mainstream Movie (2 conditions: a) Group A watched a mainstream movie that include a date rape situation b) Group B did not watch the movie).	Adapted scale from Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Burt, 1980) and Rape Empathy Scale (Deitz, Blackwell, Daley & Bentley, 1982).	- Exposure to the movie caused viewers to perceive the problem of date rape as more serious and to more strongly agree that the legal system is biased against women in rape cases.	-Females of Group A were less likely to blame the woman in a date rape situation, more likely to perceive date rape as wrongful coercion and more likely to be concerned about the societal problems related to date rape in comparison to male viewers.

The majority of the studies (n = 8) were conducted in USA, whereas three studies were undertaken in Canada (Lanis & Covell, 1995; Malamuth & Check, 1981; Weisz & Earls, 1995). Nine studies used a student sample and two studies used a non-student sample recruited either online via Amazon Mechanical Turk (Harris et al., 2016) or from random selection of telephone numbers from lists of cable subscribers of four geographic US regions (Wilson et al., 1992). Regarding the ethnicity of the participants, in five studies, the sample was predominantly White (Beck et al., 2012; Franiuk et al., 2008a; Kistler & Lee, 2009; Lee et al., 2011; Vance et al., 2015). In two studies (Kalof, 1999; Lanis &Covell, 1995) all the participants who completed the study were of White ethnicity. Four studies did not include any information relating to the participants' ethnicity (Harris et al., 2016; Malamuth & Check, 1981; Weisz & Earls, 1995; Wilson et al., 1992).

Types of Media

Seven forms of media were used in the current review as means of exploring whether the concept of "media" has an impact on individuals' acceptance of rape myths. A variety of different types allows for a more generalised conclusion. However, it should be noted that the list is not inclusive of all the existing media as no studies included in this review used songs, magazine articles or full newspaper articles.

Three studies used mainstream films that contained sexual violence against women and/or scenes that were degrading or objectifying women (Malamuth & Check, 1981; Weisz & Earls, 1995; Wilson et al., 1992). Two studies (Kalof, 1999; Kistler & Lee, 2009) used mainstream music videos that contained sexualised scenes of women. Two studies used advertisements: Lanis and

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Covell (1995) used advertisements where women were depicted as sex objects and Vance et al. (2015) used adverts depicting either sexualised images of women or women as objects.

One study (Beck et al., 2012) used a popular video game (i.e. the Grand Theft Auto, GTA) which portrays women as sex objects and violence appears as a normal behaviour and reaction in order to win the game. One study used stories/ parts of a popular book (i.e. "Fifty Shades of Grey") and one study used clips from a popular TV crime drama (i.e. the Law & Order: SVU). Finally, one study (Franiuk et al., 2008a) used news headlines from a famous case of early 2000's (i.e. the Kobe Bryant case) and manipulated the amount of rape myths included in the headlines that each group of participants read.

Measures of Rape Myth Acceptance

There was variability in the type of RMA measures used within the studies examined. One study (Beck et al., 2012) used the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance scale – short form (Payne et al. 1999). Lanis and Covell (1995) used all the four subscales from Burt's (1980) Sexual Attitudes Survey (SAS), whereas Kalof (1999) used modified versions of these subscales. Kistler and Lee (2009) and Lee et al. (2011) used an adapted version of Burt's Rape Myths Acceptance Scale (RMAS), whereas Vance et al. (2015) used the original 19-item version of this scale. Wilson et al. (1992) used an adapted version of the RMAS and the Rape Empathy Scale (Deitz et al., 1982).

Malamuth and Check (1981) used three out of four of subscales contained in the SAS: a) Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence (AIV), b) Rape Myths Acceptance Scale (RMAS) and c)

Adversarial Sexual Beliefs scale (ASB). Weisz and Earls (1995) used two out of four of the subscales: a) Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence (AIV) and b) Rape Myths Acceptance Scale (RMAS), alongside a 23-item rape trial questionnaire developed by Linz et al. (1988). Harries et al. (2016) used an Abbreviated scale adapted from Costin's R-Scale (Costin, 1985). Franiuk et al. (2008a) constructed a seven-point Likert scale to measure participants' level of perceived guilt of the alleged perpetrator of the illustrated case. These researchers also used the Attitudes Towards Rape scale (Hinck & Thomas, 1999).

Whilst all these scales measured RMA, due to the different measures used, they cannot be directly comparable. Hence, the aforementioned qualitative approach to analysis is suitable.

Effects of Media on RMA and Gender Differences

As mentioned above, all the studies included in this review have explored participants' RMA following their exposure to different types of media and compared their responses to the attitudes of control groups. In addition, all the studies have conducted further analyses, comparing the responses of male participants with the responses of female participants. An analysis of the results for each type of media explored in the current review is provided below, in order to examine the two Research Questions.

Video Games

Beck et al. (2012) conducted the first study to use actual video game playing in order to explore how the objectification of women and violence against women, as portrayed in video games, influence rape-supportive beliefs. The video game industry has significantly grown during the recent years and many games allow gamers to engage in virtual violence against women. These games often include images of virtual women and portray them as sex objects. Recent research has explored the link between engaging in video games playing and RMA and found that some video games can influence attitudes towards sexual harassment (e.g. Dill, Brown & Collins, 2008).

These researchers assigned the participants of their sample to one of four groups. Participants in the experimental group were randomly assigned to one of two subgroups: a group received a pre-test, treatment, and a post-test whereas the other subgroup did not receive pre-test. In the control group, one subgroup received a pre-test, a neutral stimuli and a post-test, and the other subgroup received the neutral stimuli and post-test only. Beck et al. (2012) controlled for testing effects as they examined their variables using a Solomon four-group design.

They found that the depiction of violence and sexist portrayal of women in video games did not, collectively, influence RMA of participants. In addition, the researchers found that the degree of exposure to violent video games (which include violence against women) did not increase negative attitudes towards women. However, when they explored gender differences on RMA in the pre-test conditions they found no significant differences between the male and female participants of the two groups. They also compared the scores of males who completed both pre- and post-tests of the experimental condition and found a significance increase in RMA; however they did not find a significant result when they conducted the same analysis for female participants.

Finally, they explored gender differences in post-test rape myth scores and found that male participants had significantly higher rape myth scores than female participants.

News Headlines

Franiuk et al. (2008a) conducted two studies to examine the prevalence and effects of rape beliefs in newspaper headlines. In the first study, they investigated 555 online news headlines from US media relating to the 2003-2004 Kobe Bryant sexual assault case. As they found, 10% of the news headlines contained at least one rape supporting belief. In the second study, the purpose was to assess the impact of these headlines on individuals' perceptions of Bryant's guilt, as well as to measure their attitudes towards sexual assault victims more generally. It should be noted that the study was conducted after the charges against Bryant had been dropped. The authors used news headlines, instead of corresponding articles, because people are more likely to read the headlines than the articles (Dor, 2003).

The participants (N = 154) were randomly assigned to four groups: Group A was exposed to actual Bryant case headlines that endorsed rape myths, Group B was exposed to similar headlines that endorsed rape supportive beliefs but without Bryant-identifying information, Group C read headlines about this case that did not include rape myths and Group D (control group) read headlines unrelated to rape. Subsequent to their exposure to the headlines, participants' RMA was measured with the 27-item Attitudes Towards Rape (ATR) scale (Hinck & Thomas, 1999) and participants were asked to rate the extent to which they attributed guilt to five high-profile figures, including Kobe Bryant, who had allegedly committed crimes.

The authors found that male participants in Groups A and B were less likely to attribute guilt to the accused perpetrator than male participants in Groups C and D and female participants in Groups A and B. In addition, male participants of Groups A and B were more likely to express rape supportive beliefs than the participants exposed to non-endorsing myth headlines. Generally, male participants were more likely than female participants to endorse rape supportive beliefs. Further, only males were affected by the priming.

Literature

Harris et al. (2016) conducted the first study to investigate the effects of reading erotica material by manipulating the submission/ dominance roles of males and females and exploring gender differences in RMA. They utilized three erotic stories from a popular mainstream book (i.e. "Fifty Shades of Grey") to examine the effects of reading submission- and dominance-themed erotica on attitudes towards rape. The participants (N = 481) were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: a) story depicting male dominance (over a female), b) story describing female dominance (over a male), c) story describing no dominance between the sexual partners and d) a control, non-erotic story.

The results showed a significant interaction between gender and condition on the outcome measures that the authors used. When they explored this further, the authors found that male participants in the first group scored significantly higher in the RMA scale than males who participated in the third or fourth group. The authors found no other significant differences between story conditions for male participants. Also, the authors did not find any significant

differences in the RMA scale between the female participants in each of the four conditions. When examining gender differences, the authors found that the male participants who read the male dominance story scored significantly higher in the RMA scale than female participants who read the male and female dominance stories. Similar to the news headlines finding, overall, male participants scored higher than females in all four conditions. Only males seemed to be affected by priming in that it increased their RMA scores.

Music Videos

Kalof (1999) used gender-stereotyped music video imagery and examined participants' sexual attitudes. The control group viewed a video that excluded all sexual images. Following the exposure, Kalof (1999) used a 60-item questionnaire with randomly ordered statements. Among these statements, the researcher included 26 items from Burt's (1980) Sexual Attitudes Survey. The modified scale included 7 items measuring RMA, 5 items measuring adversarial sexual beliefs, 10 items measuring gender-role stereotyping and 4 items measuring acceptance of interpersonal violence. An overall score of these subscales was obtained to measure sexual attitudes of the participants.

As Kalof (1999) found, male participants in both conditions scored higher than women in RMA, adversarial sex beliefs and gender role stereotyping. In addition, the results indicated that participants in the experimental condition scored higher on the Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale than participants in the control group. However, the researcher found no significant difference between the two groups for the other three subscales, including the RMA.

In a recent study, Kistler and Lee (2009) explored the short-term effects of exposure to popular hip-hop music videos with varying degrees of sexual imagery on participants' RMA. Their sample consisted of undergraduate students (N = 195) who were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: a) viewing five "highly sexual" videos, b) viewing five "low sexual" videos or c) not viewing any videos but completed the questionnaires. The researchers found that male participants who watched the "highly sexual" videos scored higher on the Adapted RMAS (Burt, 1980) than male participants in the "low sexual" video condition. However, they did not find any condition effect among female participants and no significant differences between male and female participants in all three conditions. Overall, they state that their models were all primarily driven by initial gender attitudes, males generally scoring higher than females. Only males were primed by the stimuli, showing higher RMA in the first condition.

Advertisements

In order to study the impact of advertisements on the participants' attitudes towards rape, Lanis and Covell (1995) randomly assigned 90 participants to one of three advertisement conditions: 10 advertisements depicting a female as sex object, 10 advertisements depicting a female in a progressive role and 10 advertisements that were entirely product oriented and devoid of human figures. Hence, 30 participants were assigned in each condition. The advertisements in each of the three conditions were for similar products. Following exposure to the conditions, participants completed four scales from Burt's (1980) Sexual Attitudes Survey. The scales included the 9-item Sex Role Stereotyping Scale, the 6-item Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence scale, the 11-item Rape Myth Acceptance scale and the 9-item Adversarial Sexual Beliefs scale.

The researchers found that male participants who viewed the advertisements portraying women as sex objects were more likely to score higher in all scales in contrast to male participants in the other two groups and female participants in all conditions. In addition, they found that female participants who viewed the advertisements that portrayed women in progressive roles scored lower in all scales in contrast to females of Groups A and C. Female participants in Group A scored lower in RMA, in contrast to female participants of Group C. Overall, the researchers found that exposure to advertisements depicting women in progressive roles did not have a significant impact on participants' sexual attitudes. Males generally scored higher than females. Priming by showing women as sex objects effected males' scores in that they scored higher in RMA. Priming by showing women as progressive effected females' scores in that they scored lower in RMA.

More recently, Vance and colleagues (2015) conducted a study to explore two different types of advertisements on attitudes towards rape. The two types included images that sexually objectified women or images that portrayed women as non-sexual objects. They randomly assigned their participants (N = 380) into three groups: a) Group A viewed 5 images of advertisements where women were sexually objectified and 5 neutral images, b) Group B viewed 5 images of advertisements where women were presented as "objects" and 5 neutral images and c) Group C viewed neutral images of advertisements. The results indicate that viewing adverts depicting sexual objectification of women or women as objects did not increase RMA of participants. In terms of gender differences, they found that male participants scored significantly higher on the RMAS (Burt, 1980) in contrast to female participants, in all three conditions.

TV drama shows

According to Cucklanz (2000), prime-time TV crime dramas often include scenes that portray rape. Lee and colleagues (2011) conducted a study to investigate the effects of scenes from a popular prime-time programme (i.e. the "Law & Order: SVU) that included either sexual or physical violence against women on viewers' perceptions related to sexual violence including their RMA. Their sample (N = 176) consisted of undergraduate students, who were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: a) Group A watched clips depicting sexual violence, b) Group B watched clips with physical violence and c) Group C viewed clips with no violence.

Following this, the researchers used an adapted 5-item version of Burt's RMAS. Interestingly, they found that participants who watched the clips with physical violence scored significantly higher on the RMA scale than participants in the other two groups, showing an effect of priming. In relation to gender comparisons, the researchers found that male participants had higher RMA scores than females in all three conditions.

Films

Malamuth and Check (1981) recruited 271 students to examine the effects of exposure to films that portray sexual violence as having positive consequences (i.e. "Swept Away" and "The Getaway"). The participants were randomly assigned to two conditions: Group A viewed two films that included sexual violence scenes and Group B viewed two neutral films containing no violent scenes (i.e. "A Man and A Woman" and "Hooper"). An additional "untreated control group" of participants completed the questionnaires but did not view any of the films prior to the

administration (Group C). The films used for the experimental condition contained images of sexual violence followed by positive consequences. Within a week following the exposure to the second film in each condition, the researchers administered three subscales from Burt's (1980) Sexual Attitude Survey scale: a) the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence, b) the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS) and c) Adversarial Sexual Beliefs scale.

The researchers found that male participants in Group A evidenced greater acceptance of interpersonal violence against women, in contrast to males of Group B and Group C. A similar tendency was found on acceptance of rape myths; however, this did not reach statistical significance. Female participants of Group A showed lower acceptance of interpersonal violence and rape myths than females in Groups B and C. However, these results did not reach statistical significance. Overall, male participants scored higher than females in all three subscales.

Similar to Malamuth and Check (1981), Weisz and Earls (1995) examined the effects of exposure to filmed sexual violence on RMA. They randomly assigned 193 university students to view one of four mainstream films: a) Group A viewed a film containing sexual aggression against a male (i.e. "Deliverance"), b) Group B viewed a film containing sexual aggression against a female (i.e. "Straw Dogs"), c) Group C viewed a film containing physical aggression (i.e. "Die Hard 2") and d) Group D viewed a film containing no explicit scenes of sexual or physical aggression (i.e. "Days of Thunder"). Subsequent to their exposure to the films, all participants were administered the following measures: the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence and Rape Myth Acceptance scales from Burt's (1980) Sexual Attitudes Survey and the Attraction to Sexual Aggression scale (Malamuth, 1989). Following this, all participants viewed a 54-minute re-

enactment of a rape trial and completed a 23-item rape trial questionnaire developed by Linz et al. (1988) to measure the participants' judgments about the defendant and the alleged rape victim in the mock trial.

The results indicate that overall, males compared to females were more accepting of interpersonal violence and rape myths, less sympathetic towards the rape victim, less likely to judge the defendant as guilty and generally less empathic. More specifically, male participants of Groups A and B (i.e. sexual violence against a male or a female) scored higher on Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence than females in any condition. In addition, male participants of Group A were least sympathetic towards the rape victim when compared to females of Groups A, B and D (sexual aggression and neutral content) and males of Group C (physical aggression). In contrast to female participants of Groups A, B and D, male participants of Groups A and D were significantly less likely to convict the perpetrator in the mock trial.

Male participants of Groups A and B were more accepting of interpersonal violence and less sympathetic towards the victim of rape, in contrast to female participants of Groups A and B and males and females of Groups C and D. Overall, male participants of Groups A and B held more negative attitudes towards women and scored higher in RMA and AIV scales. Overall, female participants' attitudes towards rape were not affected by any film type. Males scored higher than females on all measures. Only males showed some priming effects of the videos.

Finally, Wilson et al. (1992) conducted a field experiment to investigate the impact of a movie about acquaintance rape (i.e. "She Said No") on RMA. The sample of the study consisted

of 1038 subjects of a variety of ages and socioeconomic statuses. The researchers contacted the participants using a survey research organization and asked them to watch the movie. Half of the participants watched the movie three days before the actual network broadcast of it.   Trained interviewers contacted all the participants on the next night and asked them some general questions relating to the film, including a set of questions dealing with beliefs towards rape. The questions were adapted from RMAS (Burt, 1980) and Rape Empathy Scale (Deitz et al., 1982).

Overall, the researchers found that the movie increased awareness of date rape as a social problem across all participants' groups. The majority of participants indicated that they "strongly agreed" with the view that the legal system is biased against women in rape cases. The researchers also found that female participants were less likely to blame the woman in a date rape situation, more likely to perceive data rape as wrongful coercion and more likely to be concerned about the societal problems related to date rape, compared to male participants. In addition, the researchers found a three-way interaction between Exposure, Gender and Age Group. They explored this further using post-hoc interaction comparisons and concluded that the movie had a differential effect on males and females in the oldest group (50+ years). That is, females of this group who viewed the movie were significantly less likely to blame the woman than were females who did not watch the movie. In terms of older males, the authors found that the participants who viewed the movie tended to blame the women somewhat more than did male participants who did not see the movie. However, it should be noted that this result did not reach statistical significance.

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Discussion

This systematic review aimed to examine whether different types of media have an impact on individuals' perceptions relating to rape myth endorsement. Moreover, the current review aimed to explore gender differences in RMA following exposure to different types of media. This review identified a total of eleven studies based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The relationship of seven different types of media with RMA was explored in these studies, including news headlines, films, music videos, video games, advertisements, erotica book and television show. A summary of the main findings is presented below.

Does media have an impact on RMA?

The findings of this review indicate that currently there are mixed results in literature in terms of the impact of media on the attitudes of individuals in relation to rape and sexual violence. Some studies included in the current review found that participants who were exposed to a certain media stimuli endorsed significantly higher RMA than participants not exposed to the stimuli. However, this was only present among males. For example, Franiuk et al. (2008a) explored the impact of reading news headlines including rape supportive beliefs and found that this exposure increased male participants' RMA. In addition, these participants were less likely to attribute blame to the accused perpetrator of sexual assault cases.

Other studies that found similar results include Weisz and Earls' (1995) study, who found that male participants who watched films containing sexual violence held more negative attitudes

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towards women and scored higher in the RMA measure. Harris et al. (2016) found that male participants who read a story describing a male dominating a female scored significantly higher on the RMA scale. Consistent with these results, Kistler and Lee (2009) found that males exposed to "highly sexual" hip-hop videos were more likely to exhibit high levels of RMA in contrast to males exposed to "low sexual" videos. Beck et al.'s (2012) study was the only study that measured the RMA of participants both pre- and post-exposure to the experimental stimuli. They found that male participants' RMA was increased following exposure to a video game containing sexualised images and violence against a female, whereas they found no significant increase in the RMA of female participants.

The above studies found that male participants exposed to the experimental conditions scored significantly higher in RMA scales than male participants exposed to the control stimuli. Interestingly, all of the aforementioned studies found no significant condition effects among female participants, indicating that the media types used in these studies had no impact on females.

Other studies included in this review found different results. For example, Malamuth and Check (1981) found no significant differences in the RMA scores of male participants in the experimental and control conditions. Lee et al. (2011) found increased RMA in participants who viewed a clip containing physical violence. This result might support theories framing sexual assaults as a crime motivated by violence, rather than sex itself (Polaschek & Gannon, 2004). Lee et al. (2011) further argue that the exposure to a crime drama that frames rape within a criminal context may actually act as an educating method about sexual violence against women, and consequently debunk rape myths. This conclusion may help to explain the results of Wilson et

al.'s (1992) study, although this study was conducted almost 20 years prior to Lee et al.'s (2011) study. Wilson et al. (1992) found that the exposure of participants to a mainstream film depicting a date rape situation increased their awareness of this societal problem.

The results from Lanis and Covell's study (1995) indicate that advertisements depicting women as "sex objects" might increase male participants' RMA, whereas this exposure might decrease females' RMA. Perhaps the images used in the experimental conditions acted as raising the female participants' awareness of the sexual exploitation of women in the media, subsequently decreasing their acceptance for rape-supportive beliefs.

Finally, two studies found no influence of exposing participants to media types on RMA. Vance et al. (2015) used advertisements containing either images of women being sexual, forms of women depicting objects or neutral adverts, and found no significant differences in the RMAS for the three conditions. Kalof et al. (1999) exposed participants to two music videos, one containing stereotyped images of females' and males' sexuality and a music video containing no stereotyped images. These researchers found no differences in the RMA between the experimental and the control group.

Does media impact on males and females' RMA differently?

As seen above, the studies included in the current review provide mixed results in terms of the media impact on individuals' RMA. However, these studies provide more robust and consistent results when exploring gender differences in this context.

The majority of the studies found that male participants scored significantly higher on the RMA scales in comparison to female participants, suggesting preconceived ideas about RMA. The studies which had this finding include Beck et al.'s (2012) study which used video games, Franiuk et al. (2008a) who used news headlines, Kalof (1999) who used music videos, Wilson et al. (1992) who used a mainstream movie, Lee et al. (2011) who utilized a crime drama show, Malamuth and Check (1981) who used mainstream films, and Vance et al. (2015) who used advertisements. Consistent with these results, Weisz and Earls (1995) who used mainstream films as stimuli, found that male participants in all four conditions were more accepting of rape myths and interpersonal violence than were female participants. They also found that male participants exposed to films containing sexual violence against either a male or a female were significantly more accepting of interpersonal violence than females in all four conditions.

Only two studies found that male participants in experimental conditions (and not in both experimental and control conditions) scored higher on the RMA scales than female participants. The first study, conducted by Lanis and Covell (1995), used advertisements and found that only male participants who viewed images of women depicted as sex objects scored significantly higher in the RMA scale than females in all three conditions. The second study, conducted by Harris et al. (2016), used erotic stories from a popular book. These authors found that male participants who read the "male dominance" story scored higher on the RMA scale than females who read either the male or the female dominance stories. These results suggest priming is only effective for males.

These results are consistent with previous research indicating that males are generally more accepting of rape myths than women (Newcombe, van den Eynde, Hafner & Jolly, 2008; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010 for a review). In order to explain the differences between males' and females' perceptions with respect to the effect of exposure to sexual violence or degrading images of women in media, various explanations have been offered. Malamuth and Check (1981) suggested a possible "attitude polarization" effect (Lord, Ross & Lepper, 1979), which occurs when people with differing views on a specific issue are presented with "mixed data", such that each side focuses on the information that is consistent with their own views. This approach might also explain why some results indicate that male participants' perceptions did not change following their exposure to the media stimuli (e.g. Vance et al., 2015). Another explanation is the "reactance phenomenon" (Heilman, 1976), which suggests that females identify with victims of violence portrayed in media; hence they are less likely to be affected by exposure or be affected in the opposite direction.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The current review is the first review exploring whether various types of media have an impact on individuals' acceptance of rape myths and investigating gender differences. All the studies included in the review used randomised control trials as their study design, hence reducing potential biases relating to allocation and confounding variables.

In addition, the eleven studies used in this review were conducted throughout more than three decades – from 1981 to 2016 – hence exploring generation variability. However, this could

also be regarded as a limitation of the review, as different generations have diverse ways of thinking and this may have an impact on overall interpretation of the results. Hence, the results cannot be interpreted as a whole, due to the fact that the concepts of "rape" of "rape myths" have varied from 1980s to 2000s (Gerger et al., 2007). There was a dearth of rape prevention and educational programmes in the 1980s, when rape myths started gaining more literature focus. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that individuals completing studies in the 1980s were less aware of the prevalence and underreporting of rape, as well as of beliefs that supported this societal problem.

Additionally, the current review included articles that examined a range of different types of media (i.e. films, music videos, video games, advertisements, news headlines, erotica and crime drama) and their impact on individuals' RMA. Hence, it allows for generalisability of the conclusions to other types of media.

Limitations arise due to the student sample utilised in the majority of the studies (n = 9), which limits the generalizability to the general population. Further, some studies used a small sample size. Moreover, only studies available in English were included in the current review, and the majority of the studies utilised White populations to conduct the experiments. This may impact on the generalizability of the findings to non-White populations, and suggests a need for further research in this area.

Although the majority of the included studies took precautions to blind participants to the actual purpose of the study, it is possible that some responses might have been provided in a

socially desirable manner. It is likely that all of these factors may have had some impact on the results of each study and therefore, the outcome and recommendations drawn from these should be considered with caution.

Lastly, whilst some priming effects were observed in some of the studies, it is not possible to suggest that these would result in enduring beliefs or actual sexual violence of the participants.

Methodological Considerations and Future Research

Comprehensive and inclusive search strategies were utilised in this review alongside effective quality assessment tools. These enabled the researcher to highlight specifically relevant information, such as sampling procedures, recruiting methods, RMA measures and analyses of results. The studies included in the current review were considered to be methodologically robust, as indicated by the quality assessment process. Furthermore, only peer-reviewed articles were included in the final set of articles, which may have introduced publication bias; however, this has been recognised as a possibility and the author was aware of this throughout the process. It should be noted that the heterogeneity of statistical analyses used in the included studies limited the ability to report overall statistical significance levels. However, a systematic and qualitative approach minimised the problems associated with this.

Moreover, the main questionnaire used in the studies to measure the participants' RMA was the Sexual Attitudes Survey (Burt, 1980), or some of its subscales, with the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale being the most frequently used. The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance scale

(Payne et al., 1999) was used in one study. Gerger et al. (2007) criticised these traditional measures of RMA; they argued that participants' answers are often close to the low endpoint of the scales, thus the RMA distributions are often positively skewed. Süssenbach and Bohner (2011) added that the RMAS (Burt, 1980) contains complicated terms and concepts that can cause ambiguity for the respondent. Future research could utilize questionnaires with subtler item-wording (e.g. the AMMSA, Gerger et al., 2007) to measure the RMA of participants following exposure to media stimuli.

Eight of the studies included in the current review were conducted in USA, whereas three studies were conducted in Canada. This highlights the need for future research to be conducted in the UK, in order to explore media's impact on individuals' rape supporting beliefs. In addition, future research targeting the effects of media on RMA should pay closer attention to the actual manipulation, in that questionnaires should be administered before and after the stimuli so that other confounding factors can be eliminated. This could be done by presenting participants with a distractor task after completing the questionnaire for the first time (e.g. a logical reasoning task) and presenting them with a Social Desirability Scale (Reynolds, 1982) to ensure honesty in responding.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Practice

In conclusion, this systematic review provides mixed results in terms of whether media impact on individuals' rape-supportive beliefs. Generally, males scored higher than females on RMA, regardless of manipulation. Only males were primed by manipulations showing women in

a sexual or violent scenario, resulting in an increased score on RMA. Conversely, females were rarely found to be primed but if this did occur, it had the opposite effect (i.e. a decrease in RMA score). These findings support the significance of media in perpetuating rape supporting beliefs in men. Furthermore, the results highlight media's significance in promoting awareness of the rape concept, as two studies (Lee et al., 2011; Wilson et al., 1992) showed that educational TV programmes can increase people's awareness and understanding of rape as a serious societal problem and the implications of rape myths within the criminal context.

Subsequently, media has the power to positively influence public opinion in a manner that encourages victims to come forward and report rape. Greer (2003) argued that since 1985 the "stranger equals danger" terminology has been reduced in female rape newspaper articles, which may have increased the reporting rate of acquaintance rape to the police (Marhia, 2008). Hence, it is important that media portray rape in a representative light and promote research evidence in order to educate the public accordingly about this societal problem.

CHAPTER 3

A PSYCHOMETRIC CRITIQUE OF THE ACCEPTANCE OF MODERN MYTHS

ABOUT SEXUAL AGGRESSION SCALE

Abstract

The aim of this chapter was to evaluate the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression (AMMSA) Scale (Gerger et al., 2007). This scale is a recent measure used to evaluate individuals' beliefs in regard to sexual aggression. Due to numerous problems surrounding previous scales used to understand rape myth acceptance and sexual aggression, this scale is a novel attempt at a robust measure. The current chapter evaluated the scale's psychometric properties, including internal reliability, test-retest reliability, construct validity, convergent validity, discriminant validity, content validity, face validity, criterion validity, concurrent validity and predictive validity. Overall, it was found that the AMMSA scale can be considered "good" in that is has adequate psychometric properties. Limitations of the scale and scope for further improvements are explored.

Introduction

This review is an examination of the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression (AMMSA) Scale (Gerger et al., 2007) which is used to measure beliefs about sexual aggression. This tool will be evaluated with references to its specific properties as a psychometric tool and its research uses. To address these issues, a review of the literature was conducted to identify research papers that have utilized AMMSA, since its development in 2007. The references list of the articles was also hand-searched to identify additional research articles that have incorporated this tool in the list of measures used in their experimental designs. In addition, personal correspondence with researchers that have utilized this tool had taken place, in order to further discuss methodological considerations arising from the use of this tool (e.g. with Gerd Bohner and with Alexandra Hantzi). In the research papers that were identified the author ascertained the psychometric properties of this tool and a summary of this information is presented below. As a result, the findings reflect a thorough coverage of the literature in relation to the measurement of Rape Myth Acceptance (RMA).

German researcher Heike Gerger and her colleagues developed the AMMSA scale (Appendix I) as a tool to measure an individual's acceptance of modern myths regarding sexual aggression, which are broadly referred to in the literature as "rape myths" (Burt, 1980). According to Bohner (1998), rape myths are defined as "descriptive or prescriptive beliefs about sexual aggression (i.e. about its scope, causes, context, and consequences) that serve to deny, downplay or justify sexually aggressive behaviour that men commit against women" (p. 14). Gerger et al. (2007) chose this definition of "rape myths", amongst others (e.g. Burt, 1980; Lonsway &

Fitzgerald, 1994), as the foundation for the development of the AMMSA scale. The current

chapter will first present the rationale for the development of a new tool. This tool will then be

described. It will then be evaluated based on psychometric properties. Lastly, its limitations and

scope for further development will be highlighted.

Rationale for the development of AMMSA

Gerger et al. (2007) aimed to develop an understanding of the causes of sexually aggressive

behaviour by assessing the beliefs that have been empirically found to sustain and contribute to

the causation of sexual violence (Bohner, Reinhard, Rutz, Sturm, Kerschbaum & Effler, 1998;

Malamuth, 1986). In addition to beliefs about rape myths, the researchers incorporated beliefs

about other types of sexual aggression, including sexual assault and harassment. The focus of the

AMMSA scale is on sexual violence committed by men against women because this perpetrator-

victim context is the most prevalent form in research exploring sexual victimization (Krahé &

Scheinberger-Olwig, 2002).

As indicated above, Gerger et al. (2007) adopted Bohner's (1998) definition to define rape

myths, which states that "rape myths are descriptive or prescriptive beliefs about rape (i.e. about

its causes, context, consequences, perpetrators, victims, and their interaction) that serve to deny,

downplay or justify sexual violence that men commit against women" (Bohner et al., 1998, p. 14).

Eyssel and Bohner (2010) summarized the four general types of rape myths, as identified in

literature (Bohner et al., 1998; Burt, 1980; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). The first category

includes myths that blame the victim for the assault (e.g. "women provoke rape through their

appearance or behaviour"), and the second category relates to myths that express disbelief in claims of rape (e.g. "most charges of rape are unfounded"). The third group includes myths that serve to exonerate the perpetrator (e.g. "rape happens when a man's sex drive gets out of control"), and the fourth category relates to myths which suggest that only certain types of women are raped (e.g. "usually it is women who do things like hang out in bars and sleep around that are raped").

Overall, research has identified that the acceptance of rape myths affects the perception of blame attributed to the victim of the assault and the guilt of the perpetrator in lay persons as well as in criminal justice professionals (Jordan, 2008; Sleath & Bull, 2012). Further research findings similarly indicate that the more individuals believe in rape myths, the greater the responsibility and blame that they attribute to a victim of sexual violence, and the more they tend to exonerate the perpetrator of the offence (Pollard, 1992; Temkin & Krahé, 2008).

Problems with previous scales measuring Rape Myth Acceptance

The literature includes a number of measures which have been developed to assess constructs associated with rape myths, for example rape attitudes, rape knowledge, rape empathy and rape aversion (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). The majority of these tools are used to examine individuals' approval/agreement with a range of items that endorse rape myths, known as "rape myth acceptance" (RMA).

RMA has been considered as a multidimensional construct (Briere, Malamuth & Check, 1985; Burt, 1980). However, Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) point out that RMA measures vary

extensively in the dimensions of the "rape attitudes concept" that are emphasized or neglected. As a result, each researcher proposes their own list of items related to the concept, of which the origin is never made clear (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). As these authors summarised, the RMA literature lacks a clear articulation of the domain of the concept, the aspects of which it is composed, or the relationship of these facets and the items that associate them to the researchers' theoretical definition.

According to Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994), the majority of RMA measures lack content validity due to a variety of definitions of rape myths, which are inconsistent and unclear. Therefore, it is unclear which aspects of the RMA account for the relationships reported in research and the reasons for these relationships. The authors suggest that in order for adequate content validity to be attained, researchers must identify the domain of possible rape myths and develop a measure that samples systematically from that domain.

Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) point out another limitation of the majority of RMA scales; they assert that the wording of many items is problematic, both in relation to clarity and complexity. Many items are not written in a way that all respondents interpret in the same manner. Additionally, many scales contain items with more than one idea included (i.e. double-barrelled items), thus it is impossible to determine to which idea the respondent is attending (e.g. "being out alone at night is an acceptable practice for women and should never be linked to being the cause of rape" [Gilmartin – Zena, 1987]). In addition, other items are too specific to be a common rape myth or too complex to be reliable (e.g. "If a woman gets drunk at a party and has intercourse with a man she's just met there, she should be considered "fair game" to other males at the party who

want to have sex with her too, whether she want to or not" [Burt, 1980]). Other items appear

irrelevant to the construct of "rape myths" (e.g. "young girls – under 12 – cannot act seductively"

[Larsen & Long, 1988]).

Another problem with the wording that traditional measures use pertains to the fact that

many items include various colloquial phrases such as "asking for it", "fair game", etc. As

Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) note, such phrases mean different things to different individuals.

Ward (1988) notes that scales such as the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (RMAS, Burt, 1980) and

the Attitudes Towards Rape scale (ATR, Feild, 1978) include many colloquialisms which restrict

cross-cultural applicability.

Eyssel, Bohner and Siebler (2006) and Gerger et al. (2007) point out a few other flaws in

popular RMA measures, including the RMAS (Burt, 1980), the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance

(IRMA) scale (Payne et al., 1999) and the Costin's (1985) R scale. They criticize these tools

because "the participants' answers are often close to the low endpoint of the scale, thus producing

RMA distributions that are severely positively skewed, and this might affect the reliability of the

scale" (Gerger et al., 2007, p. 424). As Gerger et al. (2007) note, in studies aimed at exploring

RMA before and after an intervention, any beneficial effects of the intervention may be difficult

to demonstrate if the means of the target variable are already near the bottom end of the scale. The

researchers suggest that low means on self-reported RMA scales do not necessarily indicate low

endorsement of rape myths, but may reflect that participants are more aware of the politically

correct answers to the mostly obvious items used in these scales. Additionally, they suggest that

the content of common myths associated with sexual violence may have changed over time. Swim,

Aikin, Hall and Hunter (1995) suggest that racist beliefs and sexist beliefs have become subtle and covert and therefore research using sexism and racism scales that explore more subtle content areas generally supports using the concepts of modern racism and sexism (Swim et al., 1995).

Development of the AMMSA

Taking into consideration the above limitations and characteristics of the traditional RMA measures, Gerger and her colleagues (2007) aimed to develop a measure which uses subtler language to analyse classic rape myths, current gender stereotypes and sexual politics. The researchers began with a broad 60-item questionnaire in German, which covered the following categories: a) denial of the scope of the problem, b) antagonism towards victims' demands, c) lack of support for policies designed to help alleviate the effects of sexual violence, d) beliefs that male coercion forms a natural part of sexual relationships, and e) beliefs that exonerate male perpetrators by blaming the victim or the circumstances. Following this, they translated the items into English and conducted four studies in both languages to determine the scale's psychometric properties. The final scale, containing 30 items, was administered online to 848 international participants in order to check the two language versions for comparability in respect to their psychometric properties.

The authors conducted a number of analyses (including exploratory factor analysis, parallel analysis and computed congruence coefficients) which showed that the 30-item AMMSA scale may be viewed as measuring a unidimensional construct. This result is inconsistent with other authors who explored the conceptual basis of RMA and supported that it should be viewed as a

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multidimensional construct (Briere et al., 1985; Burt, 1980). The AMMSA has been translated to and validated in additional languages, including Spanish (by Megías et al., 2011) and Greek (by Hantzi et al., 2015).

Administration and Scoring

In order to complete the AMMSA scale, individuals are asked to read each of the 30 items and circle the item that best represents their opinion. Each item is scored on a 7-point Likert scale (from 1= completely disagree to 7= completely agree, with an option of 4= neutral opinion). The administration time takes approximately 15 minutes. To calculate the overall score, the assessors determine the mean across all item scores. There are no reverse scored items and scores range between 1 and 7. Thus, higher scores indicate higher levels of rape myth acceptance.

Psychometric Properties

Kline (1986) suggests that a good psychological test possesses certain characteristics, including at least interval level data, reliability, validity and appropriate norms. The AMMSA will now be discussed in relation to its psychometric properties.

According to Kline (1986), the ideal type of scale for psychological tests should be a ratio scale. Nunnally (1967) notes that "a ratio scale is an interval scale in which distances are stated with respect to a rational zero rather than with respect to, for example, the mean" (Nunnally, 1967, p.14). However, the AMMSA scale is measured at the interval level. As indicated above, the scores range from 1 to 7, and the differences between the points are equal. As Kline (1986)

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suggests, interval scales for psychological tests are acceptable for the purposes of completing statistical analyses for the treatment of data.

Reliability

Reliability refers to the extent to which a psychometric tool measures a construct accurately, consistently and with minimal error. Although the use of psychometric tools aims to increase the scientific basis of psychology and reduce the level of error, Groth-Marnat (2006) acknowledge that within every psychometric tool is some level of error. Pallant (2013) notes that internal consistency and test-retest reliability coefficients are frequently used to indicate a scale's reliability.

Internal Consistency

Internal consistency is a measure of reliability of different items intended to measure the same characteristic. Cronbach's alpha (Cronbach, 1951) has been referred to as the preferred coefficient measuring reliability. This coefficient's value ranges from 0 to 1 and higher values reflect higher internal reliability. Nunnally (1967) suggests that a minimum of .7 is required to represent an "adequate" test. However, Cattell (1978) argues that scales where Cronbach's alpha is above .90 might include items that are fundamentally repetitions of each other. Cattell (1978) coined this issue as "bloated specifics". Thus, this should be taken into account in respect to the psychometric properties of AMMSA, as previous RMA measures have been criticised for not measuring the construct of RMA adequately (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

Gerger et al. (2007) conducted reliability analyses of the AMMSA for all four studies and the results indicated high internal consistencies, both for the German and the English versions: Study 1: α = .90, Study 2: α = .95, Study 3, α= .92 and Study 4: α= .92. During the process of developing the AMMSA, Gerger et al. (2007) eliminated the items that were too ambiguous or that were open to different interpretations by different participants. This was done on the basis of low item-total correlations. In a recent research study, Sleath and Woodhams (2014) explored the relationship between RMA and the expectations about victim and perpetrator behaviours during stranger rape and utilized the AMMSA tool. The reliability analysis demonstrated a Cronbach's α of .88, indicating high internal reliability.

Other researchers have used shorter forms of this scale. For example, Krahé, Temkin, Bieneck and Berger (2008) used a 16-item version of AMMSA in two studies exploring prospective lawyers' stereotypic information processing in rape cases. This short form of the AMMSA showed good internal reliability in both studies, (α = .84 in the first study and α = .77 in the second study). More recently, Süssenbach, Bohner and Eyssel (2012) examined schematic influences of RMA on visual information processing.   They utilized an 11-item short version of the AMMSA, which included items 3, 4, 5, 6, 10, 12, 15, 16, 22, 23 and 27. This version of the tool also showed good internal reliability co-efficient (α = .83).

Furthermore, this scale has been adapted and validated in other languages. Hantzi et al. (2015) adapted the AMMSA scale in Greek through the process of translation and back translation and found high internal consistency of their translated scale (α = .95). Megías et al. (2011) translated and validated the AMMSA scale in Spanish through the same process as Hantzi et al.

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(2015) and their scale also yielded a high internal consistency coefficient (α = .91).   This data

indicates that the AMMSA scale can be considered a reliable measure of RMA.

Test-retest reliability

Test-retest reliability refers to the reliability of the test to achieve similar results over

multiple completions. The correlation coefficient between two sets of responses is often used as

a quantitative measure of test-retest reliability. Kline (2000) suggests that a coefficient of .7 is

acceptable. Gerger et al. (2007) found that the AMMSA scales yielded satisfactory test-retest

reliability coefficients, which ranged between .81 and .88 over a four to 13 week period for both

the German and the English version of the test.

Validity

According to Carmines and Zeller (1979), validity is defined as the extent to which any

measuring tool measures what it is intended to measure. Three basic types of validity are used to

assess the extent to which an instrument measures what it proclaims to measure: construct validity,

content validity and criterion-related validity (Carmine & Zeller, 1979).

Construct Validity

According to Kline (1986), construct validity is defined as the extent to which a measure

actually measures the concept that it is intended to measure. To establish this, the researchers need

to test hypotheses using an evaluated tool which has been previously demonstrated using other methods. As a result, the construct validity is examined through the investigation of its relationship with both related (i.e. convergent validity) and unrelated (i.e. discriminant validity) constructs (Pallant, 2013).

Convergent Validity

To explore the convergent validity of the AMMSA scale, Gerger et al. (2007) administered the scale along with other instruments over a number of studies, and analysed its correlations with other relevant constructs. They administered a number of items adapted from Burt (1980), which assess "rape-supportive beliefs". These include the Sex Role Stereotyping (SRS; 9 items) the Adversarial Sexual Beliefs (ASB; 9 items), and the Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence (AIV; 6 items). They also administered the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996) with its 11-item subscales relating to Hostile Sexism (HS) and Benevolent Sexism (BS).

As these researchers found, there was a high correlation of the AMMSA scale with Burt's (1980) rape supportive beliefs measures (with coefficients ranging between $r = .75$ and .77) and the Hostile Sexism scale ($r = .76$ to .82). A slightly lower coefficient was obtained between the BS scale and the AMMSA ($r = .37$ to .53), which indicates a correlation of moderate size (Cohen, 1977). Megías et al. (2011) found a similar pattern of findings; a high correlation of the AMMSA scale scores and the HS ($r = .71$) and a moderate correlation with the BS ($r = .58$). Finally, Hantzi et al. (2015) found a high correlation between the AMMSA and the HS scale ($r = .76$).

Discriminant Validity

In order to explore the AMMSA scale's discriminant validity, Gerger et al. (2007) utilized an impression management scale (i.e. the Paulhus Deception Scale, Paulhus, 1998) in two out of the four studies. As they found, this scale was negatively correlated (r = -.06, r = -.03) with the AMMSA scale. It should be noted that this correlation co-efficient indicates a very weak negative correlation. Hantzi et al. (2015) found moderate correlations of the AMMSA scale with the Right Wing Authoritarianism scale (RWA, Funke, 2005, r = .43) and with the Social Dominance Orientation scale (SDO, Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth & Malle, 1994, r = .60), providing evidence for the AMMSA's sufficient discriminant validity.

Content Validity

Content validity pertains to the degree to which the content of the measure matches a content domain that is associated with the construct being measured, including all of the facets of this construct (Howitt & Cramer, 2011). According to Anastasi and Urbina (1997), the individuals who develop a test should carefully select the items to include, so that these items comply with the test specification on the subject domain under examination. Gerger et al. (2007) reviewed the literature in order to identify various content categories and to explore the similarities between the traditional measures of RMA prior to developing the AMMSA scale.

This team of researchers conducted individual brainstorming sessions to prepare the initial version of the scale, which contained 60 items in total. Following this, they examined the items

and jointly decided which ones to remove, based on their accordance with the underlying conceptualisation of rape myths. They conducted preliminary analyses with the remaining 43 items and item-to-total correlations to select the final 30 items of the scale. As a result, the scale appears to have satisfactory content validity.

Face Validity

Face validity indicates whether a test appears to measure what it attests. This judgment is made on the "face" of the test, thus it can be judged by both an experienced researcher and a lay person (Kline, 2000). However, while a test might have face validity, it may not be measuring what it says it is measuring. One of the main criticisms of the traditional RMA tools is that they use obvious, transparent wording which may predispose the participants into giving socially desirable responses (e.g. disagreeing with statements such as "a woman who is raped might as well relax and enjoy it" which is included in the RMAS, Burt, 1980).

Gerger et al. (2007) attempted to overcome this limitation by using more subtle and less direct item wording. In this respect, it appears that the AMMSA has weaker face validity. However, the authors managed to create a tool that elicits perceptions and attitudes about sexual myths with less social desirability bias. This is evident by the scale's negative correlation with the Paulhus Deception Scale, which explores impression management ($r = -.06$, $r = -.03$) and the significantly higher means yielded in all four studies, in contrast to other RMA measures.

Criterion Validity

This type of validity includes two sub-types: concurrent validity and predictive validity. Concurrent validity refers to the degree to which the explored measure relates to other tests that measure the same construct, and this is investigated at the same time. Predictive validity refers to the degree to which this measure can predict (or correlate with) other measures of the same construct that are measured at some time in the future.

Concurrent validity

To establish the measure's concurrent validity, the authors of the AMMSA scale administered the IRMA-SF (Payne et al., 1999) measure alongside the AMMSA scale during the four studies. As they found, this scale had high positive correlation with the AMMSA scale (ranging between $r = .80$ and $r = .88$ in all four studies). Megías et al. (2011) administered the RMAS (Burt, 1980) and found a moderate positive correlation with the AMMSA scale ($r = .57$). Finally, Hantzi et al. (2015) found a high correlation between the AMMSA and the IRMA scales ($r = .83$). These results provide evidence for the AMMSA scale's satisfactory concurrent validity.

Predictive Validity

Research exploring the individuals' RMA has also focused on the association of this construct with the attribution of blame to the victim of situations depicting sexual assault, as well as the attribution of responsibility to the perpetrator. A consistent finding of this research has been that the participants' RMA levels are positively associated with victim blame and negatively associated with perpetrator blame attribution (Eyssel & Bohner, 2008). Other studies have used

measures to assess rape proclivity (e.g. Bohner et al., 1998) and others have found positive correlations of this measure with RMA measures (e.g. Abrams et al., 2003).

To examine the AMMSA scale's predictive validity, Gerger et al. (2007) correlated the scale's scores with a victim blaming scale and subsequently explored male participants' rape proclivity a few weeks later. In terms of victim blame, they found significant positive correlation coefficients, amongst both male and female participants who completed the English (for males, r = .69 and for females r = .76) and the German (for males, r = .61 and for females r = .43) versions of the scale. Gerger et al. (2007) found similar results to Eyssel, Bohner, Süssenbach and Schreiber (2009), that is, a strong positive correlation of the AMMSA scores and the rape proclivity scale (r= .67). However, this relationship was only found for male participants who completed the German version of the tool. The authors found a small and non-significant relationship for male participants who completed the English version (r = .15, p >.05). As they speculate, this result might reflect a difference between language samples in terms of the meaning of the same construct, or might be due to the small sample size of the specific study (male participants, n = 33).

Megías et al. (2011) found similar results; however, they found a moderate significant association, which was positive between the AMMSA and victim blame attribution and negative between the AMMSA and perpetrator blame attribution. In terms of rape proclivity, they found a moderate positive correlation (r = .27, p<.01). These results indicate that individuals who hold higher RMA attitudes are more likely to perceive that a victim was responsible for the attack. In addition, male participants who hold higher RMA attitudes are more likely to act like the perpetrator in sexual assault situations.

Appropriate Norms

Kline (2000) asserts that a good test needs to undergo a process of standardization in order to establish the presence of relevant norms. These norms are used to determine how a participant performs in comparison to a subgroup of a population which is representative of the population for whom the test is intended (Kline, 2000).

However, within the RMA literature, the measures that are currently used are not based on normative samples. This is because these tools are not diagnostic in nature; they are used to determine attitudes and perceptions. As with previous measures of RMA (e.g. the IRMA and the RMAS) the AMMSA scale also compares the score of different groups of participants to ascertain differences in terms of various variables e.g. gender, age, and nationality. However, in the future, it might be useful to ascertain whether this scale can be used to explore individuals' sexual preferences for violence.

Studies that have used this measure (e.g. Gerger et al., 2007; Süssenbach & Bohner, 2011; Megías et al., 2011, Hantzi et al., 2015) have compared the AMMSA score of various groups to determine differences in RMA. Hantzi et al. (2015) explored a number of factors (such as hostile sexism and benevolent sexism scores) to examine the predictive relationship with the AMMSA scores. Therefore, it can be concluded that for the development of measures that explore perceptions and attitudes, the standardization process is less likely to be necessary for establishing a "good test" (Kline, 2000). As indicated above, a number of studies have shown the AMMSA scale to be a valid and reliable tool for exploring individual differences in RMA.

Normality of Distribution

As mentioned above, Gerger et al. (2007) have criticised the traditional measures of RMA in terms of the skewness in distribution of scores noted in numerous studies using these tools. The authors of the AMMSA scale have managed to overcome this shortcoming by using less "blatant" and obvious wording for the preparation of the items included in the scale. Subsequently, the researchers found that across all four studies, the AMMSA scale means were significantly higher than the IRMA scale means. These results indicate the more subtle nature of the beliefs assessed by the AMMSA scale, and indicates that this measure has an additional advantage when compared to the traditional RMA measures.

In terms of the scale's distribution, results show that this was close to a normal distribution for both English and German language versions. In contrast to the IRMA and the RMAS scales, which in many studies show marked positive skewness, the AMMSA scale yielded a symmetrical, close to normal distribution. This result also emerged from Hantzi et al.'s (2015) study, who found that the AMMSA score's distribution was more symmetrical than the IRMA score's distribution. This result was also found by Megías et al. (2011) for the Spanish version of the AMMSA scale.

Limitations of the AMMSA

As with the rest of the measures in the RMA literature, AMMSA does not come without its limitations. Due to the fact that it is a relatively new tool, only a limited number of studies have utilised it to explore the sexual attitudes of their participants and to comment upon its psychometric

properties. The studies that have utilised this tool to examine and compare group differences in terms of RMA have highlighted the limitations of the scale.

Firstly, there appears to be a general confusion in the literature with regards to the dimensions that accompany the RMA construct. Gerger et al. (2007) developed the initial 60-item version of the AMMSA scale based on five categories (presented above), but failed to find any distinct subdomains when they performed factor analyses. As a result, they concluded that the AMMSA scale can be viewed as measuring a unidimensional construct.

Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) criticised the previous RMA measures for using a variety of items to conceptualize this construct, therefore there appears to be no agreement between the researchers of what the dimensions of RMA are. Gerger et al. (2007) note that although most RMA scales explore multi-faceted clusters of items; very few studies have examined the dimensionality of this construct in order to identify theoretically meaningful factors. For example, Feild (1978) found eight factors emerging from his Attitudes Towards Rape scale, whereas Briere et al. (1985) identified four factors in Burt's (1980) RMA scale. As Gerger et al. (2007) recommended, future literature should focus upon this issue and examine whether there is a convincing theoretical rationale for using a multidimensional approach.

Another limitation of the AMMSA scale pertains to the homogeneity of the research participants in the majority of the studies that used this instrument, as most authors have recruited students for participation in their research. Payne et al. (1999) point out that university students are a population of particular interest in the RMA area, due to their overrepresentation in statistics

associated with sexual crimes (Koss, Gidycz, & Wisniewski, 1987; Muehlenhard & Linton, 1987), and because of their susceptibility to cultural mythology regarding gender, sexuality and violence. However, as these researchers recommend, future research should expand examining the attitudes of different populations in order to enable the generalisability of the results.

Gerger et al. (2007) attempted to overcome this shortcoming by recruiting a wide range of people from the general population using a variety of strategies. However, as with other studies in this area (e.g. Megías et al., 2011), the majority of their sample consisted of university students. Hantzi et al. (2015) managed to recruit a large number of participants (N = 467) of different ages and professions (range of age 18-72 years); however all of the participants were of Greek or Greek Cypriot origin and their results are therefore restricted to these cultural backgrounds. Therefore, this highlights the need for future research using heterogeneous samples, from different backgrounds, ages, professions, religious affiliations, etc.

Although research studies have focused upon establishing the predictive validity of the AMMSA scale by administering rape proclivity scales to male participants, no research has focused on real incidents of exhibited sexual aggression. Thus, as recommended by Gerger et al. (2007) and Megías et al. (2011), future studies can use objective behavioural measures of sexual assault to test whether male participants who score high on the AMMSA are more likely to exhibit sexual aggression, in contrast to participants who score low. Furthermore, the AMMSA scale can be used to examine group differences between convicted sex offenders and control groups of lay individuals, to explore whether the level of RMA is indicative of risk for sexual re-offending.

Conclusion

In summary, recent research has demonstrated that the AMMSA scale has adequate psychometric properties to be considered a "good" test. These properties include satisfactory internal consistency of the scale, sufficient validity, and appropriate statistical distribution needed to measure the acceptance of modern myths about sexual aggression. As with all of the measures of RMA, the AMMSA has its limitations and scope for further exploration of its usefulness in different groups of the general population. Gerger et al. (2007) have taken into consideration the main criticisms of the traditional RMA measures and attempted to develop a concise measure with more subtle and less direct phrasing of its items, in order to best detect the participants' beliefs. To the knowledge of the author, the scale has been translated and validated in four languages up to date, which indicates its cross-cultural application, and all these versions provide evidence for its usefulness in studying attitudes and perceptions in the area of rape myth acceptance.

CHAPTER 4

THE EXPLORATION OF THE SEXUAL ATTITUDES AND RAPE MYTH

ACCEPTANCE OF GREEK CYPRIOTS

Abstract

The current study aimed to explore the influence of observer characteristics on the acceptance of rape myths and attribution of blame in different situations depicting sexual violence. This is the first study of its kind conducted with a Greek-Cypriot sample. Participants ($N = 257$) of both genders and of different age groups and professions were recruited using primarily social networks and were asked to complete the survey online. A set of vignettes and scales were developed and tested on the sample, alongside the AMMSA scale (Gerger et al., 2007) for measuring the participants' RMA. The results replicated findings from previous studies, showing that males tend to attribute more blame to the victim, less responsibility to the perpetrator and are less likely to encourage the victim to report the incident to the police than females. Also, males endorsed significantly higher Rape Myth Acceptance (RMA) than females. The variables of the Victim Blame scale, the Perpetrator Blame scale and the Police Report – Known Offender scale were found to be significant predictors of RMA. The results are discussed in the context of differences with other European countries with higher Gender Equality Index scores, reflecting lesser gender gaps. Methodological considerations, implications for practice and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Introduction

"In April 2016, I visited the restaurant of the "Greek-Cypriot Association" community in West Midlands with a (female) friend to enjoy traditional Cypriot cuisine. It was night time and the restaurant was quite busy. My friend and I sat at a table in a corner and watched people coming and going, talking out loud and sharing news of the day. We spent around two hours there and we noticed something remarkable: no female entered the door at any point, apart from the waitresses. The place was full of Greek-Cypriot males, predominantly middle aged, but younger, too, who were sitting in groups enjoying their meal. My friend and I were majorly surprised as we haven't seen any sign indicating that this place is "for men only". There was no rule prohibiting females entering and having a meal at this place. No written law exists that places women in a subordinate position in the (European) Greek-Cypriot culture. It is the unwritten and unspoken law of "male superiority" that permits men to enjoy a night out whilst their wives are probably at home taking care of the children or doing household chores. It is the "law" that is so deeply ingrained into this culture, and not only in the Island, as the experience described above occurred in a restaurant just outside Birmingham, UK" *(Author's Note, April 2016).*

As discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis, the endorsement of stereotypical beliefs or attitudes in relation to rape and sexual violence is affected by a range of variables, including individual, communal, organizational and societal factors. In Chapter 2, the influence of mass media on RMA was explored. The current chapter aims at exploring a culture-specific perspective of this issue, focusing on the sexual beliefs and RMA of Greek-Cypriots. In line with international and national research highlighting the gender inequalities and the subsequent limited emphasis on

sexual violence currently in Cyprus, this study explores a number of variables in relation to RMA and gender differences in attributions of blame in rape situations. First, a brief cultural context of Cyprus will be discussed. Then, gender inequality and VaW issues will be placed in a European context. Following this, information specific to Cyprus in regard to VaW and support available to victims will be provided. Previous research will then be considered, linking into the rationale for the current study. Discussion of findings and implications will be considered last.

Cyprus: A brief context

Cyprus is the third largest and third most populous island in the Mediterranean Sea, located south of Turkey, west of Syria and Lebanon, north of Egypt and east of Greece (Wathen & Hunt, 2015). Currently, two de facto states exist on the island: the Republic of Cyprus (ROC), predominantly Greek in character and internationally recognized government of the whole island, and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) proclaimed unilaterally on 15th November 1983 and which is only recognized by Turkey. The Republic of Cyprus has been a member state of the European Union (EU) since 2004 (Wathen & Hunt, 2015).

According to the United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the population of the ROC in 2015 was approximately 1.2 million (United Nations, 2015a). The Government of the ROC estimates that 70% of the residents belong to the Greek Cypriot community, around 10% to the Turkish Cypriot community and 20% are foreign citizens residing in Cyprus (Wathen & Hunt, 2015). In terms of religious groups, Greek Cypriots are primarily Eastern Orthodox Christians and the Turkish Cypriots are Sunni Muslims. There are also smaller

religious communities on the island, including Maronites, Armenians, Roman Catholics and Anglican Christians (Wathen & Hunt, 2015).

Measuring gender inequalities within the EU using the Gender Equality Index

In recent years, the EU has acknowledged that gender equality is a fundamental value and a significant factor in the development of areas such as economy, society and politics. Thus, the EU has focused on developing distinct gender-aware policies and evaluating the effectiveness of these. For example, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) developed the Gender Equality Index (GEI), an assessment tool that measures – across Member States and over time – the complex concept of gender equality (EIGE, 2013). To do so, this tool measures gender gaps within a range of areas relevant to the EU policy framework (i.e. work, money, knowledge, power, time, health, violence and intersecting inequalities) and combines the gender indicators into a single summary measure. It also takes into account the levels of achievement in each country or the overall situation of a country in the policy areas considered in each domain. The first GEI assessment was conducted in 2005 and the most recent in 2012; the first report update was published in 2015 (EIGE, 2015).

A good score in each domain and a total GEI score reflects both low gender gaps and high levels of achievement. To calculate the scores, researchers use a composite indicator to calculate a value falling in the interval between 1 and 100, where higher scores indicate lower gender gaps. Cyprus' latest overall GEI score places the country 17th out of 28 countries. However, Cyprus has

the lowest score on the "Power Domain", which indicates that women are significantly under-represented in decision-making in the areas of politics, society and economy (EIGE, 2013).

Prevalence of Violence against Women in the EU

One of the domains that the GEI tool assesses pertains to the prevalence or different forms of Violence against Women within the 28 Member States (EIGE, 2013). To collate this data, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) conducted a wide survey interviewing 42,000 women, aged 18 to 74 years old, from the general populations of all 28 countries (thus, interviewing on average 1500 in each country). The study was conducted in 2012 and an official report was published in 2014. The questions in this survey pertain to women's personal experience of several forms of violence, the severity and frequency of their experience of certain types of violence and the consequences that violence had had on their lives (FRA, 2014). In addition, it should be noted that the selected questions focused on incidents of violence that took place during the 12 months prior to the survey interview, as well as those experienced since the age of 15 years, thus measuring both lifelong and recent levels of VaW (FRA, 2014).

As indicated by the results, 8% of all the participants of this study experienced physical and/or sexual violence in the course of the 12 months prior to the survey and around 33% experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner and/or a non-partner since the age of 15 years. Approximately 22% of women experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner since the age of 15 years. In terms of sexual violence specifically, results indicate that 11% of women experienced some form of sexual abuse since the age of 15 years, either by a partner or

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some other person. One in 20 women (5%) indicated that they were victims of rape since the age of 15 years (FRA, 2014).

Contextualizing the level of disclosed Violence against Women

According to the FRA (2014), Violence against Women is a complex phenomenon which is rooted in gender power relations. As a result, this phenomenon has to be understood within the context of societal and cultural structures (EIGE, 2015). Subsequently, the focus of the FRA (2014) survey was not to rank EU Member States (as the rest of the domains of the GEI), but to cluster the States into three broad groups according to their levels of disclosed violence in relation to the EU average (EIGE, 2015). The three groups include: a) Member States where there are higher levels of disclosed violence than in the EU overall (seven Member States), b) Member States where levels of disclosed violence are close to the EU score (twelve Member States) and c) Member States where there are lower levels of disclosed violence than in the EU overall (nine Member States) (EIGE, 2015).

Cyprus was one of the nine Member States where there were lower levels of disclosed violence in comparison to the EU overall. However, as the researchers note, prevalence surveys rely only on disclosed violence and are highly likely to underestimate the true prevalence of violence against women. Thus, the social and cultural context can affect the extent to which incidents of violence are reported or disclosed. They suggest that these results must be interpreted with caution and in relation to other relevant variables of the GEI (EIGE, 2015).

For example, the FRA (2014) researchers correlated the levels of disclosed violence against women in each country with the overall GEI scores of each country and found that Member States with higher levels of disclosed violence also scored higher in the first GEI. As they note, there is a possible connection between gender equality and women choosing to disclose violence. They suggest that this could be a result of greater awareness in a society and better structural and institutional mechanisms that encourage women to report incidents of violence (FRA, 2014). So, the results indicate that lower levels of disclosed violence may not necessarily reflect lower levels of actual violence, but may mean that societal attitudes against women preclude the disclosure of violence (FRA, 2014).

Thus, it is suggested that although Cyprus is placed in the third cluster that includes Member States where levels of disclosed violence are lower than the EU average, this does not necessarily reflect the rate of actual prevalence of violence against women. As noted above, Cyprus had the lowest score on the "Power" domain of the GEI among 28 EU countries (EIGE, 2015). The GEI report notes that violence against women is based on unequal power relations between men and women which reinforces men's dominance over women (EIGE, 2015). Consequently, violence against women can be decreased by challenging the unequal division of political, social and economic power held by both genders, as well as the cultural attitudes that perpetrate this inequality at all levels of societies (Pickup, 2001). To achieve this, national studies exploring violence against women can provide helpful information in terms of the prevalence of different types of violence, the demographic characteristics of "high risk" victims and perpetrators and the consequences of this phenomenon (Apostolidou, Mavrikiou & Parlalis, 2014).

The present section explored the context of the issue within the EU; the next section presents national studies conducted in Cyprus specifically.

Legal Definitions

In Cyprus, Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is recognized only in the context of violence in the family. The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law, (L. 212(I)/2004) defines violence as "any act, omission or behaviour which causes physical, sexual or mental injury to any member of the family by another member of the family and includes violence used for the purpose of having sexual intercourse without the consent of the victim as well as of restricting its freedom" (p.10).

In terms of rape and attempted rape, according to Section 144 of the Criminal Code CAP.154, "any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a female, without her consent, or with her consent, if the consent is obtained by force or fear of bodily harm, or, in the case of a married woman, by impersonating her husband, is guilty of the felony termed rape." The maximum sentence for rape is life imprisonment, as indicated by Section 145 (Criminal Code of Cyprus, 1959, p. 52). For attempted rape, Section 146 notes that the maximum sentence is imprisonment for ten years. The Violence in the Family Law L. 47(I)/1994 recognises rape within marriage (Pavlou, 2011).

According to the European-wide survey on the prevalence of violence against women conducted by the FRA, 22% of the Greek-Cypriot women who participated in the survey have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by a partner and/or non-partner since the age of 15. In addition, 4% have experienced sexual violence by a partner since the age of 15.

According to Anastassiou-Hadjicharalampus and Essau (2012), the prevalence of violence against women in Cyprus is difficult to determine. The Cyprus Police and the Cyprus Social Services are the two main organizations that keep records of incidents which are reported to each body. However, only a few of these cases result in criminal convictions. There is no statistical data on the number of cases that do not result in convictions, neither research reports exploring this phenomenon (Anastassiou-Hadjicharalampus & Essau, 2012). Table 4 presents the latest statistics in terms of domestic violence incidents reported to Cyprus Police. In terms of Domestic Sexual Violence, the crime rates are similar to the rape figures (which are presented on page 102), as indicated by the statistics data provided by the Cypriot Police. In comparison, the rates of physical and psychological violence reporting rates are much higher (Cyprus Police, 2015).

Table 4. Reported Incidents of Domestic Violence (to Cyprus Police)

Type of Violence	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	TOTAL	Percentages
Sexual	28	21	24	15	20	108	2.71%
Physical	646	575	571	502	560	2854	71.55%
Psychological	159	124	165	275	304	1027	25.75%
TOTAL	833	720	760	792	884	3989	100.00%

Anastassiou-Hadjicharampous and Essau (2012) suggest that these figures cannot be considered representative of the actual violence in Cyprus, since they represent only reported incidents. Only one national study conducted on Cyprus focused on the prevalence of different types of IPV towards women. Apostolidou et al. (2014) utilized a large community sample of 1107 women (aged 18 to 65+ years) from all five counties of Cyprus, using a proportionate stratified sampling method. As these researchers found, 28% of the sample indicated that they had experienced at least one type of abuse (physical, psychological, social, sexual or financial) by their current or ex-partner. The most prevalent type of abuse was financial (19.4%), followed by psychological (19.3%), sexual (15.5%), social (14.8%) and physical (13.4%) abuse. The researchers also found that only 5% reported the incidents to the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family hotline. This is a non-profit NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) established in 1990 aiming at helping victims and perpetrators of IPV. Only 2% of the abused women reported the incident to the police.

As Apostolidou et al. (2014) note, the findings of this survey may represent the attitudes of a large proportion of the population in terms of this sensitive matter. They suggest that these attitudes reflect the existing ethics and morals deeply ingrained in the interpersonal relationships of Cypriot people. Apostolidou et al. (2014) argue that these attitudes are connected with a patriarchal and male-dominated stance that places men in a powerful position in society and in the family, whereas women are in a subordinate position. Consequently, as Papadaki (2011) suggests, the majority of IPV incidents are never reported which has a detrimental effect on the physical and mental health of the victims and further reinforces the "cycle of abuse" (Walker, 1979) running through the generations.

According to the most recent Criminality Statistics Data published by the Cypriot Police force, a total of 131 rape incidents and 9 attempted rape incidents were reported in the past five years (Cyprus Police, 2015). Table 5 includes the figures of reported incidents of rape and attempted rape since 2010.

Although these figures indicate that rape and attempted rape seldom take place in Cyprus, the Mediterranean Institute of Gender Studies (MIGS, 2006) suggest that there are a large number of sexual offences that go unreported and subsequently conceal the true extent of this form of violence in Cyprus. MIGS (2008) also notes that Cyprus has one of the lowest rape report rates in Europe. As suggested, women are often reluctant to report incidents of violence because of the ingrained socio-cultural attitudes within the Cypriot society and because of the economic inequalities between the two genders (MIGS, 2006). This issue will be discussed in more detail below.

Table 5. Reported Incidents of Rape and Attempted Rape

Type of Crime	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	TOTAL	Percentages
Rape	36	38	25	18	14	131	93.57%
Attempted Rape	2	2	2	1	2	9	6.43%
TOTAL	38	40	27	19	16	140	100.00%

Social Context of Sexual Crime in the Cypriot Society

According to Georgiou and Papantoniou (2004), sex crimes often go unreported in Cyprus due to the conservativeness and closeness of the Cypriot society. This may explain why very few cases of sexual violence are reported and only a small percentage of the reported cases occur in the context of an intimate relationship or marriage. Despite changes to major social structures in recent years, it is still considered shameful for a family to experience any type of violence, especially sexual. Families prefer to hide the crime in fear of the shame that publicity will bring and due to fear of "destroying its honour" (Georgiou & Papantoniou, 2004). These researchers state that Cyprus is "close-knit community" and victims want to avoid stigmatization by their relatives and the wider society. On occasion, family members persuade the victims to keep the "secret" within the family and not press charges. Consequently, rape crimes tend not to be reported, particularly when perpetrated by family members (Georgiou & Papantoniou, 2004).

In addition, recent research indicates that the Cypriot society remains highly patriarchal with prevalent rigid gender roles which contribute to maintaining the subordinate status of both Cypriot women and women of migrant background (Vassiliadou, 2004; MIGS, 2010). Kapsou and Christou (2011) note that the consequences of this subordination are apparent in all areas of life, e.g. women are significantly underrepresented in political and public life, there is a wide gender pay gap, and persistence of all forms of violence against women including rape, sexual assault and domestic abuse. As mentioned above, the majority of incidents of violence against women are not reported; however, there was a significant increase in the reports of domestic violence incidents in recent years.

For example, the call centre of the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family has answered 10,076 incidents of domestic violence during the years 2000- 2011 of which 80% of victims were women and 92.5% were women and children. This organization reports that they have recorded a rise of 120% in incidents of violence against women (Kapsou & Christou, 2011). This finding could be a result of the recent positive developments for increasing awareness and attempting to prevent violence against women, including the establishment of the Advisory Committee on Family Violence and the adoption of a National Action Plan for the Prevention and Combating of Violence in the Family (Kaili & Pavlou, 2015).

Furthermore, although the most recent official statistics indicate a low reporting rate of rape and attempted rape offences, MIGS (2008) notes that rape crimes in Cyprus are almost doubling every year. The European Sourcebook of Crime and Criminal Justice Statistics (2006, as cited in MIGS, 2008) shows that Cyprus is the only country in Europe where the percentage change is 100 or more, when comparing the rates for the years 1990-1996 and 2000-2003. However, despite the prevalence of rape, this issue is not framed as a social problem in any policy or action plan (MIGS, 2008).

The aforementioned statistics are similar to statistics in other countries, where the rates of reported IPV offences and actual prevalence differ significantly. For example, the Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW) (Office for National Statistics, ONS, 2015) shows that 28.3% of women and 14.7% of men had experienced a type of IPV since the age of 16, which is equivalent to an estimated 4.6 million female victims and 2.4 million male victims. One of the main strengths of this survey is that it covers crimes that are not reported to the police and IPV is considered the least likely crime to be reported (ONS, 2015). This survey also indicates that the number of sexual

offences that were reported to the police in 2013/14 was the highest since 2002/3 (64,205 offences), which reflects improvements in recording and a greater willingness of victims to disclose and report such offences.

As indicated above, the FRA (2014) study pointed out the relationship of gender equality and the likelihood of women choosing to report incidents of IPV. Thus, in order to get a better understanding of the reporting rate of rape crimes in Cyprus, this is explored in the context of other EU countries, whilst also considering their GEI score. Table 6 presents the police-recorded rape offences in seven EU countries across the span 2010 – 2014. For the purpose of comparison, these numbers are also presented in the rate per 100,000 population. The countries presented include Sweden, which has the highest GEI score, as well as UK (including reported incidents in England and Wales), France, Germany, Spain, Cyprus and Greece (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNODC, 2015). The rates of these countries (in the exception of Sweden) are presented due to the fact that the endorsement of rape myths of Greek-Cypriots will be compared to results from these countries in the "Discussion" section (that is, the AMMSA scores from research conducted with populations from these countries).

As can be concluded from the table, there appears to be a positive relationship between the rate of reported offences and the GEI score: higher GEI score indicates higher reporting rate of rape incidents. This result highlights the significance of gender equality policies in promoting the disclosure of sexual crimes and suggests that the social and cultural context has an important influence on the attitudes of individuals. The results presented on this Table also provide further evidence in relation to the significant under-reporting of this issue in Cyprus. As noted in the FRA

(2014) survey, the support provided to victims of sexual offences will impact on the likelihood of them choosing to come forward and report the crime (EIGE, 2015). The support provided to victims of sexual crimes in Cyprus will be discussed in more detail below.

Table 6. Number of Police-recorded rape offences (rate per 100,000 population)

Country	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	GEI Score and Ranking (of 28 EU countries)
Sweden	5,479 (58.4)	6,059 (64.0)	5,949 (62.3)	5,634 (58.5)	6,294 (64.9)	74.2 (1/28)
UK*	15,892 (28.5)	16,038 (28.6)	16,374 (28.9)	20,748 (36.4)	29,265 (51.0)	58.0 (6/28)
France	10,108 (16.1)	10,406 (16.4)	10,885 (17.1)	11,171 (17.5)	12,157 (19.0)	55.7 (9/28)
Germany	7,724 (9.6)	7,539 (9.4)	8,031 (10.0)	7,408 (9.2)	7,345 (9.1)	55.3 (10/28)
Spain	1,578 (3.4)	1,513 (3.2)	1,280 (2.7)	1,298 (2.8)	1,239 (2.7)	53.6 (12/28)
Cyprus	36 (3.1)	38 (3.5)	25 (2.2)	18 (1.6)	14 (1.2)	44.9 (17/28)
Greece	215 (1.9)	172 (1.5)	167 (1.5)	149 (1.3)	134 (1.2)	38.3 (25/28)

*Refers to data from England and Wales

Support for Victims of Sexual Crimes and Recent Developments

Legal counselling is provided to support female survivors of violence as part of implementing the laws on domestic violence during the court proceedings (if the reported case reaches this stage). According to MIGS (2010), women in Cyprus are strongly dissatisfied with the support provided by the legal services and the criminal justice system. Adequate and sufficient information associated with the legal process is rarely provided and women do not receive comprehensive information regarding their rights. A number of women have expressed that their cases have been dealt with negligently, especially voiced by migrant women who felt that they were victims of discrimination by the legal services (MIGS, 2010).

In addition, there is one national women's helpline, one women's centre and one women's shelter currently in Cyprus, all run by the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family. Only two organizations (the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family and the Cypriot Family Planning Association) can offer support to women who have experienced sexual assault from their partners or spouses. Thus, it is evident that no services exist that offer support to victims of "stranger" rape and no "rape helpline" or centres for supporting male victims of domestic abuse currently operate in Cyprus (MIGS, 2008). Georgiou, Kofou, Michael and Andreou (2015) note that there are no rape crisis centres or specialized resources for rape or sexual assault in Cyprus for either adults or adolescents.

Nevertheless, in recent years, many positive developments have taken place in an attempt to increase awareness and commitment towards preventing and reducing violence against women,

especially domestic violence. For example, a number of National Action Plans (e.g. the Plan for Violence in the Family) have been developed to address violence against women. Special agencies and organizations have been established, aiming to address gender inequalities which include the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Family, the MIGS organization and the Cyprus Family Planning Association (CFPA), all of these being NGOs (Kouta, Tolma & Pavlou, 2013). Although these bodies have created appropriate gender equality policies, little has been done to actively promote these policies and generate awareness among citizens regarding the true extent of this problem.

However, it should be noted that the new developments and plans focus almost exclusively on "family violence" and have ignored other forms of violence such as rape, sexual assault and sexual harassment, indicating a lack of awareness and understanding of the prevalence and nature of violence against women (MIGS, 2006). MIGS (2006) note that the National Action Plans lack adequate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms which consequently affects its successful implementation.

Previous research in Cyprus exploring sexual abuse

According to Kouta et al., (2013), research examining the prevalence and impact of sexual violence in Cyprus is almost non-existent. These researchers conducted a study in 2012 exploring the prevalence of date rape among a sample of female college students (aged 18-24). To the knowledge of the author, this study is the only published study exploring a type of sexual assault in Cypriot society. Their findings indicate that 12% of the sample experienced at least one incident

of an unwanted sexual experience and provide evidence to support a general culture of victim blaming in Cyprus.

Also, as the authors found, there is a general lack of confidence in the relevant authorities to provide support to victims of rape. Kouta et al. (2013) discussed this issue with representatives of the aforementioned NGOs and concluded that the existing services work only within the framework of domestic violence, ignoring other forms of gender-based violence.

Previous research in Cyprus exploring attitudes towards IPV against women

Similar to exploring the prevalence and impact of IPV against women in Cyprus, very few studies have explored societal attitudes towards this phenomenon. According to Garcia and Lila (2015), only two surveys have been conducted in Cyprus to explore attitudes and perceptions towards violence in inter-personal relationships. The first was conducted by Kapsou and Christou (2011) who explored the attitudes to gender stereotypes and gender violence among adolescents (aged 15-18) and the second survey was conducted by Andronikou, Erotokritou and Hadjiharalambous (2012) exploring the prevalence of inter-personal violence and relevant perceptions of young adults (aged 18-25).

The latter study was undertaken with 1000 Cypriot young adults and found that 70% of the participants had opinions and attitudes supporting "victim blaming attributions", such as the belief that the use of violence in relationships is acceptable under certain circumstances, such as to "correct" certain behaviours. A similar percentage (68.1%) agreed that violence in a relationship

is a "private" matter. Almost half of the sample (46.5%) agreed that "men have the right to control their partners".

Garcia and Lila (2015) compared the information from a number of European countries' national surveys with European-level surveys regarding victim-blaming attitudes. As they found, the 2010 Eurobarometer survey included a question tapping victim-blaming attitudes by asking whether "the provocative behaviour of women was a cause of domestic violence". The EU average of agreement with this statement was 52%, with results ranging from 33% to 86% across countries. Cyprus was amongst the top-3 countries, with a percentage of 80% of respondents agreeing with this statement, suggesting a widespread prevalence of victim-blaming perceptions among Greek-Cypriot citizens. Garcia and Lila (2015) note that apart from national surveys, no research studies exploring the area of attitudes towards inter-personal violence have been conducted in Cyprus.

Rationale for Current Study

Taking the above into consideration, it is evident that the issue of domestic violence in Cyprus receives significantly more attention than rape and/or sexual assault issues. No specific data of the true prevalence of rape exist, as well as no published reports of the impact of sexual violence in intimate relationships. In addition, there is no policy direction or National Action Plan on health in regard to sexual assault and rape consequences, contraception, abortion and sex education for young people (Kapsou & Christou, 2011; Georgiou et al., 2015).

Moreover, no specialized services that increase awareness and knowledge of young people around issues of sexuality exist. Victims of sexual violence can seek assistance in hospitals; however, due to the lack of privacy and anonymity very few people approach hospitals for support. As mentioned above, only the Cyprus Family Planning Association and the Association for the Prevention and Handling of Family Violence offer support, information and assistance to young people (Georgiou et al., 2015; MIGS, 2008).

To date, no research has been undertaken to examine sexual beliefs of the Cypriot population, or their attitudes towards rape victims or perpetrators. Hence, the purpose of this study is to add to the existing cross-cultural literature on rape myth acceptance by exploring endorsement of sexual beliefs using a Cypriot sample. Rape myths can have a significant impact on the victim, the society and the criminal justice system (Qi, Starfelt & White, 2016). As Qi et al. (2016) suggest, by understanding individuals' attributions of rape and investigating factors that influence individuals' perceptions of victims and assailants can help explain why many victims remain unacknowledged (e.g. Littleton, Rhatigan & Axsom, 2007), receive negative reactions to their disclosure (e.g. Filipas & Ullman, 2001), choose not to report the crime (e.g. Lievore, 2003) and experience secondary victimisation during the criminal justice process (Campbell, 2008).

Aim and Hypotheses

This study aims to investigate the Greek Cypriots' perceptions and attributions of victim and perpetrator blame in different scenarios which describe different types of rape, manipulating the gender of victim and perpetrator and levels of alcohol consumption (not analysed in the current

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study). Using the AMMSA, it also aims to explore the Rape Myth Acceptance of this population and its relation to other variables. Subsequently, five experimental hypotheses were examined:

a) There will be a difference in scores on AMMSA between male and female participants;

b) There will be a difference in scores on the victim blame scale and perpetrator blame scale between male and female participants;

c) There will be a relationship between the scores on the AMMSA and the victim blame scale;

d) There will be a relationship between the scores on the AMMSA and the perpetrator blame scale.

Moreover, the following research questions were explored:

a) Is there a relationship between the AMMSA scores and the variables age, religious affiliation, and knowing a victim of sexual assault?

b) Which independent variables best predict the AMMSA scores?

Methodology

1) Design

The current study examines the differences between participants' perceptions after reading situations describing situations of sexual assault between two individuals. These perceptions include the attribution of blame towards the victim, the attribution of responsibility towards the perpetrator and the likelihood that the participants would encourage the victim to report the incident. The situations are described in brief scenarios, where the following variables were manipulated: the relationship of the victim to the perpetrator (three levels: stranger, acquaintance and marital), the alcohol consumption by the victim and the perpetrator (two levels: alcohol vs non-alcohol consumption) and the gender of the victim and the perpetrator (two levels: male-to-female abuse and female-to-male abuse). Thus, a 3x2x2 factorial design was developed. The current study follows a cross-sectional design, as the sample can be considered to be representative of the population in Cyprus. Also, the current study explored the relationship between these perceptions and Rape Myth Acceptance, as well as the differences in RMA between groups.

2) Ethical Considerations

The University of Birmingham Ethics Committee granted ethical approval for the current project in June 2014 (ERN_14-0539). Approval was sought in relation to confidentiality of participants' details, informed consent and voluntary withdrawal from the study, the sensitivity of the topics presented in the vignettes and questionnaire and the treatment and disposal of the data.

To address confidentiality, participants were not required to provide personal information at any stage of the study. The participants were asked to respond to nine demographic questions in order to ensure that the sample is heterogeneous. They were informed that their responses could not be linked to their e-mail addresses, even if they had provided these separately in order to obtain a copy of the results.

Participants were informed of their right to withdraw, both in the information sheet and the debriefing sheet. They were advised to follow the researcher's instructions and create a unique code word before they proceeded to the questionnaire and to contact the researcher quoting this code word should they wish to withdraw from the study. Participants were reassured that no details would be asked regarding their reasons for withdrawal. In addition, participants were advised of their right to withdraw their data at any point during completion of the study and up to two weeks following completion in order to enable the researcher to effectively analyse the data. Due to the nature of the study, the contact details of support services and professionals whom the individuals could contact to discuss any distress or access emotional support were provided in the Information and Debriefing sheets (Appendices F and K respectively). All other ethical issues are addressed in the "Procedure" section, below.

3) Participants

The inclusion criteria for the sample included that individuals had to be aged 18 or older, male or female, and of Greek-Cypriot nationality. Individuals with dual nationality were not considered as appropriate participants for this study (e.g. Cypriot/English nationality). There were

no restrictions on the individual's level of education, socioeconomic status, political or religious beliefs.

The total number of participants who gave their consent to participate was 499. Of these, 242 (48.5%) did not complete the questionnaire and were therefore excluded from the analysis. Thus, a total of 257 participants' completed responses (51.5%) were included in the final analysis. The total sample comprised of 183 females (71.2%) and 74 males (28.8%). The participants had an average age of 33.71 years ($SD = 11.96$), ranging from 18 to 64 years. A total number of 95 participants (37.0%) indicated they are not religious, whereas 162 participants (63.0%) indicated that they are. Of these 162 participants, 159 (98.8%) indicated they are "Christian/Orthodox" and 3 of them are (1.2%) "Christian/Catholics".

Following the demographics section, the participants were asked to indicate whether they know someone who has been a victim of sexual assault. Seventy-six participants (29.6%) responded "Yes", 179 (69.6%) responded "No" and two participants (0.8%) did not wish to say. Individuals from various professions completed the questionnaire. The researcher aimed at collecting data from individuals of different ages, occupations and employment status. Thus, compared to previous studies (e.g. Frese, Moya, & Megías, 2004; Newcombe et al., 2008) who recruited a student sample for their study, the current research recruited only 60 students (23.3%); with the remaining professions associated with a variety of disciplines (e.g. teachers, architects, employees from the private or the public sector and other professions).

4) Procedure

Participants were primarily recruited using various social networks (e.g. Facebook). The advert (Appendix E) and the link to the questionnaire were shared to acquaintances of the researcher who were encouraged to share it with as many people who fulfilled the inclusion criteria as possible. The data were collected via an electronic questionnaire using "Lime Service", an online survey software. Participants who wished to complete the study were informed of the inclusion criteria and declared their agreement prior to proceeding with the study. Participants were required to click an "I agree" box to indicate that they had understood and agreed to the terms of their consent and participation in the study. Only when participants agreed to these could they proceed to the questionnaires.

This information was included in the Information Page (Appendix F) which also explained the purpose of the study, ensured the participants of confidentiality and anonymity, their right to withdraw at any point throughout the completion of the questionnaire and up to two weeks following completion, and other relevant information such as referrals to helplines for participants who wished to discuss any issues relating to sexual assault. Researcher information was also provided in case participants had any questions regarding the study.

Following this, the participants were presented with the Demographics section in which they were asked to state their gender, age, profession, religious affiliation, whether they have been a victim of sexual assault or if they know any individual who has been victimized, and whether they have received a caution or conviction for a violent or sexual offence against an adult or a child. The participants were also asked to state whether they had ever forced someone to complete a sexual act, or whether they have had any sexual contact with an individual of 16 years or younger

throughout their adulthood. Finally, the participants were given instructions of how to create a unique code word that they could use in a later stage to withdraw their data (Appendix G).

Subsequent to this, all participants were presented with a sequence of twelve scenarios and were asked to respond to six questions that measure their attributions of blame towards the victim and the perpetrator of the assault depicted in the scenarios (Appendix H). Unlike previous studies (e.g. Frese et al., 2004), the scenarios were presented to the participants in a random order to avoid possible sequence effects. Following the completion of the scenario questions, participants were presented with the Greek validated version of the AMMSA scale (Hantzi, Lampridis, Tsantila & Bohner, 2015; see Appendix I for the English version of the AMMSA).

All materials used in the current study were presented to participants in Greek to ensure that participants fully understand all the questions in the study. To translate the scenarios and the affiliated questions, the method of "front and back translation" was used, from six psychology post-graduate students bilingual in Greek and English. To ensure that the wording was clear and appropriate for the target group, the questionnaire was administered on a pilot basis to four volunteers of different ages and educational backgrounds, and appropriate adjustments were made following feedback.

In order to proceed to the end of the questionnaire, participants were required to complete all of the questions. At the end of the questionnaire, the respondents were presented with a Debriefing page, thanking them for their participation, explaining the aim of the study, reminding them of their right to withdraw their data up to two weeks following their participation, providing

contact details of organizations that provide support to victims of IPV and providing contact details of the researcher (Appendix K).

5) Measures

a) The twelve Scenarios

In order to examine the perceptions of individuals and their judgements of rape definitions, experimental studies have used a number of different measures (Davies & Rogers, 2006). The majority of these studies have used hypothetical vignettes to investigate judgements towards sexual assault victims and towards the perpetrator's responsibility. These vignettes vary from brief summaries of a situation to detailed realistic accounts of 1000 words or more. Other studies have employed measures such as tape recordings of statements given by actors pretending to be sexual assault victims or video-taped mock rape trials (Pollard, 1992).

Between the different versions of the vignettes, a number of variables are modified and the respondents are usually asked to complete a series of questions associated with the vignette. These questions may relate to victim blame attribution or responsibility attribution to the perpetrator and the differences in responses between the vignettes are statistically compared (Davies & Rogers, 2006). Taking this into consideration, the current study used twelve different scenarios to measure both the victim blame and the perpetrator responsibility attribution.

The twelve vignettes of the present study were adapted from scenarios used by Newcombe et al. (2008), Bell, Kuriloff and Lottes (1994), Frese et al. (2004) and Sleath and Bull (2010). As indicated above, the vignettes depicted different situations where sexual assault occurs, in different contexts. Within the scenarios, the following variables were manipulated: the relationship of the victim to the perpetrator, the alcohol consumption by the victim and the perpetrator and the gender of the victim and the perpetrator. All of the scenarios used are presented in Appendix H.

The terms "rape" or "sexual assault" were not included in the scenarios, in order to avoid bias that may be caused by describing the event using these terms. Some researchers suggest that using these terms may lead the respondents into making more extreme judgments (Davies & Rogers, 2006; Pollard, 1992). Each scenario was followed by six questions, which are also presented in Appendix H.

The amount of Victim Blame Attribution that the participants endorsed was measured using the "Victim Blame Scale" constructed by Bell et al. (1994). The first two questions of this scale assess the behavioural attribution of blame whereas the third measures the characterological attribution of blame. Questions utilised in Frese et al.'s (2004) study were used to assess the level of responsibility that the participants attributed to the perpetrator, asking the participants whether they think the perpetrator was responsible for the sexual encounter and whether they believed that he/she should be punished. In addition, one question examined whether the participants would encourage the victim to report the assault to the police (as in Frese et al.'s 2004 study). A five-point Likert scale was used for participants to express their perceptions for the five questions (1= not at all, 2= a little bit, 3= neutral, 4= a lot and 5= completely). For the sixth question, the ranking

of responses was: 1 = definitely no, 2 = probably no, 3 = neutral, 4 = probably yes, 5 = definitely yes.

Reliability Analysis was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha, as literature indicates this is the most common measure of scale reliability (Field, Miles & Field, 2012). According to Nunnally (1978), the acceptable alpha value is greater than 0.7. The current study's reliability values were as follows: the Victim Blame Scale reliability score was $\alpha = .91$, the Perpetrator Blame scale was $\alpha = .94$ and the likelihood of reporting the incident to the police scale was $\alpha = .94$. These values indicate high reliability of these scales.

b) The AMMSA

The AMMSA scale was developed and validated by Gerger et al. (2007). This scale measures the acceptance of subtle, modern myths about sexual aggression. According to Gerger et al. (2007), the AMMSA scale items cover the following categories: a) the denial of the scope of the sexual aggression problem, b) the antagonism towards the victim's demands, c) the lack of support for policies prepared to alleviate the impact of sexual violence, d) the beliefs that male coercion forms a natural part of intimate relationships and e) the beliefs that excuse the male perpetrators by blaming the victim or the circumstances of the assault.

To validate the AMMSA scale, Gerger et al. (2007) conducted four studies with German and English samples. They found across these four studies, the scale's internal consistency ranged from $\alpha = .90$ to $\alpha = .95$. Previous research shows that the AMMSA is a reliable and valid tool using different samples and methodologies (e.g. Megías, Romero-Sánchez, Durán, Moya &

Bohner, 2011). The current study employs the Greek version of AMMSA translated and validated by Hantzi et al. (2015). Similar to previous studies, the Greek AMMSA version showed high internal reliability ($\alpha = .95$). In the current study, the Cronbach's Alpha value indicated that the AMMSA scale has high internal reliability ($\alpha = .93$). For any further information regarding the psychometric properties of AMMSA, please refer to Chapter 3.

6) Treatment of Data

A priori power analysis was conducted to determine how many participants would be required in order to achieve adequate statistical power for conducting a multiple regression. The Power Analysis showed that to conduct the planned analyses (presented in the relevant section below) the minimum number of recruited participants should be 210. Data were entered into IBM SPSS Statistic Editor Version 23 for analysis.

7) Scoring and Reliability

There were no reverse items on the AMMSA or any of the other scales. For the AMMSA scale, the scores of participants were calculated from the mean across the 30 items. For the Victim Blame scale, the scores were computed from the mean of all the items measuring this variable. The same procedure was used for calculating the scores for the Perpetrator Blame Scale and the Police Report scale. The internal consistency for each of the measures was checked by calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. As presented in the "Measures" section, all measures fell within the accepted range of reliability.

Results

Data Screening and Cleaning

According to Pallant (2013), prior to analysing the data it is important to check for any errors in the data file and ensure to correct these. Thus, the author ensured to check the following: the frequencies for each item were checked to ensure that the values fell within the range of possible scores (i.e. 1-7 range in the AMMSA scale, 1-5 range in the rest of the scales). All the responses fell within the appropriate range. In addition, checks were conducted for any missing values. No missing values were identified; thus, the author proceeded to conduct the main analyses presented below.

The following variables were excluded from the analyses: the "educational attainment" variable, due to the fact that the vast majority of the participants ($n = 233$, 90.7%) had completed Tertiary Education, whereas only 24 of the participants (9.3%) had completed Secondary Education. The sexual orientation variable was also excluded, as 242 participants (94.2%) identified themselves as Heterosexual, seven participants (2.7%) as Homosexuals and eight participants (3.1%) as Bisexuals. Only eleven participants (4.3%) responded "Yes" to the question "how you ever been a victim of sexual assault", five (1.9%) individuals "did not wish to say" and the remaining 241 individuals (93.8%) answered "No" to this question, therefore, it was excluded from the analysis.

None of the participants received a caution and/or conviction for a violent and/or sexual offence, therefore this variable was also excluded. Seven (2.7%) participants indicated that they had persuaded an adult to have sexual intercourse against their will, thus this variable was excluded from further analyses. Finally, four participants (1.6%) responded "yes" to the question exploring whether they had had sexual contact with an individual less than 16 years of age during their adult life, and this variable was also excluded from further analyses. These questions were excluded as no meaningful analyses could be conducted with samples so different in size and such small participant number in one of the conditions (Field, 2009).

Principal Component Analysis

Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Oblique rotation was performed initially to identify any potential underlying components which could be used to develop sub-scales. Only factor loadings of above .3 were considered as sufficient (Field, 2009). This analysis revealed that the Victim Blame scale variables (twelve in total) load on two factors, however these were not contextually different and thus one univariate scale was used to represent "Victim Blame" across all twelve scenarios. In terms of the Perpetrator Blame, the analysis revealed that most variables load on one factor, and two variables (i.e. the Perpetrator Blame scale for the scenarios involving a female victim and stranger perpetrator) were loading on a second factor.

This was explored further by observing the frequency of the participants' responding on each of these scales, and a high level of positive responding was detected. Thus, the author decided to include all the variables within one Perpetrator Blame scale, as conceptually all the items

measure this construct. The structure matrix is presented in Table 7, below. Appendix L presents the descriptive statistics of all the scales.

Table 7. Structure Matrix for Victim Blame and Perpetrator Blame scales

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Male (Alc, Date) – Per Blame scale	.869	-.160	.301	-.168
Male (No Alc, Date) – Per Blame scale	.856	-.136	.297	-.306
Male (Alc, Married) – Per Blame scale	.852	-.216	.260	-.149
Female (Alc, Married) – Per Blame scale	.844	-.202	.227	-.102
Female (No Alc, Married) – Per Blame scale	.840	-.124	.280	-.265
Male (No Alc, Married) – Per Blame scale	.824	-.197	.181	-.325
Female (No Alc, Date) – Per Blame scale	.806	-.195	.449	-.215
Female (Alc, Date) – Per Blame scale	.805	-.160	.402	-.066
Male (Alc, Stranger) – Per Blame scale	.754	-.043	.446	-.253
Male (No Alc, Stranger) – Per Blame scale	.720	-.080	.480	-.394
Male (Alc, Date) – Vic Blame scale	-.127	.836	-.145	.344
Male (Alc, Married) – Vic Blame scale	-.140	.819	-.204	.359
Female (Alc, Married) – Vic Blame scale	-.192	.814	-.112	.325
Female (Alc, Date) – Vic Blame scale	-.256	.764	-.009	.437
Male (No Alc, Date) – Vic Blame scale	-.195	.706	-.281	.531
Female (No Alc, Stranger) – Per Blame scale	.390	-.149	.850	-.244
Female (Alc, Stranger) – Per Blame scale	.324	-.106	.827	-.140
Female (No Alc, Stranger) – Vic Blame scale	-.313	.296	-.209	.831

Male (No Alc, Stranger) – Vic Blame scale	-.163	.432	-.191	.823
Female (No Alc, Married) – Vic Blame scale	-.189	.620	-.418	.676
Female (No Alc, Date) – Vic Blame scale	-.205	.665	-.174	.676
Male (Alc, Stranger) – Vic Blame scale	-.139	.635	-.159	.669
Female (Alc, Stranger) – Vic Blame scale	-.322	.466	-.279	.616
Male (No Alc, Married) – Vic Blame scale	-.142	.583	-.389	.616

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.
Note: Female = Female victim, Male = Male victim, Alc = Alcohol consumption, No Alc = No Alcohol consumption, Per Blame scale = Perpetrator Blame scale, Vic Blame scale = Victim Blame scale.

In terms of the Police Report, the PCA revealed an interesting trend among the variables. These loaded on two factors: all the variables from scenarios where the victim knew their assailant (i.e. in acquaintance and marital situations) loaded strongly on one factor, whereas all the variables from scenarios where the perpetrator was unknown (i.e. "stranger" relationship type) loaded on the other factor. Thus, two scales were constructed: a) Police Report scale for "Known" perpetrator to include the eight scenarios that involve relationship type dating or marital ($\alpha = .95$), and b) Police Report scale for "Unknown" perpetrators including the four scenarios where the victim did not have previous knowledge of their assailant ($\alpha = .80$). The structure matrix is presented in Table 8, below.

Table 8. Structure Matrix for Police Report scales

	Component	
	1	2
Male (Alc, Date) – Pol Report scale	.898	.315
Male (Alc, Married) – Pol Report scale	.892	.203
Male (No Alc, Date) – Pol Report scale	.890	.351
Male (No Alc, Married) – Pol Report scale	.871	.181
Female (No Alc, Married) – Pol Report scale	.860	.346
Female (Alc, Married) – Pol Report scale	.855	.322
Female (Alc, Date) – Pol Report scale	.802	.505
Female (No Alc, Date) – Pol Report scale	.796	.551
Male (Alc, Stranger) – Pol Report scale	.696	.623
Female (Alc, Stranger) – Pol Report scale	.344	.888
Female (No Alc, Stranger) – Pol Report scale	.260	.836
Male (No Alc, Stranger) – Pol Report scale	.617	.629

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.

Note: Female = Female victim, Male = Male victim, Alc = Alcohol consumption, No Alc = No Alcohol consumption, Pol Report scale = Police Report scale

Evaluation of Assumptions

In order to evaluate the assumptions for use of parametric tests, preliminary analyses were completed. Using frequency histograms and normal probability plots, the distribution of scores on all the scales was checked to examine any potential skewed data. In terms of the AMMSA scale, the scores were reasonably normally distributed and slightly skewed. However, the remaining scales (i.e. the Victim Blame scale, the Perpetrator Blame scale, the Police Report – Unknown Offender scale and the Police Report – Known Offender scale) revealed high positive skewness results (i.e. above the z value of 1.96). In addition, all of the scales (apart from the AMMSA and the Victim Blame scale) showed high positive kurtosis values, which indicates high level of endorsement. As a result, the normality assumption was violated for all the scales except the AMMSA scale.

Data Analysis

The analysis of data was conducted using both parametric and non-parametric statistical tests. When the test assumptions were met, Independent Samples t-test was used to examine the differences between variables, and Pearson's correlation was used to explore relationships between the variables. When the test assumptions were violated, the Mann-Whitney U Test was used to examine differences, and the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation was used to explore relationships between variables.

Gender Differences in Victim Blame scale, Perpetrator Blame scale and Police Report Scales

A Mann-Witney U Test was conducted to explore gender differences in terms of victim blame and perpetrator blame attributions, as well as the likelihood of encouraging the victim to

report the incident to the Police. There was a significant difference in the Victim Blame scale scores, where males (*Md* = 1.90, *n* = 74) scored higher than females (*Md* = 1.55, *n* = 183), *U* = 4857.50, *z* = -3.547, *p* < .001, *r* = .22. Also, there was a significant difference in the Perpetrator Blame scale, as males (*Md* = 3.87, *n* = 74) scored lower than females (*Md* = 4.42, *n* = 183), *U* = 4064, *z* = -5.022, *p* < .001, *r* = .07. In terms of the Police Report - Known Offender scale, there was also a significant difference, where males (*Md* = 2.50, *n* = 74) scored lower than females (*Md* = 3.25, *n* = 183), *U* = 4804, *z* = -3.649, *p* < .001, *r* = .23. Finally, for the Police Report - Unknown Offender scale, similar results were observed, as males (*Md* = 4, *n* = 74) scored lower than females (*Md* = 4.75, *n* = 183), *U* = 4893, *z* = - 3.587, *p* < .001, *r* = .22. All the results support the hypotheses in terms of gender differences in these variables.

Gender difference in AMMSA scores

An Independent samples t-test was performed to compare the AMMSA mean scores for males and females, in order to ascertain gender differences in RMA. To assess the homogeneity of variance assumption, the Levene's test coefficient was checked, and the non-significant result indicated that this assumption was not violated (*F* = 3.21, *p* = 0.74). There was a significant difference in scores for males (*M* = 4.22, *SD* = .82) and females (*M* = 3.43, *SD* = .91); *t* (255) = 6.48, *p* < .001, 2-tailed), which supports the first Hypothesis that males have higher levels of Rape Myth endorsement than females. Using Cohen's *d*, the extent of the differences in the means (Mean difference = .79, 95% *CI:* .55 to 1.03) was large (*d* = 0.91) (Cohen, 1988).

Relationship between age and the AMMSA

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To explore the relationship between age and the AMMSA mean scores, a correlation analysis was conducted using the Pearson's Product Moment correlation coefficient. A weak positive significant correlation between these two variables was identified, $r = .172$, $n = 257$, $p < .05$. Thus, a one-way between-groups analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to explore the differences in RMA between different age categories. Participants were divided into four age groups (Group 1: 18-30 years; $n = 146$, Group 2: 31-40 years, $n = 37$, Group 3: 41-50 years, $n = 38$ and Group 4: 51-64 years, $n = 36$). There was a statistically significant difference in AMMSA scores for the four age groups: $F(3, 253) = 3.55$, $p < .05$. The effect size, which was calculated using eta square, was .04, indicating a small-to-moderate effect size (Cohen, 1988). Post-hoc comparisons using the Hochberg's GT2 test indicated that the mean score of Group 4 ($M = 4.13$, $SD = .95$) was significantly different from Group 1 ($M = 3.58$, $SD = .92$) and Group 2 ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.03$), but was not significantly different from Group 3 ($M = 3.65$, $SD = .91$), meaning that older generations endorse more stereotypic views.

Relationship between Religious affiliation and the AMMSA

To examine the religious affiliation of the participants, a question was used: "do you consider yourself to be religious?" with the possible answers being "Yes" or "No". An Independent samples t-test was performed to compare the AMMSA mean scores between the individuals who indicated that they consider themselves to be religious ($n = 162$; 63%), and the ones who do not consider themselves to be religious ($n = 95$; 37%). The results revealed a significant difference in the AMMSA scores, as religious individuals ($M = 3.79$, $SD = .93$) scored higher than non-religious individuals ($M = 3.45$, $SD = .96$; $t(255) = 2.76$, $p < .05$, 2-tailed). Using

Cohen's d, the extent of the differences in the means (Mean difference = .34, 95% $CI:$ .09 to .58) was small ($d = 0.36$) (Cohen, 1988), perhaps due to the restricted difference between the mean scores on the RMA scale.

Knowing a victim of a sexual crime and AMMSA

An Independent samples t-test was performed to explore the AMMSA mean scores for participants who are acquainted with a victim of a sexual crime ($n = 76$; 29.80%) and participants who answered "No" to this question ($n = 179$, 70.20%). There was a significant difference in AMMSA scores for the group of participants who indicated that they are acquainted with a victim of a sexual crime ($M = 3.26$, $SD = .88$) as they scored significantly lower than the group of participants not acquainted with a victim of a sexual crime ($M = 3.82$, $SD = .99$; $t (253) = -4.41$, $p < .001$, 2-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (Mean difference = .56, 95% $CI = -.80$ to $-.31$) was medium (Cohen's $d = -.60$).

Relationship between Victim Blame and the AMMSA

Due to the violation of the normality assumption of the Victim Blame scale, a non-parametric test was used to examine the relationship between this scale and the AMMSA mean scores (i.e. the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation). A positive moderate relationship was found between these two variables, $\rho = .43$, $n = 257$, $p < .001$, meaning the higher scores on the victim blame, the higher the scores on AMMSA.

Relationship between Perpetrator Blame and the AMMSA

As with the Victim Blame scale, the Perpetrator Blame scale violated the normality assumption. The Spearman's Rank Order Correlation was subsequently used to examine the relationship between this scale and the AMMSA mean scores. A negative moderate relationship was found between these two variables, $\rho = -.53$, $n = 257$, $p < .001$, meaning that the more they scored on the Perpetrator Blame scale the less they scored on AMMSA.

Relationship between Police Report and the AMMSA

Two separate Police Report scales have been identified, both violating the normality assumption. Thus, the Spearman's Rank Order Correlation was used to explore the relationship between these two scales and the AMMSA mean scores. For the Police Report– Known Offender scale, a negative moderate significant correlation was found between this variable and the AMMSA mean scores, $\rho = -.52$, $n = 257$, $p < .001$. For the Police Report – Unknown Offender scale, a negative moderate significant correlation was found between this variable and the AMMSA mean scores, $\rho = -.45$, $n = 257$, $p < .001$. This indicates that the more likely individuals were to encourage the victim to report the offender (both known and unknown), the less they scored on AMMSA.

Mixed between-within subjects ANOVA

A mixed-model ANOVA was performed to explore how the variable gender of participants relates to other variables manipulated within the scenarios, which are often related to victim and perpetrator blaming, as well as likelihood of encouraging the victim to report the offence to the police. This includes the variables gender of victim/perpetrator (male-to-female, female-to-male; Gerber, Cronin & Steigman, 2004), consumption of alcohol (consumption by both parties, no consumption by either party; Grubb & Turner, 2012) and relationship type (stranger, dating, marital; Frese et al., 2004). These three variables are included in the model as the within-subjects factors and resulted in 36 dependent variables/ sub-scales measuring Victim Blame attributions, Perpetrator Blame attributions and likelihood of encouraging the victim to report to the police (i.e. Police Report scales). The between-subjects factor independent variable is the gender of the participants, including two groups (male and female participants).

Gender Differences in the Victim Blame scales

Evaluation of Assumptions

Prior to conducting the analysis, a number of assumptions were checked. The normality of data assumption was checked by inspecting the frequency histograms and normal probability plots for each of the 12 variables. This examination revealed that this assumption was violated for each of the 12 means of dependent variables. Also, the skewness results were checked, which showed all 12 of the scales had positive or negative skewness results (i.e. above the z value of 1.96). Therefore, this assumption was violated. The assumption of Homogeneity of Variance was checked by examining the Levene's test statistic quotient. This assumption was partially met, as in 11 out of 12 of the variables the Levene's test was not significant. The Box's Test of Equality

of Covariance Matrices was also checked, with a sig. value of $p = .000$, therefore violating this assumption.

In addition to the two assumptions presented above, the assumption of sphericity was evaluated. According to Field (2009), this assumption can only be obtained for variables of three or more levels. Therefore, all variables which have only two levels have the sphericity assumption automatically met. This applies to the main effects of gender of victim and perpetrator (which has two levels: male-to-female and female-to-male), alcohol consumption (two levels: no consumption and consumption) and interaction effects of these two variables (e.g.. gender of victim and perpetrator*alcohol consumption). To establish whether this assumption is violated, the Mauchly's sphericity test table was inspected. The test was non-significant for the interaction of gender of victim and perpetrator*alcohol consumption*relationship type. The test was significant for the interactions of gender of victim and perpetrator*relationship type and relationship type*alcohol consumption. Therefore, these interaction effects violate the assumption of sphericity. The Greenhouse-Geisser correction was used when Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated. Considering the violation of assumptions for the use of parametric tests, the following results need to be interpreted with significant caution.

There was a significant effect of participant gender, $F(1,255) = 11.823$, $p<.05$, $\eta_p^2 =.044$ which indicates a small effect size. This result indicates that male participants ($M = 1.91$) scored significantly higher than female participants ($M = 1.66$) on the Victim Blame scales. The only significant interaction effect found was that of the three way interaction of gender of victim and

perpetrator*alcohol consumption*gender of participants, $F(1,255) = 5.254$, $p = .023$, $\eta_p^2 = .020$ which indicates a small effect size.

This interaction effect shows that for male participants the consumption of alcohol increases victim blaming attribution for both male-to-female and female-to-male scenarios. However, the consumption of alcohol affects the victim blaming attribution on the two gender scenarios differently. That is, consumption of alcohol increased victim blaming for female victims but decreased victim blame for male victims. Contrary to this, no consumption of alcohol increased victim blame for male victims and decreased victim blame for female victims. Figure 3 presents these results.

For female participants, a different trend was observed. Similarly to male participants, consumption of alcohol generally increased victim blaming. However, irrespective of alcohol presence in each situation, female participants tend to attribute more blame to female victims than male victims. Figure 4 presents these results.

Gender Differences in the Perpetrator Blame scales

Evaluation of Assumptions

Similarly to the previous analyses, the assumptions of normality of data, homogeneity of variance and sphericity were examined. The normality of data assumption was checked by inspecting the frequency histograms and normal probability plots for each of the 12 variables. This

assumption was violated for each of the 12 means of dependent variables. Also, the skewness results were checked, which showed all 12 of the scales had positive or negative skewness results (i.e. above the z value of 1.96). Therefore, this assumption was violated. The assumption of Homogeneity of Variance was checked by examining the Levene's test statistic quotient. This assumption was not met, as in 6 out of 12 of the variables the Levene's test was significant. The Box's Test of Equality of Coveriance Matrices was also checked, which had a value of $p = .000$ providing further evidence that this assumption has been violated.

In addition to the two assumptions presented above, the assumption of sphericity was evaluated. The Mauchly's sphericity test was non-significant for the interaction of gender of victim and perpetrator*relationship type and for the interaction of relationship type*alcohol consumption. This test was significant for the relationship type and the interaction of gender of victim and perpetrator*relationship type*alcohol consumption. Thus, this assumption is partially met. Similarly to the results presented above, these results should be interpreted with significant caution.

There was a significant effect of participant gender, $F(1,255) = 27,.97$, $p<.001$, $\eta_p^2=.09$ which indicates a medium effect size. This result indicates male participants ($M = 3.88$) scored significantly lower than female participants ($M = 4.32$) on the Perpetrator Blame scales. Two significant interaction effects were found in this analysis. The first was the two way interaction of gender of victim and perpetrator*gender of participants, $F(1,255) = 4.016$, $p<.05$, $\eta_p^2=.016$, indicating a small effect size. Female participants generally attributed more blame to perpetrators, regardless of the gender of the victim and the perpetrator in a scenario. For both male and female

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participants, the scenarios including female victims/male perpetrators resulted in attributing more perpetrator blaming. However, this trend of blaming male perpetrators more than female perpetrators was stronger for male participants than female participants. Figure 5 presents these results.

The other significant interaction effect found was that of relationship type*gender of participants, $F(2,510) = 9.478$, $p<.001$, $\eta_p^2 = .036$, which indicates a small effect size. This result shows that female participants generally attributed more blame to perpetrators, regardless of the scenario. Both male and female participants showed a similar trend in regards to perpetrator blame based on the type of the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator. That is, the most blame was attributed when the individuals in the scenarios shared no acquaintance, the level of blame sharply declining when the individuals were dating and further slightly declining when the individuals were married. Whilst both male and female participants followed this trend, the decline of attributing blame to perpetrators was sharper for male participants than for female participants. The results are presented in Figure 6.

Gender Differences in the Police Report scales

Evaluation of Assumptions

The assumptions of normality of data, homogeneity of variance and sphericity were examined in respect of the Police Report scales. The first assumption, normality of data, was partially met, based on the frequency histograms and normal probability plots of the 12 variables.

Seven out of 12 variables had positive or negative skewed results, whereas 5 variables did not (i.e. the variables involving: a) female victim/male perpetrator, no alcohol, married relationship, b) female victim/male perpetrator, alcohol, married relationship, c) male victim/female perpetrator, alcohol, dating relationship, d) male victim/ female perpetrator, no alcohol, married relationship and e) male victim/ female perpetrator, alcohol, married relationship). The assumption of Homogeneity of Variance was checked by examining the Levene's test statistic quotient. This assumption was partially met, as in 4 out of 12 of the variables the Levene's test was significant. The Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices was also inspected, which had a value of p = .006.

Similarly to the previous analyses, the assumption of sphericity was checked by inspecting the Mauchly's test of sphericity table. This indicated that the test was non-significant for the interaction of relationship type*alcohol consumption. However, the test was significant for the relationship type, the interaction of gender of victim and perpetrator*relationship type and the interaction of gender of victim and perpetrator*relationship type*alcohol consumption. Thus, this assumption was violated. Based on the violation of assumptions, the results presented below should be interpreted with caution.

There was a significant effect of participant gender, $F(1,255) = 16.76$, $p<.001$, $\eta_p^2=.06$ which indicates a medium effect size. This result shows that male participants ($M = 3.05$) scored significantly lower than female participants ($M = 3.62$) on the Police Report scales. The three way interaction between the gender of victim and perpetrator*relationship type*gender of participant was significant, $F(2,510) = 4.349$, $p<.05$, $\eta_p^2=.017$, indicating a small effect size.

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For male participants, the likelihood of encouraging the victim to report the offence to the police was higher, across different relationship types, if the victim was female and the perpetrator male. Further, regardless of the gender of victim and perpetrator, the likelihood of encouraging reporting to the police was highest for stranger sexual assault. This likelihood sharply declined for date sexual assault and then further slightly declined for marital sexual assault. However, for male participants, the decline in encouraging the victim to report to the police was less steep when it was a male victim and female perpetrator, rather than female victim and male perpetrator. Figure 7 presents these results.

For female participants, some similarities can be observed. The likelihood of encouraging the victim to come forward was higher if the victim was female and the perpetrator male. Also, this likelihood was highest for stranger sexual assaults, followed by date sexual assaults and then followed by marital sexual assaults. However, the pattern of this decrease differed between female participants and male participants. Female participants declined in their willingness to encourage the victim to report from stranger, to date, to marital in similar measure; whereas males declined sharply from stranger to date and then slightly to marital. This was true for both, female victims/male perpetrators and male victims/female perpetrators, as opposed to male participants where the decline in likelihood to encourage the victim to report the offence was much sharper for female victims/male perpetrator than for male victim/female perpetrator. These results are presented in Figure 8, below.

Effect of gender of participant (male), alcohol and genders of victim/perpetrator

Figure 3. Effect of gender of participants (male), alcohol consumption and genders of victim and

perpetrator.

Effect of gender of participant (female), alcohol and genders of victim/perpetrator

Figure 4. Effect of gender of participant (female), alcohol consumption and genders of victim and
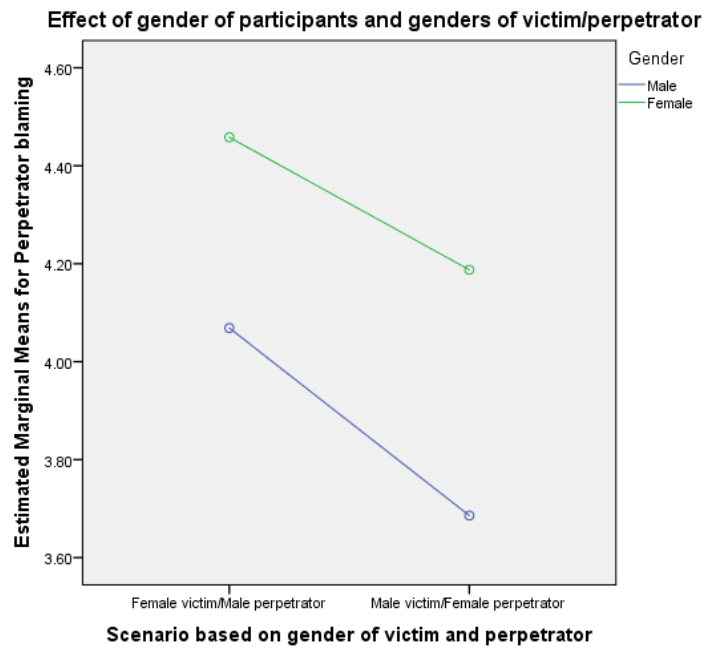
perpetrator

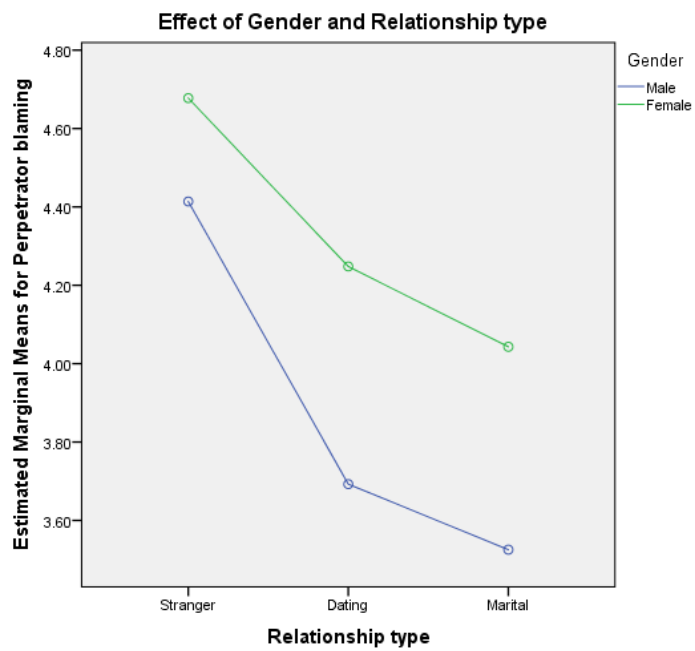*Figure 5.* Effect of gender of participants and genders of victim and perpetrator

Figure 6. Effect of Gender of participants and Relationship type
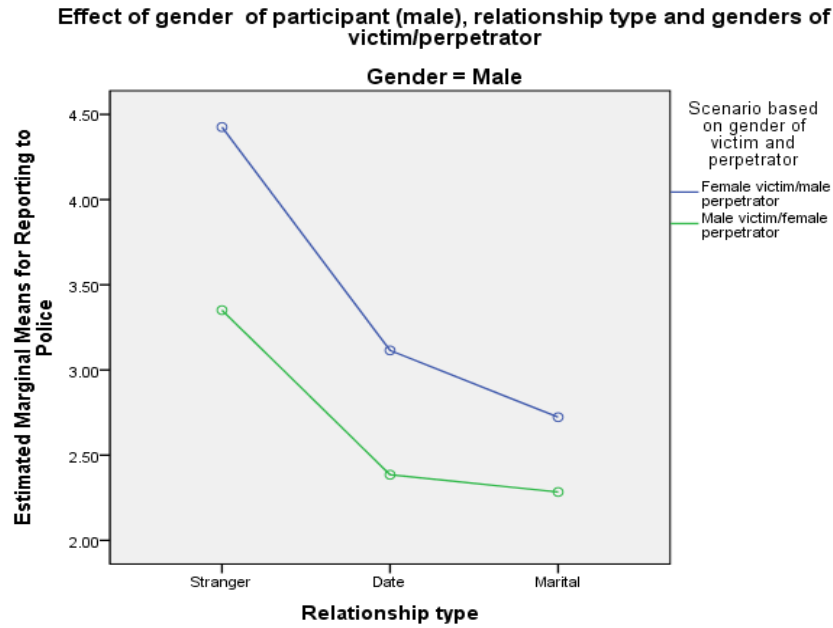
Figure 7. Effect of gender participant (male), relationship type and genders of victim and
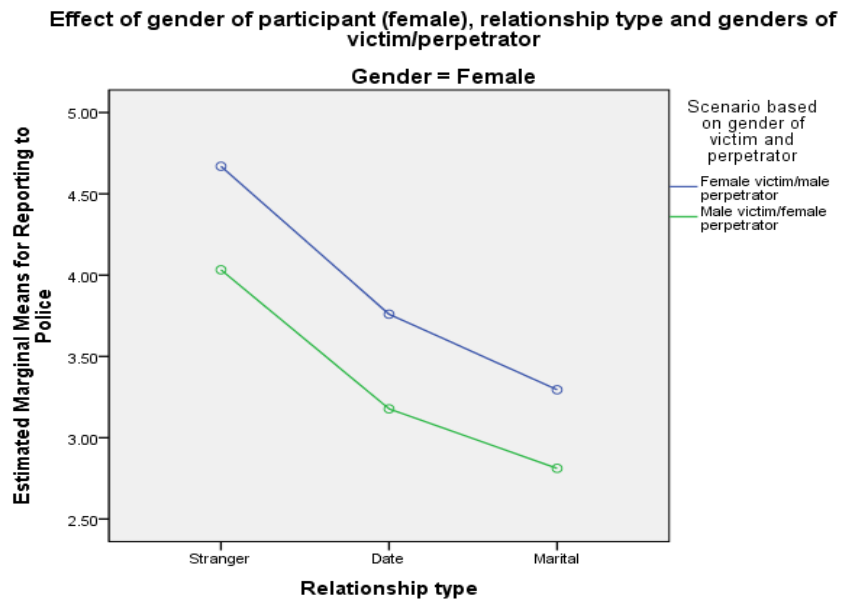
perpetrator

Figure 8. Effect of gender of participant (female), relationship type and genders of victim and

perpetrator

Multiple Regressions

In order to determine whether the independent variables age, gender, religious affiliation, knowledge of victim, victim blame, perpetrator blame and two scales of encouragement for police reporting are predictors of RMA, standard multiple regressions were performed.

Evaluation of Assumptions

Pallant (2013) suggests a number of assumptions that need to be checked for violations before proceeding with completing this analysis. To check for adequacy of the sample size, a formula proposed by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) was used: N > 50 + 8m (where m equals the number of independent variables). Based on this result, the current sample size ($N = 257$) is sufficient for performing this analysis. For checking the Multicollinearity assumption, correlations of all the Independent Variables were conducted to explore their relationship with the Dependent Variable. Based on the results, the variables age, religious affiliation and knowledge of a victim were excluded from the regression model due to very small co-efficient scores (less than .3; Pallant, 2013). The remaining Independent Variables were explored in terms of their correlations. Field (2009) suggests that variables with a bivariate correlation of .8 or more should be excluded from the analysis. As indicated by the results, no variables had such high correlation co-efficient between them.

Pallant (2013) also suggests to explore the Tolerance and Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values to further explore the presence of multicollinearity. In the current analysis, the value of the

Tolerance fell above .10 and the value of the VIF fell below 10, which further supports no violations of the multicollinearity assumption.

To check for outliers, Pallant (2013) suggests inspecting the Normal Probability Plot (P-P) of the Regression Standardised Residual and the Scatterplot. No major deviations from normality were noticed in these two plots. Also, no outliers were detected in the Scatterplot. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) suggest that outliers are cases that have a standardised residual of more than 3.3 or less than -3.3. All the residuals of the current sample fall between these two values. However, Pallant (2013) proposes inspecting the Mahalanobis distances to determine whether any of the cases exceed the critical value as proposed by Tabachnick and Fidell (2013). In the current analysis, the number of Independent variables (i.e. five) indicate that the critical value is 20.52 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). In the current sample, four cases exceeded this value.

Pallant (2013) notes that it is not unusual for large sample sizes to have a few outliers. As stated previously, the scales were skewed, however; as can be seen above, this was not due to the presence of outliers but due to naturally occurring skewness and therefore running a multiple regression is feasible in this respect (Field, 2009). Consequently, in order to explore the influence of these on the regression model, the value of Cook's Distance was explored. Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) suggest that cases with values larger than 1 cause potential problems and should therefore be excluded. In the current sample, the maximum value of all the cases fell below 1, thus no cases were deleted.

Following the check of violations of assumptions, a standard multiple regression was performed using the AMMSA mean scores as the Dependent variable and Participants' Gender, Victim Blame scale, Perpetrator Blame scale, Police Report - Known Offender scale and Police Report - Unknown Offender scale as Independent Variables. Table 9 presents the unstandardized regression coefficients (B value), the standardized regression coefficients (β value), t-value (t) significance levels (sig.) and the semi-partial correlation coefficients (sr_i^2).

The model was statistically significant, $F (5, 251) = 36.39$, $p < 0.001$, and explained 42% (R Square) of the variance in the AMMSA mean scores. The standardised beta values indicate that the Police Report - Known Offender scale and the Victim Blame scale made the strongest contributions to explaining the AMMSA mean scores. Three out of the five Independent variables (i.e. Gender, the Victim Blame scale and the Police Report - Known Offender scale) made a statistically significant (i.e. $p<.05$) unique contribution to the prediction of the AMMSA scores. Thus, higher scores on the Victim Blame Scale predict higher AMMSA scores. Lower scores on the Police Report – Known Offender Scale predict higher AMMSA scores. Also, results show that being a male participant is predictive of higher scores on the AMMSA scale.

Table 9. Summary of the Standard Multiple Regression Analysis for Predictors of AMMSA scores (N = 257)

	B	β	t	sig.	sr_i^2
Gender	-.432	-.205	-4.016	.00**	-.03
Victim Blame Scale	.424	.239	4.65	.00**	.05
Perpetrator Blame Scale	-.219	-.147	-1.92	.06	-.008
Police Report – Known Offender scale	-.218	-.285	-3.66	.00**	-.03
Police Report – Unknown Offender scale	-.04	-.038	-.611	.541	-.0008

Note $F (5, 251) = 36.39$, $p < 0.001$; $R^2 = .42$. **$p<.001$

Discussion

The current study aimed to investigate the demographic factors associated with RMA amongst a Greek-Cypriot sample, and to explore attributions of blame to the victim and the perpetrator using a range of different situations depicting sexual assault. This is the first study of its kind in Cyprus.

Gender Differences

In respect of gender differences, the results indicate that men endorsed higher levels of RMA in contrast to women, blamed the victim of the rape more and attributed less blame to the assailant. These findings are consistent with results from previous studies exploring this matter (e.g. Grubb & Harrower, 2008, 2009; Suarez & Gadalla, 2010 for a review). For example, as studies have consistently found, male observers tend to blame rape victims more than female observers both in situations where the rape victim is female (Furnham & Boston, 1996; Sims, Noel, & Maisto, 2007), and in situations where the victim is male (Davies, Smith & Rogers, 2009; Whatley & Riggio, 1993; White & Kurpius, 2002). In addition, studies have shown that male participants tend to be more accepting of rape situations (Talbot, Neill & Rankin, 2010) and minimize the seriousness of rape situations to a greater extent than female participants (Newcombe et al., 2008).

Gender differences in victim blaming attributions, perpetrator blaming attributions and likelihood of encouraging the victim to report the offence to the police were explored further in

the context of situational factors, including the relationship type between the victim and the perpetrator, the gender of the victim and the perpetrator and alcohol consumption by both or neither party. As it was found, gender of participants seems to interact with these situational factors and that female and male participants responded differently in each scenario. However, these results need to be interpreted with significant caution, considering the violations of assumptions of the data. As a result, it is recommended that future research further explore these relationships and interactions in the Greek-Cypriot population.

Pollard (1992) asserts that attitudinal factors, rather than the gender of the participants, act as relevant mediators on rape judgements. For example, Schwartz and Lundgren (1998) suggest that the gender differences could potentially be explained by the acceptance of traditional gender roles. Snell and Godwin (1993) found that participants who endorsed traditional gender roles attributed greater responsibility to a rape victim, thought that the victim was at fault regardless of the situation and felt that it was the victim's responsibility to take preventative measures. The results of a number of studies (e.g. Ashmore, Del Boca, & Bilder, 1995, Ben-David & Schneider, 2005) support this theory, as they found that men endorse more traditional attitudes than women. Individuals who agree with traditional attitudes are more likely to endorse rape myths (Sims et al., 2007; Yamawaki, 2007).

Consistent with these results, White (2009) suggests that gender is not *causing* behaviour, but is *defined by* behaviour. That is, individuals are exposed to norms of "masculinity" and "femininity" from a young age and from their family, peers and society at large, and these norms are enacted within romantic relationships. As White (2009) notes, masculinity is commonly

associated with power and independence, while femininity resembles dependence on others. Thus, males may feel compelled to behave in ways that establish and maintain authority in intimate relationships, whereas females may focus on pleasing men by placing greater priority on maintaining the relationship instead of meeting their own needs.

Based on this theory, Black and McCloskey (2013) argue that the messages about gender roles are incorporated into people's behaviours, as well as their attitudes and their judgments of others. As they found, individuals of both genders who accepted traditional gender roles were more likely to assign greater responsibility to a victim of rape, less responsibility to the assailant and were less likely to agree that the woman should report the incident, in comparison to individuals with liberal attitudes. In line with other studies mentioned above, these researchers conclude that attitudes about gender roles may be more powerful than gender in predicting attributions of blame and responsibility in rape cases, as well as the endorsement of rape myths. Another potential explanation for the gender differences relates to the fact that women are more familiar with the issue of sexual assault and are more likely to know rape victims personally, which could perhaps explain why they tend to attribute less blame to the victim (Grubb & Harrower, 2009).

Another theory that has been used to explain the gender differences in the area of victim blaming in rape cases is the Defensive Attribution Hypothesis (Shaver, 1970). According to this theory, the level of attributed blame depends on the observer's perceived similarity to the victim; thus, when the observer and the victim are perceived to be increasingly similar, the victim will be blamed less for the situation (Grubb & Harrower, 2008). Recent studies have explored this topic

further and found that male observers tend to blame (female) victims of rape more than female observers because of their reduced identification with the victim (Davies et al., 2009; Donovan, 2007).

Gerber et al. (2004) proposed an alternative view of the Defensive Attribution Theory that might be more applicable to the current study which utilized scenarios depicting both male-to-female and female-to-male abuse. As they suggest, not all men identify themselves with the perpetrators and not all women with the victims. Rather, as they note, men are more likely to identify themselves with traits linked to power (e.g. dominance, leadership) (Brace & Davidson, 2000), while women might identify themselves with characteristics such as nurturance, kindness and warmth. Therefore, when asked to judge a rape scenario, men may identify more with the "powerful" assailants regardless of whether the assailant is male or female, and women more with the victim, regardless of the victim's gender (Gerber et al., 2004).

Kahn et al. (2011) supported this hypothesis, as they found that male participants blamed the perpetrator significantly less than female participants, independent of the gender of the assailant. Thus, as found by others researchers and as indicated above, they suggest that attributions of blame in rape situations are more related to gender-role enactments and stereotypes. Therefore, future research should include measures of traditional gender role attitudes (e.g. the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, Glick & Fiske, 1996 or the Gender Attitude Inventory, Ashmore et al., 1995) to explore differences between individuals in terms of their RMA and attributions of responsibility in rape scenarios.

The above studies mostly come to a common theme – the effect of power on the perception of gender roles, rather than gender itself, on the attitudes of individuals. The current study can therefore be contextualised in light of the previously discussed GEI domain of "Power". As stated, Greek Cypriots scored the lowest on this index and therefore the gender differences found in this study are consistent with such information.

Age

When comparing different age groups in terms of their endorsement of rape myths, this study found that older participants endorse higher RMA. Previous research found a similar result; older participants express less favourable attitudes towards victims of rape (Nagel et al., 2005; Hantzi et al., 2015). Nagel et al. (2005) note that the reasons for this relationship are currently unclear, but attribute this to cohort effects; that is, younger individuals were raised in a culture that is more aware of violence against women, thus they might hold less stereotypical views supporting rape perpetuation.

A meta-analytic review conducted by Anderson, Cooper and Okamura (1997) explored 62 correlations between four demographic variables (gender, age, ethnic group and socioeconomic status) and attitudes towards rape and found that gender provided the largest mean correlation ($r = .33$), indicating that males where more accepting of these attitudes. Age produced the next highest mean correlation ($r = .12$), suggesting that as the age of the participants increased, so did their acceptance of rape myths. These researchers attribute this result to either a cohort effect (as

also suggested by Nagel et al., 2005) or to a developmental effect; that is, as people grow older they become more accepting of attitudes towards rape.

However, other studies have shown a complex relationship between age and the AMMSA scale. For example, Sham Ku (2015) explored RMA within a Jamaican population and found that the younger (i.e. 18-30 years) and older (i.e. 40+ years) groups had higher RMA scores than the middle aged (i.e. 30-41 years) group. As Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) point out, age is not directly associated with RMA, and any relationship found between these two variables is probably due to some third variable that co-varies with age (e.g. education, psychological maturity). In the current study, this result may further reflect the development of improved policies designed to increase awareness on this topic which have taken place in recent years in Cyprus and are most likely to have affected the attitudes of the younger generations.

Religion

The results of this study indicate that participants who identify themselves as "religious" scored higher on the AMMSA scale. Flood and Pease (2009) propose that spiritual institutions may have an impact on attitudes towards violence. Previous research found that members of ecclesiastical professions were likely to endorse and portray negative attitudes towards rape victims (Sheldon & Parent, 2002). As these researchers suggest, this may be related to their fundamentalist and sexist viewpoints that have traditionally been reinforced throughout their profession.

To provide an explanation for this, King (1995) suggests that gender roles and stereotypes are constructed through religion, culture, lifestyle and upbringing. For example, as Klingorová and Havlicek (2015) note, the status of women in society could be an outcome of the interpretation of religious texts and of the institutional set-up of religious communities. Cyprus is considered to be the second most religious country in the EU (European Commission, 2005); therefore, religion appears to play a significant role in the cultural norms and roles of each gender. According to Norris and Inglehart (2004), societies with higher religiosity may accept the authority of religious teachers who advocate a patriarchal organisation of society and are more likely to maintain gender inequality within societal structures.

Fortune (2005) argues that Biblical writings describing the right of the husband to his wife's body emphasize the role of the patriarchal structures of many religious institutions, and may be partially responsible for perpetuating the societal notion that husbands have conjugal rights to their wives. Freymeyer (1997) explored the sexual perceptions of male students at a Christian liberal arts college and found that participants with higher amount of religious affiliation (measured by amount of prayer and importance of religion) were more likely to attribute blame to a female victim of rape who was promiscuous or dressed in a provocative manner. As Edwards et al. (2011) suggest, more research is required to understand the reasons for these findings and how these ideologies affect the behaviours of religious individuals.

Knowledge of a victim of a sexual crime

The results of the current study suggest that approximately 30% of the sample are acquainted with a victim of a sexual assault. As indicated by the comparison in AMMSA scores, this group of participants scored significantly lower on AMMSA in comparison to participants who indicated that they do not know a victim of a sexual crime. Two studies found similar results (Ellis, O'Sullivan & Sowards, 1992; Gilmartin-Zena, 1988), whereas one study found no such relationship (Borden, Karr & Caldwell-Colbert, 1988).

As Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) suggest, future research should further explore this relationship, due to the implications for the lives of rape survivors. For instance, future research could investigate, in a qualitative manner, the rape myth endorsement of individuals who have knowledge of a victim, and how their acquaintance with victims of rape might have influenced and challenged this lack of endorsement.

Differences in RMA amongst countries in the European Union

Table 10 presents the differences of five populations of European background in terms of their scores on the AMMSA scale. It also includes their ranking position in the latest Gender Equality Index evaluation, conducted in 2012 (EIGE, 2013). As the table presents, the study sample of Hantzi et al.'s (2015) study had the highest endorsement of RMA, followed by the results of the current study. However, it should be noted that the sample in Hantzi et al.'s (2015) study consisted of both Greeks and Greek Cypriots. The researchers conducted a hierarchical regression analysis and found that alongside gender and age, nationality was a significant predictor of AMMSA scores. Thus, they further explored the differences between the two groups and found that the Greek Cypriots ($M = 4.72$, $SD = .77$) scored significantly higher than the Greeks ($M =$

3.85, *SD* = .82) on the AMMSA: *t* (335) = 9.55, *p* < .001, *d* = - 1.09. The current study further

supports that Greek Cypriots scored higher than Greeks on the AMMSA scale.

They also found that the Greek-Cypriot group tended to express more hostile sexism than

Greeks. They argue that these results may reflect the distinct identities of the two samples, as the

Greek Cypriots come from a smaller, post-conflict society and the majority of them identify

themselves as Cypriots more than Greeks (Psaltis, 2012). As they conclude, even though the two

samples share cultural traits in terms of language and religion, this result suggests that gender roles

might be more pronounced in Cyprus than Greece (Hantzi et al., 2015).

As indicated in the Introduction section, the Cypriot society is considered a patriarchal

society with entrenched ideas that support the "superiority of males" and subordinate the role of

women (MIGS, 2010). An example of the gender inequalities can be found in the political domain

in Cyprus, where only 12.5% of seats in the parliament are occupied by women (United Nations,

2015b). Also, the country has the lowest score on the Gender Equality Index in the domain of

Power, which also supports that women are significantly under-represented in power positions in

politics, economy and culture and are less likely to be involved in important decisions in these

areas (EIGE, 2013).

It should be noted that very few studies in this area have focused on participants' ethnicity

and the relationship to RMA (van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014). For example, Heaven, Connors

and Pretorius (1998) compared the attitudes of South-African and Australian undergraduate

students and found the South-African group to be more likely to blame the rape victim. Yamawaki

and Tschanz (2005) found that Japanese college students were more likely to minimize rape and blame victims compared to American students. As Ward (1995) points out, comparative studies into this area are important, as it has been suggested that attitudes towards rape vary on the basis of culture. Thus, future research could compare the RMA and attributions of responsibility and blame in rape situations of Greek-Cypriots and individuals from different cultural backgrounds, in order to explore this issue further and discuss reasons for potential differences in results.

Table 10. Differences in AMMSA scores among five EU countries

Study	Country	GEI Number and Ranking (of 28 EU countries)	M (SD) Males	M (SD) Females
Helmke, Kobusch, Rees, Meyer & Bohner (2014)	France	55.7 (9/28)	3.16 (*)	2.67 (*)
Helmke et al. (2014)	Germany	55.3 (10/28)	2.25 (*)	2.26 (*)
Megías et al. (2011)	Spain	53.6 (12/28)	3.32 (.88)	2.96 (.94)
Current Study	Cyprus	44.9 (17/28)	4.22 (.82)	3.43 (.91)
Hantzi et al. (2015)	Greece & Cyprus	38.3 (25/28)**	4.51 (.84)	3.84 (.83)

*Data not available
**Greece's score and position in GEI ranking

The results of the current study indicate a positive correlation of the RMA with the Victim Blame scale and a negative correlation with the Perpetrator Blame scale. This result is consistent with previous studies which found that participants scoring high on RMA scales tended to blame the victim more (e.g. Mason, Riger & Foley, 2004, Check & Malamuth, 1985b) and the assailant less (Kopper, 1996; Sleath & Bull, 2010). Whatley (2005) suggests that individuals with high adherence to rape myths may hold the victims of rape somewhat responsible for the attack, with the "justification" that the victim "asked for it".

Other researchers (e.g. Aronowitz, Lambert & Davidoff, 2012; Grubb & Turner, 2012) propose that rape victims are believed to "get what they deserve" for not protecting themselves in an adequate manner, or for not ensuring to avoid the assault by modifying their behaviour. In addition, as the results show, individuals with high RMA are less likely to encourage a victim of an assault report the rape to the police. This result corresponds with results of previous research (e.g. Frese et al., 2004; Krahé, 1998).

Suarez and Gadalla's (2010) meta-analysis of 37 studies showed that RMA is associated with negative attitudes towards women and is more prevalent in men. Thus, there is strong empirical support to confirm the impact of endorsement of rape myths on the attribution of blame in rape cases, and this identifies the need to address and change societal attitudes about this matter (van der Bruggen & Grubb, 2014). As these authors note, the change in attitudes is vital to ensure that victims of sexual violence are provided with the appropriate support and treatment required for their recovery.

According to van de Bruggen and Grubb (2014), the majority of the studies exploring RMA have employed student samples as participants which may restrict the generalisability of results. Thus, a strength of the current study is that is has utilized a large sample ($N = 257$) of individuals from a variety of professions and backgrounds. By investigating the attitudes of individuals from a wider range of occupations and ages, this study aimed to present a more representative view of the Greek-Cypriot population's view on rape and rape blame attributions (Strömwall et al., 2012). However, it must be stated that this study attracted a high proportion of educated individuals, predominantly female which means that the study cannot be fully generalizable.

Another strength of the study is the data collection method that was used (i.e. through the Internet). Internet-based studies have a number of advantages over lab-type research (Kraut et al., 2004; Reips, 2002). For example, it allows the researcher to recruit large heterogeneous samples from locations far away and this method is considered to be cost-effective in time, space and labour, providing more ecologically valid results (Birnbaum, 2004). Whilst this method might cause sampling bias, it also protects the participants' anonymity and reduces the bias that can emerge from socially desirable responses (Birnbaum, 2004; Gellman & Turner, 2013).

At the same time, conducting a study via the Internet might have several potential disadvantages. For example, if a participant has a question about the instructions, the experimenter is not present to explain or clarify these (Birnbaum, 2004). Also, the high drop-out rate of participants in web-based surveys is considered one of the problems of this method. As mentioned

below, this issue was observed in the current study, which can be avoided in future studies by employing the traditional method of collecting data using the "paper-and-pencil" approach.

Another limitation of the current study pertains to the fact that the victim blame attribution was significantly lower than the levels of the perpetrator blame in all the scenarios, as observed by the skewed results, despite the fact that the scenarios or instructions never included the word "rape" or "abuse". One explanation for this might be that the scenarios used were not ambiguous enough to produce higher levels of blame towards the victim and lower levels of blame towards the perpetrator. Future research could perhaps utilize more ambiguous scenarios to explore this topic.

Another possible explanation for this result pertains to the study's methodology. As indicated by van der Bruggen and Grubb (2014), the majority of rape blame attribution studies have utilized a similar experimental vignette methodology. This has included asking participants to read a hypothetical scenario in which characteristics of the situation and the victim are manipulated and are thereafter asked to judge the rape situation using quantitative (i.e. Likert) scales (Alexander & Becker, 1978; Ward, 1995). According to Alexander and Becker (1978), this procedure is thought to be more reliable and realistic rather than using simple survey questions. Abrams, Viki, Masser and Bohner (2003) suggest that the vignette method provides high content validity, as it is a method that requires people to vividly imagine a realistic situation in order to make judgements.

However, many studies utilizing this method generally find low victim blaming attributions, compared to blame assigned to perpetrators. This finding is consistent with the

current research, where the majority of the participants assigned more blame to the perpetrator than the victim in all the twelve vignette situations. Thus, the skewed results and the subsequent violation of the normality assumption led to the use of non-parametric tests when comparing differences and exploring relationships of the victim blame, the perpetrator blame and the police report scales. This can be considered another limitation of this study, as non-parametric tests may lack power in comparison to more traditional, parametric approaches (Whitley & Ball, 2002). However, as Field (2009) suggests, certain real-life observations can be expected to produce skewed results.

In addition, the vignettes contained limited information with regards to the context of each situation, providing a restricted amount of relevant details to the observers. Researchers have criticised the use of vignettes in this area, as the scenarios are artificial and may lack in external and ecological validity and do not necessarily reflect how individuals would respond in similar real life situations (Davies, Austen & Rogers, 2011; Ward, 1995). As van der Bruggen and Grubb (2014) note, many other variables might be involved in the rape attribution formation and there may be many mediating variables which affect the formation of observers' attitudes towards victims of rape.

Subsequently, future research could use a different methodology to explore attributions of blame in rape situations. Recent research (Cohn, Depuis & Brown, 2009) utilized a videotape approach in order to make the situation more realistic and provide more contextual information to the participants. Alternatively, future research can adopt a qualitative approach to investigate the naturalistic aspect of blame during a conversation and to further investigate the Greek-Cypriot's

perceptions and rationale for attributing blame to individuals of different rape situations (Anderson, 1999). This is likely to improve the ecological validity of future studies investigating this topic (van de Bruggen & Grubb, 2014).

Another limitation of the current study can be the high drop-out rate of the respondents. Although a total of 499 individuals accessed the link to the study, only approximately 50% of them completed the study. This might be a result of the sensitive nature of this topic, or might be due to practical reasons (e.g. the study required approximately 40 minutes to be completed, as indicated by the pilot testing and by participants' comments post-completion). Despite this problem with the response rate, there seemed to be adequate variance in the sample characteristics to suggest that the sample is representative of the Cypriot population. Individuals of varying genders, ages, religious affiliation levels and professions constituted this study's sample. For this reason, the results of the current study offer a considerable insight into the relationships between certain demographic characteristics and RMA and attitudes towards victims and perpetrators of rape situations, despite the limitations.

Finally, the majority of the scales used in the current study, including the Perpetrator Blame scale, the Victim Blame scale, the Police Report – Known Offender scale and the AMMSA scale had high internal consistency co-efficients (i.e. α >.90). According to Cattell (1978) and Kline (1986), scales with high internal consistency could include many items which are essentially repetitions of each other and this can appear in factor analyses as a "bloated specific". Thus, the results of this study should be interpreted with caution. Further developments of the scales are therefore recommended.

As the results of the current study suggest, there are certain variables that relate to the degree to which a victim might be blamed for their assault, including gender, religious affiliation and rape myth acceptance. These findings have important implications for rape victims and their involvement with treatment services and medico-legal organizations designed to provide support to these victims (Grubb & Harrower, 2008, 2009). Consequently, educational programmes for practitioners working with victims of sexual violence may provide a good insight into their own negative blame attributions and endorsement of stereotypes, and the impact that these may have on their clinical practice (Davies & Rogers, 2006).

Future research should focus on raising awareness of the rape supporting attitudes and development of training for individuals working with rape victims (e.g. doctors, police, solicitors, judges, mental health professionals, volunteers) to enable them to work with them as effectively and non-judgementally as possible. In addition, developing strategies for raising awareness and subsequently reducing rape victim blame in the general population might be another area that future research and initiatives can focus on, taking into account the socio-cultural context of Cyprus and the patriarchal nature of this society (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

According to Kouta et al. (2013), in Cyprus, there is a lack of awareness in terms of the prevalence and consequences of sexual violence, and a lack of co-ordination among public authorities and other related NGOs. They add that the existing taboos and stereotypes in relation to gender roles are deeply ingrained in the Cypriot society and culture, thus there is a need to

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develop education programmes to educate the public in this topic. In addition, as Kouta et al. (2013) suggest, the professionals who offer support and help to individuals involved in rape situations need to adopt a collaborated approach that will enable the implementation of appropriate policies to reduce the stigma associated with this type of crime and encourage more individuals affected by this to come forward and access these services for support.

In line with this, the above findings highlight the need for a more adept understanding of the victim-blaming phenomenon and the effects that this can have on victim's recovery and the society's response. In order to encourage victims to come forward and report this offence, and for society to be able to respond in an appropriate manner to the victims' needs, it is important that additional research is carried out in Cyprus exploring this matter.

Overall, the way that individuals attribute responsibility in situations of sexual assault depends on a complex combination of personal, psychological and situational factors (Grubb & Turner, 2012). In order to understand the reasons why individuals assign blame in the way they do, it is important to identify the factors that contribute to this and the societal variables which may result in the denigration and blame of the victim in these situations (Grubb & Turner, 2012).

Thus, by understanding the attitudes of individuals who come from a shared background, this research aims to raise awareness of the public in this matter and help individuals better understand the implications of endorsement of rape myths and attitudes that attribute responsibility to victims instead of perpetrators. This research has therefore focused upon a culture-specific perspective of RMA and attribution of blame, exploring the influence of demographic factors and

the relationship between Greek-Cypriots' endorsement of rape-supportive beliefs with assigning blame in situations depicting sexual violence, adding to the existing limited cross-cultural literature on this topic.

Conclusion

As previous research highlighted, the acceptance of myths regarding rape and sexual violence in modern society is associated with specific attitudes towards sexual violence and exploitation, this project endeavours to add to the existing limited cross cultural literature on Rape Myths Acceptance and sexual perceptions. To the knowledge of the author, this is the first study that explores this issue within the Cypriot society. Due to the fact that this study is of an exploratory nature, providing only a limited view of the complex area of sexual violence beliefs and attitudes, it is hoped that it will encourage fellow researchers to conduct large scale research exploring other relevant areas such as Greek Cypriots' perceptions of same sex sexual violence.

Possible benefits for practice of the current study include raising awareness of the degree of Rape Myths Acceptance and Victim Blaming Attitudes in Cyprus and informing people of the potential risks of these endorsements, such as victims being less inclined to disclose their experiences due to fear of being blamed or disregarded, having poor access to therapeutic support and becoming stigmatized by the public. In addition, the findings of this study have the potential to assist other professionals and organizations who provide support to victims of abuse to increase their understanding of how society perceives rape, thus enabling them to use an evidence based approach to improve assessment and delivery of services.

As noted above, Cyprus lacks rape helplines, rape crisis centres and specialized resources for rape or sexual assault. Therefore, victims may be less inclined to seek support or, due to the possible stigmatization, less inclined to report such a crime to the police. The findings of this

study may assist rape awareness and prevention programmes to educate the public of the perceptions and beliefs that people tend to have about rape and subsequently reduce the deep-rooted stereotypes of Cypriot culture.

Finally, the project aimed to inform possible interventions and the development of good practice in the field of sexual aggression which, as noted above, tends to be underrepresented in the social agenda of various organizations responsible for ensuring gender equality in Cyprus.

CHAPTER 5

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

<center>**Discussion**</center>

The current thesis aimed to explore the influence of media on RMA, the relationship of several demographic factors and attributions of blame to victims and perpetrators with RMA in a sample of Greek-Cypriots, and to critique a recently developed measure of RMA. This thesis was organized in five chapters. This final chapter aims at summarizing the main findings, presenting recommendations for future research and practice and discussing the limitations of the thesis.

Main findings

The first chapter of this thesis, the Introduction, discusses issues in relation to Violence against Women (VaW) and in particular sexual violence and presents the reasons for exploring attitudes of individuals in relation to this issue. Thus, it provides a justification background for the current thesis and presents the structure of the following chapters. As indicated in the Introduction, the endorsement of rape-supportive beliefs and stereotypes has important implications for the victims and perpetrators of sexual violence, thus it is crucial to study the variables that affect the endorsement of these beliefs. The term "Rape Myth Acceptance" was coined nearly four decades ago (Burt, 1980) and ever since a number of studies have been conducted in many countries, attempting to explain this phenomenon and understand the roots of it.

The feminist perspective postulates that VaW stems from gender inequalities both at societal and individual level (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980). Especially in societies where males

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are seen as "dominant" and "superior" to women, violence is seen as means of gaining and maintaining power and control over women, in order to keep them in subordinate positions (Burt, 1980). Suarez and Gadalla's (2010) meta-analysis of 37 studies found empirical support for the feminist perspective: the results indicate that males tend to display significantly higher endorsement of RMA than females. They also found that RMA was significantly associated with hostile attitudes and behaviour towards women which shows that sexism perpetuates the endorsement of rape-supportive beliefs. Consequently, gender featured as a core factor explored throughout this thesis.

Chapter 2 explored the impact of seven types of media in relation to RMA, in a systematic way. The review attempted to include studies that used a range of types of mass media. Eleven studies which fulfilled the PICOS criteria and scored high on the Quality Assessment measures were included. The review also aimed at examining gender differences in this respect, in line with previous studies on RMA.

The media types explored included films, music videos, advertisements, news headlines, video games, a book story and crime drama. The review concluded that male participants scored higher in RMA following the exposure to the experimental stimuli in several studies, whereas there were no significant differences between females in the experimental and the control conditions in the majority of the studies. Male participants seemed to be primed by manipulations portraying women as sex objects, for example, in that this increased their RMA score. Females were only affected by priming in two studies, but in an opposite direction – viewing females portrayed negatively or progressively decreased their RMA scored. This review highlights that media could

affect men's attitudes negatively more than females' attitudes, and discusses ways that media can educate the public and contribute to reducing the stereotypes surrounding situations of sexual violence. However, the results of the review should be interpreted with caution, as the variability of media types included may have led to bias to the overall findings. The review also points out that additional research is required to study how media may perpetuate rape-stereotypes and how it affects the cognitions of individuals, perhaps by employing qualitative methods to explore this matter.

Chapter Three focused on presenting and critiquing the scale that was used in the empirical study of Chapter Four; that is, the Acceptance of Modern Myths about Sexual Aggression scale (Gerger et al., 2007). The chapter presented methodological issues of previous RMA scales and discussed the psychometric properties of this instrument. Overall, the AMMSA has good psychometric characteristics. One of the AMMSA's main strengths pertains to the subtle item wording. The limitations of this tool were also discussed, including the fact that although this tool is described as "multidimensional" by its authors, the exploratory factor analyses conducted by several researchers (e.g. Hantzi et al., 2015; Megías et al., 2011) show a single-factor loading. Thus, additional research could be conducted to examine further this instrument's psychometric properties and its utility across different samples and cultures.

Chapter Four presented an empirical investigation of the sexual beliefs of Greek-Cypriots, by exploring a number of demographic variables and their influence on RMA and attribution of blame to victims and perpetrators in situations depicting sexual violence. The demographic characteristics examined include the gender of participants, their age, religious affiliation and

knowledge of a victim of sexual assault. The vignettes and scales used to examine attribution of blame were adapted from previous studies (e.g. Frese et al., 2004; Bell et al., 1994). The twelve vignettes described situations depicting sexual violence between two individuals; half of the vignettes included male-to-female abuse and half female-to-male. The relationship of the two individuals (stranger, dating or married) was also manipulated, as well as the alcohol consumption (i.e. in half of the scenarios both individuals were described as intoxicated, whereas in the other half of the scenarios there was no mention of alcohol intoxication). One scale was used to measure attribution of blame to the victim, another scale measured attribution of blame to the perpetrator, and a further scale was used to assess whether participants would encourage the victim to report the incident to the police (i.e. a similar methodology to Frese et al.'s study was used).

Consistent with results from previous studies, the findings of the research indicate significant gender differences in RMA and attribution of blame. Male participants scored higher on the AMMSA scale, attributed more blame to the victim and less to the perpetrator, and were less likely to encourage the victim to report the incident. In terms of age differences, the results indicate that older participants endorse more rape-supportive beliefs. Participants who identified themselves as "religious" scored higher on the RMA scale. Similar to previous studies (e.g. Sham Ku, 2015), individuals who are acquainted with a victim of sex crime demonstrated lower levels of RMA. In addition, the findings show that the variables of Victim Blame scale, Perpetrator Blame scale and Police Report – Known Offender scale were found to be significant predictors of RMA. The results of this study should be interpreted with caution, as the high internal reliability of all the scales used (i.e. above .90) could be considered to be resulting from the repetition of items within the scales (Cattell, 1978).

In addition, gender differences in respect of the different vignettes were further explored using a mixed-methods ANOVA. The analysis showed that situational factors may affect female and male participants' attributions of blame to victim and perpetrator, as well as the likelihood of encouraging the victim to report to the police, and that there are differences between the two groups. However, due to violation of assumptions for use of parametric tests these results should be interpreted with significant caution, and future research can further explore these differences to get a better understanding about which factors affect perceptions in this area of research.

Generally, the results of this chapter point to the complex nature of RMA and attribution of blame as deeply embedded within socio-cultural and individual factors. The findings support the notion that countries with a culture of high dominance of men over women (as seen by the "Power" Index of GEI) fuel an increase in male RMA and attribution of blame toward victims, rather than perpetrators. This also affects how likely individuals are to support the victim in reporting a crime. These cultural values further transcended within the finding that religious people, rather than non-religious people, also scored higher across these variables. Age was also a strongly predictive variable of scores on these variables, pointing to the possible effects of societal developments over time. The finding that those acquainted with a victim of a sexual crime further highlight the notion that better awareness of issues is key in tackling this problem.

Future Research

This thesis highlights specific areas that would benefit from being further examined through future research. Firstly, the systematic literature review included studies that examined

the individuals' RMA following exposure to certain types of media. Although all of the studies included have used control groups (that were exposed to neutral media or no media), this methodology retains a significant limitation: none of the studies had measured the participants' RMA prior to the exposure, thus it is not clear whether the findings can be attributed to the stimuli and not to pre-existing beliefs. Thus, future studies can account for this limitation, by exploring the RMA of the participants prior to and after exposure, in order to determine whether there are any significant differences that could be attributed to the experimental stimuli. This could be done by employing a distractor task after first administering the measure to avoid learning effects.

The empirical research presented in Chapter Four is considered the first of its kind conducted with a Greek-Cypriot population. Past studies have focused on perceptions of Greek-Cypriots towards domestic abuse towards women, but no other study has focused on perceptions about sexual violence specifically. The findings replicate results from previous studies exploring similar variables (e.g. Hantzi et al., 2015) and point out to the need for future research with a Greek-Cypriot sample in this area. A qualitative method with a group of individuals of different genders, ages and socio-economic background may provide additional information and insight into how Greek-Cypriots perceive victims and perpetrators of sexual violence, and further explore attributions of blame in different situations.

In addition, future research could also focus on individuals' attitudes towards same-sex sexual violence, to provide a better understanding of another area that has not been adequately researched in Cyprus thus far. The findings of these studies could further inform professionals responsible for preparing policies for prevention of violence to focus on common stereotypes that

are held by Greek-Cypriots. Professionals can prepare workshops and/or education programmes to introduce the concept of "rape myths" and other stereotypical views on VaW, and inform the public about the detrimental effects of endorsing these beliefs. This would need to be done in addition to promoting a societal change in relation to promoting open-mindedness by official institutions, including religious, educational and governmental institutions. Such initiatives would need to have long-term, rather than short-term ambitions.

Implications for Practice

To summarize the detrimental effects of rape myths, Bohner et al. (2009) assert that these beliefs perpetuate the false sense of a "just world" (i.e. bad things happen to only bad people), provide women with illusory feelings of safety and provide men ways of rationalizing tendencies for committing sexual violence by "justifying" their behaviour.   Whilst Bohner et al. (2009) do not provide empirical evidence linking AMMSA scores to actual sexual offending, there are sufficient links suggesting that RMA beliefs relate to actual sexual offending (Polaschek & Gannon, 2004) and wider societal and individual characteristics which can have detrimental effects on victim experience and recovery. As a result, in order to prevent sexual violence and minimize the negative attitudes towards victims of sexual abuse, it is crucial to address RMA. Existing Sex Offender Treatment Programmes include modules on challenging distorted beliefs and cognitions about sexual violence (e.g. Marshall, 1999; Seto & Barbaree, 1999). However, as Bohner et al. (2009) note, the prevention of violence should also focus on addressing the beliefs of individuals who have not offended.

The majority of current education programmes currently focus on working with college male students (in the USA and North America), and showed some improvement in reducing RMA and the attendees' likelihood to engage in sexually coercive behaviour (Hanson & Gidycz, 1993; Lonsway & Kothari, 2000). However, the reported effects are relatively short-term (e.g. and do not provide information on their long-term effectiveness (e.g. O'Donohue, Yeater & Fanetti, 2003). Also, little research exists on how to reduce RMA in females or other individuals apart from sex offenders and college students. Therefore, the current interventions should be evaluated in a systematic way in order to examine their long-term effectiveness and their applicability to other populations.

Understanding the roots and consequences of RMA is also important for practitioners and clinicians working with victims and perpetrators. This is particularly important as rape myths may invalidate the experiences of victims or increase their self-blame, and affect the likelihood of reporting the offence to the police (Bohner et al., 2009). Perceptions of peer acceptance of rape myths may also decrease the victims' likelihood to report the offence (Paul, Gray, Elhai & David, 2009). Subsequently, clinicians would benefit from training in order to learn how to address these beliefs of their clients, help them recognize and transform unconscious victim-blaming thoughts as part of the intervention, irrespective of whether they are working with victims or perpetrators.

According to Flood and Pease (2009), focusing on changing societal attitudes is an important step towards reduction of sexual violence. They argue that social campaigns should address both overt attitudes but also wider cluster of attitudes related to gender and sexuality that normalize and justify violence. Mass media have been shown to influence attitudes, therefore

these could be used to educate the public and challenge – instead of perpetuate - stereotypes that are currently promoted in media types. For example, Donovan and Vlais (2005) found that social marketing campaigns in media could produce positive changes in attitudes related to men's perpetuation of VaW. As can be seen, the implications of better understanding RMA and its embeddedness within other factors are wide-reaching and can be used to help victims of sexual crimes, prevent offending in the first place and generally help societal change in its perception of sexual offending.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this thesis explored a number of variables and their relationship with rape myth acceptance. The systematic review investigated the effect of mass media on RMA, whereas the empirical study in chapter three focused on a cultural-specific perspective by examining the rape myth endorsement of Greek-Cypriots. The findings highlight the need for future research in this area, in order to better understand how rape-related stereotypes are constructed, especially in societies where a profusion of initiatives is required for reducing gender inequalities. It is important to identify the implications of RMA as a social norm, and to challenge these by implementing appropriate educational campaigns. The media, which could have a profound effect on attitudes and beliefs, can be used to promote prosocial values such as debunking rape myths and reducing traditional gender stereotypes. As Bohner et al. (2009) note, "such interventions may destroy comfortable illusions, but will ultimately help to reduce sexual violence" (p. 43).

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APPENDIX A

Details of literature databases, search strategies, search terms and syntax used

A) PsycINFO (1975 to present)

1. exp Rape / or rape.mp.	8460
2. exp myths/ or myth*.mp.	17197
3. accept*.mp.	107703
4. endorse*.mp.	18445
5. attitude*.mp.	343595
6. belief*.mp.	108136
7. stereotyp*.mp.	27978
8. 2 or 3 or 4 or 5 or 6 or 7	530301
9. exp MASS MEDIA/ or Media.mp. or exp NEWS MEDIA/	69955
10. exp News Media/ or exp Newspapers/ or exp Magazines/ or headline*.mp.	42548
11. exp NEWS MEDIA/ or news.mp.	12376
12. exp Music/ or exp FILMS/ or film*.mp.	29412
13. exp Computer Games/ or video game*.mp.	6132
14. exp Music/ or exp Television/ or music video*.mp.	24539
15. exp Advertising/ or exp Television Advertising/ or advert*.mp.	17793
16. exp Films/ or movie*.mp.	10376
17. exp Advertising/ or exp MAGAZINES/ or magazine*.mp.	14198
18. exp RADIO/ or radio*.mp.	15185
19. exp TELEVISION/ or television.mp.	16127
20. exp song*.mp.	7568
21. 9 or 10 or 11 or 12 or 13 or 14 or 15 or 16 or 17 or 18 or 19 or 20	141139
22. 1 AND 8 AND 21	208
23. limit 23 to "English Language"	206
24. limit 23 to yr="1975 – 2016"	**204**

B) Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (1975 to present)

all(rape) AND (all(myth*) OR all(accept*) OR all(endorse*) OR all(attitude*) OR all(belief*) OR all(stereotype*) OR all(perception*)) AND (all(media) OR all(headline*) OR all(news) OR all(film*) OR (all(video game*)) OR (all(music video*)) OR all(advert*) OR all(movie*) OR all(magazine*) OR (all(radio*) OR all(television) OR (all(song*)))

Results = 964

C) Web of Science (1975 to present)

1. TOPIC: (rape)	21197
2. TOPIC: (myth*) OR TOPIC: (accept*) OR TOPIC: (endorse*) OR	

TOPIC: (attitude*) OR TOPIC: (belief*) OR TOPIC: (stereotyp*)
OR TOPIC: (perception*)   1,308,304
3. TOPIC: (media) OR TOPIC: (headline*) OR TOPIC: (news) OR
TOPIC: (film*) OR TOPIC: (video game*) OR TOPIC: (music video*)
OR TOPIC: (advert*) OR TOPIC: (movie*) OR TOPIC: (magazine*)
OR TOPIC: (radio) OR TOPIC: (television) OR TOPIC: (song*)   3,436,655
4. #1 AND #2 AND #3   207
5. Refined by:
DOCUMENT TYPES: (ARTICLE)
LANGUAGES: (ENGLISH)
COUNTRIES/TERRITORIES: (USA OR ENGLAND OR CANADA
OR AUSTRALIA OR NEW ZEALAND OR NORTH IRELAND OR
SCOTLAND)   **203**

Indexes=SCI-EXPANDED, SSCI, A&HCI, CPCI-S, CPCI-SSH Timespan=1975-2016

D) SCOPUS

(TITLE-ABS-KEY (rape)) AND ((TITLE-ABS-KEY (myth*) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (accept*) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (endorse*) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (attitude*) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (belief*) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (stereotyp*) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (perception*))) AND ((TITLE-ABS-KEY (media) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (headline*) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (news) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (film*) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (video game*) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (music video*) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (advert*) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (movie*) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (magazine*) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (radio) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (television) OR TITLE-ABS-KEY (song*)))

Limited by: Date: from 1975 to 2016

Results = 73

APPENDIX B

Articles retrieved in full but did not meet Inclusion Criteria and were subsequently excluded.

Table 11. Excluded articles based on PICOS criteria

Author & Year of Publication	Title of Publication	Reason for Exclusion	How was this study identified?
Bohner, 2001	Writing about rape: Use of the passive voice and other distancing text features as an expression of perceived responsibility of the victim	Did not measure RMA	Hand search from reference list
Burgess & Burpo, 2012	The effect of music videos on college students' perceptions of rape	Did not mention whether the study design was RCT	Search of electronic database
Capella, Hill, Rapp & Kees, 2010	The impact of Violence Against Women in Advertisements.	Did not directly measure RMA	Search of electronic database
Emmers-Sommer et al., 2006	Love, Suspense, sex, and violence: Men's and women's film predilections, exposure to sexually violent media, and their relationship to rape myth acceptance	Did not examine media impact on RMA	Google Scholar
Fountain, 2008	It's All in the Words: Determining the Relationship between Newspaper Portrayal of Rape Victims and Reader Responses	Did not compare males' perceptions VS females' perceptions	Google search
Franiuk et al., 2008b	Prevalence and Effects of Rape Myths in Print Journalism The Kobe Bryant Case	Did not compare males' perceptions VS females' perceptions	Hand searched from reference list

Huesmann, 1986	Psychological Processes Promoting the Relation Between Exposure to Media Violence and Aggressive Behavior by the Viewer	Not a RCT study	Search of electronic database
Hust, Marett, Lei, Ren & Ran, 2015	Law & Order, CSI, and NCIS: The Association Between Exposure to Crime Drama Franchises, Rape Myth Acceptance, and Sexual Consent Negotiation Among College Students	Did not examine gender differences in RMA following exposure to media	Search of electronic database
Kahlor & Eastin, 2011	Television's Role in the Culture of Violence Toward Women: A Study of Television Viewing and the Cultivation of Rape Myth Acceptance in the United States	Not a RCT study	Contact with professionals (sent from Dr Afroditi Pina).
Malamuth & Briere, 1986	Sexual Violence in the Media: Indirect Effects on Aggression against women	Did not measure RMA	Search of electronic database
Milburn, Mather & Conrad, 2000	The effects of viewing R-rated movie scenes that objectify women on perceptions of date rape	Did not directly measure RMA	Hand search from reference list
Mullin, Imrich, & Linz, 1996	The Impact of Acquaintance Rape Stories and Case-Specific Pretrial Publicity on Juror Decision Making	Did not measure RMA	Hand search from reference list
Shaw & Skolnick, 2004	Effects of Prejudicial Pretrial Publicity From Physical and Witness Evidence on Mock Jurors' Decision Making.	Did not measure RMA	Search of electronic database

Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008	Women as Sex Objects and Victims in Print Advertisements	Did not measure RMA	Hand search from reference list
Taylor, 2005	Effects of Visual and Verbal Sexual Television Content and Perceived Realism on Attitudes and Beliefs	Did not measure RMA	Search of electronic database
Ward, 2002	Does Television Exposure Affect Emerging Adults' Attitudes and Assumptions About Sexual Relationships? Correlational and Experimental Confirmation	Did not measure RMA	Hand searched from reference list
Woody & Viney, 2007	General Pre-trial Publicity in Sexual Assault trials	Did not measure RMA	Hand searched from reference list
Zhang, Miller & Harrison, 2008	The relationship between exposure to sexual music videos and young adults' sexual attitudes	Did not measure RMA	Hand searched from reference list
Zurbriggen & Morgan, 2006	Who Wants to Marry a Millionaire? Reality Dating Television Programs, Attitudes Toward Sex, and Sexual Behaviors	Did not measure RMA	Search of electronic database

Combined Quality Assessment tool

Screening Questions (adapted from CASP)

1) Did the study ask a clearly focused question?
1 YES
0 NO

2) Was this a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) and was it appropriately so?
1 YES
0 NO/ CANT' TELL

3) Is it worth continuing?

- If any study's total score in screening questions is 0 or 1, then it is not worth continuing.

Detailed Questions

1) Selection Bias
a) Are the individuals selected to participate in the study likely to be representative of the target population?
2 – YES
1 – PARTIALLY
0 – NO/ CAN'T TELL

b) Were the participants selected in an acceptable way (i.e. volunteered participation)?
2 –YES
1 – PARTIALLY
0 – NO/ CAN'T TELL

2) Study Design
a) Was the method of randomization described?
2- YES
1- PARTIALLY
0-NO

3) Blinding
a) Were the participants aware of the purpose of the study?
0 –YES
1- PARTIALLY
2 – NO

4) Confounders
a) Has the author accounted for confounders (e.g. race, gender, age, sexual abuse experience, affiliation with victim of sexual abuse).
2 – YES
1- PARTIALLY
0- NO/ CAN'T TELL

5) Data collection methods
a) Were data collection methods shown to be valid?
2- YES
1- PARTIALLY (i.e. only some of them)
0 – NO/ CAN'T TELL

b) Were data collection methods shown to be reliable?
2- YES
1- PARTIALLY (i.e. only some of them)
0-NO/ CAN'T TELL

6) Analyses
a) Was the analysis (i.e. statistical methods) appropriate to the study?
2- YES
1- PARTIALLY
0- NO

7) Results
a) Were the outcomes clearly described in relation to the research question?
2- YES
1- PARTIALLY
0- NO

b) Can the results be applied to the general population?
2- YES
1- PARTIALLY
0- NO

HIGHEST SCORE: 20

APPENDIX D

<u>Data Extraction Form</u>

Title of Study:

Authors:

Year of Publication:

Population size:

a) Males:

b) Females:

Mean Age:

Type of Sample:

Type of Media used:

Hypotheses/ Research Questions:

RMA measure used:

Outcomes:

Study Limitations:

Additional Comments:

Advert

Are you a Greek Cypriot 18 years or older and interested in taking part in a study exploring the sexual beliefs of Greek Cypriot population?

My name is Yianna Armosti, and I am a trainee forensic psychologist, currently completing my postgraduate course at University of Birmingham, UK. The purpose of my study is to explore the sexual beliefs of Greek Cypriot population, and also explore their perceptions relating to 12 scenarios that involve sexual encounters between a male and a female. Hence, if you agree to participate in this study, you will be required to follow this link [state web link], read the information sheet and fill your demographics. **THE STUDY IS COMPLETELY ANONYMOUS** and you have the right to withdraw your participation at any point throughout its completion, and up until two week after. Apart from demographics, you will only be asked to provide a code name/ keyword in case you wish to withdraw your data. In case you have any questions, please contact the researcher on YXA240@student.bham.ac.uk.

Information Sheet

What is the study about?
The purpose of the study is to explore the sexual beliefs of Greek Cypriots. It is hoped that the findings will contribute to the limited cross cultural research in this area. On a larger scale, it is hoped that in the future, there will be implications for professionals in terms of how services are provided to ensure that services users can access appropriate support, as well aid in the development of gender awareness programmes.

Who can participate?
The study is open to both male and female Greek Cypriot nationals, age 18 or older. **Please complete this study only if you are of Greek ethnicity and Cypriot citizenship.**

If I choose to participate, what is involved?
In order to participate, you must read and understand all the information on this page. You will then be asked to complete a survey which will take approximately 45 minutes. The first few questions will require you to give some demographics details.
Then, you will be required to read twelve scenarios about a sexual encounter between a man and a woman, in various situations, and respond to a few questions following each scenario. For example, a scenario may present a woman that goes out with her friends, drinks a lot of alcohol and then meets a man and has a sexual encounter with, on her way back to her flat. Examples of questions that you will be asked to consider subsequent to this, include questions that measure the rate of responsibility you attribute to the man and woman in the scenario for the sexual encounter.
Following this, you will be required to respond to a questionnaire that examines your general beliefs about relationships between men and women. Given that people have different views on these topics, there is no right or wrong answer and you are encouraged to be as honest as possible.

Are there any risks?
Some of the questions relate to negative sexual experiences. Should you feel anxious, upset or stressed by these questions you can seek support and discuss your thoughts and feelings with the agencies below:
1) *Association for the Prevention and Handing of Violence in the Family* helpline at 1440 (free of charge) or

2) Contact the *Police* at 119 or 112.

Will my information be confidential and will you be able to identify me?
You will not be required to give any personal information that can identify you at any point throughout this study. It is an anonymous study. All information will be kept strictly confidential. Research will be presented in a research thesis for part completion of a Professional Doctorate degree. In addition it may be written up for publication in a peer review journal article.

All findings will be aggregated and therefore your results will never be singled out and presented in their own right at any point.

Please note that if you wish to receive a copy of the study's feedback on results, you can provide your email address at the end of the survey. Your responses will not be linked to your email address. Your responses are totally anonymous.

What do I do with the questionnaire when I have finished?
On completing the questionnaire, a debriefing sheet will give you more details about the study, as well as other important information.

What will happen to my information after the study?
In accordance with the University of Birmingham's Code of Practice for Research, data will be preserved and accessible for ten years post study completion. Following this period, data will be disposed of according to the University's data disposal strategy.

What will happen if I no longer want to be involved?
Your participation is voluntary and therefore you have the right to participate, decline or withdraw from the research at any stage. There will be no consequences if you change your mind about your involvement.

How can I withdraw from the study if I have submitted my information?
Prior to commencing the completion of the questionnaires, you will be instructed of how to provide a code-word that you can use at a later stage if you wish to withdraw your participation. You are not required to give any personal information and thus, you will remain anonymous. You can use this word to withdraw your data from the study, without having to identify yourself to the researcher. To withdraw your data from the study, please contact: Dr. Louise Dixon, Senior Lecturer in Forensic Psychology at the University of Birmingham on , or Yianna Armosti, Trainee Forensic psychologist on **up until two weeks after the completion of the study (date to be announced)** quoting your unique codeword and stating your desire to withdraw. Your information will be discarded and will not be used in the study and no questions will be asked regarding your decision.

Who shall I contact if I have any questions or concerns about the study?
Should you have any further questions regarding this study, please contact the researcher via e-mail:

□ **Please tick the box if you have read and accept the terms of your participation and that you are aware that your participation is voluntary and you can withdraw at any stage of the study.**

Demographic Information

1. How old are you? _____

2. What is your gender?

□ Male □ Female □ Other (please state)

3. What is your sexual orientation?

□ Heterosexual □ Homosexual □ Bi-sexual □ Other (please state)

4. What is your Profession/Job Title? _____

5. What is your highest level of education?

□ I did not attend formal training
□ Primary
□ Secondary
□ Undergraduate
□ Postgraduate
□ Other, please state_____

6. Are you a member of a religious faith? If no, go to question 7.

□ Yes □ No

7a. If yes, what religion?

□ Christian- Orthodox
□ Christian - Catholic
□ Muslim
□ Hindu
□ Baptist
□ Other, please state_____

7b. How often do you practice/worship/pray?

□ Not at all
□ Less than once per week
□ Once per week
□ Twice per week
□ More than 3 times per week

8. Have you ever been a victim of sexual assault?

□ Yes □ No □ Do not wish to say

9. Do you know someone who has been a victim of sexual assault?

□ Yes □ No □ Do not wish to say

10. Have you ever been cautioned or received a conviction for a violent or sexual offence against an adult or a child?

□ Yes □ No □ Do not wish to say

11. Have you ever persuaded an adult to have sexual intercourse with you, despite their will?

□ Yes □ No □ Do not wish to say

12. During your adulthood, have you ever had any sexual contact with an individual who was less than 15 years of age?

□ Yes □ No □ Do not wish to say

13. Instructions of how to create your code word:

To proceed commencing the survey, please provide a code word following the instructions below. This code word can be used in order to withdraw your data at a later stage, in case you wish to do so.

The code word should be consisted of 13 "alphanumeric" characters. This means that it should contain both numbers and letters.

a) The first 8 numbers of the code word is the date that you start completing this survey in the following format: ddmmyyyy. For example, if this date is 7th July 2014, then the first 8 numbers of your code word will be: **07072014**

b) Following this, please include the first three letters of your mother's maiden name in capital letters. For example, if her maiden name is "Ioannou" then the next three characters in the code word will be: **IOA**

c) Following this, please include the last two numbers of your house or mobile phone number.

For example, if your phone number is 99455677, then the last two numbers in the code word will be: **77**.

Thus, a code word should have the following format: **07072014IOA77**

Please provide the code-word (following the instructions above) that you can use at a later stage if you wish to withdraw your participation: _____

Scenarios that examine your perceptions relating to 12 situations describing sexual encounters between a man and a woman

Please read the following scenarios. At the end of each scenario a list of questions is presented. Please read each question carefully and then circle that number from 1 to 5 that you feel best represents your opinion. The points on the scale have the following meaning:

1	2	3	4	5
Not at all	**A little bit**	**Neutral**	**A lot**	**Completely**

1) [Researcher use: Gender of victim and assailant: Male-to-Female, Type of rape: "Stranger"-Alcohol Consumption: "No alcohol"]

Maria and three of her friends went to a local pub on a Friday night. Her friends had a few drinks; Maria had to wake up early on the next day and decided not to drink. Following this, Maria said good-bye to her friends and crossed the lighted parking lot to get to her apartment, which was nearby. While she walked across the lot, John, a man Maria had never seen before, came up to her. After attempting unsuccessfully to make conversation with Maria, he asked her if she were interested in having sex. Maria said "no" very forcefully, but John did not pay attention to her answer. He grabbed her, began to kiss her, and then lifted her skirt. Her repeated protests were ignored as he forced himself on her and completed the act of intercourse.

2) [Researcher use: Gender of victim and assailant: Male-to-Female, Type of rape: "Stranger" – Alcohol Consumption: "Alcohol"]

Maria and three of her friends went to a local pub on a Friday night. Whilst in the pub, Maria had a few drinks with her friends and when started feeling drunk she decided to return home. Maria said good-bye to her friends and crossed the lighted parking lot to get to her apartment, which was nearby. While she walked across the lot, John (who was noticeably drunk), a man Maria had never seen before, came up to her. After attempting unsuccessfully to make conversation with Maria, he asked her if she were interested in having sex. Maria said "no" very forcefully, but John did not pay attention to her answer. He grabbed her, began to kiss her, and then lifted her skirt. Her repeated protests were ignored as he forced himself on her and completed the act of intercourse.

3) [Researcher use: Gender of victim and assailant: Male-to-Female, Type of rape: "Date" - Alcohol Consumption: "No alcohol"]

Maria and John went to a local pub on a Friday night. They had been dating for a few months and their relationship was going well. Neither of them had alcoholic drinks on that night as they wanted to wake up early the next day. Following this, Maria and John went back to Maria's flat to watch a movie. While watching the movie, John put his arm around Maria's shoulder. A few minutes later he asked her if she were interested in having sex. Maria said "no" very forcefully, but John did not pay attention to her answer. He grabbed her, began to kiss her, and then lifted her skirt. Her repeated protests were ignored as he forced himself on her and completed the act of intercourse.

4) [Researcher use: Gender of victim and assailant: Male-to-Female, Type of rape: "Date" – Alcohol Consumption: "Alcohol"]

Maria and John went to a local pub on a Friday night. They had been dating for a few months and their relationship was going well. Whilst in the pub, Maria and John had a few drinks and decided to leave the pub when they were both drunk. Following this, Maria and John went back to Maria's flat to chill out and have more drinks. While chilling out on the couch, John put his arm around Maria's shoulder. A few minutes later he asked her if she were interested in having sex. Maria said "no" very forcefully, but John did not pay attention to her answer. He grabbed her, began to kiss her, and then lifted her skirt. Her repeated protests were ignored as he forced himself on her and completed the act of intercourse.

5) [Researcher use: Gender of victim and assailant: Male-to-Female, Type of rape: "Marital" Alcohol Consumption: "No alcohol"]

Maria and John have been married for five years. They decided to go to a local pub on a Friday night after work. Neither of them had alcoholic drinks on that night as they wanted to wake up early the next day. Following this, Maria and John went back to their flat to watch a movie. While watching the movie, John put his arm around Maria's shoulder. A few minutes later he asked her if she were interested in having sex. Maria said "no" very forcefully, but John did not pay attention to her answer. He grabbed her, began to kiss her, and then lifted her skirt. Her repeated protests were ignored as he forced himself on her and completed the act of intercourse.

6) [Researcher use: Gender of victim and assailant: Male-to-Female, Type of rape: "Marital" – Alcohol Consumption: "Alcohol"]

Maria and John have been married for five years. They decided to go to a local pub on a Friday night after work. Whilst in the pub, Maria and John had a few drinks and decided to leave the pub when they were both drunk. Following this, Maria and John went back to their flat to chill out and have more drinks. While chilling out on the couch, John put his arm around Maria's shoulder. A

few minutes later he asked her if she were interested in having sex. Maria said "no" very forcefully, but John did not pay attention to her answer. He grabbed her, began to kiss her, and then lifted her skirt. Her repeated protests were ignored as he forced himself on her and completed the act of intercourse.

Questions:

1) To what extent did Maria put herself at risk?
2) To what extent did Maria lead John on?
3) To what extent was Maria responsible for her sexual encounter with John?
4) To what extent John is responsible for the sexual encounter?
5) To what extent do you think John should be punished?

(For the last question (6), the ranking of responses is: 1 = definitely no, 2 = probably no, 3 = neutral, 4 = probably yes, 5 = definitely yes).

6) If you were a friend of Maria, would you recommend that she reports the incident to the Police?

7) [Researcher use: Gender of victim and assailant: Female-to-Male, Type of rape: "Stranger"-Alcohol Consumption: "No alcohol"]

Andrew and three of his friends went to a local pub on a Friday night. His friends had a few drinks; Andrew had to wake up early on the next day and decided not to drink. Following this, Andrew said good-bye to his friends and crossed the lighted parking lot to get to his apartment, which was nearby. While he walked across the lot, Eleni, a woman Andrew had never seen before, came up to him. After attempting unsuccessfully to make conversation with Andrew, she asked him if he were interested in having sex. Andrew said "no" very forcefully, but Eleni did not pay attention to his answer. She grabbed him, began to kiss him, and then pulled down his trousers. His repeated protests were ignored as she forced herself on him and completed the act of intercourse.

8) [Researcher use: Gender of victim and assailant: Female-to-Male, Type of rape: "Stranger" – Alcohol Consumption: "Alcohol"]

Andrew and three of his friends went to a local pub on a Friday night. Whilst in the pub, Andrew had a few drinks with his friends and when started feeling drunk he decided to return home. Andrew said good-bye to his friends and crossed the lighted parking lot to get to his apartment, which was nearby. While he walked across the lot, Eleni (who was noticeably drunk), a woman Andrew had never seen before, came up to him. After attempting unsuccessfully to make conversation with Andrew, she asked him if he were interested in having sex. Andrew said "no" very forcefully, but Eleni did not pay attention to his answer. She grabbed him, began to kiss him, and then pulled down his trousers. His repeated protests were ignored as she forced herself on him and completed the act of intercourse.

9) [Researcher use: Gender of victim and assailant: Female-to-Male, Type of rape: "Date" - Alcohol Consumption: "No alcohol"]

Andrew and Eleni went to a local pub on a Friday night. They had been dating for a few months and their relationship was going well. Neither of them had alcoholic drinks on that night as they wanted to wake up early the next day. Following this, Andrew and Eleni went back to Andrew's flat to watch a movie. While watching the movie, Eleni put her arm around Andrew's shoulder. A few minutes later she asked him if he were interested in having sex. Andrew said "no" very forcefully, but Eleni did not pay attention to his answer. She grabbed him, began to kiss him, and then pulled down his trousers. Hiss repeated protests were ignored as she forced herself on him and completed the act of intercourse.

10) [Researcher use: Gender of victim and assailant: Female-to-Male, Type of rape: "Date" – Alcohol Consumption: "Alcohol"]

Andrew and Eleni went to a local pub on a Friday night. They had been dating for a few months and their relationship was going well. Whilst in the pub, Andrew and Eleni had a few drinks and decided to leave the pub when they were both drunk. Following this, Andrew and Eleni went back to Andrew's flat to chill out and have more drinks. While chilling out on the couch, Eleni put her arm around Andrew's shoulder. A few minutes later she asked him if he were interested in having sex. Andrew said "no" very forcefully, but Eleni did not pay attention to his answer. She grabbed him, began to kiss him, and then pulled down his trousers. His repeated protests were ignored as she forced herself on him and completed the act of intercourse.

11) [Researcher use: Gender of victim and assailant: Female-to-Male, Type of rape: "Marital" - Alcohol Consumption: "No alcohol"]

 Andrew and Eleni have been married for five years. They decided to go to a local pub on a Friday night after work. Neither of them had alcoholic drinks on that night as they wanted to wake up early the next day. Following this, Andrew and Eleni went back to their flat to watch a movie. While watching the movie, Eleni put her arm around Andrew's shoulder. A few minutes later she asked him if he were interested in having sex. Andrew said "no" very forcefully, but Eleni did not pay attention to his answer. She grabbed him, began to kiss him, and then pulled down his trousers. His repeated protests were ignored as she forced herself on him and completed the act of intercourse.

12) [Researcher use: Gender of victim and assailant: Female-to-Male, Type of rape: "Marital" – Alcohol Consumption: "Alcohol"]

Andrew and Eleni have been married for five years. They decided to go to a local pub on a Friday night after work. Whilst in the pub, Andrew and Eleni had a few drinks and decided to leave the

pub when they were both drunk. Following this, Andrew and Eleni went back to their flat to chill out and have more drinks. While chilling out on the couch, Eleni put her arm around Andrew's shoulder. A few minutes later she asked him if he were interested in having sex. Andrew said "no" very forcefully, but Eleni did not pay attention to his answer. She grabbed him, began to kiss him, and then pulled down his trousers. His repeated protests were ignored as she forced herself on him and completed the act of intercourse.

Questions:

1) To what extent did Andrew put himself at risk?
2) To what extent did Andrew lead Eleni on?
3) To what extent was Andrew responsible for his sexual encounter with Eleni?
4) To what extent Eleni is responsible for the sexual encounter?
5) To what extent do you think Eleni should be punished?

(For the last question (6), the ranking of responses is: 1 = definitely no, 2 = probably no, 3 = neutral, 4 = probably yes, 5 = definitely yes).

6) If you were a friend of Andrew, would you recommend that he reports the incident to the Police?

[Research use: The Acceptance of Modern Myths About Sexual Aggression (AMMSA) scale]

Sexual Beliefs Questionnaire

You will be presented with a set of statements and asked to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each. There are no right or wrong answers – we are only interested in your personal opinion.

Please read each statement carefully and then circle that number from 1 to 7 that you feel best represents your opinion. The points on the scale have the following meaning:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Completely Disagree	**Disagree**	**Disagree Somewhat**	**Neutral**	**Agree Somewhat**	**Agree**	**Completely Agree**

Please use the complete range of the scale to express your exact opinion.

1. When it comes to sexual contacts, women expect men to take the lead.

2. Once a man and a woman have started "making out", a woman's misgivings against sex will automatically disappear.

3. A lot of women strongly complain about sexual infringements for no real reason, just to appear emancipated.

4. To get custody for their children, women often falsely accuse their ex-husband of a tendency towards sexual violence.

5. Interpreting harmless gestures as "sexual harassment" is a popular weapon in the battle of the sexes.

6. It is a biological necessity for men to release sexual pressure from time to time.

7. After a rape, women nowadays receive ample support.

8. Nowadays, a large proportion of rapes is partly caused by the depiction of sexuality in the media as this raises the sex drive of potential perpetrators.

9. If a woman invites a man to her home for a cup of coffee after a night out this means that she wants to have sex.

10. As long as they don't go too far, suggestive remarks and allusions simply tell a woman that she is attractive.

11. Any woman who is careless enough to walk through "dark alleys" at night is partly to be blamed if she is raped.

12. When a woman starts a relationship with a man, she must be aware that the man will assert his right to have sex.

13. Most women prefer to be praised for their looks rather than their intelligence.

14. Because the fascination caused by sex is disproportionately large, our society's sensitivity to crimes in this area is disproportionate as well.

15. Women like to play coy. This does not mean that they do not want sex.

16. Many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence.

17. When a man urges his female partner to have sex, this cannot be called rape.

18. When a single woman invites a single man to her flat she signals that she is not averse to having sex.

19. When politicians deal with the topic of rape, they do so mainly because this topic is likely to attract the attention of the media.

20. When defining "marital rape", there is no clear-cut distinction between normal conjugal intercourse and rape.

21. A man's sexuality functions like a steam boiler – when the pressure gets too high, he has to "let off steam".

22. Women often accuse their husbands of marital rape just to retaliate for a failed relationship.

23. The discussion about sexual harassment on the job has mainly resulted in many a harmless behaviour being misinterpreted as harassment.

24. In dating situations the general expectation is that the woman "hits the brakes" and the man "pushes ahead".

25. Although the victims of armed robbery have to fear for their lives, they receive far less psychological support than do rape victims.

26. Alcohol is often the culprit when a man rapes a woman.

27. Many women tend to misinterpret a well-meant gesture as a "sexual assault".

28. Nowadays, the victims of sexual violence receive sufficient help in the form of women's shelters, therapy offers, and support groups.

29. Instead of worrying about alleged victims of sexual violence society should rather attend to more urgent problems, such as environmental destruction.

30. Nowadays, men who really sexually assault women are punished justly.

APPENDIX K

Debrief Sheet

Thank you for your time and participation in this study.

What was the aim of the study?
Currently, there is extensive literature available on sexual aggression and violence against women and men carried out in many countries of the world. However, there is limited research exploring this area in Cyprus. Non-government organizations provided data that support that rape continues to be a growing problem in our society, yet there is limited awareness and access to appropriate services for victims of sexual violence. Hence, is it essential that research seeks to explore the beliefs of Greek Cypriots and examine whether these beliefs might be influenced by different situations where rape can occur or in situations where alcohol is involved.

What if I need support?
Some of the questions are of a sensitive nature. If you feel you need to speak to someone, the following are some useful organisations that can provide emotional support:
1) The Association for the Prevention and Handing of Violence in the Family helpline at 1440 (free of charge) or
2) Contact the Police at 119 or 112.

If I have questions or want more information on the findings?
Should you have any queries about the research or are interested in the outcome of the study, please do not hesitate to contact the researcher with your request via e-mail:

If I want to withdraw from the study after I have submitted my information?
It is important that you keep your unique code word safely and write it down, should you wish to withdraw. To withdraw please contact: Dr. Louise Dixon, Senior Lecturer in Forensic Psychology at the University of Birmingham   or
Yianna Armosti, Trainee Forensic psychologist
                                        two weeks after the completion of the study (date to be announced) quoting your unique code word and stating your desire to withdraw. Your information will be discarded and will not be used in the study and no questions will be asked regarding your decision.

If I want to receive a copy of the study's feedback?

If you wish to receive a copy of the study's feedback on results, you can provide your email address below. Your responses will not be linked to your email address. Your responses are totally anonymous.

Your email address (optional- in order to receive the study's feedback):

_____

APPENDIX L

Table 12, including descriptive statistics for the scales used in research study

Table 12. Descriptive Statistics of Scales

Scales	Mean Statistic	Std. Deviation Statistic
AMMSA scale	3.6617	.95521
Victim Blame Scale	1.7282	.53760
Perpetrator Blame Scale	4.1946	.64304
Police Report – Known Offender	3.0783	1.24986
Police Report – Unknown Offender	4.2179	.92502
Female (No Alc, Stranger) – Vic Blame scale	1.5746	.64931
Female (No Alc, Stranger) – Per Blame scale	4.8366	.47036
Female (No Alc, Stranger) – Pol Report scale	4.6381	.94238
Female (Alc, Stranger) – Vic Blame scale	2.0208	.80337
Female (Alc, Stranger) – Per Blame scale	4.7549	.47210
Female (Alc, Stranger) – Pol Report scale	4.5603	.94645
Female (No Alc, Date) – Vic Blame scale	1.6667	.75116
Female (No Alc, Date) – Per Blame scale	4.2918	.84690
Female (No Alc, Date) – Pol Report scale	3.5992	1.40273
Female (Alc, Date) – Vic Blame scale	2.1323	.90464
Female (Alc, Date) – Per Blame scale	4.1440	.93890
Female (Alc, Date) – Pol Report scale	3.5486	1.40262
Female (No Alc, Married) – Vic Blame scale	1.4436	.66435
Female (No Alc, Married) – Per Blame scale	4.1031	.87949
Female (No Alc, Married) – Pol Report scale	3.1479	1.44209
Female (Alc, Married) – Vic Blame scale	1.8521	.83266
Female (Alc, Married) – Per Blame scale	3.9455	.92542
Female (Alc Married) – Pol Report scale	3.1128	1.44391
Male (No Alc, Stranger) – Vic Blame scale	1.5746	.70199

Male (No Alc, Stranger) – Per Blame scale	4.4319	.75921
Male (No Alc, Stranger) – Pol Report scale	3.8911	1.35056
Male (Alc, Stranger) – Vic Blame scale	1.8314	.75870
Male (Alc, Stranger) – Per Blame scale	4.3833	.79794
Male (Alc, Stranger) – Pol Report scale	3.7821	1.38321
Male (No Alc, Date) – Vic Blame scale	1.5863	.70804
Male (No Alc, Date) – Per Blame scale	4.0000	.87612
Male (No Alc, Date) – Pol Report scale	2.9844	1.47099
Male (Alc, Date) – Vic Blame scale	1.9079	.83525
Male (Alc, Date) – Per Blame scale	3.9163	.94052
Male (Alc, Date) – Pol Report scale	2.9144	1.51312
Male (No Alc, Married) – Vic Blame scale	1.4436	.64915
Male (No Alc, Married) – Per Blame scale	3.8288	.96414
Male (No Alc, Married) – Pol Report scale	2.6654	1.46472
Male (Alc, Married) – Vic Blame scale	1.7043	.73235
Male (Alc, Married) – Per Blame scale	3.6984	.96497
Male (Alc, Married) – Pol Report scale	2.6537	1.44452

Note: Female = Female victim, Male = Male victim, Alc = Alcohol consumption, No Alc = No Alcohol consumption, Vic Blame = Victim Blame scale, Per Blame = Perpetrator Blame scale, Pol Report = Police Report scale