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EXPLAINING NEGATIVE RAPE VICTIM PERCEPTION: HOMOPHOBIA AND THE MALE RAPE VICTIM

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ABSTRACT

Previous research into rape victim blaming has often neglected to assess attitudes toward male victims. The present study was designed to redress this imbalance and specifically, investigate the role of homophobic attitudes in male rape victim perception. Men and women read a vignette describing an incident of rape and answered two questionnaires that assessed firstly, homophobic attitudes toward homosexual persons and secondly, their perception of the rape victim. Based on the literature, I formulated three hypotheses a) males will evaluate male victims more negatively than females b) males will exhibit higher levels of homophobia than females and c) high levels of homophobia will predict more negative victim perception, particularly for male participants. The data supported two of the three hypotheses. Firstly, men exhibited greater degrees of homophobia than women and secondly, men's homophobic attitudes were significantly correlated with negative male rape victim perception. The implications of these findings for the reporting of rape and post-rape adjustment of victims are discussed.

It is generally accepted that individuals have a tendency to perceive the victims, as well as or even instead of the perpetrators of rape in negative terms, and much social psychological research has been devoted to an examination of factors influencing these perceptions. The majority of this research has focused on female rape, that is, the rape of women. Two approaches have dominated the study of blame attributions in sexual violence. The first approach examines the effect of victim, perpetrator and situation characteristics on negative attributions in rape, and is often referred to in social psychology as the rape perception framework (Pollard, 1992; Krahe, 1991). Factors such as the victim's respectability (Luginbuhl & Mullin, 1981), physical attractiveness (Tieger, 1981; Deitz, Littman & Bentley, 1984), previous sexual activity (L'Armand & Pepitone, 1982; Cann, Calhoun & Selby, 1979), victim resistance (VanWie & Gross, 1995; Wyer, Bodenhausen & Gorman, 1985; Yescavage, 1999), degree of victim intoxication (Richardson & Campbell, 1982; Stormo & Lang, 1997) and what the victim was wearing at the time of the attack (Edmonds & Cahoon, 1986; Workman & Freeburg, 1999) have all been found to influence negative attributions in rape. Although these studies generally demonstrate fairly modest levels of issues such as blame attributed to victims (Pollard, 1992), it is nevertheless significant that these factors affect judgments about rape in particular ways so that for example, a divorced, drunk or sexily dressed woman is perceived more negatively than a woman who is described as sober or conservatively dressed.

The second approach focuses on the characteristics of the participants to explain rape victim blame. Here, motivational and ego defensive processes are thought to underlie negative attributions directed at the rape victim. Two central theories in this framework are the Just World Theory and the Defensive Attribution Hypothesis. The Just World Theory (Lerner & Matthews, 1967; Kleinke & Meyer 1990) states that negative rape victim perception occurs as a result of *overcompensation* for a seemingly undeserved act. According to this perspective, one has a motivational need to believe that the world is a fair place and that behavioral outcomes are deserved ("people get what they deserve and deserve what they get."), thus maintaining a sense of control and efficacy over the environment. To believe that unfortunate things happen to people without any apparent reason would prove chaotic and would subsequently threaten one's sense of control. Thus, to perceive the victim as deserving of the misfortune helps to restore the comfortable view of the world as being ordered, fair and just.

According to the Defensive Attribution Hypothesis (Shaver, 1970; Cann et. al., 1979; Feild, 1978; Kanekar & Vaz, 1988; Thornton, Ryckman & Robbins, 1982; Muller, Caldwell & Hunter, 1994), people increase or reduce blame depending on their perceived similarity with the victim and the perceived likelihood of similar future victimization befalling them. Defensive attributions predict negative victim perception to decrease as the similarity of the observer to the victim increases, this being a defense mechanism to protect the observer from being blamed themselves if a similar fate should befall him or her in the future.

Attitudinal characteristics of the observer are also thought to play a part in explaining negative rape victim perception. Beliefs in traditional gender role stereotyping, sexual conservatism and sex role orientation have been linked to negative rape victim perception (Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1973; Feild, 1978a and 1978b; Burt, 1980). Studies indicate that participants who positively endorse statements such as "Telling dirty jokes should be a masculine prerogative," "It is acceptable for women to have a career but marriage and family should come first" and "It looks worse for a woman to be drunk than for a man to be drunk" evaluate rape victims more negatively than those who do not hold such adversarial beliefs (Acock & Ireland, 1983; Collier & Resick, 1987; Deitz, Blackwell, Daley & Bentley, 1982; Meyerson & Taylor, 1987; Shotland & Goodstein, 1983).

While knowledge of the processes that contribute to female rape victim blame has accumulated in recent years, by contrast little is known about the processes governing the perception of male rape victims. Yet, studies suggest that not only does sexual violence against males occur more frequently than is popularly believed but that male victims of rape are also likely to be blamed by others for their own rape as well as the female victims. For example, a number of American rape crisis centers have documented that between 6 and 20 per cent of treated rape victims are male (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992). More recently, in a survey of 336 victim support agencies in the United States, 51% reported providing services to male victims sexually assaulted during adulthood (Isely & Gehrenbeck-Shim, 1997). In a study of college men, 34% of the sample had experienced coercive sexual contact (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1994). Many welfare organizations however estimate the real figure to be considerably higher, suggesting that a significant number of men are hidden victims of rape with as many as nine in ten incidents not formally reported (The Independent, 29/5/95). In general, recent estimates suggest that while one in five women will have experienced coercive sex during their lifetime (Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997), one in ten men will have been pressured into sex (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Furthermore, male victims of rape are equally as likely to be viewed negatively and held responsible for their own rape as are female victims, particularly by male participants, as has been shown in several rape perception studies (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992; Smith, Pine & Hawley, 1988; McCaul, Veltum, Boyechko & Crawford, 1990). They are also likely to be viewed negatively in the "field" by individuals such as health workers and the police (Donnelly & Kenyon, 1996). However, compared to female rape, considerably less research effort has gone into evaluating the reasoning behind male rape victim blame. Furthermore, while some studies have applied the same theories used to explain female rape victim blame to instances of male victimization, for instance the Just World Theory (Whatley & Riggio, 1993) few theories are exclusively concerned with explaining how and why male rape victims are blamed. The present study was designed to redress this imbalance by focusing on one possible explanation for negative male rape victim perception, namely, homophobic beliefs. No previous research has examined the link between homophobia and negative male rape victim perception.

An examination of the link between homophobic beliefs and negative male rape victim evaluation provides one obvious route to uncovering some of the reasons why people should view male rape victims negatively because male rape is frequently associated with homosexuality, although this is an erroneous assumption. Despite the fact that studies (Groth & Burgess, 1980; Isely & Gehrenbeck-Shim, 1997) often report that the offenders and victims of male rape are mostly heterosexual (figures from Isley et. al.: offenders = 89.5%; victims = 81%) as opposed to homosexual (offenders = 8%; victims = 16%) or bisexual (offenders = 2.5%; victims = 3%), male rape is frequently perceived by many to be an assault with homosexual motives (Stermac, Sheridan, Davidson & Dunn, 1996; Doherty & Anderson, 2004). Thus, participants are likely to invoke homophobic attitudes when faced with an incident of male rape. Furthermore, men are more likely to invoke homophobic attitudes than women. In recent reviews and meta-analyses of the literature, several researchers have concluded that "men appear to hold more negative attitudes towards homosexuality than do women" (Whitley & Kite, 1995: 151; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Herek, 1986). However, this assertion requires qualification. Based on empirical data, a more accurate conclusion is that men are more homophobic than women on some dimensions but not on others. For example, while national opinion polls often find little or no gender difference in levels of homophobia, small-scale studies usually find the exact opposite, that is, that men are more homophobic than women. Herek (1986) accounted for this dichotomy by the fact that national surveys often question attitudes concerning the *civil liberties* of homosexuals, whereas small scale studies elicit a strong negative *emotional* reaction to homosexuals possessed by many men. Thus, according to Herek, while "males and females probably hold roughly similar positions on general questions of morality and civil liberties, males are more homophobic in their emotional reactions to homosexuality" (Herek, 1986: 565). There are several reasons why men, much more than women, should exhibit a strong emotional response toward homosexuality, and particularly to homosexual men. Recently advanced explanations include psychodynamic factors such as the role of defensiveness in homophobia (where, for example, defensiveness involves an unconscious distortion of reality as a strategy for avoiding some unacceptable part of the self; Herek, 1986; Kite & Whitley, 1996) and evolutionary factors such as reproductive success and the maximization of genes passed to subsequent generations (Oliver & Hyde, 1993). However, the most widely articulated explanation and one that is most consistent with the current literature on sex differences in attitudes toward homosexuality refers to Social Role and script theories (Whitley & Kite, 1995; Herek, 1986). These theories account for men's strong emotional response toward homosexuality by highlighting the role of cultural pressures exerted on individuals, particularly in Western societies, to conform to traditional gender roles such as masculinity, femininity and family roles. This desirability for individuals to be viewed as "normal healthy adults" is overturned by gay men and lesbians, and gay men and lesbians are disliked in part because of their perceived sex-role deviance. However, there is a tendency to view male homosexuals as *more* different from "normal healthy adults" than lesbians (Whitley and Kite, 1995) and violating gender role expectations is considered to be more serious for men than for women in Western society (Herek, 1986; Whitley & Kite, 1995). Researchers have argued that it is these kinds of pressures that contribute to the finding that men consistently exhibit more negative emotional reactions to homosexual men than women. Put another way, males appear to reinforce their "maleness" by attacking gay men, either mentally, verbally, or in the worst cases, physically (Herek, 1986; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Schwartz & DeKeseredy, 1997).

STUDY RATIONALE & HYPOTHESES

In this study, I report a between-subjects design used to measure participants' levels of victim perception after reading a rape scenario concerning either a male or female victim. Although the focus was primarily on participants' reactions to male victims of rape, female rape was also examined here for comparison purposes. Participants' level of homophobia was also measured in order to establish whether homophobia functions as a predictor of victim perception. The main hypotheses for this study were as follows:

- (1) Males will evaluate the male victim more negatively than females
- (2) Males will exhibit higher levels of homophobia than females
- (3) High levels of homophobia will predict more negative victim evaluations, particularly for male participants

METHOD

Participants

80 undergraduate psychology students (no. of males = 40, no. of females = 40) took part in this study in exchange for course credits. Their ages ranged from 19 to 33 years, the mean age being just over 20 and the median being 19.

Procedure

Participants took away a questionnaire booklet (A copy of the questionnaire booklet complete with scoring system is available from the author) and returned it to the experimenter once completed. The booklets were returned anonymously. The booklet contained three main items, which participants were asked to complete in the following order:-

- (1) a questionnaire designed to assess the subject's level of homophobia
- (2) a vignette describing a rape incident. For half the subjects the vignette involved a male victim and for the other half it involved a female victim. In both instances the attacker was male
- (3) a questionnaire utilizing several measures to assess rape victim perception

Materials

Homophobia assessment. I utilized the short version of Hansen's (1982) Homosexism scale to assess the participants' degree of homophobia. Half of the items in the questionnaire were positively skewed and half were negatively skewed, for example, "Homosexuals are unnatural and should be made to get help for their problem" or "Homosexuals should have the same legal rights as heterosexuals." Participants were required to indicate on a five point scale the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement (strongly agreed, agreed, undecided, disagreed or strongly disagreed). The range was 15 to 75, with higher scores indicating a more homophobic response. The scale has a high reliability coefficient ($\alpha = .96$, with a mean of 41.80 and a standard deviation of 14.52) as reported in Hansen (1982). The scale is documented in Appendix 1. The scale requires participants to respond to each item by selecting one of the following answers: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree. For items phrased in a nonsexist manner (see Appendix 1), the response categories of strongly agree to strongly disagree were assigned values of 1 to 5. Responses to items phrased in a sexist manner were scored in reverse order (i.e., strongly agree = 5 and strongly disagree = 1). All participants' total score was the sum of the numerical value of responses.

Attribution of blame assessment. Several items were used to assess overall victim perception. These items focused on the degree of blame, fault, responsibility and behavior relating to the victim and perpetrator, the degree of perceived trauma suffered by the victim, whether the offender should be punished and the extent to which the rape was due to bad luck. Half of the items were positively skewed (for example, "Gail is to blame for the rape") while the other half were negatively skewed (for example, "The rape is not Gail's fault."). The other three items examined. A 5 point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree was used, with lower scores representing a more negative victim evaluation. The maximum score was 55, while the minimum was 19, the lower score indicating a more negative victim evaluation. The descriptive statistics for this measure were a mean of 52.7 and a standard deviation of 4.95. Again, all participants' total score was the sum of the numerical value of responses

The rape vignettes. Each vignette was 145 words in length and identical except for the manipulation of victim gender. The male rape vignette included the description that the victim was forced to have anal sex, whereas it was stated in the female rape vignette that the female victim was forced to have sex. The following is an example of the female rape vignette used in the study:

Gail was introduced to Chris at a friend's housewarming party. She stayed chatting to Chris in the living room for a little while and then went to talk to her friends. At the end of the party, Gail left to walk home on her own and Chris followed her out. He caught up with her and said that as they were going the same way, they might as well walk together. They reached Gail's house first. She opened the front door and turned to say goodnight when Chris pushed her violently into the hallway and slammed the door shut. Taken by surprise, Gail was thrown face down on to the stairs. She hit her head while falling, leaving her only semi-conscious for a few seconds. In that period, Chris removed Gail's trousers and underwear and proceeded to force her to have sex.

RESULTS

In order to assess the effect of participant and victim gender on the degree of homophobia and victim blaming, separate 2 x 2 (victim gender versus participant gender) analyses of variance (ANOVA) were performed. The dependent variables were the homophobia score and a score representing victim perception. Table 1 contains the means for men's and women's judgments of homophobia and victim perception in the female and male rape conditions.

Table 1: Mean homophobia and victim perception scores for men and women in female and male rape incidents

Measure	Men		Women	
	Male rape	Female rape	Male Rape	Female rape
Homophobia	32.2 (10.9)	22.6 (8.5)	16.2 (3.8)	20.1 (6.2)
Vic. perception	51.5 (3.7)	53.5 (3.1)	51.8 (8.3)	53.9 (6.1)

NB. Higher scores indicate a more homophobic response. Higher scores indicate more positive victim perception. Standard deviations are shown in parentheses.

Participant gender was found to have a highly significant effect on the level of homophobia ($F = 28.13$, $p < .0001$, Partial Eta-Squared = .3; all statistical tests are reported at a two-tailed level of analysis). Men ($M = 27.4$) exhibited higher levels of homophobia than females ($M = 18.1$). The second factor of victim gender did not have a significant effect on homophobia ($F = 2.73$, $p = n.s.$). However, there was a significant interaction between the two factors of victim and participant gender ($F = 14.95$, $p < .0001$, Partial Eta-Squared = .2). Male participants exhibited significantly higher levels of homophobia in the male rape scenario ($M = 32.2$) than in the female rape scenario ($M = 22.6$) while the opposite effect was observed for the female subjects but to a much smaller degree (means = 16.2 compared to 20.1, for male and female rape respectively).

The second ANOVA revealed that participant gender did not have a significant effect on victim perception ($F = 0.07$, $df = 1$, $p = n.s.$). The male participants had a mean of 52.5 while the female participants had a mean of 52.8. The analysis also found that victim gender did not have a significant effect although this factor was approaching significance ($F = 3.46$, $df = 1$, $p = 0.06$, Partial Eta-Squared = .05). The female victim was perceived less negatively than the male, with scores of 53.7 and 51.7 respectively. The interaction between participant and victim gender (mean scores: men in female rape condition = 53.5, men in male rape condition = 51.5; women in female rape condition = 53.9, women in male rape condition = 51.8) also proved to be non significant ($F = 0.00$, $p = n.s.$). Table 1 again illustrates the mean scores for this ANOVA.

To assess whether the degree of homophobia predicted negative victim perception, the scores were correlated. The only significant correlation existed between men's male rape victim perception scores and homophobia (Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient, $r = -.487$, $n = 20$, $p < .05$). The negative correlation between the two measures demonstrates that a higher level of homophobia resulted in more negative victim perception. Other correlated homophobia and victim perception scores proved non significant (women's homophobia level and male rape victim perception, Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient, $r = -.192$, $n = 20$, $n.s.$; women's homophobia level and female rape victim perception, Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient, $r = -.11$, $n = 20$, $n.s.$; and men's homophobia level and female rape victim perception, Spearman Rank Correlation Coefficient, $r = -.359$, $n = 20$, $n.s.$).

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to provide a preliminary investigation into the relationship between homophobic attitudes and male rape victim perception. Data supported two of the three hypotheses, namely that male participants would exhibit higher levels of homophobia than female participants and that high levels of homophobia would predict negative male rape victim perception, particularly for the male participants. The results of this study however did not support the hypothesis that males will evaluate the male victim more negatively than females.

The first hypothesis supported by the present data was that the male participants would exhibit a greater degree of homophobia than the female participants. This finding is in line with other literature on gender differences in behavioral and attitudinal factors in sexuality, that is, that "men appear to hold more negative attitudes towards homosexuality than women" (Whitley & Kite, 1995: 151). This result also strengthens current arguments in the literature which suggest that men regard homosexuals as violating their prescribed gender role more than women and resent this deviation from the norm, especially if they themselves are hyperconforming to the "ideal" or traditional masculine role (Whitley & Kite, 1995; Herek, 1986). There may also be an additional factor at work here. An interaction effect between participant and victim gender on homophobia scores where male participants exhibited significantly higher levels of homophobia in the male rape scenario than in the female rape scenario while the opposite effect was observed for the female participants suggests a more generalized fear toward the incident, which appeared to be higher for individuals presented with a scenario involving a rape victim of the same sex as them. Thus, in addition to or even instead of homophobia per se, what is elevated in these scenarios is fear toward rape in general. This finding is in line with previous studies, which have shown that the ever-pervasive fear of sexual violence may cause people to deploy certain cognitive coping strategies – they may repress the processing and recall of threatening information about rape (Krahé, 1999) or increase blame assigned to rape victims (Ward, 1995). Whilst researchers have primarily focused on examining these effects in female participants' reactions toward female rape, I suggest here that these issues extend to male participants' reactions to male rape as well.

The hypothesis that a high degree of homophobia would predict negative male victim perception was also supported for the male participants, whose homophobia scores correlated significantly with their victim perception scores. Thus, there is some evidence for the suggestion that individuals, and particularly males, regard male rape as a homosexual incident and as a result of this view engage in negative male rape victim perception. An important point to note is that the victim's sexual orientation was not explicitly specified in any of the stimulus materials used. It appears that the male participants invoked homophobic attitudes and associated these with the rape on the basis of the description of the events alone rather than on the basis of any explicit description of the victim's homosexuality. In light of this, an important issue for researchers to investigate is the strength of the homophobic attitude that may be invoked if the victim were to be described as explicitly homosexual. Given that the present findings indicated that possessing a high level of homophobia resulted in more negative victim perception, one implication is that if the victim were to be described as a homosexual, this effect would perhaps be even stronger, leading to all manner of implications for rape victims. Researchers should investigate the types of inferences and stereotypes that participants in rape perception studies, and particularly in studies examining male rape make in relation to the information that is explicitly provided for them, and the effects that these assumptions have on rape victim perception (likewise, participants' own sexual orientation may also be of relevance).

Although I investigated these issues on university students who represent a specific cohort of research participants with particular characteristics, the study nevertheless offers an insight into how male victims of rape may be viewed by social perceivers. The present findings indicate that men might respond in a more negative way to the male rape victims than women by holding more homophobic beliefs and responding to the victim in a more negative manner. Nevertheless, there is a paucity of research on groups other than university students, such as medical personnel or the victim's social network members. It is important for rape perception researchers to focus on these groups as the reactions of these groups are likely to have a direct effect on the victim's reporting of rape and well-being in the postrape period (Davis & Breslau, 1994; Ward, 1995). Male rape perception researchers should also focus on investigating the effect of descriptions of the victim such as the victim's personality and demographic characteristics on negative male victim evaluations. Past research has indicated that certain characteristics of female victims lead to increased victim blaming, for example, occupational status, respectability and attractiveness (e.g., McCaul et al, 1990). It is unknown whether these issues would also apply to male victims and are therefore important to investigate as these can provide the basis upon which negative victim perception is determined, and which often carry devastating effects for the rape survivor.

The hypothesis that men will evaluate male victims of rape more negatively than women was not supported in the present study. Indeed, no significant effects of participant gender on negative victim perception were observed, for either the male or the female victim. This is an unexpected result, particularly in the light of previous research where a frequent finding is that men perceive both female and male victims of rape more negatively than women (e.g., Weisz & Earls, 1995; Smith et. al., 1988). Female participants did display more positive victim evaluation than males for each rape scenario - however, this difference was not large enough to be significant. This unexpected finding could be symptomatic of the experimental design rather than a straightforward reflection of underlying attitudes toward rape. Indeed, the lack of differences between participants on this measure may be related to another problem evident in this study, namely to do with the homophobia measure. The homophobia scores indicate a non-normal distribution along the homophobia dimension. Even though the procedure was such that required the homophobia measure to be taken prior to the rape manipulation in the vignettes, and participants were randomly assigned to conditions, they nevertheless appear to vary systematically along the homophobia dimensions. One explanation for this is that because participants were asked to take away the experimental packs and complete the experiment in their own time (done here to try and increase the participation rate), they opened and carried out the instructions in the experimental packs in a different order to the one requested by the experimenter (homophobia measure, rape vignette, victim perception measure). This indicates a lack of control (regarding the order in which stimuli and measures were presented) in the study and as such, any discussion concerning inferences about causality in this study can only be speculative at best. Researchers need to be aware of the implications of asking participants to complete experimental tasks at home, away from the close scrutiny of the researcher.

Victims' gender did not have a significant effect on participants' perception of them. Both sets of participants perceived the female victim less negatively than the male victim but these differences were not significant. The female participants exhibited the expected pattern of evaluation, that is, being relatively sympathetic to both the female and to the male victims (Smith et. al., 1988). However, male participants also perceived both male and female victims somewhat less negatively than even female participants, which is an unusual finding given previous research (Whatley and Riggio, 1993; Smith et. al., 1988). The finding that the male participants did not view the male victim as harshly as in other studies may indicate a degree of same-sex identification, thus invoking defensive attributions (Shaver, 1970). However, this explanation is not able to account for similarly less negative victim perception of the female rape victim. However, one possible explanation for this finding is that men's and women's views are converging with respect to perceptions of female and male rape victims, a possible outcome of feminist theorizing on rape that has encouraged individuals to view rape survivors more sympathetically than before (Rich & Samson, 1990).

In general, these unexpected observations regarding the present participants' rape victim perception should be investigated further in order to ascertain whether they reflect a real phenomenon or an artifact of the present study's experimental methodology and design. If the former is the case, then these findings are encouraging because they may reflect a real shift in attitudes in relation to previous research (e.g.: Feild, 1978). A lack of significant differences in perceptions of victims or between men and women may reflect an increasingly tolerant and liberal society where the implications of negative rape victim perception are widely known, accepted and acted upon. Individuals may also feel that it is no longer socially acceptable to view victims of rape in negative terms, consequently hiding their 'true' feelings and providing answers that are politically correct. Since the issue of whether rape victim perception has really become less negative or is simply a result of self-presentational or methodological factors is an important one, researchers in the future need to account for the element of social desirability in rape perception research before conclusions regarding any real progress in people's views about rape can be drawn.

Finally, it is important to consider a confound in this study, which, together with a lack of control in procedure cited above, further renders a cautions interpretation of the present findings. In the vignettes used to describe the rape scenario, different terminology was used to describe the female as opposed to the male rape event. In the female rape scenario, the event was described as the victim being forced to have "sex" whereas in the male rape scenario, the victim was described as being forced to have "anal sex." Although by including this difference, I was keen to tap into dominant socio-cultural understandings of rape (i.e., these terms take into account widely held beliefs about the gendered nature of rape, where female rape is usually thought of as a penile-vaginal penetrative act, whereas male rape is usually perceived to be a penile-anal penetrative act; Doherty & Anderson, 2004. I considered that to have described both incidents in terms of anal penetration would have left participants facing an unexpected and surprising event description relating to female rape as they are unlikely to come across this description in the media or elsewhere.

Conversely, to have described both incidents as forced "sex" may have left many participants wondering whether the incident described in the male rape scenario was indeed rape and how exactly this was executed, as participants have been observed to do in other studies, for example, Anderson, Beattie & Spencer, 2001), this difference between experimental conditions nevertheless represents a confound in the study. As such, present findings can only be cautiously interpreted and evaluated given that it is impossible to decide whether it was the experimental manipulation or the difference in description in the stimulus materials that could have produced the findings. In general, future researchers need to be aware of the issues surrounding experimental design and procedure when conducting research on socially sensitive issues such as sexual violence.

APPENDIX 1. Short-form Homosexism Scale Items (Hansen, 1982)*

- (1) Sexual preference should not be a factor in employment opportunity
- (2) Homosexuals are just like everyone else, they simply chose an alternative lifestyle
- (3) Homosexuals should be isolated from heterosexuals
- (4) Homosexuals should not be discriminated against because of their sexual preferences
- (5) Homosexual acts should be illegal
- (6) Homosexuals are a danger to our young people
- (7) I would not like to work with a homosexual
- (8) Homosexuals should not hold high government offices
- (9) Job discrimination against homosexuals is wrong
- (10) Homosexuals should not hold leadership positions
- (11) Homosexuals do not corrupt the youth of America (changed to UK in the present study)
- (12) I would not want a homosexual to live in a house next to mine
- (13) If I found out one of my friends was a homosexual, our friendship would be severely damaged
- (14) I would never have anything to do with a person if I knew he/she was a homosexual
- (15) Apartment complexes should not accept homosexuals as renters

*Following Hansen (1982), items 1, 2, 4, 9 and 11 were phrased in a nonsexist manner.

APPENDIX 2. Questionnaire Items Used to Measure Victim Perception*

- (1) Gail is to blame for the rape
- (2) The rape is not Chris's fault
- (3) Gail's behavior did not cause the rape
- (4) The rape is Chris's responsibility
- (5) Chris is not to blame for the rape
- (6) The rape is not Gail's fault
- (7) Chris's behavior is the cause of the rape
- (8) The rape was Gail's responsibility
- (9) Gail is unlikely to be traumatized by the rape
- (10) Chris deserves to be punished
- (11) The rape was just due to bad luck of the victim

*Items 1, 2, 5, 8, 9 and 11 were coded from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Items 3, 4, 6, 7 and 10 were coded from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

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