"Why Wouldn't You Like It?": Exploring Masculine Identities in Discussions of Male Rape

Bridget Woods
CUNY John Jay College, bridget.woods@jjay.cuny.edu

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“Why Wouldn’t You Like It?”

Exploring Masculine Identities in Discussions of Male Rape

A Thesis Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Masters in Forensic Psychology

John Jay College of Criminal Justice

City University of New York

Bridget Woods

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Abstract

Empirical research on the topic of male rape is scarce within the discipline of psychology. Current research focuses on negative perceptions of male rape victims, but does not take into account the role hegemonic masculinity plays in constructing beliefs about male rape. The present study aims to gather narratives of young men’s beliefs of male rape and male rape myths and analyze how masculinity and masculine identities shape these beliefs. Narratives were gained through collection of journal writings and focus groups, and an integrated narrative analysis was conducted to identify themes and discursive strategies that men employed to balance their own beliefs with larger societal masculine ideals. The reproduction of dominant masculine norms was prevalent; however, the relationship between consent and male rape myths allowed for disruption of masculine privilege. The research emphasizes a need to understand and deconstruct how men hold conflicting ideas about male rape and masculinity simultaneously, and the ways in which we as researchers and activists can disrupt these barriers to conversations.
Introduction

The study of male rape and male rape myths is an emerging area of research that aims to focus on male victimization as a separate and potentially unique experience when compared to female victimization. Researchers, influenced by the second wave feminist movement’s call to address violence against women, analyzed the power dynamics that led men to commit sexual violence against women, as well as the social structures that kept women in the potentially subjugated role of “victim” (Brownmiller, 1975). The shift from this gendered dichotomy of man/perpetrator and woman/victim has been an arduous process, however, both within academia and public policy/legislation when considering male rape. The National Sexual Resource Center (2015) reports that 1 in 71 men will be raped in their lifetime and 1 in 45 men have been made to penetrate a sexual partner at some point in their lives; these numbers alone most likely do not represent the scope of the issue, as male sexual assault is also a largely underreported crime. The implied low frequency of occurrence and reporting impacts how male rape is discussed and analyzed within academia: research focuses either on male rape’s relation to female rape (Howard, 1984) or on perceptions of victims and perpetrators that perpetuate the gendered dichotomy (Turchik & Edwards, 2012). Research analyzing the relationship between male rape and masculine identity, though, is only now beginning to emerge (Javaid, 2015a).

Literature about male rape and the myths that are continuously perpetuated often implicitly demonstrates the link between male rape myths and hegemonic masculinity, without explicitly stating so. It is critical to extrapolate on this relationship, as it not only is the core factor in the maintenance and perpetuation of male rape myths, but it also allows researchers an avenue to disrupt this continued reproduction and challenge hegemonic masculine beliefs within this context.
The aim of this study was to analyze young men’s discourse surrounding male rape myths and identify if and when hegemonic masculine ideals were perpetuated or challenged. I briefly outlined the current literature studying male rape and male rape myths, and expanded upon hegemonic masculinity as a theoretical framework for my analysis. I then conducted a series of integrated analyses, all of which allowed me to identify where the reproduction of dominant masculine narratives occurred, and where the potential for disruption began. Finally, I outlined the implications of these findings and how we as researchers may begin to shift discourse around male rape myths away from these prevailing dominant ideologies.

**Literature Review**

The literature review will begin with an overview of recent research on male rape and male victimization, as well as a brief analysis of where the gaps in the literature lie. It will then examine rape myths, focusing specifically on male rape myths and the impact they have on male victims and larger perceptions of victims. It will provide a theoretical framework grounded in hegemonic masculinity, specifically focusing on the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and male rape myths. Finally, it will detail the research questions of the present study.

*Male Rape in Recent Literature*

While the past decade has marked an increase in research focusing on male rape, predominant language still favors the gendered dichotomy of male perpetrator and female victim. Current research on male rape often focuses on specific populations, such as male victims in prison (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 2006), male victims in the military (Belkin, 2008), and male victims who identify as gay (Rumney, 2009). When male rape is studied in more general terms, it is almost exclusively in comparison to female rape (Howard, 1984; Pino & Meier, 1999). Researchers who conduct studies analyzing perceptions of rape victims
emphasize negative attitudes with female rape victims as the default, and often use tools and scales that don’t maintain the validity for male victims that they do for female victims (Burt & DeMello, 2002; White & Robinson Kurpius, 2002; Anderson, 2007).

When male rape is written about as a separate and unique phenomenon, the victims’ narratives are highlighted and emphasized. Weiss (2010) documents that while male victims of sexual violence in the U.S. report certain experiential similarities with female victims, such as circumstances surrounding rape, there are also uniquely distinct ways male victims “justify” their position as victim: male victims were more likely to report that they were heavily intoxicated or that they attempted to fight back against their attacker. Another study expanded on this acknowledgment of male victimization by analyzing how men reported their experiences after. Male victims rarely reported their assault as rape, while they concurrently reported high levels of physical, mental, and psychological distress (Artime, McCallum, & Peterson, 2014). Analyzing men’s perception of their own victimization is critical in identifying aspects that differ from female victimization, and whether these aspects are influenced by dominant masculine ideals. Simultaneously, though, we must also question whether these hegemonic masculine ideals are also being perpetuated in others’ perceptions of male rape victims and through the enactment of male rape myths. Here, the literature struggles to emphasize the relationship between the utilization of male rape myths and the maintenance of prevailing masculine ideals.

Perceptions of Male Rape and Male Rape Myths

Victims’ perceptions of themselves and their experience, as well as how others perceive victims or “victimhood” as a concept, is influenced by dominant social narratives. While there has been a relative shift to viewing female victims of rape in a more supportive and affirming manner, as a way to combat prevalent victim-blaming narratives, the same cannot be said for
male victims. Studies analyzing the effects victim and perpetrator gender have on perceptions of rape victims consistently demonstrate that while men view all rape victims less favorably than women, they judge male victims the most unfavorably (Anderson, 2007; Anderson & Quinn, 2009). What these studies do not address, however, is what dominant masculine ideals are influencing these negative perceptions, and how they manifest themselves within male rape myths.

Rape myths, defined as “stereotypical or false beliefs about the culpability of victims, the innocence of rapists, and the illegitimacy of rape as a serious crime” (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2008, p. 2-3), significantly impact the negative attitudes individuals hold toward rape victims regardless of gender. Much of the current rape myth literature, though, focuses on the impact rape myths can have on the perceptions and attitudes towards female victims (Brownmiller, 1975; Burt, 1980). The Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale, developed in 1999, is a consistent measure used when assessing endorsement of female rape myths (Payne, Consway, & Fitzgerald). This same measure cannot be used, however, when assessing endorsements of male rape myths as the language is gendered and does not account for discrepancies in myths. While there are some male rape myth acceptance scales (Melanson, 1999; Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992), they are not consistently used across studies.

Researchers have identified a number of consistent male rape myths: men cannot be raped (Stermac, Del Bove, & Addison, 2004), but especially not by a woman (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992); men who are raped by another man must be gay (Sivakumaran, 2005); men who are raped experience a loss of masculinity (Groth & Burgess, 1980); men are expected to be able to defend themselves against rape (Groth & Burgess, 1980);
and men are not as impacted by rape trauma as women (Stermac et al., 2004), especially if the perpetrator is a woman (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992). Male rape victims are generally viewed more negatively than female rape victims (Davies & McCartney, 2003; Davies, Pollard, & Archer, 2006), but researchers have also demonstrated that endorsement of male rape myths increases negative attitudes toward male victims (Burt & DeMello, 2002; Anderson, 2007; Davies & Hudson, 2011).

Reviewed in this section, research demonstrates that male rape victims face negative perceptions similar to female rape victims, and this in turn effects how willing victims are to report their rape, or even acknowledge it as such. On a surface level, researchers have begun to link these perceptions and attitudes to a maintenance of gender power structures: research focusing specifically on what hegemonic masculine standards influence perceptions of male victimization is in its infancy. The link between male rape myths and dominant masculine norms is barely registered within the literature; however, this relationship is critical to analyze when conceptualizing how to disrupt the reproduction of male rape myths.

**Hegemonic Masculinity and Male Rape**

The underlying motivation of both male victims underreporting their rape and men holding negative attitudes towards those victims who do report is maintaining dominant representations of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity, the structural maintenance of gender hierarchy and the ideal masculine identity within its societal, racial/ethnic, and cultural constraints (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005), constitutes a set of rules and qualities that boys and men are expected to enact and adhere to. Some of these qualities include: being assertive and domineering; avoiding any behavior that may be construed as “feminine” (i.e. being overtly
emotional, being or acting “gay”); maintaining constant sexual desire for women; and cultivating perpetual control over one’s own masculine identity (Connell, 1987; Kimmel, 2008).

Hegemonic masculinity allows us to think of gender as a performance: a man’s masculine identity is constructed and controlled through his performance of it. Butler (1993) has argued, “There is no gender identity behind the expression of gender; identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results” (p. 25). The basis of performing one’s masculinity, especially within a group of one’s peers, is the reproduction of pervasive masculine ideals. In utilizing hegemonic masculinity as a theoretical framework for analysis, I will elucidate on themes and narratives centered around gender and masculinities that occur within discourse about male rape myths, as well as excavate the nuances within the conceptualizations of male rape.

**Research Questions**

We know that male rape victims face similar struggles to female rape victims in their experience and the subsequent aftermath of being raped. When asked about perceptions of male victimization, the enactment of male rape myths is common, especially among other men. While researchers studying male rape and male rape myths do begin to conceptualize the role of hegemonic masculinity in the creation of male rape myths (Javaid, 2015b; Javaid, 2017), what’s missing is an explicit link between the enactment of male rape myths and the maintenance of dominant masculine representations. Understanding this relationship allows us as researchers to discern the theoretical foundation of negative perceptions, identify when these hegemonic masculine ideals are being perpetuated, and begin to challenge these ideas and shift the discourse in a way that disrupts these prevalent notions.
The present study aims to understand if and when hegemonic masculine ideals are perpetuated or challenged in discourse around male rape myths. In what ways do men maneuver their positionality within these discussions and what techniques are utilized to either progress or end the conversation? Specifically, in focusing on four specific male rape myths, do men enact dominant masculine ideologies to conceptualize their understanding of male rape victimization? Finally, in what ways do men challenge these masculine ideologies in discourse around male rape myths, and when?

**Methodology**

*Design*

The present study implemented a qualitative research design, in which male participants were asked to engage in a journal writing session and two focus group discussions. This design was employed to gauge any varying techniques across methods; the journal writing prompt was considered a “private” context, while the focus groups were considered “public” contexts in which the men would be directly interacting with other men and thus performing some level of their masculinity. The same group of participants were present over each portion of the study, ensuring continuity. I implemented a cross-modal design in order to address each of my research questions: I would be able to compare masculine performance across the “public” and “private” spheres, and holding two focus group sessions allowed for less superficial conversation.

*Procedure*

Young men who were enrolled in gender studies courses at an urban college were recruited to take part in the study. The researcher used the recruitment script (see Appendix A) to inform potential participants about the nature of the study. Participants in the study were given extra credit for the gender studies course they were enrolled in, as per the class instructor’s
permission\textsuperscript{1}. Students who identified as men and were interested in participating were given a time and location at the college for the first group session. At the start of the first focus group, participants were asked to sign the informed consent form (See Appendix B) and create a pseudonym for themselves, by which everyone would be addressing each other. Participants were then given a short demographic form, asking their age, racial/ethnic identity, sexual orientation, and major/minor (See Table 1), and a short journal writing prompt.

In the first stage of the study, participants were asked to write what they knew about rape in general, and then to write anything they knew about male rape. Participants were encouraged to write openly and informed that no one aside from the researcher would see the journal entries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Racial/Ethnic Identity</th>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>Major and Minor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S. Erkel</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>Computer Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sean Carter</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>Poly-Romantic Asexual</td>
<td>Forensic Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jose</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Latino</td>
<td>Straight</td>
<td>History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Deux</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>Criminal Justice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.J.</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Non-defined</td>
<td>Sociology/Gender Studies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the second stage of the study, participants were asked to take part in two focus group sessions on understandings of male rape and male rape myths. The focus groups were semi-structured interviews, in which I provided a series of questions to structure the group sessions (see Appendix C); this helped facilitate a discourse influenced and led by the men’s perceptions, and allowed for divergence from the central topic when the men felt it necessary. In the first focus group, the men were asked what they knew about rape myths in general, and then specifically asked to think about male rape myths they may have heard of. At the end of the first

\textsuperscript{1} All students were provided multiple opportunities to receive extra credit.
focus group, I wrote out four male rape myths that had been chosen prior and asked the participants to write any thoughts or reactions they had. The four male rape myths chosen were:

1) Men cannot be raped by women.
2) Men who are raped by men must be gay.
3) Men who are raped by another man experience a loss of masculinity.
4) Men are expected to be able to defend themselves against rape.

In the second focus group, I put up the first male rape myth and the responses the men had written at the conclusion of the first group, and the men were asked if anything needed to be addressed or added. Next, the men were provided with two media examples of male sexual victimization and asked to share their thoughts and perceptions (See Appendix D). The media examples portrayed two famous musical artists who spoke about their first sexual encounter at a very young age. The men were asked about what factors might have affected the narrative. I chose two specific artists – Chris Brown and Anthony Kiedis – in order to provide a specific situation we could dialogue about without making it too personal (as I felt this would not allow for productive discourse). Each focus group session was about an hour and fifteen minutes, and was recorded and transcribed.

Data Analysis

My initial goal of this research was to conduct a thematic analysis of hegemonic masculine attributes constituted within male rape myth discourse. I planned to conduct an inductive thematic analysis to derive consistent themes and patterns from the data and situate the participant’s experiences within situational discourse (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

However, during the process of conducting the thematic analysis, I became less attuned to what the men were saying, and rather how they were saying it; specifically, how these men
were reproducing or challenging the ideologies behind the male rape myths. A shift from a thematic analysis to an integrated narrative analysis was necessary in order to recognize both the overt statements of gender expectations, as well as the underlying gendered ideologies that were only identified through reflection (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan, 1982; Tolman, Davis, & Bowman, 2016). This shift also allowed for a more critical understanding of the discursive strategies utilized by the men to either enable or silence the conversation when certain attributes of masculinity and male victimization arose. Finally, an integration of the multiple analyses I had already conducted provided the most immersive understanding of these perceptions and performances, as well as where these masculine performances began to falter and authentic dialogue arose.

As much of gender expression is constituted as gender performance (Butler, 1993), one could argue that narratives surrounding gender identity and gender politics is, as such, a linguistic performance. Narratives allow individuals to navigate their own socially constructed identity, as well as collaborate with others – whether it be peers or an audience – to identify what aspects of oneself can and should be presented (Riessman, 2002). Narrative itself is not a fixed story created outside of social controls, but “rather a site of struggle over personal and social identity” (Gilbert, Ussher, & Perez, 2014, p. 1447). In working with a group of young men, masculine performance was challenged and compromised at times: “people are constantly engaged in a process of negotiating the connections between their personal narratives and these dominant social narratives” (Murray, 2003, p.99). These men had to navigate their own masculine identities as they interacted with their peers, while simultaneously attempting to speak about their own identities and the dominant masculine ideals that influence the construction of their identities.
Integrating numerous analyses – thematic, discursive, and narrative – acknowledged the complex nature of masculine performance, and allowed me as a researcher to reflect on aspects of the discourse that were not initially present. These analyses were not randomly strewn together; each analysis presented a clear hegemonic masculine ideal that arose when the men tried to grapple with their understanding of male rape myths. In our initial discussions, understandings of male rape and the myths associated were relatively clear: the men identified societal biases and mistreatments of male rape victims and they were open in speaking up about their own conceptualizations. However, in shifting my own ideas about the men’s performance of their masculinity, it became crucial to analyze the moments when uncertainty was rife – these appeared to be the most authentic ventures into challenging masculine norms about male rape and allowing men to question their preconceived ideas about sex, rape, and consent.

Analysis

I began my analysis with an introduction into a common theme that arose both in identifying and delving further into male rape myths: power and control. The men struggled to conceptualize how they could simultaneously hold power over others, but have their own control be at the mercy of other men. Next, I examined two discursive strategies men employed when attempting to grapple with uncomfortable or unknown areas of discussion that came up. The use of distancing and humor both reinforced hegemonic masculine ideals, and often shut the conversation down. Finally, I closely analyzed a narrative component that arose in the second focus group: the topic of consent. It was in this discourse that a change began to emerge and the reproduction of dominant masculinity was challenged.
“WHY WOULDN’T YOU LIKE IT?”

Power and Control

My initial exploration into thematic analysis was centered around what aspects of hegemonic masculinity might be perpetuated or challenged in a discussion on male rape myths. The men easily identified more prevalent male rape myths: “Men can’t get raped” (Sean); “It’s usually a joking matter. Like, oh she did him a favor or something like that” (M). Even when asked about perceptions of male rape victims, and the impact these perceptions could have on factors like reporting the rape, the men were quick to respond:

*PI*: Anything else, why they wouldn’t go to the police, or why they wouldn’t want to press charges or things like that.

*M*: Maybe it could be an older woman taking advantage of a younger child, younger boy.

*S. Urkel*: They don’t want to feel weak.

*M*: Maybe someone could think that it makes them look gay.

*PI*: Ok. Uh, what about if the victim was gay and they were raped by a man. Why might they not report it then?

*John Deux*: They could argue that he should have liked it then.

*PI*: If a man gets raped by…let’s say a straight man gets raped by a woman, what are they gonna think?

*John Deux*: That he’s gay.

Each of the male rape myths they described reproduced multiple hegemonic masculine ideals: homophobia and a fear of being perceived as gay (Tharinger, 2008); an overwhelming need to maintain physical and psychological power over oneself and others (Tolman, 2016); and a constant desire to engage sexually with women (Javaid, 2015b).
While the men were quick to share what they knew on the subject in the form of male rape myths, they did not seem to question the existence of these myths. That is to say, by identifying and explaining the myths without necessarily challenging them, the men were inadvertently reproducing the dominant masculine narratives underlying each of these myths.

A critical characteristic of their explanations, though, was a continued emphasis specifically surrounding this fear of losing power and control. When they were asked about how they might explain the connection between masculinity and power, many reiterated the same ideas:

*John Deux*: Men are typically known to hold all the power.

*M*: [Masculinity and power] sort of go hand in hand. They aren’t one without the other.

The men viewed masculinity, power, and control as intrinsically linked – not only through societal perceptions of gender roles, but also through the behaviors and actions that men take on to perform their masculinity. It was when the men were asked to explore this supposedly inherent connection in the context of male rape and victimization that the juxtaposition of control and lack of power became evident:

*PJ*: Masculinity would say – you didn’t lose power and control yet. Like, you…like how deep you’re willing to go with suppressing everything is your control. So if you even talk about it, that’s you giving up your power. Because if you don’t say anything about it, then your control’s still there, your power is still there. Like cause your power is given by others, not by yourself.

*John Deux*: I think power is transferred over, or like…like back to what [PJ] said…maybe if he, if guys keep it in. They still have power and control.
This conflicting view of how men hold power and control within their own masculine identity reveals a set of contradictions. On the one hand, a man is able to hold his own power and control by the way he portrays himself around others: if he is able to resist the feminizing aspects that are often associated with victimization (especially rape victimization), he maintains control over his masculinity because he has successfully maneuvered around anything that might challenge it. He alone holds the ability to control how much this experience affects him; in order to preserve the hegemonic masculine identity he is striving for, he must ensure it does not affect him. The rejection of this victimization is his power and control. On the other hand, though, his power and control is also innately linked to other men’s perceptions of his performance. If other men can see through this act – if the man has not hidden his victimization well enough, or allowed himself to be affected in a way that complicates his own understanding of his masculinity – he has lost his control. The man has not hidden his victimization well enough under the scrutiny of others’ policing, and thus he forfeits his masculine identity; not by his own choice, but at the behest of those whose masculinities have not been compromised.

The implications of this balancing act of power and control makes it extraordinarily difficult to challenge the constant reproduction of male rape myths. A cycle is created and perpetuated when men admit to the knowledge of these myths, but do not attempt to challenge these myths within their own social circles. If men do try and challenge these rape myths, their own masculinity is in jeopardy: peer disciplining and the policing of gender performance keeps hegemony in place (Stoudt, 2006). Any incongruity in a man’s masculine identity – which includes questioning the reproduction of male rape myths – is subject to scrutiny and judgment from other men (Reigeluth & Addis, 2016).
Further exploration of the relationship between one’s own masculine identity and perceptions of one’s performance is needed to accurately discern the intricacies. However, it is clear that the hegemonic ideal that one have total power and control over one’s masculinity is almost impossible to attain, when so much of what we view of ourselves is determined by outside perceptions.

**Discursive Strategies**

The following section outlines the two discursive strategies I found throughout the focus group sessions. These strategies were utilized to navigate potential unknown or discomforting territories within the dialogue. Specifically, though, the shift to a more discursive analysis allowed for me to not only analyze the content of what the men were saying, but the ways in which they maneuvered this terrain and whether the techniques used engaged or shut down the conversation.

**Distancing**

Distancing, a common discursive strategy, is used in narrative discourse to create separation between oneself and the experience being described (Reyes, 2011). The use of distancing allowed the men to maneuver a fine line of where they wanted to place themselves within the discourse; they were able to identify and explain male rape myths and the factors underlying them without adhering their own beliefs to them. Simultaneously, though, they distanced themselves from a victim narrative. Utilizing distancing in these two ways concurrently granted the men a strategy to balance themselves in a discursive situation that would allow them to speak fully on the subject without the fear of being labeled a “bigot” or a potential “victim.”
The first manifestation of distancing occurred when men attempted to protect themselves from being seen as bigoted or unknowledgeable on the subject of male rape and male rape myths. Throughout our conversations, the men would emphasize their own view on the subject before continuing with a differing view that “some people” or “other people” might believe; they constructed an “other” based on the dominant masculine framework that the group determined was appropriate. Employing distancing in this way allowed the men to provide an overarching societal explanation while simultaneously preserving their personal views – which almost always contradicted the “negative” societal idea they were explaining. PJ, one student who held his own interest in an academic understanding of male rape, explained his own experience attempting to discuss male rape with others:

**PJ:** In prisons, they say that it’s not rape, it’s just gay.

**PI:** It’s not rape, it’s just gay.

**PJ:** Yeah I’ve heard that, but that’s because I’ve personally gone and been like hey, yeah, men get raped all the time like prisons, but nobody talks about it.

PJ not only uses this universal “they” to describe the larger societal perception, but he also follows his identification of one of the male rape myths with his own personal attempts to dissuade others from this way of thinking. He emphasizes his knowledge of the subject, while also affirming his disdain for this portion of the knowledge; he has distanced himself from “other people” who think like that.

The othering of oneself occurs regularly in the conversations, especially when the men were prompted to reflect on how they might act or respond in specific scenarios. It is important to note that the discussion began with a particularly pro-victim viewpoint, and thus men who may have held certain opposing views might not have felt comfortable fully sharing their
opinions. Even when the men were asked to think of what first comes to mind, with the understanding that it may not be “socially acceptable,” they continued to separate themselves from those who may hold these views: “A lot of guys in the crowd would think that, oh he must be gay or something” (M); “People will argue that if a man rapes another man it’s not necessarily gay…” (PJ); “They could argue that he should have like it then” (John Deux). The men could easily identify and explain male rape myths; however, beyond the act of othering themselves from these “negative” myths, they did not delve further into challenging the existence and reinforcement of these rape myths.

The second manifestation of distancing occurred when men would separate themselves from male victims by shifting the ubiquitous “they” from society to male victims. S. Urkel, who like many of the other men identified male rape myths with relative ease, provided an explanation as to why men might not admit their rape:

*S. Urkel:* They don’t want to feel weak.

Again, the use of “they” is used to distance himself from the group he is speaking about, which has now transformed into male victims. Distancing is a strategy utilized specifically when speaking about victims of sexual violence. It can often be used as a way to cope with a potential threat; in using “they” when referring to male rape victims, the men are separating themselves from potential similar victimization (Cao & Decker, 2015). This potential to even think of oneself in a similar situation may cause immense discomfort; to alleviate this discomfort, men will create the division between themselves and victims. None of the men appeared to want to deconstruct that discomfort on a more theoretical level, and thus the conversation shifted away from this discomfort. This usage of distancing reproduces the hegemonic masculine idea – and subsequent male rape myth – that men are incapable of being victims.
In maintaining this strict balance, the men also were prone to using both methods of distancing simultaneously: “They wouldn’t be taken seriously, they’d probably think it was just a joke or something” (Jose); “Maybe someone could think that it makes them look gay” (M). In the first example, “they” is used twice to explain the rape myths: first, to refer to male victims not being taken seriously by police and second, to refer to the police themselves. In M’s explanation, he utilizes “someone” to reference what society might think and “them” to refer to the male victims. These examples exhibit tension the men grapple with: they want to demonstrate their knowledge and be perceived as being on the “right” side of the issue, but not at the expense of positioning themselves within the situation and envisioning their own feelings or responses, even when explicitly asked.

As a discursive strategy, distancing allows men to leverage themselves on multiple sides of the narrative without fully committing to a position. Having knowledge of male rape myths was one layer of narrative engagement, but the men needed to perform this knowledge in different ways to grapple with the maintenance of their own identity and the perceptions of those in the group with them (myself included). However, this technique also acts as a way of stopping the conversation and barring more rewarding dialogue. When the men were asked to think about how men would view male victims who vocalized their experience as a negative and traumatizing life event, they seemed stuck:

M: I wouldn’t really look at him any differently.

PI: Mhm, okay. What else?

Jose: I mean, I would be the emotional support friend. More sympathetic, I understand.

Forced to think about the situation in a way where they couldn’t distance themselves, as they were asked how they might directly respond in reality, the men quickly halted the conversation: a
long pause or silence would occur and the men would only re-engage if I reframed the question or scenario. Whether their responses were authentic or not, this distancing from potential criticism at the expense of being honest suspended any further nuanced understanding of reactions to male rape and male rape myths.

However, moments of authenticity were glimpsed when the men were on the verge of connecting their own experiences with hegemonic masculinity and the perpetuation of male rape myths. While the men were able to identify the male rape myths, they struggled more with excavating the power structures that maintained them. When they did attempt to delve into the abstract, though, the men were more willing to share their own experiences and relate to the material in a different way. Attempting to decipher just how being overpowered and raped by a woman impacts masculine identity, John Deux explained:

It shows that you’re not really as strong as you thought you were. You’re not just naturally stronger than the other gender.

Not only is John Deux positioning himself closer to the victim narrative through the use of “you”, but he also allows himself – and thus the group as a whole – an avenue to question this previously conceived notion of masculinity as inherent power and dominance. In another instance, PJ elaborates on the link between homophobia and social ostracization:

I mean, being labeled as gay pushes you out of the whole, like, club of being like, one of the guys – like you can’t be doing bro stuff now. You can’t be a bunch of guys all goofing off, being a bunch of idiots, because there’s always gonna be one or two of your guy friends who’s gonna be like “Oh, he’s gay though, doesn’t that mean that he might like try doing shit with me, like that’s weird.” But it’s like you get that though.
Using “you” brings PJ closer to the narrative and elaborates upon language that he has presumably heard before to expand upon his conceptualizations. Many of these occurrences in which men finessed their positions within the discourse in order to better expand upon their knowledge ended at the rehashing of their personal experiences. While they were willing to open up more when specific scenarios were introduced, the connection between their experiences and the perpetuation of male rape myths often fell short. However, witnessing these shifts in techniques and strategies provides a clearer understanding of the barriers that must be addressed.

*Humor*

The implementation of humor fluctuated depending on what aspects of male rape myths were the focus of the discussion. Humor was present more in the second group session, when our conversations shifted from identifying male rape myths to understandings around consent, social pressure, and the direct role masculinity plays in the enforcement of male rape myths. Humor is a discursive strategy that has been linked to gender performance (Weaver, Mora, & Morgan, 2016); the men utilized humor to navigate unknown narrative scenarios, whether it was to fill a silence, lighten the mood, or shift the conversation away from a specific topic. The use of humor acts as a tool to reinforce and reproduce hegemonic masculine ideals: while the men might have thought that they were challenging dominant narratives in what they saying, in fact they were perpetuating these norms through the use of humor to navigate and essentially end conversations to assuage any discomfort.

The small bouts of laughter occurred sporadically as a way to relieve the heavy tension that engulfed the subject of male rape. Humor was injected throughout the discussion to display

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2 I hypothesize that this may have been due to the closer nature of the relationships, as compared to the first group session. The men may have felt more comfortable opening their personalities up in this safer context.
incredulity at the scenarios proposed. An exchange occurred where the men discussed the influence social pressure had on engaging in sex, even if the situation wasn’t ideal:

PI: Ok, reasons why…what you might think or what a group of people might think about this guy, he’s just like “no…”

PJ: I’ve known guys who use that as their excuse, where if they didn’t want to do something with a girl and then they don’t, they say “oh, she was too drunk, I didn’t want to take advantage” […] to protect from the accusations of being a rapist.

M: What a gentleman.

Jose: Prison fear is very real – [everyone laughs]

M’s initial sarcastic comments aims the humor at the would-be rapist; however, Jose’s comment subverts this criticism of a man identifying a way out of a potentially unwanted sexual encounter with a joke about implied male rape. While this implication seemed an unconscious response to make, it shifts the humor away from the disbelief of the situation and places it on the act of being raped in prison, thus shutting down any further development into that aspect of the conversation. The fact that everyone seemed to laugh along with the comment also indicates a reluctance to fully challenge certain hegemonic masculine attributes, even if some men didn’t agree with the humored aspect of the comment. The use of laughter here directly reinforces the dominant narrative that male rape is a joke and not to be taken seriously.

A similar moment occurred a little later in the session, when M proposed that a man could be overpowered by a woman if she were to “pull a gun on him or something” and someone laughed in response. Again, humor as a response here seems to indicate a level of skepticism associated with the scenario; however, this seemingly inadvertent outburst reinforces hegemonic structures and makes it difficult to continue the conversation. Humor is used as a disciplinary
tool to reproduce masculine norms; as much as the men may want to elevate their understanding of male rape myths through the content of their dialogue, the tools they use to manipulate the space for themselves and the other men actually prevent any further theoretical discourse. It is in these moments, though, that humor can be directly addressed and challenged.

Using humor as a discursive strategy did, at times, help motivate the men to continue the conversations and diffuse potentially uncomfortable moments which could have ended the discussions abruptly if not alleviated. During an exchange where the men were asked to think about rape in the context of partners engaging in sex involving the use of a safe word, I utilized humor in an attempt to keep one of the men from silencing himself:

\( PI: \) […] He says the safe word, and she keeps going. Is that rape?

\( Jose \ & \ Sean: \) yes.

\( M: \) Eh….

\( PI: \) Why? I see that face, why that face?

\( M: \) If he didn’t say the safe word, then I would not consider it rape.

\( PI: \) Right, okay. So he says the safe word. Is it rape?

\( Jose, PJ, \ & \ John \ Deux: \) Yeah, yes.

\( PI: \) Ok, ok so he –

\( M: \) Hmm, actually –

\( PI: \) Tell me! I want to hear it! [Laughs]

\( M: \) Actually, wait. I just thought of something. Is it more he doesn’t want to have sex or is it more, oh these handcuffs are too tight.

\( PI: \) Does it matter?

\( M: \) Because if he…uh…
“WHY WOULDN’T YOU LIKE IT?”

PI: He says the safe word.

M: Cause if he takes the handcuffs off, he may just want to still have sex.

PI: Ok, yeah. But in that moment, which he says the safe word, and she keeps going.

PJ: That’s rape.

Jose: Yeah, that’s…

M: [Pause] Yeah. [Everyone laughs.]

In this scenario, humor not only relieved tension M might have felt in sharing his potential objection, but it also allowed him to question the situation further which resulted in a more comprehensive understanding. In addition, the sense of thoughtfulness surrounding the issue wasn’t lost. Instead, the more relaxed environment pushed the men to question more, and the use of humor enabled them to feel more comfortable in doing so.

Humor also allowed for a diffusion of genuine tension when personal narratives eventually emerged. The men were presented a news article, in which singer-songwriter Chris Brown explained how he lost his virginity at age eight to a thirteen-year-old girl. Humor arose numerous times throughout our discussion of Brown based on the incredulity of his claim, as most men believed Brown was lying about his age. The men were asked to think about how they might respond if they were faced with someone they knew stating what Brown had said:

PI: You said lying to sound cool. Why would it be…why would it be cool to say that you had sex for the first time when you were eight.

John Deux: Maybe to like one up someone? Where someone could have been like yeah, I had sex at like ten years old. And, even that’s like still a little, that still sounds a little ridiculous.

PI: Right.
S. Urkel: Well, I mean – it may sound weird, but like my brother actually told me that he lost his virginity at eight too.

PI: Really.

S. Urkel: Yeah, so.

John Deux: Is he Chris Brown? [Everyone laughs.]

S. Urkel: And the girl was like thirteen.

John Deux reacted rapidly with a joke to diffuse the situation that had suddenly become very tense. His joke, however, was not aimed at S. Urkel’s brother, and his ability to relieve the tension resulted in S. Urkel continuing to share about this personal experience. In a situation where masculine norms may have called for a strict retreat from the discourse, humor permeated these boundaries and opened the dialogue up to further exploration.

The use of humor, especially when discussing a topic like male rape, is a balancing act that must focus on respect and appropriateness. The men had trouble calibrating when humor was needed; whenever tension occurred, there was a reflexive need to dispel it immediately, without questioning why it was present. In certain instances, humor allowed the men to maneuver the conversation in a more comfortable way. However, it was clear that this was also a strategy employed to keep the discussions within these certain parameters of comfort.

Distancing and humor as discursive strategies demonstrated that analysis beyond content or themes was necessary in order to ascertain the underlying navigation of this dialogue. In understanding when and how distancing and humor were used, it became clear that these were tools that anchored the men within hegemonic masculinity. Notions of dominant masculinity were reproduced in order to maintain control over the direction of the conversation and structure invisible boundaries that none of the men could permeate. It was only in brief moments that the
men’s employment of these techniques allowed for a breach in the confines of the discourse and authentic conceptualizations of male rape and male rape myths began to emerge.

**Questioning Consent**

Language and conceptualizations surrounding consent was simultaneously a portion of great engagement and great discomfort in our discussions. Our first group session focused heavily on identifying what male rape myths were, and thus the examples and conclusions we came to were based in extremes. The men were confident in their knowledge that men could be raped when faced with extreme circumstances or met with overwhelming force. Our second session centered almost exclusively on conceptualizing and perceiving how men can be victims of rape by female perpetrators. During these discussions, the men were more engaged directly in the dialogue – asking direct questions, adding anecdotal evidence, and pushing me on my own knowledge. It was also during these discussions, though, that the men were highly uncomfortable in contending with these more “moderate” examples of rape. As we began to delve into the more critical nuances of rape and consent, tension arose. The men found it, at times, more difficult to employ strategies like distancing and humor to differentiate their own perceptions from victim experience.

Some of the men had an easier time engaging in discourse around consent, and were more willing to disclose how their understandings had been shaped by personal experiences. PJ began the second session with “[...] the idea of what sex technically is very – is a very blurred line.” He further expanded on the role social pressures play in men’s willingness to engage in sex:

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3 This supports my hypothesis that implementing a second focus group session allowed for more authentic dialogue and safer discussions.
Like I don’t know exactly how to explain it, but kinda like – men can be forced by like a group of people, kind of pushing them into a situation to feel like if they don’t go through with sex, then…

He highlights that masculine performance impacts not only willingness, but also perceptions of one’s self by others. PJ began his analysis with uncertainty, but as the other men gave indications of agreement, he felt more confident continuing.

The men invited a conversation about consent and male rape after establishing that lack of consent is the underlying basis of rape. While an understanding of verbal consent was clear, physical consent created some tension in comprehending its role in conjunction with verbal consent. PJ determined there was a clear demarcation of physical consent, and it was just as critical as verbal consent:

Well, like, through her actions, she’s not giving, like, by like, acting that way she’s not really giving like, uh, physical consent. Like she’s not showing like a constant consent. Like technically, just because you say yes doesn’t mean that it’s consent if you’re like physically, completely showing a disinterest.

John Deux conceptualized physical consent as a part of verbal consent, in that they should reflect one another:

I mean I think it’s rape, cause one the guy was unconscious, well not unconscious but he was asleep, so he definitely wasn’t aware. The body still reacts to stimulants regardless so, fear, arousal, all that – it could still go sort of hand in hand in this situation.

S. Urkel seemed torn about some of the other men’s willingness to completely differentiate consent and physical arousal:
No, I mean cause like, I’m not too sure about, um – I mean I don’t know how it feels to be raped – so I don’t know how the, like, penis would work in that situation, you know. I feel like, you get hard from arousal, so if you’re ejaculating, I feel like you like it to some extent, I mean, yeah it’s still technically…you didn’t want to do it, but…[stops]

S. Urkel stops his thought there. However, he appears unsure over what role verbal consent has in the interaction when the body appears to be consenting itself. This context was specifically focused on female perpetrators; the difficulty arose not only in understanding how physical reactions could not equal pleasure to some extent, but also in the overarching masculine ideal that men should always want sex with women. In addition, S. Urkel may have felt he was breaching a masculine barrier in the group, as his ideas of physical consent seemed in opposition to the other men’s ideas.

Along with these overt questions about verbal and physical consent, the men also attempted to negotiate ideas of coercion and the role it plays in an individual’s ability to provide consent. Most notably, when the discussion shifted to conceptualizing male rape within partner relationships, manipulation was brought up:

*Jose:* That’s like a form of manipulation right there.

*PI:* Interesting.

*Jose:* Yeah cause sometimes, you know, the person might not want to, but they feel kind of pressured because like, you know, they’re romantic partner is kind of saying stuff like, oh you don’t want to have sex with me because you don’t love me or other stuff like that, and making them feel bad, so then they do it anyway to make the person feel better, but not because they want to do it themselves.
Jose, along with many of the other men who agreed with his interpretation, provided his discernment of the nuances of consent. While the men agreed that this form of emotional coercion was wrong, they oscillated between considering it an act of rape or not. There was a reluctance to equate any form of coercion or manipulation with rape; this may have been due to the men’s perception of rape as extreme. Sean illustrated his apprehension at always equating emotional coercion with rape:

_Sean:_ I would say that this is also, sort of, emotional abuse.

_PI:_ Interesting. Expand on that please.

_Sean:_ Cause, he, he was clearly not into it. She was more like, why don’t you want to do for with me, I thought you loved me, and he was like I do love you. So I’m like, ehh. So, the first one is definitely rape, but this one is more like she was guilting him into doing this.

It’s clear that while the men comprehend the necessity of verbal, and even physical, consent, manipulation is placed just outside the sphere of rape. Manipulation, though, consistently aligns itself with the hegemonic masculine norm that men should always desire and engage in sexual relationships with women (Javaid, 2015b); the line between coercion/manipulation and seduction is very blurry and purposefully undefined. Conceptualizing manipulation and coercion as acts of sexual violence may have prompted incredibly uncomfortable self-reflections on one’s own masculine behavior. The men’s unwillingness to engage in deeper dialogue around coercion may have indicated that the conversation was delving too far into the personal.

Consistent with how the men identified and defined male rape myths, they were more likely to persist in classifying many extreme situations of male rape, but struggled in deconstructing subtle factors that could influence a man’s ability or willingness to give consent.
In this part of the discourse, critical inquiries arose more frequently and the men clearly seemed to wrestle with ideas that are naturally more difficult to ascertain understandings of.

Most commonly, however, the discursive strategies of distancing and humor were not utilized as frequently when the conversation shifted in a muddier direction. I emphasize the junction of these discursive techniques and contexts because deconstructing consent and the role it does or does not play in male rape appeared to be the specific context that shifted the balance. Up until this point, when uncomfortable or uncertain concepts were proposed, the men were able to enact these strategies to maintain the balance between their identity and the group’s perceptions. When consent entered the dialogue, many of the men seemed to struggle with this balance as there was no longer such a clear “right” or “wrong” side. It was during these brief imbalances that serious and authentic questions began to occur. Instead of falling back on these discursive strategies to negotiate their positionality within the discourse, the men retreated from how I expected them to engage. Some of the men positioned themselves directly within the narrative and challenged me on the grey areas that often permeate discussions of consent, while others struggled to engage in the dialogue in the more confident way that defined the initial discussion of male rape myths.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to identify if hegemonic masculine ideals were present in discourse surrounding male rape myths, and whether they were reproduced or challenged by men engaging in these discussions. I aimed to specifically analyze how dominant masculine narratives could be reproduced constantly within discourse surrounding these myths. The utilization of an integrative analysis that evaluated thematic, discourse, and narrative attributes
allowed me to uncover and deconstruct methods in which men grappled with their masculine identity in male rape myth discourse.

Initial research presented numerous prevalent male rape myths that I utilized within the discussion: men cannot be raped (Stermac, Del Bove, & Addison, 2004), but especially not by a woman (Struckman-Johnson & Struckman-Johnson, 1992); men who are raped by another man must be gay (Sivakumaran, 2005); men who are raped experience a loss of masculinity (Groth & Burgess, 1980); and men are expected to be able to defend themselves against rape (Groth & Burgess, 1980). The men supported and expanded upon the literature that is beginning to emphasize that male rape myths have aspects of hegemonic masculinity perpetuated within them. Hegemonic masculinity dictates that men should be assertive and domineering (Connell, 1987): thus, men should be able to defend themselves against an attacker. Hegemonic masculinity dictates that men should always crave sex with women (Javaid, 2015b): thus, men can’t be raped by women because if they didn’t enjoy it, they must be gay. They also identified, though, the relationship between dominant masculinity and the notions of power and control. Not only is the preservation of a man’s power critical to his masculine identity and rejection of victimization, but it also emphasizes how crucial the performance of one’s masculinity is to maintaining power. The implications of the consistent theme of power and control are larger, though, than just male victims: the men within the group struggled to balance their power within the discourse. Their own masculine identities were being policed by the other men in the group, and from the beginning, masculine norms created this invisible boundary that kept the men from maneuvering out of the borders. The men were active agents in the reproduction of dominant masculine ideologies throughout the sessions, whether they fully realized it or not. There was a real and
present boundary the men were not comfortable permeating because the perceptions from the other men were always lurking.

Over the course of our discussions, however, there were brief instances of challenges and open possibilities to delve beyond this invisible hegemonic masculine barrier. While distancing and humor are discursive tools utilized to separate oneself from the dialogue (Cao & Decker, 2015; Reyes, 2011; Weaver, Mora, & Morgan, 2016), there were moments of clarity where these techniques were used to engage directly with the content and understand the meaning behind these conceptualizations. The most remarkable shift away from hegemonic masculinity, though, came in the discussions focused solely on the relationship between conceptualizations of consent and reproductions of male rape myths. As we began to deconstruct what it meant to be a male victim of rape by a female perpetrator, the men rejected the discursive strategies they had been residing behind and instigated themselves and their experiences within the narrative.

This demonstrates two things: first, the men appeared eager to understand and conceptualize what consent meant to them personally, and in the larger context of male rape and male victimization. They began asking questions and providing anecdotes in a way not present before the second focus group session, and their personal stories tested the boundaries of the masculine barrier they had constructed at the inception of the study. Second, it is in these dialogues and this context that the men shared more of their experiences and began questioning their own ideologies; however, it is also where the most discomfort was present, as it was the recognition of masculine privilege. Specifically during the second group session, I asked these men to imagine themselves or someone they knew within this experience, and thus they were forced to reckon with the idea that victimization is an experience held by many men. While they did employ techniques to navigate their way away from this victimization (Cao & Decker, 2015),
there were still moments where they may have had to imagine a scenario most often placed on women rather than men. In disrupting this privilege, the men had to grapple with the position of their own masculinity and what victimization meant to one’s perception of their own identity.

While these discussions may have faced barriers in delving further into abstract and theoretical ideas, they demonstrate how pervasive hegemonic masculine ideals are in conceptualizations of male rape and male rape myths. These conversations, though, can help us alter our approaches and direct our discourse in a way more conducive to merging experience and education. Identifying the beneficial way of having these discussions is crucial to educating men not only on male rape and male rape myths, but also consent and coercion, and how all of these factors play a role in relationships.

There were several limitations to the present study, all of which make it difficult to generalize the findings. As I was a female researcher asking male students to speak to me about male rape, there were two types of performances occurring: first, the men most likely viewed me as an educator rather than a peer (and I could clearly recognize when the men were performing for my benefit to appear knowledgeable); and second, the men may have felt more or less comfortable speaking with a woman about a more personal topic (whether they would feel more comfortable discussing male rape with a male researcher is unclear). The sample size of participants was very low, and all of the participants were enrolled in some gender studies course. Thus, these men may have had more interest in engaging in these discussions and felt less discomfort because they had experience in conversing about gendered ideologies.

This study provided a preliminary analysis of how some men understand and conceptualize male rape myths within homosocial discourse. Through invoking certain discursive strategies, the men attempted to balance their masculine identities with normative
masculine ideals as they shared their knowledge on male rape. This research allows us to understand not only the pervasive nature of dominant masculine ideologies, but also how they come to reproduce male rape myths. However, this research also leads to more questions surrounding how to engage men, outside of a research setting, in discourse around male rape myths and disrupting masculine privilege in order to challenge hegemonic masculine ideals.

Future research must not only delve further into dominant masculinity, but also emphasize the malleability of hegemonic masculinity, as it changes with the fluctuations of societal norms and expectations (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Perceptions and conceptualizations of male rape myths will change as our social institutions and structures change, and the role of hegemonic masculinity in the reproduction of these myths may change as well (Javaid, 2017); it is the responsibility of researchers to follow and navigate these changes and ensure that male victimization is adequately identified and addressed in future literature.
References


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Appendix A

My name is Bridget Woods. I am looking for participants in an Interdisciplinary psychological study. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to engage in two focus group sessions, both of which will occur during class time, in which we will talk about male rape. In order to participate, you must be at least 18 years old and self-identify as male. The purpose of this study is two-fold. First, we want to investigate how you, as men, conceptualize male rape in these open discussions. Second, we want to conceptualize these discussions in a larger, curriculum-based way in order to critically analyze how we speak about male rape in Gender Studies courses. Rape is a sensitive topic, and thus I want to emphasize that participation in this study is completely voluntary. At the completion of your participation, you will receive extra credit in your Gender Studies class, as per your instructor’s directions. Male students who wish to participate will meet during community hour (1:40PM-2:40PM) in [TBD] classroom with myself. We want to maintain privacy and confidentiality in this study, so while you will be asked to sign a consent form with your name, we ask that those who wish to participate come up with a pseudonym for themselves – during the focus groups, we will only refer to each other by our pseudonyms. Participation in this study will only take two sessions, and you are free to exit the study at any point.
Appendix B

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
John Jay College
Department of Psychology

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Title of Research Study: Discourses on Male Rape

Principal Investigator: Bridget Woods, BA

Faculty Advisor: Brett Stoudt, PhD
Associate Professor

You are being asked to participate in a research study because you have registered for an Introduction to Gender Studies course at John Jay College of Criminal Justice with Dr. Brett Stoudt as the classroom professor.

Purpose:
The purpose of this research study is to understand how men think about and speak about male rape, and if masculinity plays a role in this narrative discussion. We will be conducting up to 2 focus groups, each of which will include up to 20 participants. Participants must be at least 18 years of age and identify as male.

Procedures:
If you volunteer to participate in this research study, we will ask you to do the following:

- You will be asked to participate in a journal writing prompt, in which you will be asked about personal beliefs about male rape. This writing portion will be conducted during the duration of the class time at John Jay College, within the classroom allotted.
- You will be asked to participate in two focus groups, both lasting approximately 1 hour. You will be asked to engage in a conversation about male rape and male rape myths with a group of men. The focus groups will be conducted during the duration of the class time at John Jay College, within the classroom allotted.
- The focus groups will be audio recorded in order to accurately preserve your responses. Audio recordings will be deleted at the conclusion of the study, May 2017. You will be able to review audio recordings at your request at any time.

Time Commitment:
Your participation in this research study is expected to last for a total of 2 to 3 hours, over the course of four class sessions at John Jay College.
Potential Risks or Discomforts:

- You will be asked questions about male rape and sexual assault. It is possible that some questions may be uncomfortable for you to answer, or bring up negative emotions. You can choose to not respond to any questions you do not wish to answer, and you may withdraw participation at any time without penalty.

Potential Benefits:

- This is an opportunity to have your voice heard and potentially impact future research.

Payment for Participation:
You will not receive any payment for participating in this research study.

New Information:
You will be notified about any new information regarding this study that may affect your willingness to participate in a timely manner.

Confidentiality:
We will make our best efforts to maintain confidentiality of any information that is collected during this research study, and that can identify you. We will disclose this information only with your permission or as required by law. We will also ask that everyone in the focus group respect each other’s privacy, and not disclose any information that we discuss with others.

We will protect your confidentiality by keeping the audio recording of your focus groups on a locked computer. Your information will be kept private after the focus group, and the collected data will be accessible to the faculty and graduate student researchers on this project as well as staff of the CUNY Institutional Review Board. We will use the recording to write up what we discuss but your name will not be documented or connected to this focus group in anything we write. Instead, you can choose a pseudonym. There will be no way of connecting you with the information you share.

The research team, authorized CUNY staff, and government agencies that oversee this type of research may have access to research data and records in order to monitor the research. Research records provided to authorized, non-CUNY individuals will not contain identifiable information about you. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not identify you by name.

Participants’ Rights:

- Your participation in this research study is entirely voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

- Your participation or non-participation in this study will in no way affect your grades, your academic standing with CUNY, or any other status in the College.
• You can decide to withdraw your consent and stop participating in the research at any time, without any penalty.

**Questions, Comments or Concerns:**
If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to one of the following researchers:

Brett Stoudt, PhD  
Associate Professor  
529 W 59th St, Room 10.65.31NB  
New York, NY 10019  
Phone: 646.781.5663

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or you have comments or concerns that you would like to discuss with someone other than the researchers, please call the CUNY Research Compliance Administrator at 646-664-8918. Alternately, you can write to:

CUNY Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research  
Attn: Research Compliance Administrator  
205 East 42nd Street  
New York, NY 10017

**Signature of Participant:**
If you agree to participate in this research study, please sign and date below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____________________________________________________
Printed Name of Participant

_____________________________________________________
Signature of Participant	Date

**Signature of Individual Obtaining Consent**

_____________________________________________________
Printed Name of Individual Obtaining Consent
Signature of Individual Obtaining Consent  Date
Appendix C

Interview Protocol – Focus Group #1

1. Journal Writing Prompt:
   a. Take 3 minutes and write what you know/what you think about rape in general
   b. Take another 5 minutes and write what you know/what you think about male rape/men who are victims of rape

***I will collect these -> we won’t discuss these and they’ll only have their pseudonym

2. Portrayals of Rape Victims (in general) in the media:
   a. Where have you seen female rape victims shown in the media?
   b. Where have you seen male rape victims shown in the media?
   c. Are there differences in these depictions? If so, what are they?

3. Last Thing: Take 15 minutes and pick 2 or 3 rape myths from around the room and write your thoughts on them -> how do you feel? Do you believe they’re accurate? If so, why, and if not, why not? Write your open and honest thoughts - we will be discussing these, but you will not have to “claim” your writing per say
   a. Men cannot be raped by women.
   b. Men who are raped by men must be gay.
   c. Men who are raped by another man experience a loss of masculinity.
   d. Men are expected to be able to defend themselves against rape.

Interview Protocol – Focus Group #2

1. Revisit 4 myths we talked about -> brief overview of what was said
   a. Do we want to add anything?
b. Do we have any questions?

2. Focus discussion on myth #3: Men can’t be raped by women
   a. Write aspects that were talked about on board
   b. What elements do we agree with? Disagree with?
   c. Can we add any comments/questions to this list?

3. Examples:
   a. Give groups 2 examples of real life news
      i. Chris Brown
         (http://www.usatoday.com/story/life/people/2013/10/06/chris-brown-i-lost-virginity-at-age-8/2931311/)
   b. What stands out to us here?
      i. Fear of being seen as gay?
      ii. Fear of being seen as weak?
      iii. Fear of losing power and control?
Appendix D

“Chris Brown: ‘I lost virginity at age 8’”: Cindy Clark, October 6, 2013

https://www.usatoday.com/story/life/people/2013/10/06/chris-brown-i-lost-virginity-at-age-8/2931311/

Chris Brown says he lost his virginity when he was 8 years old to a local girl who was 14 or 15.

“It’s different in the country,” says rural Virginia-raised Brown in an interview with the U.K.’s Guardian. Growing up with a group of male cousins, he chalks up losing his virginity at such a young age to all of the porn they watched.

“By that point, we were already kind of like hot to trot, you know what I’m saying?” says Brown. “Like, girls, we weren’t afraid to talk to them; I wasn’t afraid. So, at 8, being able to do it, it kind of preps you for the long run, so you can be a beast at it. You can be the best at it.”

Brown, 24, declines to tell the interviewer how many women he has slept with, but he does liken himself to Prince: “But you know how Prince had a lot of girls back in the day? Prince was, like, the guy. I’m just that, today,” says Brown. “But most women won’t have any complaints if they’ve been with me. They can’t really complain. It’s all good.”

When asked to define himself, Brown says: “You can take my life story or scenarios or songs and relate to them, and apply them to your everyday life. You know, whether it be personal or musical, I just think I’m a walking art piece, just a ball of creativity.” He also says were it not for “the incident with Rihanna,” he would now be “bigger than life.”
Red Hot Chili Peppers frontman Anthony Kiedis lost his virginity at the age of 12 to his father’s girlfriend.

The CAN’T STOP asked his dad’s permission during a night out together – and he agreed. LARRY SLOMAN, ghostwriter of Kiedis’ new autobiography SCAR TISSUE, tells PAGESIX.COM, “Anthony’s father, who took the name BLACKIE DAMMET, was once a big-time coke dealer and he was the king of the Sunset Strip in Hollywood.

“His girlfriends were always young, hot girls.

“One night, when Anthony was 12, he went with his father to the Rainbow Room and Blackie’s girlfriend is there dancing for him.

“And Anthony asks, ‘Dad, can I have my first sexual experience with your girlfriend?’ And Blackie says, ‘Sure, son.’

“So they go back to the house, and his dad builds a big bed out of four mattresses in his room and puts the girl in next to him.

“And that’s how he (loses his virginity).”