

**The effect of denial of the victim arguments on the attribution of blame to the suspect during a simulated investigative interview in a control and coercion context**

Alina Schmuck

Department of Conflict, Risk and Safety, University of Twente

S1926179

Supervisor: Dr. Steven Watson

2nd Supervisor: Dr. Sven Zebel

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### Abstract

To avoid prosecution, suspects try to manipulate others using influencing behaviours. Often used is the justification technique *Denial of the victim (DoV)*. It involves claims that the victim deserved any negative behaviour from the suspect due to their own provocations or faulty character. *DoV* arguments are expected to shift attributions of blame from the suspect. This proposal was tested and whether *DoV* arguments are more effective or not depending on whether the suspect's accusations against the victim are accurate or not. It was also tested if *DoV* affects judgements of suspect guilt, the severity of punishment, and empathy and sympathy towards the suspect. Additional exploratory analyses were conducted to test whether ambivalent sexist views or a belief in a just world moderate any relationships between the independent and dependent variables.

Participants ( $N = 194$ ) completed an online experiment in which they were presented a case description of a control and coercion offence that indicated that the alleged victim either engaged in negative behaviour (infidelity), did not engage in negative behaviour, or where no information about the victim's past behaviour was provided. They were further given a script of an investigative interview with the alleged suspect. The suspect interview behaviour was manipulated as the suspect responded with either *DoV* arguments or *No comment*.

Results showed that *DoV* arguments did not affect the attribution of blame to the suspect, nor the perceived empathy and sympathy the recipients have towards the suspect. *DoV* did also not affect guilt judgements. Participants recommended stronger punishment when the suspect's accusations about the victim are false. It was concluded that *DoV* arguments are not effective in shifting blame from the suspect.

*Keywords:* control and coercion, attribution theory, investigative interviewing, influence behaviours, suspect behaviours, denial of victim

## **Introduction**

In 2015, England and Wales criminalized non-physical abuse for the first time as they officially declared controlling and coercive behaviours in intimate or family relationships to be a crime (“Serious Crime Act,” 2015). Controlling behaviour, as defined in the British legislation, is “a range of acts designed to make a person subordinate and/or dependent by isolating them from sources of support, exploiting their resources and capacities for personal gain, depriving them of the means needed for independence, resistance and escape and regulating their everyday behaviour”. Coercive behaviour, on the other hand, is defined as “an act or a pattern of acts of assault, threats, humiliation and intimidation or other abuse that is used to harm, punish, or frighten their victim” (The Crown Prosecution Service., 2017). This study will particularly focus on suspects accused of coercive control and their use of denial of the victim arguments during investigative interviews with the aim to shift attributions of blame from themselves.

### **The Impact and Prevalence of Coercive Control**

The necessity of introducing this new offense becomes evident when one considers the plight of its victims. As previous research in the field of trauma revealed, severe and enduring traumatic reactions to domestic violence can occur even when physical violence is absent (Bishop & Bettinson, 2018). This was also addressed by Williamson (2010) who found that the symptoms many victims of domestic abuse experience are widespread and range from low self-esteem and anxiety to self-harm. Yet, although not every victim of psychological abuse necessarily develops traumatic reactions, many victims experience different forms of post-traumatic stress symptoms, such as complex PTSD, resulting from repeated exposure to extreme external events (Bishop & Bettinson, 2018). These findings emphasize the harmful nature of controlling and coercive behaviours and the effect they can have on a person's physical and psychological health.

Since the introduction of the new law, reports of controlling and coercive behaviours in intimate or family relationships are increasing in the United Kingdom. Within a one-year time frame, from March 2019 to March 2020, the police recorded a total of 24,856 offences of C&C behaviours in intimate relationships in the UK. Compared to the previous year, this is an increase of 49% which further shows that this law uncovered an important gap in the previous legislation which is now being addressed (Stripe, 2020). This development might also be a response to the new juridical possibility to now receive protection which, for the first time, encouraged more women to report crimes of coercive control. Furthermore, the ongoing outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic and the accompanying lockdown measures are suggested to further increase cases of coercive control (Smyth et al., 2021). Additionally, studies indicated that the experiences of this type of offense changed during 2020. Since February 2020, for instance, 47% of women who have experienced coercive control also reported an increase in its frequency or severity (Smyth et al., 2021).

### **The Difficulty of Prosecuting Control and Coercive Offences**

Nonetheless, patterns of harassment within an intimate relationship remain difficult to prosecute. One reason for this is that victims of control and coercion rarely contact the police to report domestic abuse but that they rather report offences that are of physical nature. In fact, property damage and common assault are found to be the most reported offences (Barlow et al., 2020). Yet even cases that deal with physical or sexual violence often times do not get reported but remain hidden. Being ashamed or embarrassed by one's powerlessness, the desire to keep an illusion of a perfect life to prevent judgement or public exposure are just a few of the reasons for non-reporting (Thaggard & Montayre, 2019).

Barlow et al. (2020) highlight another factor that adds to the difficulty of persecution. In their study, they stated that police officers are often more experienced in responding to incidents of physical violence rather than to patterns of abusive behaviour indicative of control or coercion. The failure to identify those patterns, however, might be the source of

misjudgement and can lead to missing important evidential opportunities that could otherwise identify signs of controlling and coercive behaviour. Thus, it comes as no surprise that the focus of many investigations lays on the gathering of evidence in terms of photos of any assault and the reports of the victims on their injuries rather than looking into signs of controlling and coercive behaviour. These can often be found in many of the victim's descriptions but are usually neglected as "one word against each other" and labelled as not verifiable or weak evidence (Barlow et al., 2020).

### **Suspect Interview Behaviour and their Use of Neutralizations**

With this absence of physical evidence, the gathering of information through investigative interviewing becomes especially important. Being successful in the process of gathering evidence can be challenging though considering that many suspects accused of controlling and coercive crimes try to avoid self-incrimination and make use of manipulative influence behaviours during investigative interviews. Many of these behaviours are performed with the aim of shifting blame to the victim or excusing one's own behaviour (Watson et al., 2018). The existing influence behaviours are, however, not limited to these but range from denials to emotional influences aimed to have the investigator sympathize with them. To get a more detailed look at the various tactics suspects use, Watson et al. (2018) developed a taxonomy of different suspect behaviours that could affect the interviewer's perception of the evidence, other investigation relevant individuals such as victims or witnesses and, consequently, also how the crime is perceived. Based on actual control and coercion cases, their analysis on interview transcripts identified that suspects use up to 18 behaviours aimed at influencing the interviewer.

Among these different behaviours, justification techniques were among the most prevalent. Justifications are used by suspects with the aim of minimizing any negative attributions that are made about them by proposing non-internal causes of their wrongful behaviour (Watson et al., 2018). Justifications are derived from the Neutralization Theory

which was formulated by Sykes and Matza (1957). The theory explains that delinquents coast between illegal and legal behaviours and that juvenile delinquents share the same value system as other members of society (Sykes and Matza, 1957). With the use of neutralization techniques, these juvenile delinquents try to minimize their guilt and justify their behaviour when they violate this value system. When performing an action that does not meet society's standard but rather contradicts it, criminals relativize their actions to prevent their self-image from being damaged (Kriminologie, 2021; Sykes & Matza, 2017). In other words, neutralisation techniques are psychological reflexes that maintain the criminal's positive self-image and fundamental views of society.

### **Denial of the Victim Arguments and the Suspects' attempt to shift Attributions**

Based on the study of Watson et al. (2018), the most used justification technique by suspects of control and coercion was called *denial of the victim*. Here, the suspect tries to imply that the victim deserved or caused the suspect's negative behaviour due to their actions or bad character (Watson et al., 2018). A suspect justifying the installation of a tracking app on their partner's phone because of that partner's past infidelity, as a means to now be able to know if their partner is where they claim they are, is just one of many examples of this technique. Thus, even when the offender is ready to admit to their destructive behaviour, they try to manipulate the situation in a way that they denigrate the victim's character and imply that they are not worthy of help or that the victim is personally responsible for the negative behaviours that are directed at them, not the suspect.

The way individuals assign responsibility to actors within a scenario is further related to the attribution theory which is a well-known basis for investigating how victims of crimes are perceived (Grubb & Turner, 2012). During the process of attributing blame, people differentiate between internal and external attribution (Heider, 1958). The former indicates that the individual himself is responsible for the situation due to whom they are as a person and what they believe in whereas the latter indicates that external circumstances led to the situation

(Heider, 1958). Applying this theory to the use of denial of the victim arguments, it could be argued that the suspects' attempts to shift responsibility from themselves might elicit a change in people's perception. As noted by Grubb and Turner (2012) observers can also be biased when interpreting scenarios. Therefore, people might utilize external instead of internal attribution and place more emphasis on the things the suspect claims to suffer from, such as the victim's negative behaviour, and are led to believe that the suspect's actions are due to circumstances rather than who they are as a person. In other words, it is argued that denial of the victim arguments aid the suspect to shift attributions of blame away from themselves and this assumption will be investigated in this paper.

Another concern is that denial of the victim might not only lead people to assign blame to the wrong individuals but that they also lead people to suggest reduced punishment for offenders and to a failure to recognize their guilt. As the name suggests, influencing behaviours like justifications can influence the interviewer and lead the investigations in the wrong direction. Yet, the detection of these behaviours is of importance as the judgments that are being made during the suspect interviews are a crucial part of law enforcement (Meissner & Kassin, 2002). When failing to detect influencing behaviours like denial of the victim, the police not only fail to grasp the seriousness of the victim's situation but also enable the suspect to get away with their controlling and coercive actions. This further relates to the previously mentioned "he said, she said" issue which might lead the police to conclude that it is best to put the case to rest instead of giving the offender the rightful punishment. This would, in turn, even benefit the suspect as their overall aim is not only to shift attributions from them but also to avoid prosecution and to change the recipient's beliefs about guilt. Thus, denial of the victim arguments might serve as a mechanism used to facilitate that the victim is responsible for the negative actions of the suspect while at the same time making the suspect less guilty or at least reducing the severity of any punishment received.

## **Empathy and Sympathy toward Suspects using Denial of the Victim Arguments**

As Watson et al. (2018) argued, the intended effect of denial of the victim arguments appeared to be to shift attributions, but there are also other alternative mechanisms such as empathy that might explain how denial of the victim works. Although denial of the victim arguments are not known for eliciting empathetic reactions from the interviewer, the construct of empathy is very complex and appears to mean different things to different people (Jeffrey, 2016). According to Davis (1983), empathy is multidimensional and can be divided into being either cognitive or emotional. Cognitive empathy is described as the ability to take the other person's perspective whereas emotional empathy as the ability to experience and appreciate another's distress and emotions (Davis, 1983). During investigative interviews, the suspect is encouraged to talk and to provide an accurate account of the situation. The suspect, however, might not only withhold information but attempt to mislead the interviewer (Vrij et al., 2014). With the use of denial of the victim arguments, they might deceive the interviewer to shift blame from themselves and towards the victim. During this process, the interviewer might experience the suspect's distress himself and feels empathy towards the suspect. This might partly be based on the suspect's narrative skills as some suspects try to omit self-incriminating information or tell stories that are only close to the truth (Strömwall & Willén, 2011). Additionally, a recipient who, prior to being introduced to denial of the victim arguments, has also been given the information that the victim indulged in some of the negative behaviour they are accused of, might further increase feelings of empathy towards the suspect.

Another mechanism that might get triggered by denial of the victim is sympathy. Unlike empathy, sympathy is not about actually feeling another person's emotions, but rather about feeling sorrow and compassion for another person's fate (Schmitt & Clark, 2006). Thus, sympathy is an emotion that is evoked when realizing that something bad has happened to someone else (Jeffrey, 2016). Nonetheless, sympathy is often found to be used interchangeably with the concept of empathy despite them being separate concepts. Given that accusing one's

partner of infidelity is a commonly used example of denial of the victim, it can be argued that the use of such remarks could serve as a trigger for sympathy, as they highlight more strongly the distress experienced by the suspect. This is based on the assumption that the interviewer might get directed into thinking that the supposed victim did something bad to the suspect and make him sympathize with the suspect. Similar to empathy, the sympathy the recipient feels towards the suspect might further be increased when the suspect's account about the victim's behaviour is grounded in truth.

In sum, it is expected that denial of the victim arguments have an influence on how the suspect who is using them is perceived by the recipient. More specifically, it is anticipated that suspects who make use of such justifications, manipulate people to attribute less blame to them, to perceive them as less guilty and to sympathize and empathize more with the suspect.

### **Ambivalent Sexism and the Impact on Victim-Blaming**

An unbiased audience reflecting upon denial of victim arguments would most likely recognize that even suspect arguments that are grounded in truth do not change whether or not the suspect is guilty of the crime or not. However, until this day prejudicial and ambivalent views on women are present that shape the attitudes that especially men have towards women (Glick et al., 1997). Intending to explain the deep underlying prejudice that exists against women, Glick and Fiske (1996) introduced the Theory of Ambivalent Sexism. In their theory, they argue that sexism is multidimensional and differentiate between two sexist attitudes, namely hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Hostile sexism describes the attitude that women who refuse to act in traditional gender roles should be punished. Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, describes the attitude that women who act in traditionally feminine ways should be rewarded (Grubb & Turner, 2012). The influence hostile and benevolent sexism has on aspects such as victim-blame can be seen in multiple studies. Abrams et al. (2003), for example, showed that those who are high in benevolent sexism are more likely to blame the victim of acquaintance rape compared to those with low benevolent sexism. Furthermore, a

significant relationship between hostile sexism and rape proclivity was found indicating that hostile sexism is often used as a means to justify sexual violence (Abrams et al., 2003). Particularly for those who hold sexist views, denial of the victim arguments are likely to be more effective. This is suggested as these arguments directly tap into the narrative of hostile and benevolent sexism by portraying the victim as negative and their behaviour, especially when it involves around sexual activity, as a violation of gender norms.

There are, however, also other theories that help deepen the insights and reasons for victim-blaming. According to Luginbuhl and Mullin (1981), the factors with the strongest impact on victim-blaming are the victim's physical attractiveness, respectability, previous sexual activity, and the level of intoxication, clothing and resistance at the moment of the attack (e.g. rape). Other studies also support these findings and show that a woman who is, for instance, more sexually experienced is more likely to get blamed for being raped compared to a sexually inexperienced woman. Accordingly, people attribute more blame to the offender when he raped a virgin compared to a highly sexually experienced woman (Idisis & Edoute, 2017). These findings suggest that attributions of blame are expected to shift depending on the information that is given about the victim's behaviour.

### **The Belief in a Just World**

Another widely known theory is called *Belief in a Just World* and it states that the world is a fair place and that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get (Culda et al., 2018). Those who follow this belief are more likely to assign responsibility and blame to the victim as a means to justify what happened to them (Hafer & Begue, 2005). A suspect telling an investigator with a strong belief in a just world that, for instance, their girlfriend has been disloyal in the past could convince the detective that the victim deserved the control and coercive behaviour caused by their partner. Certainly, the suspect's accusation about the victim's negative behaviour should not make the offender's actions any less acceptable. It is, nonetheless, possible that the accuracy of the suspect's account plays a role in the credibility of

their justifications. In other words, accusations that are grounded in truth might magnify the effect of the denial of the victim arguments especially when the recipient of the denial of the victim arguments endorses a belief in a just world. For the world to remain a fair place, negative victim behaviour, as it is described in denial of the victim arguments, is expected to be punished by reciprocal behaviour. Those exhibiting this mindset might, thus, be more motivated to believe the denial of the victim arguments or even support the suspect's actions. Consequently, the offender himself might be seen as less guilty as high believers would be unwilling to punish someone when the victim deserved what happened to them.

All in all, by tapping into the suspect's narrative, sexism and the belief in a just world are expected to impact the perception of the suspect as well as the victim. Thus, the previously discussed aspects such as the suspect's attribution of blame or their guilt are likely to be reduced when the recipient endorses such beliefs. Further, especially those high in sexism or a strong belief in a just world might be more likely to perceive the suspect as more empathetic and sympathetic when he paints an undesirable picture of their victim.

Taken together, denial of the victim arguments are expected to help the suspect change people's perceptions in a way that is favourable to them. This assumption entails that the denigration of the victim's character potentially impacts the investigations by making the suspect appear less guilty and reducing the length of any prison sentence. Further, by empathizing the distress caused by the victim's negative behaviour, the suspect might be able to be perceived as more empathetic and sympathetic. Generally, it is hypothesised that suspects will get blamed less when they use denial of the victim arguments. If the arguments are not based on truth, however, it is expected that the suspect gets blamed more.

In an exploratory way, it will also be tested whether any of the above effects are stronger when the recipient of the suspect's denial of the victim arguments endorses a strong Belief in a Just World or scores high for Hostile or Benevolent Sexism.

The current study will explore the following hypotheses:

H1: Suspects who do not use denial of the victim arguments are more likely to be perceived as guilty than suspects who use denial of the victim arguments

H2: People will attribute less blame to the suspect when he uses Denial of the Victim arguments than when he does not use Denial of the Victim arguments.

H3: People perceive more empathy and sympathy for suspects who use Denial of the Victim arguments than for suspects who do not use Denial of the Victim arguments.

H4: People will attribute more blame towards the suspect, when the suspect's claims about the victim's behaviour prior to the offence are not true, than when they are true.

H5: People will assign a higher prison sentence to the suspect when he does not use Denial of the Victim arguments than when he uses Denial of the Victim arguments.

The following moderator hypotheses will be explored:

H6: People with a stronger belief in a just world, will perceive the suspect as less guilty when he uses Denial of the Victim arguments and when his claims about the victim's behaviour prior to the offence hold any truth to them.

H7: People with a stronger belief in a just world, will perceive lower levels of empathy and sympathy for the suspect when he uses Denial of the Victim arguments and when his claims about the victim's behaviour prior to the offence hold any truth to them.

H8: People with a weaker belief in a just world, will attribute more blame to the suspect when he uses Denial of the Victim arguments and when his claims about the victim's behaviour prior to the offence do not hold any truth to them.

H9: People who hold sexist beliefs will perceive more empathy and sympathy for the suspect and attribute more blame toward him when he uses Denial of the Victim arguments than when he does not.

H10: People who do not hold sexist beliefs will perceive the suspect as more guilty when he uses Denial of the Victim arguments than when he does not.

## Methods

### Design

The design is a 2x3 between participants design involving two independent variables *suspect interview behaviour* and *accuracy of the suspect's account*. The first independent variable *suspect interview behaviour* has two levels. The first was *denial of the victim* and the second was *no comment*. In the *denial of the victim* condition, the suspect tries to justify his negative behaviour by implying that the victim deserved and caused the suspect's actions due to past negative behaviour. In the *no comment* condition, the suspect refuses to comment on any crime related questions that are asked during the investigative interview. No comment responses ensure no additional information about the victim or suspect's motives is provided to ensure that the participants' perceptions are based on their assumptions about the presented scenario. The second independent variable *accuracy of the suspect's account* consists of three levels, namely *negative victim behaviour*, *no negative victim behaviour* and *no information*. In the *no information* condition, no information about the victim's behaviour is given to participants. In the *negative victim behaviour* condition, participants are made aware that the victim has engaged in some negative relationship behaviour prior to the presented offence, showing that the behaviours the suspect accuses the victim of are true. In the *no negative victim behaviour* condition, on the other hand, participants are informed that the victim did not engage in any genuine negative relationship behaviour prior to the presented offence. The three conditions were randomly assigned to the participants.

The dependent variables that were measured included *attribution of blame*, *empathy and sympathy toward the suspect*, *suggested punishment* and *perceived guilt of the suspect*. The exploratory moderators were *Sexism* and *Belief in a Just World*.

## Participants

To determine the ideal sample size for this study the G\*Power software was used. Based on Cohen's (1992) "A Power Primer" article, a medium effect size of 0.25 was selected. The main reason for choosing this particular effect size was because it is the smallest effect size that might have a tangible effect on the outcomes of the investigations. The selected alpha level was 0.05 and the power level was 0.8. The analysis showed that the required sample size would be 155 participants.

The participants were recruited using opportunity sampling via the test subjects pool SONA of the University of Twente, which is a platform that allows researchers to conduct research and enables students to participate in current studies and via the social media networks of the researchers. In total, 194 people participated in the study. The sample consisted of people aged 18 and older ( $M = 27.10$ ;  $SD = 12.78$ ). Compared to males (30.4%), females (69.6%) were overrepresented in this study. The majority of the participants had a college education (43.3%) and the most represented nationality was German (84%), followed by Dutch (10.3%). The participants were equally spread within each experimental group with the same amount of people in the *no comment* ( $N = 97$ ) and the *denial of the victim* condition ( $N = 97$ ). Further, within these two groups, the participants were evenly assigned to either the *no information* ( $N = 65$ ), the *no negative victim behaviour* ( $N = 66$ ) and the *negative victim behaviour* ( $N = 63$ ) condition.

## Materials

### *Case description*

A fictional case scenario that contained a brief description of an alleged non-physical control and coercion offence was presented in the questionnaire. The alleged offence contained the victim's description of several events leading up to the moment she called the police. These include information about her current boyfriend's negative behaviour such as his extreme

jealousy and the abusive text messages he regularly sends her. The participants further learned what happened during the incident that led the victim to seek help from the police. The night of the incident, the victim's boyfriend followed her to the book club she attends, and, after pushing his way inside, accused her of infidelity and threatened her.

While the descriptions were the same for all participants, in the end, three different versions of the victim behaviour prior to the relationship with the suspect were presented. The three conditions were *negative victim behaviour*, *no negative victim behaviour* and *no information*. These were shown after the description of the incident which prompted the victim to call the police in a separate paragraph that started with the following sentence: "*This behaviour has been going on for 1 year and upon reflection Miss Miller believes she is the victim of coercive and controlling behaviour.*" In the *negative victim behaviour condition*, the paragraph is extended and gives additional information in which the victim admits that she had been unfaithful to the suspect in the past: "(...) *During the collection of investigation evidence, Ms Miller admits that she has been unfaithful to Mr Cooper in the past but that this was a few months ago and not recently.*". In the *no negative victim behaviour condition*, the added information gives no evidence of infidelity on the victim's side: "(...) *Ms Miller denies having ever been unfaithful and in the course of the investigation, no evidence was found which could indicate that Mr Cooper's accusations have any truth to them.*" In the *no information condition*, no information about the victim's behaviour is being mentioned at the end of the sentence.

### ***Investigative Interview***

The investigative interview was presented as a script to the participants and showed the conversation between the police interviewer and the suspect from the before described case. The interview consisted of two variations, namely *denial of the victim* and *no comment*. Although the suspect was behaving differently in each of the two conditions, the interviews presented the exact same questions to the suspect to ensure consistency. In both, the police

interviewer first makes the suspect aware of interview procedures such as the recording of the conversation and explains the reason for the arrest. He then asks relationship-related questions followed by a request to explain the incident that had caused the victim to call the police. In the *no comment* variation, the suspect repeatedly responds with “*No comment*” to the relationship and incident-related questions. In the denial of the victim variation, the suspect gives answers to all of the interviewer’s questions. However, in his answers, he justifies the actions he is accused of by denigrating the victim’s character and making her behaviour responsible for his wrongdoing. An example of the *denial of the victim* arguments can be seen in the following: “*Her little skirt barely even covered her up. Am I really meant to think she wasn’t doing that to attract someone’s attention?*”. Therefore, the interviews varied not only in content but also in length. Due to the short answers of the no comment condition, the interview was relatively short compared to the one that gave details about the alleged offence.

### ***Manipulation Checks***

To ensure that the participants were attentive while reading the case description and the investigative interview, two manipulation check questions were incorporated into the questionnaire. The former question “Based on the evidence provided how likely is it that Miss Miller cheated on Mr. Cooper prior to the offence?” was linked to the accuracy of the suspect’s account and its three conditions while the latter question “Based on the evidence provided how likely is it that Miss Miller is cheating on Mr. Cooper right now?” was linked to the suspect interview behaviour and its two conditions. The answer options were presented on a 5-point Likert-Scale (1 = Extremely Unlikely; 5 = Extremely Likely) and the participant answers were expected to shift depending on each condition they were assigned to.

Regarding the accuracy of the suspect’s account, participants assigned to the no negative victim behaviour condition were expected to answer with either “Extremely unlikely” or “Somewhat unlikely” whereas those in the negative victim behaviour were expected to answer

with either “Extremely likely” or “Somewhat likely”. Those in the no comment condition were expected to stay neutral and answer with “Neither likely nor unlikely”. Concerning the suspect interview behaviour, those assigned to either the denial of the victim or the no comment condition were expected to give answers ranging from “Somewhat likely” to “Somewhat unlikely” as no direct evidence of infidelity was provided. Inattentive readers who did not answer these questions correctly would have been excluded from the study. However, all participants passed this attention check.

### ***Scales and Measures***

**Dependent variables.** In addition to the scales described here, two scales measuring perceived sympathy towards the victim and perceived empathy towards the victim were shown to participants but not part of this project and hence are not described. Likewise, the parts of the attribution scale that concerned the attribution of blame to the victim are not described.

***Attribution of blame.*** After the presentation of the case description and interview, the questionnaire started with questions concerning how much blame the participants would attribute to the suspect. The items of this scale were partly taken from the *Items Assessing General Victim Blame* by Eigenberg and Policastro (2016) as they designed a scale to measure victim-blaming. Thus, the questions had to be tailored to be able to assess the suspect’s and not the victim’s attribution of blame. Ultimately, a total of 4 items of this scale were altered and linked to the suspect. An example of these items is: “*Mr Cooper’s behaviour was the reason Miss Miller was feeling distressed*”. Here the participants were instructed to indicate how much they agree with the statements and asked to give their answer on a 5-point Likert-Scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree). Results of the Cronbach’s alpha showed that the scale has an internal consistency of .75.

***Perceived Empathy toward the suspect.*** Questions about how much empathy the participants perceive toward the suspect were also integrated into the questionnaire. The items

used for this scale were taken from the State Empathy Scale designed by Shen (2010), more specifically from the cognitive and affective empathy dimensions. The scale itself consisted of 5 items and the participants were asked to indicate how much they agree with the statements using a 5-point Likert-Scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree). An example item is: “*I can see the suspects point of view*”. Reliability checks, using Cronbach’s alpha showed that the scale has an acceptable reliability of .75.

***Perceived Sympathy toward the suspect.*** Participants were instructed to indicate how much they sympathize with the suspect with the question: “How much sympathy do you feel for the suspect?”. For this single question also a 5-point Likert-Scale was used (1 = None at all; 5 = A great deal) and the question was developed specifically for this research.

***Perceived Guilt of suspect.*** Next, the participants were asked to indicate how guilty they perceive the suspect to be of control and coercion. The items used to measure this were developed for this research and consisted of 2 statements: “*I think Mr Cooper is guilty of control and coercion;*” “*Mr Cooper behaved toward Miss Miller in a way that can be defined as controlling and coercive behaviour.*” The instructions invited the participants to indicate how much they agree with these statements using a 5-point Likert-Scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree). The Cronbach’s alpha showed that the guilt scale has an internal consistency of .79.

***Suggested Punishment of suspect.*** Committing a crime that falls under the context of control and coercion can be punished with a maximum of a 5-year prison sentence (Sentencing Council, 2021). Based on this, a visual analogue Scale has been designed which instructed the participants to disregard whether they believe the suspect is guilty or not and to answer as though he was guilty as punishing the suspect would be redundant when the suspect is perceived as innocent. Using the scale, they were then asked to choose how high of a prison sentence they would find appropriate for the suspect of this particular case. The slider indicated years ranging from 0 to 5 but the participants could place the slider at any point they wished along the scale.

### ***Moderators***

The two moderators of this study were *Ambivalent Sexism* and *Belief in a Just World* as they were believed to also have an impact on the effectiveness of *denial of the victim* arguments.

The *Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI)* was taken from Glick and Fiske (1996) and their study on hostile and benevolent sexism. The scale consisted of 22 items and was measured using a 5-point Likert-Scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree). The given items consisted of statements with either a hostile or benevolent sexism matter. One example item of a benevolent sexism statement is: “*A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man.*” One example of a hostile sexism statement is: “*Women are too easily offended.*” The scale that captures benevolent sexism yields an acceptable reliability of .76 whilst the hostile sexism scale has a slightly higher internal consistency of .87.

The *Belief in a Just World* scale was derived from Dalbert et al. (1987) and consisted of 6 items. The items were measured using a 5-point Likert-Scale (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree). An example item of this scale is: “*I believe that, by and large, people get what they deserve*“. Reliability checks showed that this scale has an acceptable internal consistency of .78.

### **Procedure**

The ethical approval for this study was given by the Ethics Committee of the faculty of Behavioural and Management and Social Sciences at the University of Twente prior to the start of the research. The study itself was conducted online and could be found via the University’s SONA system and the social media of the two researchers.

After clicking on the published link, the participants were presented with an online informed consent form. Here, the participants were told about the contents of the study and what they would have to do without giving them information about the hypotheses. Further,

they were informed that they can withdraw from the study at any time without facing consequences and that they can contact the researcher's supervisor in case of unclarities of any kind. This was important to ensure that the participants know what they can expect and that agreements to take part in this study happen on a voluntary basis.

At the start of the questionnaire, the participants were asked demographic questions about their gender, age, nationality, educational level and relationship experience. Following were questions concerning the moderators' *Belief in a Just World* and *Sexism*. After that, they were made familiar with the definition of the crime of control and coercion. Then, the case description of the alleged offence case was presented. The description of the alleged offence was the same for each participant. Yet, the three variations of the victim behaviours, which were each randomly placed underneath the description of the case, were randomly spread between the participants. Consequently, each participant received different information about the victim's behaviour prior to the offence. Thus, while one participant might learn that the victim has cheated on the suspect before, another participant might not be given any information about the victim's behaviour. After being informed about the case, the participants read the investigative interview with the suspect. Here, the participants were again randomly assigned to different conditions, namely either to the *no comment* or the *denial of the victim* condition. After having read both the case description and the interview, two manipulation check questions were asked to ensure that the participants had read and understood the texts. Finally, the participants were directed to the scales concerning the dependent variables. These started with questions concerning the attribution of blame to the suspect, followed by the empathy and sympathy the participants feel toward the suspect, and lastly, about how guilty they think the suspect is of having committed a control and coercive crime and how much punishment would be appropriate for the suspect if found guilty. After completion of the questionnaire, a short written debrief was presented which served to explain the background and purpose of the study

and included websites that offer support and help for those who might have felt distressed by the topic of this study.

### **Data Analysis**

Data was analysed using SPSS version 24. The study included both continuous and ordinal variables. The continuous variables were guilt, empathy, attribution of blame, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and belief in a just world. Punishment and sympathy served as ordinal variables. Out of these variables, guilt, empathy, attribution of blame, sympathy and punishment were outcome variables. The predictor variables of the study were suspect interview behaviour and accuracy of the suspect's account. Possible main effects of and interaction effects between the independent variables and dependent variables were checked using two-way ANOVAs. The moderators were not included in the baseline analysis of this study, but as exploratory variables intended for further checks. This is because the current study was not powered to detect these effects. Therefore, separate general linear model analyses were conducted which included these variables to ensure our primary hypotheses could be tested in accordance with our power analysis.

## Results

### Descriptive Statistics

For each of the dependent variable and moderator variable scales, the mean scores were calculated. The scores can be found in Table 1. On the perceived empathy toward the suspect scale, the participant answers were normally distributed and focused on the middle range, likewise on the attribution of blame to the suspect and on the perceived sympathy towards the suspect scale. The participants scored relatively high on the perceived guilt of the suspect scale and relatively low on the punishment scale, which gave options on the length of the prison sentence the suspect should receive if found guilty. This indicated a skew in the data which was addressed using Log10 transformation for all analyses for these two dependent variables.

The average scores of the moderators were also calculated. The participant answers were focused on the middle range on the scales of both hostile sexism and benevolent sexism, and on the Belief in a Just World scale.

**Table 1.**

*Descriptive Statistics of the Dependent Variables and Moderators*

	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Guilt	4.04	.78	2.00	5.00
GuiltLog10	.60	.09	.30	.70
Empathy	2.67	.87	1.00	5.00
Attribution of Blame	3.72	.70	2.00	5.00
Punishment	1.27	1.15	.00	5.00
PunishmentLog10	.19	.21	.00	.70
Sympathy	2.09	.89	1.00	5.00
Benevolent Sexism	2.49	.61	1.18	4.18

Hostile Sexism	2.34	.73	1.00	4.09
Belief in Just World	2.81	.69	1.00	4.67

### Inferential Statistics

Pearson's correlation coefficients were used to estimate bivariate relationships between continuous variables. The bivariate relationships are presented in Table 2. This table shows that there were statistically significant negative relationships between the guilt assigned to the suspect and how much the participants empathized with the suspect ( $r = -.15, p = .021$ ), the guilt assigned to the suspect and the moderator belief in a just world ( $r = -.13, p = .035$ ), the guilt assigned to the suspect and the moderator hostile sexism ( $r = -.32, p < .001$ ), and between the empathy of the participant with the suspect and the blame attributed to the suspect ( $r = -.16, p = .013$ ). Statistically significant positive relationships could be found between the guilt assigned to the suspect and the blame attributed to the suspect ( $r = .55, p < .001$ ) and the moderators benevolent sexism and hostile sexism ( $r = .57, p < .001$ ).

Spearman's rho coefficients were used to estimate univariate relationships between ordinal variables. The univariate relationships are also presented in Table 2. Statistically significant positive relationships were found between the blame attributed to the suspect and the level of punishment he should receive for his actions if found guilty ( $r = .22, p < .001$ ), the empathy of the participant with the suspect and the sympathy of the participant with the suspect ( $r = .20, p = .003$ ), and between the moderator hostile sexism and the sympathy of the participant with the suspect ( $r = .20, p = .003$ ). Statistically significant negative correlations could be found between the guilt assigned to the suspect and how much the participants sympathized with the suspect ( $r = -.44, p < .001$ ) and the level of blame attributed to the suspect and the sympathy of the participant with the suspect ( $r = -.53, p < .001$ ).

**Table 2.**  
*A Correlation Matrix Showing the Relationship between the Dependent Variables and the Moderators*

	Guilt	Empathy	Attribution of Blame	BS	HS	BJW	Punishment	Sympathy
Guilt	1	<i>r = -.15</i> <i>p = .021</i>	<b>r = .55</b> <b>p &lt; .001</b>	r = -.09 p = .113	<b>r = -.32</b> <b>p &lt; .001</b>	<i>r = -.13</i> <i>p = .035</i>	r <sub>s</sub> = .08 p = .131	<b>r<sub>s</sub> = -.44</b> <b>p &lt; .001</b>
Empathy		1	<i>r = -.16</i> <i>p = .013</i>	r = -.01 p = .444	r = .01 p = .450	r = -.01 p = .474	r <sub>s</sub> = -.06 p = .192	<i>r<sub>s</sub> = .20</i> <i>p = .003</i>
Attribution of Blame			1	r = .01 p = .431	r = -.11 p = .059	r = -.09 p = .112	<b>r<sub>s</sub> = .22</b> <b>p &lt; .001</b>	<b>r<sub>s</sub> = -.530</b> <b>p &lt; .001</b>
BS				1	<b>r = .57</b> <b>p &lt; .001</b>	r = .08 p = .131	r <sub>s</sub> = -.12 p = .042	r <sub>s</sub> = .11 p = .070
HS					1	r = -.03 p = .345	r <sub>s</sub> = -.09 p = .104	<i>r<sub>s</sub> = .20</i> <i>p = .003</i>
BJW						1	r <sub>s</sub> = .03 p = .361	r <sub>s</sub> = .08 p = .125
Punishment							1	r <sub>s</sub> = -.036 p = .307
Sympathy								1

*Correlations in bold and italics are significant at p < .05*

**Correlations in bold are significant at p < .01**

BS = Benevolent Sexism

HS = Hostile Sexism

BJW = Belief in a Just World

To investigate whether the use of denial of victim arguments and negative or no negative victim behaviours affect the attribution of blame, perceived empathy, guilt and punishment, and sympathy of the suspect, two-way ANOVAs were conducted. A representation of all interactions can be found in Appendix A.

### ***Attribution of Blame to the Suspect***

The first two-way ANOVA showed a non-significant main effect for both the Suspect Interview Behaviour conditions ( $F(1,188) = 0.62, p = .804$ ) and the three conditions of the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account ( $F(2,188) = 1.59, p = .207$ ) on the attribution of blame to the suspect. These main effects did not indicate a difference between those who did receive the Denial of the Victim condition ( $M = 3.70, SD = .69$ ) or those received the No Comment condition ( $M = 3.75, SD = .71$ ); nor in those who received either the No Information ( $M = 3.75, SD = .67$ ), No Negative Victim Behaviour ( $M = 3.82, SD = .67$ ) or the Negative Victim Behaviour ( $M = 3.60, SD = .75$ ) conditions. A simple planned contrast was conducted revealing positive non-significant contrasts between the Negative Victim Behaviour group and the No Info group ( $p = .220$ ) and between the Negative Victim Behaviour group and the No Negative Behaviour group ( $p = .084$ ).

Additionally, there was no interaction effect between the Suspect Interview Behaviour conditions and the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account ( $F(2, 188) = .807, p = .448$ ). This indicated that both the Suspect Interview Behaviour conditions and the different conditions of the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account did not have an impact on how blame is attributed towards the suspect.

### ***Perceived Empathy toward the Suspect***

The second two-way ANOVA showed a non-significant main effect for both of the Suspect Interview Behaviour conditions ( $F(1, 188) = 1.82, p = .180$ ) and the three conditions

of the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account ( $F(2, 188) = 2.45, p = .089$ ) on the perceived empathy toward the suspect. Further, no difference between those who did receive the Denial of the Victim condition ( $M = 2.76, SD = .70$ ) or those who did not but instead received the No Comment condition ( $M = 2.60, SD = .99$ ) was found. There is also no difference between those who received either the No Information ( $M = 2.51, SD = .81$ ), No Negative Victim Behaviour ( $M = 2.67, SD = .84$ ) or the Negative Victim Behaviour ( $M = 2.84, SD = .92$ ) conditions. Although it appears that the participants emphasize more with the suspect when there is Negative Victim Behaviour, this effect was not significant within the ANOVA. However, a simple planned contrast showed a statistically significant contrast between the Negative Victim Behaviour group and the No Information group ( $p = .028$ ). There was a non-significant contrast between the Negative Victim Behaviour group and the No Negative Behaviour group ( $p = .253$ ).

No interaction effect between the Suspect Interview Behaviour conditions and the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account was found ( $F(2, 188) = 1.24, p = .292$ ). This result indicated that both, the Suspect Interview Behaviour conditions and the different conditions of the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account did not have an impact on how much the participants emphasize with the suspect.

### ***Perceived Sympathy toward the Suspect***

The next two-way ANOVA showed a non-significant main effect for both the Suspect Interview Behaviour conditions ( $F(1, 188) = 2.82, p = .095$ ) and the three conditions of the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account ( $F(2, 188) = .537, p = .585$ ) on the perceived sympathy toward the suspect. Further, these main effects did not indicate a difference between those who did receive the Denial of the Victim condition ( $M = 2.20, SD = .09$ ) or those who did not but instead received the No Comment condition ( $M = 1.98, SD = .87$ ), nor in those who received either the No Information ( $M = 2.02, SD = .88$ ), No Negative Victim Behaviour ( $M = 2.08, SD$

= .85) or the Negative Victim Behaviour ( $M = 2.19$ ,  $SD = .97$ ) conditions. A simple planned contrast was conducted revealing positive non-significant contrasts between the Negative Victim Behaviour group and the No Information group ( $p = .302$ ) and between the Negative Victim Behaviour group and the No Negative Behaviour group ( $p = .617$ ).

Lastly, no interaction effect between the Suspect Interview Behaviour conditions and the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account was found ( $F(2, 188) = .629$ ,  $p = .534$ ). This result indicated that neither the Suspect Interview Behaviour conditions nor the different conditions of the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account had an impact on how much the participants sympathized with the suspect.

### ***Perceived Guilt of the Suspect***

A non-significant main effect was found for both of the Suspect Interview Behaviour conditions ( $F(1, 188) = .910$ ,  $p = .341$ ) and the three conditions of the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account ( $F(2, 188) = .282$ ,  $p = .755$ ) on the perceived guilt of the suspect. As mentioned earlier, Log10 transform was used due to the skew in the original guilt variable. The main effects did not show a difference between those who received the Denial of the Victim condition ( $M = .603$ ,  $SD = .10$ ) or those who did not but instead received the No Comment condition ( $M = .591$ ,  $SD = .08$ ), nor in those who received either the No Information ( $M = .602$ ,  $SD = .085$ ), No Negative Victim Behaviour ( $M = .596$ ,  $SD = .09$ ) or the Negative Victim Behaviour ( $M = .593$ ,  $SD = .10$ ) conditions. The simple planned contrast also showed non-significant contrasts between the reference group Negative Victim Behaviour and the No Info group ( $p = .454$ ) and the No Negative Victim Behaviour group ( $p = .706$ ).

Further, the results showed no interaction effect between the Suspect Interview Behaviour conditions and the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account ( $F(2, 188) = 1.34$ ,  $p = .264$ ). This indicated that both the Suspect Interview Behaviour conditions and the different conditions

of the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account did not have an impact on how guilty the suspect is perceived to be.

### ***Suggested Punishment of the Suspect***

The fifth two-way ANOVA showed a non-significant main effect for both of the Suspect Interview Behaviour conditions ( $F(1, 188) = .882, p = .349$ ) and the three conditions of the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account ( $F(2, 188) = .282, p = .755$ ) on the level of punishment. Level of punishment here meant the length of the prison sentence participants indicated the suspect should receive if found guilty. Again, Log10 transformation was used due to the skew in the original punishment variable. No difference was found between those who received the Denial of the Victim condition ( $M = .173, SD = .21$ ) or those who did not but instead perceived the No Comment condition ( $M = .216, SD = .21$ ), nor in those who received either the No Information ( $M = .198, SD = .21$ ), No Negative Victim Behaviour ( $M = .214, SD = .22$ ) or the Negative Victim Behaviour ( $M = .171, SD = .21$ ) conditions. A simple planned contrast was conducted showing non-significant contrasts between the Negative Victim Behaviour group and the No Info group ( $p = .577$ ) and between the Negative Victim Behaviour group and the No Negative Behaviour group ( $p = .475$ ).

No marginal significant interaction effect between the Suspect Interview Behaviour conditions and the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account ( $F(2, 188) = 3.02, p = .052$ ) was found. This indicated that both the Suspect Interview Behaviour conditions and the different conditions of the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account also did not have an impact on the perceived punishment of the suspect.

Yet, due to the almost significant interaction, a follow up test of simple effects was conducted through a t-test for the Suspect Interview Behaviour variable and a one-way ANOVA for the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account variable. Results of the t-test showed that there was a significant difference in the suggested level of punishment when suspects used Denial of

Victim arguments ( $M = .14$ ,  $SD = .20$ ) compared to when they used No Comment ( $M = .27$ ,  $SD = .21$ ), but only in the No Negative Victim Behaviour condition ( $t = 2.34$ ,  $p = .024$ ,  $M = .14$ ,  $SE = .06$ ), but not in any of the other Victim Behaviour conditions. This implies that participants believe the suspect's punishment should be harsher if they use denial of the victim arguments and there is evidence that the accusations they make against the victim are false.

No effects of the Accuracy of the Suspect's Account were found when the conditions were split across the two levels of the Suspect Interview Behaviour.

### **Exploratory Moderator Analyses**

Further in this study, it was investigated whether the moderators Belief in a Just World, Hostile and Benevolent Sexism have an effect on the relationship between the independent and dependent variables.

#### ***Belief in a Just World***

The results show that there are no significant relationships on the dependent variables from the interaction between the Belief in a Just World and the independent variables Suspect Interview Behaviour and Accuracy of the Suspect's Account (see Appendix B). A significant main effect was found between the perceived guilt of the suspect and the Belief in a just World ( $F(1, 188) = 4.81$ ,  $p = .029$ ). This indicated that a high Belief in a Just World predicts a lower perception of guilt.

Due to the almost significant interaction between the moderator Belief in a Just World and the independent variable Accuracy of the Suspect's Account on the perceived guilt of the suspect ( $p = .059$ ) a follow-up regression using PROCESS had been conducted (see Appendix B for the interaction). The results of the follow-up analysis can be found in Table 3. Accuracy of the Suspect's Account was set as the independent variable with No information set as the comparison group, perceived guilt of the suspect was set as the dependent variable and Belief

in a Just World as the moderator variable. The results showed a significant interaction effect between No Information versus Negative Victim Behaviour and Belief in a Just World ( $b = -.06$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $t = -2.47$ ,  $p = .015$ ) but not between No Information versus No Negative Victim Behaviour and Belief in a Just World ( $b = -.03$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $t = -1.36$ ,  $p = .176$ ). This means that Belief in a Just World reduces guilt perceptions when victims had engaged in past infidelity compared to when no information about past infidelity was given. However, Belief in a Just World makes no difference to guilt perceptions when comparing no information about past infidelity and evidence confirming no past infidelity had taken place. That is, Belief in Just World only seems to be relevant when past negative behaviour by the victim can be confirmed. Consequently, just the effects in the No Information versus Negative Victim Behaviour condition are further reported.

The conditional effects of the Victim Behaviour conditions showed that there is no difference between No Information and Negative Victim Behaviour conditions when Belief in a Just World is low ( $b = .03$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $t = 1.30$ ,  $p = .194$ ) or medium ( $b = -.01$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $t = -.80$ ,  $p = .423$ ). Only when the Belief in a Just World is high ( $b = -.06$ ,  $SE = .02$ ,  $t = -2.28$ ,  $p = .024$ ), does Negative Victim Behaviour reduce perceived Guilt compared to No Information about victim behaviour.

**Table 3.**

*Interaction effect of the moderator Belief in a Just World on the different Victim behaviour conditions using PROCESS*

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
No Negative Victim Behaviour	.08	.06	1.23	.221
Negative Victim Behaviour	.16	.07	2.26	<b>.025</b>
BJW	.01	.02	.54	.587

No Negative Victim Behaviour*BJW	-0.03	.02	-1.36	.176
Negative Victim Behaviour*BJW	-0.06	.03	-2.47	<b>.015</b>

*Correlations in bold and italics are significant at the  $p < .05$*

BJW = Belief in a Just World

### ***Benevolent Sexism***

The results show that there are no significant relationships on the dependent variables from the interaction between Benevolent Sexism and the independent variables Suspect Interview Behaviour and Accuracy of the Suspect's Account (see Appendix C). Therefore, moderation is not supported. Further, no significant main effects were found.

### ***Hostile Sexism***

The results show that there are no significant relationships on the dependent variables from the interaction between Hostile Sexism and the independent variables Suspect Interview Behaviour and Accuracy of the Suspect's Account (see Appendix D). However, significant main effects were found for guilt ( $F(1,188) = 18.85, p < .001$ ) and sympathy ( $F(1, 188) = 7.87, p = .006$ ) indicating that high hostile sexism predicts lower guilt and higher sympathy with the suspect.

## Discussion

The study investigated the effect denial of the victim arguments have on the attribution of blame to the suspect, the sympathy and empathy the recipient has toward the suspect, followed by the perceived guilt of the suspect and, lastly, on the amount of punishment that would be perceived to be fair for the suspect. In addition, exploratory moderator analyses were conducted to test whether any of these effects are stronger when the recipient of the denial of the victim arguments endorses in a high Belief in a Just World or Benevolent or Hostile Sexism.

Among the findings, it was only observed that denial of the victim arguments that contain false information about the victim negatively affect the suspect as they increase the level of punishment the participants think is appropriate. Overall, the mechanism of denial of the victim does not work by shifting attributions of blame away from the suspect.

### **The effects of denial of the victim arguments on the attribution of blame to the suspect**

It was hypothesized that people will attribute less blame to the suspect when he used denial of the victim arguments than when he did not use denial of the victim arguments. According to Watson et al. (2018), denial of the victim arguments are hypothesised to have their effect by shifting attributions, yet the findings show that the use of this specific justification did not affect how the blame is attributed to the suspect.

The process of attributing blame to actors within a scenario can easily be influenced by not only personal and psychological biases but also by situational factors (Grubb & Turner, 2012). Denial of the victim arguments aim to change the context of the situation by attempting to shift attribution away from the suspect and towards the victim. Thus, it was expected that being exposed to such arguments might strengthen situational biases and lead people to perceive the actors of a crime, here the suspect and the victim, in a disordered way making the suspect appear less blameworthy. Yet, despite the exposure to the denial of the victim arguments, the participants did not end up being influenced in their perception of the illustrated scenario. The

ineffectiveness of denial of the victim in influencing attributions of blame was also found by the study of Mertins (2020) who investigated the effect of denial of the victim in the context of sexual assault. Similar to this study, she also looked at different effects of denial of the victim in suspect interviews and her results also showed that suspects who used denial of the victim arguments were not able to change their guilt perceptions and were still blamed for their actions (Mertins, 2020). She based this finding on the idea that people try to make fair decisions and consider all potential influencing factors before concluding on who to blame.

It may also be possible that while considering any of these factors the participants were torn between who to blame for the situation. On the one hand, denial of the victim arguments are utilized by the suspect to shift attributions from them. On the other hand, denial of the victim arguments do require that the suspect also admits to their harmful actions and takes responsibility (Skyles & Matza, 1957). In their argumentation, the suspect typically says that their behaviour was “provoked“ or that their wrongdoings are a “result of the victim’s own behaviour“ (Watson et al., 2018). The acknowledgment of blame might not necessarily reduce how much the suspect is seen to be at fault but rather increase how the victim is seen to be at fault. This could not be identified by Mertins (2020) as she measured attributions with a single item even though attributions are independent. Doing measurements with single items means the effects may cancel out whereas measuring only change in attributions of blame to the suspect neglects that the effect may instead be to increase the blame that is attributed to the victim independent of any effect on the suspect. It should, therefore, be taken into consideration that denial of the victim arguments might not only affect the perceptions of the suspect but also the perception of the victim. In sum, the effectiveness of denial of the victim might be weakened due to the ambiguity of the nature of these arguments or the lack of evidence that the suspect’s accusations about the victim are based on truth.

Yet, denial of the victim arguments do not shift attributions from the suspect even when the victim has genuinely behaved in ways the suspect accuses them of. This is very interesting

considering that many studies put emphasis on the strong impact victim behaviour has on the way blame is attributed between the two involved parties. In cases of rape, for instance, the victim's physical attraction, type of clothing or provocativeness still remain factors that influence attributions of such a crime (Grubb & Harrower, 2008). Further, also Luginbuhl & Mullin (1981) showed that the victim's respectability influences the attribution of blame. In their study, the respectability and character of the victim were found to be important factors in the assessment of rape crimes (Luginbuhl & Mullin, 1981). In other words, when a victim behaved badly prior to the offense they typically get more often blamed for the crime. Derived from the study by Grubb & Turner (2012), it was therefore assumed that when the blame is attributed to the victim, the offender will experience less blame as a result. However, in this study not even the negative victim behaviour condition, which painted the victim as being unfaithful to her partner and thus supported the suspect's allegations, affected the participants' perceptions. The failure to find support for this assumption might further be related to the background of existing literature that is mostly based on victim rather than suspect blame. Combined with the results of this study, this suggests that there might be an effect of victim blame, but not on suspect blame which indicates that victim blame and suspect blame should be treated as different concepts.

### **The effects of denial of the victim arguments on the perceived empathy and sympathy toward the suspect**

It might be that denial of the victim arguments do make the recipient understand and sympathize more with the suspect but that the recipient still holds them responsible for their actions. Therefore, it was further proposed that people perceive more empathy and sympathy for suspects who use Denial of the Victim arguments than for suspects who do not use Denial of the Victim arguments. However, denial of the victim did not make the participants emphasize or sympathize more with the suspect.

Looking at the various influencing behaviours suspects use during investigative interviews, this result might have been different when, instead of denial of the victim, another influencing behaviour and its effectiveness in evoking empathy and sympathy was investigated. Influencing behaviours that fall under the category of justifications are not typically known to elicit emotional responses. Supplication or contrition, on the other hand, are used with the intention of influencing the emotions of the recipient (Watson et al., 2018). That suspects using supplication are actually successful in evoking emotions in others can be seen by the study of Holland (2020). In her study, the effectiveness of supplication on guilt perceptions of suspects accused of control and coercion were investigated and their findings showed that, among other things, supplication increases recipients' state empathy (Holland, 2020). Generally, both supplication and denial of the victim centre the suspect's version of events but focus on different aspects of the crime. The focus of supplication, for instance, lays on the suspect's experiences of the event, whereas denial of the victim focuses on the behaviour of someone else (Watson et al., 2018). Taking this into consideration one can argue that while denial of the victim arguments give the suspects side of the story, the suspect is not the main focus of the narrative. This, in turn, might hinder people to feel empathy towards the suspect as any emotions and feelings, potentially expressed in their experiences of the event are missing and thus cannot be acknowledged by others.

Another possible explanation for this result might be that while reading the fictional text about the controlling and coercive crime the participants were not able to relate to the suspect's situation which serves as a basis for feeling empathy for another person (De Vignemont, 2006). Reasons for this might be that the shown scenario failed at displaying the suspect's emotions sufficiently or again, that the suspect's arguments mainly focus on the behaviour of the victim and fail to portray the suspect's own.

Further, as stated by De Vignemont (2006), people feel more empathy towards people they can identify with. Thus, it might be possible that the participants did not only fail to put

themselves into the suspect's situation but also were not able to associate themselves with the suspect as a person. Finally, regarding the context of the suspect interview, it could be possible that the suspect's arguments against the victim were not seen as fair and fairness positively affects empathy (Singer, 2006). Put another way, when presenting a hostile view of someone else they might make themselves appear less sympathetic and empathetic.

### **The effects of denial of the victim on the perceived guilt and the suggested punishment of the suspect**

Regarding the guilt of the suspect, it was hypothesized that suspects who do not use Denial of the Victim arguments are more likely to be perceived as guilty than suspects who use Denial of the Victim arguments. This expectation could not be supported. Interestingly, however, is that despite the lack of effectiveness of denial of the victim arguments, guilt correlates with many of the previously discussed mechanisms. The results show, for instance, that when a suspect is perceived as guilty, they are perceived to be less empathic and sympathetic. Guilt is also positively correlated with attribution of blame meaning that when a suspect is perceived as guilty, they also get more blamed for the crime. Taken together, each of the proposed variables are associated with guilt judgements, but both suspect and victim behaviour did not have enough of an effect on the variables themselves to change any of these perceptions or guilt judgements. This implies that people might not only tend to assess guilt judgements rationally but also that denial of the victim arguments are not strong enough to influence the perceptions of others.

It is also noteworthy that people's perceptions on whether the suspect is guilty of the crime of control and coercion and the punishment they should receive if found guilty are not correlated. This conflicts with literature that shows the connection between guilt and punishment. Generally, the purpose of punishment is to give an offender who is guilty of certain wrongdoing the rebuke he deserves (Duff & Hoskins, 2001). The failure to find a link between

these variables, however, might stem from the instruction the participants were asked to follow. In order to assign the appropriate prison sentence to the suspect, the participants were asked to discount whether or not they believe the suspect is guilty in their judgement and to answer as if he is guilty of the crime. Consequently, the assumption of guilt in combination with punishment made the previous question about suspect guilt redundant. This in turn, might explain the missing correlation between these two concepts.

Looking at the results, the denial of the victim arguments did not affect guilt judgements and not even the negative behavior of the victim changed this result. Therefore, it should be taken into consideration that guilt might be affected by much more than just denial of the victim arguments and that other factors such as evidence also matter. Here, it appears that just the description of the allegations had enough weight to hold the suspect accountable for his actions. Thus, even in the potential case that denial of the victim arguments do work, the suspect might still not be able to affect the guilt judgements. This conclusion is certainly positive for the criminal justice system as it implies that the judiciary maintains its neutral status in the assessment of the crime regardless of suspects attempts to influence this process.

Another positive finding was that contradictorily to the expectation that people will assign a higher prison sentence to suspects who do not use denial of the victim arguments, the use of denial of the victim arguments do not lessen the suspects suggested punishment. In fact, participants will assign a higher sentence length to the suspect if they use arguments that are not based on truth but are deceptive in nature. This might stem from the fact that people tend to dislike liars more than truth-tellers (van't Veer et al., 2014). In general, criminals who are perceived as lacking warmth tend to be associated with feelings of anger and low compassion. These emotions are then consequently expressed through support for harsh criminal justice policies (Côté-Lussier, 2012). This suggests that the suspect's lies made him appear more negatively which in turn elicited people's desire to assign a harsher punishment.

It is also interesting that the participants would generally not assign a high prison

sentence to the suspect if found guilty. In fact, the average chosen sentence length did not exceed the two years mark. The typical sentence length for coercive and controlling crimes ranges from a community order to four years in custody and a maximum of five years in prison, depending on severity (Sentencing Council, 2021). The fictional case scenario illustrated the distress of the victim and their fear of violence after a serious incident “*She (the victim) felt very scared,..*” It further gave multiple examples of the controlling and coercive behaviours of the offender and that this is going on for over one year. According to the Sentencing Council (2021), which makes decisions based on the culpability of the crime and the resulting harm for the victim, the appropriate starting point for the sentencing would be one year in custody. When comparing the typical sentence length to the average length chosen by the participants, it can be concluded that the participants intuitively chose a level of punishment that is close to what is typically given.

Lastly, punishment and attribution of blame to the suspect were found to be positively correlated. This can be linked to the findings of Lens et al. (2017) as they also found a positive correlation between the perception of the offender including his blameworthiness and the level of punishment he should receive for his wrongdoings. In their study, especially those who are accused of committing a severe crime got more blamed and in turn also more punished. Coercive control as a form of psychological abuse can cause severe harm to physical and psychological health. This might explain why the suspect's attempt to shift blame from themselves to avoid punishment was not effective and the suggested level of punishment was not lowered.

### **The effects of the moderators on the relationship of the dependent and independent variables**

It was further investigated whether any of the above-described effects are stronger when the recipient of denial of the victim arguments scores high in hostile and benevolent sexism or

a belief in a just world. The findings showed that benevolent sexism did not affect any relationships between the independent and dependent variables. Hostile sexism, on the other hand, predicts lower guilt and higher sympathy for the suspect. According to literature, however, both benevolent and hostile sexism increase victim-blaming and in turn lower responsibility of the offender (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The connection between both of these moderators was also evident as they were positively correlated with each other. Yet, hostile sexism might have a stronger effect as the denial of the victim arguments of the suspect present the victim as a negative behaving and non-traditional woman. This could consequently tap more into the narrative of those who endorse hostile sexism as they believe that women who refuse to conform to traditional gender norms should be punished.

Finally, those with a high belief in a just world who learned that the victim behaved negatively prior to the offence perceived the suspect to be less guilty. In all the other conditions, however, belief in a just world did not have an impact. This suggests that the effect is conditional on victim behaviour but not on suspect behaviour. This was interesting considering that some participants did learn that the suspect's accusations are not based on truth but that the statements concerning the victim's past infidelity were lies. According to literature about belief in a just world, the lies of the suspect should have affected his reputation and have led the participants to assign more blame to the suspect. The impact a high belief in a just world can have on the perception of the victim and offender is discussed in many studies. Strömwall & Alfredsson (2013), for instance, showed that those high in belief in a just world assign less blame to the perpetrator and more blame to the victim. Another study found out that people blame the victim and exonerate the offender more when a cause for the aggression was mentioned such as the female wanting to end the relationship (Valor-Segura & Moya, 2011). Considering that in this study the suspect was perceived as less guilty when the victim cheated on him in the past, the study from Valor-Segura and Moya (2011) further strengthens the findings of this study.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

The research had strengths and limitations that need to be taken into account. First, the questionnaire, used as the tool to collect the data, had been translated into two languages, German and English. During the translation process it was ensured that both the English and German versions were absolutely compatible in terms of content and quality. This important as the questionnaire did not only include simple questions, but a detailed case description followed by a suspect interview and so text comprehensiveness was essential. Only with a complete understanding of the illustrated scenario would the participants be able to answer the accompanying questions correctly and form an opinion about the presented case and the people involved. Therefore, a manipulation check was carried out to ensure that the participants were able to grasp the story which turned out to be successful. By providing participants with the option to choose their preferred language, the risks of language barriers were limited, and a clear understanding of the contents was increased. Considering that a total of 84% of the participants were German further serves as an indicator that the majority of participants did not have any difficulties grasping the scenario. Nonetheless, it is important to note that for most, who chose the English version, English was still their second language. This potential lack of understanding may have weakened those participants' ability to develop a full understanding of the scenario and, thus, might negatively impact how they answered the questions.

Furthermore, regarding the sample of this study, females were overrepresented compared to males. As a consequence of this overrepresentation, the results of this study could be limited due to a gender bias. This might further make it difficult to generalize the results to the whole population. Yet, despite the lack in gender diversity, the conducted power analysis showed that the sample met and even exceeded the required number of participants. This implies that the found null results are true nulls and that the positives are likely to be true positives.

Another limitation might concern the presentation of the case description that contained

the description of the alleged offence. According to the victim, the suspect engaged in numerous negative behaviours which heavily imply that he was guilty of the crime. This might have led the participants to also think that the suspect is guilty and, in return, might have led to the negative skewed results. To reduce the implication that the suspect must be guilty, future research could create a control group that will not be introduced to the case description but only learns about the situation by reading the investigative interview with the suspect. A different approach could be to make changes to the case description by, for instance, explicitly stating that it is not known whether any of these allegations are based on truth.

Additionally, there are limits to “*no comment*” as a control condition for the suspect interview behaviour variable. Typically used by suspects to shorten the investigative interview or to avoid self-incrimination, *no comment* is a legal privilege to refuse to give evidence (Stokoe et al., 2016). In other words, it is desired that the suspect talks and answers the interviewer’s question (Vrij et al., 2014). They are, however, not obligated to do so and the interviewer has to respect the suspect’s decision to refuse to testify. Nonetheless, juries in the UK are allowed to draw inferences from those who refuse to cooperate meaning that an unjustified failure to answer questions or provide evidence may result in juridical conclusions that are drawn against the suspect (The Crown Prosecution Service, 2018). In other words, juries are allowed to consider it suspicious that no defence was offered from the suspect when they had an opportunity to do so. Therefore, it can also not be ensured that the participants stayed neutral regarding the suspect’s uncooperativeness. To better understand how *no comment* and *denial of the victim arguments* affect the participants’ perception of the suspect, future research could add additional controls. These could take the form of an added condition with no interview at all or compare the participants’ perception prior to and after the interview.

Lastly, it might be possible that the script that was used to present the investigative interview with the suspect and the case description was too weak of a manipulation. This was indicated considering that some of the results of this study were close to being significant.

Although using a script has its benefits as it, for instance, allows the researcher to have total control over what influences the participants the failure to find differences in the participants' perception of the suspect suggests that a simple text presentation might not be as effective as, for example, a spoken argument. Further, as discussed by Navarro & Karlines (2008) also non-verbal behaviours can help to give clues on the true thoughts, feelings and intentions of a person and are often seen as more honest than verbal speech. It could, therefore, be investigated whether not only the context of the statements influences the participants' perception, but also elements such as body language, facial expressions and gestures of the suspect. Especially the effect of denial of the victim on the perceived empathy toward the suspect could lead to different results using a different manipulation as the study of Cole (2001) showed that empathy is not only supported by but also requires facial expressions. Thus, to achieve a more comprehensive impression of the suspect's behaviour, it may be useful to show the participants a video of the police interview or to have an actor re-enact the scene in a further research step. Altogether, it could be interesting to investigate whether other forms of manipulations would lead to different outcomes and a perhaps stronger effect of denial of the victim arguments among the dependent variables.

## **Conclusion**

The study aimed to test whether the proposed mechanism of denial of the victim works as intended. It was, however, not effective in eliciting a change in attributions and the suspect was not able to shift blame from themselves. Unlike what was proposed, people did not sympathize or empathize more with the suspect or perceive them as less guilty when using denial of the victim arguments. Lastly, denial of the victim arguments did not lessen people's perceptions of punishment for the suspect. On the contrary, when no evidence is found that shows support for the suspect's accusations about the victim, the participants would assign a higher prison sentence to the suspect.

In conclusion, it is quite positive that the hypotheses could be rejected as this means that

criminals are not successful in their attempts to shift blame from themselves and that the recipient of the denial of the victim argument does not fall for the suspect's justifications. Nonetheless, many variables which were unaffected by denial of the victim arguments still showed to be correlated and some of the results were close to being significant. This might stem from the ambiguity of not only the nature of the denial of the victim arguments but also of variables such as guilt but also indicates that the manipulation might not have been strong enough. A different manipulation in form of, for instance, spoken arguments should, therefore, be investigated in a further study. Lastly, victim blame and suspect blame should potentially be considered as separate concepts as the failure to find an effect on suspect blame does not limit the chance that denial of the victim arguments might affect victim blame.

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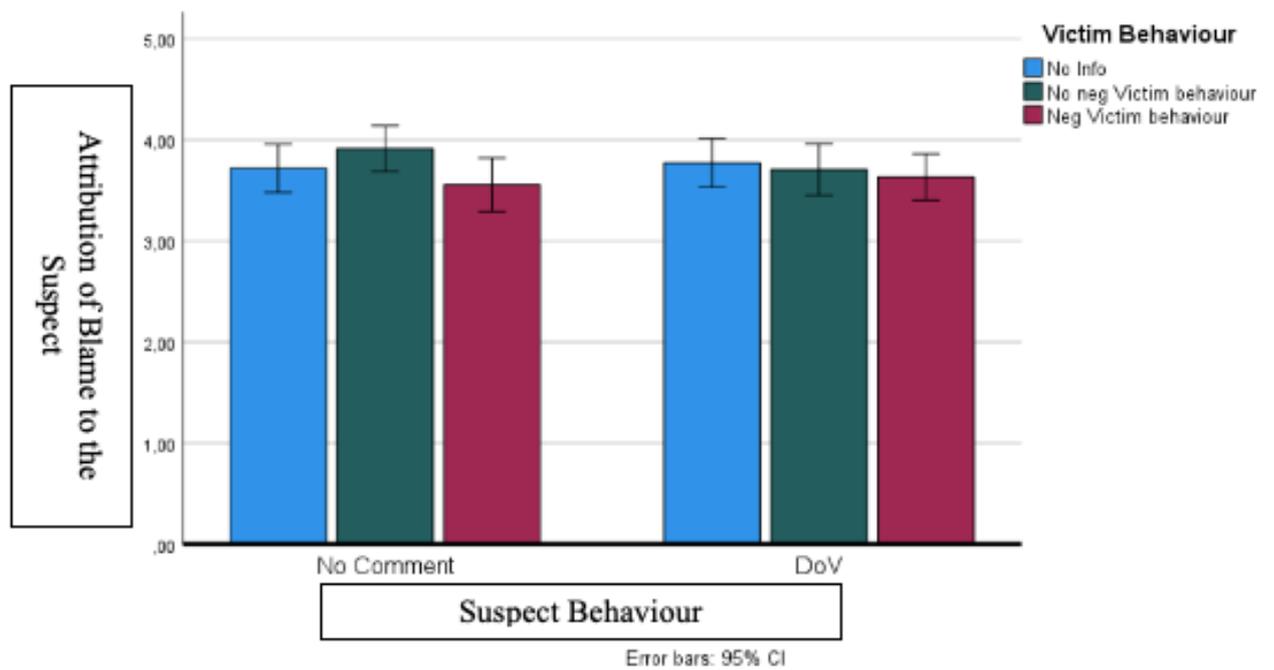
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## Appendix A

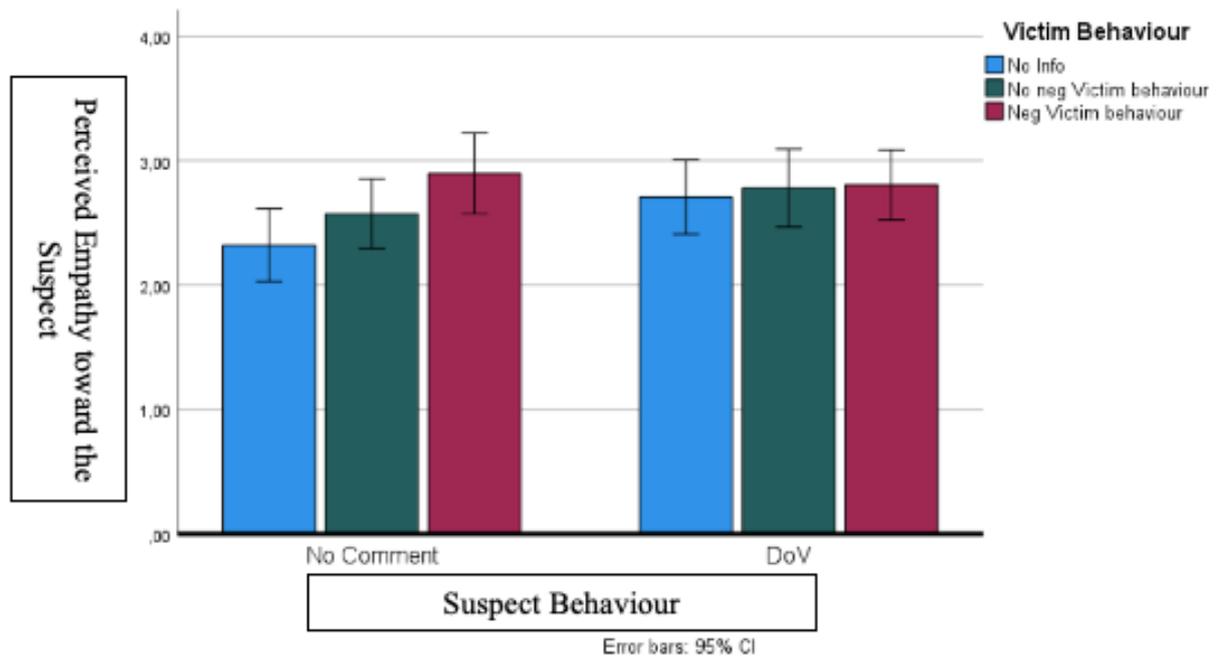
### Bar Chart with Error Bars of the attribution of Blame to the Suspect

*Estimated Marginal Means of the Attribution of Blame to the Suspect among the three Victim Behaviours using No Comment and Denial of the Victim*



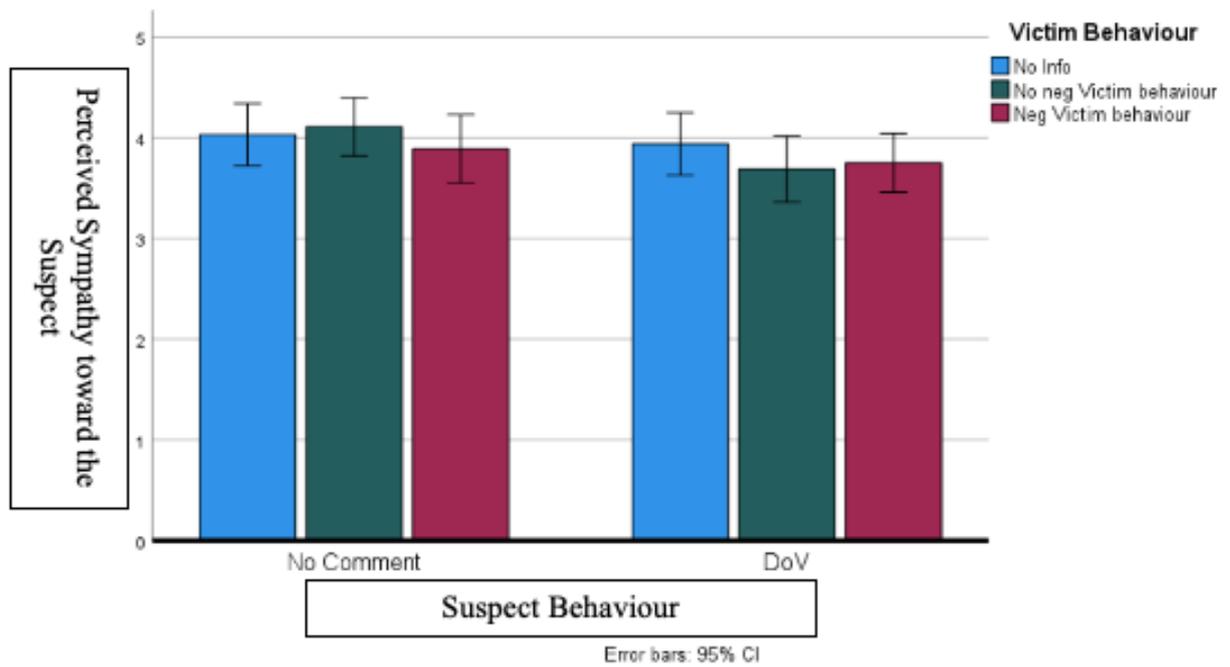
### Bar Chart with Error Bars of the perceived Empathy towards the Suspect

*Estimated Marginal Means of the perceived Empathy toward the Suspect among the three Victim Behaviours using No Comment and Denial of the Victim*



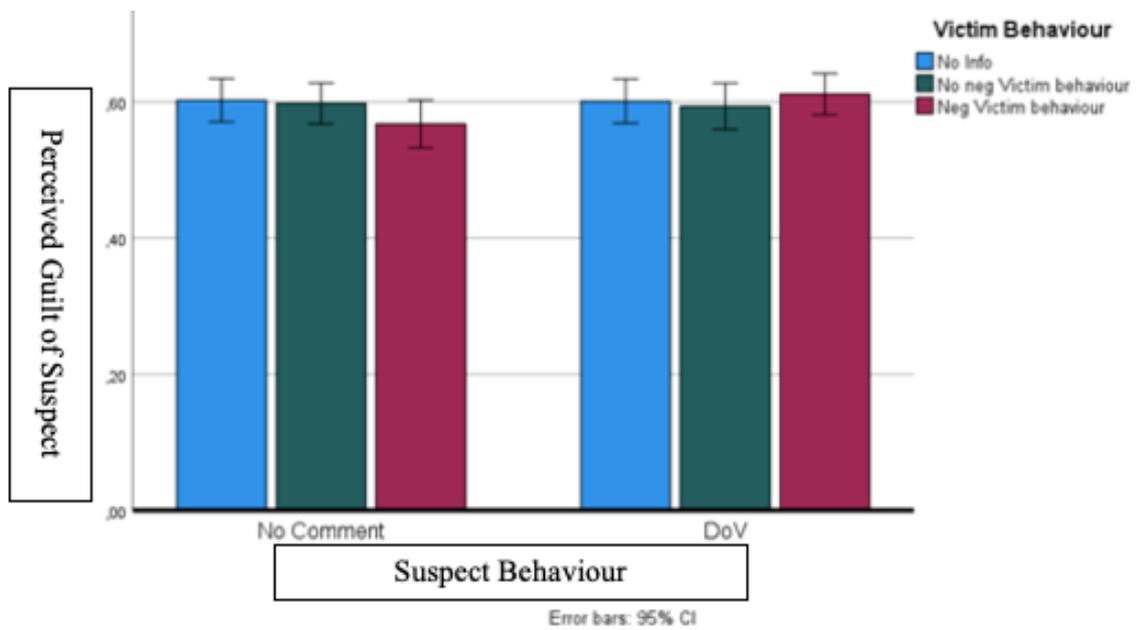
### Bar Chart with Error Bars of the perceived Sympathy toward the Suspect

*Estimated Marginal Means of the perceived Sympathy toward the Suspect among the three Victim Behaviours using No Comment and Denial of the Victim*



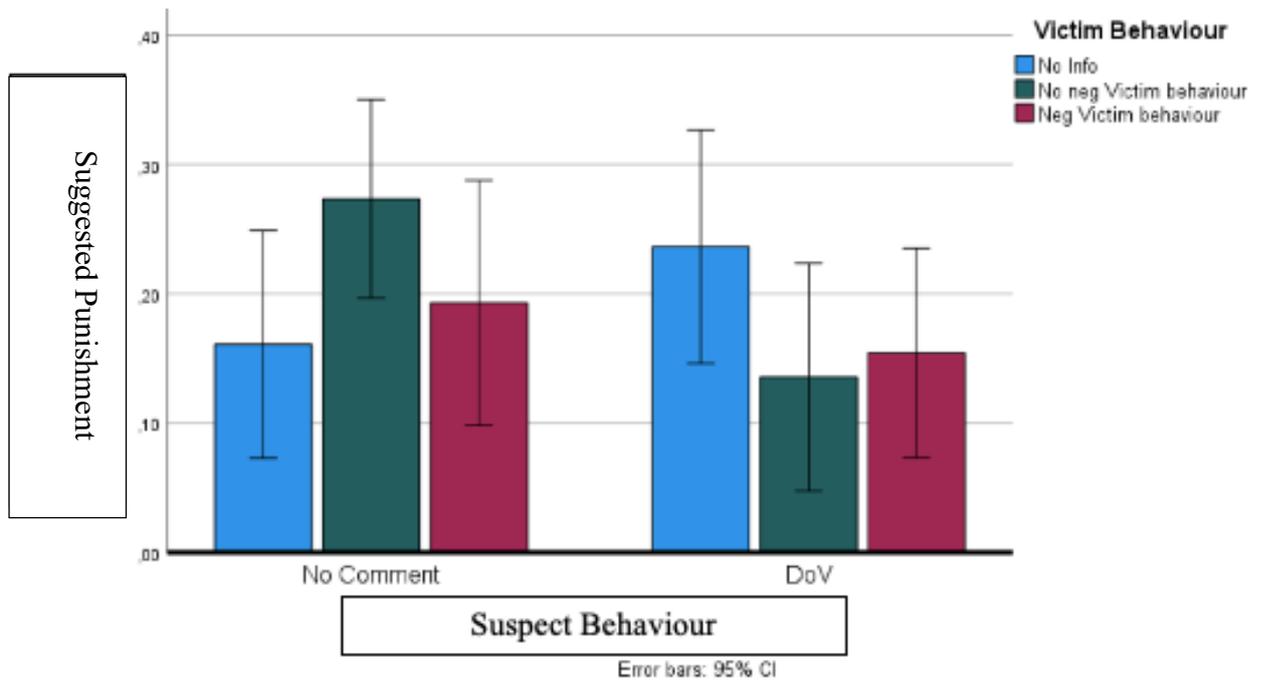
### Bar Chart with Error Bars of the perceived guilt of the Suspect

*Estimated Marginal Means of the perceived Guilt of the Suspect among the three Victim Behaviours using No Comment and Denial of the Victim*



### Bar Chart with Error Bars of the suggested Punishment of the Suspect

*Estimated Marginal Means of the suggested Punishment of the Suspect among the three Victim Behaviours using No Comment and Denial of the Victim*



## Appendix B

### Table of Moderator Belief in a Just World

*Interaction and main effects between the dependent and independent variables and the moderator variable Belief in a Just World*

Predictor variables	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Attribution of Blame</b>			
Denial of the Victim	.296	1	.587
Victim Behaviour	.707	2	.494
BJW	2.13	1	.146
Denial of the Victim*BJW	.226	1	.635
Victim Behaviour*BJW	.706	2	.495
<b>Empathy</b>			
Denial of the Victim	.528	1	.468
Victim Behaviour	.076	2	.927
BJW	.005	1	.943
Denial of the Victim*BJW	1.14	1	.288
Victim Behaviour*BJW	.147	2	.863
<b>Guilt (Log10)</b>			
Denial of the Victim	.173	1	.678
Victim Behaviour	2.32	2	.102
BJW	4.81	1	<b>.029</b>
Denial of the Victim*BJW	.378	1	.539

Victim Behaviour*BJW	2.88	2	.059
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**Punishment (Log10)**

Denial of the Victim	1.30	1	.256
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Victim Behaviour	.840	2	.434
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BJW	.638	1	.426
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Denial of the Victim*BJW	.843	1	.360
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Victim Behaviour*BJW	.676	2	.510
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**Sympathy**

Denial of the Victim	.067	1	.795
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Victim Behaviour	.753	2	.472
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BJW	.851	1	.357
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Denial of the Victim*BJW	.465	1	.496
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Victim Behaviour*BJW	.995	2	.372
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*Effects in bold and italics are significant at the  $p < .05$*

BJW = Belief in a Just World

## Appendix C

### Table of Moderator Benevolent Sexism

*Interaction and main effects between the dependent and independent variables and the moderator variable Benevolent Sexism*

Predictor variables	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Attribution of Blame</b>			
Denial of the Victim	.066	1	.789
Victim Behaviour	.935	2	.394
BS	.144	1	.705
Denial of the Victim*BS	.040	1	.841
Victim Behaviour*BS	1.66	2	.193
<b>Empathy</b>			
Denial of the Victim	.354	1	.553
Victim Behaviour	1.26	2	.287
BS	.002	1	.967
Denial of the Victim*BS	.872	1	.352
Victim Behaviour*BS	.687	2	.505
<b>Guilt (Log10)</b>			
Denial of the Victim	.944	1	.333
Victim Behaviour	.819	2	.442
BS	1.12	1	.291
Denial of the Victim*BS	.636	1	.426

Victim Behaviour*BS	1.08	2	.340
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**Punishment (Log10)**

Denial of the Victim	.107	1	.745
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Victim Behaviour	.344	2	.710
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BS	1.94	1	.166
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Denial of the Victim*BS	.339	1	.561
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Victim Behaviour*BS	.296	2	.744
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**Sympathy**

Denial of the Victim	.772	1	.381
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Victim Behaviour	.363	2	.696
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BS	1.72	1	.192
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Denial of the Victim*BS	.229	1	.633
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Victim Behaviour*BS	.247	2	.781
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BS = Benevolent Sexism

## Appendix D

### Table of Moderator Hostile Sexism

*Interaction and main effects between the dependent and independent variables and the moderator variable Hostile Sexism*

Predictor variables	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Attribution of Blame</b>			
Denial of the Victim	.160	1	.690
Victim Behaviour	.830	2	.438
HS	2.51	1	.115
Denial of the Victim*HS	.087	1	.769
Victim Behaviour*HS	1.53	2	.219
<b>Empathy</b>			
Denial of the Victim	.281	1	.597
Victim Behaviour	2.49	2	.086
HS	.003	1	.954
Denial of the Victim*HS	.027	1	.870
Victim Behaviour*HS	1.43	2	.241
<b>Guilt (Log10)</b>			
Denial of the Victim	2.80	1	.096
Victim Behaviour	.055	2	.946
HS	18.85	1	<b>.001</b>
Denial of the Victim*HS	2.15	1	.144

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Victim Behaviour*HS	.010	2	.990
<b>Punishment (Log10)</b>			
Denial of the Victim	.565	1	.454
Victim Behaviour	2.05	2	.133
HS	.067	1	.797
Denial of the Victim*HS	1.12	1	.292
Victim Behaviour*HS	2.16	2	.119
<b>Sympathy</b>			
Denial of the Victim	.743	1	.390
Victim Behaviour	.729	2	.484
HS	7.87	1	<b>.006</b>
Denial of the Victim*HS	.144	1	.704
Victim Behaviour*HS	.544	2	.581

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*Correlations in bold and italics are significant at the  $p < .05$*

HS = Hostile Sexism

## Appendix E

### Consent Form and Questionnaire (English Version)

# C&C Master Thesis

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## Start of Block: Information Sheet

### Introduction

#### **What is the study about?**

This study investigates how people attribute blame to victims and suspects of coercive and controlling behaviour in intimate relationships.

#### **Am I eligible to take part?**

To participate in this study, it is required that you are over the age of 18.

#### **Do I have to take part?**

No, it is your decision whether you want to participate in this study or not. You can withdraw from the study at any time without having to explain the reason and without facing any consequences by closing your browser window or tab. If you close your browser before the end of the study, all the data you will have entered will be deleted and you will no longer be included as a participant. However, once you completed the questionnaire, we will not be able to withdraw your data because all data is being collected anonymously and so it is impossible to identify your data after this point.

#### **What will happen when I agree to take part?**

If you consent to take part in this study, you will be directed to the questionnaire which will take you approximately 20-30 minutes to complete. The questionnaire starts with some demographic questions which will only ask for basic information to preserve anonymity. Next, you will be asked about some of your personal beliefs. After that, you will read an account about an alleged case of Control and Coercion in an intimate relationship. You will then read a transcript of an investigative interview with the suspect of the described case. After this you will be asked some questions about the case and the interview. Finally, you will be asked questions about your attitudes. Please keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers and that we want to know your personal option regarding these topics.

#### **Risks of taking part**

Please keep in mind that the case description and the questions that are being asked are about sensitive topics and that, as a participant, you will be exposed to descriptions of controlling relationship behaviour. If you think these descriptions are likely to upset you please do not start the experiment. If you start the experiment and later do not feel comfortable feel free to stop by closing your browser window. However, at the end of the study we will share links to relevant websites that can offer support around issues concerning domestic abuse.

#### **What will happen to my data and to the results of this study?**

This study is being conducted by two psychology master students of the University of Twente and the collected data will be analysed for each of our master thesis. Throughout the whole questionnaire no identifiable information is being collected. The collected data itself will be treated with absolute confidentiality and will not be identifiable or traceable. The data will be

stored securely on a password protected device. No individual responses will be presented but only aggregated data. The results of the study may be submitted for publication and used for further research in this area.

### Contact details

Research supervisor: Steven Watson: [s.j.watson@utwente.nl](mailto:s.j.watson@utwente.nl)

If you want to participate in this study, please read the following statements and give your consent:

- I confirm that I voluntarily want to take part in this study and that I am over the age of 18.
- I have read the information sheet and understand the purpose of this study and that it will include discussion of domestic abuse.
- I understand that my data will be collected anonymously and that I will not be personally identifiable.
- I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time.

If you read and understand the statements above and want to consent to take part in this study, then you can click the button at the end of the page.

I Consent (1)

I do not Consent (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If What is the study about? This study investigates how people attribute blame to victims and su... = I do not Consent*

End of Block: Information Sheet

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Start of Block: Demographics

### Gender

Gender

Male (1)

Female (2)

Other (3) \_\_\_\_\_

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### Age

Age

---

*Skip To: End of Survey If Condition: Age Is Less Than 18. Skip To: End of Survey.*

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### **Nationality**

Nationality

- German (1)
  - Dutch (2)
  - Other (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

### **Education**

What is your highest level of Education?

- Didn't finish Secondary School (1)
  - High-School Diploma (2)
  - College Education (3)
  - Bachelor's Degree (4)
  - Master's Degree (5)
  - Prefer not to say (6)
- 

### **Relationship experience**

What is your relationship (including dating) experience?

- Previously had/ currently in a romantic relationship (1)
- Never had a romantic relationship (2)
- Prefer not to say (3)

*Skip To: End of Block If What is your relationship (including dating) experience? = Never had a romantic relationship*

*Skip To: End of Block If What is your relationship (including dating) experience? = Prefer not to say*

---

**Cheating**

Have you ever been cheated on in a romantic Relationship?

- Yes (1)
  - No (2)
  - Prefer not to say (3)
- 

**Cheated on**

Have you ever cheated on your partner in a romantic Relationship?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Prefer not to say (3)

End of Block: Demographics

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Start of Block: Belief in a Just World

**BJW**

How much do personally you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Somewhat Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
I think basically the world is a just place. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe that, by and large, people get what they deserve. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am confident that justice always prevails over injustice. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am convinced that in the long run people will be compensated for injustices. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I firmly believe that injustices in all areas of life (e.g., professional, family, politics) are the exception rather than the rule. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think people try to be fair when making important decisions. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Belief in a Just World

Start of Block: Ambivalent Sexism

Sexism Below is a series of statements concerning men and women and their relationships in contemporary society. Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with each statement. How much do personally you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Somewhat Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
No matter how accomplished he is, a man is not truly complete as a person unless he has the love of a woman. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Many women are actually seeking special favors, such as hiring policies that favor them over men, under the guise of asking for "equality." (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In a disaster, women ought not necessarily to be rescued before men. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Women are too easily offended. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
People are often truly happy in life without being romantically involved with a member of the other sex. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men. (7)

Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess. (8)

Women should be cherished and protected by men. (9)

Most women fail to appreciate fully all that men do for them. (10)

Women seek to gain power by getting control over men. (11)

Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores. (12)

Men are complete without women. (13)

Women exaggerate problems they have at work. (14)

Once a woman gets a man to commit to her, she usually tries to put him on a tight leash. (15)

When women lose to men in a fair competition, they typically complain about being discriminated against. (16)

A good woman should be set on a pedestal by her man. (17)

There are actually very few women who get a kick out of teasing men by seeming sexually available and then refusing male advances. (18)

Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility. (19)

Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives. (20)

Feminists are making entirely reasonable demands of men. (21)

Women, as compared to men, tend to have a more refined sense of culture and good taste.  
(22)



End of Block: Ambivalent Sexism

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Start of Block: Case Description no comment

### no Comment **C&C Definition**

Coercive and controlling behaviours in intimate relationships are a crime in the UK since the end of 2015. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) prosecutes criminal cases that have been investigated by the police and other investigative organisations in England and Wales. They define the crime as: “Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional.” (CPS, 2017).

**Case Description** The following text will describe an accusation of Control and Coercion. Please take your time to read it carefully as we will ask you questions about it later.

**Alleged Offence:** On 07/01/2021 the police received a phone call from Mr Cooper’s girlfriend: Miss Miller, alleging that she required immediate help.

Please see Miss Miller’s brief description of the events leading up to the police phone call on 07/01/2021:

- Miss Miller alleges that Mr Cooper is a very jealous individual within their relationship and that he regularly accuses her of infidelity.
- Miss Miller accuses Mr Cooper of constantly demanding access to her phone and texts.
- Miss Miller accuses Mr Cooper of frequently preventing her from leaving the house unless he accompanies her.
- Miss Miller accuses Mr Cooper of taking control over aspects of her free time activities, such as where she can go and for how long.
- She also states that he sends her abusive text messages after arguments and whenever she is coming home late.
- The night Miss Miller called the police she states that she went to her book club like she does every Wednesday. She believed that Mr Cooper somehow must have managed to track her location to follow her. According to Miss Miller, Mr Cooper approached the house, pushed his way inside and they had a heated argument in which he accused her of infidelity. She said Mr Cooper got very angry and threatened her. She felt very scared, so she called the police.
- This behaviour has been going on for 1 year and upon reflection Miss Miller believes she is the victim of coercive and controlling behaviour.

End of Block: Case Description no comment

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### Start of Block: Case Description neg victim behav

#### neg victim behav **C&C Definition**

Coercive and controlling behaviours in intimate relationships are a crime in the UK since the end of 2015. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) prosecutes criminal cases that have been investigated by the police and other investigative organisations in England and Wales. They define the crime as: “Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional.” (CPS, 2017).

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**Alleged Offence:** On 07/01/2021 the police received a phone call from Mr Cooper’s girlfriend: Miss Miller, alleging that she required immediate help.

Please see Miss Miller’s brief description of the events leading up to the police phone call on 07/01/2021:

- Miss Miller alleges that Mr Cooper is a very jealous individual within their relationship and that he regularly accuses her of infidelity.
- Miss Miller accuses Mr Cooper of constantly demanding access to her phone and texts.
- Miss Miller accuses Mr Cooper of frequently preventing her from leaving the house unless he accompanies her.
- Miss Miller accuses Mr Cooper of taking control over aspects of her free time activities, such as where she can go and for how long.
- She also states that he sends her abusive text messages after arguments and whenever she is coming home late.
- The night Miss Miller called the police she states that she went to her book club like she does every Wednesday. She believed that Mr Cooper somehow must have managed to track her location to follow her. According to Miss Miller, Mr Cooper approached the house, pushed his way inside and they had a heated argument in which he accused her of infidelity. She said Mr Cooper got very angry and threatened her. She felt very scared, so she called the police.
- This behaviour has been going on for 1 year and upon reflection Miss Miller believes she is the victim of coercive and controlling behaviour. During the collection of investigation evidence, Ms Miller admits that she has been unfaithful to Mr Cooper in the past but that this was a few months ago and not recently.

### End of Block: Case Description neg victim behav

### Start of Block: Case description no neg victim behav

#### no neg victim behav **C&C Definition**

Coercive and controlling behaviours in intimate relationships are a crime in the UK since the end of 2015. The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) prosecutes criminal cases that have been investigated by the police and other investigative organisations in England and Wales. They define the crime as: “Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass,

but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional.” (CPS, 2017).

**Case Description** The following text will describe an accusation of Control and Coercion. Please take your time to read it carefully as we will ask you questions about it later.

**Alleged Offence:** On 07/01/2021 the police received a phone call from Mr Cooper’s girlfriend: Miss Miller, alleging that she required immediate help.

Please see Miss Miller’s brief description of the events leading up to the police phone call on 07/01/2021:

- Miss Miller alleges that Mr Cooper is a very jealous individual within their relationship and that he regularly accuses her of infidelity.
  - Miss Miller accuses Mr Cooper of constantly demanding access to her phone and texts.
  - Miss Miller accuses Mr Cooper of frequently preventing her from leaving the house unless he accompanies her.
  - Miss Miller accuses Mr Cooper of taking control over aspects of her free time activities, such as where she can go and for how long.
  - She also states that he sends her abusive text messages after arguments and whenever she is coming home late.
  - The night Miss Miller called the police she states that she went to her book club like she does every Wednesday. She believed that Mr Cooper somehow must have managed to track her location to follow her. According to Miss Miller, Mr Cooper approached the house, pushed his way inside and they had a heated argument in which he accused her of infidelity. She said Mr Cooper got very angry and threatened her. She felt very scared, so she called the police.
  - This behaviour has been going on for 1 year and upon reflection Miss Miller believes she is the victim of coercive and controlling behaviour. Ms Miller denies having ever been unfaithful and in the course of the investigation, no evidence was found which could indicate that Mr Cooper’s accusations have any truth to them.

End of Block: Case description no neg victim behav

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Start of Block: Investigative Interview DoV

DoV

### Interview Script

The following text will show an interview with Mr Cooper. Please read it carefully as we will ask you some questions about it afterwards.

**Police interviewer:** Hello, my name is detective constable Johnson, I will be conducting an interview with you today. So, you do not have to say anything, but it may harm your defence if you do not mention, when questioned, something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence. Would you like me to explain the caution?

**Mr Cooper:** No, that’s fine.

**Police Interviewer:** The black box there on the wall is recording everything. If this investigation did go further, this recording can be used in court. Do you understand?

**Mr Cooper:** Er, yeah, I understand that.

**Police Interviewer:** Good stuff. So, you’ve been arrested on an allegation of controlling and coercive behaviour against you partner, Mr Cooper. This is alleged to have happened

numerous times over the course of the relationship, which to my understanding is the past year. So, do you want to start from the basics and just tell me about the relationship?

**Mr Cooper:** We have been going out for just over a year and it was really good at the start. I'd say it was good for the first four months. The only problem is that she's not necessarily the most trustworthy person and lately she is acting very weird. She started to join this book club. It's almost like her new obsession because she's going there quite regularly now. Some nights I barely see her because of this club. I feel like this made me start to think that she might be like seeing someone else again. There were a few things that made me think that actually. And this is when the arguments started.

**Police Interviewer:** So, what were your reasons for the suspicion?

**Mr Cooper:** Different things. I mean she never used to read a single book in the past. And let's be honest, everyone who knows her knows that she doesn't have enough brains to read a whole book. Magazines and Instagram with lots of pictures are enough for her. Then she would like get really dressed up and do her hair and all that just to go there. Her little skirt barely even covered her up. Am I really meant to think she wasn't doing that to attract someone's attention? I mean would you get all dressed up like that to go to a book club? And not only that but the fact that she is going to a „book club“?! Have you ever heard that people actually join clubs like that? She couldn't have made it more obvious that something else is going on and I think we both can see that.

**Police Interviewer:** OK, you mentioned before about arguments, did you two argue a lot during the relationship?

**Mr Cooper:** Yeah, we do and also did in the past because my girlfriend has a hard time understanding what it means to be loyal in a relationship. This was also when our bigger fights started. I've had to show her how relationships should actually work but she doesn't care and shows no respect to me. Trust me when I say that she is snooty as hell and only has eyes for herself and other men and this behaviour doesn't help the arguments once she gets going. We had a massive blowout once because I didn't want her to leave the house. Like a few days before that she spent almost two hours at this supposed book club and that obviously made me go crazy because she's gone out dressed up like that and stayed away longer than she'd promised me she would be. At that time, I confronted her and asked her why it took her so long to be back and she just came up with all of these excuses and tried to make me think I'm the problem, but I just know that there is something she's hiding. I mean why else would she turn her phone off when she's there?!

**Police Interviewer:** Can you explain why you take control over aspects of Miss Miller's free time, such as where she can go and for how long?

**Mr Cooper:** Man, I just told you! She is a cheater. After all of this bullshit that I had to go through before I simply asked her to not be gone for longer than an hour and that I would want her to be back on time and not be late. She freaked out but I just need to be able to trust her. So of course, I want to know where she is going and who she is going to hang out with.

**Police Interviewer:** OK so now I know a bit more about the relationship. I think we should move on to the incident that happened on the 7th of January 2021, when you went to Miss Miller's book club. Please explain in your own words what happened on the evening of that date.

**Mr Cooper:** Like I said earlier, she's been getting all dressed up recently and on that night she did it again. The longer she was at this supposed club the more suspicious I got. She wanted to be back at 9pm and she even promised it to me, but she was not home on time. I tried to call and texted her multiple times, but she wouldn't pick up, so I decided to use the tracking app I installed on her phone a few days before to check her location. I could just feel that there is something off, so I decided to drive to this location and to catch her in the act. The place I pulled up at did not look like there was a book club inside, it was just some house. By that time, it was already like 9:30pm and my thoughts were all over the place because I

knew she must be cheating on me again. I was annoyed and couldn't wait any longer, so I just went in there. When she answered the door, she looked really flustered and embarrassed and I knew she didn't want to let me in, so I just sort of pushed my way in. I kept asking "where is he, where is he?" and she was just standing there speechless which only made me more annoyed because she wouldn't even explain herself. Then we had an argument and one thing I noticed while standing there was that there were also other people in this house including some men. She just keeps lying and lying to me as she promised me before that there weren't any men in this club and this honestly proves it to me that my suspicion was justified this whole time.

**Police Interviewer:** Can you tell me why you think she called the police?

**Mr Cooper:** I don't even know why she called the police. I mean she's the one dressing slutty and lying about meeting other men behind my back. Like I said earlier she is acting weird and this whole book club thing is just the tip of the iceberg. I don't know what she's told you, but she is a very good actress, and you can't believe a word she says. Also, it's not like I check her phone all the time. I only check her phone when she wants to have a look at mine.

**Police Interviewer:** Can you tell me about any threatening language that might have been used during the altercation?

**Mr Cooper:** I can't remember exactly what I said once she started going off at me. Who wouldn't be angry when their girlfriend is going out to secretly meet men in other people's houses? You know how it is, I reckon we both probably said quite bad stuff. Like I said it's all a bit of a blur. This is actually annoying me talking about it all again, can we take a break please.

**Police Interviewer:** Yes, that's fine, let's take a short break then. Just for the recording the interview is being paused at 3:43 pm.

End of Block: Investigative Interview DoV

---

Start of Block: Investigative Interview no comment

no comment

## Interview Script

The following text will show an interview with Mr Cooper. Please read it carefully as we will ask you some questions about it afterwards.

**Police interviewer:** Hello, my name is police constable Johnson, I will be conducting an interview with you today. So, you do not have to say anything, but it may harm your defence if you do not mention, when questioned, something which you later rely on in court. Anything you do say may be given in evidence. Would you like me to explain the caution?

**Mr Cooper:** No, that's fine.

**Police Interviewer:** The black box there on the wall is recording everything. If this investigation did go further, this recording can be used in court. Do you understand?

**Mr Cooper:** Er, yeah, I understand that.

**Police Interviewer:** Good stuff. So, you've been arrested on an allegation of controlling and coercive behaviour against your partner, Mr Cooper. This is alleged to have happened

numerous times over the course of the relationship, which to my understanding is the past year. So, do you want to start from the basics and just tell me about the relationship?

**Mr Cooper:** No comment.

**Police Interviewer:** No comment, okay. I've still got to go through all the questions. I know you've already indicated you're going to say "no comment", but I have to just cover everything anyway. We've been told you are often suspicious of Miss Miller's activities. Could you give us the reasons for your suspicion?

**Mr Cooper:** No comment.

**Police Interviewer:** Did you two argue a lot during the relationship?

**Mr Cooper:** No comment.

**Police Interviewer:** Can you explain why you take control over aspects of Miss Miller's free time, such as where she can go and for how long?

**Mr Cooper:** No comment.

**Police Interviewer:** OK, I think we should move on to the incident that happened on the 7th of January 2021, when you went to Miss Miller's book club. Please explain in your own words what happened on the evening of that date.

**Mr Cooper:** No comment.

**Police Interviewer:** Can you explain why Miss Miller thought that you must have tracked her location?

**Mr Cooper:** No comment.

**Police Interviewer:** Can you tell me why you think she called the police?

**Mr Cooper:** No comment.

**Police Interviewer:** Can you tell me about any threatening language that might have been used during the altercation that you were accused of?

**Mr Cooper:** No comment.

**Police Interviewer:** Okay Mr Cooper, I've got no further questions. Is there anything else before I conclude the interview that you would like to say?

**Mr Cooper:** No.

**Police Interviewer:** Okay, I'm going to conclude the interview, and the time is now 3:34 pm.

End of Block: Investigative Interview no comment

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Start of Block: Manipulation Check

Man. Check **Please answer the following questions about the case you just read.**

	Extremely unlikely (1)	Somewhat unlikely (2)	Neither likely nor unlikely (3)	Somewhat likely (4)	Extremely likely (5)
Based on the evidence provided how likely is it that Miss Miller cheated on Mr Cooper prior to the offence? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Based on the evidence provided how likely is it that Miss Miller is cheating on Mr Cooper right now? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

End of Block: Manipulation Check

Start of Block: Attribution of blame

#### Attribution

**Coercion and control definition:** “Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional.” (CPS, 2017).

Please complete this questionnaire about the case you have just read. Indicate how much you

agree with the following statements about the suspect (Mr Cooper) and the victim (Ms Miller) of the case above.

**Based on the evidence provided in the case above, how much do you agree with the following statements:**

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Somewhat Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Mr Cooper's behaviour was the reason Miss Miller was feeling distressed. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Miss Miller is a victim of Control and Coercion in this case. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Miss Miller provoked Mr Cooper's behaviour. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Miss Miller asked to be victimized. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think Miss Miller is a bad individual. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mr Cooper enjoys having control over Miss Miller's life. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Miss Miller deserved to become a victim of Control and Coercion, because of her behaviour prior to the offence. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think Mr Cooper is a good individual. (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Miss Miller played a role in her own victimization. (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I think Mr  
Cooper is a  
manipulating  
individual.  
(10)

End of Block: Attribution of blame

---

Start of Block: Empathy for the suspect

Sus. Empathy

**How much do you agree with the following statements?**

	Strongly agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
The suspect's emotions are genuine. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I experienced the same emotions as the suspect while reading this transcript. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can feel the suspect's emotions. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can see the suspect's point of view. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I recognise the suspect's situation. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

## Sus. Sympathy

**How much sympathy do you feel for the suspect?**

- A great deal (1)
- A lot (2)
- A moderate amount (3)
- A little (4)
- None at all (5)

End of Block: Empathy for the suspect

---

Start of Block: Empathy for the victim

## Vic. Empathy

**How much do you agree with the following statements?**

	Strongly agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
The victim's emotions are genuine. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can feel the victim's emotions. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can see the victim's point of view. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I recognise the victim's situation. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

## Vic. Sympathy

**How much sympathy do you feel for the victim?**

- A great deal (1)
- A lot (2)
- A moderate amount (3)
- A little (4)
- None at all (5)

End of Block: Empathy for the victim

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Start of Block: Guilt of suspect

## Guilt

**Coercion and control definition:** “Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members, regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse: psychological, physical, sexual, financial and emotional.” (CPS, 2017).

Please complete this questionnaire about the case you have just read. Indicate how much you agree with the following statements about the suspect (Mr Cooper) who has been interviewed.

**Based on the evidence provided in the case above, how much do you agree with the following statements:**

	Strongly Disagree (1)	Somewhat Disagree (2)	Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)	Somewhat Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)
Mr Cooper behaved toward Miss Miller in a way that can be defined as controlling and coercive behaviour. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think Mr Cooper is guilty of Control and Coercion. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

### Punishment

For this question we would like you to disregard whether you believe Mr Cooper is guilty or not, and to answer the question as though he was guilty. In the case Mr Cooper was guilty, how long of a prison sentence do you feel would be appropriate? Please selected how many years the suspect should be sentenced to jail ranging from 0 to a max of 5 years.

Years in prison

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Assuming that Mr Cooper was found guilty of the crime, how long should his prison sentence be? ()						

End of Block: Guilt of suspect

Start of Block: Debriefing

### Debriefing

Thank you for your participation in our research. This data will be used to explore how people attribute blame in cases of Control and Coercion. The behaviour demonstrated in the case you read was an example of controlling and coercive behaviour, which was criminalized in England at the end of 2015. The case presented in this study was fictional, none of these things have happened, but similar cases do occur.

Research has found that suspects use a variety of manipulation techniques within police interviews to try to convince interviewers to take their side during disputes. The one used in this interview is called Denial of the Victim, which means that the suspect admits to having committed some of the behaviour he is accused of, but justifies it by arguing the behaviour of the victim was unacceptable and therefore their behaviour was an understandable response to the negative behaviour of the victim. In this way they attribute the blame to the victim. To test whether this technique has any impact on how people attribute the blame in this case, two versions of the interview were used. Some people in this study were presented to an interview version where the suspect (Mr Cooper) gave extensive answers incorporating Denial of the Victim arguments, whereas others were presented with an interview where the suspect always answered 'No comment'. We also investigated the effect of different victim behaviours on the attribution of blame. Therefore, the case description also varied. In one case the victim (Ms Miller) cheated on the suspect earlier in their relationship, in another version she did not cheat on Mr Cooper, and in the third case, there is no information provided whether Ms Miller has cheated on Mr Cooper or not. The purpose of this manipulation was that despite the fact that denial of victim arguments do not offer evidential value, we want to know if people are more likely to be persuaded by those arguments, if they have any truth to them. We needed to make it clear that past infidelity does not excuse the suspects behaviour, but we wanted to see if people think it (partly) does.

We hope that our study will help us to understand how blame is attributed in cases of Control and Coercion. Now, after your participation in this study, we want to remind you that all your data is collected completely anonymous and confidential. We are aware that some of the information provided in this survey may be sensitive and might disturb you. If this study

has caused any personal issues for you, we advise you to visit these websites that include information and support for Control and Coercion:

**English:** <https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/coercive-control/>

**Dutch:** <https://www.huiselijkgeweld.nl/organisaties/voor-wie-hulp-zoekt>

Additionally, feel free to contact the researchers of this study in any case of questions.

**Contact details**

Research supervisor: Steven Watson: [s.j.watson@utwente.nl](mailto:s.j.watson@utwente.nl)

The researchers Alina and Chiara want to thank you for participating in this study!

End of Block: Debriefing

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## Appendix F

### Consent Form and Questionnaire (German Version)

# C&C Master Thesis

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#### Start of Block: Information Sheet

#### Introduction

#### **Worum geht es in der Studie?**

Diese Studie untersucht, wie Menschen Opfern und Verdächtigen von Nötigungs- und Kontrollverhalten in intimen Beziehungen die Schuld zuschreiben.

#### **Kann ich an der Studie teilnehmen?**

Um an dieser Studie teilzunehmen, müssen Sie über 18 Jahre alt sein.

#### **Muss ich an der Studie teilnehmen?**

Nein, es ist Ihre Entscheidung, ob Sie an dieser Studie teilnehmen wollen oder nicht. Sie können jederzeit ohne Angabe von Gründen und ohne Konsequenzen von der Studie zurücktreten, indem Sie Ihr Browserfenster oder Ihren Tab schließen. Wenn Sie Ihren Browser vor dem Ende der Studie schließen, werden alle Daten, die Sie eingegeben haben, gelöscht und Sie werden nicht mehr als Teilnehmer berücksichtigt. Sobald Sie den Fragebogen ausgefüllt haben, können wir Ihre Daten jedoch nicht mehr zurückziehen, da alle Daten anonymisiert gesammelt werden und somit eine Identifizierung Ihrer Daten nach diesem Zeitpunkt unmöglich ist.

#### **Was passiert, wenn ich der Teilnahme zustimme?**

Wenn Sie zustimmen, an dieser Studie teilzunehmen, werden Sie zum Fragebogen weitergeleitet, für dessen Beantwortung Sie ca. 20-30 Minuten benötigen werden. Der Fragebogen beginnt mit einigen demographischen Fragen, bei denen nur grundlegende Informationen abgefragt werden, um die Anonymität zu wahren. Als nächstes werden Sie nach einigen Ihrer persönlichen Ansichten gefragt. Danach lesen Sie einen Bericht über einen angeblichen Fall von Kontrolle und Nötigung in einer intimen Beziehung. Danach lesen Sie eine Abschrift eines Ermittlungsgesprächs mit dem Verdächtigen des beschriebenen Falls. Danach werden Ihnen einige Fragen zu dem Fall und dem Interview gestellt. Abschließend werden Ihnen Fragen zu Ihrer Einstellung gestellt. Bitte beachten Sie, dass es keine richtigen oder falschen Antworten gibt, wir interessieren uns für Ihre persönliche Meinung zu diesen Themen.

#### **Risiken der Teilnahme**

Bitte bedenken Sie, dass es bei der Fallbeschreibung und den gestellten Fragen um sensible Themen geht und dass Sie als Teilnehmer Beschreibungen von kontrollierendem Beziehungsverhalten ausgesetzt sein werden. Wenn Sie glauben, dass diese Beschreibungen Sie aufregen könnten, beginnen Sie bitte nicht mit dem Experiment. Wenn Sie das Experiment starten und sich später unwohl fühlen, können Sie es jederzeit abbrechen, indem Sie Ihr Browserfenster schließen. Am Ende der Studie werden wir Ihnen Links zu relevanten Websites zur Verfügung stellen, die Unterstützung bei Problemen mit häuslichem Missbrauch bieten.

#### **Was passiert mit meinen Daten und mit den Ergebnissen dieser Studie?**

Diese Studie wird von zwei Psychologie-Masterstudenten der Universität Twente

durchgeführt und die gesammelten Daten werden für unsere Masterarbeit ausgewertet. Während des gesamten Fragebogens werden keine identifizierbaren Informationen gesammelt. Die gesammelten Daten selbst werden absolut vertraulich behandelt und sind nicht identifizierbar oder rückverfolgbar. Die Daten werden sicher auf einem passwortgeschützten Gerät gespeichert. Es werden keine individuellen Antworten präsentiert, sondern nur aggregierte Daten. Die Ergebnisse der Studie können zur Veröffentlichung eingereicht und für weitere Forschungen in diesem Bereich verwendet werden.

### **Kontaktangaben**

Betreuer der Studie: Steven Watson: s.j.watson@utwente.nl

Wenn Sie an dieser Studie teilnehmen möchten, lesen Sie bitte die folgenden Erklärungen und geben Sie Ihr Einverständnis:

- Ich bestätige, dass ich freiwillig an dieser Studie teilnehmen möchte und dass ich über 18 Jahre alt bin.

- Ich habe das Informationsblatt gelesen und verstehe den Zweck dieser Studie und dass sie eine Diskussion über häusliche Gewalt beinhalten wird.

- Ich verstehe, dass meine Daten anonym erfasst werden und dass ich nicht persönlich identifizierbar bin.

- Ich verstehe, dass ich jederzeit von der Studie zurücktreten kann.

Wenn Sie die obigen Erklärungen gelesen und verstanden haben und der Teilnahme an dieser Studie einwilligen wollen, dann können Sie auf den Button am Ende der Seite klicken.

Ich stimme zu (1)

Ich stimme nicht zu (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If What is the study about? This study investigates how people attribute blame to victims and su... = I do not Consent*

End of Block: Information Sheet

---

Start of Block: Demographics

### **Gender**

Geschlecht

männlich (1)

weiblich (2)

divers (3) \_\_\_\_\_

-----  


**Age**

Alter

---

*Skip To: End of Survey If Condition: Age Is Less Than 18. Skip To: End of Survey.*

---

**Nationality**

Nationalität

- Deutsch (1)
- Niederländisch (2)
- Andere (3) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

**Education**

Was ist Ihr höchster Bildungsstand?

- Ich habe keinen Schulabschluss (1)
- Schulabschluss (2)
- Abitur (3)
- Bachelor/Berufsausbildung (4)
- Master (5)
- Ich möchte es nicht sagen (6)
-

### Relationship experience

Was sind Ihre bisherigen Beziehungserfahrungen (Dating inbegriffen)?

- Ich hatte in der Vergangenheit/ habe aktuell eine romantische Beziehung (1)
- Ich hatte noch nie eine romantische Beziehung (2)
- Ich möchte es nicht sagen (3)

*Skip To: End of Block If What is your relationship (including dating) experience? = Never had a romantic relationship*

*Skip To: End of Block If What is your relationship (including dating) experience? = Prefer not to say*

---

### Cheating

Waren Sie in einer Beziehung jemals untreu?

- Ja (1)
  - Nein (2)
  - Ich möchte es nicht sagen (3)
- 

### Cheated on

Wurden Sie in einer Beziehung jemals betrogen?

- Ja (1)
- Nein (2)
- Ich möchte es nicht sagen (3)

End of Block: Demographics

---

Start of Block: Belief in a Just World

**BJW**

Wie sehr stimmen Sie persönlich den folgenden Aussagen zu:

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu (1)	Stimme eher nicht zu (2)	Stimme weder zu noch widerspreche ich (3)	Stimme eher zu (4)	Stimme voll und ganz zu (5)
Ich glaube, dass die Welt grundsätzlich ein gerechter Ort ist. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich glaube, dass die Menschen im Großen und Ganzen das bekommen, was sie verdienen. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich bin zuversichtlich, dass die Gerechtigkeit immer über die Ungerechtigkeit siegt. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich bin davon überzeugt, dass die Menschen auf lange Sicht für Ungerechtigkeiten entschädigt werden. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich bin fest davon überzeugt, dass Ungerechtigkeiten in allen Lebensbereichen (z.B. Beruf, Familie, Politik) eher die Ausnahme als die Regel sind. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich denke, dass die Menschen versuchen, bei wichtigen Entscheidungen fair zu sein. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

Start of Block: Ambivalent Sexism

Sexism Im Folgenden finden Sie eine Reihe von Aussagen über Männer und Frauen und ihre Beziehungen in der heutigen Gesellschaft. Bitte geben Sie an, inwieweit Sie jeder Aussage

zustimmen oder nicht zustimmen.

Wie sehr stimmen Sie persönlich den folgenden Aussagen zu:

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu (1)	Stimme eher nicht zu (2)	Stimme weder zu noch widerspreche ich (3)	Stimme eher zu (4)	Stimme voll und ganz zu (5)
Egal, wie erfolgreich er ist, ein Mann ist als Person nicht wirklich vollständig, wenn er nicht die Liebe einer Frau hat. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Viele Frauen fordern unter dem Deckmantel der "Gleichberechtigung" besondere Bevorzugungen, wie z.B. eine Einstellungspolitik, die sie gegenüber Männern bevorzugt. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bei einer Katastrophe sollten Frauen nicht unbedingt vor Männern gerettet werden. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Die meisten Frauen interpretieren unschuldige Bemerkungen oder Handlungen als sexistisch. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Frauen sind zu schnell beleidigt. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Menschen sind oft wirklich glücklich im Leben, ohne eine romantische Beziehung mit einem Mitglied des anderen Geschlechts zu haben. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feministinnen wollen nicht, dass Frauen mehr Macht haben als Männer. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Viele Frauen haben eine Qualität der Reinheit, die nur wenige Männer besitzen. (8)	<input type="radio"/>				
Frauen sollten von Männern wertgeschätzt und beschützt werden. (9)	<input type="radio"/>				
Die meisten Frauen wissen nicht voll zu schätzen, was Männer für sie tun. (10)	<input type="radio"/>				
Frauen versuchen, Macht zu erlangen, indem sie Kontrolle über Männer bekommen. (11)	<input type="radio"/>				
Jeder Mann sollte eine Frau haben, die er anbetet. (12)	<input type="radio"/>				
Männer sind ohne Frauen vollständig. (13)	<input type="radio"/>				
Frauen übertreiben bei Problemen, die sie auf der Arbeit haben. (14)	<input type="radio"/>				
Sobald eine Frau einen Mann dazu bringt, sich an sie zu binden, versucht sie normalerweise, ihn an die kurze Leine zu nehmen. (15)	<input type="radio"/>				
Wenn Frauen in einem fairen Wettbewerb gegen Männer verlieren, beschweren sie sich in der Regel darüber, diskriminiert zu werden. (16)	<input type="radio"/>				
Eine gute Frau sollte von ihrem Mann auf ein Podest gestellt werden. (17)	<input type="radio"/>				

Es gibt nur sehr wenige Frauen, denen es Spaß macht, Männer zu reizen, indem sie sich sexuell verfügbar zeigen und dann männliche Annäherungsversuche zurückweisen. (18)

Frauen haben im Vergleich zu Männern tendenziell ein höheres moralisches Empfinden. (19)

Männer sollten bereit sein, ihr eigenes Wohlbefinden zu opfern, um die Frauen in ihrem Leben finanziell zu versorgen. (20)

Feministinnen stellen völlig vernünftige Forderungen an Männer. (21)

Frauen haben im Vergleich zu Männern tendenziell einen feineren Sinn für Kultur und guten Geschmack. (22)

End of Block: Ambivalent Sexism

Start of Block: Case Description no comment

## No Comment

### Kontrolle und Nötigung Definition:

Nötigendes und kontrollierendes Verhalten in intimen Beziehungen ist in Großbritannien seit Ende 2015 eine Straftat. Die Staatsanwaltschaft (Crown Prosecution Service, CPS) verfolgt Straffälle, die von der Polizei und anderen Ermittlungsorganisationen in England und Wales untersucht wurden. Sie definieren das Verbrechen als: "Jeder Vorfall oder jedes Muster von Vorfällen von kontrollierendem, nötigendem oder drohendem Verhalten, Gewalt oder Missbrauch zwischen Personen ab 16 Jahren, die Intimpartner oder Familienmitglieder sind oder waren, unabhängig von Geschlecht oder Sexualität. Dies kann die folgenden Arten von

Missbrauch umfassen, ist aber nicht darauf beschränkt: psychologischer, physischer, sexueller, finanzieller und emotionaler Missbrauch." (CPS, 2017).

### **Fallbeschreibung**

Der folgende Text wird einen Vorwurf der Kontrolle und Nötigung beschreiben. Bitte nehmen Sie sich die Zeit, ihn sorgfältig zu lesen, da wir Ihnen später Fragen dazu stellen werden.

#### **Vorgeworfene Straftat:**

Am 07.01.2021 erhielt die Polizei einen Anruf von der Freundin von Herrn Cooper: Frau Miller, die angab, dass sie sofortige Hilfe benötige.

Bitte lesen Sie Frau Millers kurze Beschreibung der Ereignisse, die zu dem Anruf bei der Polizei am 07.01.2021 führten:

- Frau Miller behauptet, dass Herr Cooper in ihrer Beziehung sehr eifersüchtig ist und dass er sie regelmäßig der Untreue beschuldigt.
- Frau Miller beschuldigt Herrn Cooper, ständig Zugriff auf ihr Telefon und ihre SMS zu verlangen.
- Frau Miller wirft Herrn Cooper vor, dass er sie häufig daran hindert, das Haus zu verlassen, wenn er sie nicht begleitet.
- Frau Miller beschuldigt Herrn Cooper, die Kontrolle über Aspekte ihrer Freizeitaktivitäten zu übernehmen, z. B. wohin sie gehen kann und wie lange.
- Sie gibt auch an, dass er ihr nach Streitigkeiten und immer dann, wenn sie spät nach Hause kommt, beleidigende Textnachrichten schickt.
- In der Nacht, in der Frau Miller die Polizei anrief, gab sie an, dass sie zu ihrem Buchclub ging, wie sie es jeden Mittwoch tut. Sie glaubte, dass Herr Cooper es irgendwie geschafft haben musste, ihren Standort zu verfolgen, um ihr zu folgen. Laut Frau Miller näherte sich Herr Cooper dem Haus, drängte sich hinein und sie hatten einen heftigen Streit, in dem er sie der Untreue beschuldigte. Sie sagte, Herr Cooper sei sehr wütend geworden und habe sie bedroht. Sie fühlte sich sehr verängstigt, so dass sie die Polizei rief.
- Dieses Verhalten dauert nun schon seit einem Jahr an und Frau Miller glaubt, dass sie das Opfer von Kontrolle und Nötigung ist.

End of Block: Case Description no comment

---

Start of Block: Case Description neg victim behav

### **neg victim behaviour**

#### **Kontrolle und Nötigung Definition:**

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Missbrauch umfassen, ist aber nicht darauf beschränkt: psychologischer, physischer, sexueller, finanzieller und emotionaler Missbrauch." (CPS, 2017).

**Fallbeschreibung** Der folgende Text wird einen Vorwurf der Kontrolle und Nötigung beschreiben. Bitte nehmen Sie sich die Zeit, ihn sorgfältig zu lesen, da wir Ihnen später Fragen dazu stellen werden.

**Vorgeworfene Straftat:**

Am 07.01.2021 erhielt die Polizei einen Anruf von der Freundin von Herrn Cooper: Frau Miller, die angab, dass sie sofortige Hilfe benötige.

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- Frau Miller behauptet, dass Herr Cooper in ihrer Beziehung sehr eifersüchtig ist und dass er sie regelmäßig der Untreue beschuldigt.
- Frau Miller beschuldigt Herrn Cooper, ständig Zugriff auf ihr Telefon und ihre SMS zu verlangen.
- Frau Miller wirft Herrn Cooper vor, dass er sie häufig daran hindert, das Haus zu verlassen, wenn er sie nicht begleitet.
- Frau Miller beschuldigt Herrn Cooper, die Kontrolle über Aspekte ihrer Freizeitaktivitäten zu übernehmen, z. B. wohin sie gehen kann und wie lange.
- Sie gibt auch an, dass er ihr nach Streitigkeiten und immer dann, wenn sie spät nach Hause kommt, beleidigende Textnachrichten schickt.
- In der Nacht, in der Frau Miller die Polizei anrief, gab sie an, dass sie zu ihrem Buchclub ging, wie sie es jeden Mittwoch tut. Sie glaubte, dass Herr Cooper es irgendwie geschafft haben muss, ihren Standort zu verfolgen, um ihr zu folgen. Laut Frau Miller näherte sich Herr Cooper dem Haus, drängte sich hinein und sie hatten einen heftigen Streit, in dem er sie der Untreue beschuldigte. Sie sagte, Herr Cooper sei sehr wütend geworden und habe sie bedroht. Sie fühlte sich sehr verängstigt, so dass sie die Polizei rief.
- Dieses Verhalten dauert nun schon seit einem Jahr an und Frau Miller glaubt, dass sie das Opfer von Kontrolle und Nötigung ist. Während der Beweisaufnahme gibt Frau Miller zu, dass sie Herrn Cooper in der Vergangenheit untreu war, aber dass dies vor ein paar Monaten war und nicht in letzter Zeit.

End of Block: Case Description neg victim behav

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Start of Block: Case description no neg victim behav

**no neg victim behaviour**

**Kontrolle und Nötigung Definition:**

Nötigendes und kontrollierendes Verhalten in intimen Beziehungen ist in Großbritannien seit Ende 2015 eine Straftat. Die Staatsanwaltschaft (Crown Prosecution Service, CPS) verfolgt Straffälle, die von der Polizei und anderen Ermittlungsorganisationen in England und Wales untersucht wurden. Sie definieren das Verbrechen als: "Jeder Vorfall oder jedes Muster von Vorfällen von kontrollierendem, nötigendem oder drohendem Verhalten, Gewalt oder Missbrauch zwischen Personen ab 16 Jahren, die Intimpartner oder Familienmitglieder sind oder waren, unabhängig von Geschlecht oder Sexualität. Dies kann die folgenden Arten von

Missbrauch umfassen, ist aber nicht darauf beschränkt: psychologischer, physischer, sexueller, finanzieller und emotionaler Missbrauch." (CPS, 2017).

### **Fallbeschreibung**

Der folgende Text wird einen Vorwurf der Kontrolle und Nötigung beschreiben. Bitte nehmen Sie sich die Zeit, ihn sorgfältig zu lesen, da wir Ihnen später Fragen dazu stellen werden.

#### **Vorgeworfene Straftat:**

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- Frau Miller beschuldigt Herrn Cooper, ständig Zugriff auf ihr Telefon und ihre SMS zu verlangen.
- Frau Miller wirft Herrn Cooper vor, dass er sie häufig daran hindert, das Haus zu verlassen, wenn er sie nicht begleitet.
- Frau Miller beschuldigt Herrn Cooper, die Kontrolle über Aspekte ihrer Freizeitaktivitäten zu übernehmen, z. B. wohin sie gehen kann und wie lange.
- Sie gibt auch an, dass er ihr nach Streitigkeiten und immer dann, wenn sie spät nach Hause kommt, beleidigende Textnachrichten schickt.
- In der Nacht, in der Frau Miller die Polizei anrief, gab sie an, dass sie zu ihrem Buchclub ging, wie sie es jeden Mittwoch tut. Sie glaubte, dass Herr Cooper es irgendwie geschafft haben muss, ihren Standort zu verfolgen, um ihr zu folgen. Laut Frau Miller näherte sich Herr Cooper dem Haus, drängte sich hinein und sie hatten einen heftigen Streit, in dem er sie der Untreue beschuldigte. Sie sagte, Herr Cooper sei sehr wütend geworden und habe sie bedroht. Sie fühlte sich sehr verängstigt, so dass sie die Polizei rief.
- Dieses Verhalten dauert schon seit 1 Jahr an, und im Nachhinein glaubt Frau Miller, dass sie das Opfer von Kontrolle und Nötigung ist. Frau Miller bestreitet, jemals untreu gewesen zu sein, und im Laufe der Untersuchung wurden keine Beweise gefunden, die darauf hindeuten könnten, dass an Herrn Coopers Anschuldigungen etwas dran ist.

End of Block: Case description no neg victim behav

---

Start of Block: Investigative Interview DoV

### **DoV**

Der folgende Text zeigt ein Interview mit Herrn Cooper. Bitte lesen Sie es aufmerksam, da wir Ihnen anschließend einige Fragen dazu stellen werden.

#### **Interview Skript**

**Polizei Interviewer:** Hallo, mein Name ist Polizeiwachtmeister Johnson, ich werde heute ein Interview mit Ihnen durchführen. Also, Sie müssen nichts sagen, aber es kann Ihrer Verteidigung schaden, wenn Sie etwas nicht erwähnen, wenn danach gefragt wird, worauf Sie sich aber später vor Gericht stützen. Alles was Sie sagen, kann als Beweis verwendet werden. Möchten Sie, dass ich Ihnen die Rechtsmittelbelehrung erkläre?

**Herr Cooper:** Nein, das ist in Ordnung.

**Polizei Interviewer:** Die schwarze Box da an der Wand zeichnet alles auf. Sollte diese Ermittlung weiterführen, kann diese Aufnahme vor Gericht verwendet werden. Haben Sie das verstanden?

**Herr Cooper:** Ehm, ja, Ich habe das verstanden.

**Polizei Interviewer:** Sehr gut. Also Herr Cooper, Sie wurden verhaftet aufgrund einer Anschuldigung für kontrollierendes und nötigendes Verhalten gegenüber Ihrer Partnerin. Das soll angeblich mehrfach vorgekommen sein im Verlauf Ihrer Beziehung, was nach meinem Kenntnisstand das vergangene Jahr ist. Also, wollen Sie mit dem Grundlegenden anfangen und mir einfach etwas über die Beziehung erzählen?

**Herr Cooper:** Wir gehen seit etwas mehr als einem Jahr aus und am Anfang war es wirklich gut. Ich würde sagen es lief gut in den ersten vier Monaten. Das einzige Problem ist, dass sie nicht unbedingt die vertrauenswürdigste Person ist und in letzter Zeit verhält sie sich sehr seltsam. Sie hat angefangen, diesem Buch Club beizutreten. Es ist fast so etwas wie ihre neue Obsession, denn sie geht jetzt ziemlich regelmäßig dorthin. An manchen Abenden sehe ich sie kaum noch, wegen dieses Clubs. Das hat mich dazu gebracht, zu denken, dass sie vielleicht wieder mit jemandem zusammen sein könnte. Es gab ein paar Dinge, die mich das tatsächlich denken ließen. Und dann fingen die Streitereien an.

**Polizei Interviewer:** Und was waren Ihre Gründe für den Verdacht?

**Herr Cooper:** Verschiedene Dinge. Ich meine, sie hat in der Vergangenheit nie ein einziges Buch gelesen. Und seien wir mal ehrlich, jeder, der sie kennt, weiß, dass sie nicht genug Hirn hat, um ein ganzes Buch zu lesen. Zeitschriften und Instagram mit vielen Bildern reichen ihr aus. Dann macht sie sich schick und stylt ihre Haare und sowas, nur um dorthin zu gehen. Ihr kurzer Rock hat nicht mal das Nötigste bedeckt. Soll ich wirklich glauben, dass sie das nicht getan hat, um die Aufmerksamkeit von jemand anderem auf sich zu ziehen? Ich meine, würden Sie sich so aufmakeln, um in einen Buchclub zu gehen?

Und nicht nur das, sondern die Tatsache, dass sie zu einem "Buchclub" geht?! Haben Sie jemals gehört, dass Leute tatsächlich solchen Clubs beitreten? Sie hätte es nicht offensichtlicher machen können, dass etwas anderes vor sich geht, und ich denke, das können wir hier beide sehen.

**Polizei Interviewer:** OK, Sie haben vorhin von Streitereien gesprochen, haben Sie beide sich während der Beziehung oft gestritten?

**Mr. Cooper:** Ja, das tun wir und haben es auch in der Vergangenheit getan, weil meine Freundin es nur schwer versteht, was es bedeutet, in einer Beziehung loyal zu sein. Das war auch der Grund, warum unsere größeren Streitereien angingen. Ich musste ihr zeigen wie Beziehungen eigentlich funktionieren sollten, aber das ist ihr egal und sie zeigt mir keinen Respekt. Glauben Sie mir, wenn ich sage, dass sie verdammt hochnäsig ist und nur Augen für sich selbst und andere Männer hat, und dieses Verhalten hilft nicht bei den Auseinandersetzungen, wenn sie einmal in Fahrt ist. Wir hatten einmal einen heftigen Streit, weil ich nicht wollte, dass sie das Haus verlässt. Ein paar Tage davor war sie fast zwei Stunden in diesem angeblichen Buchclub und das hat mich natürlich wahnsinnig gemacht, weil sie so verkleidet ausgegangen ist und länger weggeblieben ist, als sie mir versprochen hatte. Damals habe ich sie damit konfrontiert und sie gefragt, warum sie so lange gebraucht hat, um wieder da zu sein, und sie kam nur mit all diesen Ausreden und versuchte, mich glauben zu lassen, ich sei das Problem, aber ich weiß einfach, dass sie etwas zu verbergen hat. Ich meine, warum sollte sie sonst ihr Telefon ausschalten, wenn sie da ist?!

**Polizei Interviewer:** Können Sie erklären, warum Sie die Kontrolle über Aspekte von Frau Millers Freizeit übernehmen, z.B. wohin sie gehen kann und für wie lange?

**Mr. Cooper:** Mann, ich habe es Ihnen doch gerade gesagt! Sie ist eine Betrügerin. Nach all dem Mist den ich vorher durchmachen musste habe ich sie einfach gebeten nicht länger als eine Stunde weg zu sein und dass ich möchte, dass sie pünktlich zurück ist und nicht zu spät kommt. Sie ist ausgeflippt, aber ich muss ihr einfach vertrauen können. Also will ich natürlich

wissen, wohin sie geht und mit wem sie abhängt.

**Polizei Interviewer:** OK, jetzt weiß ich ein bisschen mehr über die Beziehung. Ich denke, wir sollten mit dem Vorfall vom 7. Januar 2021 fortfahren, als Sie zu Frau Millers Buchclub gingen. Bitte erklären Sie in Ihren eigenen Worten, was am Abend dieses Datums passiert ist.

**Mr. Cooper:** Wie ich schon sagte, hat sie sich in letzter Zeit sehr herausgeputzt und an diesem Abend tat sie es wieder. Je länger sie in diesem angeblichen Club war, desto misstrauischer wurde ich. Sie wollte um 21 Uhr zurück sein und hat es mir sogar versprochen, aber sie war nicht pünktlich zu Hause. Ich hab mehrere Male versucht sie anzurufen und ihr zu schreiben, aber sie nahm nicht ab, also entschied ich mich, die Tracking-App zu benutzen, die ich ein paar Tage zuvor auf ihrem Telefon installiert hatte, um ihren Standort zu überprüfen. Ich konnte einfach spüren, dass etwas nicht stimmt, also beschloss ich, zu diesem Ort zu fahren und sie auf frischer Tat zu ertappen. Der Ort, an dem ich anhielt, sah nicht so aus, als wäre dort ein Buchclub, es war nur irgendein Haus. Zu diesem Zeitpunkt war es schon etwa 21:30 Uhr und meine Gedanken waren überall, weil ich wusste, dass sie mich wieder betrügen musste. Ich war genervt und konnte nicht länger warten, also ging ich einfach rein. Als sie die Tür öffnete, sah sie sehr aufgeregt und verlegen aus, und ich wusste, dass sie mich nicht reinlassen wollte, also drängte ich mich einfach hinein. Ich fragte immer wieder "Wo ist er, wo ist er?" und sie stand einfach nur sprachlos da, was mich nur noch mehr ärgerte, weil sie sich nicht einmal erklären wollte. Dann hatten wir einen Streit, und was ich bemerkte, während ich da stand, war, dass auch andere Leute in diesem Haus waren, darunter einige Männer. Sie lügt und lügt mich immer wieder an, weil sie mir vorher versprochen hat, dass keine Männer in diesem Club sind und das beweist mir ehrlich gesagt, dass mein Verdacht die ganze Zeit über berechtigt war.

**Polizei Interviewer:** Können Sie mir sagen, warum sie Ihrer Meinung nach die Polizei gerufen hat?

**Mr. Cooper:** Ich weiß nicht einmal, warum sie die Polizei gerufen hat. Ich meine, sie ist diejenige, die sich nuttig anzieht und darüber lügt andere Männer hinter meinem Rücken zu treffen. Wie ich schon sagte, sie verhält sich seltsam und diese ganze Buchclub-Sache ist nur die Spitze des Eisbergs. Ich weiß nicht, was sie Ihnen erzählt hat aber sie ist eine sehr gute Schauspielerin und Sie dürfen ihr kein Wort glauben. Außerdem ist es nicht so, dass ich ihr Telefon ständig kontrolliere. Ich überprüfe ihr Telefon nur wenn sie einen Blick auf meines werfen will.

**Polizei Interviewer:** Können Sie mir etwas über irgendwelche Drohungen sagen, die während des Streits gefallen sind?

**Mr. Cooper:** Ich kann mich nicht mehr genau erinnern was ich gesagt habe als sie anfang auf mich loszugehen. Wer wäre nicht wütend wenn seine Freundin ausgeht um sich heimlich mit Männern in fremden Häusern zu treffen? Sie wissen ja wie das ist, ich schätze wir haben beide ziemlich schlimme Sachen gesagt. Wie ich schon sagte, es ist alles ein bisschen verschwommen. Es nervt mich, wieder darüber zu reden. Können wir bitte eine Pause machen?

**Polizei Interviewer:** Ja, das ist in Ordnung, dann machen wir eine kurze Pause. Nur für die Aufzeichnung wird das Interview um 15:43 Uhr unterbrochen.

End of Block: Investigative Interview DoV

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Start of Block: Investigative Interview no comment

## No Comment

Der folgende Text zeigt ein Interview mit Herrn Cooper. Bitte lesen Sie es aufmerksam, da

wir Ihnen anschließend einige Fragen dazu stellen werden.

### **Interview Skript**

**Polizei Interviewer:** Hallo, mein Name ist Polizeiwachtmeister Johnson, ich werde heute ein Interview mit Ihnen durchführen. Also, Sie müssen nichts sagen, aber es kann Ihrer Verteidigung schaden, wenn Sie etwas nicht erwähnen, wenn danach gefragt wird, worauf Sie sich aber später vor Gericht stützen. Alles was Sie sagen, kann als Beweis verwendet werden. Möchten Sie, dass ich Ihnen die Rechtsmittelbelehrung erkläre?

**Herr Cooper:** Nein, das ist in Ordnung.

**Polizei Interviewer:** Die schwarze Box da an der Wand zeichnet alles auf. Sollte diese Ermittlung weiterführen, kann diese Aufnahme vor Gericht verwendet werden. Haben Sie das verstanden?

**Herr Cooper:** Ehm, ja, Ich habe das verstanden.

**Polizei Interviewer:** Sehr gut. Also Herr Cooper, Sie wurden verhaftet aufgrund einer Anschuldigung für kontrollierendes und nötigendes Verhalten gegenüber Ihrer Partnerin. Das soll angeblich mehrfach vorgekommen sein im Verlauf Ihrer Beziehung, was nach meinem Kenntnisstand das vergangene Jahr ist. Also, wollen Sie mit dem Grundlegenden anfangen und mir einfach etwas über die Beziehung erzählen?

**Herr Cooper:** Kein Kommentar.

**Polizei Interviewer:** Kein Kommentar, okay. Ich muss trotzdem alle Fragen durchgehen. Ich weiß Sie haben bereits signalisiert, dass Sie mit „kein Kommentar“ antworten werden, aber ich muss trotzdem einfach alles abdecken. Uns wurde mitgeteilt, dass sie oft misstrauisch gegenüber Frau Millers Aktivitäten sind. Können Sie uns die Gründe für Ihr Misstrauen mitteilen?

**Herr Cooper:** Kein Kommentar.

**Polizei Interviewer:** Haben Sie zwei viel gestritten während der Beziehung?

**Herr Cooper:** Kein Kommentar.

**Polizei Interviewer:** Können Sie erklären, warum Sie die Kontrolle über manche Aspekte von Frau Millers Freizeit übernehmen, wie zum Beispiel wohin sie gehen darf und für wie lange?

**Herr Cooper:** Kein Kommentar.

**Polizei Interviewer:** OK, ich glaube wir sollten zu dem Vorfall überwechseln, der sich am 7. Januar 2021 zugetragen hat, als Sie zu Frau Millers Buchclub gingen. Bitte erläutern Sie in Ihren eigenen Worten, was an diesem Abend passiert ist.

**Herr Cooper:** Kein Kommentar.

**Polizei Interviewer:** Können Sie erklären warum Frau Miller dachte, dass Sie Ihren Standort verfolgt haben?

**Herr Cooper:** Kein Kommentar.

**Polizei Interviewer:** Können Sie mir sagen, warum glauben Sie hat sie die Polizei angerufen?

**Herr Cooper:** Kein Kommentar.

**Polizei Interviewer:** Können Sie mir von einer bedrohenden Ausdrucksweise während der heftigen Auseinandersetzung berichten, der Sie beschuldigt werden?

**Herr Cooper:** Kein Kommentar.

**Polizei Interviewer:** Okay Herr Cooper, Ich habe keine weiteren Fragen. Ist da irgendetwas was Sie sagen möchten, bevor ich das Interview beende?

**Herr Cooper:** Nein.

**Polizei Interviewer:** Okay, Ich werde das Interview nun beenden. Die aktuelle Zeit ist 15:34 Uhr.

## Start of Block: Manipulation Check

Man. Check Bitte beantworten Sie die folgenden Fragen über den Fall, den Sie zuvor gelesen haben.

	Sehr unwahrscheinlich (1)	Eher unwahrscheinlich (2)	Weder wahrscheinlich noch unwahrscheinlich (3)	Eher wahrscheinlich (4)	Sehr wahrscheinlich (5)
Basierend auf den vorliegenden Beweisen, wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass Frau Miller Herrn Cooper vor dem Vergehen betrogen hat? (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Basierend auf den vorliegenden Beweisen, wie wahrscheinlich ist es, dass Frau Miller Herrn Cooper aktuell betrügt? (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## End of Block: Manipulation Check

## Start of Block: Attribution of blame

**Attribution**

**Kontrolle und Nötigung Definition:** "Jeder Vorfall oder jedes Muster von Vorfällen von kontrollierendem, nötigendem oder drohendem Verhalten, Gewalt oder Missbrauch zwischen Personen ab 16 Jahren, die Intimpartner oder Familienmitglieder sind oder waren, unabhängig von Geschlecht oder Sexualität. Dies kann die folgenden Arten von Missbrauch umfassen, ist aber nicht darauf beschränkt: psychologischer, physischer, sexueller, finanzieller und emotionaler Missbrauch." (CPS, 2017).

Bitte füllen Sie diesen Fragebogen über den Fall, den Sie gerade gelesen haben, aus. Zeigen

Sie, inwiefern Sie den folgenden Aussagen über den Verdächtigen (Herrn Cooper) und das Opfer (Frau Miller) aus dem vorherigen Fall zustimmen.

**Basierend auf den Beweisen, die im Fall beschrieben wurden, wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu?:**

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu (1)	Stimme eher nicht zu (2)	Stimme weder zu noch widerspreche ich (3)	Stimme eher zu (4)	Stimme voll und ganz zu (5)
Herr Coopers Verhalten war der Grund warum Frau Miller sich verängstigt gefühlt hat. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Frau Miller ist in diesem Fall ein Opfer von Kontrolle und Nötigung. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Frau Miller hat Herr Coopers Verhalten provoziert. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Frau Miller hat es herausgefordert schikaniert zu werden. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich denke Frau Miller ist eine schlechte Person. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Herr Cooper genießt es Kontrolle über Frau Millers Leben zu haben. (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Frau Miller hat es aufgrund ihres Verhaltens vor dem Vergehen, verdient ein Opfer von Kontrolle und Nötigung geworden zu sein. (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich denke Herr Cooper ist eine gute Person (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Ich denke Frau  
Miller hat  
selbst zu ihrer  
Opferrolle  
beigetragen.  
(9)

Ich denke Herr  
Cooper hat  
eine  
manipulative  
Persönlichkeit.  
(10)

End of Block: Attribution of blame

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Start of Block: Empathy for the suspect

**Sus. Empathy****Wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu?:**

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu (1)	Stimme eher nicht zu (2)	Stimme weder zu noch widerspreche ich (3)	Stimme eher zu (4)	Stimme voll und ganz zu (5)
Die Emotionen des Verdächtigen sind ehrlich. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich habe die gleichen Emotionen empfunden wie der Verdächtige, während ich das Transkript gelesen habe. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich kann die Emotionen des Verdächtigen spüren. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich kann die Perspektive des Verdächtigen verstehen. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich kann die Situation des Verdächtigen wiedererkennen. (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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### Sus. Sympathy

Wie viel Sympathie empfinden Sie für den Verdächtigen?

- Eine Menge (1)
- Eher viel (2)
- Weder viel noch wenig (3)
- Eher wenig (4)
- Überhaupt keine (5)

End of Block: Empathy for the suspect

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Start of Block: Empathy for the victim

### Vic. Empathy

Wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu?

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu (1)	Stimme eher nicht zu (2)	Stimme weder zu noch widerspreche ich (3)	Stimme eher zu (4)	Stimme voll und ganz zu (5)
Die Emotionen des Opfers sind ehrlich. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich kann die Emotionen des Opfers spüren. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich kann die Perspektive des Opfers verstehen. (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich kann die Situation des Opfers wiedererkennen. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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## Vic. Sympathy

Wie viel Sympathie empfinden Sie für das Opfer?

- Eine Menge (1)
- Eher viel (2)
- Weder viel noch wenig (3)
- Eher wenig (4)
- Überhaupt keine (5)

End of Block: Empathy for the victim

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Start of Block: Guilt of suspect

## Guilt

**Kontrolle und Nötigung Definition:** "Jeder Vorfall oder jedes Muster von Vorfällen von kontrollierendem, nötigendem oder drohendem Verhalten, Gewalt oder Missbrauch zwischen Personen ab 16 Jahren, die Intimpartner oder Familienmitglieder sind oder waren, unabhängig von Geschlecht oder Sexualität. Dies kann die folgenden Arten von Missbrauch umfassen, ist aber nicht darauf beschränkt: psychologischer, physischer, sexueller, finanzieller und emotionaler Missbrauch." (CPS, 2017).

Bitte füllen Sie diesen Fragebogen über den Fall, den Sie gerade gelesen haben, aus. Zeigen Sie inwiefern Sie den folgenden Aussagen über den befragten Verdächtigen (Herrn Cooper)

zustimmen. Basierend auf den Beweisen, die im Fall beschrieben wurden, wie sehr stimmen Sie den folgenden Aussagen zu?:

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu (1)	Stimme eher nicht zu (2)	Stimme weder zu noch widerspreche ich (3)	Stimme eher zu (4)	Stimme voll und ganz zu (5)
Herr Cooper hat sich Frau Miller gegenüber auf eine Art und Weise verhalten, die als kontrollierendes und nötigendes Verhalten definiert werden kann. (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich denke Herr Cooper ist schuldig für Kontrolle und Nötigung. (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Punishment**

Für diese Frage möchten wir Sie bitten, nicht zu berücksichtigen, ob Sie glauben, dass Herr Cooper schuldig ist oder nicht, sondern die Frage so zu beantworten, als ob er schuldig wäre. Für den Fall, dass Herr Cooper schuldig ist, wie lange wäre Ihrer Meinung nach eine Haftstrafe angemessen? Bitte wählen Sie aus, zu wie vielen Jahren im Gefängnis der Verdächtige verurteilt werden sollte, von 0 bis max. 5 Jahren.

Jahre im Gefängnis

0      1      2      3      4      5

Angenommen, dass Herr Cooper schuldig für das Verbrechen befunden wird, wie lang sollte seine Gefängnisstrafe sein? ()	
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End of Block: Guilt of suspect

Start of Block: Debriefing

## Debriefing

Vielen Dank für Ihre Teilnahme an unserer Studie. Diese Daten werden verwendet, um zu untersuchen, wie Leute die Schuld zuweisen in Fällen von Kontrolle und Nötigung. Das Verhalten, welches in dem Fall, den Sie gelesen haben, gezeigt wurde, war ein Beispiel für kontrollierendes und nötigendes Verhalten, welches Ende 2015 in England kriminalisiert wurde. Der aufgeführte Fall in dieser Studie war fiktional, keines dieser Dinge ist wirklich passiert, aber ähnliche Fälle kommen tatsächlich vor.

Die Forschung hat herausgefunden, dass Verdächtige verschiedene Manipulationstechniken während eines Polizei Interviews verwenden, um zu versuchen die Interviewer davon zu überzeugen sich auf ihre Seite zu stellen während der Verhandlung. Diejenige, die in diesem Interview verwendet wurde heißt „Verleugnung des Opfers“, was bedeutet, dass die Verdächtigen zugeben einige der Taten, die ihnen vorgeworfen werden, begangen zu haben, sie rechtfertigen diese Taten aber, indem sie argumentieren, dass das Verhalten des Opfers inakzeptabel war und ihr Verhalten daher eine nachvollziehbare Reaktion auf das negative Verhalten des Opfers war. Auf diese Weise weisen sie die Schuld dem Opfer zu. Um zu testen, ob diese Technik einen Einfluss auf die Art hat, wie Leute die Schuld in diesem Fall zuweisen, wurden zwei Versionen des Interviews verwendet. Einige Teilnehmer in dieser Studie haben eine Version des Interviews gesehen, in der der Verdächtige (Herr Cooper) ausführliche Antworten gegeben hat, welche Argumente zur Verleugnung des Opfers beinhalten, während andere ein Interview gelesen haben, in dem der Verdächtige durchgehend mit „kein Kommentar“ geantwortet hat. Wir haben außerdem den Effekt von verschiedenem Opferverhalten auf die Schuldzuweisung untersucht. Dafür variierte auch die Fallbeschreibung. In einem Fall hat das Opfer (Frau Miller) den Verdächtigen (Herrn Cooper) früher während ihrer Beziehung betrogen, in einer anderen Version des Falls hat sie Herrn Cooper nicht betrogen, und im dritten Fall wurden keine Informationen darüber gegeben, ob Frau Miller Herrn Cooper betrogen hat oder nicht. Die Absicht dieser Manipulation war, dass wir, ungeachtet der Tatsache, dass Argumente zur Verleugnung des Opfers keine Beweiskraft haben, wissen wollen, ob Leute mehr dazu neigen sich von diesen Argumenten überzeugen zu lassen, wenn etwas Wahres in ihnen steckt. Wir müssen deutlich betonen, dass frühere Untreue das Verhalten des Verdächtigen nicht entschuldigt, aber wir wollen sehen, ob Leute denken, dass es das (teilweise) tut.

Wir hoffen, dass unsere Studie dabei helfen wird zu verstehen, wie Schuldzuweisungen in Fällen von Kontrolle und Nötigung stattfinden. Nun, nach Ihrer Teilnahme an dieser Studie, möchten wir Sie daran erinnern, dass alle Ihre Daten vollkommen anonym und vertraulich gesammelt werden. Wir sind uns bewusst, dass einige Informationen, die in dieser Umfrage gegeben wurden, sensibel sein können und Sie möglicherweise beunruhigen können. Wenn diese Studie irgendwelche persönlichen Probleme bei Ihnen hervorgerufen hat, empfehlen wir Ihnen eine dieser Webseiten aufzusuchen, die Informationen und Unterstützung bei Kontrolle und Nötigung

bietet. **Deutsch:** <https://www.re-empowerment.de/gewalt/gewaltbeziehungen/partnerschaft-oder-misshandlungsbeziehung/>

**Niederländisch:** <https://www.huiselijkgeweld.nl/organisaties/voor-wie-hulp-zoekt> **Kontaktinformationen** Betreuer der Studie: Steven Watson

s.j.watson@utwente.nl

Die Forscherinnen Alina und Chiara danken Ihnen für Ihre Teilnahme an dieser Studie!