SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN: CONSEQUENCES OF NEWS MEDIA (MIS)REPRESENTATION

DISSERTATION

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SANDRA CLAUDIA SCHWARK (M.SC.)

"I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own."

— Audre Lorde

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Erstgutachter: Prof. Dr. Gerd Bohner
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CONTENTS

Part I

MANUSCRIPT SUMMARIES

In Manuscript #1, we focused on the issue of false allegations in cases of sexual violence. The idea that women make false rape allegations against men to get revenge or any kind of advantage, is a common rape myth (e.g. Lisak, Gardinier, Nicksa & Cote, 2010). In this manuscript, we have looked at the scientific literature and empirical findings on the matter. To start out, we described how cases of rape allegations that involve public figures are discussed by news media. We then defined and discussed the legal terminology according to current German law and explained the difficulties of obtaining official statistics on false allegations in cases of sexual violence. Furthermore, we discussed issues regarding terminology that arise in the English-speaking world where most empirical studies on the subject are from. One of the most cited problems for example is the fact that cases falsely fall under the official police record categories of "no crime" (United Kingdom) and "unfounded" (United States) and are therefore interpreted to be false allegations. In reality these are often cases that have been dropped due to a lack of evidence or when the allegation has been retracted by the plaintiff (Kelly, 2010).

In the next part of the manuscript, we looked at empirical data on false rape allegations. In Germany, only one study exists that found 140 cases within one year and only in the county of Bavaria (Elsner & Steffen, 2005). While this study does not provide reliable empirical evidence for Germany as a whole it describes interesting findings regarding motives of women who make false rape allegations. The authors discuss that these women are usually of a lower social status and often have multiple issues in domains such as drug and alcohol abuse as well as mental health issues.

In terms of prevalence of false rape allegations in English-speaking countries, a recent meta-analysis (Ferguson & Malouff, 2016) put the rate at around 5 percent.

One persistent problem in the context of false allegations in cases of sexual violence are rape myths, often held by members of law enforcement and the criminal justice system (e.g. Brown & Horvath, 2009; Krahé, 1991). These attitudes can lead to several problems for victims of sexual violence if they decide to come forward and report the rape. They might be confronted with disbelief by the police and judges and in the worst case, face retraumatization.

Overall, we argue in this manuscript that the issue of false rape allegations is overstated and that there are bigger problems that need to be tackled when talking about sexual violence against women. For example, most cases of sexual violence are never reported and even if they are, the attrition rate for these cases is extremely high (Kelly, Lovett and Regan, 2005). We argue that the focus of this discussion surrounding rape and

sexual violence against women should be based on empirical facts, rather than focused on the alleged problem of false allegations.

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SUMMARY MANUSCRIPT #2 – VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ONLINE NEWS OUTLETS

The second manuscript was a qualitative analysis focusing on images accompanying German online news articles about sexual violence against women. While several studies have looked at the way myths about sexual violence can be found in news headlines and articles (Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress & Vandello, 2008; Franiuk, Seefelt & Vandello, 2008), our study aimed to investigate rape myths in the context of photographs.

A total of $N = 42$ photographs were subjected to a thematic analysis. From the data, two themes as well as several sub-themes emerged. The first theme was "rape myths" which was linked to a stereotypical and biased attitude on sexual violence. It consisted of the three sub-themes. The first was "beauty standards", a theme referring to the women portrayed in the photograph, who were all young, Caucasian and generally fit the ideal of western beauty. This finding can be linked to the myth that sexual violence only happens to young and conventionally attractive woman. The second theme was "physical violence", referring to the finding that in most of the images, if a perpetrator was present on them, some form of physical violence was either explicitly shown or implied. This is linked to the rape myth that sexual violence always involves physical force. The final sub-theme for "rape myths" was "location", referring to the settings of the images. Most were staged in secluded outdoor locations and set at night, referencing the myth that sexual violence happens at night in secluded outdoor areas. Overall, the images in our sample clearly portrayed a variety of rape myths, a finding that could have potential repercussions. Zillmann, Gibson and Sargent (1999) showed that perception of an issue (presented as a text) can be influenced by the implications of a photographs juxtaposed with the article.

The second theme that emerged from the data was "portrayal of victimhood" which refers to the way women who have experienced sexual violence were portrayed in these photographs. The most prominent sub-theme was "passivity". It referred to the way women in these photographs were staged to look passive and vulnerable (e.g. with their hands covering their faces and being barefoot). Other themes, referring to the overall staging of the photographs, were "background", "organization of space", "lighting" and "camera perspective". These findings show how overall, women who have experienced sexual violence were portrayed in a stereotypical way that is likely to represents common associations with victimhood. This might impact women's perceived ability of empowerment and overcoming sexual violence.

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SUMMARY MANUSCRIPT #3 – SEXUAL VIOLENCE – „VICTIM" OR „SURVIVOR": NEWS IMAGES AFFECT ATTRIBUTIONS OF BLAME

For the third manuscript, we conducted two experimental studies, partially based on the findings in Manuscript #2. As described above, we found that images of women who have experienced sexual violence tend to portray them as weak and vulnerable. For this manuscript, we linked this portrayal with the debate surrounding the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' when referring to women who were raped. Research found that the term 'victim' is usually perceived to be more negative, describing women who are weak, vulnerable and who lack agency (e.g. Thompson, 2000). The term 'survivor' is associated with more positive attributes, such as strength and recovery (e.g. Kelly, 1988; Thompson, 2000). However, the idea of innocence is central to the term 'victim', which is an important distinction (Dunn, 2005). In the first study of this manuscript, our aim was to see whether this difference in perception of the terms 'victim' and 'survivor' is also applicable to different kinds of photographs, showing women who experienced sexual violence. We presented participants with one out of two sets of pictures: one containing photographs taken from Manuscript #2 (Schwark, 2017) which show women as vulnerable and weak ('victim') and another set of pictures that showed women in a more active role, such as attending a self-help group meeting ('survivor'). We then asked participants to rate the women in the pictures on several semantic differentials, adapted from Papendick and Bohner (2017), such as strong vs. weak or active vs. passive. Our results showed that as expected, 'survivor' pictures were generally rated more positively than victim pictures. However, we could not replicate the findings that 'victim' was seen as more innocent than 'survivor'.

In a second study, we investigated whether these two sets of pictures ('victim' vs. 'survivor') have an impact on attributions of blame in a fictions rape case. Participants were primed with either 'victim' or 'survivor' pictures and then asked for their judgments on a case of sexual violence on an explicit as well as an implicit measure (IAT). Results showed that in both conditions and on both measures, women showed less victim blaming than men. We argue that for the implicit condition, this effect might be caused by a general gender bias in the IAT, with female participants preferring terms referring to their own gender.

Furthermore, we found a significant three-way interaction effect of type of measure, priming condition and gender. On the implicit measure, men blamed the woman more in the 'victim' condition, whereas they blamed her more in the 'survivor' condition on the explicit measure. We argue that the higher attributions of blame in the 'victim' condition on an implicit level might be explained by the operation of an existing schema that triggers associations between 'victim' pictures and attribution of blame.

Since the kind of survivor pictures we used in our material are not usually shown in the press when reporting on sexual violence (Schwark, 2017), there are no existing associations between the pictures and attribution of blame in rape cases that could be triggered. Overall, it appears that the type of visual representation has an impact on attributions of blame but further research is needed to understand this effect.

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Part II

SYNOPSIS

INTRODUCTION

"Majority cultural domination often carries with it the power to stereotype. It is in itself a way to maintain power, in fact, because it underlines the ability of those holding power to determine how to portray those who do not."
(Browne, Firestone, & Mickiewicz, 1994, p. 8)

The aim of this dissertation is to shed light on the interplay between societal misconceptions of sexual violence against women and how these misconceptions are informed and perpetuated by news media reporting on the subject (see Figure 1). To build the foundation leading up to the three manuscripts, the first part of the thesis will look at the issue of sexual violence against women, as well as gender and news media in more general terms. In the second part, a detailed theoretical background on the key issues rape myths, false allegations and victimization will be presented. Since visual representations (photographs) of women who have experienced violence were a vital part of two of the manuscript, this area will also be discussed in detail. To further broaden the perspective beyond the three manuscripts, a brief excursus on sexual violence in entertainment media will be presented. Finally, all findings and their implications for theory and practice will be critically discussed.
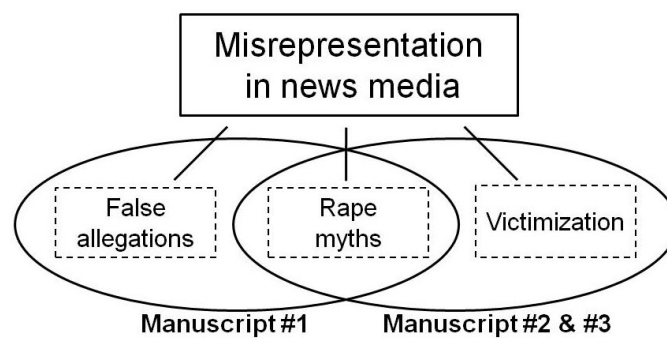

Figure 1: Schematic depiction of the three key issues discussed in this dissertation. False allegations and rape myths are addressed in Manuscript #1. Rape myths and victimization are addressed in Manuscript #2 and #3.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Sexual violence against women is one of the most prevalent societal is-
sues of our time. The United Nations Statistics Division (2015) has recently
called it a 'pandemic', estimating that at least 35 percent of women world-
wide have experienced some kind of sexual violence in their lifetime. It
has been established by psychological research that the effects of sexual
violence are detrimental for those who experience it. Studies found that
sexual violence survivors often suffer from things such as Post Traumatic
Stress Disorder, avoidance behaviour and depression, which in extreme
cases can lead to suicide (e.g. Cybulska, 2007). It is therefore of utmost im-
portance to understand the causes and social dynamics leading to sexual
violence against women.

Because of its prevalence and societal impact, sexual violence is also a
topic often reported on by news media. As a result of a recent change
in German legislation in 2016, sexual violence was a frequently discussed
issue in national news media. The new law made sure that 'no' actually
means 'no' when it comes to sexual violence. Before this legislation change,
simply saying 'no' was considered insufficient to make rape allegations.
Evidence that the perpetrator used or threatened physical violence during
the attack was necessary to constitute a rape charge. The new law now also
includes sexual harassment as a criminal offense. This change in legislation
was at least partially brought forward by an incident during New Years Eve
2015/2016. In several cities, but mostly in Cologne, large groups of men
committed sexual offences against women. This lead to a public outcry
and demands for a change in policies. Apart from this – controversially
discussed – new law, in recent years in Germany, there were several trials
for rape, involving more or less well-known celebrities. For example the
case of weather presenter Jörg Kachelmann, who was accused of raping a
woman he was acquainted with. He has since been exonerated by a court.
In 2016, the case of Gina-Lisa Lohfink, a model who accused two men of
raping her, made headlines in German news media. The case ended with
the exoneration of the accused, who then brought forward a trial against
Lohfink for false accusations.

In both these cases, the media were criticized for how they handled re-
porting on the cases from both parties involved. While cases involving
sexual violence allegations from and against celebrities come with some-
what special circumstances, there are certainly aspects of media reporting
that could be improved when it comes to sexual violence against women.

This dissertation focuses on how portrayals of sexual violence in news
media often lead to misinformation on the issue. In order to understand
these complex connections between media reporting and public percep-
tions of sexual violence, it is important to first get an overview of the role
of gender in general when it comes to news media. Since violence against
women is in itself a gender issue, understanding gender biases in news
media is vital to explain the interactions between the two.

GENDER AND NEWS MEDIA

"Because the news is made by men, it is thought to reflect the interests and values of men too [...]."
(van Zoonen, 1998, p. 34)

Before we look at how news media treat the issue of sexual violence against women, it is important to understand how news media treat women in general. One important aspect is to understand who produces news media content and what attitudes are held by people involved in the process. Regarding the 'who', it is difficult to obtain up to date numbers on gender distributions in journalism. According to a 2005 study, merely 37 percent of journalists in Germany were female (Weischenberg, Malik, & Scholl, 2006). For Austria in 2007, the number was at 42 percent (Kaltenbrunner, Karmasin, Kraus, & Zimmermann, 2007). There are more recent statistics for the United States of America, putting the percentage of women in journalism at about 35 percent (Women's Media Center, 2017). Overall, these numbers show that in some cases, just above a third of people working in the news media industry are women. Being aware of this gender inequality, it should not come as a surprise that men tend to use other men as expert sources when writing an article. Carter (1998, p. 227) stated that "studies have recurrently shown that news organisations tend to rely overwhelmingly on male news sources [...]". Furthermore, some authors have argued that female news sources are usually regarded as less credible by journalists (Carter, 1998; Rakow & Kranich, 1991). However, this last claim is based on textual analysis and interpretations only. Experimental studies have yet to be conducted to support this finding empirically.

A large gender disparity has also been found regarding news content. Several studies have shown that women are generally underrepresented in news stories (Len-Ríos, Rodgers, Thorson, & Yoon, 2005; Rodgers & Thorson, 2003; Rodgers, Thorson, & Antecol, 2000). The underrepresentation of women is also found in news photographs (Len-Ríos et al., 2005; Rodgers & Thorson, 2000), an important aspect we will return to later.

Using longitudinal data from over two thousand news sources, Shor, van de Rijt, Miltsov, Kulkarni, and Skiena (2015) investigated several factors such as individual editors as well as newsroom gender composition and their impact on women's coverage rate in news media. Their findings show a large gender gap in news coverage and "all coverage focusing on a relatively small number of famous individuals who are largely men" (Shor et al., 2015, p. 976). Furthermore, they found that increasing the number of women on newspapers' editorial boards only makes a small difference, if any at all, regarding the gender gap in news coverage. A report by the Global Media Monitoring Project 2010 (2010, p. 57) explained that "if conditions remain unchanged and the rate of progress is maintained, it will take at least 40 more years to reach parity". This notion of almost stagnation has already been reported more than twenty years ago by van Dijk (1995, p. 24) who stated that "virtually all major news topics are as male-

oriented as the social and political domains they define". It seems like not much has changed since then. Because of these discouraging findings, several scholars have questioned if individuals or even groups are able to change the gender coverage bias within the media industry (Shor et al., 2015). Apparently, the overall gender inequality we find in society at large is also impacting the composition of news rooms, as well as their content regarding sources and topics. This gender difference is especially relevant in the context of the more specific topic of how news media portray sexual violence against women.

THE PRESENT RESEARCH: SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN NEWS MEDIA

"The media's treatment of sexual assault not only serves to prime and reinforce rape myths in those who already hold them but also may construct these thoughts for those who do not already have them."
(Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress, & Vandello, 2008, p. 291)

This quote sums up the issues surrounding news media portrayals of sexual violence against women. While these problems are by no means limited to news media, we will start out by discussing this domain, as it is the main focus of this thesis. Further below, in a brief excursus, we will look at these issues in the context of entertainment media, specifically television shows and movies.

RAPE MYTHS

The concept of rape myths and Rape Myth Acceptance (RMA) was first introduced by Burt (1980). Based on feminist and social psychological theories, the author described rape myths as attitudes that serve to blame the victim and exonerate the perpetrator in cases of sexual violence. Later on, Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler, and Viki (2009) identified four types of rape myths: beliefs that (1) blame the victim for their rape, (2) express a disbelief in claims of rape, (3) exonerate the perpetrator and (4) allude that only certain types of women get raped.

As we have already established, news reporting is in and of itself biased when it comes to gender and representations of women. This also extends to the news reporting on sexual violence against women. Several studies have found that rape myths are present in the majority of news reports (Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress et al., 2008), as well as news headlines (Franiuk, Seefelt, & Vandello, 2008) in articles discussing cases of sexual violence against women. Furthermore, there is a discrepancy between the type of rapes that were committed and those that the newspapers reported on. While most sexual assaults are committed by someone known to the victim, "62% of the published rapes concerned rapes by strangers – double the rate in the police records" (Schwengels & Lemert, 1986, p. 37). This finding represents a common rape myth, namely that sexual violence is only committed by strangers. It is also linked to the "real rape" stereotype, describing a stereotypical but false idea of what constitutes a "real" rape. (e.g. Burt, 1980). While the study by Schwengels and Lemert is already three decades old, the more recent research on this topic – as discussed above – suggests that not much has changed in news reporting since then.

In a lexical analysis of newspaper coverage of three cases of sexual violence, O'Hara (2012) found that the news media often portray the perpetrators as deranged 'monsters', while the victims are often described as 'promiscuous' and therefore to be blamed for the assault. The author stresses the importance of the media in forming public opinion and that such a misrepresentation can easily lead to widespread misconceptions in members of the public as well as those working in the criminal justice system. Korn and Efrat (2004) looked at the coverage of rape in the Israeli popular press. Their findings showed a strong emphasis on the women's behaviour prior to the assaults, which evoked a sense of victim blame.

As described in the summary above, Manuscript #2 focussed on visual representations used to illustrate content that deals with sexual violence against women. The qualitative thematic analysis supported the hypothesis that images posted alongside articles about sexual violence contained a variety of rape myths. The most common ones were that sexual violence happens in remote, outdoor locations and at night, that physical violence is involved and finally that only women who conform to a certain beauty standard experience sexual violence. In the context of the stranger rape myth, Carll (2003) criticizes that news media tend to wrongly portray violence against women as isolated events and as a result of individual deviance or pathology. By employing this kind of framing, news media deny the larger societal issue and also lose sight of the societal obligation to tackle the problem.

In this context of news media reinforcing rape myths, it is interesting to look at the social psychological theory of scripts and schemas, as they are often used to explain perceptual processes in media consumption (Shrum, 2006). Schemas and scripts are both constructs that help us categorize new information in the context of past experiences. Schemas specifically "are knowledge structures that represent a set of associations regarding objects or events" (Shrum, 2006, p. 61). Scripts can be described as a type of schema that relates to knowledge about a specific sequence of events (e.g. Abelson, 1981). Once these scripts and schemas are activated, they serve to guide expectations about situational outcomes (Shrum, 2006). Rape myths have often been described as stereotypical scripts and schemata of what a 'real rape' is (e.g. Süssenbach, Bohner, & Eyssel, 2012). More broadly speaking, the idea of 'sexual scripts' refers to attitudes and behavioral intentions regarding sex. Hust et al. (2014) looked at sexual scripts presented in popular magazines and their influence on sexual consent negotiations. They found that exposure to women's magazines was associated with higher intentions to turn down unwanted sexual activity. However, exposure to men's magazines was associated with lower consent negotiation intentions. While magazines are usually not part of news media, these results are nevertheless interesting for our context. News media also present its readership with certain scripts about sexual activity and, as mentioned before, often turn to rape myths. Changing these scripts and schemas about sexual violence and especially 'real rape' is vital to tackle the problem as a whole. News

media play an important role in this process, which will be discussed in more detail in the last section of this dissertation.

A wide-spread and often cited rape myth is the notion that women lie about sexual violence. In the next section, we will look at this idea of false rape allegations and how news media deal with presenting this issue.

False allegations

The idea of women making false rape allegations goes back as far as Greek mythology. One example of this is Phaedra, the wife of Theseus, who wrongly accuses her stepson Hippolytus of raping her, which ultimately leads to his death[1]. Stories of false rape accusations can also be found in the bible. In the Old Testament, the unnamed wife of Potiphar, an official of the Egyptian Pharaoh, falsely accuses Joseph of rape after he refuses to sleep with her, resulting in Joseph's imprisonment[2]. This idea that women lie about rape is not only very old but very common, too. It is also frequently found in news media (Belknap, 2010). As discussed in Manuscript #1, false allegations in cases of rape are a very complex and certainly under-researched area. However, the little empirical research that does exist puts the frequency rate of false allegations of sexual violence consistently at around 5 percent (e.g. (e.g. Kelly, Lovett, & Regan, 2005). There is very little specific research on how the media portrays this issue. Usually, false allegations can be found as a category of rape myths, for example in studies such as Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress et al. (2008). Here, the myth 'she's lying' was endorsed by 42.3 percent of the articles the researchers looked at in terms of their content supporting rape myths. This was by far the highest percentage, compared to other myths. For example, the second most frequently endorsed rape myth in this study was 'she asked for it', being present in 31.8 percent of articles. The fact that the false perception that women lie about sexual violence was found in such a high number of new articles illustrates how wide-spread this myth seems to be in the minds of journalists. In a follow-up study, Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress et al. (2008) showed that when participants read articles about the same case that endorsed rape myths (vs. an article that challenged rape myths), especially the myth about women lying about rape, they were more likely to exonerate the perpetrator. This illustrates the obstacle already mentioned in the quote at the beginning of this section – not only do rape myths in news media reporting reinforce already existing misconceptions about sexual violence, they might also create them for those who did not hold these beliefs before. Gavey and Gow (2001) have looked at how news media in New Zealand 'assist' in creating false beliefs regarding the issue of false rape allegations. They criticized how a news article talks about an "epidemic of bogus rape reports" (Gavey & Gow, 2001, p. 347) and stressed that this is a serious problem for any attempts to change public misconceptions about false allegations in sexual violence cases.

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1 Odyssey iv. 274.
2 Genesis 39, Holy Bible, New International Version.

Cases of (alleged) false allegations involving politicians or celebrities like the ones mentioned in the introduction also play a role in forming public opinion on this issue. The case of French politician Dominique Strauss-Kahn made headlines in 2011. Nafissatou Diallo, a hotel employee at a hotel in New York, accused Strauss-Kahn of sexually assaulting her in his suite. He denied the allegations and the prosecutors filed a recommendation to dismiss all charges after several months of investigation. Strauss-Kahn eventually settled with Diallo over a civil suit for an undisclosed amount. This case generated tremendous media attention, which was also heavily criticized. The Irish Times titled "Media the front line as sides in Strauss-Kahn case set for a dirty war[3]" and accused other media outlets for falling back on the stereotype of portraying the (alleged) rape victim Diallo as a promiscuous woman, framing her and her allegations as untrustworthy.

As this example of the issue of news media reporting on sexual violence illustrate, there are a range of misconceptions being spread. As one would expect, this has serious repercussions on societal as well as individual levels. In the following, the issue of perceptions of women who have experienced sexual violence will be looked at further.

VICTIMIZATION

We have established that news media portrayals of women who have experienced sexual violence are often problematic and misleading. Apart from reproducing rape myths, they also reinforce stereotypical notions about female victimization. Early research into this topic has suggested that the social psychological concept of stereotypes plays an important role in understanding perceptions of victimization (e.g. Howard, 1984). This links back to the previously discussed aspect of certain schemata that exist in relation to sexual violence. Howard (1984, p. 272) mentioned the criminological equivalent of these concepts, called 'the normal crime', describing "a set of characteristics identified by law enforcement and justice system personnel as typical of a particular crime". In this concept, victim characteristics play an important part. If the victim of a sex crime does not fit into this stereotypical script of the normal crime, they are put under much more scrutiny compared to those who adhere to the script.

Furthermore, Hollander and Rodgers (2014) identified a bias in news reports about sexual assault with regards to the behavior of the victim. The authors found that almost none of the articles mention the woman resisting or at least trying to resist the attack. In some cases, they were able to compare the news reports with an actual statement from the victim and found that even if the woman in question fought back or tried to do so, the news reports failed to mention it. In a similar study, Schwengels and Lemert (1986) compared police and newspaper reports about rape. According to their findings, the police reports usually stated if the victim

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3 http://www.irishtimes.com/news/media-the-front-line-as-sides-in-strauss-kahn-case-set-for-a-dirty-war-1.587776

had tried to resist or defend herself (mentioned in 73 percent of cases), while the newspapers usually did not (mentioned in 9 percent of cases).

While we did not investigate the content of news articles in either of our manuscripts, none of the visual representations analysed in Manuscript #2 showed a woman trying to resist an attack. If an attacker was present in the picture, the woman usually cowered away from him, trying to protect herself. This lack of portraying resistance to sexual violence is therefore something also found in the research presented here.

This way of framing women as inherently vulnerable to sexual assault can have severe consequences. Stanko (1990, p. 100) argued that "sexual safety is so fragile for women it can be shattered each time the media spotlight a tragedy of random violence against women". This is especially true when it comes to reports of stranger rape, where the perceived danger of such an attack is seemingly impossible to avoid. Kelly (1988, p. 98) stated "it is the threat of violence that results in women feeling vulnerable". This feeling of vulnerability is therefore also created by the way news media report on sexual violence.

Another aspect of victimization in the context of rape is the question of terminology when referring to women who have experienced sexual violence. In the next section, we will look at this discourse in more detail.

VICTIM VS. SURVIVOR DISCOURSE

As described in the summary above, for Manuscript #3 we focused on the different ways women who have experienced sexual assault were portrayed in photographs and the effects of these pictures. In a pre-test, we showed that the images we used were seen as equivalent with the terms 'victim' and 'survivor'. For the 'victim' images, we used the photographs described in Manuscript #2 which overall, portrayed women as passive and vulnerable. For the 'survivor' pictures, we chose images that showed women in situations where they seek help, for example in the form of counselling or a support group meeting. These 'survivor' pictures present a more empowered and active response after experiencing sexual violence, compared to the 'victim' images.

The question whether the term 'victim' is always the best one when talking about women who have experienced sexual violence has been frequently discussed, both in academic literature as well as in general feminist discourse. In her book on 'surviving sexual violence', Kelly (1988) suggests that the term 'victim' might, in some cases, eliminate the fact that many women manage to resist, cope and survive after a sexual assault. Therefore, 'survivor' is often discussed as a possibly more appropriate term in this context. Hockett, McGraw, and Saucier (2014) asked participants to list five characteristics of 'rape victims' and 'rape survivors'. This data was then examined by two independent judges. Results showed that overall the term 'rape survivor' was perceived to be linked to more positive characteristics (e.g. empowerment and agency) than the term 'rape victim' (e.g. disempowerment and objectification).

Thompson (2000) presented similar findings: In a qualitative study, she interviewed five women who have been raped about their experiences after the assault. This also included questions about the connotations of the terms 'victim' and 'survivor'. Her participants associated positive characteristics with the term 'survivor' such as recovery and said that it referred to someone who was 'over the rape'. While the term 'victim' was generally associated with more negative characteristics such as weakness and vulnerability, it was also associated with innocence which was viewed positively. However, 'victim' does not always automatically trigger associations of innocence (Papendick & Bohner, 2017). In Manuscript #3, we looked at the impact of 'victim' and 'survivor' pictures on explicit and implicit victim blame in a fictitious rape case. Results showed that male participants implicitly blamed the woman more in the 'victim' condition, whereas they blamed her more explicitly in the 'survivor' condition. This effect was not found for female participants. These somewhat mixed results show no clear associations between the 'victim' image and 'innocence' – in our study operationalized as (a lack of) victim blame. Nevertheless, using less stereotypical images of women who have experienced sexual violence could have an impact on reducing prejudice and unwanted, negative associations.

There has been a lot of research in social psychology looking at counter-stereotypes, mostly in the context of prejudice interventions (e.g. Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004; Moors & De Houwer, 2006). Blair, Ma, and Lenton (2001) showed that letting participants create the mental image of a counter-stereotypical strong women was sufficient for them to display less gender stereotyping in a following Implicit Association Task (IAT).

A recent study by Taschler and West (2017) demonstrated that contact with counter-stereotypical women predicted less sexism, less rape myth acceptance, as well as less intention to rape in men and less projected enjoyment of rape in women. While the results of this study were purely correlational and obtained via an online survey as opposed to being an actual intervention, they have interesting potential. Given the results shown in the first study of Manuscript #3, the 'survivor' pictures used in this study can be seen as counter-stereotypical to the usually victimized portrayals of women who have experienced sexual violence. If the mere exposure to these counter-stereotypes could reduce harmful attitudes such as sexism and rape myth acceptance, this could be extremely beneficial and certainly warrants further research.

The topic of choosing an appropriate term to describe women who have experienced sexual violence has recently been the focus of intense media discussion. In Februrary 2017, the author Mithu Sanyal proposed in an article in the newspaper "TAZ"[4] that the term 'Erlebende' (somebody who experiences something) should replace the term 'victim' when talking about sexual violence.[5] She argued that the term 'Opfer' (victim) is

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4 https://www.taz.de/!5379541/
5 Interestingly, this article is illustrated using a picture of a women shoving her palm into the camera in a clear posture of resistance and defence. The title beneath the picture reads "„Erlebende" sind nicht automatisch wehrlos" („Erlebende" are not automatically defenceless/vulnerable).

not neutral but carries a lot of connotations of passivity and vulnerability – a notion mirrored in research findings as discussed above. This article sparked a heated online debate on the appropriateness of terms describing those who have experienced sexual violence in general. Critics argued that the term 'Erlebende' implies an active participation in the sexual assault, blurring the lines of consent and non-consent[6]. Interestingly, there were few demands to use the term 'Überlebende' as an alternative.

We saw in our data from Manuscript #3 that the term 'Überlebende' (survivor), while established in this context in the English-speaking world, is perceived to be inappropriate in German. Papendick and Bohner (2017) also support this finding, stating that the German term is more focused on staying alive after a potentially deadly experience and not as future-oriented as the English term.

In the end, this is an on-going debate in both society as well as academia that is unlikely to be 'solved' anytime soon, if at all. When talking about labels, especially about those that are self-ascribed, it is important to take into account the perspective of those affected. People who have experienced sexual violence are not a homogenous group and therefore, a label that some might find fitting and appropriate for them, might not be appropriate for another. Kelly (1988) warned not to generalize women's experience of sexual violence. This point is especially important and potentially often overlooked in mainstream media reports. It is crucial that those affected by sexual violence keep the prerogative of interpretation for what happened to them and how they want to label it. Of course, this makes it almost impossible for news media to choose a term that everybody will find appropriate when reporting on women who have experienced sexual violence. Overall, it seems like there is no easy solution for this problem.

THE ROLE OF PHOTOGRAPHS IN NEWS MEDIA

As mentioned above, in Manuscripts #2 and #3 we focused on visual representations of sexual violence in news media. Photographs are an important medium to convey meaning and research suggests that people often do not read a newspaper but just look at the pictures (Blackwood, 1983). Before going into the specifics of the topic of photographs displaying sexual violence, it is worthwhile to have a look at the representation of women in news photos in general. Len-Ríos et al. (2005) did a content analysis of two newspapers and looked at the way they represented women, both in content and photographs. They found that in photographs, 67 percent of people portrayed were male while only 30 percent were female (3 percent could not be identified). Looking at particular sections in the newspapers, images of men appeared more in all sections apart from entertainment. Three quarters of news stories were also about men, while only one quarter featured women. The authors discuss their findings in terms of a lack

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6 http://diestoerenfriedas.de/im-erlebnisbad-der-gewalt-eine-replik-auf-den-text-du-opfer/

of representation of women in news media and how this helps to reinforce masculine cultural hegemony in society.

Several studies have empirically investigated different kinds of visual representations in news media and their effects. For example, Pearl, Puhl, and Brownell (2012) have investigated the visual portrayals of obese people in the media and what kind of impact different kind of photographs have on their viewers. They showed participants one of two different images, one of a positive portrayal of an obese woman (selecting healthy food in a grocery store) and a negative portrayal (sitting on a sofa while eating unhealthy food). They then measured antifat attitudes as well as the desire for social distance from obese people. Results showed that participants who viewed the more positive images also showed less desire for social distance and more positive attitudes towards obese people, compared to participants who viewed the stigmatized photos. In a similar study, McClure, Puhl, and Heuer (2011) randomly assigned participants to read a neutral news story that was paired with either positive or negative photographs of obese people. Results showed that participants who read the story paired with the negative image also expressed a more negative attitude towards obese people, compared to participants who read the story paired with a positive photograph. The authors conclude that negative stereotypes about obesity in photographs in news media can serve to perpetuate a negative attitude, even if the article's content is neutral. This is an interesting and important finding, demonstrating again the powerful effect of stereotypical images alone, apart from the accompanying text.

As research suggests that stereotypical images do have an effect on their viewers, the next question is how this process works on a more cognitive level. Abraham and Appiah (2006) describe the concept of implicit visual propositioning and how it leads to priming racial stereotypes. This concept is defined as "the use of visual images (with implied information beyond that stated explicitly in the verbal text) juxtaposed with the explicit verbal statements to make a comment, proposition or suggest new meanings that go beyond the meanings simply produced through the written or verbal narrative" (Abraham & Appiah, 2006, p. 185). In summary, this theory suggests that images can convey implicit meanings that go beyond those stated in a text and via this process, stereotypes can be primed and activated. This works since both linguistic as well as visual features signify meaning and often do so interactively (Ormerod & Ivanič, 2002). Media representations that involve verbal or written text as well as visual images (moving or still) are referred to as multi-modal (Abraham & Appiah, 2006).

The theory behind implicit visual propositioning has its origin in cognitive psychology. There are two cognitive models that deal with multiple modalities in memory processes, but the most popular one is the dual-code theory. It was first proposed by Paivio (1990) and claims that there is a difference in quality when it comes to the way images are stored in memory, compared to verbal material. Verbal and visual information are stored in different sub-systems according to this theory, but these sub-systems are connected and allow transfer of information. This theory explains research

findings that showed how an additional visual cue can enhance processing and understanding of written information (Abraham & Appiah, 2006). Since this concept includes verbal messages as well as written messages and still pictures as well as moving pictures, it can also be extended to television. Grimes (1990) gives an interesting example about this in the law suit Clark v. ABC News[7]. As Ruby Clark was walking down a street close to her home, she was video recoded by a reporter. ABC News showed the footage of Clark during a report on black prostitution in her neighborhood, implying that almost every black woman in that area is a prostitute. Clark brought forward a lawsuit against ABC News, stating that the interplay of the video footage of her and the narrative by the news reporter insinuated that she was a prostitute. While ABC News insisted that it was never explicitly stated that she was a prostitute, Clark argued that the juxtaposition of the video footage of her and the narrated text led viewers to believe that she was. In the end, the judge decided that Mrs. Clark's appearance in the television segment did not imply that she was a prostitute and the case was dismissed.

This shows that by simply combining a verbal or written statement with an image, a possibly unintended meaning can be constructed. Interestingly, this effect also seems to work both ways: The content of a text can be applied to an image as in the case of Ruby Clark but an image can also imply things that are not stated in the contents of a text. In their study, Abraham and Appiah (2006) showed White participants one of two news stories that was illustrated with different kinds of pictures: two photographs of black people vs. two photographs of white people vs. one photograph of a black and one of a white person. The participants read a text that discussed a public policy issue and did not make any references if that problem was associated with a specific ethnic group. However, the content of the stories (vouchers that can be used by families for school education and a law regarding criminal behavior) are usually associated with the Black population. Finally, participants were asked how affected they think Black and White populations are by the public policy issue discussed in the text previously. Results showed that for the school voucher news story, only if the text was illustrated with pictures of Black people, White participants perceived the Black population to be more affected by this issue than the White population (Abraham & Appiah, 2006). The authors argued that these results confirmed that photographs of Black people alone are enough to activate a stereotypical schema about this ethnic group. Participants then applied this stereotypical schema to the news story even though the article did not make mention of ethnic groups.

As one can see from the research discussed here, the impact that photographs have in news reporting should not be underestimated. As an image seems to be able to unknowingly trigger stereotypes about a certain group, journalists and other groups should take greater care when making choices about photographs to illustrate their news stories.

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7 Records of the court proceedings can be found here: http://openjurist.org/684/f2d/1208/clark-v-american-broadcasting-companies-inc

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ENTERTAINMENT MEDIA

In our day and age, we are constantly surrounded by media. May it be in the form of news media in the more traditional form of newspapers or radio, or mass media such as television shows or movies that mostly aim to entertain. Social science research has long established that all forms of media have an undeniable effect on us, the consumers (e.g. Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

While this dissertation focuses on misrepresentations of sexual violence against women in news media, there are a number of reasons for a brief excursus to look at the issue in entertainment media. For one, compared to news media, there is a lot more research that has investigated the portrayals of sexual violence in entertainment media (film and television). There is also a vast body of research looking into potential effects of these portrayals on viewers. While there are several differences between news media and entertainment media, their similarities make it worthwhile to look into this and see what findings might be applicable to news media as well.

Several studies have found a high prevalence of rape myths on television, including shows and movies (e.g. Brown, 2005; Carll, 2003; Kunkel et al., 1999).The possible effects of these portrayals of sexual violence against women have also been the subject of a lot of research.

In an early study on the influence on mass media exposure on acceptance of violence against women, Malamuth and Check (1981) presented male and female participants with a film that portrayed sexual violence as something that has positive consequences. Their results showed that men who were exposed to the film portraying violent sexuality (vs. a non-sexually violent control film) had a higher acceptance of interpersonal violence against women. In a similar study, Kahlor and Eastin (2011) investigated the role of television in the cultivation of rape myth acceptance in society. They found that even general television consumption is related to rape myth acceptance (RMA) among both men and women. In more detail, soap opera viewing showed a positive relationship to RMA as well as the overestimation of false rape allegations. Watching crime shows, however, showed a negative relationship with rape myth acceptance. Although the authors point to problems with inferring causality from their results, a plausible account would be that crime shows present a more realistic portrayal of issues regarding sexual violence compared to soap operas. For example, Hust, Marett, Lei, Ren, and Ran (2015) investigated the association between exposure to crime drama, rape myth acceptance and sexual consent negotiation in college students. Results suggested that participants who reported watching "Law & Order" on a regular basis showed decreased rape myth acceptance and increased intentions to negotiate sexual consent. While again, no claims about causality can be inferred from this study, Cuklanz and Moorti (2006) analysed the contents of the television show "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit" that focuses primarily on sexual assault. The authors argued that the show challenges rape myths in their storylines and frequently showcases women who survive their sexual

assaults and manage to move on. Based on this analysis, it is likely that regularly watching a crime drama like this changes perceptions surrounding sexual violence against women for the better.

Taking a slightly different perspective, Reid and Finchilescu (1995) looked at the effects of media violence against women on college women. After viewing a film depicting sexual violence that portrayed the female victim as vulnerable (vs. a neutral film) women exhibited heightened feelings of disempowerment. Ferguson (2012) investigated how this notion of disempowerment could be challenged and looked at the effect of positive female role-models in sexually violent media. They exposed participants to one of three clips from different television shows: neutral shows, sexually violent shows with strong female characters and sexually violent shows with negative/subordinate female characters. The dependent variables were negative attitudes towards women, depression and anxiety. Results showed that women reported the highest anxiety after watching a sexually violent show with a negative female character and the least anxiety after watching a sexually violent show with a positive female character. The authors argue that for women, depictions of strong female characters might serve to negate the negative impact of watching sexual violence on television shows. If exposure to stereotypical depictions of victimhood leads to feelings of disempowerment and anxiety, this could also be relevant for research on the impact of news photography.

The previously discussed theory of schemas and scripts is also relevant in this context. Brown and L'Engle (2009) stated that the mainstream media perpetuate certain gender specific scripts when it comes to sexuality. For women, they focus on availability and willingness to engage in sexual contact with men. For men, these scripts revolve around sexual prowess and desires. This idea of men being sexually aggressive and women being 'available' reinforces harmful perceptions of what is expected and normal when it comes to intimate heterosexual relationships.

Kahlor and Eastin (2011, p. 225) summed up the issue that television acts as "a purveyor of cultural norms at the macrosystem level, norms that are embedded in a culture of violence towards women". In order to change the biased presentation of rape in entertainment media, Linz, Wilson, and Donnerstein (1992) proposed educational interventions to teach viewers about the realities of sexual violence and to create awareness that its depiction on television is often unrealistic and false. This is also a relevant approach to tackle misinformation about sexual violence spread by news media.

While research like the one discussed above shows that sexual violence against women is often misrepresented in mainstream entertainment media, it is worth mentioning a more positive example. The third season of the British crime drama „Broadchurch" deals with a case where an older woman has been raped at a party by an unknown perpetrator. For this programme, the series creators have entered a cooperation with „Rape Crisis", a non-profit organisation that supports survivors of sexual assault in England and Wales. This cooperation becomes apparent upon watching the show. It debunks a series of rape myths within the first hours (e.g. that

the woman was to blame because she was intoxicated). It also portrays the process a rape survivor goes through upon calling the police, in a very sensitive and yet realistic way. Furthermore, the show deals with the issue of trauma and stresses that there is no 'right' reaction after experiencing a sexual assault. A reporter from the Huffington Post wrote that "Broadchurch season 3 can help rape survivors find their voice".[8]

Positive representations of sexual violence in mass media like this one have the potential to reach and to educate a large audience about the realities of the experiences of rape survivors. In a study by Lee, Hust, Zhang, and Zhang (2010), participants watched different clips of a crime show that dealt with sexual violence. The clips either contained physical violence, sexual violence or neutral content (control group). The scenes surrounding sexual violence also included content relevant for sexual assault prevention, such as discussions about consent or the process of reporting rape. Results showed that participants in the control as well as sexual violence condition exhibited significantly lower rape myth acceptance compared to participants in the physical violence condition. The authors argued that the myth-challenging framing of the sexually violent content serves an educational purpose which positively impacts RMA.

Moving away from entertainment media again, the final part of this thesis will examine key concepts as well as limitations of the presented findings. Finally, future research and practical implications will be discussed.

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8 http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/broadchurch-rape-crisis-new-series-storyline_uk_58b455ade4b060480e0a5fa9

GENERAL DISCUSSION AND OUTLOOK

"In order to combat the problem of sexual violence, the news media must provide accurate examples of rape that do not fit preconceived notions or conform to myths. Only through doing so can the media begin to address the wider societal issues that contribute to this crime."
(O'Hara, 2012, p. 257)

In this dissertation, the interplay between issues of gender, news media and societal perceptions of sexual violence has been investigated. By creating and reinforcing misinformation as well as stereotypical concepts about sexual violence and those who experience it, the media contribute to a societal climate that can have severely negative effects on many different levels. For example, Hollander and Rodgers (2014) stress the consequences for women if (news) media construct them as nothing than victims, especially in relations to sexual violence. The authors state that on the one hand, it reinforces feelings of vulnerability, which in term leads to reinforcement of women being lower in social hierarchy than men. On the other hand, it leads to the conclusion that if self-defence is not presented as an option, the only way for women to prevent sexual assault is to limit their participation and movements in the public sphere. This includes things like avoiding certain public places or not going out alone after dark. Almost ironically, these strategies, while employed by the majority of women (Hibdon, Schafer, Lee, & Summers, 2016; Hickman & Muehlenhard, 1997; Warr, 1985) are unlikely to prevent sexual violence, as these assaults most frequently happen in the private sphere.

However, there was a recent incident in Germany that gained a substantial amount of media attention: the multiple sexual attacks on women, committed by groups of men during New Years Eve 2015/16 in Cologne. This event can be compared to the Central Park attacks that happened in New York. On June 11, 2000, following the Puerto Rican Day parade, at least 48 women were sexually assaulted by a group of 60 men in Central Park. Just like in the Cologne incident, the police was heavily criticized for not intervening at the time and for downplaying the incidents in retrospective. Henriette Reker, back then the mayor of Cologne, gained a lot of media attention by famously suggesting that women need to keep an arm's length distance from men to avoid sexual assault. After the Central Park attacks, a police spokeswoman was interviewed about the attack and asked why none of the victims called the police during the attacks. She did not ask, however, why none of the bystanders called the police and she also failed to mention that several of the victims did approach police officers who were present in Central Park, but were dismissed by them (Carll, 2003). Both these examples from Germany and the United States show

that even in such high-profile cases of group sexual violence, victim blame seems to be a common reaction. The German news media were criticized for focusing on the narrative that allegedly, most of the men involved in the attacks were immigrants from North African countries. This in some cases clearly racist discourse completely overshadowed the consequences the attack had for their victims. Instead of discussing ways to reduce violence against women, the debate was largely about immigration. Interestingly, one story the news media picked up frequently in this context was that of an 18-year old who made false allegations, saying she was raped during the attacks in Cologne[9]. Notably, this case is extremely similar to what we describe in Manuscript #1 as to the motivation behind false rape allegations. The woman who made the accusations was young, already had a history of other false allegations, and while the information is scarce on this point, some kind of mental health problem as well as difficulties in other aspects of her life were implied. Unsurprisingly, the news media did not mention any of this in their reports on the case.

As we can see from these and other examples of media reporting on sexual violence, the two are intertwined. News media is a social institution and as discussed previously, just as biased as the rest of society. This interaction between news media and society could be described as vicious circle, where the news media pick up on societal misconceptions of certain issues, reproduce them in their reporting and hence feed them back into society at large (see Figure 2).
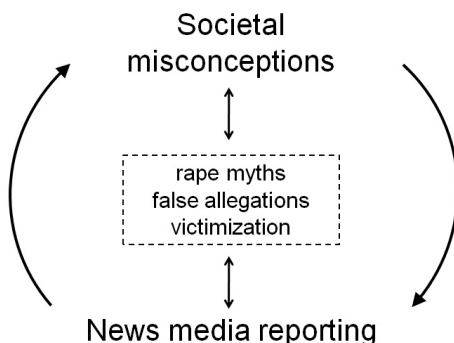
Figure 2: The interplay between societal misconceptions about sexual violence and news media reporting.

In the final part of this dissertation, I will discuss the limitations of the presented research and give suggestions to further extend our empirical findings. Finally, implications for practice will be examined.

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9 https://www.welt.de/regionales/nrw/article157359005/18-Jaehrige-soll-Silvester-Vergewaltigung-erfunden-haben.html

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While Manuscript #1 was set out to be a literature review from the very beginning, the empirical evidence on the subject of false rape allegations is incomplete. This is especially true for Germany. While it did not fit into the scope of this dissertation, future research should pick up where Elsner and Steffen (2005) have left off with their in-depth analysis of false rape allegations in Bavaria, Germany. An extensive analysis of empirical data is needed to make any claims about the scope of the issue of false allegations in cases of sexual violence in Germany and other countries. Additionally, the issue of false rape allegations in the context of news media is worth further investigation. Several studies have shown that the myth of false allegations being a widespread phenomenon is a common occurrence in news media (e.g. Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress et al., 2008; Gavey & Gow, 2001). It would be interesting to additionally investigate how the perpetuation of this false belief via news media influences public perceptions on specific cases or the issue in general.

Another focus of this dissertation was the way news media portray the issue of sexual violence against women with the use of images to illustrate articles about the topic. We were able to show in Manuscript #2 that there clearly is a biased towards rape myth consistent photographs, as well as stereotypical portrayals of victimization. However, to make further claims about this issue, research should be extended to include print news media as well. It might be that different departments are working on online and print media and therefore the choice of photographs might be different. Additionally, the general decision making process when it comes to choosing photographs to illustrate articles should be investigated. To create awareness of the potentially harmful impact of certain photographs, it is important to obtain knowledge about decision making structures within newspapers and similar agencies. Finding out who makes decisions about these illustrations and what kind of resources (e.g. stock photography databases) they have access to would be helpful, for example when it comes to interventions. Journalists and others working for news outlets usually use online stock photo websites that provide them with images for almost every topic imaginable. Although I did not conduct a systematic review of these stock image websites, I had access to one (Picture Alliance) frequently used by German journalists. I had the impression that the choice of pictures from this websites reflects the choice we see on news reports. There was little to no variability when it came to images of women who have experienced sexual violence – almost all of them looked like the pictures described in Manuscript #2. This means that because of limited sources and possibly also limited resources, people working in news media might not have much of a choice when it comes to the kind of picture they choose for their articles. There are first attempts to create stock photo websites that present more diversity[10] and hopefully in the future, those in charge of choosing images to illustrate content will be able and willing to use them. In order

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10 E.g. http://www.diversestockphotos.com/

to extend this research on visual representations further, our findings from Germany could be compared with findings from other countries. It is possible that there are cultural differences in news reporting and therefore in the choice of pictures to illustrate content.

Regarding the issue of victim blame, Manuscript #3 gave some indications on the impact stereotypical portrayals of women who experienced sexual violence have on the way these women are perceived. From here on, there are several lines of possible further investigation. For example, instead of using a priming procedure, the different kinds of photographs could be included into articles about sexual violence, to investigate whether they have an impact on things like victim blame. This method was successfully employed by McClure et al. (2011) in the context of attitudes towards obese people and certainly has potential for the topic of sexual violence against women.

Returning to the question how much influence and therefore responsibility journalists have on both the content as well as their chosen imagery, investigating attitudes regarding sexual violence and assessing rape myths in this particular population would be worthwhile. This could be accomplished by a mixed-method design, conducting interviews with journalists about their views on sexual violence on how they report on it. Additionally, attitudes such as rape myths could be assessed using quantitative methods. Findings could then be used to develop educational or even interventional programs for this target group.

A strength of this dissertation is the use of images instead of terms when investigating the issues surrounding 'victim vs. survivor'. Since the German term 'Überlebende' is perceived to be inappropriate in the context of sexual violence (Manuscript #3; Papendick & Bohner, 2017) using visual representations that carry similar meanings as the term could be a way to further research in this area and avoid the problem regarding the appropriateness of the term itself.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

"News coverage represents windows into the community and the world. If we are to change the long history of cultural tolerance of violence against women, it is imperative that news reports about violence be reported in an accurate, unbiased manner [. . .]."
(Carll, 2003, p. 1607)

The research presented in this dissertation has several implications for practice on different levels as well as for different institutions. To start with, journalists and other individuals involved in the process of news media publications should be made aware of how their reporting hurts perceptions of sexual violence by spreading myths and misinformation. While this dissertation has mainly focused on the photographs and their impact (Manuscript #2 and #3), other research suggests that this is also true for the articles' content (e.g. Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress et al., 2008). Important as-

pects of news reporting are the sources quoted by a reporter when writing an article. As discussed before, the majority of sources used by journalists are men. Carter (1998) found that this was also true for reports on sexual violence. The sample she looked at contained far more male sources, especially those that were interviewed for an 'expert opinion'. Female sources tended to be presented as an "emotional or familial" point of view (Carter, 1998, p. 227). This is the kind of bias that needs to be addressed. Benedict (1992) has dedicated an entire chapter of her book to the issue of how the press should cover crimes involving sexual violence. One important point she makes is for reporters to be more mindful to set the correct context of sexual violence when writing about the issue. She stresses the importance of informing the public of the reality of sexual violence while reporting on specific crimes. Furthermore, it should be made clear whether a crime is typical for a case of sexual violence or not (Benedict, 1992). This is especially important as the press mostly reports on stranger rapes (e.g. Schwengels & Lemert, 1986). Mentioning the reality that the majority of sexual violence happens between people who previously knew each other is an important piece of information for the reader. While these cases might not be the most 'sensational' ones and are therefore often of little interest to the press, pointing out that acquaintance rape constitutes the majority of sexual violence cases is crucial.

Shedding light upon misinformation is especially important in regards to the often false public perceptions surrounding unfounded rape allegations. As discussed above, news media largely overstate the problem of false allegations in cases of sexual violence, which then leads to the public perception that this is a widespread problem, when in reality this is not the case. With the media frequently reinforcing this notion, a change in awareness is certainly necessary to finally dispel this persistent misconception.

In the end, this all comes down to the issue of rape myths and rape myth acceptance. Since journalists and reporters are also members of the public, they are not immune to false perceptions about sexual violence. However, because of their role as informants of public opinion, it should be assured that they receive correct information about important issues such as sexual violence and report on them accordingly. This includes the issue of meaning conveyed through images used in news reports as well as the content of news articles themselves. Benedict (1992) suggests training for reporters to make sure they are aware of rape myths and the harm these false beliefs can do. Hopefully, this knowledge would transfer into more accurate reporting on sexual violence. However, such a major change would certainly require people in the right positions to recognise the importance of the issue and the willingness to tackle them in what would without a doubt be a long process.

Another issue that should be looked at is how reporting on sexual violence in news media often paints a stereotypical picture of female victimization. In the first study of Manuscript #3 we showed that even visual representations showing survivors of sexual violence in situations of weakness and vulnerability were sufficient to trigger more negative associations

with these women in participants. While this is generally a problem, our data also showed that non-stereotypical, more positive and active portrayals may lead to increased victim blame, depending on participants' gender and type of measure. Extending this research further, maybe along the lines of previously discussed studies on counter-stereotypes as a means of prejudice reduction, could be a way to go forward with this.

When breaking it down, this is a societal issue. As soon as women fall out of their stereotypical role as being the weak and vulnerable victim, they are likely to get blamed for what happened to them. Therefore, this issue cuts both ways and more research is needed before making any general recommendations.

As discussed in Manuscript #2, other websites, apart from actual news outlets, also use stereotypical images of victimization to illustrate their content. In our sample, there were several websites that fall under the umbrella term 'service providers', hosted for example by the police or rape crisis centers. As these institutions are potential first points of contact for those who have experienced sexual violence, they should take extra care what kind of message they want to send with their internet presence. While research cannot say for sure yet if using stereotypical 'weak' portrayals of women have a negative influence in general, avoiding images that reinforce rape myths is important, especially for agencies that function as part of the support system for rape survivors.

The news media play a crucial role in shaping our perceptions of the world around us (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). People working in news media are influenced by societal beliefs. At the same time, they reproduce these beliefs and put them back into society by creating content that presents misinformation about sexual violence against women. To break this vicious circle, intervention is needed on two levels: a more general, societal level where myths and stereotypes about sexual violence and its survivors need to be challenged, and more specifically targeted interventions for journalists and reporters, to raise awareness of their responsibility and influence and inform them about the reality of sexual violence against women. By implementing measures like this, attitude change is something that becomes achievable.

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Part III

APPENDIX

AUTHORS CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

MANUSCRIPT #1: FALSCHBESCHULDIGUNGEN BEI SEXUELLER GEWALT

Sandra Schwark conducted the majority of the literature research for this manuscript, assisted by Nina Dragon. Sandra Schwark wrote the first draft of the manuscript and Nina Dragon, as well as Gerd Bohner critically revised and approved the final manuscript. Nina Dragon and Gerd Bohner agree to the submission of the publication as part of this cumulative dissertation "Sexual violence against women: consequences of news media (mis)representation".

MANUSCRIPT #2: VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ONLINE NEWS OUTLETS

Sandra Schwark is the sole author of this study. She designed the study, conducted the data analysis and wrote the manuscript.

MANUSCRIPT #3: SEXUAL VIOLENCE – "VICTIM" OR "SURVIVOR": NEWS IMAGES AFFECT ATTRIBUTIONS OF BLAME

Sandra Schwark designed the two studies in "Sexual violence – "victim" or "survivor": News image affect attributions of blame" advised by Gerd Bohner. She conducted the statistical analysis, assisted by Gerd Bohner. Sandra Schwark conducted the literature research for the manuscript and wrote the first draft. Gerd Bohner revised and approved the final manuscript. Gerd Bohner agrees to the submission of the publication as part of this cumulative dissertation "Sexual violence against women: consequences of news media (mis)representation".

"FALSCHBESCHULDIGUNGEN BEI SEXUELLER GEWALT"

SANDRA SCHWARK, NINA DRAGON, AND GERD BOHNER

Universität Bielefeld

SANDRA SCHWARK

Universität Bielefeld

VISUAL REPRESENTATIONS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE IN ONLINE NEWS OUTLETS

ABSTRACT

To study visual representations of sexual violence, photographs accompanying German Internet news articles that appeared between January 2013 and March 2015 ($N = 42$) were subjected to thematic analysis. Two main themes, consisting of several sub-themes, emerged from the data. The first theme was 'rape myths', illustrating a stereotypical view of sexual violence. It consisted of three sub-themes: 'beauty standards', referring to the fact that all women in our sample fit western beauty standards, 'physical violence', as most images implied some form of physical violence, and finally 'location', suggesting that rape only happens in secluded outdoor areas. These findings suggest that the images from our sample perpetuate certain rape myths. The second theme was 'portrayal of victimhood', referring to the way victims of sexual violence were portrayed in photographs. The analysis of the sub-theme 'passivity' showed that these portrayals fit a certain stereotype: the women were shown to be weak and helpless rather than individuals with agency and able to leave their status as a victim. Further sub-themes were 'background', 'organization of space', 'camera perspective' and 'lighting'. We discuss these findings in relation to possibly reinforcing rape myths in society and as an issue in creating a biased perception of women who have experienced sexual violence.
Keywords: sexual violence, gender, media, qualitative analysis, rape myths

INTRODUCTION

Photographs have been part of news media since the mid 19th century. Often, a simple image can convey more meaning than a written or oral account. In this study, we aim to examine what kind of messages photographs accompanying articles about sexual violence against women in online news outlets convey to their viewers. In order to answer this question, we have conducted a qualitative thematic analysis of a set of photographs that were obtained from reports about sexual violence in German online news outlets. This analysis yielded the two main themes 'rape myths' and 'portrayal of victimhood', each with at least one sub-theme. Overall, we were able to show that several different rape myths were present in the analyzed pictures, such as the misconception that sexual assault happens in outdoor locations, or that physical violence is always involved in these crimes. Furthermore, our data showed a one-sided portrayal of women who have experienced sexual violence. In our sample, these women were portrayed as passive victims, lacking agency and self-

efficacy. We discuss the implications of these results regarding their impact on public perceptions on both sexual violence itself as well as its survivors.

Sexual violence against women is an on-going and widespread problem. A report by the United Nations Statistics Division (2015) found that one in three women worldwide has experienced physical or sexual violence at some point in their lives. While the prevalence of sexual violence is high, the conviction rate remains low. In Germany for example, only 15 percent of suspects in reported rape cases were convicted in the year 2006 (Jehle, 2012). As many researchers have pointed out, one of the underlying causes of this discrepancy are rape myths (Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler, & Viki, 2009; Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994).

Rape myths

The concepts of rape myths and rape myth acceptance (RMA) were first introduced by Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1974), as well as Brownmiller (1975). Schwendinger and Schwendinger (1974, p. 217) focus on the idea of "the myth of the impossibility of rape", describing the misconception that "rape can easily be avoided", for example by the woman's resistance. In her paper, Burt (1980, p. 217) picks up the concept and further describes it as "stereotypes and myths – defined as prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists – creating a climate hostile to rape victims". In later research, Bohner et al. (2009, p. 19) identified "four general types of rape myth: beliefs that

- *blame the victim for their rape* (e.g. 'women have an unconscious desire to be raped', 'women provoke rape through their appearance and behavior');

- express a *disbelief in claims of rape* (e.g. 'most charges of rape are unfounded', 'women tend to exaggerate how much rape affects them');

- *exonerate the perpetrator* (e.g. 'most rapists are over-sexed', 'rape happens when a man's sex drive gets out of control');

- allude that *only certain types of women are raped* (e.g. 'a woman who dresses in skimpy clothes should not be surprised if a man tries to force her to have sex', 'usually it's the women who do things like hang out in bars and sleep around that are raped')."

Another example of a popular rape myth is that rape usually happens in secluded outdoor areas and that the perpetrator is a stranger, while statistics show clearly that in most cases, the victim knew the perpetrator before the attack (Bundeskriminalamt, 2015). Furthermore, the notion that women lie about rape and make false accusations can also be refuted by data, as only about five per cent of rape accusations are false (Ferguson & Malouff, 2016).

The phenomenon of rape myths has been the subject of a number of investigations. One of the consistent findings is that men generally show

higher rape myth acceptance (RMA) than women (Hammond, Berry, & Rodriguez, 2011; Muir, Lonsway, & Payne, 1996). The term 'rape myth acceptance' refers to the degree to which an individual believes in rape myths, such as the ones described above.

Gender stereotypes

The topic of sexual violence is surrounded by a variety of social beliefs on the subject. Apart from the issue of rape myths, which we have discussed above, there clearly is a gendered aspect to it. Women are commonly perceived to be victims of sexual violence, whereas men are seen as perpetrators (Howard, 1984). While crime statistics support these assumptions (Bundeskriminalamt, 2015), it is problematic to frame women as inherently vulnerable to violent crimes. This perception is rooted in stereotypical perceptions of women as a group. In social psychology, Lippmann (1922) famously coined the term 'stereotype' as the 'pictures in our heads' of social groups as well as individuals around us. Stangor and Lange (1994) describe stereotypes as a mental association between certain characteristics and a label of a social category. In the case discussed above, this could be the association between women and vulnerability.

Since stereotypes are so persistent in our society, it is likely that they are not completely inaccurate. Several studies have found that stereotypical perceptions of social groups have at least some truth to them (e.g. Judd, Ryan, & Park, 1991; Swim, 1994). However, in most cases, this is due to the status and roles that different groups hold in society and not because of individual differences (e.g. Stangor, 2000). Women are perceived as "the weaker sex" not because they actually are, but because of their lower status compared to men in our society. This stereotype of women being weak and vulnerable heavily influences the way we, as a society, talk about female victimization. This of course also spills over to the criminal justice system and the way police as well as courts handle cases of sexual violence against women. Rape has one of the lowest conviction rates (e.g. Kelly, Lovett, & Regan, 2005) compared to other violent crimes. Research has investigated this thoroughly, and while part of the problem is within the system itself (usually there are no witnesses and it is a matter of the victim's statement vs. the statement of the perpetrator), stereotypes and rape myths held by criminal justice personnel has also been identified to be an issue that might influence the conviction rate negatively (e.g. Krahé, Temkin, Bieneck, & Berger, 2008).

Findings like this show how stereotypical perceptions of both women and sexual violence against them can cause harm in ways one might not initially think of. Therefore, we aim to investigate what kind of possible stereotypes and myths are reproduced in news media imagery on the issue of violence against women.

Representation of sexual violence in the media

The way that sexual violence is framed in the media is of vital importance, as this portrayal often shapes public opinion on the matter (Soothill, 1991). In a recent study, O'Hara (2012) performed a lexical analysis that aimed to explore how news media portray sexual violence against women. Her results showed that a majority of the analyzed articles perpetuate rape myths. The perpetrator was often described as "a devious monster" (O'Hara, 2012, p. 256), whereas the victim was frequently blamed for the assault because of her behavior, for example the way she dressed. This links back to the rape myth that perpetrators of sexual violence are often described as 'crazy' and therefore not to blame for their actions (Bohner et al., 2009). These findings are supported by other studies. Rape myths have also been found in prime time television contents, perpetuating false ideas about sexual violence (Brinson, 1992; Cuklanz, 1996, 2000). Garland, Branch, and Grimes (2015) found that mainstream comic books' portrayals of sexual violence also reproduce rape myths. For example, the previously discussed myth that perpetrators act out of sexual desire and that they are mentally ill was supported in comic books.

Concerning the issue of rape myths in news media, Franiuk, Seefelt, and Vandello (2008) investigated both the prevalence and the effects of rape myths in the headlines of news articles, surrounding a high-profile case of alleged sexual assault, involving the basketball player Kobe Bryant. Their results showed that ten percent of articles about the case had a rape myth-endorsing headline (e.g. 'she is lying' or 'she asked for it'). Furthermore, when they exposed participants to such headlines, men were more likely to endorse rape-supportive attitudes and less likely to think that the alleged perpetrator was guilty, compared to those exposed to headlines that did not endorse rape myths. In a similar study, Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress, and Vandello (2008) examined the prevalence of rape myths in newspaper articles surrounding the same high-profile case. They found that rape myths were present in more than one third of the examined articles, the most common one being that the woman lied about the sexual assault.

Another issue regarding the way news media report on rape is the over-representation of cases involving false allegations. Gavey and Gow (2001) analyzed a number of media texts from New Zealand regarding their mentions of supposedly false rape allegations. They conclude that these kinds of articles perpetuate the myth that women tend to lie about sexual assault. Apart from the concern of perpetuating rape myths, there is another issue regarding news reports about rape that needs to be taken into consideration. In a recent study, Hollander and Rodgers (2014) investigated the portrayal of women's resistance to sexual assault. Their findings showed that about two thirds of articles did not mention resistance at all, and the remaining articles did so only to note that the attempt was in vain. The authors concluded that this kind of reporting reinforces the idea of women as passive victims without agency. This form of secondary victimization

can have negative effects, as it takes away the ability to be a functioning actor, rather than a passive victim (Holstein & Miller, 1990).

Not only the content, but also the language used to write about sexual violence plays an important role in the general perception of the issue. Henley, Miller, and Beazley (1995) found that participants generally showed more acceptance of violence against women after they had read a mock news report on rape that employed the passive voice, compared to one that used the active voice. Furthermore, male participants attributed less perpetrator responsibility and victim harm in the passive voice condition.

As discussed above, there has been a variety of research showing not only the misrepresentation of sexual violence and its victims in news media, but also the serious effects this bias may have on readers. Previous research indicated that rape myths are present in both the headlines and the articles themselves in the print news media. However, to the best of our knowledge, no study has yet examined the accompanying photographs that are presented alongside news articles.

The role of photographs in news media

The role that photographs play in news media (mostly newspapers) has been the subject of thorough scientific investigations. For example, Zillmann, Gibson, and Sargent (1999) exposed participants to news-magazine reports that featured a favorable portrayal of either side of the issue discussed in the article. They found that participants' assessment of the presented issues was biased in favor of the implications given by the photographs. Furthermore, Knobloch, Hastall, Zillmann, and Callison (2003) found that the incorporation of threatening images into an online news website led to a more frequent selection of associated articles, when participants were free to choose between articles featuring innocuous vs. threatening images. Reading times for these texts were also increased.

These findings were replicated by Sargent (2007), who investigated image effects on selective exposure to news stories. The results showed that the inclusion of threatening images accompanying news articles resulted in significantly longer self-exposure time to following text sections, even if these texts did not have an accompanying image. The authors argued that "the threatening image produced an affective reaction in readers that stimulated greater and more deliberate cognitive processing of following text that was devoid of an image" (Sargent, 2007, p. 720). These affective reactions to 'sensational' pictures could be a way for journalists to appeal to readers' curiosity and encourage reading of the accompanying articles.

The current study

Because of the lack of existing research on this topic, we chose a qualitative study design. Therefore, our research question for this paper is "How are survivors of sexual violence portrayed in images posted along German online news outlet articles about sexual violence?"

We chose to limit the sampling to German websites to create boundaries on the cultural context. During the period of data collection for this study, a legal reform of the German law on sexual violence has been brought forward. There was no systematic difference in the kind of pictures we found in articles discussing the legislation change and those that did not. As we do not have any data from before the discussion about this legislation change started or from after it passed, we cannot make any statements about a possible impact it might have had on our data. Another reason for limiting the sampling to German websites was the manageability of the data, given the time frame for this research.

While research has not yet examined images in this context, we based the following hypotheses on previous, text-related findings.

H1: Pictures of women posted along articles in online news outlets perpetuate rape myths.

H2: The images portray survivors of sexual violence as passive.

METHOD

The sample was drawn by using Google as a search engine, using the search terms 'rape', 'sexual violence' and 'sexual assault' (the equivalent terms in German: 'Vergewaltigung', 'sexuelle Gewalt' and 'sexueller Übergriff').

The pictures resulting from this search were part of articles published from January 1, 2013 to March 31, 2015. This period yielded sufficient data for analysis. Only articles in German were included and the search was narrowed down to URLs ending with .de. Furthermore, there were several exclusion criteria:

1. Sources that did not fit the definition of a news outlet. News outlets included any kind of news media such as the online presence of newspapers, but also news-related content on websites run by organisations (e.g., the police or charities).

2. Websites with audio or video content only.

3. Articles that did not contain a picture accompanying the article.

4. Articles discussing cases of under 18-year-olds either as victims or as perpetrators, since the theoretical framework for sexual violence against adolescents and children would go beyond the scope of this article.

5. Articles behind a paywall that could not be accessed by the researcher.

In the initial online search, 63 articles were found. 21 of those did not contain an image and were therefore excluded from the analysis, leaving a total of 42 pictures. The range of websites that did and did not contain images in their articles did not systematically differ in terms of type of source. Overall, the websites included local newspapers from different parts of Germany, national newspapers, websites from the German public-service television networks, as well as women's magazines.

Several content types could be identified (see Table 1). Most of the specific cases that were reported on ($n = 16$) came from local newspapers, containing information about crimes that had been committed in the area. Reports on legislation change ($n = 7$) were primarily discussed in national newspapers, as well as television networks' websites. There were several websites discussing measures of rape prevention ($n = 6$) as well as those discussing possible consequences for victims ($n = 6$) and offering advice in terms of e.g. counseling. The category 'other' ($n = 7$) refers to a variety of different content, for example an interview with a convicted rapist.

All articles included in this study discussed male-on-female sexual violence, as opposed to female-on-male or same-sex violence. This was not a prerequisite set by the author, but a result of the search process. Several of the images came with an annotation, stating that they are generic pictures, hence indicating that the photographs are staged and do not portray actual events. This was especially the case for pictures showing any kind

Table 1: Contents of articles included in the analysis; $N = 42$.

Content	n
Specific case	16
Legislation change	7
Rape prevention	6
Consequences for victims	6
Other	7

of assault. Therefore, it is safe to assume that the women as well as the alleged perpetrators portrayed in these photographs are professional photo models, rather than actual victims or perpetrators of sexual violence.

In order to approach the research question, visual thematic analysis was employed. Braun and Clarke (2006) provided a clear overview of the method, as well as giving instructions about its execution. However, their paper focused only on text-based thematic analysis. Gleeson (2011) has adapted a method of thematic analysis for visual data, called 'polytextual thematic analysis'. The method of the research presented here was based largely on the aforementioned two papers. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis can be employed free from any epistemology. The approach used in the analysis is deductive, based on the specific research questions given earlier. As Gleeson (2011) points out, creating codes and themes from visual data requires taking these elements on a textual level. The identified themes are therefore to be seen as written descriptions of visual representation in the selected images.

Three independent coders were involved in the analysis. They viewed the pictures repeatedly, individually as well as in groups and different orders. During this process, we took notes and wrote down descriptions of the images. Next, relevant images were pulled together in the first attempts of identifying possible themes. These were noted down and subsequently revised several times. All of the researchers involved in this process were female, holders of a postgraduate degree in Psychology and trained in qualitative as well as quantitative research methods.

Once we had identified the final versions of the themes, we then looked at them in relation to each other to verify their distinctness. As a final step, we chose the themes for writing up that best fit to address the research questions. Three independent coders then coded each of the themes for each picture (present vs. absent). In order to assess inter-rater reliability, Krippendorff's alpha was calculated for each of the sub-themes (see Table 2). For further information on calculating inter-rater reliability for qualitative data with this measure, see Hayes and Krippendorff (2007).

Table 2: Inter-rater reliability for sub-themes.

Theme 1: Rape myths	
Measure	Krippendorff's alpha
Location	.82
Physical violence	.91
Beauty standards	.82

Theme 2: Portrayals	
Measure	Krippendorff's alpha
Passivity	.83
Background	.61
Organization of space	.70
Camera perspective	.62
Lighting	.73

NOTE: For all correlations and measures of association: $N = 42$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From the dataset, we identified two overarching themes, consisting of respectively three and five sub-themes (see Figure 1).
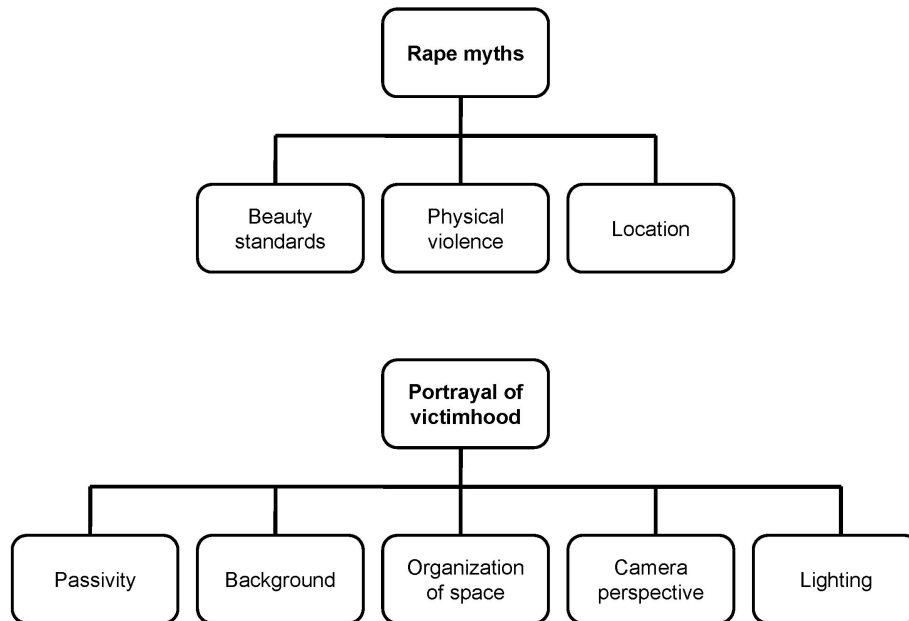
Figure 1: Themes identified in the data analysis.

The first theme, 'rape myths', consisted of three sub-themes: 'beauty standards', 'physical violence' and 'location'. In the second theme, 'portrayals of victimhood', the coders identified the sub-themes 'passivity', 'background', 'organization of space', 'camera perspective' and 'lighting'.

The scenes in the pictures portraying a woman were further classified into three categories, independent of the aforementioned (sub-)themes:

1. Showing a scene heavily implying that an assault is imminent (preassault)

2. Depicting an act of clear physical and/or sexual assault

3. Picturing the aftermath of sexual violence (post-assault)

Theme 1. Rape myths: Results and discussion

Rape myths are defined as stereotypical beliefs about sexual aggression that express an exoneration of the perpetrators and blaming of the victims. We identified several of these myths as sub-themes in our visual thematic analysis, hence supporting our first hypothesis.

Beauty standards

This theme occurs in almost all images of this sample that portray women. The women in the photographs fit a typical western norm of female beauty: They are thin, Caucasian, young (approximately early 20s to early 30s) and, as far as the photographs show, able-bodied. Most of them have long hair (blonde or brown) and, if their faces are visible in the picture, they are wearing make-up and jewelry, such as earrings. In the majority of pictures, however, the women's faces were covered by their hands or arms.

These findings are in line with existing research in this area. While several studies (Len-Ríos, Rodgers, Thorson, & Yoon, 2005; Stanley, 2012) showed in their content analysis of images in newspapers that the majority of the photographs depicted men, if women are present in an image, they are likely to fit existing beauty standards. Research on female beauty standards and objectification has shown that especially magazines marketed towards women fail to present a diverse range of body types and excessively promote thinness as the desired ideal for women (Kilbourne, 1994; Malkin, Wornian, & Chrisler, 1999). While this one-sided portrayal of women in terms of body type is common and certainly problematic in advertising, seeing it in the context of reports on sexual violence has other severe implications. This biased visual representation of women feeds into the rape myth that only young women, who fit a western idea of beauty, become victims of sexual violence (Gordon & Riger, 1991). This is a dangerous misconception, as survivors, as well as criminal justice personnel, might not classify an incident as sexual assault if the person concerned does not fit this stereotype. Therefore, they may not report the incident to the police or might face disbelief if they choose to disclose the incident to others.

Physical violence

If an (alleged) perpetrator was present alongside a woman in the photograph (*n* = 15), physical violence against women was either directly shown or heavily implied in all of these pictures. The implication of physical violence was portrayed by the presence of a raised fist or hand aimed at the woman. Other photographs also portrayed the aftermath of a physical attack, showing for example women with visible bruising on their faces.

Some of the images were very explicit. For example, in one photograph, the hand of an attacker is shown to pull down a woman's top, exposing her bare chest. One common finding in this sub-theme was the representation of implied physical violence by the perpetrator's hand. In several pictures, the image of a threatening fist being raised against a woman was present. In others, a disembodied hand was shown, reaching for the victim in a threatening manner (see Figure 2).

As stated above, the majority of the images portrayed an act of implied or completed physical violence against women. This is problematic, as it is likely to perpetuate the rape myth that it is only a 'real' sexual assault if physical force was used. In a study, Langhinrichsen-Rohling and Monson
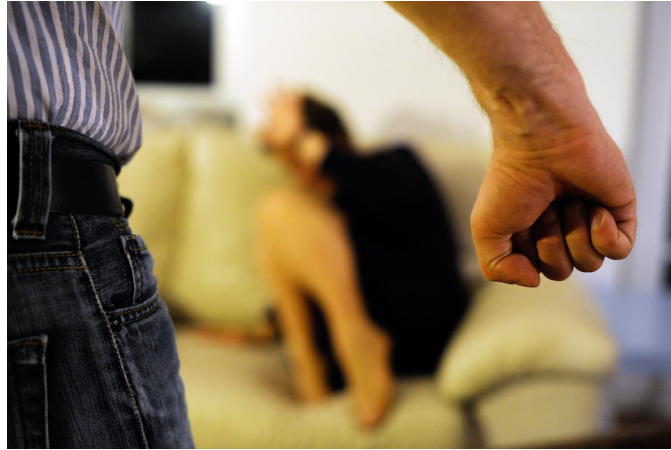
Figure 2: Sample picture for physical violence. (© DPA 2015. Reprinted by permission)

(1998) presented their participants with different scenarios of marital rape. They found that if the scenario included no prior history of physical abuse, the seriousness of the sexual violence was minimized and participants attributed more blame to the woman than in the scenarios containing physical violence. It is not surprising that journalists looking for a generic image about sexual violence would resort to a photograph portraying (imminent) physical violence. It fits the stereotypical belief most people have about rape as it is frequently portrayed in popular media to be a crime involving physical violence (e.g. Garland et al., 2015). For ethical reasons, an image showing a sexual assault, even if it is a staged one, is likely out of the question. In our sample, there was only one image (described earlier) with a perpetrator forcibly pulling down a woman's top and exposing her chest, portraying an act of sexual, rather than purely physical violence.

It is interesting that not only online newsletters but also websites providing information for survivors of sexual violence in our sample have used these kinds of images to illustrate their content. This is surprising, as one would expect that these service providers are more sensitive to reproducing misconceptions about sexual violence.

Location

The sub-theme 'location' described where the scene portrayed in the pictures took place. Those images that showed a 'pre-assault' scene almost all depicted a woman walking outdoors on her own. Several of these photos are shot in an alleyway, with the alleged perpetrator watching a woman from behind or from the other side of the road. The majority of the photographs are also shot at night.

Another group of images falling into this sub-theme were images of actual crime scenes in reports on cases of sexual assault. Since the articles belonging to this sub-set of pictures were all about cases of (attempted) sexual assault perpetrated by a stranger, it was not surprising that the

photographs showed only 'outdoor' crime scenes. In the sample presented here, these were parks, parking garages, and parking lots. In most of these images, the crime scene was shown sealed off by police tape.

The notion that sexual violence is always perpetrated by a stranger who attacks his victim in a remote location is one of the most prevalent rape myths. It is also a stereotypical idea of sexual violence that has long been disregarded as false. In fact, according to Lovett and Kelly (2009) in the majority of cases, the victim knew the perpetrator prior to the assault (48 percent of cases), whereas only 22 percent of victims reported that they were sexually assaulted by a stranger. Furthermore, statistics showed that most cases of sexual assault happen in either the victims or perpetrator's home, rather than in an outdoor location (Lovett & Kelly, 2009).

The idea of 'stranger rape' is one of the most popular rape myths, often supported by media reports about rape. The reality, however, is very different. According to an official crime statistic for Germany, only 23 percent of all reported rape cases in 2015 were committed by a stranger (Bundeskriminalamt, 2015). These findings are a sharp contrast to prevalent views of rape in society. This particular rape myth was also present in the photographs portraying women. All the 'pre-assault' pictures showed a woman walking outside, in a remote area. In some of them, the women were being followed by a man. From the composition of the pictures, it can be assumed to supposedly be a stranger. By choosing these kinds of images for their articles, news outlets further perpetuate this already widespread false belief about where sexual assaults happen and who the perpetrators are.

Theme 2. Portrayals of victimhood: results and discussion

This theme refers to the way that the images discussed here portrayed victimhood in the case of sexual assault.

Passivity

The sub-theme we identified for this category was 'passivity'. It occurred in all three scene categories (pre-assault, ongoing, and post-assault). In the photographs portraying an imminent assault with the perpetrator looming in a threatening manner, the victims were all shown in a cowering position, either on the floor or on a sofa. One distinct similarity in all the photographs was that the women's faces were only partially or not at all visible. They were covering their faces with their hands, arms, or – in some cases – their long hair. The same was true for the 'post assault' images. The vast majority of them showed women cowering in either a home setting or outdoors, with their faces not visible to the observer. In most of these pictures, the women had their arms wrapped around themselves, their legs drawn up against their chest, with their forehead resting on their knees. Another noticeable detail about these images was that some of the women had bare feet, especially the ones set outdoors (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: Sample picture for passivity. (© DPA 2015. Reprinted by permission)

Regarding the fact that in the majority of the cases, the women's faces were covered by their hands, arms etc., one might argue that this portrayal is supposed to protect their identity. However, as these photographs were staged as opposed to being snapshots from a real life situation, this explanation is unlikely to hold. While it might not be intuitively related to passivity, another important finding for this sub-theme was the lack of other people present in these images. None of the photographs of women analyzed for this study showed another person in any of the scenes, apart from the victim and the perpetrator. In the pictures where only a woman was present, this gives a distinct impression of the loneliness of her situation. Furthermore, there was no portrayal of a woman seeking any kind of support from a third party after the assault. A more positive and empowering portrayal might have been, for example, a woman disclosing her experience to a female friend or even seeking professional help in a rape crisis center. A vast body of research on consequences of sexual violence on women has shown that counseling is of vital importance for survivors, as it helps them deal with the psychological consequences of the trauma (Mein et al., 2003; Wilken & Welch, 2003). This kind of alternative portrayal would open up a wider representation in terms of options for survivors of sexual violence.

Another noticeable finding was that over all three categories, the women's body language, as well as their facial expressions (if visible), showed severe distress. This was especially true for the photographs in the 'post assault' category. It can be assumed that by choosing these kinds of photographs, the articles' authors aim to present the detrimental effects of sexual violence on the survivors. While it is important to stress the severe negative physiological and possibly physical consequences of sexual violence, the usage of these kinds of images might not be the best way to do so.

Although the analysis presented here is looking at the portrayal of victimhood in photographs, some of the literature looking at terminology might be applicable in our context. Several studies (e.g. Papendick & Boh-

ner, 2017; Thompson, 2000) found that labels used to refer to women who had been affected by sexual violence carry distinctly different connotations. While the 'survivor' label was strongly associated with strength and recovery, the 'victim' label was linked with powerlessness, weakness and vulnerability. The latter description linked to the term 'victim', seems to be the one most fitting for the photographs in our analysis. Furthermore, Hockett, McGraw, and Saucier (2014, p. 21) argued that "a 'rape victim'-focused perspective may contribute to a social power hierarchy in which there exist barriers to women's abilities to construct empowering self-conceptualizations". This should be taken into consideration when choosing photographs to portray the consequences of sexual violence against women.

Background

One aspect the majority of pictures have in common is a non-descriptive background. The photographs show the women in front of what often is a white wall, either in an inside or outside location. Therefore, the images give very little to no context to the viewer about the portrayed situation. Adding to this perceived anonymity and non-descriptiveness is the fact that most of the images do not show the faces of the people portrayed. This makes it difficult to perceive the portrayed people as individuals and could therefore lead the perceivers to emotionally distance themselves from the portrayed situation, taking away empathy for the victim.

Organization of space

In terms of organization of space, it is notable that in the majority of photographs where a perpetrator is present, the women are staged in the background, whereas the men are staged in the foreground. The women are presented in the center of the pictures with men to either side of them, only partially shown. At the same time, the amount of space in the pictures dedicated to the women is significantly smaller than that of the male perpetrators.

In several of the pictures where no perpetrator is present, the women only take up around a third of the picture, the rest being background (e.g. concrete floor and white wall). If the victims are shown walking, they are staged to one side of the pictures, again taking up relatively little space within the images.

In general, women are socialized to take up little physical space in public when compared to men (Löw, 2016). The same seems to apply to the analyzed pictures. This gives the impression that the women are not the main protagonists in the images.

Camera perspective

Another factor to take into consideration is the camera perspective. As stated above, the women tend to be staged in the background of the images

if a perpetrator is present in the pictures. Furthermore, while the women are facing the camera (though often with their faces covered) the perpetrators' backs are turned towards the viewer. This gives the impression of 'looking over the perpetrator's shoulder' at the woman. In the images where no perpetrator is present, the camera angle is often staged from above, making the viewer look down onto the woman. Taking into account the already passive body language of the women, this adds to the perception of a kind of power from the viewer over the victim.

Additionally, for at least two of the photographs, it is apparent that they cater to what Mulvey (1989) called 'the male gaze'. Two of the images show a woman being attacked, her upper body bared. It gives the impression of clearly anticipating a male audience watching as a woman is sexualized as well as assaulted in the image. In his work, Schroeder (1998, p. 21) explains the connection between the male gaze and an unequal power relationship as follows: "To gaze implies more than to look at – it signifies a psychological relationship of power, in which the gazer is superior to the object of the gaze."

The fact that most of the images were made to look like they were taken without the women's knowledge or consent gives the impression of stalkers following their victims. A whole body of literature has addressed the topic of 'the male gaze', mostly in relation to Fredrickson and Roberts' (1997) theory on objectification. Especially the pictures in the 'pre-assault' category could be classified as representing sexual objectification to a certain degree. In all photographs in this category, the picture is taken from behind the woman, often with only her legs or lower body visible, or her head cut off and not part of the picture. Fredrickson and Roberts (1997, p. 174) describe sexual objectification as "the experience of being treated as a body [...] valued predominantly for its use to [...] others." This is precisely what the photographs in our data set represent. A woman walking alone at night in a public space, portrayed as an object for a man to use – in this case in the context of sexual assault.

In the pictures that portray an ongoing or imminent assault, the framing of the images convey to the viewer that the men in the pictures are the active subjects, whereas the women are seen as the passive objects, being acted upon. Loughnan et al. (2010) found that objectification influences judgments of personhood, specifically the attribution of moral status and mind. Their results suggested that objectification of women leads to them being denied both aspects of personhood. Furthermore, Dworkin (1985) noted that female objectification is an important factor leading to sexual violence against women. Taking all this into consideration, using pictures that objectify women to a certain degree, especially in the context of sexual violence, makes the photographs part of the problem they are trying to raise awareness for.

Lighting

In general, light is often used in the image as a tool to set the mood. For example, instead of showing the perpetrator himself, one can only see the

shadow of his hand on the wall. Additionally, several of the pictures are staged in a dark environment (e.g. after nightfall). All of this could give the impression of a perpetrator 'lurking in the shadows' (see Figure 4). This adds to the feeling of vulnerability regarding the depicted women.

Figure 4: Sample picture for gaze. (© DPA 2015. Reprinted by permission)

GENERAL DISCUSSION

In our study, we have investigated visual representations of sexual violence in online news media. Results show that both, sexual violence itself as well as its female victims, are represented in highly stereotyped ways. While several different rape myths are conveyed by the images (e.g. the perpetrator is always a stranger), women are portrayed in a way that feeds into the stereotype of female weakness and vulnerability.

As our analysis has shown, a prominent theme in the photographs was physical violence, either imminent, on-going, or its aftermath. One motivation for news outlets to select potentially upsetting photos for their articles might be that these kinds of images often serve as a way to appeal to the readers' curiosity. In their study on imagery effects on selective reading, Knobloch et al. (2003) found that incorporating a threatening image into a news article led to more frequent selection of this article and also fostered longer reading times of the affiliated text.

As discussed earlier, several studies have shown that the majority of newspaper images depict women who fit the western beauty standard (Len-Ríos et al., 2005; Stanley, 2012). This appears to be a solid result, independent of the pictures or articles' context. While an idealized and limited portrayal of women that severely lacks diversity is not a finding unique to the study presented here, the implications might differ. If women who have been victims of sexual violence do not see themselves presented in the narrow picture the newspapers' choices of photographs paint, the readiness to report the incident to the police as well as other peoples' willingness to believe them could be diminished. To provide a more diverse and therefore realistic representation of women as a group, news media outlets should broaden their scope in terms of image choices. Including pictures of for example older women, women of color and women with disabilities would tackle the issue of creating awareness that not only young, able-bodied and Caucasian women are victims of sexual violence.

Another important finding from our data was that not only online newspapers resort to these stereotypical photographs for their articles. In our sample, we had eight sources that fall under the category of "providing information and support for victims of sexual violence". These were, for example, a website from a German police force aiming at crime prevention, a well-known German organization that works in advocating victims' rights, as well as government websites also working toward crime prevention. Fahmy and Wanta (2007) conducted a survey amongst photo journalists and press photo editors, inquiring about the perceived impact of their work. Results showed that visual journalists believe that their work has a great impact on public opinion. Taking this into account, it is likely that journalists are not aware of the potentially negative impact their choice of image might have. However, organizations specifically tackling issues surrounding crime prevention as well as those working with survivors of sexual violence should be more sensitive about perpetuating false and dangerous stereotypes via their choice of imagery. Overall, future research

should focus on investigating differences in how various kinds of news outlets portray the topic of sexual violence, both in writing and regarding the usage of images.

It could be interesting to broaden this research and look at printed newspapers to find out if results can be replicated there. Furthermore, we should analyze media outlets outside of Germany to see if the findings are representative of more than just one country. However, it is likely that our findings are also applicable to other Western countries, since we were able to replicate findings from text-based studies conducted in the United States (Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress et al., 2008; Franiuk, Seefelt, & Vandello, 2008). Further studies should investigate our assumption that a portrayal of women as powerless and passive is associated with the label of a sexual assault 'victim' rather than a 'survivor'. If this is the case, it could have implications for the possibility of merging textual and visual findings on this topic.

As we have been able to show in this study that images in news articles perpetuate stereotypes about sexual violence against women, a next step would be to examine if exposure to these images would influence people's RMA. Since Franiuk, Seefelt, Cepress et al. (2008) found this effect for their text-based study, it would be interesting to find out if it holds for visual information as well.

Press photographs play an important role in shaping perceptions regarding social issues and the formation of opinions about reality (Fahmy & Wanta, 2007). It is therefore important to create awareness about the perpetuation of rape myths and about the one-sided portrayal of sexual violence survivors, along with its potentially negative consequences.

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"SEXUAL VIOLENCE – „VICTIM" OR „SURVIVOR": NEWS IMAGES AFFECT ATTRIBUTIONS OF BLAME"

SANDRA SCHWARK AND GERD BOHNER

Universität Bielefeld

SEXUAL VIOLENCE "VICTIM" OR "SURVIVOR": NEWS IMAGES AFFECT ATTRIBUTIONS OF BLAME

B

ABSTRACT

Students viewed images portraying women who have experienced sexual violence as either "victims" (e.g., in passive, vulnerable positions) or "survivors" (e.g., at a self-help group). In Study 1, participants' ratings of the images were more positive in the survivor (vs. victim) condition. In Study 2, participants completed explicit and implicit measures of victim blame regarding a rape vignette. Results showed that male participants implicitly blamed the woman more after viewing victim (vs. survivor) images, but explicitly blamed her more after viewing survivor (vs. victim) images; no such effects were obtained for female participants. Discussion focuses on theoretical and practical implications.

INTRODUCTION

Sexual violence against women is a widespread problem with detrimental effects on those who suffer from it. According to the World Health Organization (2013), up to 70 percent of women worldwide have suffered from physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. Correspondingly, the United Nations Statistics Division (2015) estimated that for sexual violence only, that number is at least 35 percent. The consequences of this victimization are severe and wide-ranging, from physiological problems such as sleep pattern disturbance and sexual dysfunction (Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006) to psychological problems like post-traumatic stress disorder or general mood disorders (Faravelli, Giugni, Salvatori, & Ricca, 2004). Furthermore, women who have been raped often experience secondary victimization when service providers (e.g. law enforcement or medical staff) hold attitudes that blame them for the assault (Maier, 2012).

Rape supportive attitudes

A large body of research has investigated rape supportive attitudes, including rape myth acceptance (RMA). Rape myths are common stereotypical beliefs about sexual violence against women that serve to shift responsibility to the victim and exonerate the perpetrator (Burt, 1980). Research has shown that RMA can lead to higher attributions of victim blame in cases of rape (e.g. Bohner, Eyssel, Pina, Siebler, and Viki, 2009). Furthermore, certain situational aspects have also been shown to influence judgments in rape cases. If the victim was intoxicated, walked alone at night, or showed any other behavior that could be interpreted in a way that she shares at

least part of the blame for the rape, people with high RMA are more likely to attribute responsibility to her (e.g. Grubb and Turner, 2012; Whatley, 1996). Not only individual and situational aspects have been investigated in relation to the assignment of blame in rape cases. There is a growing amount of literature looking at the labels that are given to women who have experienced sexual violence.

'Victim' or 'survivor'

There is an ongoing debate in science but also feminist circles about how to call a woman who has experienced sexual violence. The term 'victim' has been long-established, especially in scientific literature. There is discussion, however, whether this term might have a negative impact on women who have been raped and whether the alternative term 'survivor' should be adopted instead. Dunn (2005) has examined the victim/survivor terminology with respect to women who stay in an abusive relationship. She writes that "victims are presented as trapped, and survivors, conversely, are shown as making choices, they are constructed in ways that place them at opposite poles of an agency continuum" (Dunn, 2005, p. 2). She stresses that one of the central points of the 'victim' construct is innocence, and that 'real' victims do not have any part in their victimization. Another important issue is the lack of agency, weakness, and vulnerability that comes with the term (Thompson, 2000). Research suggests that these labels might have an influence on the self-perception of women who have experienced sexual violence. For example, McCarthy (1986, pp. 323–324) suggests that for a woman who adopts the 'victim' label, the experience of sexual violence "becomes the controlling and dominating event in her life and controls her sexual (or personal) self-esteem".

The term 'survivor', on the other hand, is often associated with strength and recovery from the experience (Thompson, 2000). Kelly (1988) describes the emergence of the term as a replacement for 'victim' within feminism in the 1980s. She discusses findings from her interview studies with women who have been raped and stresses that "the focus on coping, resistance and survival reflects the experiences of the woman interviewed" and the importance of "shifting the emphasis from viewing women as passive victims of sexual violence to seeing them as active survivors" (Kelly, 1988, p. 163). However, there are difficulties regarding the conceptualization of the term 'survivor'. Thompson (2000) stated that some women might feel like they have overcome their trauma brought on by sexual violence and call themselves survivors. This might be an issue though if they want to address or even review this feeling in the future as it might lead to invalidating their constructed self-image as a survivor. This is likely to be linked to the common associations with both terms as discussed earlier. It might be a better strategy to frame oneself as a 'victim' in order to stress innocence and vulnerability, for example in the context of a court trial. However, in order to recover from the experience and create a positive self-identity, adopting the term 'survivor' might be the psychologically better

strategy (Thompson, 2000). In a qualitative study, Patterson and Campbell (2010) find that women who feel empowered, like a survivor, while going through the criminal justice system after reporting their rape are more likely to see the process through.

In a similar line of research, linguistic properties surrounding sexual violence have been investigated. For example, Henley, Miller, and Beazley (1995) found that American newspaper writers used the passive form of the verb "raped" much more frequently (70 percent) than the active (30 percent), in comparison to more positive verbs (e.g. thanked) where the passive use was less frequent. The authors interpreted this finding as a tendency to exonerate perpetrators of sexual violence at least partially from their actions. There is also research suggesting that certain linguistic variations have an influence on observers' judgments. Bohner (2001) asked participants to watch a film scene portraying an acquaintance rape and then to write a description of it in their own words. Results showed that participants who were high in rape myth acceptance used the passive voice more often to describe the perpetrator's actions (e.g., "and then she was raped"; "the rape occurred"). This way, they focused more on the victim and less on the perpetrator. Judgments of victim blame were also positively correlated with the use of the passive voice in this study.

Research by Papendick and Bohner (2017) with speakers of English and German indicated that the labels 'victim' and 'survivor' are ascribed different meanings and influence the perceptions of women who have been raped. In their first study, the authors asked participants to read a brief rape vignette that contained either the term 'victim' or the term 'survivor' but was otherwise identical; then participants rated the meaning of the term they had read on a 15-item semantic differential (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1971) containing bipolar items such as 'weak – strong', 'passive – active', and 'bad – good'. Results showed that, in both English and German, the term 'survivor' was rated to be more positive, active, and strong than the term 'victim'.

In a second study, Papendick and Bohner (2017) varied the labels within assessments of victim blame in a fictitious rape scenario and found significant interactions between label and participants' gender. Female participants rated a rape case to be more severe if the woman in the case was referred to as "survivor" rather than "victim". For male participants, the opposite effect was found. Finally, the authors showed that, if the label was self-ascribed, the English-speaking sample perceived the woman more positively if she called herself 'survivor' as opposed to 'victim'.

In the present research, we aim to extend this line of inquiry. Instead of examining the perceptions and effects of the terms themselves, however, we will be using images that depict 'victims' and 'survivors', taken from online news articles.

Photographs in news media

Several studies have examined the role that photographs play in newspapers, as well as in the news media in general. Zillmann, Gibson, and Sargent (1999) found that participants' assessment of issues presented in news-magazine reports was biased in favor of the implications given by the photographs accompanying the reports.

Another study showed that when participants were free to choose between articles featuring innocuous vs. threatening images, the incorporation of threatening images into an online news website led to a more frequent selection of associated articles (Knobloch, Hastall, Zillmann, & Callison, 2003). Reading times for these texts were also increased.

Sargent (2007) replicated these findings by investigating image effects on selective exposure to news stories. In her study, the inclusion of threatening images accompanying news articles resulted in significantly longer self-exposure time to following text sections, even if these texts did not have an accompanying image. The author argued that "the threatening image produced an affective reaction in readers that stimulated greater and more deliberate cognitive processing of following text that was devoid of an image" (Sargent, 2007, p. 720). For journalists, these reactions to "sensational" images could be employed to encourage readers to engage with their articles.

Overall, these findings show that it is important to investigate if a certain kind of image has an effect on readers perceptions in cases of sexual violence reports, as well as to take these effects into account when composing news articles/reports on sexual violence. Schwark (2017) investigated the kind of photographs shown alongside articles about sexual violence in online news media. In a qualitative content analysis, the author found that the vast majority of images in her sample perpetuate stereotypes about women who have experienced sexual violence: These women are portrayed as weak and helpless, as opposed to strong and with agency. A typical photograph from this sample would show a woman in a dark alleyway, crouching on the floor with her arms covering her face. In the current study, we refer to this kind of photograph as 'victim' image, as it appears to be associated with characteristics from the victim terminology. In contrast, a 'survivor' image portrays women who have experienced sexual violence as being more active and possessing greater self-efficacy. An example would be an image that shows a self-help group of sexual violence survivors or a woman in a session with a female counselor.

The present research

In summary, there seems to be a perceived difference between the labels 'victim' and 'survivor' when referring to women who have experienced sexual violence. Our aim is to further extend this research by looking at visual representation of these labels and their impact when people evaluate a fictitious rape scenario. However, investigating perceptions of sexual

violence against women often is not an easy topic to study for researchers. When asking participants about their case-related judgments, social desirability is always an issue with explicit measures, such as questionnaires to assess opinions. To tackle this issue, Süssenbach, Albrecht, and Bohner (2017) have devised and implemented an Implicit Association Test (IAT; Greenwald, McGhee, & Schwartz, 1998) in order to determine participants' implicit judgments regarding a fictitious rape scenario. Therefore, we have employed an IAT as an additional measure in the present research.

To measure the impact of pictures on participants' judgments in Study 2, we have used a priming procedure. Klauer (2009, p. 200) describes priming and its effects as follows: "A priming effect occurs when the processing of a target stimulus is influenced by a preceding stimulus on the basis of a particular relationship between prime and target". In our current research (Study 2), the target stimulus will be the judgment of a fictitious rape scenario while the preceding stimuli are the 'victim' and 'survivor' pictures. We assume that presenting either the 'victim' or 'survivor' pictures will activate an association between these visual stimuli and their interpretations, which have been tested and established to be present in Study 1.

In priming procedures, the level of accessibility of a concept (stimulus) depends on a variety of factors: how recently the concept has been encountered, how strongly the concept has been triggered, and how frequently the concept has been encountered (Moskowitz, 2005). In our experimental priming procedure we will make use of the first two of these factors by asking about the case judgments shortly after presenting the priming images and by giving participants enough time to engage with these images in the priming task.

Based on the previous findings discussed above, these were our aims for the current research:

1. To examine whether we can replicate the previously discussed text-based findings with image stimuli. We predict that women depicted in the 'survivor' pictures will generally be associated with more positive attributes on the semantic differentials compared to women depicted in the 'victim' pictures.

2. To explore if priming with the picture stimuli affects perceptions of women who were raped on both explicit and implicit measures, and if there are any effects of participants' gender on both measures.

Ethics statement

Procedures for all studies reported below were approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Bielefeld.

METHOD

Design and Stimuli

The picture stimuli were chosen based on previous research (Schwark, 2017). The 'victim' batch of pictures portrays women after an assault has taken place, showing them in passive, vulnerable positions such as crouching on the floor with their arms shielding their bodies. The 'survivor' pictures show women in very different settings. They portray women who have been raped in more empowering situations, such as at a counsellor's office or at a self-help group with other women.

In order to test whether the picture stimuli we used are actually associated with the terms 'victim' and 'survivor', we pretested them. Since the German term for survivor ("Überlebende") is unusual and rarely used in this context, we decided to include both an English speaking as well as a German speaking sample for this pretest. To control for order effects, we presented the pictures as well as the two terms in a randomized sequence.

The German sample consisted of 63 participants (39 female, 16 male and 8 participants, who indicated a different gender identity). Their mean age was 30.81 years ($SD = 9.63$). The order of the picture presentation did not have an effect on these participants' assignment of terms. For the pictures showing a more passive representation, participants chose the term 'victim' with an average of 69.41 percent over all three images. The results for the more active representations however were not as clear-cut. In fact, they were all split almost 50:50 between 'victim' and 'survivor'. When presented with the active representations, participants still chose 'victim' ("Opfer") with an average of 49.73 percent. In the open answer field provided at the end of the pretest survey, several participants indicated that they thought the term "Überlebende" was inappropriate in this context. These results indicate that the term is not yet established in German for cases of sexual violence.

In the English sample ($N = 43$) the mean age was $M = 32.19$ ($SD = 9.82$), 35 of the participants were female, 5 male and 3 indicated a different gender identity. Results show that for all pictures except one there was no order effect.[1] Overall, the results were as expected, with all the victim as well as the survivor pictures being labeled clearly as such by participants. When presented with the passive representations, participants chose the label 'victim' in 79.74 percent of cases, whereas 'survivor' was only in chosen 20.26 percent of cases. For the more active representations, participants chose 'survivor' with an average of 72.87 percent. Based on these pretest results, we will refer to the two categories of pictures as victim and survivor images, respectively.

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1 For one of the 'survivor' pictures, there was a significant order effect ($\chi^2 = 4.33, p = .04$). Nonetheless, the label 'survivor' was chosen more often in both order conditions ($n = 8$ victim, $n = 14$ survivor and $n = 2$ victim, $n = 19$ survivor, respectively).

STUDY 1: PERCEPTION OF VICTIM/SURVIVOR IMAGES

Participants

102 German students at the University of Bielefeld were invited to participate in a lab study. The sample consisted of 51 male and 51 female participants with a mean age of 23.47 years ($SD = 3.56$).

Procedure and measures

Participants were randomly assigned either to the victim or the survivor condition. They were then handed five pictures to look at.

With the pictures present, they were asked to rate the women shown in the respective pictures on eleven semantic differential items. These consisted of bipolar pairs of adjectives with 7-point-scales (e.g. good-bad). We asked participants to indicate the point on the scale which best represents their association with the women in the photographs. The majority of adjectives as well as the three dimensions of association (evaluation, activity, and potency) were adapted from the original studies on semantic differentials (Osgood et al., 1971). Additionally, adjectives from Papendick and Bohner (2017) were added to address the study's specific subject matter. Afterwards, participants were thanked for their participation and informed about the aim of the study.

Results

Cronbach's alpha for the semantic differentials was very good ($\alpha = .83$). Overall, participants in the 'survivor' condition associated more positive items with the women in the pictures than did participants in the 'victim' condition (see Table 1). For example, women portrayed in the 'survivor' pictures were rated to be more optimistic, more confident, braver and more active than those in the 'victim' photographs.

One unexpected result was the semantic differential of guilty-innocent. In the 'survivor' condition, the ratings on this scale were leaning more towards innocent ($M = 5.16$, $SD = 1.57$) when compared to the 'victim' condition ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 2.00$). This result was marginally significant, $F(1,101) = 3.80$, $p = .054$. There was no main effect for gender, $F(1,101) = .177$, $p = .675$, and no interaction effect of gender and experimental condition, $F(1,101) = .753$, $p = .388$, regarding the guilty-innocent differential.

Factor Analysis

Like Papendick and Bohner (2017), we were unable to replicate the semantic differential's three-factorial structure (evaluation, potency, and activity). We extracted one main factor based on eigenvalues as well as the scree plot. The factor had an eigenvalue of 5.20 and explained 37.15 percent of vari-

Table 1: Means and standard deviations (in parentheses) of semantic differential ratings by picture condition; t-test results and effect size estimates (Study 1).

	victim (*n*=51)	survivor (*n*=51)	*t*-test for difference (*df*=101)	Cohen's *d*
pessimistic – optimistic	1.73(1.01)	3.14(1.21)	6.38‡	1.27
insecure – confident	1.58(0.80)	2.42(1.23)	4.12‡	0.81
introverted – extraverted	2.15(1.13)	3.36(1.35)	4.90‡	0.97
backward-looking – forward-looking	2.54(1.29)	3.30(1.53)	2.72†	0.54
bad – good	2.31(1.39)	3.12(1.38)	2.96†	0.58
weak – strong	2.12(1.32)	3.24(1.77)	3.65‡	0.72
passive – active	2.10(1.21)	3.74(1.61)	5.84‡	1.15
anxious – brave	1.63(1.01)	3.58(1.74)	6.94‡	1.37
submissive – dominant	2.31(1.34)	3.18(1.10)	3.59‡	0.71
guilty – innocent	4.46(2.00)	5.16(1.57)	1.96	0.39
quiet – loud	2.02(1.24)	2.46(1.18)	1.83	0.36
aggregated score (all items combined)	2.64(0.66)	3.44(0.79)	5.53‡	1.09

Note. 7-point scales. $^*p<.05$, $^†p<.01$, $^‡p<.001$

ance. Therefore, we averaged the eleven items into a one-dimensional scale with a Cronbach's alpha of .82. High scores on this scale thus represent a mix of positivity, strength, and activity; overall, the 'survivor' pictures received higher scores ($M = 3.44$; $SD = .79$) than did the 'victim' pictures ($M = 2.64$; $SD = .66$), $F(1, 101) = 30.5$, $p < .000$.

Discussion

Overall, the results were in line with our expectations based on previous research. We were able to replicate Papendick and Bohner's 2017 results that participants' generally associated more positive and active words with the 'survivor' pictures (e.g. good, strong, forward-looking), whereas the associations with the 'victim' pictures were more passive and negative (e.g., weak, insecure, backward-looking). This supports the results already reported in our pretest, namely that the two different kinds of images we chose act as visual representations of the 'victim' and 'survivor' labels.

We do not have an immediate explanation for the unexpected result that women in the 'survivor' images were rated to be more innocent than those

in the 'victim' pictures. This finding is opposite to both the results of Papendick and Bohner (2017) and the literature on this topic. As discussed earlier, usually the term 'victim' is likely to be associated with innocence (Thompson, 2000). It is possible that since this study did not have any immediate context from which to judge guilt or innocence, participants were unsure what to make of this category. Furthermore, it is possible that the absence of the actual terms 'victim' and 'survivor' explains our result. The semantic association between 'victim' and 'innocent' might rely on the verbal cue of the terms. By only using images that represent these terms, the association might not have been triggered. To investigate this result further, we chose a different experimental design for our second study.

STUDY 2

In our second study, we aimed to investigate how our chosen sets of 'victim' and 'survivor' images affect participants' judgments in a fictitious rape scenario. To further expand existing research on this topic, we used the IAT as an implicit measure of victim blaming, additionally to the explicit one.

Participants

Participants ($N = 236$) were recruited at the university of Bielefeld and invited to take part in the study at a computer lab. Their mean age was $M = 21.55$ ($SD = 5.22$). Of the total number of participants, 125 were female, 109 male, and 2 indicated a different gender identity.

Procedure

Participants were told that they would take part in a material pretest and an unrelated study afterwards. They were then randomly assigned to one of two conditions, presenting them with either five 'victim' or five 'survivor' pictures. Participants were told that the pictures were needed for a university website featuring an article about sexual violence. The experimenter then asked participants to rank the pictures in the order they find them most suited to be used in the alleged article. This procedure was designed to ensure that the participants thoroughly look at and engage with the images, in order to prime them with either the 'victim' or the 'survivor' content.

Afterwards, the experimenter asked participants to complete the actual study at a computer. They read a vignette describing a fictitious case of acquaintance rape, followed by a questionnaire asking about how much blame they assign to the victim and the perpetrator in the vignette. This was then followed by an IAT. Finally, as a measure of RMA, they completed a scale measuring the acceptance of modern myths about sexual aggression (AMMSA).

Acceptance of modern myths about sexual aggression

Participants completed the Acceptance of Modern Myths About Sexual Aggression scale (AMMSA; Gerger, Kley, Bohner, & Siebler, 2007). On a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (I completely disagree) to 7 (I completely agree), participants were asked to indicate their degree of agreement with 30 items (e.g. "If a woman invites a man to her home for a cup of coffee after a night out this means that she wants to have sex"; "Many women tend to exaggerate the problem of male violence"). Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .89.

Rape case scenario

All participants read the same scenario, describing how several colleagues, among them the victim (Tanja K.) and the perpetrator (Georg S.), went out for after-work drinks at a bar. Tanja K. ended up being slightly intoxicated and Georg S. drove her home. He entered her apartment even though she did not invite him in and started kissing her. Georg S. proceeded further to hold Tanja K. down on the sofa and started undressing her. She told him to stop but did not fight back. He did not stop and ended up having sex with her. Afterwards, he got dressed and left, while Tanja K. was very distressed and did not know what to do. It took her two weeks to tell a friend what happened.

Explicit victim blaming

We assessed victim blaming with five questions on a 1-7 scale: *"How much do you think the woman is to blame for what happened?"*, *"How much do you think the man is to blame for what happened?"*(reverse-scored), *"Do you think what happened was rape?"* (reverse-scored), *"How severe do you think the possible psychological consequences for the victim might be"*? (reverse-scored), and *"To what extent do you think Tanja K. made it all up?"*. Cronbach's alpha for these items was .71, so they were averaged into an explicit index of victim blaming.

Implicit victim blaming

Our procedure was equivalent to the methodology of Süssenbach et al. (2017). We used the Implicit Association Test (Greenwald et al., 1998) as an indicator of implicit associations regarding the male and female protagonists of the rape vignette. Participants were asked to categorize stimulus items (i.e. words) that represent different categories by pressing the 'E' and the 'I' keys on the computer keyboard.

The position of the superordinate category on either the left or the right side of the screen determined the correct response to an item. In our IAT, there were two target categories ('man' and 'woman') and two evaluative categories ('good' and 'bad'). Participants were instructed that the 'man' and 'woman' categories referred to the protagonists of the rape case they had read before. Three stimulus words were used for each category. For the positive evaluative category we used 'innocent', 'right', and 'friendly'. The words used for the negative evaluative category were 'false', 'guilty', and 'mean'. Target category words for 'woman' were 'Ms. K.', 'she' and 'Tanja'. For the target category 'man' we used 'Mr. S.', 'he' and 'Georg'. In the critical blocks of the IAT, one target category shared a response key ('I' or 'E') with one of the two evaluative categories. For example, in one critical block 'woman' and 'innocent' shared the same key, whereas in the other critical block 'man' and 'innocent' shared the same key. In total, the IAT consisted of five blocks. Before each critical block, there were practice

blocks for participants to familiarize themselves with the stimuli as well as the procedure. For a schematic illustration of the IAT procedure, see Figure 1.

To capture implicit victim blaming, we computed a D-Score for each participant (Greenwald, Nosek, & Banaji, 2003). It represents the difference in reaction times between the two critical blocks, and was coded in such a way that higher D-scores represented more victim blaming.

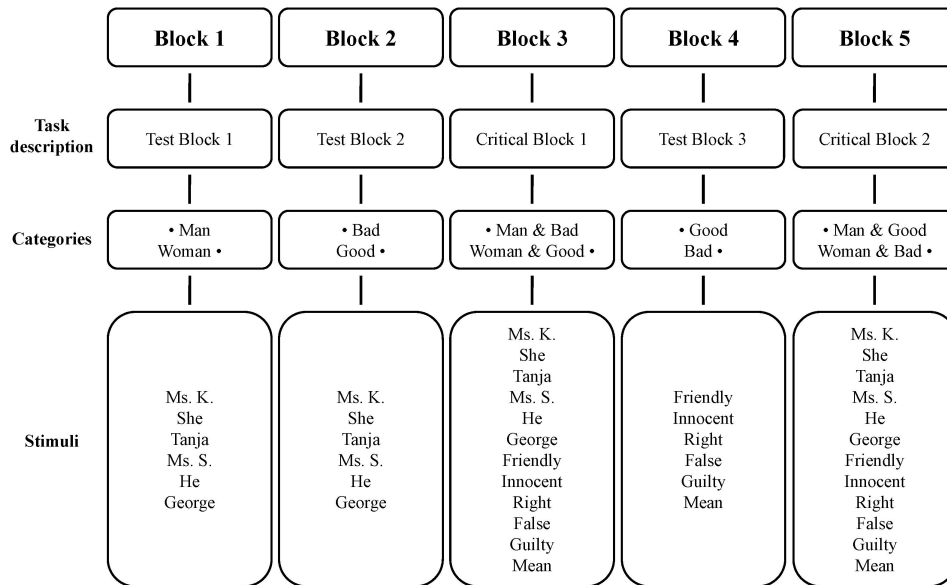|	Block 1	Block 2	Block 3	Block 4	Block 5
Task description	Test Block 1	Test Block 2	Critical Block 1	Test Block 3	Critical Block 2
Categories	• Man Woman •	• Bad Good •	• Man & Bad Woman & Good •	• Good Bad •	• Man & Good Woman & Bad •
Stimuli	Ms. K. She Tanja Ms. S. He George	Ms. K. She Tanja Ms. S. He George	Ms. K. She Tanja Ms. S. He George Friendly Innocent Right False Guilty Mean	Friendly Innocent Right False Guilty Mean	Ms. K. She Tanja Ms. S. He George Friendly Innocent Right False Guilty Mean

Figure 1: Schematic illustration of the Implicit Association Test. Asterisks (on the left versus right of categories) indicate the assignments to left ('E') and right ('I') keys

Results and Discussion

Because of initial technical difficulties, IAT data of the first 16 participants had to be discarded. Therefore, we only used $N = 220$ participants' IAT scores for analyses.

Analyses showed that participants' explicit and implicit judgments of victim blaming were correlated. AMMSA as well as participants' gender also covaried with both victim blaming measures (see Table 2). There were, however, no significant correlations with the experimental condition, indicating the absence of a main effect. Participants' gender was associated more strongly with the implicit than the explicit measure of victim blaming. This finding replicates the results of Süssenbach et al. (2017) and suggests that, in addition to victim blaming, the IAT score may also reflect a more general preference for one's gender-ingroup. All descriptive statistics for the study's measures are displayed in Table 3.

We analysed the effects of priming condition and participant gender on explicit and implicit measures of victim blaming, using a repeated-measures ANOVA, in which we defined z-scores of the implicit and explicit

Table 2: Zero-order intercorrelations of study variables, condition, and participant gender (Study 2).

	Imp. VB	Exp. VB	AMMSA	Prime
Explicit VB	.231†	-		
AMMSA	.144*	.552†	-	
Priming condition[a]	−.098	−.005	.026	-
Gender[b]	.464†	.254†	.243	−0.19

Note. VB = victim blaming; AMMSA = acceptance of modern myths about sexual aggression.

[a]coded 1 = 'victim' picture and 2 = 'survivor' picture.

[b] coded 1 = 'female' and 2 = 'male'.

*$p < .05$, †$p < .01$

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of study variables (Study 2).

	Min	Max	*M*	*SD*
Implicit victim blaming	−1.47	0.93	−0.44	0.52
Explicit victim blaming	1.00	4.80	2.80	0.80
AMMSA	1.00	5.17	2.98	0.82

Note. AMMSA = acceptance of modern myths about sexual aggression.

measures as two levels of a within-subjects factor. Results of this ANOVA first showed a significant main effect of gender, $F(1,219) = 56.53$, $p < .001$. Overall, on both measures as well as in both conditions, women showed less victim blaming than did men (see Table 4).

Furthermore, there was a significant three-way interaction effect of gender, priming condition, and type of measure, $F(1,219)] = 3.96$, $p = .04$. To decompose this effect, we analyzed the simple interaction of priming condition by type of measure separately for each gender. For male participants, this interaction was significant, $F(1, 97) = 4.86$, $p = .03$. Specifically, on the implicit measure, men blamed the woman more in the 'victim' condition ($M = .65$; $SD = 1.06$) than in the 'survivor' condition ($M = .33$, $SD = 1.03$), whereas on the explicit measure, they blamed the woman more in the 'survivor' condition ($M = .38$, $SD = 1.11$) than in the 'victim' condition ($M = .13$, $SD = .87$).

For female participants, on the other hand, none of the simple effects of condition, type of measure, or their interaction was significant, all $p = .69$. Descriptively, female participants generally showed somewhat greater victim blaming in the 'victim' condition (explicit $M = -.16$, $SD = .98$; implicit $M = -.39$, $SD = .67$) than in the 'survivor' condition (explicit $M = .-32$, $SD = .87$; implicit $M = -.47$, $SD = .76$).

Table 4: Means of implicit and explicit victim blaming (z-scores) by participant gender and label condition (Study 2).

		Male		Female	
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Implicit	Victim	.653	1.07	−.396	.677
	Survivor	.334	1.04	−.471	.764
Explicit	Victim	.131	.877	−.169	.986
	Survivor	.386	1.12	−.325	.874

The significant main effect for gender on implicit victim blaming may partly be driven by an implicit own-gender bias, where women find it easier to associate female-related words with positive words, independent of context. Overall, we observed smaller differences between male and female participants' judgments on the explicit measure compared to the implicit measure. Similar in-group biases on implicit measures have been reported in the past (e.g. Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002; Süssenbach et al., 2017, Süssenbach et al., 2017).

We argue that the higher attributions of blame in the 'victim' condition on an implicit level in both men and women might be explained by the operation of an existing schema that triggers associations between 'victim' pictures and attribution of blame. Since the kind of survivor pictures we used in our material are not usually shown in the press when reporting on sexual violence (Schwark, 2017), there are no existing associations between the pictures and attribution of blame in rape cases that could be triggered.

For men, the higher levels of blame in the 'survivor' condition on the explicit measure suggest that, at least when being asked directly, seeing images that contradict the common stereotype of a woman who has experienced sexual assault may lead to conscious construals of blame attribution.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to examine whether image stimuli representing 'victim' and 'survivor' categories have the same associations as the terms themselves. Furthermore, we investigated whether priming with these pictures influences attributions of blame on explicit as well as implicit measures.

In our first study, we were able to show that, generally, women in 'survivor' pictures were perceived more positively than women in 'victim' pictures. This replicates the findings of Papendick and Bohner (2017), who have examined the terms 'victim' and 'survivor', demonstrating more positive associations with the latter. Even though our German-speaking sample indicated that they found the word "Überlebende" (survivor) inappropriate in the context of sexual violence, the term's visual representation still yielded more positive associations when compared to the 'victim' images. This finding has important implications for both theory and practice. In their meta-analysis, Hockett and Saucier (2015) compared academic articles regarding the use of normative (victim) and non-normative (e.g. survivor) framings of women who have experienced rape. They argue that the non-normative framing tends to maintain aspects of negative outcomes while stressing the positive ones (Hockett & Saucier, 2015), whereas the normative framing exclusively focuses on negative outcomes.

This has implications for future research, whether it addresses the terminology ('victim' vs. 'survivor') or the visual representation. In order to avoid replicating common and potentially harmful stereotypes, researchers might want to take greater care when choosing their stimulus materials.

Regarding practical implications outside of the academic sphere, this mostly concerns news agencies. As stated earlier, images are an important part of print as well as online news outlets, and their influence on readers must not be underestimated (Zillmann et al., 1999). Therefore, it is important to at least broaden the range of pictures used by news agencies when writing about sexual violence. Although the current studies cannot offer a final conclusion regarding the connection between a certain kind of photographic representation and attribution of blame, it would be desirable that news media present a more empowered image of women who have experienced sexual violence alongside the 'victim' pictures that stress the often devastating consequences. Overall, the best choice of picture material might depend on the context. If the intention is to stress the consequences of sexual violence against women, a 'victim' picture might transport this message better than a 'survivor' picture. However, if empowerment and self-efficacy is the focus, using a 'survivor' image could be beneficial.

Another possible field this issue applies to is the prevention of gender-based violence and designing campaign materials (e.g. posters) that use 'victim' imagery. Potter, Moynihan, Stapleton, and Banyard (2009) discuss the various difficulties in evaluating effects and effectiveness of poster- and media campaigns in general. Our research suggests that using photographic material depicting women who have experienced sexual violence

in a 'victimized' way might reinforce the stereotype of the weak and help-less victim. Depending on the campaigns' aim, using more neutral imagery could be a better choice.

It is important to offer alternative options and behaviors to women who have experienced sexual violence, not only those commonly seen in the media. Several studies have "stressed the importance of providing spaces in which women who have been raped are empowered to create their own identities" (Hockett & Saucier, 2015, p. 30). According to the authors, group therapy settings offer a good context for this while also creating a safe community. This is echoed in Gondolf and Fisher (1988), who describe the transformation of women who have experienced sexual violence from victims to survivors. The authors argue against the theory of 'learned help-lessness' and offer instead the idea of a 'survivor' hypothesis'. They state that "eventually with sufficient confirmation of the [their own] insights, [women] begin to define themselves as survivors – as individuals who are aware of their strength in enduring the abuse" (Gondolf & Fisher, 1988, p. 16). This kind of discourse on coping mechanisms after experiencing gender violence is something often absent from conversations around this issue.

Limitations and Future Directions

The implicit measure used in Study 2 provides an important opportunity to expand existing research on judgments in cases of sexual violence. This methodology therefore deserves further development and implementation in future research.

Our finding that women generally attributed less blame than did men on the implicit measure could partly be the result of a general in-group bias. It is likely that female participants are generally faster in associating stimuli that are related to their own in-group (women) with positive rather than negative concepts (see Süssenbach et al., 2017). In future studies, it might thus be useful to include a more general gender IAT measuring implicit attitudes toward men and women. Using such IAT scores as a covariate would render any results related to our victim-blaming IAT more precise and interpretable.

To broaden this line of research further, it would be interesting to in-vestigate the effects that certain visual representations have on women in general and on women who have previously experienced sexual violence in particular. As the connotations of the stereotypical 'victim' representa-tion seem to be largely negative, this might impact women's self-concept and maybe even their self-efficacy regarding the best course of action af-ter experiencing sexual assault. As research suggests that there are differ-ences regarding the perceptions of the 'victim' and 'survivor' label among women who have been raped (e.g. Skjelsbaek, 2006), it is likely that these differences also exist with regard to news media photographs. Fohring (2015), for example, has shown that perceptions of an incident (a crime) and the self-identification as victims influence the willingness to engage

with the criminal justice system. A more qualitative approach might be useful to investigate this question, for example doing in-depth interviews or discussion groups on women's perceptions regarding these wide-spread media images. Overall, our research shows that the impact of visual representations of women who have experienced sexual violence should not be underestimated and warrants further investigation.

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EIGENSTÄNDIGKEITSERKLÄRUNG

Ich versichere, dass ich meine Dissertation „Sexual violence against women: Consequences of news media (mis)representation" selbstständig und ohne unerlaubte Hilfe angefertigt habe und mich dabei keiner anderen als der von mir ausdrücklich bezeichneten Quellen und Hilfen bedient habe.

Die Dissertation wurde in der jetzigen oder einer ähnlichen Form noch bei keiner anderen Hochschule eingereicht und hat noch keinen Prüfungszwecken gedient.

Bielefeld, Juni 2017

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Sandra Claudia Schwark