From “real rape” to real justice: A systematic review of police officers' rape myth beliefs

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From "Real Rape" to Real Justice: A Systematic Review of Police Officers' Rape Myth Beliefs

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Abstract

This systematic review examined 18 documents that contained information about rape myths/cognitions of police officers with the goal of identifying the factors that influence police officers' beliefs of rape. Past research on sexual offence processing decisions has rarely considered the characteristics of police officers as active participants in the legal decision making process (Alderden & Ullman, 2012); meaning that the factors that directly influence police officers' rape myths and the implications these may have on rape victims' experiences when reporting to the police remain unclear. The current review systematically examines the literature on police officers' rape myth beliefs, and evaluates the current available research regarding, decision-making, victim credibility, police training and experiences, and police gender. It concludes by providing recommendations for policy makers in terms of best practice, continual police training and development and improving rape victims' reporting experiences.

Keywords: systematic review, rape myths, police, rape victims, sexual assault

From "Real Rape" to Real Justice: A Systematic Review of Police Officers' Rape Myth Beliefs

1. Introduction

1.1. Victims' experiences and attrition rates

The United Kingdom has the lowest conviction rates for rape cases in Europe (Hohl & Stanko, 2015); with rape being considered as one of the most under-reported crimes (Fisher, Daigle, & Cullen, 2008; Hohl & Stanko, 2015). Attrition is also at its highest at the beginning of the police investigation, with victim withdrawal explaining a large proportion (Hester, 2013; Stern, 2010). Victim withdrawal may be attributable to secondary victimization, as rape victims are at an increased risk through negative beliefs surrounding their credibility (Hackett, Day, & Mohr, 2008). Attrition can also be explained by rape myth conceptions, which can include, but are not limited to the idea that a "real" rape victim will report to the police as soon as the offence has occurred, and will also have bruising and distinguishing marks on their person (Hohl & Stanko, 2015). Attempts to address the issue of attrition in rape cases include the introduction of Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs), also known as Havens, some of which are based in London, that serve to address the medical and physical needs of rape victims (Hohl & Stanko, 2015). SARCs are also available in many areas to facilitate support to sexual assault victims, providing multi-agency, forensically secure, one-stop services for victims (ACPO Rape Working Group, 2008). Despite such implementations, victims report dissatisfaction when reporting to the police, finding that officers are too lenient on the perpetrator, and lack sensitivity especially when the victim and perpetrator are acquaintances, not complete strangers (Felson & Pare, 2008).

1.2. Rape myths

Rape myths were first recognized in the 1970s as cultural beliefs supporting male sexual violence against women (Brownmiller, 1975; Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1974), thereby trivializing rape (Brownmiller, 1975). Research sought to examine the cultural mythology of sexual aggression perpetrated by men against women (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994), which was theorized to be serving a similar function to that of just world beliefs (Lerner, 1980), thus blaming the victim for their own victimization (Ryan, 1976). Rape myths were then defined in 1980 by Burt, combining social psychological and feminist theories, as "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists" (p.27). Rape myths have also been conceptualized as "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to justify male sexual aggression again women" (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, p.134). By conceptualizing males as perpetrators and females as victims, these myths could be seen as denying the possibility of males also being victims of rape (Newburn & Stanko, 1994). In the same time period, male rape research was undertaken (Zeringer, 1972), however it is still considered to be approximately twenty years behind that of female rape (Rogers, 1998; Sleath & Bull, 2012). Rape myths serve many purposes, including blaming the victim whilst exonerating the perpetrator from responsibility (Anderson, 1999), implying that the victim is lying about the offence (Cuklanz, 2000; Grubb & Turner, 2012) or is to blame (Scully, 1990), and providing justifications for acquaintance rape (Johnson, Kuck, & Schander, 1997).Therefore, such beliefs have been suggested by Grubb and Turner (2012) to have a significant impact on: 1) how victims of rape are perceived, 2) how victims of rape are treated, and 3) the dissemination of a cultural acceptance of rape and a rape-supportive society.

2. Goals of the current review

2.1. Rape myths within the police service

The goal of this review is to describe the literature that investigates rape myths within the police service, including negative cognitions/schemas of victims/perpetrators which may influence decision making in sexual assault cases. Over the past three decades (Page, 2008a) there has been limited research into police officers' rape myths (Sleath & Bull, 2015). With attrition rates being greatest at the investigative stage of a sexual assault case (Brown, Hamilton, & O'Neill, 2007), it needs to be recognized that police officers are actively involved in the legal decision-making process and ultimately, officers' identity, social position, and past experiences may be influential in the decisions made in processing a rape case (Alderden & Ullman, 2012).

This review is the first of its kind to systematically investigate police officers' rape myths in relation to a variety of attributes both internationally and nationally. It is essential that the review is as inclusive as possible, analyzing both police officers' perspectives and capturing the impact of negative beliefs of sexual assault victims, which infiltrate the legal system and may impact on the decision making process involved in sexual assault cases. The review will only examine direct empirical literature from 1980, since this year was the first conceptualization of rape myths (Burt, 1980). Additionally, the systematic review will only include research that examines adults and police officers directly.

3. Method

3.1. Initial search strategy

A computer –assisted systematic literature review was conducted. The databases used for the initial searches were EBSCO, ERIC, PsychINFO, Scopus, Web of Science, Criminal Justice Abstracts, ScienceDirect, and PsychArticle (from 1st January 1980 to 31st December

2014). The search terms were: rape* AND myths, Rap* AND myths, "Rape Myths", "rape myths" AND "Victim blaming" AND "Perceptions", "Male Rape" AND "police training" AND "Rape Myths", Rac* OR Ethn* AND "Rape Myths", "Male rape myths " AND "police" AND Train* OR Edu* OR Teach* OR Prac*, "rape myths" AND "Victim blaming" AND "Perceptions", "just world" AND "Rape myths", and "male rape myths". These initial searches were intentionally broad in order to locate all research relevant for the review. In addition, to ensure location of grey material, the following databases were also searched with the same search terms: Social Sciences Research Network, Grey Net, Intute, Proquest Dissertations & Theses: UK & Ireland, EThOs, Zetoc, Networked Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (NDTLD), and OpenThesis.

3.2. Selection criteria

For the initial screening the following primary inclusion criteria were applied:

a) Written in English.
b) Written after Burt (1980).
c) Published in a peer-reviewed journal or unpublished, not including books.

Secondary screening based on reading the title and abstract for each article excluded articles that did not:

a) Analyze rape myths/cognitions of police officers who may or may not have a comparison group (e.g. we excluded comparison groups of non-adults).
b) Analyze rape myths and/or cognitions of adults (over the age of 18; e.g. we excluded beliefs of children or adolescents).
c) Focus on beliefs of rape (male and female) or related to rape and sexual violence and beliefs related to such offences (e.g. we excluded offences against children or sexual harassment).

d) Include a measure (qualitative/quantitative) of rape myths (or cognitions related to rape myths).

e) Use empirical evidence (e.g. essay or opinion pieces were excluded from the review). Studies that analyzed case files of rape cases were also excluded from the review.

The review looks specifically at police officers' beliefs of rape cases, and it is felt that in this context, inferences cannot be made from case reports (e.g. what the officers have written) as to what the investigating officers were thinking at that time (Soulliere, 2005).

3.3. Secondary search strategy

Additional searches were conducted using new search terms with the same databases (excluding Proquest Dissertations & Theses: UK & Ireland was replaced with Proquest Dissertation and Thesis Global and Intute, and NDTDL was no longer active) with the same exclusion criteria. The search terms were: "police officers" AND "decision making" AND "sex offences"; "sexual assault" AND "victim credibility" AND "investigative bias"; "male sexual assault" AND police; police AND victim AND "sexual assault"; "sexual assault" AND "decision making" and police; and "police training" AND "sexual assault".

4. Results

4.1. Literature searches

The initial search applying the primary and secondary inclusion criteria identified 1484 documents (after duplicates were removed). Secondary screening based on the criteria laid out in the methods section, and also reading the title and abstract for each article reduced the number of articles to 38. If it was unclear if the article met the inclusion criteria or not, the article remained in the review. Full copies of all 38 articles were obtained and underwent a full screening. The screening process also ensured that rape myths/beliefs in police officers were investigated through data analyses and that the articles directly measured police

officers' beliefs and did not use case studies. This reduced the pool of articles to 29. Additional searches were conducted using the same search terms and databases for 2015 which yielded 3 results. After checking for duplicates (n=2) only one document was added bringing up the pool to 30.

The second search identified 239 (n=51 duplicates removed), but after applying the primary and secondary inclusion criteria, 10 documents remained. After reading the abstracts and title, the sample was further reduced to 8. Overall, all searches culminated a total of 38 documents included for the review.

4.2. Data extraction and assessment of study quality

For each of the identified articles a process of data extraction was undertaken using an author-constructed form that collected information on: peer reviewed, abstract, location, sample characteristics (age range, gender, ethnicity, source of participants, number of participants), methodology (quantitative, qualitative, quasi), interventions used, key themes, strengths of the paper, and limitations. A quality scoring system was also developed in order to rate identified studies, addressing the differences and similarities of the studies that are of importance to the research questions. Differences were based on sample size, publication type, method of gathering beliefs or experiences, and validation and reliability of the methods used.

Rape is considered a sensitive and controversial topic; therefore, it may cause some officers to give biased answers in face to face interviews (Campbell, 1995). In addition, because, for interviewing purposes, researchers may have spent time with the officers to establish trust, such familiarity may end up further biasing results (Campbell, 1995). Interviews on sensitive topics may also prompt some participants to give an official point of view as opposed to a personal, say what the researcher wants to hear, create a good

impression by not answering honestly, tend to say something even though they cannot answer the question, and the researcher may influence the participants' responses by expressing surprise or disapproval (Doody & Noonan, 2013). It is for the aforementioned reasons that interviews and focus groups were assigned a lower quality score compared to other data collection methods. Table 1 shows the scoring assigned to each category for the documents.

Table 1.

Scoring system for quality of police belief papers.

		Validity Score			Validity Score
Publication	Peer reviewed	3	Method of gathering beliefs	Self-report Survey	2
	PhD Dissertation	2		Focus group	1
	MSc Dissertation	1		Semi-structured Interview	1
	Unknown	0		Mixed Methodology	3
Sample Size	0-50	0	Validity and reliability of rape myths measure	No information on reliability/validity provided.	0
	51-100	1		Citation to the original study provided but no reliability/validity.	1
	101-200	2		Author constructed, but data provided on reliability/validity scores for the present study.	2
	201-400	3		Citation to the original study (established method/scale) and provided reliability/validity for current study.	3
	401+	4			

The documents varied greatly in standards, which is reflected in the scoring system to assess overall quality of each document. Using the median (i.e. 8), documents were grouped into three categories: low quality (0-4), medium quality (5-8), and high quality (9-13). The highest scoring document achieved a score of 13 (see Table 2); the lowest, a score of 2 (see Table 4), and the average score was 8 (see Table 3). Seven documents fell within the low quality-scoring category, 14 fell into the medium quality-scoring category and 17 fell into the high quality-scoring category.

Table 2 shows the 17 studies that scored highly on the quality scoring sheet, along with each study's sample size, design (including measures used) and quality score. Most

studies that fell into this category were peer-reviewed journals (14 documents; 82.35%), with the remaining being PhD dissertations (three documents; 17.65%). The majority of these documents also had a high number of participants, with nine documents (52.94%) having over 401 participants, six documents (35.29%) having between 101-200 participants, one document (5.88%) having between 201-400, and one document (5.88%) having between 51-100 participants. The majority of the documents measured officers' beliefs through self-report surveys (14 documents; 82.35%), with the remaining using mixed methodology (three documents; 17.65%), which included self-report surveys and role-playing simulated rape interviews, vignettes and interviews. In terms of reliability and validity, four documents (23.53%) constructed their own measures, and provided information on reliability/validity scores for their study, 12 documents (70.59%) cited the original study (if they used an established method or scale) and provided validity and reliability for their current study, and one document (5.88%) did not provide any information on reliability or validity.

Table 2.

Summary of high scoring studies that identified factors influencing police beliefs.

Publication	Sampling		Design/Measure(s)	Quality of Study
Author(s), year of publication	Total Police Sample	Other Sample		Quality Score
Baldry (1996)	130	-	• Videotaped Testimonies (author constructed); Perceived Credibility Scale (Winkel & Koppelaar, 1991, 1992)	10
Campbell (1995)	91	-	• Experience with Rape Scale (EWR) (author constructed); Training on Rape- The Helpfulness of Training Likert items (author constructed); The Sexualized Work Environment Scale (SWES) (modified from Gutek, Cohen Konrad, 1990); The Attitudes Towards Women Scale (Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1973); Adversarial Sexual Beliefs and Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence (Burt, 1980); and Attitudes Towards Date Rape Scale (author constructed). Three open-ended questions (author constructed) on influential factors on officers' beliefs of date rape	9
Lee, Lee, and Lee (2012)	236	-	• Korean Rape Myth Acceptance Scale-Revised (KRMAS-R) (Oh & Neville, 2004); vignette questions adapted from the Rape-Supportive Attributions Scale (Monson, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, & Binderup, 2000); The Attitudes Toward Women Scale (AWS) (Spence & Helmreich, 1978)	11
Lonsway (1996)	161	-	• Post-recruit judgement Likert scale (author-constructed); Role play ratings Likert scale (author-constructed); Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA) (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999); simulated interview; baseline curriculum; experimental workshop; integrated workshop	9

Lonsway, Welch, and Fitzgerald (2001)	608	-	• Police Training Program (experimental, baseline, workshop); background information questionnaire (author constructed); Knowledge of Sexual Assault Response Scale (author constructed); IRMA (Payne et al., 1999); simulated sexual assault interview (role playing), role player evaluation questionnaire (author constructed); Post interview recruit judgements (author constructed) adapted from Victim Evaluation Questionnaire (Naber, 1991; Wyer, Bodenhausen, & Gorman, 1985)	13
Muram, Hellman, and Cassinello (1995)	977	-	• 10 statements regarding sexual assault on a 4-point Likert scale (author constructed)	9
Page (2007)	891	-	• RMA-R (adapted from Burt, 1980); Victim Credibility Scale (VCS) (author constructed)	11
Page (2008a)	891	-	• RMA-R (adapted from Burt, 1980); Non-Genuine Victim Scale (NGVS) (Spohn & Horney, 1996)	12
Page, (2008b)	891	-	• Old Fashioned Sexism Scale (OFSS) and Modern Sexism Scale (MSS) (Swim, Aikin, Hall, & Hunter, 1995); Victim Credibility Scale (VCS) (Page, 2007); RMA-R (adapted from Burt, 1980)	12
Page (2010)	891	-	• RMA-R (adapted from Burt, 1980); VCS (Page, 2007); Feedback on survey instrument (author constructed)	12
Rich and Seffrin (2012)	429	-	• Knowledge of Interview Techniques Scale (KIT-author constructed); Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (author constructed); Sexual Assault Education Scale (author constructed); several author constructed items: number of sexual assault cases victims known personally, years as a police officer and rank; general education, agency type	11
Rich and Seffrin (2013)	429	-	• Crime victim advocacy measure (CVA; author constructed); Victims known personal item (author constructed); KIT (author constructed); Sexual Assault Education item (author constructed); Number of sexual assault cases item (author constructed); years as police officer and rank	11

			(author constructed); general education item (author constructed); gender item; age and agency type; Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (author constructed)	
Rich and Seffrin (2014)	429	-	• CVA (Rich & Seffrin, 2013); author constructed items: sexual assault education; attitudes towards training; negative comments towards rape victims; reporting rape to the police; victims known personally; number of sexual assault cases; years as a police officer and rank; general education; gender and age; and agency type; Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (author constructed)	11
Sleath (2011)	123	-	• Victim and perpetrator blaming scale (Sleath & Bull, 2010); belief in a just world (Dalbert, Montada, & Schmitt, 1987); Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (Bem, 1981); IRMA (Payne et al., 1999); and vignettes (author constructed)	9
Sleath and Bull (2012)	123	-	• Vignettes(Sleath & Bull, 2010); Victim and Perpetrator Blaming Scale (Sleath & Bull, 2010); General belief in a just world (Dalbert et al., 1987); BSRI (Bem, 1981); IRMA (Payne et al., 1999)	10
Sleath and Bull (2015)	123	147 psychology students; 82 law students	• IRMA (Payne et al., 1999)	10
Venema (2013)	184	-	• Semi-structured interviews; vignettes (author constructed), open-ended item on questions officers would ask regarding vignette (author constructed); 3 Likert type questions on legitimization of vignettes (author constructed); 4 Likert type questions on behavioral intent (author constructed); 3 Likert type questions on attitude towards behavior (author constructed); Subjective Norm measures (author constructed), Compliance with Subjective Norm measure (author constructed); Perceived Behavioral Control measure (author constructed); Decisional Frames (author constructed); Attribution of Blame Scale (Bieneck & Krahe, 2011); Rape	10

	Myth Acceptance Scale (author constructed) developed from Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale- Short Form (IRMA-SF) (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994) and Subtle Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (McMahon & Farmer, 2011); The Marlowe-Crown Social Desirability Scale-Short Form (Reynolds, 1982)

Table 3 highlights the studies that fell into the medium-quality scoring category. Of the 14 studies that fell into this category, many were peer reviewed (nine documents; 64.29%), with the remaining being PhD dissertations (two documents; 14.29%), and MSc dissertations (two documents; 14.29%) and one unknown (7.14%). These documents mainly consisted of low sample sizes, with two having 50 participants or less (14.29%), followed by five documents (35.71%) including between 51-100 participants, three documents (21.43%) having between 101-200 participants, two documents (14.29%) having between 201-400 participants, and two (14.29%) document having over 401 participants. These documents also measured officers' beliefs through self-report measures (13 documents; 92.86%), followed by mixed methodology (one document; 7.14%). In terms of reliability, five documents (35.71%) provided no information on the reliability or validity of the measures used, four documents (28.57%) cited the original authors but did not provide information on reliability or validity for current study, three documents (21.43%) cited the original authors and provided information on validity/reliability for the current study and the remaining (two documents; 14.29%) used author-constructed measures and provided information on validity/reliability for their own research.

Table 3.

Summary of medium scoring quality-scoring studies of officers' beliefs of rape

Publication	Sampling		Design/Measure(s)	Quality of Study
Author(s), year of publication	Total Police Sample	Other Sample		Quality Score
Abdullah-Khan (2002)	93	16 sexual assault victims	• Author constructed questionnaire	5
Areh, Mesko and Umek (2009)	1,000	-	• Vignettes, and questionnaire including personal descriptions of vignettes measured on a 7-point scale (Fischer, 2000 as cited in Areh et al., 2009)	5
Brown and King (1998)	50	50 students	• Hyper Masculinity Scale (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984); Hyper femininity Scale (Murnen & Byrne, 1991); Short Form on Attitudes Towards Women (Spence, et al., 1973); General Attitudes Towards Rape Scale (Larsen & Long, 1988); and Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale (Burt, 1980)	6
Darwinkel, Powell and Tidmarsh (2013)	77	-	• Training course; vignettes and vignette questionnaires on 10-point Likert scale and 1 open-ended vignette question (author constructed)	6
Fay (2013)	85	-	• Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (IRMA) (Payne et al., 1999)	8
Goodman-Delahunty and Graham (2011)	125	-	• Vignette and questionnaire with Likert items (author constructed), IRMA-SF (Payne et al., 1999)	8
Kinney, Bruns, Bradley, Dantzler and Weist (2008)	301	125 sexual assault victims	• Author constructed survey	8
Mennicke, Anderson, Oehme and Kennedy (2014)	149	-	• Qualitative questions on definition of rape (Campbell & Johnson, 1997) and beliefs of unfounded rape claims (author constructed); Rape Myth Acceptance Scale	8

			Revised (RMA-R) (Page, 2007); background questionnaire (author constructed)	
Rhim (2005)	26	-	• RMA (Burt, 1980); Attitudes Towards Rape Victims Scale (ARVS) (Ward, 1988)	6
Schuller and Stewart (2000)	212	-	• Vignettes (author-constructed), author constructed Likert items (assessing credibility, attribution of blame, case evaluation, response to complaint, and perceived levels of intoxication)	8
Schwartz (2010)	286	-	• Semi-structured interviews, using questions drawn from Rape Myths Scale (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995); the Rape Attitude and Perception Questionnaire (Hinck & Thomas, 1999); the Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Carmody & Washington, 2001), and questions drawn from the qualitative interviews with sexual assault investigators; author constructed questionnaire-questions drawn from Cochran and Bromley (2003 cited by Schwartz 2010) and "Dr Edith Lynn of Kean College" (Schawartz, 2010, p.37).	8
Stephanus (2006)	100	-	• Rape Scenarios (Simonson & Subich, 1999); AWS-Short Form (Spence & Helmreich, 1978); BSRI (Bem, 1981); ARVS (Ward, 1988)	7
Westera, Kebbell and Milne (2011)	136	-	• A quasi-experimental questionnaire including Likert scale items and open-ended items (author-constructed); mock rape investigative case (author constructed)	7
Wentz and Archbold (2012)	100	-	• Vignettes (Schuller & Stewart, 2000); author-constructed questionnaire both Likert items and open-ended items.	8

Low quality-scoring studies are shown in Table 4. The seven studies that fell into this category were a mixture of peer-reviewed journals (four documents; 57.14%), PhD dissertations (two documents; 28.57%) and a MSc dissertation (one document; 14.29%). These documents also had a low number of participants, with all of them having fewer than 50.

Table 4.

Summary of low scoring quality-scoring studies of officers' beliefs of rape

Publication	Sampling		Design/Measure(s)	Quality of Study
Author(s), year of publication	Total Police Sample	Other Sample		Quality Score
Barrett and Hamilton-Giachritsis (2013)	22	-	• Vignettes and simulated investigation materials (author constructed), and structured interview	4
Campbell, Menaker and King (2015)	44	-	• Semi-structured interviews	4
Hellmann (2005)	6	-	• Semi-structured interviews	2
Javaid (2014)	3		• Semi-structured interviews	4
King (2009)	14	-	• Semi-structured interviews, using Jordan (2001) and Campbell (2001) interview guideline questions; 10 scenarios partially modelled from the Rape Empathy Scale (Deitz, Blackwell, Daley, & Bentley, 1982); vignette open-ended questions (author constructed)	3
Shoultz (2011)	11	-	• Focus groups	3
Venema (2014)	10	-	• Semi-structured interviews	4

Table 4 shows that all low scoring documents utilized primarily interviews or focus groups when assessing police officers' beliefs regarding rape. The decision was made to re-asses these specific documents using the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research (COREQ) 32-item checklist which enables comprehensive reporting of qualitative research (Tong, Sainsbury, & Craig, 2007). We implemented and adapted the COREQ version by Katz et al. (2013), assessing the documents in Table 4 on the following criteria: 1) researchers' role; 2) sampling method; 3) data collection method; 4) analyses; and 5) type of paper are all clearly described. Such studies were re-assigned a quality qualitative score which determined if they should be kept in the review (see Table 5).

Table 5.

Summary of qualitative quality-scoring of previously low quality scoring studies

Publication	Quality of Study
Author(s), year of publication	Qualitative Quality Score
Barrett and Hamilton-Giachritsis (2013)	6
Campbell et al. ((2015)	6
Hellmann (2005)	7
Javaid (2014)	6
King (2009)	6
Shoultz (2011)	5
Venema (2014)	6

Using the median (i.e. 6), qualitative documents were summarized into three categories: low quality (0-3), medium quality (4-6), and high quality (7). One document fell within the low quality-scoring category, six fell into the medium quality-scoring category and one fell into the high quality-scoring category. Low scoring and medium scoring studies will be excluded from any further analyses as it is essential that only high quality articles are included in the review. This resulted in a total of 18 high quality scoring studies being included.

5. Are there factors that influence officers' beliefs of rape?

5.1. Methodological findings

Location and Sample

Table 6 demonstrates the location and methodological findings of the documents that analyzed beliefs of rape within the police service. The majority of studies were conducted in the USA, followed by the UK, with a small number of studies in various other locations. Most failed to identify the race and ethnicity of participants, and those that did, the majority identified their samples as being over 60% white. For gender, documents were largely non-diverse, with most identifying that over 60% of their participants were male. Thus, overall, studies analyzing police beliefs of rape were from white male officers.

Table 6.

Study characteristics of remaining high quality articles in review for police officers' beliefs

Study characteristics (N=18 studies) [1]	M (SD)	Range	n	%
Publication type				
Peer-reviewed journal article			14	77.77
PhD Dissertation			3	16.67
Masters Dissertation			1	5.56
Interventions				
Mixed methodology			3	16.67
Self-report questionnaire			14	77.77
Interview			1	5.56
Study location				
United States of America			12	66.67
United Kingdom			3	16.67
South Korea			1	5.56
South Africa			1	5.56
Unknown			1	5.56
Type of data gathered				
Quantitative			13	72.22
Qualitative			1	5.56
Mixed methods			4	22.22
Study population race/ethnicity				
>60% White			8	44.44
<60% White			0	0.00
Not reported			10	55.56
Study population gender				
>60% male			13	72.22
>60% female			0	0.00
Diverse (no group more than 60%)			5	27.78
Total sample size[1]	422.94(344.54)	6-977		

Note.

[1] Sample size range within studies, including mean, standard deviation and minimum and maximum number of participants

5.2. Measuring beliefs within the high quality scoring studies

Out of the 18 high quality scoring documents, four documents (22.22%; Page, 2007; Rich & Seffrin, 2012, 2013, 2014), received a score of 2 for reliability and validity of their measure(s) due to administering author constructed methods, and providing validity and reliability scores. Two documents (11.11%; Hellmann, 2005; Muram et al., 1995) were

assigned a quality-score of 0 for their reliability and validity of measures used, as they failed to provide information on reliability/validity. Lastly, 12 documents (66.67%; Baldry, 1996; Campbell 1995; Lee et al., 2012; Lonsway, 1996; Lonsway et al., 2001; Page, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Sleath, 2011; Sleath & Bull, 2012; Sleath & Bull, 2015; Venema, 2013), received a score of 3 on the quality of their study for reliability and validity due to providing a citation of the original study for the established scale/measure and the validity and reliability of the measure(s) for their current study (see Table 7).

Table 7.

Studies that scored high on providing reliability/validity in high quality studies using established measures for police beliefs

Measures used (N=12 studies)	Details	α	n	%
Adversarial Sexual Beliefs and Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence (Burt, 1980)	Measures opinions on dating and violence in intimate relationships.	0.89[b]	1	8.33
Attribution of Blame Scale (Bieneck & Krahé, 2011)	Measures aspects of victim and suspect responsibility and blameworthiness.		1	8.33
	- Victim blame items	0.76[l]		
	- Perpetrator blame items	0.84[l]		
AWS (Spence & Helmreich, 1978)	Measures attitudes towards the right and roles of women.	0.70[c]	1	8.33
BSRI (Bem, 1981)	Participants' beliefs of their masculine and feminine attributes, including a degree to which individuals are masculine, feminine and undifferentiated.		2	16.67
	- Masculine items	0.79[i] 0.71[j]		
	- Feminine items	0.88[i] 0.90[j]		
General Belief in a Just World (Dalbert et al., 1987)	Measured a general belief in a just world.	0.77[k] 0.77[l]	2	16.67
IRMA (Payne et al., 1999)	Assesses rape myth beliefs.	0.93[d] 0.92[e] 0.96[i]	4	33.33

		0.96[j] 0.95[k]		
KRMAS-R (Oh & Neville, 2004)	Measures level of acceptance of rape myths among Koreans, and consists of two subscales.		1	8.33
	- Rape survivor myths	0.73[c]		
	- Myths about the impact of rape	0.84[c]		
NGVS (Spohn & Horney, 1995)	Measures opposing characteristics of genuine rape victims based on vignettes.	0.94[f]	1	8.33
OFSS and MSS (Swim et al., 1995)	Assesses stereotyped sexist attitudes associated with hegemonic masculinity as well as subtle forms of modern day sexism.		1	8.33
	- OFSS	0.73[g]		
	- MSS	0.77[g]		
Perceived Credibility Scale (Winkle & Koppelaar, 1991, 1992)	Measured perceived credibility of a man and a woman in videos.		1	8.33
	- Woman's credibility	0.85[a]		
	- Woman's responsibility	0.84[a]		
	- Man's credibility	0.86[a]		
	- Man's responsibility	0.80[a]		
Perpetrator Blaming Scale (Sleath & Bull, 2010)	Assesses perpetrator blaming.	0.60[j] 0.60[i]	2	16.67
RMA-R (Page, 2007)	Adapted from Burt's (1980) RMAS, assessing endorsement of rape		3	20.00

	myths.	0.75[f] 0.75[g] 0.75[h]		
The Attitudes Towards Women Scale (Spence et al., 1973)	Modified version of Spence et al. (1973). Measures opinions towards rights and roles of women in society	0.82[b]	1	8.33
The Sexualized Work Environment Scale (SWES)	Adapted from Gutek et al. (1990) Sexualized Work Environment Scale	0.83[b]	1	8.33
Victim Blaming Scale (Sleath & Bull, 2010)	Assesses victim blaming.	0.77[j] 0.70[i]	2	16.67
VCS (Page, 2007)	Measures how believable a certain victim would be to individual police officers.	0.81[g] 0.81[h]	2	16.67

Note.

[a] Baldry (1996) [b] Campbell (1995) [c] Lee et al. (2012) [d] Lonsway (1996); [e] Lonsway et al. (2001) [f] Page (2008a) [g] Page (2008b) [h] Page (2010)

[i] Sleath (2011) [j] Sleath and Bull (2012) [k] Sleath and Bull (2015) [l] Venema (2013)

5.3. Rape myth questionnaires

Table 7 shows the details of the established scales used in the 12 documents that scored highly on reliability. For rape myth scales, the IRMAS (Payne et al., 1999) was one of the most implemented measures within these documents, and consists of 40 rape myth items, including five filler items designed to reduce the effects of response set (Sleath & Bull, 2012). There are seven subscales: "She asked for it", "It wasn't really rape" "He didn't mean to", "She wanted it", "She lied", "Rape is a trivial event", and "Rape is a deviant event" (Sleath & Bull, 2012). Participants indicate their level of agreement to items on a 7-point scale, 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree), with a neutral mid-point of 4 (neither agree or disagree). An example item would be "If a woman is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of control". McMahon and Farmer (2011) developed a slightly revised version of the IRMA, because of concerns about the language used in the IRMA; the Subtle Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (McMahon & Farmer, 2011), and it is thought to eliminate potential bias or strong language (e.g. caught having an illicit affair) and replaced it with more common vernacular (e.g. caught cheating) (Venema, 2013). Additionally, the Subtle Rape Myth Acceptance Scale uses the word "girl" rather than "woman."

The next most commonly used rape myth measure (see Table 7) was the RMA-R (designed by Page, 2007) and adapted from Burt's (1980) RMAS. Page (2007) altered Burt's (1980) scale by removing items that appeared outdated, and deleted the hitchhiking item, feeling that the practice is no longer common, and deleted the "stuck-up" and "drunk at a party" items as they were double-barreled items and were unclear. Several other double-barreled items in the original scale were either separated into individual items or shortened. Page (2007) also changed gendered items into gender-neutral items to coincide with a change

in the law in the USA as at the time when Burt (1980) designed the RMA, rape was seen as a crime against women, whereas now in America is it legally possible for a man to be raped.

The KRMAS-R was used only once within the 12 studies (see Table 7), and was developed by Oh and Neville (2004), to measure the level of rape myth endorsement among Koreans, consisting of two subscales: (a) rape survivor myths and (b) myths about the impact of rape. The rape survivor myths subscale comprises of 12 items, largely adopted from the IRMA (Payne et al., 1999), and means across items were calculated, with higher scores indicating greater endorsement of rape survivor myths. The myths about the impact of rape subscale comprises of nine items, reflecting the belief that rape is related to losing one's chastity, which is the unique cultural dimension of rape myths in South Korea (Oh & Neville, 2004).

5.4. Other questionnaires

These questionnaires measured a variety of beliefs, which do not cover rape myths but cover beliefs related to rape and sexual offences.

The BSRI (Bem, 1981) was implemented twice out of the 12 documents, and places participants into four unique gender roles according to the participants' beliefs of their masculine and feminine attributes, including a degree to which individuals are masculine, feminine and undifferentiated, consisting of 30 items on a 7-point Likert-type scale. The BSRI has been criticized for its' underlying structure and construct measurement (Colley et al., 2009; cited by Sleath, 2011) meaning that the effects of gender role traits and role of victim blaming may be obscured. Sleath (2011) suggest that the structure still needs to be fully validated, despite them attempting to guard against this by using the current Choi, Fuqua, and Newman (2009) structures of femininity, social masculinity, and personal masculinity.

The VCS (Page, 2007) was implemented twice, and measures how believable a certain victim would be to individual police officers with varying characteristics and serves as a more specific measure of rape myth acceptance than the RMA-R (Page, 2007). Page (2007) developed the VCS from Burt's (1980) RMAS questions that did not factor load on other questions in their analyses. Page (2007) reworked items relating to age, sex, profession and marital status, with items ranging on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "very unlikely" to "very likely".

The Victim and Perpetrator Blaming Scale (Sleath & Bull, 2010) was implemented twice and consists of two subscales: The Victim Blaming scale (items 1, 3, 5, 9, 10, and 11), and the Perpetrator Blaming scale (items 6, 7, 8, and 13). Scores on both scales were averaged out in order to allow for comparisons between victim and perpetrator blaming (Sleath & Bull, 2012).

The General Belief in a Just World (Dalbert et al., 1987), was implemented twice in the 14 documents (14.29%), and measures a general belief in a just world by using six statements with officers answering on a 6-point Likert-style scale.

The remaining questionnaires were used only once within the 12 documents. The OFSS and MSS (Swim et al., 1995) measures stereotyped sexist attitudes associated with hegemonic masculinity as well as the more subtle forms of modern day sexism. The response set for both scales ranged from ''strongly disagree'' to ''strongly agree'' and used a 5-point scale. The scales were formulated from the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986) and were adapted to apply to women.

The Perceived Credibility Scale (Winkle & Koppelaar, 1991, 1992) measured perceived credibility of a man and woman in videos (when used by Baldry, 1996). All responses are measured on a 7-point scale, 1= certainly not to 7= certainly.

The Attribution of Blame Scale (Bieneck & Krahe, 2011) measures participants' evaluation of victim and perpetrator responsibility and blameworthiness, consisting of eight items on a 7-point rating scale, whereby 1 represented "not at all" and 7 represents "very much", and includes two subscales: suspect blame and victim blame which consist of four items. An example would be "Do you think the victim is to blame for the incident?". Subtracting the participants' victim blame score from the participants' total victim blame score creates suspect blame.

The NGVS (Spohn & Horney, 1996) is based on opposing characteristics that make up the "genuine" victim ideal (Page, 2008a). According to research by Spohn and Horney (1996), the perceived ideal is seen as a virgin who is unacquainted with the perpetrator, who screamed and who physically resisted the assault and/or reported the incident to the police within 24 hours (Page 2008a). Participants are offered the opposite of such characteristics, and are provided with a response set ranging from "very unlikely" to "very likely" on a 5-point scale.

The AWS (Spence & Helmreich, 1978) measures attitudes towards the rights and roles of women. Participants rate their opinions on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "disagree strongly" to "agree strongly". An example would be "Women earning as much as their dates should bear equally the expense when they go out together".

The Acceptance of Interpersonal Violence Scale (Burt, 1980) measures the endorsement of violence and coercion as appropriate and legitimate methods in interpersonal interactions; specifically, sexual relationships. The Adversarial Sexual Beliefs Scale (Burt, 1980) measures participants' beliefs regarding heterosexual relationships. Both scales are measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The Adversarial Sexual Beliefs consists of five items, with an example would be "A man's got to show the women who's boss right from the start or he'll end up henpecked". The Acceptance

of Interpersonal Violence consists of six items with an example would be "being roughed up is sexually stimulating for women".

The Attitudes Towards Women Scale (Spence et al., 1973) measures opinions towards the rights and roles of women in society. Campbell (1995) revised the original version by Spence et al. (1973), which consists of 25 items on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree'. Campbell (1995) dropped five items from the original scale due to ambiguous wording and dropped a further 10 items due to low factor values which were reported by Spence et al. (1973). Scores from participants were averaged out to create the final scale and several items were reverse scored (for more details see Campbell, 1995).

The Sexualized Work Environment Scale (Campbell 1995) was a modified version of the Gutek et al. (1990) scale. The original scale measured the frequency participants engaged in various activities, for example flirting, that occur in the workplace. Participants would answer on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "very frequently" to "not frequently at all". Scores were then averaged to create the scale, with higher scores indicating that participants felt that their working environment was more sexualized and that sexual harassment was a problem in their workplace (Campbell, 1995). Campbell (1995) dropped one item from the original scale due to low item-total correlation.

6. Overall findings of factors related to police beliefs of rape

Out of the remaining high quality documents, several factors were analyzed that covered essentially four elements: victim/crime scene characteristics, police personal characteristics, beliefs/attitudes and professional characteristics, which can be seen in figure 1.

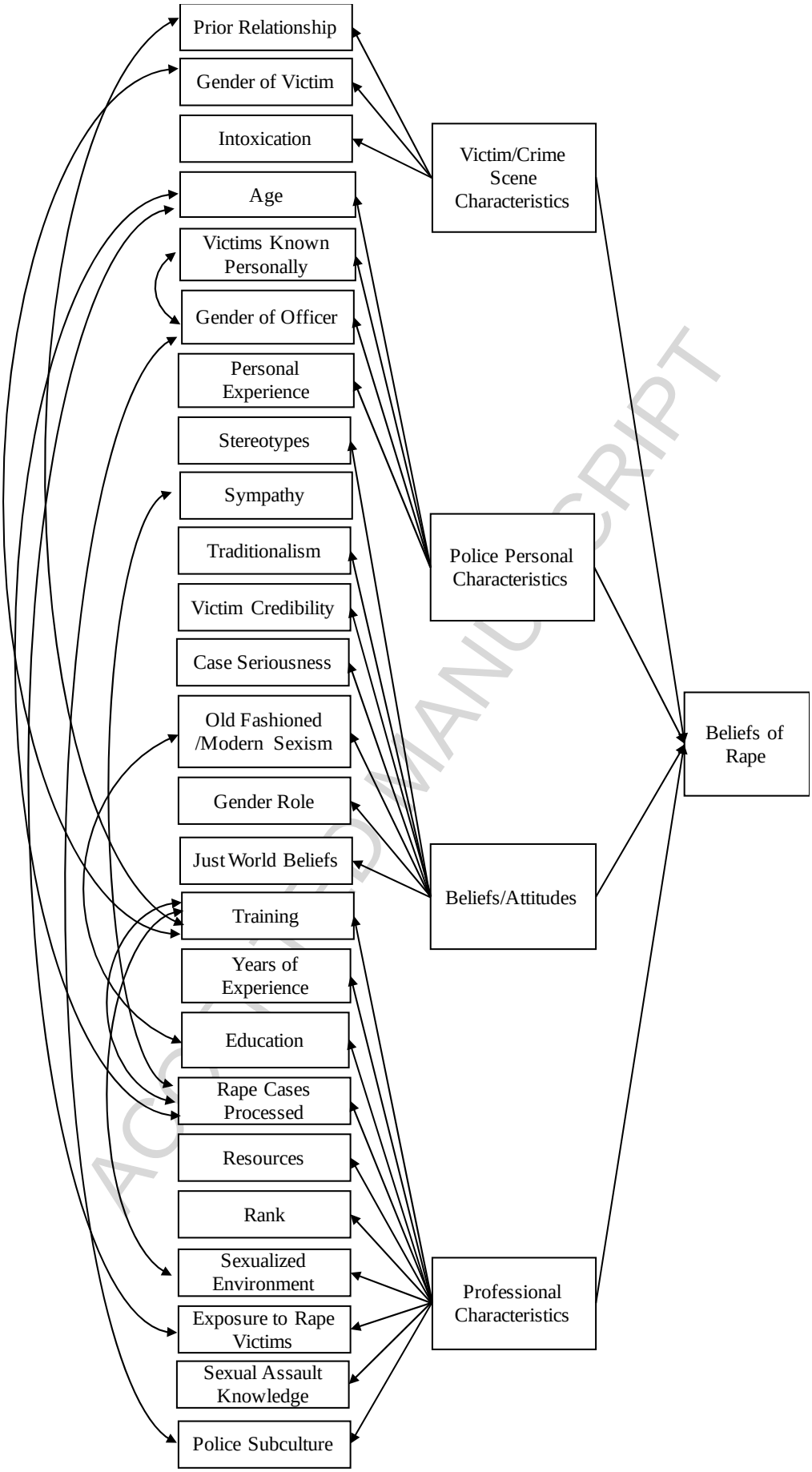

Figure 1: Model of the factors related to officers' beliefs of rape in the systematic review.

Figure 1 highlights the main factors that have been demonstrated in the remaining 18 documents in the review. Figure 1 also demonstrates that several factors are inter-related in explaining officers' beliefs of rape. The nature of these interactions and other factors will now be discussed in more detail.

6.1. Victim/Crime scene characteristics

Five (27.78%) out of the 18 documents analyzed factors associated with the victim or crime scene and how these influenced officers' beliefs. Such documents highlight that prior relationship between the victim and the perpetrator may influence officers' beliefs of rape. Acquaintance rape victims were blamed more (Sleath, 2011; Sleath & Bull, 2012), and acquaintance rape perpetrators were blamed less (Sleath & Bull, 2012) than those involved in stranger rape. Venema (2013) also found that in qualitative interviews, prior relationship led to officers' perceiving the case as ambiguous and not legitimate. However, in their self-report surveys, Venema (2013) found that prior relationship had no effect on beliefs of the suspect and victim and behavioral intentions. Venema (2013) also found that in qualitative interviews, victim intoxication resulted in officers' believing the case to be more ambiguous, not legitimate or completely false. However, self-report measures did not show this effect on officers' beliefs about the victim or how they would continue with the case.

The remaining documents in this category focused on the gender of the victim in relation to officers' beliefs surrounding rape. One study found that female rape victims were believed more than a male perpetrator regardless of how the victim was dressed (Baldry, 1996). In Hellmann (2005), a study conducted in South Africa, officers placed responsibility on the male rape victim, believing that the victim should have been able to fend off the assault. When comparing officers' beliefs of female rape to male rape, many officers did not believe that male rape was possible. In addition, officers also exhibited several male rape myths; specifically, that a man cannot be raped, and that only homosexual men can be raped.

They also endorsed the belief that male rape victims cannot be taken seriously as they should be strong and able to protect themselves.

6.2. Beliefs and attitudes of officers

Table 8 demonstrates the factors of influence related to the general beliefs and attitudes of officers' and how these can influence their beliefs of rape. Stereotypes appeared to be highly influential in officers' beliefs of rape, where in most, but not all, officers had pre-conceived ideas of what a genuine victim presents as, and when victims do not fit such stereotypes, they are believed to be less credible than those that do.

Table 8.

The influence of stereotypes on officers' beliefs of rape

Publication	Finding(s) Related to Beliefs of Rape
Baldry (1996)	• Police officers had a pre-conceived idea that a woman who has been raped should be emotional. • Even though a victim did not fit officers' stereotype (shocked and emotional), they did not hold her anymore responsible. • Victim who was not shocked or emotional was believed less than one that was.
Page (2008a)	• Victims who adhered to "genuine victim" stereotypes were more likely to be believed and officers assigned less rape myths to these individuals than victims who did not.
Page (2010)	• Police officers generally endorsed some rape myths whilst discounting others and deemed victims with certain characteristics (e.g. virgin, a professional woman) more credible than others (e.g. a man, a prostitute).
Venema (2013)	• Beliefs that false reporting is prevalent, and real or serious rapes involve strangers, injury, and weapons, as opposed to acquaintances and incapacitated or under-the-influence victims.

Five (27.78%) out of the 18 documents also highlighted a variety of beliefs/attitudes relating to rape, which are highlighted in Table 9. Some studies highlighted that traditional beliefs and sexist attitudes are related to rape myth endorsement. This is logical considering that rape myths serve to support sexual violence against women by men (Brownmiller, 1975; Schwendinger & Schwendinger, 1974), which supports the notion that women should be subordinate to male domination (Lee et al., 2012).

Table 9.

Beliefs and attitudes of officers' and how they influence officers' beliefs of rape

Publication	Factor(s) of Influence	Finding(s) Related to Beliefs of Rape
Lee et al. (2012)	Traditional Views	• Officers who had more traditional beliefs of women tended to have stronger rape survivor myths, leading to greater rape supportive attitudes.
	Rape Myths	• Officers who had stronger beliefs in rape survivor myths tended to also have greater rape-supportive attributions.
Lonsway (1996)	Rape Myths	• Rejecting rape myths related to increase in probable arrest in simulated rape case. • Rape myth rejection associated with increased likelihood of believing victim and their story.
	Victim Credibility	• Victim credibility associated with perceived victim harm, incident seriousness, probable cause to arrest, and believing that the perpetrator should be prosecuted and convicted. • Victim credibility associated with victim role-player evaluations of police performance in simulated rape interview.
	Seriousness of Case	• Perceived seriousness of the incident related to increased perceived victim harm, identifying probable cause, and greater police belief that the suspect should be convicted. • Perceived seriousness of the incident related to more favourable victim ratings in interview content, and greater victim belief that the officer will make an arrest.
Page (2008b)	OFFS/ MSS	• Officers did not endorse blatantly sexist attitudes. • Officers who accepted more rape myths were more likely to endorse old-fashioned and modern sexism.
Sleath (2011)	Gender Role	• Gender role did not predict female victim blaming.
	Just World	• Belief in a just world decreases victim blaming. • Belief in a just world did not predict perpetrator blaming.
Sleath and Bull (2012)	Gender Role	• Androgynous gender role blamed perpetrator more than undifferentiated gender role. No significant effect for victim blaming.

Rape Myths	• Rape myth acceptance significantly predicted victim blame but not perpetrator blaming.

6.3. Personal characteristics of officers

Eight (44.44%) out of the 18 documents included personal characteristics of police officers in relation to their beliefs of rape. Table 10 demonstrates the factors of influence related to these personal characteristics, specifically gender and how it relates to officers' beliefs of rape. Gender was influential, in that female officers, overall, appear to have more positive perceptions of rape victims compared to their male colleagues.

Table 10.

The influence of personal characteristics on officers' beliefs of rape

Publication	Factor(s) of Influence	Finding(s) Related to Beliefs of Rape
Campbell (1995)	• Personal Experiences	• Personal experiences such as being a rape victim or having a daughter who could be a victim, prompted them to take rape cases more seriously
Muram et al. (1995)	• Gender	• Male officers compared to female officers were more likely to agree that homosexuals can rape men. Difference disappeared after training.
Rich and Seffrin (2012)	• Gender	• Female officers had lower rape myths than male officers. • Regardless of rank, years of experience, agency types, female officers were better adapted than male officers in interviewing suspects of rape.
Rich and Seffrin (2013)	• Gender	• Female officers used victim advocates more extensively that their male colleagues, which resulted in better statements. Although gender was less significant than sexual assault training.
	• Victims Known Personally	• Officers who knew victims personally were more likely to collaborate with advocates in rape cases.
Rich and Seffrin (2014)	• Gender	• Female officers showed more enthusiasm than male colleagues in working with victim advocates. • Female officers more likely to make personal contact with advocacy agency and involve them early in the process.
Sleath (2011)	• Gender	• Male officers blamed the rape victim more than female officers when there were high rape myth elements in scenario, compared to low rape myth scenario. • Female officers blamed the female victim more when there were low rape myths in the scenario than male police officers.
Sleath and Bull (2012)	• Gender	• Male police officers blamed the rape victim significantly more when there was a higher level of rape myths present in the scenario compared to when there was a lower level. • Female officers blamed the female victim more when there were low rape myths in the scenario than male police officers.
Sleath and Bull (2015)	• Gender	• Significant effect found between males accepting more rape myths than female police officers. On particular subscales ("she lied"), male officers and male students accepted more rape myths than male psychology students. Female officers accepted "she

	lied" to a higher degree than female law and psychology students.

6.4. Professional characteristics

Professional characteristics covered elements that were related to the profession of being a police officer, such as training, experience (years of service, and processing rape cases), education, resources, and police subculture. Table 11 highlights the influence of training on officers' beliefs regarding rape. It can be seen that training has mixed results, whereby it may change behavior but not necessarily officers' beliefs.

6.4.1. Training of police officers

Ten documents (55.56%) of the 18 documents focused on the influence of training on officers' beliefs regarding rape, finding mixed results. Training was found to be associated with possible benefits such as an increased likelihood of including victim advocates when taking rape complaints, and advanced interviewing skills. However, in terms of beliefs of rape, even though training appeared to influence behavior, it failed to alter officers' attitudes, and even when officers outperformed in simulated interviews after training, the knowledge they gained deteriorated over time, and had no eventual influence on victim blaming. Additionally, training had no effect on rape myth acceptance rates regarding the victim.

Table 11.

The influence of training on officers' beliefs of rape

Publication	Finding(s) Related to Beliefs of Rape
Campbell (1995)	• Officers who found that sexual assault training to be very helpful had less victim-blaming perceptions of date rape.
Lee et al. (2012)	• Training programs can have an influence on behavior and beliefs without changing attitudes.
Lonsway (1996)	• Significant increase in sexual assault knowledge and less skeptical of women following completion of general curriculum training. • Experimental (specialized) training had no effect on rape myths, or sexual assault knowledge compared to baseline curriculum. • Officers in experimental training more likely to communicate victim credibility, better questioning, perform more favorably, and describe the offence as rape and more serious than baseline curriculum. • Officers in workshop training more likely in simulated interview to address victim physical needs, emotional/information needs and perpetrator responsibility and statutory requirements. • Officers in workshop and integrated training more likely to give victim more choice on interview location and tone. • Officers in integrated training less likely to mention victim intoxication, explain procedures for criminal prosecution and emphasize seriousness of offence. • Perceived likelihood to arrest did not differ amongst victim role-players within training conditions.
Lonsway et al. (2001)	• Recruits who performed in experimental training did not change in attitudinal or cognitive variables, however they outperformed in the simulated sexual assault interview. • Experimental training did not change levels of rape myths or knowledge of sexual assault investigations. • Knowledge gained deteriorates over time. • Training had no influence on victim blaming.
Muram et al. (1995)	• After lecture on sexual assault training, there was no significant difference in the acceptance rates of negative myths regarding rape victims.
Page (2008a)	• Large disagreement between officers in same department on whether training for dealing with rape cases was offered and frequency.
Rich and Seffrin (2012)	• Training had a positive influence in relation to police work in that training was a bigger influence over interviewing skills (more so than general education).
Rich and	• More training meant more likely to always include victim advocates when taking rape complaints.

Seffrin (2013)	
Sleath (2011)	• No effect on specialized training in victim blaming.
Sleath and Bull (2012)	• No significant effect was found for specialist rape victim training regarding levels of victim blaming.

As can be seen (in Table 11), sexual assault training does not incur consistent results in terms of its ability to alter officers' beliefs of rape, suggesting that there may be inconsistencies in the type of training provided to officers, or in the ability of the training to bring about a more permanent change in attitudes or beliefs.

6.4.2. Professional Experience of police officers

Five of the documents (27.78%) analyzed officers' professional experience in relation to their beliefs of rape. In Table 12 it can be seen that years of experience had a positive impact in reducing officers' negative beliefs of rape. Ultimately, the longer the officer served, the less likely they were to endorse rape myths, than officers who had less experience. This included officers of higher ranks with more experience in processing rape cases and dealing with victims.

Table 12.

The influence of professional experience on officers' beliefs of rape

Publication	Finding(s) Related to Beliefs of Rape
Campbell (1995)	• Officers often reported that more experience with rape victims resulted in more sympathetic views on date rape and date rape victims.
Muram et al. (1995)	• Officers who were in the force for 2-10 years were less likely to exhibit negative attitudes in response to the myths that stipulated that the system is used to resolve arguments or that teenagers often lie after being punished.
Page (2007)	• Officers with higher educational attainment were less likely to endorse rape myths than officers with more experience of conducting rape cases. • Police officers with lower levels of educational attainment and less experience of rape investigations were more accepting of rape myths.
Rich and Seffrin (2012, 2013)	• Officers who were of higher ranks, with more years of experience appeared to be better at interviewing rape victims, and endorsed less rape myths than officers who had attended sexual assault training sessions.

6.4.3. Education of police officers

Two documents (11.11%) examined education in relation to officers' beliefs of rape, finding that education has an overall positive effect; in that officers with a higher education are less likely to endorse rape myths (Page, 2007; Page, 2008b). In addition, the higher the education level, the lower officers scored on the MSS (Swim et al., 1995) (e.g. more subtle forms of sexism; Page, 2008b), however education level had no impact on old-fashioned sexism (e.g. statements that denote hegemonic masculinity). Officers with a higher education level were also less likely to endorse rape myths than officers with more experience of investigating rape. In addition, police officers with lower levels of education and less experience of rape investigations were also more accepting of rape myths.

6.4.4. Resources, police subculture and working environment

Three documents (16.67%) out of 18 included the influence of resources, police culture and questioning style in relation to officers' beliefs. In Page (2008a), the majority of police officers felt that resources have no influence on their decision to pursue a rape case (Page, 2008a). Page (2008a) also found that 90% of officers felt at that they did not have individual discretion over pursuing rape cases, and 70% of their sample stated that there were not written guidelines on which rape investigation to pursue. Lastly, 77% of officers felt that their department did not provide guidelines for rape investigations.

The type of agency was also influential in officers' beliefs of rape, specifically that officers from larger agencies endorsed a lower amount of rape myths than officers in smaller and more rural agencies, however, this did not seem to influence officers' interviewing skills (Rich & Seffrin, 2012). In Campbell (1995), officers who felt that their work environment was sexualized and sexual harassment was a problem also held less victim-blaming perceptions.

6.5. Gender and other inter-related influential factors

Five documents (27.78%) out of 18 also highlighted interactions between different factors and how they can influence officers' beliefs of rape. Specifically, regarding gender, some of the articles highlighted that female officers find training to be more useful and show greater appreciation for it than their male colleagues, and blame perpetrators more than male officers (Rich & Seffrin, 2012, 2013, 2014). Knowing a victim personally appears to result in officers collaborating with advocates of rape cases and endorsing less rape myths. In addition, female officers were found to be more likely to know a rape victim, however Rich

and Seffrin (2012, 2013, 2014) neglected to specify the gender of those victims or have a control group in any of their studies to compare whether the numbers of rape victims known differed between male, female officers and controls. Therefore, it may be that women naturally know more rape victims, regardless of whether they are an officer or not. This finding may also explain why other studies have found that female trained officers blame rape victims less than male trained officers (Sleath, 2011; Sleath & Bull, 2012). It can, therefore, be argued that training has a positive effect on female officers but less so on male officers. However, it is important to highlight that these findings come from the same police population, but are presented in three separate documents (i.e. Rich & Seffrin, 2012, 2013, 2014).

Other inter-related factors were also found, which can be seen in Table 13. Gender also appears to affect other factors related to officers' beliefs of rape. Specifically, regarding police subculture, it appears that female officers are more likely to notice negative comments being made about rape victims in their police department than their male colleagues. This being associated with them attending more training and collaborating with other agencies in rape cases. With regards to intoxication, male officers are more likely to perceive an intoxicated victim as more to blame and less credible than female officers. In sum, this suggests that male officers are unlikely to notice negative comments about rape, but at the same time are influenced by other factors brought by them to the crime scene and victim.

Table 13.

Interacting factors and their influence on officers' beliefs of rape

Publication(s)	Inter-relational Factors	Finding(s) Related to Beliefs of Rape
Campbell (1995)	Sympathy and Experience of Rape Cases	• Officers with more experience with rape cases held more sympathetic beliefs about date rape and date rape victims.
	Training, Experience of Rape Cases, and Sexualized Work Environment	• Officers with more experience and those who perceived their training to be helpful, and had a heightened awareness of sexual harassment in the workplace, also held more favourable attitudes towards women which predicted less victim-blaming perceptions of date rape.
Lonsway (1996)	Age, Experience of Rape Cases and Direct Contact with Rape Victims	• Older and more experienced officers were more likely to expect some professional contact with a rape victim over the course of the coming year, report having more experience of law enforcement, and have more contact with sexual assault victims. • Even though older and more experienced officers had more exposure to rape victims, they had no more sexual assault knowledge than new recruits.
Sleath (2011)	Gender of Officer and Training	• Male trained officers blamed perpetrator more than female trained officers. For untrained officers, stranger rape perpetrator blamed more than acquaintance rape perpetrator.
Sleath and Bull (2012)	Prior Relationship and Training	• Police officers who were not specially trained blamed the stranger rape perpetrator more than the acquaintance rape perpetrator.
Page (2008b)	Modern Sexism and Education	• Officers with a higher school diploma or GED scored higher on the MSS scale than officers with Masters degrees. • Level of education did not appear to influence scores on the OFSS.
Rich and Seffrin (2012)	Victims Known Personally and Gender of Officer	• Female officers report knowing more rape victims personally.
Rich and Seffrin (2014)	Gender of Officer, Police Subculture and Training	• Female officers were 2.7 times more likely than male officers to report hearing negative comments made. • Female officers were more likely than male officers to highlight that officers in their department would make negative comments about rape victims. These officers were also more likely to attend sexual assault training and collaborate with victim

		advocates.
	Victims Known Personally and Gender of Officer	• Knowing rape victims personally increases participation in sexual assault training and inclusion of Crime Victim Advocates in victim interviews and reporting of negative comments in department. • Knowing victims' personally, less rape myths than officers who do not and those who do not less likely to participate in training.

7. Discussion

This review has systematically analyzed published and unpublished research, examining the factors that influence officers' beliefs of rape. It has also emphasized several important findings, including implications for research and policy. However, the review also highlights key problems within the research area, pointing towards future research avenues that will develop the field further.

Overall, the majority of the research highlighted that officers' attitudes towards rape are influenced by a vast array of elements, which can vary from case to case and officer to officer; specifically, personal, professional, and victim/crime scene factors. Such factors were found to be inter-related, further affecting officers' beliefs of rape. Ultimately, it is unclear, based on the findings of the review, as to whether any specific factors have greater influence over officers' beliefs than others, and to what extent they affect their behavior when interacting with victims.

Studies emphasized that for victim and crime scene characteristics, the prior victim and perpetrator relationship can have a damaging effect on how officers perceive the victim. Specifically, a previous relationship leads officers to place more blame on the victim and less on the perpetrator, believing the case to be ambiguous or not legitimate. Similarly, alcohol intoxication was also related to officers perceiving the case as less legitimate, false and more ambiguous. In relation to the gender of the victim, studies found that some officers endorsed

several rape myths relating specifically to male rape; believing that men cannot be victims of rape and that they should be able to defend themselves from their attacker.

For personal characteristics, findings highlighted that male officers endorsed more rape myths than female officers. Specifically, male officers were found to blame a rape victim more than female officers, if the assault included factors relating to rape myths; such as intoxication or provocative clothing (Sleath, 2011; Sleath & Bull, 2012). However, female officers blamed the victim more if the assault did not include elements relating to rape myths, such as conservative clothing and no intoxication (Sleath, 2011; Sleath &Bull, 2012). Female officers were also found to use rape victim advocates more extensively than their male counterparts (Rich & Seffrin 2012, 2013, 2014).

Regarding professional elements, studies indicated that sexual assault training was related to possibly some variety of benefits for officers' skills but not rape beliefs including rape myths and victim blaming. In addition, an increase of years of experience, higher ranks and experience of rape case processing resulted in a decrease of rape myths and negative attitudes. In terms of education level, the higher the education level of officers, the less they endorsed rape myths. Two studies also examined working conditions, specifically resources and police subculture, and found that most officers did not feel resources affected their decision to pursue rape cases, and officers from larger agencies endorsed more rape myths than smaller rural agencies.

As far as beliefs and attitudes (as analyzed in the documents in the review) go, stereotypes were the most widely researched, indicating that officers had a pre-conceived idea of what an ideal victim would be; leading them to question the victims' credibility and increase victim blame if victims did not fit officers' pre-conceptions. Furthermore, it was found that the number of false allegations was commonly over-estimated, with officers reporting that the rate of false allegations was much higher (Mennicke et al., 2014) than

current estimates. Studies also highlighted that knowing a victim personally was related to officers participating in sexual assault training, less likely to endorse rape myths, and include Crime Victim Advocates. Female officers were also more likely to know a rape victim personally than male officers. Traditionalism and sexism were also found to lead to endorsement of rape myths, with gender roles also predicting perpetrator blaming (but not victim).

The review highlighted a number of inter-related factors affecting officers' beliefs of rape. Specifically, female officers appeared to benefit more from sexual assault training than their male counterparts, which led to other benefits, such as finding the training more useful, an increased likelihood to include victim advocates in investigations; no such benefits were found in male officers. In addition, female officers were more likely to report negative remarks about rape victims in their department than men and this, in turn, was related to them seeking sexual assault training. Furthermore, female officers were not influenced by intoxication of the victim or revealing clothing worn by the victim, unlike their male colleagues. However, when such factors were not present (no alcohol or provocative clothing) female officers blamed the victim more than male officers (Sleath, 2011). As females are suggested to be better at emphasizing with female rape victims (Mitchell, Hirschman, & Nagayama Hall, 1999), Sleath (2011) suggests that this may explain why female officers could reject rape myths compared to male officers. Other inter-related factors were also highlighted such as sexism and educational level, with the higher the education of the officer, the less likely they were to endorse ideologies that reflected modern sexism. However, education did not influence old-fashioned sexism. Lastly, increased experience of processing rape cases was found to be associated with increased sympathy for date rape victims.

Considering previous research on the purpose of rape myths, officers who indicated higher endorsement of rape myths were likely to perceive a rape victim as less credible, more responsible, and less likely to communicate non-consent, therefore alleviating guilt from the perpetrator, and less likely to recommend that the perpetrator be charged. Thus, rape myths in officers increased victim blaming but not perpetrator blaming, and led to greater rape supportive attitudes.

7.1. Limitations of the literature

There are several limitations concerning the research included in the review. Firstly, there is a lack of comparison groups. This is problematic, as it means that there is an uncertainty as to whether officers' beliefs differ from non-policing populations. By failing to provide comparisons to other populations we cannot infer with certainty whether individuals who embark on a policing career, naturally differ in their beliefs to other members of the public. However, one study (Sleath & Bull, 2015) included a comparison group and found that police officers scored lower than psychology and law students on all of the rape myth subscales on the IRMA (Payne et al., 1999) apart from the "she lied" subscale. Secondly, research tends to rely on white male officers, thus limiting its applicability to other ethnicities, genders and cultures. In addition, sexual orientation of the officer, victim and perpetrator have frequently not been taken into account. This is particularly crucial, considering that research into non-policing samples has found that such factors are influential. Specifically, heterosexual men appear to endorse more rape myths than women or gay men, and gay men make more pro-victim judgements overall (Davies & McCartney, 2003). Furthermore, religious beliefs and affiliation, and ethnicity have not been examined in detail in past literature. This is surprising as research in non-policing samples further suggests differences in rape beliefs in relation to ethnicity (namely White and African Americans)

(Nagel, Matsuo, McIntyre, & Morrison, 2005). Nagel et al. (2005) suggest that the relationship between race and beliefs of rape is complex, especially when considering socioeconomic status and educational background, highlighting the inter-relatedness of such factors and their contribution to rape myths. Furthermore, religion and ethnicity considerably overlap and in some cultures, specifically for Hispanic Catholics, females are expected to protect their virginity at all costs and failing to do so will dishonor their family (Lira, Koss, & Russo, 1999). Thus, it becomes important to consider the impact that both religion and ethnicity may have on officers' beliefs of rape. Thirdly, an overwhelming majority of studies assessed rape myths and beliefs through self-report questionnaires, which tend to have recognized limitations. The topic of rape is a sensitive one, meaning that officers may respond in a socially desirable fashion, which is not always directly assessed in research (Lee et al., 2012). Page (2008a) also highlights that self-report scales operationalizing the term 'rape myths' may have missed out the subtle nuances that a qualitative interview may capture. Furthermore, officers may have felt obliged to portray the police service in a positive light which in turn could have influenced their responses (Page, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Rich & Seffrin, 2012); resulting in them being more dishonest than other groups and leading them to think they have to answer in a 'politically correct' way (Campbell, 1995).

7.2. Limitations of the review

The key limitations of this review are three: 1) non-English articles were excluded, (2) we included studies that are not legally comparable, and 3) there is lack of consistency regarding what is defined as a rape myth. By not including articles not written in English, the review may have missed some essential literature. Including articles that are not legally comparable is particularly problematic, especially when applying international research to the United Kingdom and the legal definition of what constitutes rape. Specifically, research into

rape beliefs of police officers needs to keep in mind that there are differences between the legal definition of rape in the United Kingdom and what constitutes rape in some other countries, in addition to any academic definitions. Scarce (1997) claims that in academia rape is defined as "any penetration of a person's mouth, anus, or vagina by a penis or any other object, without the person's consent." (p. 7). This is not the definition that police officers will necessarily follow. The law in the United Kingdom does not currently recognize that a woman is legally capable of raping a man (Sexual Offences Act 2003), unlike in the USA (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2014).

Furthermore, there are also theoretical concerns with the research included in this review. There is a lack of consistency in the definition of rape myths, meaning that research lacks a comprehensive articulation of rape myths (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). Specifically, authors often propose their own list of items to measure rape myths which are similar in nature but do not necessarily overlap, and their origins are unclear (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994). This lack of consistency makes it difficult to clearly deduce what the characteristics that influence officers' beliefs are, as there is a lack of accord in the literature as to what qualifies as a rape myth and other negative beliefs of rape.

7.3. Implications

The findings from this systematic review highlight that any intervention that attempts to modify officers' rape myths, must take into consideration all of the elements that were identified in the present model (see figure 1), and even in doing so, whether the effects of the interventions will be long lasting is still unknown. What cannot be controlled are the specifics that are often brought to the case, such as the victim and crime scene variables, which, until officers encounter each unique case, remain unknown. Thus, it may be more appropriate to encourage officers to be aware of how specific factors may affect their beliefs relating to

particular rape cases and how such beliefs can have an impact on victim experiences when working with the police. This is not to say that training and interventions should not be implemented, as with greater knowledge and understanding, officers can at least be aware of rape myths and therefore monitor how they then conduct themselves in rape investigations. However, from this review it can be seen that training alone may be insufficient in tackling negative beliefs on a permanent basis. Arguably, even when officers have found training useful, it may be unreasonable to expect that when training is completed, they are not then influenced by the elements they experience every day (for example their gender, working environment and so forth), which may explain why training itself does not appear to have long lasting effects.

8. Conclusion

The present systematic review concludes that rape beliefs in police officers are influenced by a variety of factors; from the beliefs and prejudices that they bring to work with them, to the characteristics surrounding the offence and the victim. As many factors seem inter-related, it can be concluded that there is clear evidence that future research needs to address a combination of personal, professional and victim/offence related factors when investigating officers' beliefs of rape. This review has highlighted that because officers (like other people) also have pre-conceived ideas and attitudes that may influence their beliefs of rape, training or experience alone may not be sufficient in order to reduce bias and prejudice. Specifically, training can address negative beliefs of rape and suggest good standards of practice for rape investigations. However, if other factors that may influence officers, such as their gender, ethnicity, and age (to name but a few), are not addressed in training, it can be argued that knowledge alone may well not induce attitude or behavior change. As shown in this review, the effectiveness of training is influenced by a variety of different factors that need to be highlighted during training and throughout the officers' time in service. Finally,

this review calls for research that addresses the differences in legislation regarding rape and how officers' beliefs may differ depending on country and culture of origin.

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Highlights

- Officers' attitudes towards rape are influenced by a vast array of elements.
- Factors can interact with each other in influencing officers' beliefs.
- Unclear whether specific factors have greater influence over beliefs.
- Police sexual assault training to take into consideration variety of factors.