

# Rape Myths as a Challenge to Objective Policing: Exploring Attitudinal Antecedents of Rape Myth Acceptance and Police Officers' Judgements of Rape Scenarios

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## Context

- Reporting rates for rape are generally regarded as low, and not a reflection of the extent of the crime
- Roughly 17% lifetime reporting rate for victims of rape (ONS, 2013, 2015) (Home Office, 2013; Wykes & Welsh, 2009).
- When reported, there are also high levels of **attrition**
- While there has been an increase in reports over the past 15 years conviction rates are still alarmingly low - between 6 & 12% nationally, with considerable regional variation (Horvath & Brown, 2009).



## Sources of Attrition

- Non-reporting is the initial source of attrition in rape, this may have previously been as high as 94% (Myhill & Allen, 2002)
- Rape reports may be "no crimed" or NFA - (potentially CPS advised), where between half and a two thirds of cases are lost through the 'police' stage of the attrition process (Kelly, 2001)
- Where prosecution is the course of action between one third and half of attrition occurs through inconsistent corroborating evidence or the unwillingness of a complainant to proceed with the process (HMCPSI & HMIC, 2002)



## Rape as a Crime

- Rape as a crime is typically very challenging to investigate, prove and secure a conviction
- Issues in the physical collection of evidence may be further exacerbated by police officer attitudes when dealing with victims and may contribute to influencing decisions made during the investigation process
- Despite several reviews (most recently, Dame Elish Angiolini, 2015), as well as changes in UK practice rape myth acceptance (RMA), varying levels of victim blame are still present in police officers (Page, 2010; Sleath & Bull, 2012, 2015)



## Rape Myths

- RMA can be defined as a set of popularly held beliefs about rape, victims and perpetrators. Broadly, they constitute beliefs that:
  - Blame victims for their rape
  - Express disbelief where claims of rape are made
  - Exonerate the perpetrator
  - Allude to the notion that only certain types of women are raped

(Bohner et al., 1998; Briere, Malamuth, & Check, 1985; Gerger et al, 2007)



## Impact of Rape Myths

Variations in attitudes have the capacity to:

- Affect decision making during the process of investigation (O'Keeffe, Brown & Lyons, 2009)
- Discourage victims from reporting sexual violence (Jordan, 2001, 2004; Page, 2010)
- Affect officers interactions with victims
- Lead to a possible 'Judge and Jury' attitude amongst officers



## Part 1

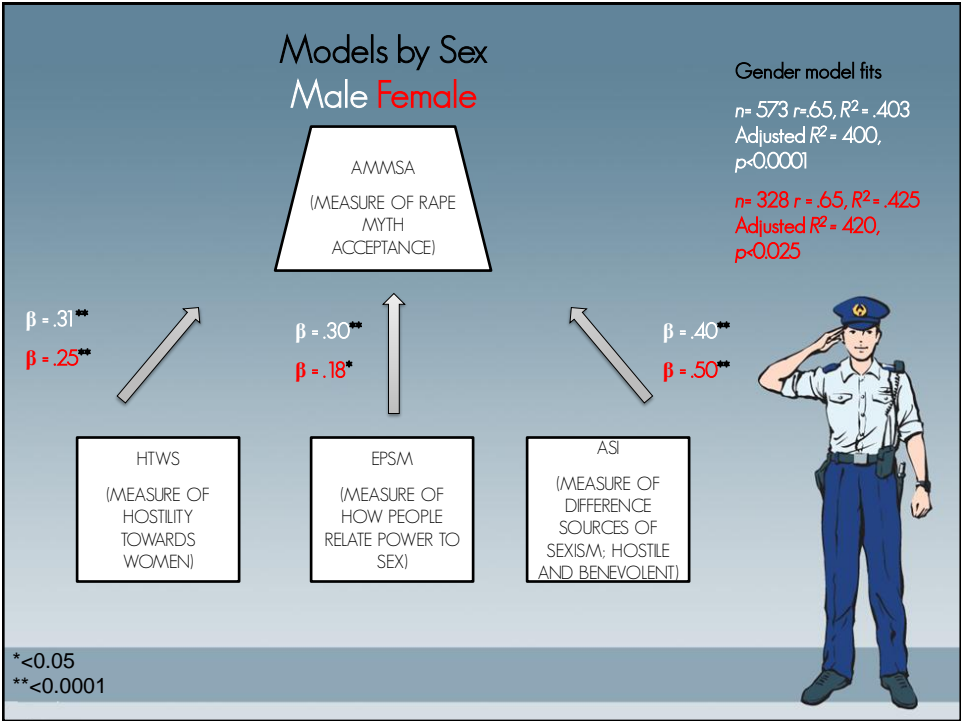
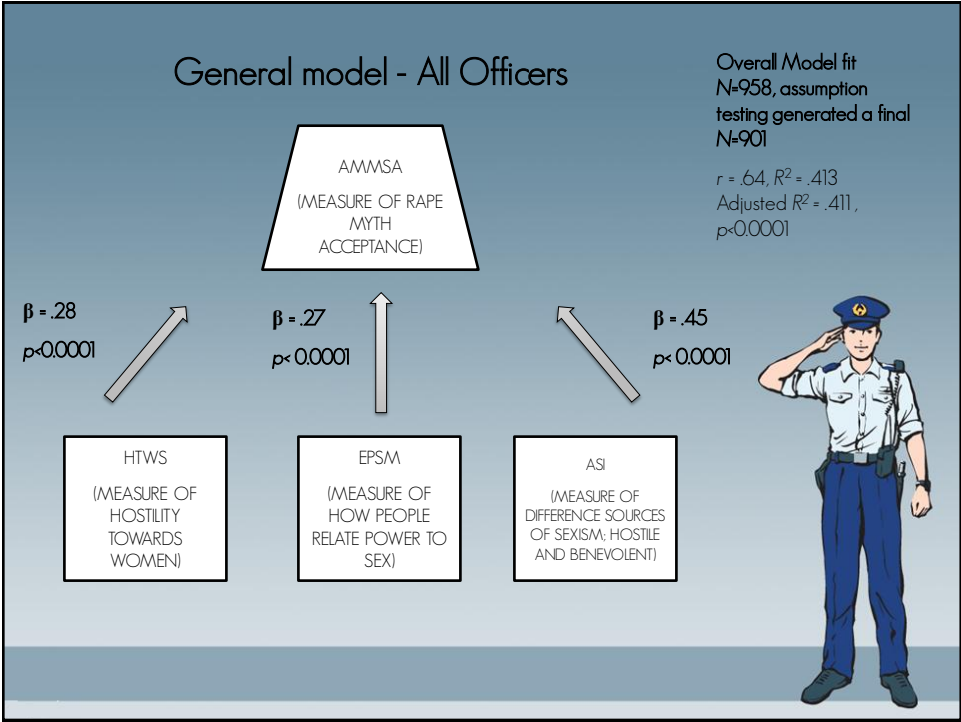
- Large-scale study in collaboration with MPS, on the back of the Angiolini review (2015), this study sought to investigate the underlying attitudes that are associated with biases surrounding RMA
- Qualtrics online stimulus presentation including measures of:
  - Rape myth acceptance - AMMSA (Gerger et al., 2007)
  - Ambivalent Sexism - ASI (Glick & Fiske, 1996)
  - Association between power and sex - EPSM (Chapleau & Oswald, 2010)
  - Hostility towards Women - HTWS scale (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995).

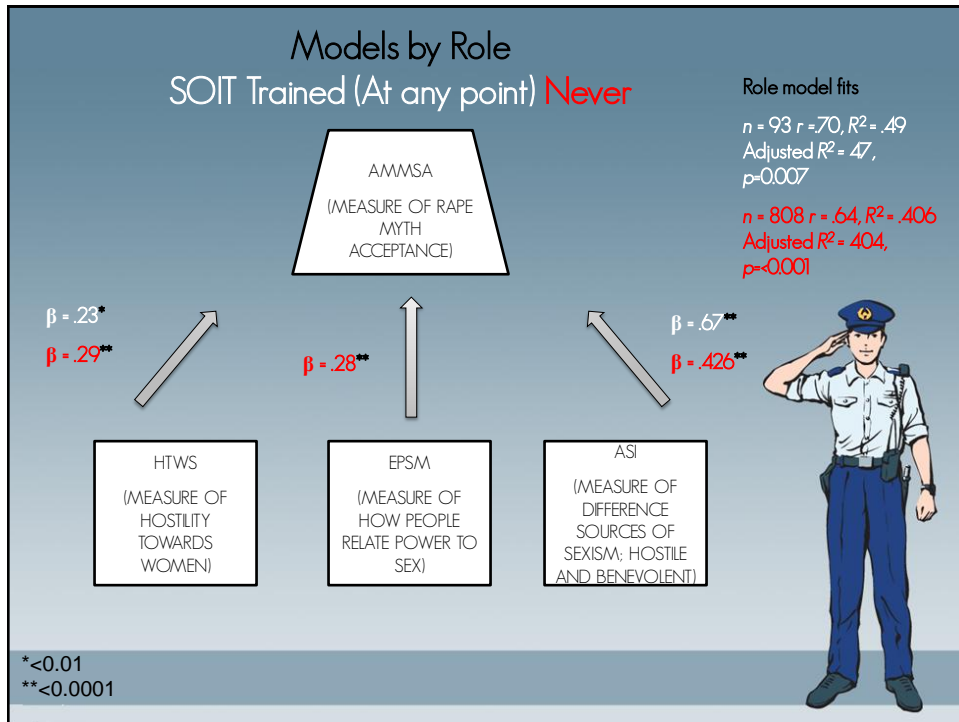


## Descriptive Statistics

| Scale | All Officers (901) | Male (573)         | Female (328)       | SOECA (93)  | Non-SOECA (808) |
|-------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| AMMSA | 2.69 (0.77)        | 2.73 (0.77)        | 2.59 (0.76)        | 2.78 (0.76) | 2.67 (0.77)     |
| HTW   | 2.43 (0.78)        | <b>2.35 (0.74)</b> | <b>2.59 (0.81)</b> | 2.53 (0.77) | 2.42 (0.78)     |
| EPSM  | 1.32 (0.43)        | 1.34 (0.44)        | 1.28 (0.41)        | 1.34 (0.43) | 1.32 (0.43)     |
| ASI   | 2.80 (0.66)        | 2.92 (0.64)        | 2.59 (0.63)        | 2.76 (0.66) | 2.81 (0.66)     |







## The ASI

The Ambivalent Sexism Scale is made up of four factors: **Hostile Sexism** (many women are actually seeking special favours, such as hiring policies that favour them over men); **Benevolent Sexism - gender differentiation** (women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste); **Benevolent Sexism - protective paternalism** (a good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man); **Benevolent Sexism - Heterosexual intimacy** (Every man ought to have a woman who he adores).

In all models *Hostile Sexism*, and *Benevolent Sexism - gender differentiation* are the contributing factors.

## Discussion

- Generally, levels of negative attitudes are low
- RMA is associated with, and strongly predicted by, broader attitudinal constructs
- These constructs are representative of much broader systems of belief about gender and power
- Looking at the contribution of rape myth acceptance to officers' decision making in isolation may not be beneficial
- Self-reported - Does this mean officers are free from prejudice?



## Part 2

- Same large scale project with MPS
- Vignette Study
- Assessed officers' judgments regarding male blame, female blame, and how much a scenario is considered rape
- Scenarios varied on 3 key factors (chosen to correspond with key rape myths) creating 16 scenarios in total
  - Relationship to the victim (with 4 levels - Stranger, Acquaintance, Partner, or Ex-Partner)
  - Reputation (with 2 levels - Good or Bad)
  - Initial Point of Resistance (with 2 levels - Early or Late)



- An example of the scenario is given below. In this example, the relationship to the women is a **stranger**, she has a **good reputation**, and there is a **late point of initial resistance** (the sentences highlighted were varied in the other scenarios to create the 16 different comparison groups).
- Maggie was at a Christmas celebration in her place of work, among those attending were colleagues, friends and **people from other departments she had never met**. After some brief introductions Maggie decided she had to go back to her own office, at the other side of the building, to take care of some final emails before returning to the party. **A man from the party had been 'checking her out' during the course of the evening, her colleagues told him that Maggie rarely went out to parties, volunteered with a local charity, and had never 'hooked up' with anyone in the office before**. He followed her to her office where Maggie was working on her emails, she said, "can I help you" he replied "yes you can, it's Christmas, and I have some mistletoe here". Maggie laughed politely; she stopped her work and kissed the man under the mistletoe. **Maggie continued to kiss the man and things became increasingly physical with him placing his hands on her breasts. After several minutes of kissing and physical petting he unbuttoned her blouse and pulled her in close. Maggie then said "I am at work, I am meant to be at a party.. I have to stop sorry!"** At this point the man became more forceful, pushing her hand onto his crotch. He then pushed her to her desk, forcibly held her and went on to have sex with Maggie.

## 4 x 2 x 2 ANOVA

|              | Early Point of Resistance |         | Late Point of Resistance |         |
|--------------|---------------------------|---------|--------------------------|---------|
|              | Good Rep                  | Bad Rep | Good Rep                 | Bad Rep |
| Stranger     |                           |         |                          |         |
| Acquaintance |                           |         |                          |         |
| Partner      |                           |         |                          |         |
| Ex-Partner   |                           |         |                          |         |





# Male Blame

- Relationship\*\*
  - Ex-Partner (95), Stranger (94), Acquaintance (93), Partner (87)
- IPOR\*
  - Early (94) vs. Late (90)



\*<0.001  
 \*\*<0.005

# Female Blame

- Reputation\*
  - Good (17) vs. Bad (25)
- IPOR\*
  - Early (11) vs. Late (30)
- Reputation\*IPOR\*

|      | Early | Late  |
|------|-------|-------|
| Good | 9.56  | 23.92 |
| Bad  | 12.97 | 37.79 |



\*<0.001

## Rape Rating

- Relationship\*
  - Ex-Partner (97), Stranger (95), Acquaintance (93), Partner (78)
- IPOR\*\*
  - Early (93) vs. Late (89)
- Relationship\*IPOR\*

|              | Early        | Late         |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Stranger     | 93.29        | 97.19        |
| Acquaintance | 95.96        | 91.03        |
| Partner      | <b>85.84</b> | <b>71.76</b> |
| Ex-Partner   | 96.73        | 97.07        |

\*<0.001

\*\*<0.05



## Rape Rating

- Relationship\*Reputation\*IPOR\*\*

|              | Reputation | Early | Late         |
|--------------|------------|-------|--------------|
| Stranger     | Good       | 94.04 | 95.66        |
|              | Bad        | 92.54 | 98.72        |
| Acquaintance | Good       | 95.83 | 88.93        |
|              | Bad        | 96.10 | 93.14        |
| Partner      | Good       | 87.51 | 81.47        |
|              | Bad        | 84.17 | <b>62.05</b> |
| Ex-Partner   | Good       | 96.42 | 99.53        |
|              | Bad        | 97.04 | 94.62        |

\*\*<0.05



## Discussion

- These results show that officers attribute varying levels of victim and perpetrator blame, and rate scenarios differently in terms of whether they are rape or not, based on variations in key details of the case
- Particularly important for 'Rape Ratings' as all scenarios legally constitute rape
- These judgments may be influenced by the attitudes outlined in Study 1



## Implications

- Officers may judge cases differently from the outset based on key factors
- This may contribute to attrition and victim dissatisfaction
- Important to consider the role that attitudes have in obstructing 'Objective Policing'



## Limitations

- Only MPS
- Smaller sample of SOIT officers within sample
- Not actual cases and not actual decisions
- Not behavioural



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Thank you!  
Questions?



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