

# Residual Rape Myth Acceptance among Young Women Who Have Recently Completed a Sexual Violence Prevention Workshop

Madeline Hayward<sup>1</sup>, Gareth J. Treharne<sup>1</sup>, Nicola Liebergreen<sup>2</sup>, Katie Graham<sup>3</sup> and Melanie Beres<sup>2,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Psychology, University of Otago, Aotearoa/New Zealand

<sup>2</sup> Sociology, Gender Studies and Criminology, University of Otago, Aotearoa/New Zealand

<sup>3</sup> Te Whare Tāwharau, University of Otago, Aotearoa/New Zealand

This study explored young women's conceptions of sexual violence after attending a prevention workshop at university and addressed how rape myths feature in ongoing thinking about sexual violence. Three focus groups were carried out with a total of seven 18-/19-year-old women living in residential colleges who had recently attended a sexual violence prevention workshop during their first year at a university in Aotearoa/New Zealand. The focus groups involved activities to discuss rape myths and wider perspectives about tackling sexual violence on campus. Thematic analysis led to the development of three themes: women's lived experience of rape culture, women's residual rape myth acceptance, and encouraging men to challenge rape culture. These results demonstrate how rape myth acceptance can continue after attending a sexual violence prevention workshop and suggest that workshops should further address rape myths using evidence about how some such myths may be unintentionally reinforced.

**Keywords:** *Sexual violence prevention; Health education; Rape myths; Rape culture; Qualitative research; Focus groups*

## Introduction

The prevalence of sexual violence makes the necessity of an intervention clear. In Aotearoa/New Zealand, approximately a third of women experience interpersonal or sexual violence at some point in their lives (Fanslow & Robinson, 2011). Rates of sexual violence on university campuses are especially high, which illustrates a need for sexual violence prevention programmes in this setting (Towl, 2018). However, the university sector currently lacks a comprehensive approach to sexual violence prevention (Beres, Stojanov, & Treharne, 2019; End Rape on Campus Australia, 2017). It has also been noted that universities have not until recently started challenging the societal norms that contribute to the prevalence and acceptance of sexual violence (End Rape on Campus Australia, 2017), and further research is needed to understand the status quo and inform change (Beres et al., 2019).

Sexual violence prevention workshops, such as bystander programmes, provide universities with an opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to reducing sexual assault on campuses (Banyard, Moynihan, & Plante, 2007; Beres et al., 2019). These prevention workshops are typically evaluated using quantitative methods. Qualitative research has the potential to expand on these quantitative evaluations by providing novel insights into how concepts such as rape myths function and thus inform understandings of sexual violence and rape myths in the university environment, where such

workshops are increasingly common. This was achieved in the present study by considering how participants reflect on whether attending a sexual violence prevention workshops directly challenges rape myths or subtly reinscribes any such myths.

This study is an exploration of rape myths that was conducted alongside a larger project on the feasibility of a bystander sexual violence prevention workshop in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Bystander sexual violence prevention workshops seeks to counter sexual violence by teaching participants how to safely intervene in situations where they are bystanders (Banyard et al., 2007). Banyard, Eckstein, and Moynihan (2010) described how bystander workshops involve identifying situations where intervention is necessary and discussing strategies for safely intervening before, during, or after sexual violence. Participants also receive education about different types of sexual violence and their prevalence, the role of a bystander, and psychological findings about bystander behaviour. Throughout bystander programmes, participants are encouraged to consider and challenge societal contributions to the prevalence of sexual violence, such as rape myths and gender stereotypes around sex and sexual violence. Therefore, participants of such workshops are in a unique position to demonstrate how their understandings of rape myths become clarified or shift in light of discussions spurred during and after the workshop.

Bystander sexual violence prevention workshops are usually delivered to single-gender groups because rape prevention literature suggests that this method is more effective (Breitenbecher, 2000). Bystander workshops have been shown to have a number of positive outcomes for participants, including decreased rape myth acceptance and increased positive bystander behaviour after participation (Banyard et al., 2007; Moynihan, Banyard, Arnold, Eckstein, & Stapleton, 2010, 2011; Potter & Moynihan, 2011). Several studies have also shown that both empathy and education have a role to play in increasing bystanders' willingness to intervene (e.g., McMahan, 2010; Stewart, 2014).

The main limitation of the existing body of research on sexual violence prevention is the relative absence of studies applying qualitative methods to understand changes in key concepts such as rape myths from the perspective of participants. Previous evaluative studies of bystander sexual violence prevention programmes have involved quantitative methods demonstrating changes in the intended outcomes around bystander behaviour (Banyard et al., 2007; Moynihan et al., 2010, 2011, 2015; Potter & Moynihan, 2011). Qualitative methods allow for exploration of how conceptualisations of rape myths change in response to structured programmes that address sexual violence. The present study utilised focus groups as a method for gaining rich exploratory data to explore how participants talk about rape myths within a social group with shared experience of a bystander sexual violence prevention workshop.

Rape myths are attitudes and beliefs about sexual violence that are contrary to established data. For example, a common misconception is that most instances of sexual violence occur between strangers (End Rape on Campus Australia, 2017; Gavey, 2019), when evidence suggests about 90% of sexual assaults in Aotearoa/New Zealand occur between people who are known to each other (Morris, Reilly, Berry, & Ransom, 2003). This statistic reflects an international trend where, in most instances of rape or sexual assault, the perpetrator is known to the victim (Ben-David & Schneider, 2005; End Rape on Campus Australia, 2017; Kelleher & McGilloway, 2009; McMahan, 2010).

Rape myths are one aspect of rape culture. Rape culture is a phenomenon where a community holds views which normalise and minimise the impact of sexual assault; in such a community, sexual assault becomes dismissible (Gavey, 2019). Rape myths contribute to rape culture by silencing and dismissing claims of rape, and by shifting the burden of responsibility for rape from perpetrators and onto victims (Gibaldi & Monk-Turner, 2017). The latter phenomenon is known as victim blaming (Singleton, Winkell, Nkambule-Vilakati, & Sabben, 2018). A classic example of victim blaming is the notion that it is a woman's fault if she gets sexually assaulted when she is dressed a certain way (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999). Other common rape myths include the misconceptions that women 'ask for' sexual assault through their conduct, that rapists are not accountable for their actions, that forced sex cannot be considered rape if the victim did not protest, and that victims of sexual assault are merely lying (Payne et al., 1999).

Qualitative data highlights the detrimental role of victim blaming on sexual assault survivors' wellbeing and access to support services. Kelleher and McGilloway (2009) explored the perceptions of service providers in the sexual violence sector around barriers to accessing care after sexual assault. Participants spoke about survivors feeling shame and guilt due to the belief that the assault was their fault. Further, participants spoke about survivors who had experienced negative reactions when they disclosed assault, due to their confidante reinforcing the notion of victim responsibility. Survivors' guilt and shame was a significant barrier to disclosing the incident again, often preventing the incident from being reported to the police, and a significant barrier in accessing support (Kelleher & McGilloway, 2009).

Petersen, Bhana and McKay (2005) used focus groups to explore how young women and men in South Africa spoke about the risks of becoming victims or perpetrators of sexual violence. Both female and male participants spoke about the notion of male superiority as a factor used to justify rape, and about rape being used by men to dominate women. Young men spoke about being pressured to perpetrate rape in order to prove their masculinity. Participants explained that gender-based violence is a norm in their community. Both female and male participants also spoke about rape myths as legitimising sexual assault, thus showing rape myth acceptance. The themes of Petersen et al.'s (2005) study help to demonstrate the role of rape myths in maintaining tolerance of sexual violence.

Lower levels of rape myth acceptance are associated with more instances of pro-social bystander behaviour and attitudes (Banyard, 2008), and higher levels of rape myth acceptance are associated with less willingness to intervene as a bystander (McMahan, 2010). Higher rape myth acceptance among men is associated with more hostile attitudes and behaviours towards women (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010) and is theorised to be a precursor to perpetrating sexual assault (Russell & King, 2016). Higher rape myth acceptance is associated with having no previous education about rape prevention (McMahan, 2010), which points to a role for education in lowering rape myth acceptance and thereby increasing pro-social bystander behaviour.

The aim of this study was to explore the link between rape myth rejection and participation in sexual violence prevention workshops. The present study used focus groups comprised of young women who had recently completed a bystander sexual violence prevention workshop. Considering that bystander workshops are well evaluated, the intention here was not to qualitatively evaluate the programme. It is already established that bystander interventions are effective at reducing rape myth acceptance (Banyard et al., 2007; Moynihan et al., 2010, 2011, 2015; Potter & Moynihan, 2011), and the purpose of this study was to explore in more detail how young women make sense of rape culture after such a workshop. There were two research questions: How do young women who have recently participated in a bystander sexual violence prevention workshop conceptualise rape culture and rape myths? Do young women indicate that participating in a sexual violence

prevention workshop affected their understanding of rape culture and rape myths?

## METHODS

### Design

This qualitative study involved three semi-structured focus groups. Focus groups were used to meet the aim of exploring how the social issue of rape myths was talked about in a social setting. Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis was used to organise the qualitative data into themes. Themes were identified at a semantic level following a theory-driven process in relation to the concept of rape myths. A realist position informed the analysis. The data used in this analysis were gathered as part of a larger study of bystander sexual violence prevention workshops and this paper only focuses on participants' discussion of rape culture and rape myths, especially in relation to participation in the workshop. Focussing on one aspect of a qualitative dataset is an accepted approach to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The overall study and this qualitative component received approval from the Human Ethics Committee of the University of Otago, where the research was conducted (Stojanov et al., 2021).

### Participants

Seven participants were recruited from two residential colleges at the University of Otago in Dunedin, Aotearoa/New Zealand. All participants had completed a bystander sexual violence prevention workshop at their college in the previous month (Stojanov et al., 2021). One participant had completed the workshop sessions with a mixed group of young men and women; the other six had completed sessions with other young women only. Five participants were 18 years old and two participants were 19 years old. All participants identified as female. Four participants identified as Pākehā/New Zealand European, one participant as Aboriginal, one participant as Asian, and one participant as Scottish. Five participants identified their sexuality as straight and two participants identified as bisexual/pansexual. Four participants were studying psychology, with the rest studying a variety of other humanities and science subjects. Each focus group consisted of participants from the same residential college.

### Materials

A semi-structured schedule was created for the focus groups by two researchers involved with this study and is available on request. The schedule was designed to be flexible and guided by participants' responses, so as to ensure that the resulting data were rich and reflected participants' views as best as possible. The schedule contained questions exploring participants' understandings of rape myths and rape culture as well as their experiences of the bystander sexual violence prevention workshop. The questions were mostly open-ended, with the intention of eliciting detailed answers (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

During the focus groups, several materials were used to help elicit responses. An activity using five pairs of cards was adapted from our previous research (Graham et al., 2021). One card in each pair had a question about a rape myth and the corresponding card had a statistic or

statement that was counter to the myth. For example, one card read 'a victim will always scream, fight and act hysterical if someone tries to rape them. True or false?' Its pair read 'false' (Payne et al., 1999). The other four cards pertained to the rape myths that more instances of sexual assault occur between strangers, that alcohol causes sexual assault, that unwanted intercourse cannot be called rape if physical force was not used (End Rape on Campus Australia, 2017; Payne et al., 1999), and that perpetrators of sexual violence are mentally ill (Cowan & Quinton, 2006). Most of these myths were related to those within the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (Payne et al., 1999), which all participants had completed prior to participation in the bystander sexual violence prevention workshop as part of the quantitative evaluation in the larger study.

Two images that had been presented and discussed during the bystander sexual violence prevention workshops were adapted for use in the focus groups. Each image showed a group of people, with speech bubbles indicating whether they were conveying acceptance of, or disagreeing with, a rape myth. One of these images related to a myth about the role of alcohol in sexual assault, and the other related to the myth that a woman's clothing is related to sexual assault (Payne et al., 1999).

Photographs taken around the university campus and its surrounding area were printed out and used to facilitate discussion about the type of scenario where participants thought sexual assault would be most likely to occur. This prompt related to the rape myth that sexual assault is something that mainly occurs in seedy locations (Payne et al., 1999). The statements "Sex workers can't be raped" and "Men can't be raped because they always want sex" were printed on cards and presented to participants to generate discussion about these rape myths.

### Procedure

All participants who had completed the bystander sexual violence prevention workshops were invited by email to attend a focus group. The focus groups were conducted by two female researchers (the first author and third author). A third female researcher observed each session and took notes. The duration of focus groups ranged from just over one hour to just over an hour and a half. The first focus group, comprising three participants, was held in a private study room at the participants' college. The other two, each comprising two participants, were held in a quiet, private meeting room on campus. Each focus group was audio-recorded and later transcribed by a professional service. All participants gave informed consent before the focus group started and were given a \$15 supermarket voucher as reimbursement for expenses related to participating.

The focus groups began with introductions and questions about participating in the bystander sexual violence prevention workshops. Next, a facilitator used the materials described above to generate discussion about rape myths, beginning with the task involving five questions about rape myths. Following a discussion about this task, the other prompts were presented. Generally, after a prompt was presented, participants were asked a broad, open question, such as, "What do you think these pictures represent?" There was a particular focus on generating further discussion around any myths that

appeared to be contentious or difficult for participants to respond to.

### Analysis

The transcripts were checked for accuracy and to ensure they were anonymised. This process, along with repeated readings of the transcripts, led to familiarisation with the data and formed the first stage of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Analysis was led by the first author and discussed with the other authors. In line with Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines for thematic analysis, the next stage of analysis involved systematically generating codes from all focus group data. These codes were then organised into potential themes that represent repeated patterns in the data pertaining to the research questions. Themes were then reviewed in relation to their associated coded extracts as well as the entire data set. Once themes had been checked, they were named and defined following the steps described by Braun and Clarke (2006).

Themes were identified at a semantic level, with the main interest being what was described by participants, rather than theorising underlying ideas or assumptions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A semantic approach to analysis was in line with our application of a realist ontology/epistemology and enabled us to take a broad approach to exploring themes that represent an analysis of the perspectives expressed by the young women who participated (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Given that the focus group schedule and the analysis were driven by a theoretical interest in rape myths, the process of identifying themes was theory-driven (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Quotes were used to illustrate themes. In presenting quotes, the notation '[...]' has been used to indicate where part of a quote has been redacted for brevity without changing the intended meaning.

The analysis was informed by the epistemological position of realism (Braun & Clarke, 2006), theorising that the way participants talked about rape myths meaningfully revealed the extent to which they accepted or rejected the rape myths. In other words, the relationship between their discussion and the associated meaning was assumed to be a straightforward representation of experienced reality.

## RESULTS

The thematic analysis of focus group data led to the development of three themes: 1) women's lived experience of rape culture, 2) women's residual rape myth acceptance, and 3) encouraging men to challenge rape culture.

### Theme 1:

#### Women's Lived Experience of Rape Culture

The first theme is about the ways in which women conveyed their lived experience of rape culture. Participants spoke about experiencing the harmful societal attitudes that normalise sexual assault and form rape culture (Gavey, 2019). Participants unequivocally believed rape culture existed in Aotearoa/New Zealand and expressed why it is important to challenge rape culture and the experience they had doing this.

It was common among participants to know people who had been sexually assaulted and many had

themselves been the target of sexist behaviour. This experience was a motivating factor for participating in the workshop and shaped their perspectives on rape myths. With regard to the rape myth about alcohol causing sexual assault, one participant responded, *'I don't want to blame alcohol [...] because a lot of the sexual assault I [...] know about [...] has nothing to do with alcohol'*. Participants' experience with rape culture also facilitated their understanding that it is *'the little things that sort of add up that make people think it's ok to rape people so like um rape jokes, sexist comments...'*

Participants argued that someone who believed rape culture did not exist within Aotearoa/New Zealand would be *'incredibly naive'*. They were also discerning as to how prominent aspects of rape culture known to exist within the US might be found within Aotearoa/New Zealand because, for example, *'we don't have fraternities here but we do have sports teams'*.

All participants thought it was important to challenge rape myths and many had experience of challenging rape myth acceptance and sexist attitudes in those around them. This was despite the liability that *'you'll get called names or like oh you can't take a joke'*. Hearing sexist views from family and friends was distressing to them: *'it like hurt me to think that someone that I'm quite close to as a friend would think these things'*.

Participants also noted that one of the most valuable parts of the workshop was learning about the *'spectrum'* of sexual violence ranging from jokes up to more harmful aspects. One participant reflected that *'some people don't understand just how bad the issue is and how little things like [...] sex jokes or like misogynistic jokes [...] how often they actually occur and [...] in regards to the scale of sexual harassment, even though it's so little it happens so much more often than the big things'*. Rape jokes were therefore seen as important to challenge, especially after participating in the workshop: *'it sort of gave me a way to learn how to deal with these things because they happen so often and nobody sort of sticks up for it and it just becomes acceptable'*.

### Theme 2: Women's Residual Rape Myth Acceptance

The second theme is about a subtle residual level of rape myth acceptance that related to a varied effect of the workshop on these myths. Most participants indicated that they already strongly rejected rape myths, with the workshop only strengthening their views. Other participants pointed to specific myths where participation in the workshop had changed their opinion by strengthening their rape myth rejection. However, some rape myth acceptance, both explicit and subtle, remained after participation in the workshop.

In most instances, the workshop mainly served to strengthen existing anti-rape myth views. In the words of one participant: *'I've always sort of had similar perspectives but I think that the course has definitely sort of cemented it and given me more reasons to believe it'*. This sentiment was also expressed in an exchange between two participants:

Participant 1: *'I think personally I had pretty solid opinions anyway just like from the way I've been brought up and all that and the way I myself have*

*learned about things [...] you might've guessed but I have very solid opinions (laughs)*

Participant 2: *'Yeah same'*.

Participant 1: *'[...] so I think personally [...] a lot of my beliefs were reaffirmed I guess [...] but I wouldn't say they were changed'*.

However, in some cases, participants credited the workshop as forming or changing their understanding. As a case in point, several participants had thought that most instances of sexual assault were committed by strangers before the workshop. After the workshop, almost all participants acknowledged that evidence shows more instances of sexual assault occur between acquaintances. One participant said, *'I almost trust guys less [...] because now I know that it's like it happens between friends and acquaintances'*. While instilling a distrust of men is not an intended outcome of the workshop, this response does show rejection of the myth that most rapes are committed by strangers.

Participants were generally quick to reject rape myths that were raised, providing lengthy, nuanced reasoning. However, even after participating in the workshop, participants did not unanimously disagree with the rape myth that 'perpetrators of sexual violence are mentally ill'. Instead, some participants argued that the statement could be true in the case of some mental illnesses because, for example, perpetrators might have a *'kind of complex in their head'* or be *'mentally ill as in someone who doesn't feel empathy'*. However, participants did not think a common mental illness such as depression or anxiety would be *'the sort of thing that would push you to do that [i.e., commit sexual violence]'*.

In other cases, participants explicitly rejected a rape myth, but their comments revealed subtle rape myth acceptance. Participants stated that the workshop had made them aware that sexual assault can *'literally happen anywhere'* and not just in *'dark alleys and stuff'*, thus challenging this rape myth. However, all participants indicated that they thought sexual assault would be most likely on a dark street at night, showing subtle residual acceptance of this myth: *'they're isolated, they're dark, there's not people around to hear you so it would be incredibly easy for someone to hurt you'*. Participants also implicitly indicated rape myth acceptance when reasoning that sexual assault would more likely occur in a large hall of residence where there was *'more anonymity'* despite explicitly rejecting the myth that more sexual assault is perpetrated by strangers: *'if there's more than 500 people [living in a hall], it's what you said about not knowing everyone and easier just to be another face in the crowd'*.

### **Theme 3: Encouraging Men to Challenge Rape Culture**

The third theme is about how the female participants perceived men to be lacking a vested interest in challenging rape culture, and the ways this could be addressed. Participants perceived there to be a range of ways that men uphold rape culture. One was the way that men were seen to minimise women's reactions to sexist jokes, *'saying "Oh it's just a joke, why do you have to be so angry about everything?"'* Participants also perceived a tendency among men to accept rape myths: *'they've got this idea well if she's drinking, then it's consent'*.

Moreover, participants perceived that men's complicity in rape culture often means they are unintentionally abusive: *'they would just do whatever they want to get, like get, have sex [...] they don't realise that there's like a whole rape part of it'*.

In addition, participants perceived men to be ignorant about sexual violence due to experiencing less *'general sexism'*, for example not being *'exposed to all of the stuff about clothes that we get'*. On the other hand, women were perceived to be more aware, due to a lived experience of rape culture: *'It's like with general sexism, we're more likely to notice it because it's addressed at us whereas guys in general are less likely to notice how sexist things are'*. One participant expanded on how they perceived women to be taught to be aware of sexual violence, saying *'they teach girls not to be raped and then there's less focus on guys not to rape so I feel like [...] girls are more likely to get involved because they go well how can I stop this [...] happening to me whereas guys kind of go well I'm not gonna join in with this because why would I, like I'm not gonna get affected'*. Participants noted that men are rarely active allies against sexual violence. They thought it was important that men should get involved: *'we were trying to make sure that guys went' to the workshops*.

Participants discussed three main reasons they perceived as preventing men from engaging with sexual violence prevention programmes. The first reason was the disapproval of other men: *'I think it's again that sort of idea of "Oh if I sign up, then what are other guys gonna think of me?"'* The second reason was the idea that men do not think they will be affected by rape: *'they teach girls not to be raped and then there's less focus on guys not to rape [...], girls are more likely to get involved because they go well how can I stop this happening [...] whereas guys kind of go well I'm not gonna join in with [...] I'm not gonna get affected'*. The third reason was the need to uphold hegemonic masculinity; that there is *'an idea of what a manly man is and [...] if they invest time in this, then it sort of goes against this sort of idea'*. Participants suggested that enlightening men about issues of sexual violence could be done in a way *'that doesn't like offend their masculinity'*. Nonetheless, they thought it was important that hegemonic masculinity be challenged.

Participants acknowledged the common misconception that only women are affected by sexual assault, but explicitly rejected the myth that men cannot be raped: *'there are male victims as well'*. Participants acknowledged that anyone can perpetrate sexual assault or sexist behaviours. The need to uphold *'social stereotypes and gender roles'* was perceived to be detrimental to male victims of sexual assault: *'not a lot of guys actually come forward because there is that whole like sense of macho kind of stuff, like when you're a man, you don't get raped [...] it's kind of the culture in guys for some reason and it's embarrassing to say that they've been raped [...] so they don't come forward'*.

### **DISCUSSION**

The aim of this study was to explore how young women make sense of rape culture and rape myths after participating in a bystander sexual violence prevention programme. Participants discussed rape culture as something they, or people close to them, had experienced.

Participants tended to reject rape myths, sometimes attributing this rejection to perspectives they had learned in the sexual violence prevention workshops. However, participants showed subtle rape myth acceptance after participation in the workshop. Participants spoke about a perceived lack of male engagement in sexual violence prevention and the ways this could be addressed.

Female participants spoke about their lived experience of rape culture. This finding should be of little surprise given the prevalence of sexual violence towards women. The way women discussed rape culture in the wake of the workshop implies that they were able to relate the workshop content to what they or others had experienced. Participants found the workshop valuable for helping them continue to challenge rape culture. Participants discussed the bystander sexual violence prevention workshop as having strengthened their rejection of rape myths. This finding aligns with previous literature that shows an association between participation in the bystander workshop and decreased rape myth acceptance (Moynihan et al., 2010). However, a reduction in rape myth acceptance does not mean a complete rejection of rape myths. Participants in this study explicitly accepted the myth that perpetrators of sexual assault are mentally ill and appeared to implicitly accept the myths that more sexual assaults occur between strangers or on dark streets at night.

Overall, these findings help identify subtle aspects of rape myths that may be more resistant to change than quantitative research has suggested. In this study, participation in a bystander sexual violence prevention workshop did seem to decrease participants' explicit rape myth acceptance for most myths, as has been found in past research (Banyard et al., 2007; Moynihan et al., 2010, 2011, 2015; Potter & Moynihan, 2011), but it may not have decreased implicit rape myth acceptance. Future research could investigate residual and implicit rape myth acceptance further and explore whether certain rape myths are more resistant to change than others. Qualitative methods made the exploration of nuanced perspectives on these myths possible. Open questioning in the focus groups revealed participants' implicit rape myth acceptance, whereas traditional survey measures may have only captured participants' explicit rejection of the myths. This finding highlights the necessity of ongoing qualitative and quantitative evaluations of sexual violence prevention programmes.

The female participants in this study perceived men to be lacking a vested interest in challenging rape culture. Participants perceived men to be oblivious to issues of sexual violence. Previous literature has suggested that women tend to have greater knowledge about sexual violence than men (Banyard, 2008). Participants perceived that men tend to have higher rape myth acceptance, and this is consistent with previous literature in which women have lower rape myth acceptance than men (Suarez & Gadalla, 2010).

Participants also had a perception that social expectations of hegemonic masculinity dissuaded men from getting involved with sexual violence prevention. This perception is consistent with literature exploring the link between masculinity and sexual violence. For example, the pressure to conform to masculine norms and

the acceptance of behaviour aimed at objectifying women were found to potentially mediate the relationship between fraternity membership and acceptance of sexual violence in a sample of male American college students (Seabrook, Ward, & Giaccardi, 2018). Men's acceptance of and adherence to masculine stereotypes is thought to both justify the degradation of women and absolve men of responsibility for such behaviours (Gibaldi & Monk-Turner, 2017). These findings imply that it is important to find ways to encourage men's involvement with sexual violence prevention. Participants discussed some ways that this could be achieved: educating men about sexual violence in a way that does not offend their masculinity and shifting norms among men so that engaging with sexual violence prevention is accepted.

The present study had several limitations, one being that the sample only included a moderate portion of the overall cohort. Given that seven women out of a larger group who completed the bystander sexual violence prevention workshop participated in focus groups, the themes arising from this sample should not necessarily be taken as being reflective of all participants in the wider study. Future research could use similar methods with a larger cohort and could also use similar methods with male participants.

Another limitation was that participants had volunteered for both the bystander sexual violence prevention workshop and the focus groups. Participants whose participation in a bystander workshop is compulsory might discuss rape myth acceptance in a different way. Future research could explore rape myth acceptance in participants of compulsory sexual violence prevention workshops. In our study, the total number of participants who elected to participate in the workshop sessions was only a small portion of those invited to attend. If universities were to implement sexual violence prevention workshops on a wider scale, it would be important to consider whether compulsory sessions would be successful. For example, it would be worth exploring whether compulsory workshop attendance is associated with unintended 'backlash' effects (see Moynihan et al., 2010, 2011), where participants' attitudes or behaviours worsen after the intervention.

Participants in this study were all in their first year at university. Banyard and Moynihan (2011) noted that first-year students are at a unique developmental stage, meaning that the way they respond to sexual violence prevention messaging may not be reflective of all students' responses. It would be beneficial to explore rape myth acceptance in students of different year groups who have participated in sexual violence prevention workshops.

An established aspect of bystander sexual violence prevention workshops is open discussion (Banyard et al., 2010). Participants who attended different sessions of the workshops may have been involved in quite different discussions despite the overall standardisation. The extent to which these discussions shaped participants' views is unknown. A related limitation is that the focus groups took place up to several weeks after participants had attended the bystander workshops. Other events in participants' lives during this time may have affected their perspectives on the issues raised in the bystander

workshops. This limitation is common in studies evaluating the bystander workshop (e.g., Moynihan et al., 2010). However, it is worth noting that participants in the present study did appear to remember content from the bystander workshops well, which is another positive outcome.

Sexual violence prevention efforts are needed to ameliorate the high rates of sexual violence in Aotearoa/New Zealand (Fanslow & Robinson, 2011), particularly the disproportionately high rates experienced by Māori (Ministry of Justice, 2015, 2019). It is therefore critical that prevention efforts like bystander workshops are culturally meaningful to Māori. Definitions of sexual violence are not universal and Pākehā definitions of sexual violence are not necessarily relevant to Māori (Pihama et al., 2016). Intergenerational trauma, forced migration, and the mandated adoption of Western ideologies through colonisation have been identified as major contributors to the disparity in rates of sexual violence between Māori and non-Māori New Zealanders (Cavino, 2016; Pihama et al., 2016; Robertson & Oulton, 2008). It is important to consider how sexual violence prevention efforts can include definitions of sexual violence that are located within a Māori worldview, for example by considering sexual violence as an act which harms both individual and collective well-being (Pihama et al., 2016).

The bystander sexual violence prevention workshop that our participants attended was originally developed in the US by Banyard and colleagues (Banyard et al., 2007; Moynihan et al., 2010, 2011, 2015; Potter & Moynihan, 2011). Translating this workshop to the cultural context of the participants involved incorporating discussions of media about local cases of sexual violence. Future consideration must be given to whether this modification alone is sufficient when delivering such workshops in the context of in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Future research involving Māori participants and led by Māori researchers working within a Kaupapa Māori framework may help inform an understanding of how these workshops could incorporate definitions of sexual violence beyond dominant Western understandings.

Furthermore, future research could explore whether the subtle aspects of rape myth acceptance and overt aspects of rape myth rejection discovered in this study remain for longer periods after attending sexual violence prevention workshops and how those aspects translate into everyday interactions, such as responding when rape jokes are made by others. Understanding the long-term trajectory of rape myth rejection would allow universities to make decisions about implementing workshops on a large scale and understanding whether it is sufficient for students to participate once during their time at university or whether booster sessions might be beneficial to address subtle rape myth acceptance.

In this study, semantic analysis led to the development of themes that broadly captured the perspectives expressed by the young women who participated. In future studies, particularly of larger data corpuses, it could be useful to take a latent approach to analysis (as outlined by Braun & Clarke, 2006, and others who have provided guidance for discursive approaches to analysis). Latent analyses would allow deeper exploration of how

participants' experiences and reflections of sexual violence prevention workshops can be understood in terms of wider discourses about sexual violence, as this will be pertinent to informing how the workshops can meet their goal around enduring attitudinal change. For example, a latent approach could provide a deeper insight into findings of the present study such as the residual endorsement of the rape myth that sexual assault is more common on a dark street, by considering how this finding can be understood in relation to endorsement of victim blaming. Similarly, findings around women's perceptions of men's disinterest in sexual violence prevention could be more deeply understood in relation to wider discourses around masculinity and gender roles.

The current study only involved participants who had completed the bystander sexual violence prevention workshop. There was no exploration of whether different themes about rape myths arose in focus groups with participants who had not participated in a bystander sexual violence prevention workshop. Further, the extent to which participating in the bystander workshop affected participants' perspectives on rape myths could only be investigated by asking participants whether they believed they had held different attitudes before the workshop; there was no quantitated comparison of attitudes before and after participation in the workshop. These limitations suggest two directions for future research. Firstly, themes arising in focus groups using participants who either did or did not complete the programme could be compared. Secondly, focus groups could be carried out with one group of participants before and after they participated in a bystander sexual violence prevention workshop, thus allowing themes from each time point to be compared.

This qualitative study has provided novel insights into how young women who have completed a sexual violence prevention workshop discuss rape culture. The female participants spoke about a lived experience of rape culture and their perception that men need to be encouraged to challenge rape culture. The analysis identified some aspects of rape myth acceptance that remained after the intervention. The results imply that there is scope to investigate how certain aspects of sexual violence prevention workshops might be modified in order to optimise their intended outcomes.

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### Corresponding Author

Corresponding Author

Gareth J. Treharne

Department of Psychology / Te Tari Whakamātau Hinekaro

University of Otago / Te Whare Wānanga o Otāgo

William James Building, Leith Walk

PO Box 56

Dunedin 9054

Aotearoa/New Zealand

Email: [gareth.treharne@otago.ac.nz](mailto:gareth.treharne@otago.ac.nz)

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