Mapping the Landscape of Male-On-Male Rape in London: An Analysis of Cases Involving Male Victims

Reported Between 2005 and 2012

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Abstract

Male-on-male rape remains an under-researched area, and little is known about the characteristics and outcomes of this type of crime. This study examines 122 rape cases involving young adult and adult male victims reported to the London Metropolitan Police Service between 2005 and 2012. Overall, there were a number of similarities with cases involving female victims; however, male cases were more likely to involve strangers, substance use, and a victim with mental health issues, alluding to specific vulnerabilities. Moreover, younger victims, victims with poor mental health, and victims who had consumed alcohol or drugs were less likely to have their cases referred to prosecutors and more likely to be 'no-crimed' by police. This paper provides unique insight into the profile and trajectories of male-on-male rape cases, and preliminary recommendations for both police practice and future research are provided.

Keywords: rape, male rape, attrition, rape myths, policing

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Within the UK, and indeed many countries, problematically low conviction rates in rape cases are widely acknowledged. For example, Home Office statistics for the year ending December 2018 indicate that only 1.7% of reported rape cases resulted in prosecution (Home Office, 2019). The extremity of such figures has led to the identification of an 'attrition problem' in the criminal justice response to cases of rape (Horvath & Brown, 2013). This 'justice gap' is the result of myriad issues surrounding the investigation and prosecution of rape, and the complicated legal and extra-legal factors involved in determining the veracity of rape claims. Such challenges are set within the broader, and equally challenging, context of low reporting rates of rape victims to police in the first instance (Wolitzky-Taylor *et al.*, 2011).

Negative outcomes for rape survivors are also well documented. Several studies highlight the negative impact of the criminal justice process on the mental health of victims and the significant levels of trauma experienced when reporting to law enforcement agencies (Campbell, 1998, 2006, 2008; Campbell & Raja, 1999; Parsons & Bergin, 2010; Rich & Seffrin, 2012; Ullman & Townsend, 2007). This 'secondary victimisation' frequently involves subjection to "victim-blaming attitudes, behaviours, and practices engaged in by service providers, which further the rape event, resulting in additional trauma" (Campbell *et al.* 2001: 1240): observations supported by qualitative data from government statistics on rape victims' experiences (Office for National Statistics, 2018b). The prevalence of such experiences is particularly concerning when considering the wide-ranging negative physical and mental health outcomes associated with the initial incident (C. Jordan, Campbell, & Follingstad, 2010; Koss, 1993).

A rich investigation into the experiences of female rape survivors, and the progression of their cases through the criminal justice system, has been fuelled by feminist approaches focused on male violence perpetrated on women. Several reviews using case data within the UK (Hester & Lilley, 2017; Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Lea, Lanvers, & Shaw, 2003; Lundrigan, Dhami, & Agudelo, 2019), other countries in Europe (Daly & Bouhours, 2010), and the United States (Alderden & Ullman, 2012; Morabito, Pattavina, & Williams, 2019; Spohn & Tellis, 2012) have highlighted the chronically low conviction rates described above, as well as the various legal and extra-legal factors influential in the investigation and prosecution of rape cases. As a result, the work generated by this movement has led to several reforms of rape legislation in the UK, and around the world. Studies have also sought to explore the factors predictive of rape proclivity and attitudes supporting of sexual violence in men, in an attempt to reduce incidence in the first instance (see Debowska, Boduszek, & Willmott, 2018).

The emphasis in past work on female victims is not surprising, given the majority of rape victims are women (approximately 90%; Office for National Statistics 2018a). However, following the legal recognition of male rape in 1994 (see Jamel, Bull and Sheridan 2008, for a review), and research highlighting the traumatic outcomes of male rape victims (Weiss, 2010), researchers have begun to explore the experiences of male rape victims in relation to three key areas: (1)

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under-reporting; (2) the impact of the criminal justice process, focusing in particular their interactions and experiences with police officers; and (3) attrition of male rape cases within the criminal justice system. These endeavours are crucial because, although many aspects of victim experience are similar across different demographic groups, there are unique challenges for male victims; for example, the influence of gender-role stereotypes and beliefs surrounding sexuality (Rumney, 2008; Weiss, 2010). As discussed in more detail below, however, whilst research in the first of these two areas is burgeoning, research on male rape case attrition is currently non-existent, and more data is desperately needed on the journey of such cases through criminal justice processes in the UK. The present study offers a unique examination of rape cases involving a male victim reported between 2005 and 2012 to the London Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), in an attempt to provide preliminary information in this area, from which further exploration can be developed.

Under-reporting of Male Rape

The limited research available suggests that male victims, at a minimum, experience similar challenges to women in reporting their victimisation to police (Javaid, 2015). Moreover, evidence suggests men may face additional barriers, such as feelings of shame associated with violation of masculine gender role norms and duties (Abdullah-Khan, 2008; Lees, 1997; Weiss, 2010). Further examples include the influence of unwanted physiological reactions to the act of anal penetration, such as erection and ejaculation (Groth & Burgess, 1980; Sarrel & Masters, 1982), which can create feelings of confusion regarding enjoyment of the act (Kassing, Beesley, & Frey, 2005), and sexuality (Groth & Burgess, 1980). Questions and/or prejudices surrounding sexuality are of particular concern for many male victims who fear that, either through the perception they are homosexual, or upon disclosure of homosexuality, officers may react negatively (Rumney, 2008).

It is, therefore, unsurprising that the reporting rate for male victims is estimated to be equally low or lower compared to female victims. For example, Weiss (2010) found that 30% of female rape victims reported their rape to the police, compared to only 15% of male rape victims. Other small-scale studies of male rape have placed the reporting rate for male victims at 12 percent (Hillman, O'Mara, Taylor-Robinson, & Harris, 1990) and 20 percent (Mezey & King, 1989). Information collected in collaboration with third-sector support services, such as Survivors UK, reveals the lowest figure of around 11% (HMCPSI/HMIC, 2002). These low reporting rates may be further attributed to the fact that men have a harder time acknowledging or recognising that what happened to them was rape and that they should report it (Javaid, 2015). Taken together, current findings suggest that male victims of rape are reluctant to report to law enforcement agencies, and potentially face additional challenges in doing so.

Experiences of Male Victims

Many of the concerns held by men about reporting are reflected in research documenting the experiences of those who do go on to report their victimisation to the police. Again, whilst research is limited, results suggest that whilst some men report positive experiences with police, others do not (Rumney, 2008). Those who report negative experiences

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state that officers frequently ask inappropriate or troubling questions, and that officers are overly suspicious and doubting (Rumney, 2008). Such interactions are further characterised by an over-emphasis on sexuality, and questioning representative of homophobic attitudes (Rumney, 2009), which is worsened if the reporting man explicitly states he is homosexual. Examples also exist of male victims being plainly disbelieved or demeaned; for example, through laughter and ridicule (Jamel et al., 2008; Rumney, 2008).

It has been argued that, as with female victims (see Sleath and Bull 2017 for a review), these experiences are reflective of negative and insensitive societal attitudes surrounding male rape (Rumney, 2008). Such assertions are consistent with the growing evidence suggesting the existence of so-called male rape myths (Coxell & King, 2010; M. Davies & Rogers, 2006). Examples of myths include those concerning frequency and context (that male rape does not exist, or only happens in male prisons), sexuality (that male rape victims are homosexual), masculinity (that 'real men' cannot be raped), pleasure (that ejaculating during rape indicates pleasure and therefore decreases the legitimacy of a claim), perpetrators (that men who rape other men do so to satisfy sexual, as opposed to power-based desires), and the effects of the incident (that men are not as traumatised by rape or cope differently than women; Coxell and King 2010; Gonsiorek 1994). More broadly, several studies using both undergraduate (e.g. Davies, Pollard and Archer 2006) and professional populations (e.g. Idisis, Ben-David and Ben-Nachum 2007) demonstrate that men are attributed higher levels of responsibility for their victimisation overall than women. Studies have also demonstrated that male rape myths (e.g. sexuality; Mitchell, Hirschman and Nagayama Hall 1999) have a significant effect on reactions to victimisation, both from the victim themselves and from those around them.

Male rape myths are likely to be exacerbated and normalised within some aspects of police sub-culture (Javaid, 2016). For example, it has been argued that the organisational structure of police forces is often characterised by the idealisation of hegemonic masculinity (R. Connell, 2002; Page, 2007): a form of masculinity venerating dominance, aggression, heterosexuality, and a lack of emotion (R. W. Connell, 2005). Male rape presents a very visceral affront to this ideal. Police sub-culture is also typified by demonstrable scepticism (Kelly, 2010), where disbelief of rape victims specifically is commonplace (J. Jordan, 2004; Kersetter, 1990; LaFree, 1989). Research demonstrates that this scepticism may be particularly extreme towards male victims (Rumney, 2008), powered by the masculine ideals and myths outlined above (Javaid, 2016). It would also be unsurprising if male rape myths related to sexuality were particularly influential within an organisational culture identified as homophobic (Javaid, 2015). Beyond the police, research with jurors assessing trials involving female victims would suggest that such myths will also likely influence belief in defendant and complainant stories, as well as associated verdicts (Willmott, Boduszek, Debowska, & Woodfield, 2018).

Where male rape myths are present, they are likely to operate alongside 'traditional' rape myths, which have historically been defined in relation to female victims (Burt, 1980). Such myths could either operate in the same way for men and women, be applied in different ways to men, or both. For example, increased responsibility as a result of

voluntary consumption of alcohol by a rape victim is a widely identified rape myth (Lovett & Horvath, 2009). Studies show that both men (Sleath & Bull, 2010) and women (Sims, Noel, & Maisto, 2007) are judged to be more responsible in hypothetical scenarios involving alcohol consumption. These results are most likely due to the fact that intoxication, and its associated influence on control, consent and memory, remain consistent regardless of sex, and thus carry similar responsibility deficits. However, myths regarding alcohol consumption could also operate uniquely in relation to men, due to the interaction with other important stereotypic information concerning, for example, the traditional male gender role. Men may receive harsher judgement if, through alcohol consumption, they are believed to have compromised protective characteristics associated with traditional masculine stereotypes (e.g. that men are strong, and thus able to fend off potential attackers; Coxell and King 2010). Beliefs surrounding sexuality provide a further example, as men may be judged more harshly if they are raped whilst engaging in substance consumption during activities linked to the gay community (e.g., chemsex: the intentional combining of sex with the use of particular non-prescription drugs in order to facilitate or enhance the sexual encounter; Bourne *et al.* 2015). Put simply, whilst further research is needed, it appears that men face substantial challenges within the criminal justice system, in relation to both recognition and belief, as well as adequate support, and that rape myths may play an important role.

Attrition of Male Rape Cases in the Criminal Justice System

At present, almost no evidence is available regarding the progression of male rape cases through the criminal justice system and the factors that influence the attrition or advancement of these cases. This lack of research likely arises, in part, as the result of a failure by both researchers and government bodies to separate case information by sex of victim, either deliberately or in ignorance (Harris & Grace, 1999). For example, in Daly and Bouhours' (2010) large-scale review of studies conducted on attrition between 1970 and 2005 across five countries, of the 33 studies on adult or mixed-age victims, none separated findings by victim sex. In some cases, this lack of evidence may be due to practical or methodological constraints. For example, in Hohl and Stanko's (2015) influential study on rape case attrition, there were too few male cases within the sample to conduct meaningful analyses. Examination of male cases is, however, desperately needed. Obtaining detailed information about the typical profile of such cases, as well as their trajectory through the justice process, would allow a unique insight into the investigatory and prosecutorial challenges associated with these crimes; both those shared with female cases, and those unique to men. Such research would also allow for the identification of case characteristics related to problematic societal beliefs or stereotypes (e.g. rape myths) which may complicate legal processes, which in turn would help inform policy and training initiatives on male rape, which are routinely called for within the literature (Javaid, 2015, 2016; Pearson & Barker, 2018; Rumney, 2008).

To address the gaps in our understanding of male rape case progression, the present study provides a unique examination into male rape case data from incidents reported to the London Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) between 2005 and 2012. It utilises pre-coded data on a variety of victim, suspect, offence and procedural variables to produce a

descriptive profile of male rape cases. Moreover, the relationship between case characteristics and case outcomes was examined, to determine what factors influence attrition or advancement of cases through the criminal justice process. Because this study uses pre-coded data, it is important to note there was no opportunity to code cases beyond 2012. However, because Operation Yewtree[1] was launched in October 2012 in the wake of several high-profile cases of historical sexual abuse, these findings provide important context to evaluate the landscape of male-on-male rape pre-implementation of Operation Yewtree, and can act as an important anchor for subsequent investigations.

Method

Data Coding and Processing

The data for this study comes from several annual reviews of rape cases reported to the MPS between 2005 and 2012, originally coded by research teams working within MPS. Coded cases were those involving a rape reported by or on behalf of a male victim during the months of April and May in the years 2005 to 2012.[2] The selection of only April and May as target months was driven by time constraints related to coding; however, limiting the sample to these months was deemed acceptable because, although there is some evidence to support seasonality in the volume of recorded rapes, the months of April and May are considered to be 'average' months (Hird & Ruparel, 2007; Hohl & Stanko, 2015). Additionally, the MPS appears to have average rates of 'no-criming' and sanction detections in offences of a sexual nature (HMIC, 2014), which suggests the cases used in this study are reflective of national patterns.

A total of 230 cases were coded by a team of researchers working within the MPS. The number of coders varied from year to year, though only one person coded each case. Reliability between coders was established informally, through a sample of pilot cases coded by the team and compared for discrepancies (as is common for non-academic case reviews). Similar iterations of the same coding framework were used during each review, although these were not identical.[3] Cases were accessed on the Crime Record Information System (CRIS) and each rape complaint was systematically examined by coders for various characteristics, including the ultimate case outcome (during the police investigation stage). Case characteristics were coded dichotomously as present/absent (e.g. had the victim consumed alcohol), categorically (e.g. level of injury), or as a distinct continuous value (e.g. victim age).

The coded data for each year was sent to the authors to be combined for secondary analysis, as previous examinations had excluded cases involving male victims due to low sample sizes in individual years. The first author first identified similarities in the coding frameworks across coded years and produced a set of variables that were coded in at

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[1] Operation Yewtree is the police investigation into sexual abuse allegations, predominantly the abuse of children, against the British media personality Jimmy Savile and others. The investigation, led by the Metropolitan Police Service, started in October 2012. After a period of assessment it became a full criminal investigation, involving inquiries into living people, notably other celebrities, as well as Savile.

[2] Data was not available for the years 2006 and 2009; therefore, we only report here on six years' worth of data.

[3] The 2012 coding framework is identical to that presented in Hohl and Stanko (2015) and is the most comprehensive framework.

least three of the six reviews (i.e. half). This threshold was set because the dataset contained an abnormally high level of missing data, and a minimum of three years' worth of data for each variable was required to produce adequate sample sizes for analysis. Some characteristics originally coded categorically were converted to categorical dummy variables (e.g. victim injury). The final dataset consisted of 27 case characteristics represented by 31 separate variables, grouped into 5 victim, 4 suspect, 13 offence, and 9 procedural variables.

In addition, the ultimate case outcome for each case was coded as one of four options: 1) a decision by police to 'no crime' a case; 2) a decision by the victim to withdraw their complaint; 3) a decision by police to take no further action on a case; and 4) a decision by police to refer the case to prosecutors. Typically, a no crime outcome is awarded when verifiable evidence emerges that no offence took place. However, at the time the current data was collected, police had a substantial level of discretion as to whether to classify an allegation as 'no crime', including potentially their own doubts surrounding the testimony of the victim. Other outcomes, for example exceptional clearances, were also included in this outcome. In both April 2015 and again in April 2019, more stringent guidelines about 'no criming' were introduced (Home Office, 2019), which restricted the use of this outcome to the categorical disproval of incident occurrence. A withdrawal outcome specifically refers to a decision by the victim to withdraw their case; reasons for withdrawal were myriad. A no further action outcome was typically awarded when the case is no longer proceedable (i.e., for further investigation or referral to prosecution). This covered a large variety of circumstances, including but not limited to: Insufficient evidence available to verify the crime, inability to identify a suspect, and inability to make further contact with a complainant. Finally, a referral to CPS outcome refers to a decision by police officers to refer the case to the CPS for a formal charge. Unfortunately, in this study, it was not possible to code for outcomes beyond this point, for example, a CPS decision to take no further action or formally charge and proceed with the case to court.

Twenty-one cases had no coded outcome and were excluded from analysis. A further 51 cases were missing the victim's age at the time of the incident and were also excluded. The decision was also taken to exclude the small sample of male child victims (aged under 13 years, n = 36), in acknowledgement of the differential justice challenges experienced by victims of child sexual exploitation (CSE) and adult sexual assault (Grossman *et al.*, 2009). This approach is also in line with the legislative delineation in the UK in regards to rape, which differentiates between those under 13 ('Rape of a child under 13'; Section 5) and over 13 (Rape; Section 1).[4] This process left a sample of 122 "young adult and adult"[5]

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[4] The authors also acknowledge that, in the UK, there are further legislative delineations for those aged over 13, but under 16. However, in acknowledgement that cases involving victims aged over 13 are still classified under Section 1 ("Rape"), and that further exclusions would significantly compromise sample size, victims aged 14 years and over were included in the main sample.

[5] During analysis "young adult and adult" cases were further split into those with victims under- versus over-18 years of age. This is in acknowledgement of the further legislative delineations between cases involving victims aged *between* 14 and 17 years, and those aged 18 years and over, which, whilst both classified as Rape (under Section 1), can be subject to additional sections (e.g., Section 9). This decision was also made to reflect the more informal societal recognition of 18 years as the onset of adulthood, and the impact this may have on the progression of cases. A separate analysis exploring various age-related delineations, using a larger sample, is planned for the future.

male rape cases for analysis, which proceeds as follows. First, the data was examined descriptively to generate a profile of male-on-male rape cases in London, including eventual case outcome (during the police stage of investigation). Second, a series of bivariate multinomial logistic regressions was conducted to identify the case characteristics that increase or decrease the probability of different case outcomes.

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Results

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Numbers and percentages of cases showing each coded characteristic are shown in Tables 1 to 5. Values for frequency of missing data are also included, and, as shown, several variables have missing data values of over 20% and should be treated with extreme caution.

Case Outcomes and Characteristics

As Table 1 shows, case outcomes were fairly evenly distributed. Just over one-quarter of cases received an outcome of no crime (29%) or no further action (27%). A slightly lower proportion of cases were withdrawn by the victim (22%), and the same proportion of cases were referred by police to prosecutors (22%). These results suggest the majority of male young adult and adult victims of rape are likely to exit the criminal justice system as a result of police decision, and are unlikely to voluntarily withdraw once they have taken the initial decision to report.

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[Insert Table 1 about here]

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Tables 2-5 present descriptive data for the case characteristics. Analysis of victim characteristics revealed the following profile: young adult and adult male victims of rape were, on average, 28 years old at the time of victimisation (range 13 to 57 years; see Table 2), and 17% of the sample were aged under 18. A sizeable minority of male victims were recorded as having a mental health issue (27%). Only a small minority of male victims had previously reported a crime (17%) or made a previous false report of rape (10%).

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[Insert Table 2 about here]

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Suspects were, on average, 37 years old at the time of the offence (range 13 to 78): 9 years older than the average age of victims in this study. Consistent with the older average age of suspects, a smaller proportion of suspects were aged under 18 at the time of the incident (5%). Only a small proportion of suspects were recorded as having mental health issues (6%) and they were, more often than not, known to the victim (52% of suspects were known to the victim; see Table 3).

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[Insert Table 3 about here]

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Analysis of offence characteristics showed that rape involving male victims was rarely: related to domestic violence (7%), involved a weapon (8%), or involved more than one perpetrator (15%). Offences predominantly occurred in a known location (88%), which was typically the victim or suspect's address (61%). Prior to the incident, 43% of victims had voluntarily consumed alcohol and 24% had voluntarily consumed drugs. A small minority of victims (11%) claimed they had been drugged during the incident. Around one-quarter of suspects had consumed alcohol and/or drugs

prior to the incident. Most victims had no injuries to report (75%), and, of those who did, the majority of these injuries were recorded as minor (see Table 4).

[Insert Table 4 about here]

Procedurally, and in terms of reporting behaviour, half of male victims reported within 24 hours of the incident and half reported after 24 hours. Most rapes were reported directly by the victim (see Table 5). Following the incident, around one quarter of male victims (27%) were administered an early evidence kit (EEK) and attended a Haven centre (25%).[6] A sizeable minority of men received a medical exam following the incident (38%). In a small proportion of cases the victim was unsure if the incident had occurred (21%), the suspect denied the incident occurred (18%), and the suspect alleged the victim gave consent (13%). In the majority of cases, the suspect was identified.

[Insert Table 5 about here]

Relationships between Characteristics and Outcomes

To explore the relationship between case characteristics and case outcome, bivariate multinomial logistic regressions were conducted between each case characteristic and each case outcome (see Table 6). Only those characteristics with less than 15% missing values were eligible for analysis (in order to have adequate power for analysis). Submission to Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) was chosen as the reference category, meaning the results can be interpreted as whether case characteristics predict an outcome of no crime, victim withdrawal and police no further action (NFA) *compared to* CPS submission.

Two victim characteristics significantly predicted case outcomes. First, victims who were aged under 18 years old at the time of the incident had significantly lower odds of no crime, withdrawal, and police NFA, compared to CPS submission. Second, victims who were recorded as having a mental health issue had significantly higher odds of receiving a no crime outcome, compared to CPS submission. If the victim had previously made a false allegation of rape, the odds of receiving a no crime outcome was also higher, but this relationship was only significant at the p<.10 level. The only suspect characteristic that was eligible for analysis – whether or not the suspect was known to the victim – did not significantly predicted any of the case outcomes.

[Insert Table 6 about here]

Two offence characteristics – relating to the victim and suspect's drug use – significantly predicted case outcomes. First, victims who had voluntarily taken drugs prior to the incident had significantly higher odds of no crime, compared to CPS submission. In contrast, suspects who had taken drugs prior to the incident had significantly lower odds of no crime. Five more results were significant at the p<.10 level: victim voluntary consumption of alcohol increased the odds of no crime, withdrawal, and police NFA; victim voluntary drug use increased the odds of withdrawal; and suspect

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[6] Sexual Assault Referral Centres (SARCs) are referred to as Haven Centres in the London area.

drug use decreased the odds of police NFA. Only one procedural characteristic predicted case outcomes: if the suspect was identified, the odds of no crime, withdrawal, and police NFA were significantly lower.

Discussion

Using real case data, this study presented a profile of male-on-male young adult and adult rape cases in London and explored relationships between case characteristics and case outcomes. It addresses a sizeable gap in the literature on male rape victims and their experiences through the criminal justice process. Below, the main findings are discussed and, where possible, detail salient divergences and similarities with cases involving female victims.[7] The implications of the current findings for policy and training, and the opportunities to raise awareness of barriers and facilitators to case progression among police, prosecutors, and professionals working with these victims (within the context of the historical nature of the data) are discussed. Importantly, the findings of this study provide useful context on the nature and experiences of male victims of rape prior to 2012 and Operation Yewtree.

In the current sample, around 1 in 5 male victims withdrew their allegation of rape. Interestingly, the rate of withdrawal for male victims is substantially lower than the rate for female victims over a similar time period (~50% withdrawal rate; Hohl and Stanko 2015; Kelly, Lovett and Regan 2005; Lea *et al.* 2003). Researchers have argued there are significant gender-role deliberations for men, along with specific cultural, social, and emotional barriers, that may hinder them from coming forward to police (Badenoch, 2015). One explanation for the lower withdrawal rate for male victims could be that, once men have overcome difficult initial hurdles to reporting (above and beyond those experienced by women), they may be more likely to engage with the criminal justice process. Moreover, Jamel et al. (2008) offer further reasons for men's commitment to the justice process. For example, a strong desire for retribution, reporting acting as a gateway to access support services, and that the formal investigation of an incident validated their experience as being against the law (Jamel et al., 2008). Clearly further research in this area is required.

Of the cases not withdrawn by the victim, a police decision to no-crime accounted for 37% of case outcomes, and a police decision to take no further action accounted for 35%. The rate of no crimes in the current sample is substantially higher than the rate for female rape victims (e.g. 13%; Hohl and Stanko 2015; 7-12%; (Office for National Statistics, 2018a).[8] In contrast, the rate of police no further action is lower than trends in male-on-female rape cases (Hohl & Stanko, 2015). The remaining 28% of cases not withdrawn by the victim were referred on to prosecutors (compared to 37% in Hohl and Stanko 2015). Overall, the results suggest young adult and adult male victims are more likely than

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[7] Hohl and Stanko (2015) is our principal point of comparison because their data was gathered in the same geographic area using a similar procedure (the male victims from 2012 in our sample are from the same dataset as their female sample). However, it is important to note that their dataset includes child victims (8% of their sample was aged less than 13 years old). The comparisons should therefore be interpreted with caution.

[8] Note that Hohl and Stanko's sample includes cases in which the police investigation is ongoing. Percentages were recalculated excluding these cases.

female victims to voluntarily remain within the criminal justice process and that, although attrition avenues may differ, a similar (though slightly lower) percentage of cases reach prosecution.

In respect of victim characteristics, several comparisons can be made with data available on female victims. Male victims in our sample had a higher rate of poor mental health (33%) compared to female victims (e.g. 22%; Hohl and Stanko 2015), and the rate of previous false reports was also higher (10% for male cases compared to 4% of female cases; Hohl and Stanko 2015). Other characteristics lack a direct comparison. However, the prevalence of previous victimisation of any crime among male victims (17%) compared to the prevalence of previous victimisation of rape specifically among female victims (16%; Hohl and Stanko 2015) suggest a lower vulnerability to victimisation among male rape victims: females' previous victimisation of rape alone was almost identical to male victimisation of *any crime* whatsoever. Furthermore, previous victimisation in our sample was in line with the general population of men in the UK (e.g. 15% of men report being the victim crime; Office for National Statistics (2018c). These findings suggest some exacerbated vulnerabilities among male victims (e.g. mental health), but it does not appear that rape fits within a broader ecology of heightened vulnerability to victimisation for male victims in our sample.

Fewer comparisons of suspect characteristics are available between cases involving male and female victims; however, 48% of suspects in the current sample were strangers to the victim, compared to 29% in female cases (Hohl and Stanko 2015).[9] These findings could be due to the inclusion of children in Hohl and Stanko's study (see footnote 7), however literature exploring male sexual practices provide potential sex-specific explanations for the prevalence of anonymity within cases of rape. For example, even though victim sexuality was not available in this data set and is infrequently recorded by officers or disclosed by victims, in sub-samples of victims who identify as men who have sex with men (MSM) and homosexual, two practices associated with these groups may explain the results. First, anonymous sexual encounters between consenting male participants are frequent in these communities and may be accompanied by risks associated with anonymity and limited knowledge of the sexual partner (Tewksbury, 2008). Second, the rise of the so-called 'chem-sex parties' phenomenon (Drugscope, 2014; Kirby & Thornber-Dunwell, 2013; Stuart, 2013) has provided additional context for cases involving male victims unknown to their perpetrator. Incidentally, the risks outlined above may also apply to subsamples of self-identifying straight men who have sex with men (SMSM) or indeed experimenting straight men who do not identify in this way, who may encounter similar risk factors through their sexual interactions with strangers. However, more detailed work on these issues is clearly warranted, and, at present, these explanations remain largely speculative.

Turning to the broader context within which the offence has occurred, many of the figures for young adult and adult male cases can be compared to those available for female cases. For example, 43% of male cases involved a victim

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[9] This includes both stranger 1 (suspect completely unknown to victim) and stranger 2 (suspect known to victim for less than 24 hours) classifications

who had voluntarily consumed alcohol, which is higher than the 30% of female victims who did the same (Hohl & Stanko, 2015). Our figure is also slightly higher than the 38% of rape victims over 16 years old who reported being under the influence of alcohol identified by the Office for National Statistics (2018a). Male victims were also more likely to claim they had been drugged during the incident compared to female victims (11% vs. 5%), and the rape was more likely to have occurred in a public place (33% vs. 24%; Hohl and Stanko 2015). In contrast, the percentage of cases where the victim reported injuries (23% vs. 25%) and stated the rape involved a weapon (8% vs. 5%) were similar to data on female rape cases. Again, explanations for these results are speculative, but could again result from sexual practices synonymous with the communities outlined above.

Some offence characteristics lack direct comparisons to female cases but can instead be compared to national survey data. For example, 24% of male victims self-reported voluntary consumption of drugs, which is substantially higher than the 2% of victims over the age of 16 who reported having taken drugs and the 6% who reported being a victim of drug facilitated rape (Office for National Statistics, 2018a). Moreover, suspects reported being under the influence of alcohol or drugs in approximately one in every four male cases (26% and 24%, respectively). These values represent substantially lower and higher figures, respectively, than the 38% of victims over age 16 who reported a suspect consuming alcohol, and the 8% who reported a suspect under the influence of drugs (Office for National Statistics, 2018a). Such comparisons would suggest that substance use may be more common in cases of male rape, perhaps alluding to unique risk factors associated with these offences, and associated contexts (i.e., chem-sex). Moreover, recent publicity surrounding the Reynhard Sinaga case has highlighted the role illegal substances play in male rape cases, and the rise of drug-facilitated sexual assault against men (DFSA; Wise, 2020), including where men may voluntarily take an illegal substance, and subsequently become the victim of sexual assault.

Finally, when assessing procedural elements of young adult and adult male rape cases, some meaningful points of comparison are available. Similarities with female rape cases include: the identification of a suspect(s) (62% in male versus 70% in female cases); attendance at a Haven after the incident (25% in male cases versus 28% in female cases); and the administration of an Early Evidence Kit (EEK) (27% compared to 33% in female cases; Hohl and Stanko 2015). These results encouragingly suggest that some service provision is at least equally accessible to male and female victims (i.e. Havens). Other characteristics showed notable differences. For example, half of young adult and adult male victims reported their rape on the same day it occurred (within 24 hours), which is substantially higher than the 31% of female victims who reported in the same period (Hohl & Stanko, 2015). This is a particularly interesting finding, given the unique challenges and barriers to reporting for male victims that have been identified in previous literature (Abdullah-Khan, 2008; Lees, 1997; Weiss, 2010).

This study also investigated the relationship between case characteristics and case outcomes. Younger victims were significantly more likely to have their case referred for prosecution than older victims. Rape allegations made by

people under 18 are more likely to bring about a visceral public, institutional, media, and governmental response (Davidson, 2008), which might prompt a push for prosecution. Furthermore, issues surrounding consent are much more clearly defined when the victim is under age, which may have protected against attrition in the current sample. Male victims who were recorded as having mental health issues were significantly more likely to have their cases no-crimed. Poor mental health may compromise victim credibility (demonstrating extra-legal challenges) and may also affect the construction of a clear timeline of events (demonstrating legal challenges).[10] Victims who were recorded as having previously made a false allegation of rape were also more likely to have their cases no-crimed (although this finding was only significant at the p<.10 level). Unfortunately, the legitimacy of the previous false report claim was not assessable; however, in the context of more lenient no-criming rules in operation at the time these cases were recorded (see footnote 10), it is possible police officers may have used the existence of a previous 'false' allegation to influence and/or guide their decision to no-crime the most recent incident. Indeed, there is a broader debate about the nature and extent of false allegations, specifically as it applies to rape (see Kelly 2010 and Rumney 2008 for an examination of legal definitions and recording practices). It may also be the case, of course, that such allegations were proven to be false, and that they formed part of a string of such allegations.

Victim and suspect substance use prior to the incident were also significantly related to case outcomes. Notably, in cases where the victim had voluntarily taken drugs, no crime decisions were significantly more likely. Consumption of illicit drugs may impact on rape cases through both legal and extra-legal means. Legally, illicit substances may have a deleterious effect on recall of victim testimony, while extra-legally, a victim's voluntary consumption of illegal substances increases perceived responsibility (Finch & Munro, 2006; Girard & Senn, 2008). Although not examined in police populations or for male victims specifically, there is evidence of blame attribution in victims who are intoxicated by illicit substances, such as Ecstasy (Castello, Croomer, Stillwell, & Cate, 2006), Lysergic Acid Diethylamide (LSD) (Wenger & Bornstein, 2006), and Marijuana (Qi, Starfelt, & White, 2016). The implications of this attribution are that victims remain unacknowledged (Littleton, Rhatigan, & Axsom, 2007), receive adverse reactions to their disclosure (Filipas & Ullman, 2001), and experience secondary victimisation during the criminal justice process (Campbell & Raja, 1999). As examined above in relation to victim-perpetrator relationship, there may also be negative associations and prejudices against male members of various communities (e.g., LGBTQ+, and the consumption of alcohol and drugs as representative of a "gay lifestyle"). This is no more exemplified than in the case of chem-sex parties (as discussed above; Drugscope 2014; Stuart 2013; Kirby and Thornber-Dunwell 2013), where the "blurred lines of consent" that are reported

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[10] As noted in footnote 3, rules for application of the "no crime' outcome were changed after this data was collected. Extra-legal factors relating to victim credibility may therefore have been one factor that police used to make judgements about the veracity of the claim. It may also have been that cases involving these factors were harder to progress as crimes due to uncertain factual timelines (e.g., affected by victim mental health issues).

to accompany interactions in this context (Bourne *et al.*, 2015) may prove both legally and extra-legally influential in no-criming decisions. Interestingly, although victim consumption of drugs made no crime decisions more likely, suspect drug use showed the opposite pattern: cases in which the suspect had consumed drugs were significantly more likely to be referred for prosecution. It could be that the very factors that decrease a rape complainant's credibility as a victim, increase a suspect's credibility as a perpetrator.

Overall, police decisions to proceed with a case seem to be most influenced by factors that influence perceptions of victim credibility and compromise the construction of evidentially sound cases (e.g. mental ill-health, drug use, previous false report). These findings may represent what Frohmann (1997) termed 'downstream orientation', whereby police officers are reluctant to progress 'weak' cases to prosecutors, based on their own judgements of the likelihood of conviction: an argument supported by previous observations regarding both the legal and 'extra-legal' influence of these factors in literature examining female cases (e.g., Hohl & Stanko, 2015). Findings around substance use are particularly important considering the burgeoning literature around the role both legal and illegal substances play in sexual interactions between men belonging to various communities, and the mythologies and prejudices associated with such practices. Indeed, understanding the factors that lead to attrition within the criminal process – particularly the factors that influence police decisions not to take forward a case – have important implications for the development of training and awareness packages to improve officer responses, and ultimately lead to more prosecutions and greater victim satisfaction with the investigative process (which can operate in a mutually exclusive fashion). The results from this study suggest that, at least at the time these offences were reported and investigated, that greater awareness within officer training of characteristics representative of male cases, and those which may disproportionately effect case investigation, would be beneficial.

There are a number of important limitations to this study. First, all cases coded for this study were reported to, and recorded by, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), representing only 1 of the UK's 43 forces. The MPS also face several unique challenges based on their size and geography, such as greater ethnic diversity and demographic variation within London, population size and density, and the volume of reported cases. Future research should, therefore, seek to provide support for the generalisability of these findings by examining cases from other forces, and other countries.

Second, there are a number of constraints in relation to the dataset, which primarily result from the initial coding practices utilised, and variations therein, during data collection by MPS across several years. As outlined above, data from this study was produced through an amalgamation by the authors of several independent data sets, produced as part of annual rape case reviews by MPS. This process was adopted as no individual year had provided a sufficient sample of male cases for analysis (as initial coding targets were driven by the overall number of cases for analysis, rather than relevant sub-samples). The use of different coding frameworks across years, and a lack of male cases within each annual sample, thus result in a low overall sample size and high levels of missing data. Moreover, the authors of this study had no direct input over the characteristics available for coding, the robustness of inter-rater reliability measures, or the

application of the coding framework itself, which again limits the rigour of this research. Furthermore, these sample size limitations made it impractical to explore the specific profile and pathways of male child victims through the criminal justice process which is particularly disappointing when acknowledging that childhood sexual exploitation of boys is still an under-researched area, particularly in relation to the literature available on girls (Moxley-Goldsmith, 2005). Interactions between variables were also not assessed for reasons relating to sample size. However, several important caveats must be made. First, whilst many variables had a high level of missing data, parameters were put in place during analyses to ensure that only characteristics with a robust sample were included in regression models. Second, a certain level of missing data must always be anticipated when coding data from systems that are not designed for data capture (like the CRIS system utilised by the MPS). Third, we are clear that this study is specifically designed to provide preliminary inquiry into this issue, and further analysis on more robust data sets relating to male rape cases is most certainly required.

A further limitation is that the data available was limited to the police investigation phase. Further research should seek to capture prosecutorial outcomes and examine the role of case characteristics on trajectories within the Crown Prosecution Service, in order to understand decision-making within the CPS on male cases and to shed light on the troublingly low conviction levels for all rape cases in the UK (Home Office, 2019). Finally, the data represents only cases between the years 2005 and 2012, and it could be argued that the data set is thus 'dated' and potentially even irrelevant. Indeed, several significant reforms to case classification (i.e., the parameters for awarding a 'No Crime' outcome), high profile operations (e.g., Yewtree), and revisions to police training, resulting from both commissioned reviews (Angiolini, 2015) and recent UK Police research (Hine & Murphy, 2017, 2019; Murphy & Hine, 2019), have been implemented since 2012. However, this study currently represents the *only* evaluation of the trajectories and outcomes of male rape cases in the UK, and thus provides a useful base upon which future research can build. To that end, a more comprehensive, up-to-date coding of cases (notably post-2012 and Operation Yewtree) should be urgently conducted to provide a richer, more contemporaneous picture of the male victim experience to complement the current study.

Conclusion

This study provides a useful, historical insight into the profile and trajectories of male-on-male rape cases in London. It also furthers our understanding of the case characteristics that impact attrition, identifying useful avenues for enhanced awareness and training for police forces, and throughout the criminal justice system. Regrettably, the usefulness of the data presented in this study is somewhat hampered by the methodological limitations outlined above. Therefore, alongside the preliminary findings presented, this study principally represents a 'call to arms' for further research and inquiry in this area, as more thorough and methodologically rigorous examinations of this previously neglected group are clearly desperately needed. Such research should focus strongly on providing continuity and thoroughness of data capture

and coding, as both are crucial to understanding the experiences of victims of crime, as well as enabling assessment of changes in policy and practice. Indeed, it is only by improving the quantity and quality of research into male rape case attrition, that key avenues for understanding and development can be identified, and that victims' experiences and access to justice can be improved. This study provides one of the first steps in this important process.

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Table 1. Descriptive data for Case Outcomes

Outcome	*N*	%	% not withdrawn
No crime	35	28.7	
Case withdrawn by victim	27	22.1	36.8
No further action	33	27.0	34.7
Referral to Crown Prosecution Service	27	22.1	28.4

Table 2. Descriptive data for Victim Characteristics

Case Characteristic	Yes N (%)	No N (%)	Missing data N (% total sample)
Age at time of incident	*N* = 122, M = 27.57, SD = 10.90, min = 13, max = 57		0 (0.0)
Age under 18 at time of incident	21 (17.2)	101 (82.8)	0 (0.0)
Mental health issues[1]	40 (33.1)	81 (66.9)	1 (0.8)
Previously reported (any crime)	15 (16.9)	74 (83.1)	33 (27.0)
Previously made a false report[2]	12 (10.0)	108 (90.0)	2 (1.6)

[1]This variable was coded if there was information relevant to a mental health issue within the case file, or the dedicated mental health field in the system had been 'flagged'.
[2]This variable was coded if it was noted within the case file that a previous false report had been made. This could have been from a statement made by an officer that this had been determined (either through asking the complainant or from their own case file crosscheck) or an admission by the complainant themselves in interview. It was not determined by the coders performing case file crosschecking.

Table 3. Descriptive data for Suspect Characteristics

Case Characteristic	Yes N (%)	No N (%)	Missing data N (% total sample)
Age at time of incident	*N* = 87, M = 37.25, SD = 14.25, min = 13, max = 70		35 (28.7)
Age under 18 at time of incident	4 (4.6)	83 (95.4)	35 (28.7)
Mental health issues	6 (6.0)	94 (94.0)	22 (18.0)
Suspect known to victim	61 (51.7)	57 (48.3)	4 (3.3)

Table 4. Descriptive data for Offence Characteristics

Case Characteristic	Yes N (%)	No N (%)		Missing data N (% total sample)
Victim voluntarily consumed alcohol	53 (43.4)	69 (56.6)		0 (0.0)
Victim voluntarily consumed drugs	28 (23.7)	90 (76.3)		4 (3.3)
Victim claims drugged by suspect	11 (10.7)	92 (89.3)		19 (15.6)
Suspect voluntarily consumed alcohol	28 (25.7)	81 (74.3)		13 (10.7)
Suspect voluntarily consumed drugs	27 (24.1)	85 (75.9)		10 (8.2)
Level of injuries	None: 61 (77.2)	Minor: 15 (19.0)	Moderate: 3 (3.8)	43 (35.2)
Injury reported	18 (22.8)	61 (77.2)		43 (35.2)
Related to domestic violence	7 (6.6)	99 (93.4)		16 (13.1)
Group Attack	Group: 18 (15.1)	Single: 101 (84.9)		3 (2.5)
Weapon Used	9 (7.6)	110 (92.4)		3 (2.5)
Location Known	105 (87.5)	15 (12.5)		2 (1.6)
Location (victim vs. suspect)	Victim Address: 34 (34.0)	Suspect Address: 27 (27.0)	Other: 39 (39.0)	22 (18.0)
Venue (domestic vs. public)	Domestic: 52 (59.1)	Public: 29 (33.0)	Other: 7 (8.0)	34 (27.9)

Table 5. Descriptive data for Procedural Characteristics

Case Characteristic	Yes N (%)	No N (%)	Missing data N (% total sample)
Time taken to report (less than vs. more than 1 day)	< a day: 35 (50.0)	> a day: 35 (50.0)	52 (42.6)
How reported	Direct: 96 (90.6)	Indirect: 10 (9.4)	16 (13.1)
Victim unsure if incident occurred	18 (21.2)	67 (78.8)	37 (30.3)
Victim administered Early Evidence Kit (EEK)	21 (26.6)	58 (73.4)	43 (35.2)
Victim attended Haven	30 (24.6)	92 (75.4)	0 (0.0)
Victim received a medical exam	33 (37.5)	55 (62.5)	34 (27.9)
Suspect identified	75 (62.0)	46 (38.0)	1 (0.8)
Suspect alleges victim gave consent	13 (13.4)	84 (86.6)	25 (20.5)
Suspect denies incident occurred	17 (17.9)	78 (82.1)	27 (22.1)

Table 6. Bivariate multinomial logistic regressions predicting case outcome

| | | **No Crime** | | | | **Victim Withdrawal** | | | | **No Further Action** | | | |
Characteristic	N	B (SE)	Wald	Odds Ratio	95% CI	B (SE)	Wald	Odds Ratio	95% CI	B (SE)	Wald	Odds Ratio	95% CI
Victim under 18 years	122	-3.15 (1.09)**	8.40	0.04	[0.01, 0.36]	-1.38 (0.67)*	4.23	0.25	[0.07, 0.94]	-1.35 (0.62)*	4.67	0.26	[0.08, 0.88]
Victim mental health	121	1.75 (0.64)**	7.44	5.75	[1.64, 20.21]	1.06 (0.68)	2.42	2.88	[0.76, 10.87]	0.92 (0.66)	1.92	2.50	[0.68, 9.13]
Victim previous false report	120	2.08 (1.10)±	3.60	8.00	[0.93, 68.59]	0.73 (1.26)	0.34	2.08	[0.18, 24.41]	-0.18 (1.44)	0.02	0.84	[0.05, 14.08]
Suspect known to victim	118	-0.29 (0.53)	0.31	0.75	[0.27, 2.10]	-0.77 (0.57)	1.86	0.46	[0.15, 1.40]	-0.78 (0.54)	2.14	0.46	[0.16, 1.31]
Victim consumed alcohol	122	0.99 (0.55)±	3.21	2.70	[0.91, 7.80]	0.98 (0.58)±	2.79	2.65	[0.84, 8.34]	0.99 (0.56)±	3.11	2.69	[0.90, 8.07]
Victim consumed drugs	118	1.88 (0.82)*	5.26	6.57	[1.31, 32.86]	1.58 (0.85)±	3.45	4.84	[0.92, 25.58]	0.94 (0.86)	1.18	2.56	[0.47, 13.91]
Suspect consumed alcohol	109	-0.59 (0.71)	0.68	0.56	[0.14, 2.25]	0.26 (0.64)	0.16	1.30	[0.37, 4.58]	0.66 (0.60)	1.20	1.93	[0.60, 6.26]
Suspect consumed drugs	112	-1.55 (0.73)*	4.49	0.21	[0.05, 0.89]	-0.11 (0.57)	0.03	0.90	[0.29, 2.77]	-1.15 (0.63)±	3.37	0.32	[0.09, 1.08]
Single vs. group attack	119	0.58 (0.76)	0.57	1.78	[0.40, 7.90]	0.38 (0.82)	0.21	1.46	[0.29, 7.24]	0.36 (0.78)	0.21	1.43	[0.31, 6.61]
Weapon used	119	-0.94 (1.25)	0.56	0.39	[0.03, 4.56]	0.78 (0.91)	0.72	2.17	[0.36, 13.01]	-0.18 (1.04)	0.03	0.83	[0.11, 6.35]
Victim attended Haven	122	-0.52 (0.60)	0.76	0.59	[0.18, 1.91]	-0.39 (0.63)	0.38	0.68	[0.20, 2.32]	-0.12 (0.58)	0.04	0.89	[0.29, 2.75]
Reported directly by victim	106	-1.12 (1.15)	1.54	0.33	[0.03, 3.12]	-1.24 (1.19)	1.08	0.29	[0.03, 3.01]	-0.69 (1.26)	0.30	0.50	[0.04, 5.91]
Suspect identified	121	-2.17 (0.81)**	7.11	0.11	[0.02, 0.56]	-2.75 (0.83)**	10.95	0.06	[0.01, 0.33]	-2.34 (0.81)**	8.29	0.01	[0.01, 0.47]

± = $p < .10$, * = $p < 0.05$, ** = $p < 0.01$

Note: submission to Crown Prosecution Service was the reference outcome in each bivariate regression (N = Total cases minus missing data)

Note: the variables 'related to domestic violence' and 'location known' were excluded because one of the cell counts = 0.