THE GREY ZONE BETWEEN CONSENT AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE: HUNGARIAN HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS UNWANTED SEX

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ABSTRACT

In this research, I study Hungarian higher education students' narratives of the grey zone between consent and sexual violence, because I want to explore how unwanted sex is labeled and negotiated, in order to understand how rape myth acceptance and gendered expectations towards sexuality can create ambiguous sexual experiences, and why sexual violence has occurred within higher education.

While the participants of the present study approached beliefs about sexual violence with a lot of criticism, instances of rape myth acceptance illustrate how rape myths can influence whether ambiguous sexual encounters get labeled as sexual violence. The discussion of the grey zone also shows that if false beliefs about rape are accepted, reliance on consent can be insufficient to clearly negotiate the mutual wantedness of sex. The analysis of prevailing gendered expectations within society explains how the double standard influencing female sexuality interferes with the concept of consent as an unambiguous tool to negotiate sexuality. Expectations towards what a "normal man" is like divides men into a false dichotomy of "normal" and "rapists" and obscures the characteristics of non-violent and acquaintance rape. Finally, heteronormative assumptions about sexual violence and gendered expectations limit the scope of who is a victim and who can be a perpetrator.

Considering these findings and that Hungarian students' experiences with sexual violence are not necessarily connected with the campus, blaming universities solely for students' experiences with sexual violence and expecting the problem to be solved on the higher education level would obscure the responsibility of earlier sex education, overlook the prevailing gendered expectations within Hungarian society and neglect the experiences of victims of sexual violence in other strata of society.

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1. Introduction

Sexual violence among students has been a widely discussed and researched topic for decades, especially in the United States. Numerous studies have been conducted in disciplines such as sociology, criminology, legal studies and gender studies in order to tackle sexual violence among members of academic communities. Among many other topics, research has discussed the prevalence of campus sexual violence, it tried to unearth underlying causes of it, and there have been efforts to design and monitor different prevention programs and to implement different services for victims. In Hungary, however, campus sexual violence had not been considered an issue up until 2014, when reports of university rape scandals appeared in the media.

The "freshman camp rapes" invited a widespread public discussion in Hungary involving a number of actors and pointing towards change in the "policy of neglect" often seen concerning issues of sexual violence. Eötvös Loránd University, for example, in whose camps the rape scandals happened, has taken measures to address sexual violence among students, but scholarly attention has been also emerging. The initial aim of my thesis was to enter this public discussion by mapping out Hungarian students' misbeliefs about sexual violence and to discover how clear their ideas of consent are. I assumed sexual violence might result from deficient knowledge about consensual sex, and that universities could tackle the problem by preventive education programs on topics like consent or rape myths. The gathered data, however, suggest that the situation is more complicated.

The majority of the students I interviewed had clear ideas of consent and were rather critical with rape myths, however, at instances, they showed acceptance of some beliefs. Furthermore, about half of the people I interviewed reported having heard of at least one acquaintance who has had experience with unwanted sex or sexual violence, but with one

exception, these cases happened unrelated to the university context. Through the analysis of three such accounts, I will first show how rape myths can influence the negotiation of consent, and how the concept of consent, therefore, can be insufficient to guarantee the unambiguity of a sexual encounter. Then, I will analyze the gendered expectations underlying these rape myths, as either implicitly held, or rejected but critically explained by the interviewees.

In this thesis, I study students' narratives of the grey zone between consent and sexual violence, because I want to explore how unwanted sex is labeled and negotiated, in order to understand how rape myth acceptance and gendered expectations towards sexuality can create ambiguous sexual experiences. Blaming only universities for students' experiences with sexual violence and expecting the problem to be solved on the higher education level would obscure the responsibility of earlier sex education, overlook the prevailing gendered expectations within Hungarian society and neglect the experiences of victims of sexual violence in other strata of society. Therefore, I argue that without addressing gendered expectations regarding sexuality on the level of the whole society, students experiences with sexual violence cannot be tackled by targeted policies on the higher education level alone.

1.1. The context

In Hungary, heated public discourse emerged on sexual violence in August 2014, when a student of Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE) was raped in the freshman camp [gólyatábor] of the Faculty of Special Education (Index.hu, 2014a). In Hungarian higher education, freshman camps are usually organized a few days before the academic year begins and serve as a socializing, bonding opportunity for the incoming students. They are typically organized by the university's student union; they take place off campus, often not even in the same town with it, and last for a couple of days. These camps tend to include team-building activities, heavy drinking and parties,

where games are often charged sexually or easily turn into hazing rituals. Taking part in freshman camps and in the programs offered are voluntary, but peer pressure strongly encourages participation. Soon after the first scandal, two more "freshman camp rape" cases came to light. A student of the Faculty of Law said that she had been raped by one of her peers in 2013 (Népszava, 2014), and a third student claimed to have been a victim of sexual violence, but without publicly identifying herself, the perpetrator or the institution of their affiliation (Index, 2014b). While in the first case, the perpetrator was a photographer working in the camp (HVG, 2015), in the latter two cases the rapists were students.

The scandals induced response from a variety of actors. The Faculty of Law sanctioned members of the student union for not having reported the case (Eduline, 2014), restructured orientation by introducing on-campus workshops instead of the freshman camps (Hirado, 2016), and organized a conference on gender-based violence soon after the scandals (ELTE ÁJK, 2014). The rector of ELTE suspended the student unions of both the Faculty of Law and the Faculty of Special Education (Elteonline, 2014). Even the government found the problem important enough to address, therefore, the Ministry of Human Resources commissioned the Ombudsman of Education to prepare policy recommendations concerning campus sexual violence. The main focus of this document called "A Study of Higher Education Violence by the Task Force Led by the Ombudsman of Education" (Baranya, 2015) is how to reduce the risks of sexual violence occurring in freshman camps, and it was sent to Zoltán Balogh, Minister of Human Resources, the rectors of Hungarian higher education institutes together with the student unions of each of these, and the Nationwide Student Union (HÖOK) (L. Aáry-Tamás, personal communication, March 3, 2016). Since the time of these scandals, there also have been civil initiatives to engage with the issue of sexual violence, for example, the women's rights NGO called NANE started a campaign on consent, including detailed information about consensual sex on their website, and a

theater play performed on university campuses, which illustrates what counts as consensual by the example of drinking tea (NANE, 2016).

1.2. The research problem

At the time of the rape scandals, no literature had been available on any aspect of the issue of sexual violence within higher education in the Hungarian context. When designing my thesis research, my aim was to study Hungarian higher education students' perceptions of sexual violence and consensual sex by exploring their beliefs about gender, sexuality, and violence, in order to understand whether their attitudes contribute to the prevalence of sexual violence occurring in contexts connected to higher education. My initial assumption was that holding false beliefs about sexuality and sexual violence and having unclear ideas of consent might contribute to the perpetuation of sexual violence among students. While results of the research complicated this matter, the research design was largely informed by this initial assumption. In this section, I am discussing the structure of interviews by reviewing the literature that informed the questions, I will discuss the research process, and finally reflect on issues of positionality.

The main framework of my thesis relies on the theory of rape myths and the effects of accepting them. Rape myths were first defined in the 1970s as "distorted proverbs that govern female sexuality" (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 312). According to Brownmiller, rape myths are often told and repeated, for example, in fairy tales and jokes, and by giving a passive role to female sexuality and enabling men to dispose of responsibility for rape, these myths constitute a set of cultural beliefs that help men to perpetuate sexual violence. In Burt's definition (1980), rape myths are "prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists", which narrow down the definition of rape. In the article, she also identifies some of the most common rape myths, such as "women ask for it" or "rapists are sex-starved, insane, or both" (p. 217).

Therefore, if a case of sexual violence does not confirm to one's set of beliefs about what rape should be like (e.g. the perpetrator does not seem to be sex-starved and insane), it might not be labelled or recognized as rape. Research conducted by Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1994) confirms that there is a connection between the prevalence of these beliefs and the likelihood that a person will not label an act of sexual violence as rape. They offer a new definition of rape myths: "[r]ape myths are attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held, and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women" (p. 134). As Payne et al. (1999) point it out, rape myths function as a normalizing power on sexual victimization and victim blaming (p. 28). The acceptance of rape myths, therefore, has become used in measuring attitudes towards sexual violence. Rape myth acceptance has been used widely in research on students in higher education, as it can influence how sexual violence is motivated, reported or dealt with within the academic community (Iconis, 2008).

My research relies on the framework of rape myths because it provides an extensive body of literature on students' experiences with sexual violence and because rape myth acceptance can have a number of implications for the life of the academic community. The majority of the literature from this field comes from the United States, whose higher education system is different from the Hungarian one in some respects, and therefore, needs to be applied with care. For example, in the US, students often live in on-campus residence halls. In Hungary, dormitories are seldom located at the same place with academic buildings, and even the faculties of a university are often dispersed across town. Therefore, while students in the US often live and study at the same location and spend most of their time on campus with their peers, Hungarian student life is less tied to the university geographically. Besides that, fraternities and sororities, whose culture has also been associated with campus rape (Copenhaver and Grauerholz, 1991), have no equivalent social organizations in the Hungarian campus life, while the infrastructural

differences also affect how close the academic community can become. Still, even if there are differences between the two systems, the resources and research capacity that has been concentrated around the issue in the United States produced a richer body of literature on student attitudes towards sexual violence than it has been done in any other contexts. Therefore, rape myths are not only used in the interview guide of this research project, but I will also apply the concept and relevant literature in the analysis of what implications holding beliefs concerning sexual violence has on how students label experiences of unwanted sex.

In much of the United States literature on campus sexual violence, the research participants are students, however, the data collected often does not explicitly tell whether students experience sexual violence on campus or elsewhere. With this thesis research, I hope to contribute to the literature on rape myth acceptance and sexual violence among students by exploring how closely their experiences with sexual violence are connected to the university in a context where student life tends to be less tied to campus than in the United States. I also aim to contribute to the emerging Hungarian research body on rape myths and student sexual violence. While little has been published on these topics, the conference called "Sexual Violence – Myth and Reality", organized by the National Criminological Institute in April 2016 showed that there is a lot of work in progress. Parti and Szabó (2016) study information on sexual violence and rape myth acceptance in a wider population, Zabolai (2016) analyzes web comments on news articles reporting on the "freshman camp" scandals, and Giczi and Gregor (2016) have been conducting research on the gender regimes and sexist beliefs within Eötvös Loránd University. Qualitative research on students' rape myth acceptance and perceptions of consent, however, has not been conducted in the Hungarian context, and I hope that this research project will provide further insight into why sexual violence occurs in a higher education context by exploring not only whether students hold false beliefs about rape, but also why they do or do not.

1.3. Methodology

This thesis is based on primary data that I collected with the help of qualitative interviews. In April and May of 2016, I interviewed nine Hungarian higher education students between the age of 19 and 27. The interviews were semi-structured and conducted in Hungarian, and lasted approximately between 40-60 minutes. Regarding location, I offered the interviewees to meet in quiet university facilities, and they all agreed to do so.

Five of the interviewees were female and four of them were male. In the analytical chapters, they are given pseudonyms. I reached the interviewees through friends and former classmates in order to avoid public channels like social media or university mailing lists in the recruitment. I did so because I wanted as few people as possible to know which higher education institutes the interviewees are affiliated with. I had planned to ask participants if they have heard of any occurrences of sexual violence at their universities, but out of ethical concerns I did not want any such accounts analyzed in this thesis to be connected with any of the higher education institutes. Therefore, I also decided to include students of more than one university in the sample, and the universities will not be named either. The potential interviewees were told that the questions would be inquiring about sexuality, but only about thoughts and opinions, not about personal habits or experiences. I found that some rejected the idea of talking about sexuality with a stranger even when their acquaintances asked them if they would do so, and even some of my acquaintances refused to ask around claiming that they are sure none of their friends would take part in this research. The sampling process has two important implications for this research. First, most likely there is a reason why some of the people I contacted refused to participate when they found out that the topic of the interview would be connected to sexuality. However, even if my personal impression is that sexuality is too much of a taboo among Hungarian young adults to

be discussed in such a situation, this is only an assumption and the question would require more research. Second, it means that the ones who participated in this research might be more interested, motivated or open to talk about sexual violence in higher education than the average.

The interviews consisted of four main parts: a warm-up section, definitions of consent and sexual violence, opinion of rape myths, and finally, other personal reflections. In the warm-up section, I first asked the interviewees about their age, where they are in their studies, whether they are affiliated with any university-related clubs or organizations, and whether they live in a dorm. These questions were included considering research on the relationship between membership in different student bodies and the perpetuation of sexual violence on campus (Locke and Mahalik, 2005, Copenhaver and Grauerholz, 1991). Then, I asked the interviewees what kind of sexual education they have had in life in order to start the conversation about sexuality with a topic that most young Hungarians have experience with, and which, at the same time is not too personal. In the second section, I asked them how they would define consent, what they consider as the lack of it, and what they call sexual violence.

The third part was the most extensive part of the interview guide and it was based on the *Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance* (*IRMA*) (McMahon and Farmer, 2011). This scale serves as a quantitative research tool to measure the prevalence of rape myths by asking the participants to mark which common stereotypes about sexual violence they agree with. This set of beliefs is a comprehensive overview of many common rape myths (e.g. “If a girl is raped while she is drunk, she is at least somewhat responsible for letting things get out of hand”, “When guys rape, it is usually because of their strong desire for sex”). The original *IRMA* scale by Payne, Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1999) was designed with the intention of providing a quick tool for assessment on rape myths and has been widely used in research on campus sexual violence (Vladutiu et al., 2011). Although my research is fundamentally different from the quantitative studies conducted

with the scale in its methodology, my rape myth questions rely on the four main categories identified by the *Updated IRMA*. However, in order to gain more detailed information, I turned their statements into questions. I did not only ask participants whether they agree with a statement, but also asked why they thought so. This way, I hoped to gain information not only about the prevalence of rape myths, but also why some of them might be held true by the interviewees.

The final section of the interview guide included questions regarding what students know about sexual violence in a higher education context, whether they have heard about such cases at their own universities, and whether they think the topics covered by the interview, such as consent or sexual violence, should be discussed at any level of education. Finally, at the very end of the interview, I asked my interviewees to reflect on the interview experience itself. I did so considering two ideas: research might have consciousness raising potential and the interview should be a learning experience. Sprague and Zimmerman (1989) discuss a research project in which women involved were asked to write down daily what household chores they did, and during the research process they became more conscious how much they worked at home (pp. 80-81). Such consciousness-raising potential might be present in my research: after a pilot interview, the interviewee said that by thinking about the questions, he realized certain things concerning the topic and about himself too. With this last question, I hope to find out whether dialogue about consent and rape myths in itself can shape how they are perceived. Besides that, by inviting the interviewees to freely contribute to the conversation with anything else they find important or to criticize the interview process, I tried to shift the internal hierarchy of the interviewer-interviewee relationship. As Borland (1991) shows, both actors can learn from the interview if "we might open up the exchange of ideas so that we do not simply gather data on others to fit into our own paradigms" (p. 73). Although the temporal limits of my thesis research

will not allow me to discuss the outcomes of my analysis with the participants, I hope that in the reflection phase of the interview, there will be room for exchanging thoughts and enhance learning beyond what is suggested by specific questions. I designed the structure of the interview this way with the hope of receiving detailed information on several aspects of students' thoughts, notions and attitudes towards sexual violence.

Concerning methodology, it is also important to reflect on terminology. When translating the interviews which had been conducted in Hungarian, I realized that some terms do not precisely translate to English. In the Hungarian language, rape and sexual violence are not differentiated the same way as in English. In the legal terminology, rape is called "erőszakos közösülés", which translates as "violent/forced intercourse", but this phrase is rarely used in non-legal contexts. The interview questions included the phrase "nemi erőszak", which literally translates as "sexual violence", and which is commonly used to denote penetrative sexual violence, however, not exclusively (the "freshman camp" scandals were also referred to with the phrase "nemi erőszak", even if one of the three cases did not include penetration). In the analysis, I will use the word "rape" for cases of penetrative sexual violence. The phrase "sexual violence" is used to denote any sort of unwanted sexual encounter, but in a broader and more abstract sense, as the aim of this research is not to map out the physical particularities of what counts as rape, but to explore how it relates to consent.

1.4. Positionality

In terms of positionality, I need to discuss the implications of my motivation, gender and field of study and research. While in research, there has been a long tradition of considering the researcher to be neutral and detached, this thesis is following a feminist approach by recognizing that "the position of the researcher, whether sociocultural and/or political, does and should not

constitute a separate factor in the research process" (Sarikakis, 2003, p. 424.). I certainly did not approach the topic of campus sexual violence as a detached observer. While I do not personally have experience with sexual violence, I have been subject to stalking on campus while studying in Hungarian higher education, without receiving adequate help from the university administration. Following that experience, I spent an exchange semester in the United States at a small Midwestern liberal arts college. During that semester, I was continuously surprised by the amount of discourse on campus sexual violence and on sexuality per se, such as services available to victims of harassment and sexual violence, awareness-raising exhibitions, and lectures on sexuality. The "freshman camp rapes" happened soon after I returned from the United States, and made me wonder if, and in what way, changing "the policy of neglect" concerning sexual violence in Hungarian higher education could decrease the number of such cases. The personal experience of uncertainty about what my possibilities are if a fellow student interferes with my learning process did not only motivate me to do research on a topic with practical implications about a similar situation, but also made more aware what victims of sexual violence need to face if their experience is connected to the campus.

While my motivation has had an impact on my research topic and approach, my positionality as a female researcher and as a student of Gender Studies probably had an effect on how the interviewees answered my questions, as some of them expressed concern that they would give me "the wrong answers". I tried to address these concerns by saying that there are no wrong answers, I am interested in why they think what they think; still, such concerns might have had an impact on their answers. Being a female researcher might have further affected the research. If these interviews had been conducted by a male researcher, male participants might have been talking more openly. However, I cannot be sure if female interviewees would have shared personal information with me to the same extent had I not been of the same gender.

Most of the interviewees seemed critical with rape myths and rejected most of them. Some of the interviewees rejected all rape myths when I directly asked them whether they agreed that a certain situation counts as rape. The justification of their answers, however, contradicted their initial answers at points (e.g. "No, I don't think we should blame the victim, it's all the perpetrator's fault, but…"). At other instances, when asked about a particular rape myth, they brought in other beliefs, either ones that I asked about at other points of the interview, or ones that I did not have questions about at all. Although I could never avoid affecting my interviewees by my positionality, in my analysis, I try to filter out some bias by paying attention to how they might have policed their answers. Therefore, the main focus of my analysis is not whether the interviewees agreed with a particular rape myth or not when I posed a question. I am going to discuss those instances when they gave contradictory answers, brought in rape myths that were independent from the current question, or when they explained to me why a rape myth might be widely held.

2. The grey zone of (non)consent

In order to map out obscurity and inconsistency of definitions, I asked my interviewees what they think consent is in a sexual context, what they interpret as such from their partners, and what sort of behavior they consider to be a clear lack of consent. After establishing what they think about consensual sex, I asked them to define sexual violence too. While I expected contradictions to occur in these answers, I aimed to further complicate the definitions by asking the interviewees what they thought about common misbeliefs connected to rape. Most interviewees easily provided me with their definitions of consent and sexual violence, but their notions of consensual sex and sexual violence did not necessarily appear as two sides of a coin. As a general observation, the interviewees approached rape myths with a lot of criticism, and many of the beliefs were consistently rejected by most participants. Some of the participants showed a lot of interest in the topic of sexual violence, proved to be well-read and well-informed on it, and had an articulate opinion concerning the problem. Instances of rape myth acceptance, however, did occur, and these often contradicted what the interviewees earlier established in their definitions, or influenced how they labeled ambiguous sexual encounters.

Some of the inconsistencies of answers went unnoticed by the interviewees. However, at points they either admitted that they were unable to decide whether a sexual act in a certain context would count as sexual violence, or they labeled cases as a "borderline[1] category" or as something belonging to a "grey area". Although they used these two different phrases, I will discuss them as the same phenomenon, as both refer to ambiguous experiences between consensual sex and sexual violence. In this chapter, I am going to explore this borderline zone or grey area, because I want to understand how conflicting definitions and rape myths influence what is labeled as rape, in order to gain a better understanding of students' experiences and

[1] The word "borderline" is not my translation; my interviewees used the English word even in Hungarian.

opinions of sexual violence. Besides illustrating how rape myth acceptance influences whether one labels ambiguous sexual encounters as rape, I also came to the conclusion that the notion of consent in itself is a simplistic approach to determine whether a sexual encounter is ambiguous for the following reasons: acquiescence and consent can be easily confused, coerced consent can be interpreted as miscommunication, while consensual sex and wanted sex do not necessarily fall under the same category.

In the analysis of "grey zone" cases, I am going to rely on three students' narratives of sexual encounters which were labeled as something that is neither clearly consensual sex nor unambiguously sexual violence. While I did not directly ask the interviewees to share their personal experiences, these narratives all describe events that happened either to them or to someone they know. In the analysis of these narratives, I will first reflect on the different definitions of sexual violence and consent, then discuss the interaction of these, especially in relation to rape myth acceptance.

2.1. The complexity of defining sexual violence

In order to unravel how rape myths and conflicting notions of consent shape these narratives, it seems inevitable to define rape. This attempt is, however, not without problems; since these concepts have been and are defined in a variety of ways across different temporal, spatial and cultural contexts. One important aspect is the legal context of Hungary; in itself, however, it is insufficient to understand anyone's experiences with sexual violence in its entire complexity. The Hungarian legal definition of rape ("violent/forced intercourse") focuses on the perpetrator's violence, coercion, or abusing the victim's inability to express willingness or defense (njt.hu)[2]. This definition implies that the victims are supposed to try to defend themselves

[2] "Whoever forces someone, by violence or by directly threatening the other person's life or bodily integrity, to engage in sexual intercourse, or takes advantage of someone's inability to defend herself/himself or to express

(Amnesty International, 2007, p. 4), and the lack of consent of a conscious and able victim in a physically non-violent case is overlooked. The majority of the literature that is available on sexual violence among students, however, was written in the United States, where the lack of consent and sexual violence without physical coercion has been problematized a lot more, although legal definitions may vary to some extent from state to state even in the US context (Eileraas, 2011). Resulting from the narrowness of the Hungarian legal definition of rape, cases which would count as sexual violence in other contexts, very often documented and analyzed by research, and which have been established as inducing traumatic consequences, might not be recognized as sexual violence in the Hungarian practice. Furthermore, even if a case seems to fit the local legal definition, proving rape is typically extremely difficult in the Hungarian context (Amnesty International, 2007, p. 2). Therefore, even if a narrative told in an interview can be labeled as rape based on the definition, one cannot easily declare that any case would unambiguously recognized as such on court (which might bear implications on whether victims consider their case something worthy of reporting). Sticking to the local legal definition, therefore, might result in overlooking narratives that can reveal a lot about students' experiences with and attitudes towards sexual violence.

Because of the complexity of definitions, I will refer to rape and sexual violence in three different senses. One of them is the Hungarian legal definition. The second aspect is the lack of consent, which is very widely problematized by the literature. However, I found that the grey area narratives cannot necessarily be disentangled from either of these. Therefore, I will also reflect on whether a narrated event counts as sexual violence according to the interviewee's own definitions provided in the beginning of the interview. In the analysis, I also assume that

her/his wish to have sexual intercourse, is to be sentenced to two to eight years in prison." The law is available in the original Hungarian version on http://www.njt.hu/cgi_bin/njt_doc.cgi?docid=3356.237644#foot_453_place, but the English translation is from http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/465bfa162.pdf (Amnesty International, 2007).

regardless of how a sexual encounter can or cannot be described by any definition of sexual violence, confusion of any parties involved about what exactly happened to them, or if they consider their experience to be sexual violence makes any case worthy of attention.

2.2. The influence of rape myth acceptance

With the first example, I am going to illustrate how the acceptance of rape myths can influence how an ambiguous sexual encounter gets labeled. Balázs told me the narrative of a case which was labeled as rape by the person to whom it happened, still, according to Balázs, it belongs to a grey zone between consensual sex and sexual violence. Balázs defined this grey zone first when I asked him what he interprets as consent:

> […] obviously there are cases, when, like, and I guess these will create the grey zone between sexual violence and consent, when the girl shows signs of wanting it in the beginning, or at least she enjoys the presence of the other person, and then, then she doesn't want it. […]

Later, when I asked him what he thought about a drunk victim's responsibility for being raped, he told me about the following case:

> […] afterwards they might not remember, and I can easily imagine that someone wakes up, doesn't remember anything, and thinks they were ra… actually something like this has happened within my acquaintanceship, that she claimed to have been raped – and by the way she had a boyfriend too – but it wasn't really possible to tell anymore, whether this girl actually wanted it too, and she was just drunk, and then one tends to do things like that more easily, or if this was really rape. And it wasn't really possible to find out later either, because when she finally told her boyfriend, it was two months later already, so there were no signs of physical harm, it was not possible to find any evidence. […] they were drinking, and then, I don't know, they say that the girl just lay down to rest, and then one of the guys went to her and…

Due to a limited amount of details included in the narrative, the case is difficult to define as rape or not. According to the narrative, the girl's ability to consent was influenced by alcohol. If we understand sexual violence as a lack of consent due to impaired capacity to express it, her

case can be seen as rape. Engaging in a sexual encounter with a person who is drunk and "just lay down to rest" might be interpreted as sexual violence according to the Hungarian legal definition too, although it is not clear based on the amount of information available whether the girl was drunk to the point of being unable to express willingness or the lack thereof. Balázs's own definition of rape does not give an unambiguous answer either: in his opinion, sexual violence is "when the sexual encounter happens against the willingness and explicit stance of one of the parties". The reason, however, why I still chose to discuss this narrative is the discrepancy between the opinion of the girl involved and Balázs's explanation about what happened: she claimed to have been raped, while Balázs considers this a grey zone-case.

Balázs further explained his point by analyzing the following hypothetical situation:

> There are these typical "grey zone" cases, that the girl is initiating things, dunno it really seems like, that I don't know, she wants to hook up with someone, but she knocks herself out, and then I don't know, like, yeah of course I wouldn't do anything like that, and I also would have had the chance to do it, but I still didn't, but yeah, whether this is rape or not, that dunno, she really has knocked herself out, and you can't know how conscious she is and then someone has sex with her. I think then you cannot, many times you cannot unambiguously tell whether this is rape or not.

This excerpt illustrates the acceptance of the following rape myths: that a drunk victim bears at least some responsibility for letting things get out of hand, and that "[i]f a girl initiates kissing or hooking up, she should not be surprised if a guy assumes she wants to have sex" (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). This is confirmed by Balázs's answers to the relevant two rape myth questions: he said that in the case of drunk victims, it is very difficult to tell afterwards whether there was consent (especially if the victim does not remember the next day), and if the victim and perpetrator had been dancing or flirting before the alleged rape, one must look for signs of physical harm to decide whether sexual violence did happen. This second rape myth also brings in a third one: that rape must leave signs of physical harm. In the narrative quoted above, the

victim is drunk to the point that it is unclear how conscious she is, which makes it unsure whether she could unambiguously express willingness to have sex or explicit refusal (as Balázs's definition would require). Still, the interviewee avoids labeling even this hypothetical situation as rape, as according to the accepted myths, alcohol makes it difficult to decide whether consent was given, and the absence of physical violence makes it unlikely that rape happened. Interestingly, Balázs distances himself from the case by saying that he has been into a similar situation and still did not act the same way, but even if he had some reason for that, he refuses to call having sex with a barely conscious woman as rape.

Considering that the hypothetical situation was set into parallel with the "grey zone" case of Balázs's acquaintance, the rape myths can help explain the discrepancy between his and the girl's opinion about what happened. He emphasizes that the girl was drunk and that no signs of physical harm were to be found by the time she first spoke about her case. Since he accepts the corresponding rape myths, he questioned whether rape actually happened. If the girl was drunk to the point that it was questionable whether she could remember what happened to her, as it was suggested by the narrative, the case could easily be defined as rape. The rape myths, however, opened up a grey area, where the narrator questioned whether rape happened even if he found it important enough to emphasize that in a similar situation, he would not act the same way.

2.3. The borderline between coercion and acquiescence

The most detailed narrative of a borderline case was shared with me by Anna, a female student who herself had a sexual experience that left her uncertain what had happened to her. As it has been mentioned, the interview guide did not include items inquiring about personal experiences. However, when I asked her to define consent, she first asked back whether it would

be a better idea to discuss what does not count as such, and then told me her own example to illustrate her point:

> Something might have happened that I wouldn't even admit to myself, that I might… so I might not have given consent, like I wasn't raped, but that maybe a bit… a bit… I don't know what to call this. I don't think it was violence, but ehm… ehm… […] I think it might happen to anyone that you go into one-night-stands, and then, dunno, you're leaving with the guy, but then, dunno, you change your mind, 'cause, dunno, everyone has the right to change their mind, and then you're like ah, no, rather not. And then it's not like someone pushes you down and rapes you, but instead there is this, dunno what to call it, emotional coercion, or you cannot even call it that, cause I wasn't really connected with this guy emotionally, but then I, dunno, gave in, that okay, this is not very good for me, ehm, but okay. And then what do you call this. In fact, I did not give consent, but I acquiesced [egy ilyen hallgatólagos beleegyezést adtam]. Let it be. So we can say he made me do this with coercion, but I wouldn't say this was violence…

Although in this answer, she explicitly denies having been raped, the rest of the discussion made the case more complicated. Anna's definition of sexual violence included "if there is no consent in any form, it definitely is sexual violence", but she also added that even the name of the act implies that sexual violence is an aggressive thing, unless someone passed out under the influence of alcohol or drugs, when no physical violence is needed. When asked what she thought of a situation when someone is conscious, does not want to have sex, but does not resist physically, her conclusion regarding was the following "If I really don't want it, but it happens, I don't know if we can call that sexual violence. I don't know. What do you think? I have no idea. […] This is a what-do-you-call-it. Borderline category."

The answer to Anna's question whether a hypothetical situation very similar to her experience, and with that, her own story count as rape depends on which of the three aforementioned definitions of sexual violence is used. In the legal sense and in the Hungarian context, the lack of physical resistance and evidence would make it difficult to prove that sexual violence happened even if she had labeled it so and had intended to report. Verbal coercion

despite first expressing non-consent, however, would count as rape not just in many other contexts, but also according to Anna's initial definition of sexual violence. Why then did she not label it as such herself? In order to gain a better understanding of that, I will discuss Anna's notion of consent and rape myths that shape her perception of the event.

First of all, it is important to see whether the interviewee's acquiescence can be interpreted as a certain form of consent even if she did not explicitly express willingness to engage in the sexual act. Muehlenhard et al. (2016) argue that "consent is conceptualized in various ways; all can be problematic" (p. 467). Still, the authors offer a typology of consent that takes into consideration, on the one hand, the mental and the physical dimensions of it, and on the other hand, the directness of expressing consent too. Since their review focuses on consent among college students, I will rely on their typology in analyzing Anna's case.

Besides discussing the shortcomings of the different conceptualizations of consent, the typology of Muehlenhard et al. defines consent in three main ways: "as an internal state of willingness, as an act of explicitly agreeing to something, and as a behavior that someone else interprets as consent" (p. 462). As focusing on an internal state of willingness, the definition is most concerned about sex occurring without the willingness of someone involved. The authors argue that one of the main limitations of this definition is that consent is impossible to observe directly; therefore, in law-making or in designing policies it would be unworkable. In Anna's narrative, however, it can be clearly seen that there was no internal willingness from her part at all. By understanding consent as an act of explicitly agreeing to something, Muehlenhard et al. mean clearly stating that one wants to have sex. As a criticism of this definition, the authors argue that most people rely on more indirect cues in negotiating consent, and it is seldom discussed this explicitly by most people. In Anna's case, first of all, she emphasized not having given verbal consent. Secondly, negotiation did happen – but in the form of verbal coercion. According to the

last item in the typology, consent can be understood as behavior interpreted as willingness by someone else. The authors compare this to the concept of implied consent, which is "indirectly given and is usually indicated by a sign, and action or inaction, or a silence that creates a reasonable presumption that an *acquiescence* of the will has been given" [my italics] (Block, 2004, pp. 51-52). This form of consent, however, relies heavily on assumptions about how to interpret different cues and signals. Anna's acquiescence might have been interpreted as this form of consent by her partner (assuming he was looking for such a thing), but interpreting her "giving in" as willingness seems to be based on false assumptions considering her narrative that includes lack of willingness and verbal coercion. Based on this typology, which takes into consideration the physical and mental dimensions of consent and the directness of expression, Anna did not consent to what happened to her.

While Anna's initial definition of sexual violence includes "if there is no consent in any form, it definitely is sexual violence", she does not label her experience as such even if she seems not to have given any form of consent besides her acquiescence. What then, makes her explicitly say that she was not raped? I argue that rape myth acceptance, common rape scripts, victim blaming, belief in a just world and gendered assumptions about sexuality modify the perception of the borderline between consensual sex and sexual violence, and they create confusion that can lead to uncertainty about how to label one's experience, like in the case of Anna.

In their 2004 article, Peterson and Muehlenhard discuss the rape myth acceptance of undergraduate female students. The participants of the study have all experienced nonconsensual sex that met the local legal definition of rape (the research was conducted in Kansas, US), however, only part of them were acknowledged rape victims. The aim of the study was to see whether rape myth acceptance and belief of stereotypical rape scripts ("an individual's impression of what typically occurs during a rape" [p. 130]) have an influence on how

participants label their own experiences of nonconsensual sex. The authors argue that rape myths and stereotypic rape scripts have a reinforcing effect on each other and influence a victim's own understanding of their own experiences, because these ideas typically define very narrowly what counts as sexual violence, while the unacknowledged rapes also tend to include elements that are excluded from the definition of rape according to rape myths and scripts.

Anna's thoughts on sexual violence can at points be set into parallel with the findings of Peterson and Muehlenhard. According to their results, participants who did not fight the perpetrators physically while experiencing nonconsensual sex, and who at the same time accepted the myth that "it is not rape if a woman does not physically fight back" were less likely to call their experience rape than other participants (p. 138). Anna's narrative does not include physical violence, quite on the contrary, she explained the situation as "it's not like someone pushes you down and rapes you, but instead there is this, dunno what to call it, emotional coercion". Later she also added that "even the name of it [sexual violence] implies that it is a… an aggressive thing". While in the case of raping an unconscious victim, she agreed that no physical violence is needed to commit rape, she became uncertain at the point of talking about a conscious, capable victim. Her answers imply that she conceptualizes rape as an act necessarily involving physical aggression unless the victim is completely unable to resist. This idea is in line with the rape myth that victims always fight back and with the stereotypical script of aggressive rape, which, interestingly, is similar to what the Hungarian legal definition expects from rape. Since the hypothetical situation of a capable, but non-resistant victim and her own experience do not match the definition of rape narrowed down by her beliefs (which might also be influenced by what is recognized as rape in the Hungarian context), she became uncertain how to label this situation. As argued by Turchik et al. (2010), women who hold rape scripts that are not consistent with their experience are less likely "to recognize important risk cues in contexts that do not fit their

idea of a real rape" (p. 82). What is still striking about the discrepancy of Anna's concepts is the fact that although her experience does not match her own definition of rape, she immediately thought of this example when asked about consent, and even if she did not label it rape, the case made her thinking and induced uncertainty. In this sense, the common belief about rape as an act tightly connected to physical violence modified her definition of sexual violence as a lack of consent, and opened up a borderline zone.

The expected psychological reaction of a victim is another factor that might be a constituent of the borderline zone as defined by Anna. According to Ryan (2011), rape scripts often include "negative psychological consequences for the victim" (p. 776). Kahn and Mathie (2000) also argue that victims who did not have a strong negative emotional reaction after having nonconsensual sex might not label their experience as rape. After describing her borderline experience, Anna also told me how she felt about it:

> …but I didn't feel particularly shitty afterwards, but I felt weird, like Jesus, I am so stupid, and then I stopped a bit, like okay, I need to think this through, 'cause there could be much bigger trouble… but I don't think that this caused like a big trauma in my life…

Besides this excerpt, Anna also mentioned her emotions when at the end of the interview I asked her to reflect on the interview experience itself.

> Especially, like, I don't know what you exactly mean, whether it was a relief to talk about such things, actually there was nothing like that in me, nothing that would have been straining me too much from inside.

Although the fact that Anna denied having felt particularly bad (without me suggesting in any way that she should have) might in itself indicate that she did have negative feelings, it would be beyond the scope of the current analysis to elaborate on the psychological processes behind her statements in detail. The narrative, however, clearly states that she did not experience a significant trauma, and at the same time she implies that after an event like the one happened to

her, one should or might feel so. In light of the connection between accepting the rape myth or common script that victims must have strong negative emotional consequences after being raped, the discrepancy between Anna's experience as lacking that reaction, and her expectations how she should feel can explain why she labeled her experience as a borderline case. The direction of causality, however, cannot be unambiguously established here: the lack of traumatization and the acceptance of the rape myth might have led to her not labeling the experience as rape, but also, her assertion that the case was not rape might have led to a feeling that she should not feel traumatized if her experience was not sexual violence.

Victim-blaming and gendered expectations regarding behavior can also contribute to Anna's conceptualization of the borderline zone.

> I'd say I was the stupid one in this… ehm… situation. Because ehm… Of course, the guy himself wasn't Mother Teresa either *laughs*. And obviously he was stupid in this situation too, but a girl, dunno, must know that… that this can happen.

In this excerpt, Anna places responsibility on women for getting into a situation like hers. When asked whether she thinks one can do anything to avoid getting raped, she also says the following:

> …it's one person's responsibility, the perpetrator's, but dunno, you can do something against it, like we are girls, we need to take care of ourselves. […] Dangerous things typically happen in dangerous places and dangerous situations. […] I consciously avoid such situations.

Expectations regarding feminine and masculine behavior will be analyzed in more detail in the following chapter, but it is important to see the victim-blaming aspect of Anna's statements here. Although she claims that the responsibility belongs solely to the rapist, she still thinks that women have to take care of themselves and should or should not do certain things in order to avoid getting raped. In the case of men, one function of rape myths is to deny or justify sexual violence, but for women, it is also a tool to reject the idea of being personally vulnerable to sexual violence (Lonsway and Fitzgerald, 1994). In her second statement here, Anna seems to

express a similar effort to distance herself from the dangers of rape. This effort can be understood in two different ways: as claiming agency and as expressing a belief in a just world. On the one hand, while believing that rape can be avoided by not going to "dangerous places" might be an illusion, Anna distances herself from a passive victim-role by claiming that she has some agency in the situation. On the other hand, victim-blaming can be seen as an expression of the belief that the world is a just place, where everyone gets what they deserve and where keeping one's behavior under control guarantees a sense of safety (p. 203). In either case, Anna clearly accepts the rape myth that sexual violence typically occurs in "dangerous situations" (as opposed to acquaintance rape), and therefore, does not label her experience as sexual violence. Furthermore, by stating that she is consciously avoiding situations where she could be raped, she establishes herself as a person who tries her best to ensure her own safety and therefore cannot be a victim. The fact that not going to dangerous places does not always save one from sexual violence is not compatible with this worldview, and thus, Anna's case sinks even deeper into the borderline zone.

2.4. Unwanted consent

The second narrative of a borderline case was told me by Ádám, a male student. He did not talk about his own experience, but described what one of his female friends shared with him:

> A guy used to approach one of my friends and got rejected several times. But after, I don't know, the tenth rejection, they had sex. And it was… basically, there wasn't a rejection after the beginning of the act, but it was a terrible experience for the girl. […] I think she didn't count this as sexual violence, because she agreed on it, after all. But she considered it a very big lesson, which she won't do again in her life. […] She didn't just accept it, I think, because she rethought it over and over. […] I think this is kind of the borderline of being raped or not. Because you… you sometimes you suffer terrible experiences and you cannot accuse anyone, even if others were involved.

In order to analyze this case, a somewhat different approach is needed, since the one experiencing a confusing sexual encounter and the narrator are not the same person, and the details of the story are much fewer too than in the case of Anna. First, I will discuss the case from the girl's point of view as narrated by Ádám, and then I will analyze why he might have classified it as a borderline case.

The details of the narrative do not allow classification of the experience to the same extent as in the previous case. In the legal sense, it would be very unlikely for it to be recognized as sexual violence, even if verbal coercion seems to have occurred. It is also narrated as consensual sex, however, following the typology of Muehlenhard et al. (2016), it is unclear whether there was explicit agreement or behavior indicative of consent. What makes this case worthy of attention is the fact that the story was narrated as a consensual act, even if the internal state of willingness was missing from the girl's part, and that it was a confusing experience which she had to return to many times.

In her study of a "grey area" on the sexual violence spectrum, Walker (1997) discusses the phenomenon of consensual, but unwanted sex. The article focuses on how gender-role socialization can lead to people (mainly, but not exclusively women) consent when in fact they do not want to have sex. According to studies on unwanted sex, direct or indirect pressure is more prevalent than "verbal threats or actual force" (p. 158). Pressure, whether direct or indirect, can include a variety of factors: e.g. a normative context, peer pressure, partners' expectations, or "the internalized belief [rape myth] that a man's sexual arousal is both appropriate and unstoppable in the context of a romantic relationship" (p. 158). Whatever factor might have influenced the girl in Ádám's narrative to consent, this case illustrates the limitations of reliance on consent as a discrete entity that can be "given" to the other one in the negotiation of engaging in sex. In this narrative, consent seems to be understood as a tool to legitimize sex; however, this

understanding overlooks the repeated preceding expressions of non-consent as well as the lack of willingness to have sex. The girl's denial of experiencing sexual violence shows that in certain cases, the lines between wanted and consensual sex can and do become blurred.

After he told me this narrative, I asked Ádám if he thought this case counted as sexual violence. First, he mentioned the legal sense. He was not completely sure, but he said it probably counts as sexual violence according to the law. Then, however, he added the following:

> But not the one you can't discuss later with somebody, so, I mean, not the one that should be punished legally, or maybe yes, but I think this is more like something which is a bad experience, maybe for both parties involved, and can be discussed, can be relieved after.

According to Crawford (1995), this is the miscommunication model of rape, which implies that victims do not communicate their wishes clearly enough and that rapists are just confused about what the other one wants. The myth that rape is often a result of miscommunication brings to light the same problem that consent does from the girl's point of view: one momentary act of giving consent in some form nullifies the clarity of expressing non-consent ten times beforehand. Since cases when someone willingly consents only after saying no several times can occur (resulting, for example, from expectation towards women's behavior, which will be analyzed in detail in the next chapter), Ádám's suggestion for discussion and reconciliation might be a successful strategy to avoid miscommunication. However, if that is not done before the sexual act already, the miscommunication myth opens up the borderline zone where unwanted sex can be legitimized by neglecting repeated non-consent and by claiming lack of clarity when the victim finally gives in and provides some sort of formal consent.

3. Gendered expectations

Besides the complexities surrounding the concept of consent, gendered expectations regarding sexuality was another major theme emerging from the interviews. The interview guide was gender neutral in the sense that I asked every interviewee the same questions, and none of the questions inquired directly about gender-specific experiences of sexuality or sexual violence. Still, many times, the interviewees elaborated on societal expectations regarding "the right kind of" or typical feminine and masculine sexual behaviors. I identified three main narratives of gendered expectations: the sexual double standard restricting women's sexuality, the idea of "the normal man", and heteronormative ideas about the gender and sexuality of victims and perpetrators of sexual violence. These expectations are all connected to certain rape myths (e.g. the expectation that "normal men" would never rape feeds the myth that rapists are mentally ill). At points, they emerged as explanations what lies behind the relevant rape myth, while at other instances, they were not directly connected to any specific beliefs by the interviewees. These expectations, however, are not only connected to rape myths, but through these beliefs, they also contribute to the complications around the reliance on consent.

3.1. The sexual double standard

The fifth item on the *Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale* is the following: "When girls get raped, it's often because the way they said no was unclear" (McMahon and Farmer, 2011). Since this myth is strongly connected to verbal consent, I further inquired about reasons why a no might be unclear. While the majority of the interviewees rejected the myths belonging to the "She asked for it" subscale, I added a question that generated interesting answers: do you think that some people only say no to appear innocent or to play a game? The answers to this question were still mainly critical saying that "no means no" regardless of the

circumstances, and that it is no excuse for a rapist if the victim said no despite their real intentions. Still, some interviewees claimed that for women, it is common to say no even when they want sex. Anna, for example, told me that she consciously applied the strategy of seeming innocent:

> It has happened to me that, I dunno, huh, I really wanted someone, but I grit my teeth, cause… cause I wanted this relationship or affair between the two of us to be more serious, and that's why… I wanted to seem innocent because my experience with guys tell me that no matter how liberal they want to seem, within their hearts they are terribly provincial. […] The girl who gives in for the first time is loose. […] I think this is stupid, but if guys live with the false belief that the one who plays with saying no is worth more, then… then you have to enter the game. *laughs*

Anna's explanation illustrates how gendered expectations towards female sexuality can shape women's behavior. Although she sees the mechanism very clearly and is critical with it, she tries to make the best out of the situation by consciously playing according to the rules, and not by challenging the system. These gendered expectations have been theorized from different points of view. In psychoanalytic theory, for example, the so-called Madonna/whore dichotomy has been used to explain psychical impotence, a male sexual disorder (Hartmann, 2009). The idea originates from Freud, who argues that men make a distinction between highly respected (Madonnas) and debased women (whores). According to him, men are not able to fully express their desire towards their "well-brought-up wife", and instead need debased women to obtain sexual satisfaction (Freud, 1991). The dichotomy that a woman can only be either a partner for sex or respectful implies that women need to behave themselves sexually if they want to be valued by men. Wolf (1997) approaches this distinction from a feminist perspective, and by discussing the opposition of good girls and sluts, she illustrates how the normative expectations towards female sexuality are internalized by women and the whole society as well. In her words, becoming a slut means that one "could die several deaths". The danger carried by the word, and

by any behavior that would provoke the use of this label can lead to the loss of the identity of a good child, and to death in the eyes of the society, of the family, or it can even lead to consequences that result in death in the literal sense. (pp. 74-75)

The normalizing power of the slut discourse does not affect men and women in the same way. The sexual double standard, which is informed by traditional gender roles, grants men more sexual freedom than women (Zaikman and Marks, 2014, p. 342). Muehlenhard and McCoy (1991) study the relationship between female college students' sexual behavior and their expectations about their partners' acceptance of this double standard. The authors refer to women's refusal to sex when they in fact want to do it as a "scripted refusal", and they find that those women who have had communicated with a scripted refusal are more likely to think that the sexual double standard is accepted by their partners than those who have admitted their desire for sex openly (p. 457). Although Anna gave me the most insight on how the sexual double standard influences behavior, some of the other interviewees also said that the double standard is present in their lives, in their families, or in society.

It is beyond the limits of this thesis to provide information on how prevalent the sexual double standard and gendered expectations towards women are. Still, it is important to consider their potential to inform Hungarian students' sexual behavior, because the implications of these expectations can also shed light on the connections between rape myths and complications around consent. One of the female interviewees, Helga, was very critical with all rape myths, and when I asked her about the miscommunication myth, she emphasized that "a no is a no, and it means you don't have the right to enter my body or my private sphere". Still, when I further inquired about the game of saying no, she said that she knows people who do it. She emphasized, however, that in her opinion, this strategy creates a "vicious circle" by reinforcing the belief that a no does not always mean a lack of willingness, which can lead to situations in which a no is not

accepted even when it is not part of a game. This thought adds another layer to the discussion of coerced consent from the previous chapter. It might be the myth of miscommunication which makes it unclear whether finally consenting to have sex after saying no several times repeatedly is an expression of willingness to have sex after playing a game with the partner, or just giving in to verbal coercion. The underlying gendered expectations towards women's sexual behavior, however, explain why such situations occur. As long as societal expectations encourage people to engage with the game of saying no, the clarity of (non)consent is at risk. The sexual double standard, thus, can influence female sexual behavior, male perceptions of non-consent, and whether sexual violence is recognized as such. It is important, therefore, that any future efforts to improve sexual communication take such gendered expectations into consideration.

3.2. The "normal man"

Regarding male behavior, the idea of the "normal man" seemed to be the most recurring gendered expectation. The interviewees defined what a "normal man" is by discussing what he would or would not do, and the male interviewees often even distanced themselves from the behaviors that differ from how a "normal man" would act. Most of the definitions emerged when the interviewees discussed two rape myths: whether a drunk victim bears any responsibility for being raped, and whether some men rape because male sexuality is uncontrollable (either sober or drunk). Similarly to other instances of the interviews already mentioned, many of the responses rejected these particular myths. Still, the rejections offered insight into gendered norms, and through that, to how these students imagine the typical rapists, who do not conform to the expectations of the "normal man".

One question that induced different answers about the "normal man" inquired about whether a drunk victim bears any responsibility for getting raped. According to Anna, if someone

is not in a condition to consent, "it must be self-evident to a normal man that we do not start a sexual encounter with an unconscious or not fully conscious person". In Betti's opinion, a "well-mannered, normal man would call a taxi and take her home". From these examples, it is clear what a "normal man" is expected to do: he should not abuse someone's inability to consent or resist, and if he is really well-brought-up, he should even protect the drunk woman. While these answers deny the rape myth by identifying that in the case of a drunk victim, the responsibility is born by the person who takes advantage of the victim's condition, the idea of the "normal man" also creates a dichotomy. The idea that "normal men" would not rape implies that those who do commit sexual violence belong to their own category. Further insight into who rapists supposed to be was provided to me by the denial of another rape myth.

The second subscale of the *Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale* (McMahon and Farmer, 2011) explores beliefs that justify rape by saying that the rapist "didn't mean to" do it. The interviewees offered different explanations why the excuse of uncontrollable male sexuality is not valid, regardless of whether the rapist is drunk: libido varies, it is not universally strong and it depends on the person how strong his desire is; alcohol might ease up inhibitions, but it does not change one's intentions; or when deciding to drink, one has to still accept responsibility for their actions. Some of them, however, also added a further detail: that a sane, mentally healthy "normal man" would not rape anyone. Betti explained it in the following way:

> If someone is a normal, sane man, then their sexual desire can be controlled, and if we are talking about a case unlike this, then there are probably other mental problems too.

Nóra offered me some further insight into the narrative of mental unhealth by saying that rape must be about issues with dominance if giving in to uncontrollable male sexual desire means that someone hurts the other party involved.

> I can't imagine a healthy person in good mental shape, who lives a normal life, […] to do something like that. […] Only those would do such a thing who are messed up in their heads, who want to exert dominance, or show that they are stronger, that they can do this, because they like to see the other person's pain.

Both narratives pathologize sexually violent behavior, but not exactly in the same way. Betti's narrative suggests that those men who rape probably deal with other mental health issues too. Nóra, however, claims that sexually violent behavior is more of a result of mental unhealth. Still, the belief that emerges from this pathologization conforms to a rape myth that was not included in my interview guide: "rapists are obviously different from other men (e.g. mentally sick, sexually frustrated, not normal)" (Ryan, 2011, p. 779). "Normal men", therefore, are expected to be different from the image of the typical rapist, and mentally healthy men with a balanced sexual life are not expected to be perpetrators of sexual violence. This myth serves as a comforting and distancing mechanism (p. 775). Women can think that they are safe from becoming a victim as long as they avoid "abnormal" men, while men can avoid the possibility of becoming a perpetrator by behaving like a "normal man". Balázs, for example, closed the interview by joking that he hopes I do not think he is "abnormal" based on his answers.

The idea that rapists and "normal men" belong to different categories of men bears implications for how acquaintance rape might get labeled. Turchik et al. (2010) find that women are more likely to experience sexual assault if they imagine a typical rape scenario as including elements like being outdoors or being assaulted by a stranger (p. 82). These elements are not consistent with the typical script of acquaintance rape (as often happening without physical force and by a known male). The authors argue that women who do not consider acquaintance rape as a typical rape scenario are likely to miss risk cues in such situations. In the Hungarian context, 21%

of women have experienced gender-based violence[3] committed by a partner, while 14% by a non-partner (FRA, 2014, p. 28). Therefore, I argue that the myth of the "abnormal" rapist, and with that, of the "normal man" is important to question. In the previous chapter, it has been shown that in the case of physically non-violent, but unwanted sex, some find it difficult to label a case as either consensual sex or sexual violence. If the myth of the "normal man" is prevalent in a context, acquaintances who do not seem mentally ill, frustrated or in any other way "abnormal", and who do not exert physical violence might not be considered as potential perpetrators of sexual violence.

According to Herman (1988), "[t]he most striking characteristic of sex offenders is their apparent normality" (p. 426). In a study based on interviews with sexually aggressive men, Kanin (1969) shows that most of the aggressive episodes that the participants admitted happened after advanced consensual foreplay (p. 18). In this thesis research, more than the half of the interviewees shared narratives of their acquaintances who have been raped, but only one of these accounts involved rape by a complete stranger. Considering the prevalence and characteristics of acquaintance rape situations, it is important to see that the dichotomy of normality might obscure what is happening: the man who seemed normal enough to be kissing, going home or even having a relationship with cannot be committing rape. If he is not violent and does not seem mentally ill, verbally coerced consent might seem as simple miscommunication. Therefore, the prevalence of gendered expectations that define what a "normal man" is like needs to be considered in any discussion of how to identify rape risk cues.

[3] Including physical and/or sexual violence. Data disaggregated by sexual violence is not available in this study.

3.3. Heteronormativity

It is important to reflect on the heteronormativity inherent both in the rape myths that this research relies on and in the gendered expectations discussed above. The items of the *Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale* are almost all explicitly gender-specific and refer to male sexual violence against women. Payne, Lonsway and Fitzgerald (1999), who designed the original *IRMA* name two reasons for that: firstly, most adult victims of rape are female while most perpetrators of sexual violence are male; secondly, that "there exists no corresponding set of cultural beliefs that serve to deny and justify the existence of female violence or male victimization" (p. 29). I chose the *Updated IRMA* (McMahon and Farmer, 2011) to explore beliefs about sexual violence to inform my interview guide because it provides an extensive set of rape myths and because of the wide range of related literature available. However, I already realized while drafting the interview guide that the scale's focus on male to female sexual violence might completely miss opinions about other forms of sexual violence.

Heteronormativity is defined as the hegemony of heterosexuality, a culture in which "the givenness of the male-female sexual relations is part of the ordinary rightness of the world" (Berlant and Warner, 2003, p. 174). The rape myths of the *IRMA* scales reflect exactly that, however, the claim that similar sets of cultural beliefs do not exist about female perpetrators or male victims is not more than partially accurate. Stermac et al. (2004), for example, have identified male rape myths, such as "men cannot be forced to have sex against their will" or that male victims of sexual violence must be gay (p. 901). Chapleu et al. (2008) show that in the case of sexual violence against male victims, similar attitudes support rape myth acceptance to justify rape as in the case of female victims (e.g. benevolent sexism or acceptance of interpersonal violence). Literature on myths about female perpetrators does not seem to be available, however,

that might be the consequence of one widely held belief: that women cannot rape. This was also confirmed by one of the interviewees, Helga:

> There are these stereotypes that men like sex, so it can't be rape, and if it's between a man and a woman, and the woman committed the rape, that is not even a thing, so I think there are people who don't even accept that this can happen.

There might be more rape myths about male to female rape than about other cases, but I decided not to completely neglect their existence. Therefore, most of the questions in my interview guide were modified to be less gender-specific and heteronormative than the *Updated IRMA* by not referring to victims as girls and to perpetrators as guys. Since the third person singular pronoun is genderless in the Hungarian language, the questions inquiring about victims and perpetrators could avoid explicitly referring to males or females (only two questions remained gendered: whether women lie about having been raped and whether male sexual drive is uncontrollable). To really challenge heteronormativity, however, I also included one more item at the end of the rape myth section: do you think that men can be raped?

Most of the answers to the rape myth questions reflected the heteronormativity which is embedded in these myths: the interviewees often referred to victims as women and to perpetrators as men. About half of the interviewees discussed male victims as a possibility even before arriving to the last question. Although the possibility of raping men was in general not rejected, most interviewees started to consider this option by discussing in what ways a woman can or cannot rape a man. If that happened, I further inquired whether only people of the opposite sex can rape someone. Some responses to that question were surprised and self-reflective: Ádám, for example, after minutes of loud contemplation arrived at the conclusion that men can be raped both by men and women, and said that he was very "conservative" with his initial answers. Others pointed out that even if more and more people accept homosexuality nowadays, the actual

sex life of queer people is still such a taboo in today's society that there is even less talk about their experiences with sexual violence than in the case of male to female rape. While, for example, a recent study on Hungarian lesbian, bisexual and trans women's experience with partner violence shows that many of these women experience sexual violence by female perpetrators (Sándor and Turai, 2015). The interviewees' opinions about female rapists varied to a large extent. Some were critical with the idea completely saying that it would be inconsistent with how women and their sexuality work, while others claimed that women can also apply verbal coercion, or if they are a bit more well-built than the average, they might also use their physical power.

The implications of heteronormative and gendered expectations towards who is a victim and who can be a perpetrator are manifold. If only women are recognized as victims, sexual violence against men might be even less reported than against women (Chapleu et al., 2008, p. 2). Nóra and Helga, for example, identified how male rape myths that deny male victims' experiences or feminize them can discourage men from reporting. Rejecting the idea of female perpetrators does not only affect how male victims are treated, but can also obscure lesbian victims' experiences. The answers also showed how queer experiences of sexual violence in general are muted. While some interviewees explicitly said that this is the case, the mainly heteronormative responses that occurred even when the traditional gender roles of victims and perpetrators were questioned provided a fair illustration of the case. It is important to note, however, that I did not receive any explicitly homophobic answers from anyone, and the majority of the interviewees even found it important to mention that they accept homosexuality.

Most of the students I talked with seemed genuinely interested in issues of sexual violence and sexism and some of them were very well-informed about these topics, although gendered expectations and heteronormativity deeply engraved in a society do not disappear

overnight. When I was challenging these gendered and heteronormative assumptions, however, I found very little, if any, conscious resistance. Instead, I saw students taking these questions seriously, considering the possibilities, and reflecting on their own earlier assumptions. To me, their reactions did not only imply that conversation about these sensitive issues can already carry pedagogical value in itself, but suggest we take a broader look at the whole problem. Reliance on the original, heteronormative items of the *Updated IRMA* would have probably resulted in a conclusion that "the majority of the respondents gave heteronormative answers". My data, however, suggest that these answers are not necessarily reflections of a static, untouchable set of beliefs. In the case of my interviews, most instances of rape myth acceptance or sexism did not seem to be results of a lack of interest, self-reflection or willingness to engage with issues of gender, rather of widely held cultural and gendered beliefs that might not have been challenged before.

4. Conclusion

4.1. Limitations and future research

While this thesis research has not been in any way meant to be representative, most its main limitations are a result of the small sample of interviewees involved. As all of the interviewees were more or less closely connected to the circle of my acquaintances, the sample was not random either. Although I still managed to reach students from several different disciplines such as the humanities, technical sciences, and social sciences (including one participant from a religious institute), the small number of interviewees made it impossible to draw any parallels between one's attitudes towards rape and the field of their study. Similarly, the data was not sufficient to establish any connection between affiliation with university clubs or organizations and rape myth acceptance.

Due to temporal and other practical constraints, I only talked with students who study in Budapest. Even if about half of them grew up outside Budapest, the opinions and experiences of those who live in the countryside and did not move to the capital to study might differ. Interestingly, most participants do not live and have not lived in dormitories. Considering that Hungarian dormitories are spaces where a lot of students live together without significant supervision, and where parties are not rare, it would be interesting to know whether they provide a more suitable context for sexual violence to happen than other types of habitation typical to students. In the case of this research, the only narrative of rape in my sample which was explicitly labeled rape and which happened in a facility connected to a higher education institute happened in a dormitory. As it has been pointed out, the US and Hungarian campuses are structurally different. Therefore, it would be worth conducting research similar to this one in order to find out whether research focusing on dorms would result in more similar findings to the US literature,

and whether in the Hungarian context, “dorm rape” would be a more suitable label for the problem of sexual violence among students than “campus rape”.

As the aim of this research was to explore beliefs, it did not include personal questions about one’s sexuality, and none of the interviewees gave any mention of not being heterosexual. Considering the role of heteronormativity and gendered expectations in the data collected, the lack of queer students seems to be a significant limitation. Future research might benefit from contrasting heterosexual students’ beliefs with how queer ones reflect on heteronormative rape myths, and to better understand queer students’ experiences, an exploration of queer rape myths would be important too.

Most importantly, however, future research efforts need to find a way to recruit interviewees who are less open to talk about sexuality. In the case of this research, I can only they learnt that the topic would be connected to sexuality. Not being able to identify reasons, however, it is impossible to tell whether the critical mindset towards rape myths and the openness for dialogue which I experienced from many interviewees’ part was a result of a generally less distancing attitude towards sexuality. To gain a more comprehensive picture about attitudes towards sexual violence, the opinions of those more hesitant are needed too.

On a more conceptual level, the reliance on consent deserves more attention. The aim of this thesis is not to argue against the use of the idea of consent in negotiating one’s sexuality. It does, however, want to illustrate that relying on consent does not always guarantee unambiguous and mutually wanted sexual encounters. More research is required on whether there are better methods to ensure that willingness to have sex is present in all parties involved, or whether any complementing methods can improve the clarity of negotiating sex.

4.2. Main findings and policy implications

Research on students' attitudes towards rape myths and consensual sex revealed that the majority of the participants were well-informed and interested in these topics, and approached beliefs about sexual violence with a lot of criticism. Instances of rape myth acceptance, however, illustrated how rape myths can influence whether ambiguous sexual encounters get labeled as sexual violence. The discussion of the grey zone, or the borderline area between consent and sexual violence also showed that if false beliefs about rape are accepted, reliance on consent can be insufficient to clearly negotiate the mutual wantedness of sex. The analysis of prevailing gendered expectations within society resulted in the conclusion that the double standard which influences female sexuality encourages people to engage in a game of saying no even if they want to have sex, which interferes with the concept of consent as an unambiguous tool to negotiate sexuality. Expectations towards what a "normal man" is like divides men into a false dichotomy of "normal" and "rapists", which obscures the characteristics of non-violent and acquaintance rape, potentially resulting in victims missing important risk cues. Finally, heteronormative assumptions about sexual violence and gendered expectations towards who is a victim and who can be a perpetrator mute the experiences of those who do not conform to the heteronormative expectations about rape.

The initial aim of this research was to study how sexual violence among Hungarian students could be tackled by preventive education on the university level; however, the main findings of this research suggest a completely different approach towards a solution from several aspects. While literature on rape in higher education often focuses on the campus both as a space and as an institution; based on my sample, it seems that the actual Hungarian university campuses have little to do with sexual violence. The only narrative of rape connected to higher education

occurred in a dormitory, which, similarly to freshman camps, is a place where a large amount of students spend a lot of time together. Since what happens on campus still has a huge effect on students' lives, I do not want to question whether preventive education or intervention policies should happen on campus. Still, I argue that any future higher education policies concerning sexual violence should take dormitories as a context potentially contributing to the prevalence of sexual violence more into consideration.

The fact that about half of the interviewees have told me stories about sexual violence occurring in their immediate acquaintanceship, but which did not happen on campus, or did not necessarily even involve students either suggests that although sexual violence might be more or less directly present in students' life, it is not necessarily closely connected with student life as such. Considering that and the prevailing gendered expectations on the societal level, it is important to discuss the issue of sexual violence in other strata of society as well. Blaming only universities for students' experiences with sexual violence and expecting the problem to be solved on the higher education level would obscure the responsibility of earlier sex education.

Without exception, all the interviewees discussed their experiences with compulsory sex education as exclusively focusing on the biological aspects of sex and on issues of contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, and unwanted pregnancy. While discussing how compulsory sexual education in general could be improved, most some of the interviewees said that it would be important to discuss topics like consent and better communication between partners as well. These answers were presumably influenced by the preceding questions in the interview, without which they might have highlighted other aspects as important to include; however, these opinions seem to illustrate the pedagogical value inherent in open dialogue on sexuality. The fact that many of the interviewees claimed to have thought about questions they had never faced and having found out something new about the topic or themselves suggests that discussion is already

important even without an effort to educate. While some of the respondents said that it would be useful to discuss sexuality in higher education too, the most popular opinion was that sexual education should start to include topics like consent or better communication much earlier, and some even suggested talking about these with children already. Since any future efforts to reform compulsory sex education would take quite some time to have an effect on the broader society, discussion on sexuality should at the higher education level should be still supported. However, only with the understanding that even if with the freshman scandals, it was students' experiences with rape that called attention to the problem of sexual violence, it is neither a problem particular to that context, nor something to be addressed solely on that level.

Besides the responsibility of sexual education, it is also important to address gendered expectations within today's society. The interviewees in this research almost universally rejected some rape myths: for example, they would not blame victims of rape for having dressed in any particular way, and they do not think that women tend to lie about having been raped. Still, the accepted rape myths discussed in this thesis highlight how gendered expectations toward male and female sexuality can feed false beliefs, which can potentially obscure experiences with sexual violence. It must be remembered, therefore, that fight against sexual violence has to go hand in hand with efforts to reach gender equality as well.

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