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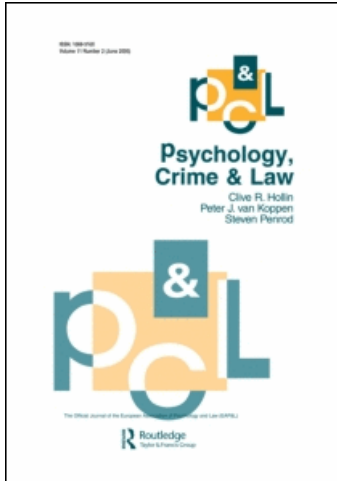
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### Social workers' and police officers' perception of victim credibility: Perspective-Taking and the impact of extra-Evidential factors

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## **SOCIAL WORKERS' AND POLICE OFFICERS' PERCEPTION OF VICTIM CREDIBILITY: PERSPECTIVE-TAKING AND THE IMPACT OF EXTRA-EVIDENTIAL FACTORS**

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The credibility of a victim can be influenced by factors that objectively should not have any impact on the judgemental process. The present two studies examine the influence of two such factors: (1) the non-verbal behavior of the victim, and (2) the ethnic identity of the victim, in the context of two different perspectives of observation (victim focused or truth detecting). Study 1 focused on perspective taking, and was included for the methodological reason that in Study 2 perspective taking was necessarily confounded with subject gender. Study 1 indicates that the perspective of the observer has a significant influence on the perceived credibility of the victim and the interpretation of non-verbal behavior. In Study 2 perspective-taking was manipulated more realistically by including a sample of social workers and of police officers. The other two factors were manipulated in the videotapes. Results suggested that the white victim exhibiting white non-verbal behavior, judged by a social worker, is perceived as more credible and has less chance of secondary victimisation. The black victim however, exhibiting black non-verbal behavior, who is judged by a police-officer, is perceived as least credible and runs a higher chance of secondary victimisation.

**Key words:** rape; extra-evidential factors; victim credibility.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Rape-cases in which the suspect denies the charges and where the supporting evidence is weak, the statement of the victim is often of crucial importance. When a victim tells her story and significant others doubt her integrity for unjust reasons, she experiences secondary victimisation. When an actual victim is not believed, she in fact becomes a victim for the second time. Because secondary victimisation can have a strong and negative impact, precautions should be taken to prevent this process from happening. These precautions should be directed at professionals who come in contact with victims and who are expected to be objective and make accurate judgements. Previous studies (Feild, 1978; Kaplan & Miller, 1978; Greuel, 1992) suggest that the impression formed of a victim is affected by extra-evidential factors, which should not have a bearing on the perceived credibility of her statements.

In this experiment we examine two extra-evidential factors: the non-verbal behavior of the victim and the ethnic identity of the victim, in the context of different perspectives of observation, empathic or truth detection.

Communication during a police interview is more than a mere verbal process in interpersonal interaction. Communication also consists of non-verbal messages which can influence

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impression formation. Non-verbal behavior is culturally determined. This implies that in cross-cultural interactions non-verbal communication errors might occur, due to different interpretations of different behaviors (Bochner, 1982). Non-verbal behavior which is subjectively associated with deception (Zuckerman, DePaulo & Rosenthal, 1981) corresponds with culturally determined black non-verbal behavior (Vrij, 1991). In a cross-cultural interaction between a white police-officer and a black citizen this could have the consequence that citizens displaying black non-verbal behavior can become suspect of withholding the truth (Winkel & Koppelaar, 1986; Koppelaar & Winkel, 1987; Winkel, Koppelaar & Vrij, 1988; Vrij & Winkel, 1989; Vrij & Winkel, 1991a,b; Winkel, 1991, 1991a, 1993; Vrij & Winkel, 1994). Black non-verbal behavior consists of more speech disturbances, speaking more slowly and with a higher pitched voice, giving more indirect answers, making less eye-contact, smiling more often and moving the body more frequently, making more non-indicative gestures with hands or arms and displaying more self-manipulations (Vrij, 1991). To a white observer this behavior could be associated with being nervous. In the context of a victim-interview the perceived tension associated with black non-verbal behavior may be interpreted differently relative to the observers' background, e.g., his observational perspective. An observer who is mainly focused on detecting the truth may relate the perceived 'nervous' behavior to attempts to hide the truth (reducing victim-credibility) while a more empathic observer may relate the same behavior to the emotionally charged nature of the incident experienced (enhancing victim-credibility). Ellsworth and Langer (1976) and Kraut (1978) suggested that the interpretation of the non-verbal behavior is a function of the situation and the suspiciousness of the observer. When we look at the different point of view between the social worker and the police-officer (the latter being more interested in detecting the truth and therefore more suspicious) we expect a social worker to interpret black non-verbal behavior more strongly as a display of emotional tension due to the victimisation and therefore perceive the victim as more credible than a police-officer (Hypothesis 1).

A second factor that can have an influence on impression formation is the ethnic identity of the victim. Previous studies on ethnic identity and impression formation revealed that black suspects were perceived as being more suspicious than white suspects (Vrij, 1991; Vrij & Winkel, 1992) and that black suspects are treated differently (Wöstmann, 1989). Especially in cases where the supporting evidence appears weak, the ethnic identity may have a strong impact. Jurors for example tend to convict suspects who belong to a different ethnic group more than suspects who belong to their own ethnic group. This effect becomes stronger when the evidence is weaker (Ugwuegbu, 1978). In their study on social categorisation, Billig and Tajfel (1973) found that the mere categorisation of subjects in different groups resulted in ingroup favouritism. Previous studies focused exclusively on the influence of the ethnic identity of the suspect. Smith, Visher and Davidson (1984) found the race of the victim to have a main influence on police decision making to arrest a suspect. They call this racial bias 'differential responsiveness' to black victims. Our hypothesis is that the ethnic identity of a victim will also influence impression formation. More specifically we expect a Surinamer victim to be judged more negatively by a Dutch observer than a Dutch victim (Hypothesis 2).

Research conducted by Deitz, Tiemann-Blackwell, Daley and Bentley (1982) suggests that the extent to which jurors feel empathy toward the victim (measured with the 'rape em-

pathy scale') influences their judgement. More empathic jurors judge the victim more positively. Weir and Wrightsman (1990) found the precise interpretation of eye contact (staring, avoiding, or random) to be a function of mock jurors' reported rape empathy. Observers who reported more empathy with the victim interpreted the victims' behavior as consistent with being raped. In other words, a juror who takes the perspective of empathy with the rape victim will judge the victim and her eye contact (staring) with the defendant as more credible. A juror who takes the perspective of little empathy with the rape victim will judge the victim and her eye contact (staring) with the defendant as less credible. In the Weir and Wrightsman (1990) study the difference in empathy for the victim was measured with the 'rape empathy scale'. In this experiment we propose that, due to their profession the two groups of observers will show a difference in perspective taking. We expect social workers to be more empathic, e.g., victim focused when listening to a victim, whilst police officers probably are more interested in detecting the truth. From their different viewpoints these two groups of subjects will also give different interpretations to the other external variables (Hypothesis 3). Though Weir and Wrightsman also studied the interpretation of gaze behavior, it should be noted that they did this by having their subjects read a story. In our study we used a video-film to make the situation more realistic.

In this experiment we expect social workers to observe a victim in a different way than police officers, especially when the victim has a Surinamer appearance and displays black non-verbal behavior. We explain this difference with the proposition that social workers are more victim focused due to their profession, and police officers are more prone to detecting the truth due to their profession. To examine whether this different viewpoint (victim focused or truth detection) is the factor which influences the judgement of the two groups, a pilot study was conducted first, focusing on the perspective-taking variable. The main reason was potential confounding with subject sex, due to the fact that victim workers tend to be female and police officers tend to be male. We gave two groups of students a different instruction to look at a videotape rape victim interview. Our hypothesis is that students with a victim focused perspective will observe the victim as more credible than students receiving a 'truth detection' instruction.

## METHOD

### *Study 1:*

#### *Subjects*

Participating in this study were 123 students, of which 64% were male and 36% were female. Of the students 68% studied economics, 9% studied law, 5% studied culture organisation and management and the remaining 18% was miscellaneous. Subjects' mean age was 22.

#### *Procedure*

In a coffee-corner at the Free University students were asked to participate in an experiment. After they agreed they were taken to a room. The experimenter opened the experiment with the following introduction: "The department of Social Psychology is studying the filing of

rape complaints. We will show you a videotaped fragment of such a complaint. You will see a rape victim who is being interviewed by a vice squad officer. Before I start the film, I would like to ask you to read these instructions carefully." A few minutes later the film started with a view of the police station where the rape victim came to file her report. A commentator announces that the woman had come to the station to file a rape complaint and that she had already been given some opportunity to tell her own story. A summary of her story was shown on the screen. In short it contained the following:

The woman went to a party of a girlfriend by bus. She enjoyed the party so much that she didn't want to go home with the last bus. She could stay at a friend (Peter) of her girlfriends' house. she slept on the floor, but got sick and went to lay down next to Peter on the double bed. She reported that he raped her.

The film then continues with pictures of an officer interviewing the woman. The commentator reports that the vice squad officer has given the woman ample time to tell her own story and that he has informed her about the procedural aspects. The woman has agreed to file the complaint. Next the victim (an actress) talking to the officer was shown.

The vice squad officer asked a total of four questions, shown on the screen as subtitles. These questions were:

- (1) What happened when you both arrived at his house?
- (2) Did you tell Peter that you only went with him to sleep at his place?
- (3) Why didn't you leave the bed immediately?
- (4) Did you make it clear to him that you didn't want it?

Each question asked took 10 seconds; the answers given by the victim took 20 seconds. Thus the victim was talking in total for 80 seconds and listening for 40 seconds. The sound of the answers was removed which means that the victim's voice could not be heard. After viewing the video subjects were handed out a questionnaire, consisting of the independent variables, manipulation checks, and biographical information.

### *Independent Variables*

In this experiment we introduced three independent measures, namely "Ethnic identity," "Non-verbal behavior" and "Instruction." The first independent variable which we manipulated in the video was the ethnic identity of the victim. The same actress played the role of victim in all the video films, but in the black skin colour condition she was made to look like a Surinamer woman and in the white skin colour condition she was a white Dutch woman. This was done by a professional make-up artist.

Non-verbal behavior was the second independent variable, which was also displayed by the victim, in the video film. To manipulate the non-verbal behavior we relied on normative data derived from former studies (Vrij, 1991), which were corrected for sex-differences (Vrugt & Kerkstra, 1982; Hall, 1984; Hall & Halberstadt, 1986). In the 'white' condition the victim averted her gaze three times with a duration of 5 seconds while speaking for 80 seconds and once for 1.5 seconds while listening for 40 seconds. Moreover the victim displayed five gestures and one body movement while speaking. In the 'black' condition the

victim averted her gaze five times five seconds while speaking for 80 seconds and once for 6 seconds during the 40 seconds listening time. She also made eight gestures, two body movements and two self-manipulations.

The instruction given provides the third independent variable. There were two versions, a victim focused instruction, focusing on the psychological implications of the victimisation and the need for assisting the victim or a truth detection instruction, focusing on the truth. These instructions were given in advance:

*Victim focused instruction:*

A rape can have serious psychological implications for the victim. Research suggests that being raped is a traumatic experience for a victim. It is therefore of great importance that a victim is supported. In a moment you will be shown a part of a rape report to the police. While watching the film try to imagine yourself in the position of the victim.

*Truth detection instruction:*

In cases of rape it is often difficult to detect what exactly took place. Getting to the truth is important not only on behalf of the victim but also on behalf of the defendant. The defendant should not be charged incorrectly. Police officers report that some rape complaints are false. In a moment you will be shown a part of a rape report to the police. While watching the film try to detect what exactly happened.

*Dependent Variables*

The "Perceived Credibility Scale" was used to measure the major dependent variables (Winkel & Koppelaar, 1992). The Perceived Credibility Scale consists of different subscales. In this experiment we have studied perceived credibility of the victim, attribution of responsibility to the victim, perceived seriousness of the consequences resulting from the incident, and the interpretation of the perceived tension of the victim.

Perceived credibility of the victim was measured through the following questions: (1) Do you perceive her as credible, (2) Do you get the impression that he is concealing the truth, (3) Does her statement seem reliable, and (4) Do you think this is a false statement ( $\alpha = 0.78$ ). Perceived seriousness of the consequences resulting from the incident was measured with the following questions: (1) Do you think the victim is very shocked by what has happened, (2) Do you think she is emotionally affected, and (3) Do you think she will experience emotional damage from the event ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ). To measure the interpretation of the perceived tension of the victim, subjects were asked to indicate which of the following statements were most appropriate: (1) the woman is at ease; (2) the woman is tense because she is concealing the truth; or (3) the woman is tense because she has difficulty talking about the event.

## RESULTS

*Manipulation Checks*

The analysis revealed that ethnic identity was successfully manipulated: 94% of the respondents identified the ethnic identity of the victim correctly.

To check the manipulation of 'Non-verbal behavior' we performed a univariate analysis of variance. Results revealed a successful manipulation: subjects indicated that the victim in the 'black' non-verbal behavior condition looked less often at the vice squad officer ( $M = 2.89$  versus  $M = 3.97$ ,  $F(1,121) = 15.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ), made more gestures ( $M = 5.13$  versus  $M = 4.32$ ,  $F(1,121) = 8.86$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and made more body movements ( $M = 4.72$  versus  $M = 3.29$ ,  $F(1,121) = 30.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ) than the victim in the 'white' non-verbal behavior condition. These significant differences represent a successful manipulation.

Furthermore we conducted an analysis of variance to check the manipulation of the variable 'Instruction'. This resulted in a significant difference between both conditions as to what extent they tried to detect the truth ( $t(1,121) = 1.74$ ,  $p < .05$ ): in the victim focused condition they tried less to detect the truth ( $M = 5.27$ ) than in the truth detection condition ( $M = 5.61$ ). To the extent in which they had focused on the consequences for the victim we found no difference ( $M = 4.31$  vs  $M = 4.32$ ).

### *Experimental Results*

To test the Hypothesis that black non-verbal behavior influences impression formation as a function of the instruction given, we performed a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) on the basis of a 2 (Ethnic Identity: Surinam vs Dutch)  $\times$  2 (Non-verbal Behavior: black vs white)  $\times$  2 (Instruction: victim focused vs truth detection) factorial design. At a multivariate level a main effect emerged for Non-verbal Behavior,  $F(2,114) = 4.30$ ,  $p < .05$  and for Instruction  $F(2,114) = 4.27$ ,  $p < .05$ . The victim with black non-verbal behavior was perceived as less credible ( $M = 3.62$ ) than the victim with white non-verbal behavior ( $M = 4.26$ ),  $F(1,115) = 8.66$ ,  $p < .01$ . For the attribution of responsibility to the victim the analysis indicated a difference approaching significance  $F(1,115) = 2.52$ ,  $p = .06$ . There was a tendency for subjects to attribute more responsibility to the victim with black non-verbal behavior than they did to the victim who displayed white non-verbal behavior ( $M = 3.98$  vs  $M = 3.62$ ). In support of the Hypothesis subjects who received the victim focused instruction perceived the victim as more credible ( $M = 4.21$  vs  $M = 3.67$ ),  $F(1,115) = 5.92$ ,  $p < .01$ , and less responsible for the rape ( $M = 3.50$  vs  $M = 4.10$ ),  $F(1,115) = 7.52$ ,  $p < .01$ , than students who received the truth detection instruction. However no interaction effects emerged.

A chi-square analysis was performed to test whether a different instruction was of influence on the interpretation of the non-verbal behavior of the victim. A significant difference was found for the interpretation of the perceived tension of the victim ( $\chi^2 = 7.09$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Most of the subjects (51.6%) who received the victim focused instruction interpreted the perceived tension of the victim as related to the difficulty of talking about the rape. While only 39.3% of the subjects who received the truth detection instruction interpret the perceived tension of the victim as related to the difficulty of talking about the rape. Percentages are shown in Table 1.

Next we analyzed the black and white non-verbal behavior conditions separately. Because black non-verbal behavior can be perceived as a subjective indicator of tension we expect differences between the two instruction groups to emerge more strongly in this condition than in the white non-verbal behavior condition. The analysis confirmed our expectation: in the white non-verbal behavior condition no significant difference between the victim focused and the truth detection instruction emerged on the perceived tension of the victim ( $\chi^2 =$



**Table 1. Percentages of the interpretation of the victims' behavior as a function of instruction.**

	<i>Victim focused instruction</i>	<i>Truth detection instruction</i>
Woman is relaxed	30.6%	21.3%
Tense, because she is withholding the truth	17.7%	39.3%
Tense, because it is difficult to talk about the experience	51.6%	39.3%

.40,  $df = 2$ ,  $p = n.s.$ ). Analysis of the black non-verbal behavior condition however suggests overall more respondents interpreting this behavior as tensed, with subjects in the victim focused condition thinking this tension is caused by the difficulty of talking about the event (63.3%) while most subjects in the truth detection condition (54.8%) think the victim is tense because she is withholding the truth ( $\chi^2 = 9.66$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

**Table 2. Percentages of the interpretation of the Black non-verbal behavior as a function of a different behavior.**

	<i>Victim focused instruction</i>	<i>Truth detection instruction</i>
Woman is relaxed	20.0%	9.7%
Tense, because she is withholding the truth	16.7%	54.8%
Tense, because it is difficult to talk about the experience	63.6%	35.5%

### *Study 2:*

#### *Subjects*

Participating in this second experiment were 286 (white) social workers and 170 (white) police officers. Of the social workers 19% were men and 81% were women. For the police officers this percentage was just opposite, 85% were men, 15% were women. Considering the sex difference between the groups this factor was covaried in the analysis. Mean age of the respondents was 41. Education levels in the two groups were compatible: 5% had a low education level (elementary school, junior highschool), 48% had a median education level (high school), and 47% had a higher education level (college).

#### *Procedure*

The experiment among social workers was conducted in one day, during a meeting organized by the LOS (National Organisation for Victim Assistance). Everybody agreed to participate in the experiment. The experiment among police officers was conducted at police training schools and at several police stations.

The experimenter introduced the experiment by explaining to the respondents that the Free University is studying how people form impressions about others. This introduction

was followed by the same video film as used in Study 1. After watching the film respondents were given a questionnaire consisting of the dependent variables, manipulation checks, observer characteristics and biographical information.

### *Independent Variables*

In this experiment we introduced three independent measures, namely "Ethnic identity," "Non-verbal behavior" and "Perspective of the observer." "Ethnic identity" and "Non-verbal behavior" were manipulated similar to Study 1.

Observers' perspective was manipulated by sampling a group of social workers and a group of police officers. The group of police officers consisted of vice squad detectives as well as patrol-officers.

### *Dependent Variables*

Parallel to Study 1 subscales of the "Perceived Credibility Scale" were used to measure the major dependent variables (Winkel & Koppelaar, 1992): perceived credibility of the victim ( $\alpha = 0.87$ ), attribution of responsibility to the victim ( $\alpha = 0.90$ ), and perceived seriousness of the consequences resulting from the incident ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ).

## RESULTS

### *Manipulation Checks*

The first manipulation check indicated that 69% of the subjects identified the ethnic identity of the victim correctly, 1.5% identified the ethnic identity incorrectly and 29% did not know the ethnic identity. A possible explanation for the higher percentage of 'don't know' answers could be that the second part of the questionnaire consisted of questions referring to the Surinam culture, this was confusing for the respondents who viewed the film with the Dutch victim. Thus causing subjects to ask the experimenter questions and change their answers to the question of the ethnic identity of the victim. To control for the incorrect and 'don't know' answers we conducted a covariance analysis with 'good' 'don't know' and 'wrong' answers as covariate. This covariance analysis was consistent with the data shown in the text and the Tables.

As a manipulation check for the variable non-verbal behavior, univariate analyses were conducted. These analyses indicated a successful manipulation. Respondents indicated that the victim in the 'black non-verbal behavior' condition, averted her gaze more ( $M = 4.53$  versus  $M = 3.77$ ,  $F(1,454) = 27.15$ ,  $p < .001$ ), displayed more gestures ( $M = 4.58$  versus  $M = 3.96$ ,  $F(1,454) = 17.31$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and made more body movements ( $M = 3.74$  versus  $M = 3.04$ ,  $F(1,454) = 22.66$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### *Experimental Results*

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) with a 2 (Observer Perspective: social workers vs police officers)  $\times$  2 (Ethnic Identity: Dutch vs Surinam)  $\times$  2 (Non-verbal Behav-

ior: white vs black) factorial design was conducted to examine the Hypotheses. Dependent variables were: perceived credibility of the victim, attribution of responsibility, and perceived seriousness of the consequences. The analysis revealed a main effect for Observer Perspective,  $F(3,446) = 8.26, p < .001$ , and an interaction approaching significance: Observer Perspective  $\times$  Ethnic Identity  $\times$  Non-verbal Behavior,  $F(3,446) = 2.48, p = .06$ . At a univariate level interaction effects were found for: Observer Perspective  $\times$  Ethnic Identity  $\times$  Non-verbal Behavior, which revealed significant differences on perceived credibility  $F(1,448) = 7.28, p < .01$ , and on perceived seriousness  $F(1,448) = 4.15, p < .05$ . A trend was found on perceived responsibility  $F(1,448) = 3.42, p = .06$ . For Observer Perspective  $\times$  Ethnic Identity effects were found at a univariate level for perceived responsibility  $F(1,448) = 5.82, p < .05$ , for perceived seriousness  $F(1,448) = 4.15, p < .05$ . For perceived credibility a trend was found  $F(1,448) = 3.47, p = .063$ . Relevant means are shown in Table 3.

**Table 3. Mean scores on perceived 'credibility', 'responsibility' and 'seriousness' of the victim by Group, Ethnic identity and Non-verbal behavior.**

	<i>Credibility</i>	<i>Responsibility</i>	<i>Seriousness</i>
<b>SOCIAL WORKERS</b>	4.78	3.37	4.89
<b>DUTCH VICTIM</b>	4.99	3.12	5.12
white nonverbal	5.09	3.19	5.11
black nonverbal	4.90	3.06	5.12
<b>SURINAMER VICTIM</b>	4.58	3.61	4.67
white nonverbal	4.44	3.84	4.40
black nonverbal	4.69	3.42	4.90
<b>POLICE</b>	4.48	3.12	4.49
<b>DUTCH VICTIM</b>	4.47	3.23	4.40
white nonverbal	4.31	3.42	4.33
black nonverbal	4.63	3.05	4.47
<b>SURINAMER VICTIM</b>	4.49	3.02	4.58
white non verbal	4.80	2.78	4.87
black nonverbal	4.21	3.28	4.32

As noted above, the analysis revealed a significant main effect for Observer Perspective. Table 3 indicates that generally, social workers made a more positive judgement about the victim than police officers. Social workers judged the victim as more credible ( $M = 4.78$  vs  $M = 4.48$ ), and perceived consequences as more serious ( $M = 4.89$  vs  $M = 4.49$ ).

To further explore the interaction Observer Perspective  $\times$  Ethnic Identity  $\times$  Non-verbal Behavior we conducted separate multivariate analyses for social workers and police officers, with the factors Ethnic Identity and Non-verbal Behavior. The analysis on social workers revealed a main effect for Ethnic Identity,  $F(3,280) = 3.35, p < .05$ . Social workers perceived the Dutch victim as: more credible ( $M = 4.99$  vs  $M = 4.58$ ), less responsible ( $M = 3.12$  vs  $M = 3.61$ ) and perceived the consequences to be more serious ( $M = 5.12$  vs  $M = 4.67$ ) than for the Surinamer victim. The analysis on police officers revealed an interaction effect at a univariate level between Ethnic Identity  $\times$  Non-verbal Behavior for credibility  $F(1,166)$

= 6.12,  $p < .05$ . Police officers attribute more credibility to the Surinamer victim when she displays white non-verbal behavior ( $M = 4.80$ ) and they attribute more credibility to the Dutch victim when she displays black non-verbal behavior ( $M = 4.63$ ).

## DISCUSSION

In order to improve the treatment victims receive from professionals whom they turn to for help, we examined variables we hypothesized have an influence on undesirable reactions to victims. Findings suggest that there is a need for improvement. First we looked at differences between social workers and police officers. Our assumption was that the profession of the observer would influence the impression formed. In order to examine this we defined the difference between a social worker and a police officer in terms of their perspective taking. In Study 1 we gave one group of subjects a victim focused instruction and gave the other group a truth detecting instruction. Results indicated a difference in impression formation due to the instruction given. Subjects who were given the victim focused instruction perceived the victim more positively, which means they observed her as more credible, and held her less responsible for the incident. Though the victim was perceived as being tense, subjects in the victim focused condition seek the explanation in the fact that she had difficulty talking about the rape.

The other external variables in the first experiment were ethnic identity and non-verbal behavior. Subjects in both conditions perceived black non-verbal behavior as a subjective indicator of tension. However causal attributions of black non-verbal behavior differed. 'Victim focused' subjects interpreted black non-verbal behavior as tense because it is difficult for the victim to talk about the rape, while 'truth detecting' subjects thought the victim was tense because she was concealing the truth. From this we infer that a difference in perspective-taking influences the interpretation of the observed behavior. In other words: the chance of becoming a victim of secondary victimisation is moderated by the viewpoint of the observer.

The results in Study 1 indicated a perspective-effect in the judgement of a victim. To further explore this effect we took on two different occupational groups who work with victims of rape, namely social workers and police officers.

In support of the hypothesis social workers made different judgements about victims than police officers: social workers perceived the victim as more credible, and perceived the consequences to be more serious for the victim than police officers. The hypothesis that there is a difference in the observation of a victim due to a difference in perspective-taking, is confirmed by these results and the results in Study 1. In both experiments we found a significant group effect. These results correspond with the findings in previous studies. Feild (1978) observed a significant difference in attitude between rapists, civilians, police officers and social workers, towards victims of rape. Especially the negative attitudes held by police officers were striking.

Furthermore we hypothesized that profession would interact with the interpretation of other external variables as ethnic identity and non-verbal behavior. Results indicated a three-way interaction for the factors credibility and seriousness of the consequences, which means that how positive the victim is perceived, is dependent on the observers' profession, the eth-

nic identity of the victim and her non-verbal behavior. The alarming implication of this interaction is that a Surinamer victim who exhibits black non-verbal behavior and is being observed by a police officer is seen as less credible, and runs a higher risk of secondary victimisation. Moreover a Dutch victim who exhibits white non-verbal behavior and is being observed by a social worker is perceived most credible and has the least chance of secondary victimisation.

Exploration of the interaction effects indicated that social workers are being influenced in their judgement by the ethnic identity of the victim. The Surinamer victim was perceived less credible, more responsible and the consequences were believed to be less serious. This effect can be clarified by the theory of the 'ultimate' attribution error. This suggests that in a negative situation the ingroup observer will attribute more negative personal dispositional causes to the outgroup member, and forget about situational attributions (Pettigrew, 1979; Winkel, Bruijninex & v.d. Kley, 1987; Winkel, Koppelaar & Vrij, 1987; Hewstone, 1990). In other words the process of a 'white' social worker putting more blame on a 'black' victim and forgetting about situational factors, might be a result of an ingroup-outgroup attribution error.

The analysis of the group police officers suggests that the Surinamer victim was perceived at least credible when she displayed black non-verbal behavior. Though the Surinamer victim displaying white non-verbal behavior was perceived as most credible, this is not relevant because Surinamer people usually do not display white non-verbal behavior. Vrij (1991) has studied non-verbal behavior displayed by integrated Surinamers and found no differences with non-integrated Surinamers. This suggests that even integrated Surinamers will display black non-verbal behavior. The Dutch victim however was perceived as more credible when she displayed black as opposed to white non-verbal behavior. Perhaps in judging black non-verbal behavior, police officers are influenced by the ethnic identity of the victim. They perceive the 'nervous' black non-verbal behavior of the Dutch victim as positive and interpret the behavior as emotional stress, whereas they interpret the same behavior displayed by the Surinamer victim as negative and suspicious.

The results of this study indicate that the risk of secondary victimisation as a consequence of external variables is real. It thus still appears to be important and necessary to train professionals who work with victims, in order to protect victims from these risks. For social workers the training should be focused on the ethnic identity of the victim. The focus of the training for police officers should be on the non-verbal behavior of the victim.

In conclusion we would like to note that giving subjects a special focus instruction in Study 1, is artificial. It would thus be interesting to replicate Study 2 and give social workers and police officers a similar instruction.

A second consideration relates to the rape-situation described in this experiment. Though the situation described might seem a bit dubious, and it could be argued that if a stranger rape example was used there would be less doubt about the credibility of the victim, in our view it is important to use non-classic, e.g., acquaintance rape situations, in experiments. The incidence of acquaintance rape is higher than the incidence of stranger rape. This is in contrast with the existing rape myth that a 'real' rape occurs by the stranger in the park. Whereas the stereotype of the "real rape" is identified as the attack by a stranger at night on the street. It is argued that public attitudes about rape frequently lead to secondary victimisation, especially

when the characteristics of the assault deviate from the "real rape" stereotype (LaFree, 1980; Burt & Semmel Albin, 1981; Williams, 1984; Krahé, 1991). Therefore in research on secondary victimisation we need to include rape cases deviant of this stereotype, especially because the case of the acquaintance rape leaves more questions on the role and truthfulness of the victim, which enhances the likelihood of secondary victimisation.

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