

**HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AND RAPE CULTURE:  
NEGOTIATING MANHOOD AT A CANADIAN UNIVERSITY**

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## ABSTRACT

Using in-depth qualitative interviews with 12 male-identified individuals between the ages of 19 and 25 recruited from the Memorial University community, this project examines how men negotiate the complexities of hegemonic masculinity in a society in which that hegemonic masculinity is constructed as violent. This research is prompted by the current crisis in North America of campus rape culture and grounded in the need to identify solutions to the rate of sexual violence occurring in university communities. To examine masculinities in this context, I explore this key question: *How do male-identified individuals understand and negotiate the intricacies of masculinity and societal expectations of what it means to “be a man”?* to explore this, I turn to the following sub-questions: a) *to what extent do participants identify with hegemonic notions of masculinity?* b) *what developmental experiences have most influenced their self-identification (either positively or negatively) with traditional masculine norms?* c) *how is rape culture understood, perceived and perpetuated (or challenged) by male-identified university students?* Drawing on the theoretical work of gender researchers such as Raewyn Connell and Michael Kimmel, this thesis will include insights into the ways in which masculinities are being reproduced, challenged and resisted.

**Keywords: Masculinity, Rape Culture, Violence, Hegemonic Masculinity, Toxic Masculinity**

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### DEDICATION

For my grandfather, William Kenneth Derragh, 1927-2016

You always have been and always will be my greatest academic cheerleader. Thank you  
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## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

In recent years, a great deal of media attention has focused on sexual violence on university and college campuses across North America, highlighting experiences of violent sexual assault against women in particular and calling attention to the concept of rape culture (the idea that society's beliefs around women and violence foster an environment which condones and/or promotes the occurrence of sexual violence). A recently released report by Statistics Canada (2013) reveals that male perpetrators account for 83 per cent of all violent crime committed against women, while the Canadian Federation of Students – Ontario (2015) reports that “one in five women will experience sexual assault while attending a postsecondary institution” (p. 1). These troubling statistics demonstrate the importance of identifying the factors behind the disproportionate rate at which men are violent against women —specifically, through acts of sexual violence undergirded by rape culture within university communities. The disproportionate rate of men's violence drew me to think about one potential factor: North American masculinities and how individuals negotiate masculine identity. The literature on masculinities suggests that conceptualizations of violent manhood have become a cultural norm in Western society. In view of the grim realities of male violence against women, and drawing on the idea that all subjects must negotiate prescribed gender roles, I am led to pose this question: how do male-identified individuals negotiate the complexities of masculinities in a culture where violent expressions thereof have become dominant?

More specifically, I set out to further analyze what it means to “be a man” in today’s society—to identify and explore how violent masculinities are reproduced or normalized, and at times contested, particularly in the context of a Canadian university. Concerned with the relationship between hegemonic masculinity (the dominant, idealized form of masculine identity), male violence against women and rape culture in our educational institutions, I conducted a detailed exploration of the way self-identified young men negotiate the masculinities they encounter in the context of a Canadian university through in-depth interviews (specifically, with self-identified male individuals at Memorial University’s St. John’s Campus, Newfoundland and Labrador). In short, my research focuses on male-identified individuals’ experiences with, and negotiations of, hegemonic masculinity in relation to the development of their gender identity and their attitudes toward violence in society. To do so, I draw on the way that masculinities has been theorized. Ultimately, by examining masculinity and male gender identity, I hope to shed more light on how we can collectively redress a pervasive and persistent problem facing society: gendered violence, or more specifically, male sexual violence against women.

With this broad aim in mind and positioning the concept of hegemonic masculinity at the center of my analysis, in this thesis I critique current social conceptions of what it means to “be a man” and explore the existing literature on masculinities with a view to understanding how violent masculinities (violent conceptions of masculine identity, that glorify aggressive behaviour, male dominance and violence against women and other gender minorities) have been reproduced or contested. The existing literature

on masculinities has informed the specific questions I asked research participants about masculinity and male gender identity in relation to their own lives. Drawing on this literature, and motivated by popular discussions of sexual violence as well as my own experience working with survivors<sup>1</sup> of sexual violence<sup>2</sup>, I explore the following key question: *How do male-identified individuals understand and negotiate the intricacies of multiple masculinities and societal expectations of what it means to “be a man”?* To answer this broad question, I ask the following: a) *to what extent do participants identify with hegemonic notions of masculinity?* b) *what developmental experiences have most influenced their self-identification (either positively or negatively) with traditional masculine norms?* and c) *how is rape culture understood, perceived and perpetuated (or challenged) by male-identified university students?*

Rape culture forms a central aspect of the contextual background of my research. As mentioned above, the many recent incidents of sexual violence and harassment at universities across Canada and the United States have made international headlines (Andrew-Gee & Armstrong, 2014; Ochsner, 2015; Levin, 2016) both within activist circles and in the mainstream media. Performance art pieces such as sexual assault

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this work, I use the word survivor to refer to individuals who have experienced (lived through) sexual violence. This was a conscious and deliberate political decision to avoid language that (re)victimizes individuals. While they may have been the victim of a crime, that is not the sum of their existence. Instead, they are survivors, individuals who must strive to overcome unimaginable trauma, and whose strength and courage—particularly when faced with a society that blames them for circumstances beyond their control—is endlessly admirable and makes them above all else worthy of the power imbued by the term survivor. The effects of language for individuals who have survived sexual violence have been studied by several researchers including Tami Spry (1995); Stacy Young & Kathryn Maguire (2003); and Jericho Hockett & Donald Saucier (2015).

<sup>2</sup> I spent three years volunteering on the provincial Sexual Assault Crisis line, a service which works directly with survivors, their friends and families, and all those affected by sexual violence.

survivor Emma Sulkowicz's (2014) *Carry that Weight*,<sup>3</sup> call attention to the rates of sexual violence on university campuses. Other incidents, such as the Frosh Week Chant from St. Mary's University (CBC News, 2013) and the Dalhousie Dentistry Facebook page scandal (Kingston, 2015) constitute clear examples of rape culture within student populations. These cases have fueled a great deal of media, academic, and activist discussion of rape culture (Edwards, 2014; Hess, 2014; Dal News, 2015; Halsall, 2016; CBC News 2014; Taber, 2013), a conversation I continue with this research. The knowledge gleaned from my interview participants offers insights into how rape culture and violent masculinities are perceived, perpetuated and contested by male-identified university students. Due to the highly visible role that university campuses have played in several recent discussions of sexual violence, talking to male-identified students who are part of the university community offers the opportunity to see their reaction to violence, and to garner insights into how they negotiate violent masculinities in their everyday life, in particular in the context of a university setting.

### **What is Rape Culture?**

To understand the crisis of sexual violence on university campuses across North America and the way in which it is being negotiated by male-identified individuals, it is important to explore rape culture. Rape culture acts as both a consequence of violent masculinity and as a site for its perpetuation, making it an important area of study in understanding masculinities. The term, which has been in use by feminists since the

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<sup>3</sup> During *Carry that Weight*, Sulkowicz carried a mattress with her everywhere she went on campus at Columbia University to protest the administration's lack of response to her assault.

1970s,<sup>4</sup> refers to a complex and sophisticated concept of sexual violence, which is linked to overarching patriarchal oppressions. For many, it is difficult to define or even clearly explain. In the interviews conducted for this research, I asked participants what the term meant to them. I anticipated that they might be unfamiliar with the term or how to define it, and prepared the following definition of rape culture to provide as necessary:

A complex set of beliefs that encourage male sexual aggression and support violence against women. It is a society where violence is seen as sexy and sexuality as violent. In a rape culture women perceive a continuum of threatened violence that ranges from sexual remarks to sexual touching to rape itself. A rape culture condones physical and emotional terrorism against women as the norm.... In a rape culture both men and women assume that sexual violence is a fact of life, inevitable.... However... much of what we accept as inevitable is in fact the expression of values and attitudes that can change (Buchwald, Fletcher & Roth, 2005, p. xi).

In exploring other explanations and definitions of rape culture, I found that most of the material revolved around ideas similar to those of Emilie Buchwald, Pamela Fletcher and Martha Roth as described above. For example, on the Marshall University Women's Center website, rape culture is further examined in relation to media's normalization of sexual violence and aggression:

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<sup>4</sup> The term's first published use was in *Rape: The First Sourcebook for Women* by the New York Radical Feminists in 1974.

Rape Culture is an environment in which rape is prevalent and in which sexual violence against women is normalized and excused in the media and popular culture. Rape culture is perpetuated through the use of misogynistic language, the objectification of women's bodies, and the glamorization of sexual violence, thereby creating a society that disregards women's rights and safety.

The definition further discusses rape culture in the context of its larger impacts on women as a whole, and the effects it has on society:

Rape Culture affects every woman. The rape of one woman is a degradation, terror, and limitation to all women. Most women and girls limit their behaviour because of the existence of rape. Most women and girls live in fear of rape. Men, in general, do not. That's how rape functions as a powerful means by which the whole female population is held in a subordinate position to the whole male population, even though many men don't rape, and many women are never victims of rape. This cycle of fear is the legacy of Rape Culture (Marshall University, 2015).

This definition's second section is reminiscent of popular social media hashtags #NotAllMen and the subsequent response #YesAllWomen which examined how all women find themselves to be affected by rape culture, and patriarchy more generally.

Overall, the way in which we choose to explain rape culture is often linked to the motives in providing such an explanation. For Gail Dines (2010), an anti-pornography activist, the concept is linked explicitly to the harms she believes arise from the

widespread availability of violent pornographic material, and she provides evidence and examples directly from pornography to support her arguments. For Jackson Katz (2006), whose work focuses on prevention programming, the explanation of rape culture centers on the need for further prevention measures, and on men's accountability and responsibility for the violence.

As someone who has studied gendered violence and rape culture for several years, I have developed my own understanding of the concept. I understand and explore rape culture as the cultural practice of devaluing individuals belonging to *othered* groups (in this case, primarily women and other marginalized gender identities, but with raced and classed dimensions) as well as devaluing qualities associated with those groups (such as the denigration of the feminine as seen in the previously discussed definitions), to the point that the idea of violence against them becomes normalized and acceptable to society at large, with aggression and threats perceived as humorous. It is so commonplace that it is often overlooked by those in power as problematic behaviour, further devaluing the individuals subjected to rape culture on a daily basis. Additionally, rape culture includes the devaluing of individuals who speak up against acts of gendered violence and aggression and results in the popularity of terms such as *feminazi* to denigrate and disempower those who take a stand against it. At the same time as this devaluing occurs, there is a distinct valuing of the individuals who perpetrate acts of rape culture, which perpetuates the idea of their actions as normal, healthy examples of masculinity. This is seen in the glamorization of sexual violence as mentioned in the Marshall University definition of rape culture. It is also seen in Michael Kimmel's (Kilmartin & Alison, 2007)



concept of antifemininity as an important trait of North American hegemonic masculinity. The devaluing and avoidance of femininity reinforces the inherent violence and aggression of rape culture. Additionally, rape culture manifests in locally specific ways, but always in relation to a larger hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity itself must be carefully examined in context-specific ways to develop a deeper understanding of its existence and function. Rape culture, therefore, emerges in relation to localized or place-specific forms of hegemonic masculinity, a fact that necessitates the examination of local masculinities to gain further insights into sexual violence. Throughout this thesis, I discuss theories of masculinity in detail, particularly in Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Methodology.

In recent years, rape culture has moved from a term found primarily in feminist discourse and academic work surrounding sexual violence, to one also found in mainstream media discussions. Unfortunately, to talk of rape culture as an existing problem, and a reality of North American life, is to court displeasure and negative responses. Rape culture is a contentious term, one which requires society to reflect on its own collective responsibility for the violence that affects so many members of the population in their day-to-day lives. I discuss participant responses and reactions to questions about the concept of rape culture, the crisis of sexual violence on campuses, and their own masculine identity in detail in my data analysis (See Chapters 3 and 4).

## **Rape Culture on Campus**

This thesis is primarily grounded in the need for a response to the crisis of rape culture found on university campuses across North America. As a young woman pursuing post-secondary education, and with an interest in sexual violence, I have been acutely aware of incidents of rape culture on campuses across North America. In studying rape culture, it seemed clear to me to work from the starting point of a university campus, as universities are institutions in which rape culture exists. Unfortunately, it is easy to find examples of rape culture within the university setting. In recent years several prominent cases have made headlines, and numerous other incidents and everyday examples deemed too small to be of note go unreported.<sup>5</sup> As this research focuses on a Canadian university, I will limit my examples to Canadian universities to illustrate that sexual violence, and the culture which fosters it, is not a problem found solely in the United States.

One example from recent years was the 2013 report of a chant used during Frosh Week at St. Mary's University in Nova Scotia. The chant, "Y is for your sister ... U is for underage, N is for no consent ... Saint Mary's boys we like them young" (CBC News, 2013), highlights a culture in which consent is secondary to "getting laid." Another prominent example from a Canadian university was the Dalhousie Dentistry Scandal in early 2015, in which the majority of the male members of the senior class in the dentistry program were implicated. It was revealed that students in that program had created a

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<sup>5</sup> It is also important to note that Canadian police forces dismiss one in five cases of sexual assault as unfounded, a disproportionately high rate (the rate of unfounded physical assault cases is approximately one in 10; Doolittle, 2017). Cases deemed unfounded (a technical police classification that results in no further investigation) are not included in statistics on sexual violence, therefore adding to the uncertainty surrounding the actual numbers of sexual assaults occurring across the nation.

Facebook group in which they posted threatening, explicit, and degrading comments about other students (with a focus on sexually humiliating female members of their program). The administration at Dalhousie was faced with a difficult decision about those particular students' ability to represent the program as professionals. While the students implicated in the incident were permitted to graduate, the situation forced recognition of rape culture within the program. A report released as a result of the incident detailed the contents of the Facebook posts, as well as the restorative justice programming put in place for remediation after the incident (Kingston, 2015).

**Sexual violence on campus.** Of particular relevance to my thesis is research conducted on campus sexual violence. A great deal has been written on this phenomenon in recent years, from a number of different perspectives. For example, Kristen Jozkowski (2015) explores sexual violence on campus by examining the new “Yes Means Yes” legislation in California, which aims to curb rates of sexual violence on campuses by clarifying the meaning of consent. Jozkowski explores contributing factors (e.g., sexism and rape culture) as well as institutional responses to various incidents of campus sexual violence, with the aim of examining the effectiveness of consent policies. Carol Jordan, Jessica Combs, and Gregory Smith (2014) explore the ramifications of violence and victimization on college women in terms of their academic performance, highlighting the long-term effects of living and working within a rape culture on student success. Katie Edwards et al. (2015) compare the rate of violence (intimate partner, dating, sexual and unwanted pursuit) for sexual-minority (categorized as any students with non-heterosexual sexual experiences) and heterosexual college students. Exploring violence faced by

students who are sexual minorities (and are therefore often excluded from studies of sexual violence on campuses), the study found them to be at significantly higher risk than heterosexual students, an important consideration for those working to prevent violence on campus. The institutional focus on heterosexual violence overlooks the risk and impact for sexual-minority students. Ryan Shorey, Hope Brasfield, Heather Zapor, Jeniimarie Febres, and Gregory Stuart (2015) explore alcohol use by male college students in relation to dating violence. This is another important consideration in studying campus rape culture because of strong links between student life and alcohol use. The study found alcohol use was strongly correlated to aggression. Hazardous drinkers (those who scored high on the Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test) were more at risk of perpetrating violence than non-hazardous drinkers. These results have implications for violence prevention programming developed and implemented on campuses. Asia Eaton and Alejandra Matamala (2014) explored the positive correlation between college students' (of all gender identities) heteronormative beliefs (which often comply with the beliefs of hegemonic masculinity) and the use of verbal sexual coercion, demonstrating the negative effects of narrow conceptions of gender identity and sexual orientation on relationships.

Finally, perhaps the most important piece of current literature to inform my research is Peggy Reeves Sanday's *Fraternity gang rape: Sex, brotherhood, and privilege on campus* (2007). Sanday provides an in-depth exploration of campus rape culture in the fraternity setting. She examines the intricacies of privilege as well as the manifestations and interactions of hegemonic masculinity in the context of the fraternity. Sanday's study combines statistical data with information gathered from interviews conducted with

students, administrators and criminal prosecutors surrounding a specific incident of sexual violence within a fraternity at the university where she was employed during the 1980s. She concludes that male-exclusive institutions (fraternities in this case) are particularly implication in the reproduction of rape cultures. Although originally published in 1990, the second edition (published in 2007) reveals little has changed in terms of sexual violence on campuses. This indicates how important and timely it is to understand male-identified individuals' negotiation of the complexities of masculinities in relation to the links between hegemonic masculinity, violence against women, and rape culture in our educational institutions.

Sanday writes primarily about rape culture in fraternities on American college campuses but, I believe, her work can be extrapolated to the Canadian context.

Fraternities are less popular in Canadian universities, but rape culture remains a problem due in part to the export of dominant conceptions of masculinity and popular culture from the United States. This occurs through television, film, pop music, video games and other forms of popular, accessible media. Sanday's work provides an excellent starting point for understanding the complexities and intricacies of hegemonic masculinity, violence, class, race and forms of privilege in the context of rape culture as related to masculinities enacted in other regions (e.g., Canada and specifically Newfoundland) and social settings, as well as within universities which strictly prohibit association with fraternities and sororities, as on-campus housing still provides a context in which violence can occur.<sup>6</sup> It

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<sup>6</sup> Memorial University does not sanction any such organization, and as a result there are no fraternities or sororities on campus that are connected to the university, although attempts have been made by students to start their own chapters in the past. Memorial does provide on-campus housing to approximately 1900

is, however, important to note that Sanday's work cannot be made to fit perfectly within the Canadian context. She is ultimately examining power structures formed by fraternities, and this cannot be directly extrapolated to the context of a university campus where fraternities are not present (such as Memorial), nor does it take into account cultural differences that exist in Canada despite the influence of cultural exports from the United States of America. What Sanday's work does have in common with this project however is the examination of rape culture within specific institutions.

### **Literature on Dominant Masculinity**

A great deal of research exists surrounding masculinities generally and violent masculinities more specifically, and I explore the concept of hegemonic masculinity in greater detail within my theoretical framework (see Chapter 2). First, however, I explore the existing literature about masculinities and rape culture. I have found numerous studies in the area of dominant masculinities<sup>7</sup> (Kahn, Holmes, & Brett, 2011; Graham, 2014); men's role in ending violence, primarily highlighted through examinations of existing prevention programs (Stewart, 2013; Murphy, 2009; Katz, 2006); men's and youth's perspectives of violence (Lawson, Munoz-Rojas, Gutman, & Siman, 2012; Hertzog and Rowley, 2014; Poteat, Kimmel & Wilchins, 2010); and sexual violence on university campuses. I did not, however, encounter any studies that asked young adult male-

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students between its Paton College and Macpherson College residences, and Burton's Pond Apartment complexes (Memorial University, 2017). All residences are co-ed "houses", each with their own social activities, and with some degree of competition between houses. Attachment to those houses has the potential to develop loyalties similar to fraternity or sorority membership (although perhaps to a lesser extent).

<sup>7</sup> I am using the term "dominant masculinity" interchangeably with "hegemonic masculinity", as hegemonic masculinity is the dominant expression of masculinity within a specific context.

identified individuals about their experiences in negotiating masculinities and experiences with rape culture within the university community, nor their larger understandings of rape culture as a concept. There is a gap that I intend to fill with my research.

**Resistance to dominant masculinities.** This project is grounded in much of the existing literature and theory about conceptions of dominant, or hegemonic, masculinity. Within my analysis of the interview data, I examine several acts of resistance (whether conscious or unconscious) to dominant masculinity, and I draw on the existing literature and theories thereof. Several researchers explore resistance to dominant masculinity. For example, Jack Kahn, Jessica Holmes and Benjamin Brett (2011) explore youth resistance to dominant masculinity, drawing on theorizations of hegemonic masculinity by theorists such as Michael Kimmel and Raewyn Connell to examine the complexities of negotiating masculine identity. Their work acknowledges that certain actions of an individual may reinforce hegemonic notions while others will rebel against and thus challenge them. It is clear from their work that masculinity is multifaceted and complex, and cannot be boiled down to single understandings. Furthermore, Kahn, Holmes and Brett call attention to the global nature of masculine identity with various cultural influences coming into play. Lauren Graham (2014), writing about youth in South Africa, explores the idea that much of the existing research on dominant masculinity focuses on risk-taking and hegemonic perceptions, and therefore chooses instead to focus on contestations thereof. Graham's work challenges much of the current literature on hegemonic masculinity as being Western-dominated and provides a context-specific examination of South African youth's masculine identities. As with Kahn, Holmes, and Brett, Graham's work highlights

alternatives to dominant discourses of masculine identity. Graham's research aims to counter the overwhelming body of research focusing on risk-taking behaviours (which act to reinforce dominant tropes of masculinity).

**Men and youth's perspectives on violence.** My study works directly with young male-identified students to examine their perceptions of masculinity and the complexities of negotiating their masculine identity in relation to campus rape culture. Several other researchers have spoken to men about their perspectives on violence. For example, Sarah Lawson, Derby Munoz-Rojas, Lauren Gutman and Matilde Siman (2012) conducted a study to explore the effectiveness of sexual violence prevention programming with a group of young Hispanic men who were not enrolled in postsecondary institutions (the usual audience of prevention programming). They concluded from their study that it was effective in changing attitudes about sexual violence. Jodie Hertzog and Rochelle Rowley (2014) worked directly with younger populations (middle and high school youths) to study the effectiveness of violence prevention programming. Paul Poteat, Michael Kimmel, and Riki Wilchins (2010) worked directly with adolescents to explore connections between their attitudes surrounding masculinity and violent or aggressive behaviours. These studies, working directly with men to explore their perceptions of violence, further demonstrate the importance of researching how male-identified individuals negotiate their masculine identities to gain greater understanding of masculinity as a whole.

**Men's role in ending violence.** Several researchers examining men's violence against women focused on men's role in ending that violence, a counter-hegemonic role



for men, which is often promoted in programming designed to curb gendered violence. Andrew Stewart (2013) and Michael Murphy (2009) both examine programs working towards ending sexual violence. Stewart examines “The Men’s Project”, which works with college men to explore the root causes of violence and best methods of reduction, while Murphy looks at the “My Strength is not for Hurting”, campaign which is aimed at a wider public audience. While Stewart’s report cites positive results from the initiative, Murphy takes a more critical perspective of the campaign he is exploring, acknowledging how it reinforces hegemonic norms and silences women. Murphy’s work illustrates the importance of critically examining violence-prevention initiatives for their effectiveness and for their treatment of women and other minorities. He gives clear critiques of the campaign while at the same time acknowledging the positive efforts being made. Jackson Katz (2006) is another activist whose work in violence prevention has been particularly prominent, and I discuss his efforts in detail in Chapter 2.

### **“Oh Canada”: Canadian Masculinities in Context**

Conducting place-specific research is an important aspect of this project and it is important to locate the current research culturally and geographically. Several interview participants in the current study came from regions of Canada other than the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Therefore, it is important to consider conceptualizations of masculinity within the entire country. A great deal of research has been conducted on Canadian masculinities in recent years (Nonnekes, 2008; Greig & Martino, 2012) and the complexities of what it means to “be a man” in Canada is reflected in that research. Several studies exist which examine specific cultural groups within Canada. Examples of

such studies are those that look at Chinese-Canadian masculinity (Millington, Vertinsky, Boyle & Wilson, 2008; Mao & Bottorff, 2015) or Indigenous masculinities (Anderson & Innes, 2015). Other studies examine the role of masculinity in healthcare (Halpin, Phillips, & Oliffe, 2009). Still others look at masculinity in the context of specific workplaces, organizations or settings (Rollmann, 2013, Ricciardelli, 2015) or within arts and culture (Ramsay, 2011). These studies taken together reveal the complex and varied nature of masculinities, emphasizing the need to examine masculinities in context. For example, Hans Rollman (2013) explores the rise of “men’s rights activists” on Canadian university campuses. This is a unique examination because it is looking at a specific masculinity in a specific context. However, it is also important to consider regional and cultural variances. For example, the studies examining Chinese-Canadian masculinities are a unique examination of Western Canadian populations, where the Chinese-Canadian community is largest. If one were to study Chinese-Canadian masculinity on the East coast, the results might be drastically different due to the regional variations. It is because of the wide range and complexity of masculinities that I undertook this thesis, to fill a gap in the existing literature. It is not an examination of masculinities as a whole. The participants in this study do not speak for all men globally, nor even all Canadian men. They are merely representatives of a particular group, in this case, young male-identified individuals living and studying at a university in St. John’s, Newfoundland and Labrador.

### **Memorial, the Atlantic Ocean, and a Scandal of our Own**

I conducted the current research at Memorial University, working directly with research participants who are studying at its St. John’s campus. The university, Atlantic

Canada's largest and the only one located in the province, was founded to act as a living memorial to the Newfoundland and Labrador soldiers who had lost their lives in World War I. It is uniquely shaped by the province in which it is located, with much of the research conducted here centered on Newfoundland and Labrador, its rich culture and history. Students at Memorial come from across the province, as well as from various regions of Canada, drawn to the province by the low cost of living, affordable tuition fees, and expansive programs offered by the university. Memorial University also has a large population of international students for these same reasons, with the number of international students increasing significantly in recent years.<sup>8</sup>

The province itself provides an interesting backdrop for research on masculinities. The island of Newfoundland, once home solely to Indigenous peoples, was "discovered" by Vikings and later by Europeans. It was initially settled in the seventeenth century, and its rich fishing grounds meant that it was contested territory for many years beginning in the sixteenth century, with French, English, Portuguese, Spanish, and Basque migratory fishers harvesting from the surrounding ocean (Cadigan, 2009). French and English interests in the region led to years of dispute, but eventually, the land was ceded to the English in 1713 with the Treaty of Utrecht, with France retaining fishing rights on the Northeastern and (later) Western shores, an area which would come to be referred to as the French Shore (Pope, 2009). The majority of the entire province's contemporary citizens trace their roots to the United Kingdom and Ireland, and English, Irish and

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<sup>8</sup> International graduate enrolment, for example, increased by 81 per cent from fall 2011 to fall 2015 (Batten, 2016).

Scottish ancestry dominates many families (Statistics Canada, 2011). This population's perceived homogeneity is misleading, however, as this perception overlooks the long history of the Indigenous populations,<sup>9</sup> the integration of aspects of Indigenous culture into contemporary life in Newfoundland and Labrador, and the influence of other European settlers on the demographics of the population, as well as the current move towards diversification brought about by recent immigration and the expansion of a global economy. It is important to note that the province's island (Newfoundland) and mainland (Labrador) regions, while holding many similarities, also come with their own unique identities. My discussion of Newfoundland masculinities attempts to integrate both island and mainland life.

The province's unique climate, with the extreme sub-arctic temperatures and wide empty spaces of mainland Labrador, and the island's more moderate temperatures but extreme weather patterns, are a central focus of life. A centuries-old, fisheries-based economy and the modern expansion into the oil and gas industry mean that the province's climate plays a large role in people's lives and can even affect their livelihood (Phillips, 1993). Even with modern transportation, it is common for weather to disrupt travel to and from the island, both by air and sea, and that isolation has fostered a rich culture, unique from other areas of Canada and even other Atlantic provinces. Further separating the province from Canada is a strong sentiment of Newfoundland nationalism. Newfoundland and Labrador officially joined Confederation in 1949, the tenth and final province to do

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<sup>9</sup> Including the Inuit, Innu and Southern Inuit in Labrador, and the Mi'kmaq on the province's island portion.

so<sup>10</sup>. Consequently, there remain generations of individuals with neo-nationalist sentiments who still associate more strongly with a Newfoundland identity than a Canadian one (Cadigan, 2009, p. 288).

Traditionally, employment has centered on the fishery, with fish-harvesting acting as the province's primary industry. This male-dominated field, in which men hold over 98 per cent of the licenses (Power, 2005, p 170), still provides jobs for many Newfoundlanders, particularly in rural communities. In recent years, the equally male-dominated oil and gas industry has risen to prominence within the local economy, as a direct result of large oil deposits accessible in the oceans surrounding the island. Additionally, many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have sought work in Fort McMurray and other areas of Alberta, creating strong ties between the two provinces, and a "fly-in, fly-out" work experience for many families (CBC News, 2007). The post-Confederation employment opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador have largely been built on male-dominated, fishing and/or resource extraction-based industries. While this is not to say that women do not play a significant role in those industries (both at present and historically), it does point out the emphasis on traditionally masculine values, and a significant undervaluing of those roles thought of as women's work (such as child-rearing and caring professions overall). Additionally, women's role within Newfoundland's fishing industry has often been marginalized and forgotten, the emphasis falling on the image of the "manly" fisherman as opposed to the work done by fish

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<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that almost half of the voters in the 1948 referendum (47.7 per cent) were opposed to confederation (Library and Archives Canada, 2005)

harvesters and processors of all gender identities. Women's roles within the fish plants are also underpaid compared to their male colleagues (Power, 2005), further demonstrating the undervaluing of women's contributions to the industry. This undervaluing of women's contribution to the local fishing industry is largely a development of post-Confederation Newfoundland culture, with earlier generations of women taking on a far more significant role in the work (as discussed by Ellen Antler, 1977). One has to question whether there are valuable lessons to be learned about sexual equality (in terms of women's increased agency and power) within the province from that previous division of labour within key industries.

Within the heteronormative family unit in Newfoundland island culture is the distinct separation of men and women's spheres, with men held in the place of head of household but women taking on the role of leader of the home. Nicole Power (2005) discusses this concept in detail in *What do they Call a Fisherman*, particularly in her analysis of women's role within the changing Newfoundland family (in the years following the cod moratorium imposed in 1992). The absence of men's physical presence from the home due to the work offered them by the fishing industry gave women the unique independence of living their lives largely without the presence of male partners. They were primarily responsible for the day-to-day operation of the home, rearing children, paying bills, and caring for aging relatives, while also being responsible for making decisions in their partner's absence. This is a pattern of household division that continued in many homes due to the large role of "fly-in, fly-out" work involved in the oil and gas and mining industries, and the ongoing emphasis on fish harvesting. With the loss

of employment for male partners experienced in many households following the cod moratorium, and now with the decline in oil prices, there is an associated loss of independence for women. They now find themselves constantly in the presence of their partner, and with the need to share the role of decision maker. For men to fill that traditional role and ideal of “Head of Household,” they must circumvent the roles their female partners have created for themselves (Power, 2005).

In the 1990s, the cod moratorium had a substantial impact on the local economy, creating a significant outmigration from the province, but also having significant and lasting social impacts. Indeed, for an industry that had been male-dominated to suffer such a decline had a negative impact upon local masculinity as many had constructed their masculine identity “in relation to fisheries work” (Power, 2005, p 149). With the move towards an oil and gas-based economy, again driven by male-dominated work, masculinity became once again tied to a specific form of employment. Newfoundland’s current economic climate however has been heavily impacted by declining oil prices worldwide, a factor which has had a severe impact on life in the province, and a result of a boom and bust economy. According to the Newfoundland and Labrador Transition House Association’s Don Meades, there has been a perceptible increase in the rate of domestic violence recently, with the use of transition houses and shelters reflecting the current economy’s turbulent nature (Bartlett, 2016). As domestic violence is a crime primarily perpetrated by men against women, its increase is reflective of violent enactments of masculinity, an important consideration when examining masculinity more generally.

Masculinity in Newfoundland and Labrador is built on traditional Western values. The province is largely Christian with 472,720 of the 507,270 self-reports on the 2011 National Household Survey identifying as Christian (Statistics Canada, 2011). Life within the province is influenced by the conservative values associated with the patriarchal norms of Christianity. Indeed Christian (and particularly Roman Catholic) values have previously been associated with a history of hostile sexism towards women, which in the contemporary Roman Catholic Church has moved towards a protective paternalism, a more benevolent sexism than in the past (Glick, Lameiras & Rodriguez Castro, 2002; Maltby, Hall, Anderson & Edwards, 2010). This is an important consideration when one acknowledges the influence of religious values on individuals growing up in a region dominated by Christianity, as is the case with Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is common for hunting and fishing to be popular pastimes among men in both rural and urban Newfoundland and Labrador. While women also frequently participate in these activities, there is an emphasis on the masculinity of the practice. While the initial value of hunting was one of practicality, in terms of making use of traditional food sources, these days hunting is often seen as a recreational pastime (for middle class residents) with the added benefit of a full freezer. In rural areas and many indigenous communities, hunting and fishing still contributes to diet. Hunters and recreational fishers in Newfoundland feed their families (and can make a profit selling) a wide range of species from moose and seal to cod. The annual moose hunt is a popular undertaking for many “outdoorsmen” with licenses issued by the provincial Wildlife Department each fall. The phrase “gotta get me moose,” which highlights the importance of the traditional



food source and recreational activity, was even the focus of a song written by local comedy musical group Buddy Wasiname and the Other Fellers (2015), whose shows focus on Newfoundland values from a humorous perspective. The value of hunting practices to Newfoundland and Labrador conceptions of masculinity lies in the rugged imagery, the practice's solidarity and fraternity, and the ability to support one's family through the use of a traditional skill set. Willeen Keough (2010), in writing about the Newfoundland sealing industry, examines the "working-class manliness" (p. 132) associated with the seal hunt an enactment of Newfoundland masculinity. Despite the long-time activism of anti-sealing animal rights activists, sealing remains an active industry within the province and the wearing of sealskin products can be seen as a political act of solidarity with the province's national identity. It is important to note that while hunting, fishing and sealing practices contribute to Newfoundland masculinity, the culture does not embrace these activities as a violent or trophy hunting pursuit.

Across the country, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have a reputation of friendly, welcoming behaviour, a culture of parties and hard work. Within Canada, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are the third highest consumers of alcohol by volume, as well as being the biggest consumers of beer and rum (Rocha, 2015). According to Statistics Canada (2016), men in Newfoundland were consistently consuming more alcohol than women from 2003-2009 and at a significantly higher rate than men in other provinces. Culturally, alcohol plays an important role as a social lubricant for many events, from kitchen parties to weddings to music festivals. George Street, located in the heart of downtown St. John's (and a popular destination amongst Memorial University

students), boasts two blocks of bars, pubs, and restaurants making it a hotspot for party-goers (George Street, n.d.). Alcohol use, like so many other factors, can be reflective of masculine identity, and with its frequent links to violent behaviour, it is an important consideration in the study of masculinity.

Despite its geographical isolation, Newfoundland and Labrador is not isolated from rape culture, and in the fall semester of 2013, Memorial University found itself at the center of its own scandal when the student Engineering society provided party-goers with promotional beer mugs at an off-campus event.



Figure 0-1 The beer mug distributed at on off-campus Engineering Society event in 2013. Note the editorial choice to label the mugs as “racy” rather than offensive in the article’s headline. Photo credit: Adam Walsh, CBC News, 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/newfoundland-labrador/dean-denounces-racy-mugs-at-memorial-engineering-party-1.1701889>

The mugs featured a scantily clad female character and a sexually explicit message taken directly from pornography. The outrage at the incident fueled discussions in media across the country, particularly as it occurred after the frosh week scandal at St. Mary’s

University (Bailey, 2013). The mugs were quickly condemned by the Dean of Engineering, Greg Naterer, who labelled them as “very disrespectful” (Bailey). While it is clear that the faculty disapproved of the student society’s decision to distribute the mugs, there was no public statement made by other university officials. Students responded to the incident in various ways, and the student society responsible for the mugs issued an apology once the story was reported in the media. One female engineering student highlighted that the mug’s offensive nature itself was not the issue at hand, but rather was indicative of a larger problem within the Faculty of Engineering, the construction of “a culture of not considering that kind of thing” (Howells, 2013), that is to say, a culture oblivious to the damage of rape culture. The incident is emblematic of the larger problem of rape culture. Were it not for similar media coverage at the time about incidents that occurred in British Columbia and Nova Scotia, it is unlikely that the incident at Memorial would have received the level of national coverage that it did (Auld, 2013; Bains, 2013; CBC News, 2013a; 2013b; Warren, 2013).

## **Conclusion**

In exploring male-identified individuals’ experiences with and negotiations of hegemonic masculinity in relation to the development of their gender identity and their attitudes toward violence in society in general and rape culture in particular, I hope to enhance current understandings of the complexities of masculinity, particularly as it relates to gender-based violence, such as rape culture. My research helps to address the gap in the existing literature in relation to young male-identified individuals’ negotiation of complex masculinities. It contributes to the growing body of literature on hegemonic

masculinity, specifically on theorizations that illustrate the links between hegemonic masculinity and the perpetration and/or acceptance of sexual violence in our society.

### **Road Map of my Research**

This research is an examination of contemporary hegemonic masculinity as theorized in relation to violence (specifically, male sexual violence against women) and rape culture. I have laid out this thesis in five chapters. The first chapter examined the context of the research as it is contextualized by the geographic, cultural and social location of its participants and of myself as primary researcher. From here I build a theoretical framework from which to further explore masculinities and to attempt to understand the complexities of participants' experiences and opinions. I will then examine my methodological approach to this project. Both my theoretical framework and the methodological approach are laid out in Chapter 2. My analysis of the interviews conducted with young male-identified university students was undertaken with the aim of gaining insights into their experiences and negotiations of hegemonic masculinity. The analysis is divided into two separate chapters in which I examine participant responses by drawing on theories of masculinity. The first data analysis chapter examines the ways in which participants' experiences and stories are reinforcing and reproducing hegemonic norms of masculinity. In the second data analysis chapter, I explore the ways in which participants may be challenging those norms.



## **CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY**

My research focuses on male-identified individuals' experiences with and negotiations of hegemonic masculinity in relation to the development of their gender identity and their attitudes toward violence in society. Thus, I am compelled to draw on the way masculinities have been theorized. Furthermore, in light of the prevalence of rape culture and its links to violent masculinities, I believe it is necessary to further analyze what it means to be a “man” in today's society, that is, to identify and explore how violent masculinities are reproduced or normalized, and at times contested, particularly in the context of a Canadian university. I suggest that in examining masculinity and male gender identity, it is possible to shed light on the troubling problem of gendered violence, and more specifically, male sexual violence against women. Additionally, rape culture acts as both a consequence of violent masculinity and a site for its perpetuation, making it an important area of study for those interested in understanding masculinities. It is my hope that by better understanding violent masculinities, we can work as a society to create better prevention programs to reduce violence against women, and also decrease recidivism rates for current perpetrators of such violence by addressing its root causes.

In this chapter, I explain in more depth the theoretical approach I have taken with this research, highlighting the specific theories and researchers who have informed this project. I will also detail my methodological approach and methods, explore the interview questions and provide demographic information about the participants before beginning analysis of my interview data in Chapters 3 and 4.

## **Theoretical Framework**

To develop a theoretical framework on which to build my research, I turn to leading researchers in the field such as Raewyn Connell, Michael Kimmel, Bobby Noble, Michael Kaufman, Peggy Reeve Sanday, and Michael Messner, as well as activists such as Jackson Katz. To comprehend work on masculinities, it is helpful to have knowledge of theorizations of gender roles—societal conceptions of how an individual should act and present oneself based on one's identification along the gender spectrum. The manner in which gender roles of male and female are constructed is influenced by cultural values and mores, which define and regulate in specific ways what it means to be a man or woman at a particular location and point in time and history. These roles “are socially constructed normative expectations about appropriate behaviour for men and women [and the] roles ascribed to men are [generally] more highly valued than those ascribed to women” (Johnson & Dawson, 2010, p. 194). Gender role theory<sup>11</sup> has long been part of the sociological theorization of gendered differences in behaviour. For example, in the case of violence against women, gender role theory would suggest that any heightened aggression in men, as with all “masculine” behaviours, is a result of their socialization. Indeed, Lorber (2011) writes that “gender is such a familiar part of daily life that it usually takes a deliberate disruption of our expectations of how women and men are supposed to act to pay attention to how it is produced” (p. 276). With this research, I explore some of those disruptions of expectations, and how they play out within

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<sup>11</sup> Key theorists include Judith Lorber (2011), Judith Butler (1990), Sandra Bem (1983), Alice Eagly (Eagly & Karau, 2002) and Nancy Chodorow (1995), among others.

contemporary understandings of masculinity, with a specific focus on the gender-based violence that is rape culture.

Gender-based violence, a term often used interchangeably with violence against women, refers to acts of violence committed against an individual on the basis of their gender. In the case of violence against women, gender-based violence would occur as a direct result of women's positioning in society compared to that of male perpetrators of violence, particularly in terms of a devaluing of women based solely on the perceived inadequacies of their gender.<sup>12</sup> Due to the emphasis on rape culture within my current research, I am interested in sexual violence (characterized as a violent crime) as a form of gender-based violence.

Turning to theories of masculinities and the growing body of research exploring masculine gender identity, I found the work of Australian sociologist Raewyn Connell (1987; 1995; 2001; 2002; 2005; 2008), a foremost authority in masculinities studies of the last 30 years, to be the most relevant for my current research. Her work has examined contemporary masculinities from a number of perspectives, including in the context of violence, athletics, and Australian youth cultures. Her theories about the active social construction of masculinity have been ground-breaking within the field; indeed, Connell (1987) coined the term *hegemonic masculinity* during her work in the 1980s. Over the

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<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that often, sex and gender become conflated in cases of gender-based violence. An example of this would be when non-binary individuals are targeted with violence based on perceived inadequacies of gender, regardless of biological sex. Women are also potential perpetrators of violence against women; however, statistically (as noted in Chapter 1), male perpetrators commit a disproportionately high rate of violence against women. This study focuses on masculinity; therefore I have not made reference to women's violence against women.



years, Connell has expanded and revised her theories, keeping her work up to date and relevant in a growing field of research.

Connell's multifaceted theories have highlighted masculinity's social construction, the concept of multiple masculinities, the hierarchy of masculinities, and the existence of hegemonic masculinity. These concepts contribute to our broader understandings of modern manhood in Western society, and societal problems, such as violent and aggressive interactions, that may arise as a result of conformity to dominant concepts of masculinity. For these reasons, I have drawn heavily on Connell's theories in my research.

### **Active Social Construction of Gender**

At the crux of Connell's research is the active social construction of masculinity. Connell (2001) argues that “masculinities do not exist prior to social behaviour, either as bodily states or fixed personalities. Rather, masculinities come into existence as people act. They are accomplished in everyday conduct or organizational life, as patterns of social practice” (p. 18). According to this theory, it is not until we use our actions to construct masculinities that those actions become aspects of masculine identity. For example, Connell references the link between masculinity and crime, stating that it “is not a product of a fixed masculine character being expressed through crime” but rather men “using crime as a resource to construct particular masculinities” (p. 18). That is to say, in the case of sexual violence, for example, men who engage in such actions are not doing so because it is a fixed aspect of masculine nature, but rather because they perceive it (if subconsciously) to be a means to achieve a particular conception of manhood (one which I will later argue has become hegemonic). Additionally, Connell expresses the need to

understand the social construction of masculinities as something that is linked to the embodiment of masculinity. In other words, we must consider bodies as active participants in enactments of masculinities, as a “participant in generating social practice” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 851). The active social construction of masculinities is therefore a far more complex process than one might first believe. However, it is easier to conceptualize if you think primarily in terms of the social construction of gender roles as a whole, and then apply that understanding to masculinities. The active social construction of masculinities can be seen within this research in the behaviours of participants that construct their own masculine identities, as well as in their understandings of masculinities as a whole.

### **Multiple Masculinities**

The theory of multiple masculinities recognizes the existence of multiple constructions of masculinity. This would include differences in cultural perceptions of masculinity. For example, there are differences between what it means to be a man in various parts of the world due to differing cultural values and mores. The existence of multiple masculinities also entails recognizing the possibility of multiple masculinities being at play at a particular time, in a particular culture. Within this research I am examining masculinities in the context of a Canadian university located in St. John’s, Newfoundland. The participants in my study came from different backgrounds, and different parts of the province, country, and world, but the majority are from the province, and all of them have chosen to live and study here. The masculinity most valued in the Newfoundland context may differ significantly from that valued in Toronto or Iqaluit.

Canada's vast geographical and cultural differences provide several different concepts of masculinity, as the setting in which an individual finds himself has a tremendous impact on his masculine identity. Rosemary Ricciardelli (2013), for example, has written about masculinities within the Canadian penitentiary system. The masculinity exhibited by someone in the specific context of a Canadian federal penitentiary is going to be situated in that setting, while also containing aspects unique to that individual's specific history.

The factors which come into play in the social construction of masculinities are endless, but include race, education, culture of background, and socioeconomic status. These factors result in differing representations of masculinity, which in turn create the potential for multiple understandings of manhood. This is important because the existence of multiple masculinities implies less violent conceptions have the potential to become hegemonic, and therefore lead to less violence in society overall. This is not to say, however, that the hegemonic conception of masculinity is quick to change, but rather that as we come to understand differing representations, we can begin to challenge existing negative hegemonic conceptions as a society.

Canadian theorist Bobby Noble's work offers theoretical insights into multiple masculinities and is notable for its intersectional approach, which highlights the many aspects of privilege in Western society — including race, class, and gender — that are important for a deep analysis of masculinity. In particular, Noble (2011) examines the privilege assigned to cisgender individuals, noting that “being male... isn't necessarily a privilege for all men” (p. 255). This is an important concept, one which indicates the presence of multiple masculinities and the negative effects experienced by those who

belong to the “wrong group”, such as trans men. Noble's work highlights how masculinity is articulated by individuals who lie outside traditional norms of what it means to be a man (2004; 2008). His work offers the reader opportunities to consider how masculinities are complexly constructed on and through bodies which are not coded as biologically “male” or as “white”. It prompts intersectional considerations of race, class, biology, and gender, and the privilege associated with different aspects of identity. In conducting my interviews, with Noble's work in mind, I took into account participants' racial identity, economic status and gender identities when considering their experiences with and negotiations of hegemonic masculinity. Within my analysis of the interview data, I examine if and how participants conceptualize and enact multiple masculinities. Noble confronts the reader with the possibility that male identity does not always ensure patriarchal privilege, especially if one does not belong to the “right” sex or “right” racial, social, economic, or religious group. Within this project, I draw on Noble to bring to light multiple aspects of masculinities in my analysis. It is important to understand the notion of multiple masculinities so I can better identify both hegemonic and counter hegemonic formations of masculinity present within the collected data. “Masculinities” is not a single concept or identity, and to take into account masculinities defined by place, class, race, education, and any other number of factors, is to acknowledge the existence of alternatives to hegemonic masculinity, and the possibility for change.

The existence of multiple masculinities is why locally based studies such as this one are necessary to gain understandings of masculinities in the context of a specific location. For Connell, this meant examining Australian youth cultures (for studies

specific to other regions and contexts, see Ferrell, 2011, central Kentucky; James-Hawkins, Salazar, Hennenk, Ha, & Yount, 2016, Vietnam; Sukhu, 2012, Trinidad; Törrönen & Roumeliotis, 2013, Sweden and Finland). As it turns out, and as I discuss in my data analysis chapters, multiple masculinities are reflected within the representations of masculinity of my research participants.

### **Hierarchy of Masculinities**

Connell's concept of a hierarchy of masculinities follows from that of multiple masculinities. The theory posits that where multiple forms of masculinity exist, there will be a hierarchical ordering of those forms, with some being preferable over others. That is to say, some masculine identities are more acceptable as enactments of manhood than others. Connell (2008) writes, "It is not the case that these different versions of masculinity are equally available or equally respected" (p. 133). For example, in a heteronormative<sup>13</sup> society, heavily influenced by the western, religiously<sup>14</sup> backed idea of heterosexuality as the only acceptable form of sexuality, many struggle with concepts of manhood that are stereotypically associated with homosexuality. Indeed, the distaste for homosexuality is so pervasive as to be present in common slang. How often does one hear, even today at a time when gay marriage has been legalized and major strides have been made by activists to embrace love in all its forms, the term "gay" used as a slur? When I was an adolescent in the early 2000s, it was not uncommon to hear my peer group

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<sup>13</sup> Heteronormativity is a term first popularized by queer theorist Michael Warner (1991; Berlant & Warner, 1995) and refers to the belief that heterosexuality is the norm or standard for human sexuality. A heteronormative society, such as ours, builds its understandings of human relationships, behaviours, sexuality, etc. from that standard of heterosexuality.

<sup>14</sup> Christianity has had a critical impact on Western masculinity, and patriarchal constructions of the gender-binary and heteronormativity.

use “that's so gay” with a negative connotation, as a substitute for “that's so uncool” or “that's so stupid”. To degrade men, “gay” is often used to infer that they are homosexual or a “fag”. Indeed, the words came to refer to far more than sexual preference, but instead became a derogatory way of labeling someone as lesser, as unmanly. So-called homosexual masculinity, based on effeminate stereotypes, is clearly placed lower within the hierarchy of masculinities.

Connell (2001) suggests that some masculinities will be marginalized within the hierarchy, for example “disempowered ethnic minorities” (p. 17), while others are exalted for their value and admired. An example of this would be the way celebrity athletes are venerated. Successful male athletes build their careers on the ability to fit into the ideal of physical masculinity, and to embody traits of masculinity that lead them to appeal to mass markets, to sign on with sponsorship deals that market to the average man. Therefore, the celebrity athlete becomes an identity to which others aspire. In disempowering some while exalting others, a hierarchy of masculinities reinforces patriarchal norms such as the oppression of minorities (those who do not fit the exalted masculinity), and of women (as, by definition, they cannot fit within the hierarchy of masculinities) as well as the erasure of those identities which do not fit within the gender-binary.<sup>15</sup> In terms of my own research, the hierarchy of masculinities creates an issue when violent masculinities rise to places of high prestige. At this juncture in time, aggressive sports produce celebrity athletes whom young boys admire (Pappas, McKenry, & Skilken Catlett, 2004). If they

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<sup>15</sup> This erasure is something which has been examined in detail by Scott Morgensen (2011).

see their role model engaging in violence on the playing field then this becomes one of the ways in which violence is normalized in their everyday lives.

### **Hegemonic Masculinity**

As is perhaps clear from the above discussions, the most valued masculinity at a particular place and time, which is always in part an ideal as opposed to a lived reality, is referred to as the dominant or hegemonic form of masculinity. It is this presentation of manhood which is most emulated and which is given a “position of cultural authority and leadership” (Connell, 2001, p. 17). While other masculinities will not be erased by it, the hegemonic masculinity will be the most visible in a society, and typify what an individual is referring to “when they speak of ‘the male role’” (Connell, 2001, p. 17). It is important to note that hegemonic masculinity is not just hegemonic over other concepts of masculinity but over the entire gender order as well. That is to say, it is the dominant expression of gender identity as a whole, not just within the realm of masculinities. Connell (1987) notes that hegemonic masculinity “is always constructed in relation to various subordinated masculinities as well as in relation to women”, with the interaction between masculinities acting as an important aspect “of how a patriarchal social order works” (p. 183). Hegemonic masculinity is the masculine identity to which male-identified individuals may aspire (consciously or otherwise) and can shape behaviour in an active social construction of masculine identity. Individuals who attain that identity may be considered highly successful and be admired by their peers. The hegemonic masculinity of a given context acts as the “mainstream” masculine identity. It is made up of integrated aspects of multiple conceptions of masculine identity, coming together to

form the desired apex of manhood. For my research, I examine how young men negotiate the complexities of that gender order, particularly as it relates to expressions of violence so intrinsic to the current hegemonic masculinity in North American society, and within university communities in particular (see below for an in-depth discussion of violent masculinity).

This research examines hegemonic masculinity in the context of a Canadian university. As such, it becomes necessary to take the time to briefly outline the current form that hegemonic masculinity takes within Canada. It is important to note that due to the diversity of populations across the country, there is some minor variation from place to place. However, at this point in time, hegemonic masculinity in Canada is embodied by white, heterosexual, cis-gender men. Furthermore, it encompasses a state of being able-bodied, Christian, and belonging to the middle class. Additionally, there are notes of paternalism and benevolent sexism within hegemonic masculinity, framed in the idea of men as providers and protectors for the women in their family units. Most importantly for this current research, hegemonic masculinity contains an acceptance of aggression and sexual dominance, one which contributes to sexual violence and rape culture.

### **Michael Kimmel and the Themes of North American Masculinities**

Sociologist Michael Kimmel leads the way in research on North American masculinities. His academic work has focused on the current state of masculinities and manhood in North America, covering topics such as education, men's feminism, racism, and homophobia. His research emphasizes making feminism accessible, and easily understood, by a broader male-identified audience. In his lecture *Mars, Venus or Planet*



*Earth: Women, and men in a new millennium* (2008), Kimmel addresses the presentation of manhood in modern North American society, and the roles men and women play in today's society. He also addresses the violence we see in presentations of manhood. Kimmel is cited for his discussion of American masculinities in the context of the "Four Rules of Manhood": antifemininity, status-achievement, inexpressiveness-independence, and adventurousness-aggressiveness.<sup>16</sup> Antifemininity refers to the idea that boys are taught from an early age to avoid exhibiting feminine traits, behaviours or interests. This affects emotional expression, peer relations, education pathways and career choice (Kilmartin & Alison, 2007, p. 98). The status-achievement theme refers to the status gained through achievements in sports and employment in particular. The emphasis within masculinity is placed on the need to achieve, an expectation that places pressure on males to conform to societal expectations of success. Inexpressiveness-independence is the concept of emotional detachment and composure. This concept suggests "true" men are capable of stoically handling any crisis dealt to them. Finally, adventurousness-aggressiveness refers to the idea that men are supposed to be physical risk takers. This theme focuses on physical feats of competition (as in sports) and aggression, which can result in violent behaviour (Kilmartin & Allison, p. 99). Together, the four rules of American manhood structure and prescribe male behaviour and thought throughout North America. The original "rules", now over 40 years old, are still prevalent as conceptions of masculinity. Each rule can be easily recognizable in manifestations of hegemonic

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<sup>16</sup> This discussion originated with the examination of masculinity conducted by Deborah David and Robert Brannon (1976), in which they presented the male sex role as conforming to a series of four "rules": No Sissy Stuff, Be a Big-Wheel, Be a Sturdy Oak, and Give 'em Hell.

masculine identity in contemporary North American society. Furthermore, they can be applied to the more specific context of a Canadian university (as I do within my research). The rules act as broad concepts as opposed to detailed regulations of behaviour, and highlight dominant conceptions of masculinity. Kimmel discusses the rules within the context of American masculinity, and I would assert that they become applicable regardless of location, class, education, or race, and have been continuously relevant to the way we perceive masculine behaviour and identity and in how we research and discuss masculinities. In the context of my research, I found myself reflecting on participants' responses in relation to this theory. Their behaviour and experiences are rarely a perfect reproduction of Kimmel's "rules", nor is it their intention to reproduce those rules. Their lives, however, often reveal the pervasiveness of these requirements of masculinity.

## **Theorizations of and Research on Masculinities and Violence**

### **Hegemonic Masculinity as Violent**

In even a casual perusal of the literature on masculinities, the focus on violence becomes evident (Orchowski, Berkowitz, Boggis, & Oesterle, 2016; Fernández-Álvarez, 2014; Baugher & Gazmararian, 2015; Bozkurt, Tartanoglu & Dawes, 2015; Egger, 1993; Hood-Williams, 2001; Martin, 2016; Towns & Terry, 2014; Reidy, Berke, Gentile, & Zeichner, 2014). Numerous researchers examine contemporary masculinities through the lens of violence, indicating the importance that violent behaviours and interactions should hold in our assessments of hegemonic masculinity. The current hegemonic notions of masculinity in North America glorify violent and aggressive behaviour, as is evident in

the way masculinity has been presented in popular media such as films, television and video games, and the idolization of popular athletes. It is with this knowledge that anti-violence activists and those working with young male-identified individuals must approach their work, particularly as it concerns education and media outreach initiatives. Violent masculinity is a particularly pressing issue facing North American society, and as young people who will be the leaders and shapers of society in coming years, university students are a particularly relevant group to turn to when seeking knowledge of masculinity and seeking solutions for the current crisis of violence against women.

### **Messerschmidt and Structured Action Theory**

Theories of violent masculinity have largely grown out of theories of masculinity more generally. James Messerschmidt (2016), for example, uses structured action theory to theorize violent masculinities. The premise of structured action theory states that “sex, gender, and sexuality grow out of embodied social practices in specific social structural settings” (p. 37), once again emphasizing the importance of context and social construction. Messerschmidt explores how this relates to violence by examining the specific contexts in which violent behaviours arise. For example, he investigates sexual violence as a response to challenges to adolescents’ masculine identities (2000). As two of Messerschmidt’s study participants, “Sam” and “John”, grew up, their masculine identities were challenged by peers and family members; having been degraded for not being real men, they developed methods of countering that challenge. Presented with opportunities to behave in sexually violent ways, they did, attacking other youth in their quest to create a stronger sense of masculinity for themselves. Their masculinity was

rooted within their violent behaviours. I would argue that this relates clearly to rape culture and sexual violence as components of masculinity. Messerschmidt proposes that crime acts as a means of performing masculinity in situations where the individual has limited access to other means of constructing and reinforcing their masculine identity.

### **Kaufman's Triad of Violence**

Canadian researcher Michael Kaufman (1987) has also written extensively about men's violence, theorizing it as a “triad of violence”, or three components or aspects of violent interactions that come together to “reinforce one another” (p. 2). The corners of the triad are made up of violence against women, violence against other men, and violence against oneself, and, according to Kaufman, no corner can be confronted without examining the other two. As with Nobel's, Connell's, and Kimmel's respective theories of masculinity, Kaufman's triad relies heavily on the social context in question, which further illustrates the centrality of social context to gender research as a whole and to violent masculinities research more specifically. Kaufman's theorization of men's violence examines the aspects of society that contribute to violence, including the influence of parents and mentors on children, social constructions of gender, the economic environment and the patriarchal nature of society. In emphasizing these factors, the triad provides a clear theory about men's violence, and how it comes to be.

### **Hypermasculinity**

Perhaps most clearly linking hegemonic masculinity and violence is the theory of hypermasculinity. Hypermasculinity acts as “an exaggeration of male stereotypical behaviour” (Renzetti & Edleson, 2008, p 346). It builds off of North American

conceptions of masculinity and relates to the “rules” as defined earlier in three ways: by emphasizing risk-taking behavior and by glorifying danger; by degrading relationships with women and gender minorities highlighting sexual intercourse as an accomplishment as opposed to a healthy aspect of human intimacy; and finally, by accentuating violence as “an acceptable and often preferred means of expressing power, dominance, and manliness” (Kilmartin & Allison, 2007, p 100). Thomas Scheff (2006) discusses hypermasculinity and violence in detail, arguing that hypermasculinity is an adherence to what Erving Goffman (1967) called the “Cult of Masculinity”. Scheff highlights the role of shame in hypermasculinity as a motivator of violent actions. To avoid the shame of femininity, one engages in the more violent and aggressive actions of masculinity as a reinforcement of that identity. While Scheff refers primarily to violence on a large scale (e.g., international conflict), I also apply the theory to the interpersonal level discussed in this thesis, as hypermasculinity manifests itself in personal actions as well as at a larger group level. As with Messerschmidt, Scheff also suggests that violent actions become a method of reinforcing masculine identity, particularly in cases of limited resources for so doing.

### **Jackson Katz and Anti-Violence Activism**

Jackson Katz has also brought questions of violent masculinity to the fore in discussions of hegemonic masculinity. As an anti-sexism activist, filmmaker, writer and lecturer, he approaches masculinity from outside the realm of the academy and in doing so has presented theorizations of masculinity in an easily accessible manner. In 1999 Katz was one of the writers and interviewees in the documentary film *Tough Guise: Violence*,

*Media, and the Crisis in Masculinity*, a film which remains popular in sociology and gender studies classes for its accessible message about violent masculinities. In 2013, *Tough Guise 2: Violence, Manhood and American Culture* was released as a follow-up to the initial film, once again based on Katz's activism and research. Within his work, Katz draws on current theories of gender-based violence, most importantly regarding its cultural impact. By suggesting links between violent presentations of masculinity in the media and violent acts perpetrated by men, Katz emphasizes the role that environment, in the form of media, plays in perpetuating violent and aggressive masculinity. Furthermore, in many ways, Katz emphasizes the importance of role modelling to the development of violent masculinity. This emphasis on role modelling includes not only media (action movie stars, aggressive lyrics in music, violence on TV and in video games), but also to athletic role models and, perhaps more directly, family and peers. In 2006, Katz published *The Macho Paradox: Why Some Men Hurt Women and How All Men can Help*, which again addressed male violence against women, this time examining the ways in which individuals can create change and reduce rates of violence in their own communities. Katz continues to work to end male violence and sexism through the dissemination of information about its root causes, exploring media presentations and everyday examples of sexism that contribute to the cultural hegemony of violent masculinities. I have drawn on Katz's work in developing my research questions.

### **Methodology and Methods**

I approach this research from an intersectional feminist perspective, taking the anti-violence stance traditionally found in feminist research and activism. An intersectional

feminist perspective is one which takes into account the complexities and multifaceted nature of the issue being examined. My analysis for this project aims to be intersectional in its approach so as to fully incorporate the complexity of power relations (that is, the unequal distribution of power between individuals/groups/roles) involved in the production and negotiation of hegemonic masculinity, and that influence participants' experiences. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) explored in depth the concept of intersectionality as it relates to violence against women, with particular emphasis on intersections of gender, race and class. Crenshaw's exploration informs the intersectional aspects of this research, emphasizing the importance of considering numerous factors in studying violent masculinities. Throughout this thesis, I have found myself referring time and time again to the importance of context, and it is the intersections between aspects of identity and social location (e.g., race, gender, social class, sexuality, geographical location) that help to inform gender identity. For this reason, I have approached this research with an intersectional lens. In the case of this project this means examining masculinity in relation to more than just gender and male violence; it also means taking into consideration factors such as race, social class, educational background, and geographical location. It is for this reason that I pay particular attention to context throughout this thesis.

Additionally, this work is from an anti-violence stance, an approach popular within feminist activism and research due to feminism's roots in working to end violence against women, and in more recent years, to end gender-based violence more generally.

Intersectionality is a critical aspect of that anti-violence work, as Crenshaw's initial development of the concept was inspired by the need for anti-violence initiatives to

examine multiple factors beyond gender—for example how race, class, or sexual orientation affect gender-based violence.

I have also conducted this research in as self-reflective a manner as possible. This has been cited as an important aspect of feminist scholarship (Fonow & Cook, 1986; 1991) and one which has remained my goal throughout the research process. Indeed, as feminist theorists have persuasively argued, researchers cannot enjoy neutral and objective stances toward their research (Haraway, 1988). Consequently, I have had to examine the numerous factors that have shaped my position as researcher. I am first and foremost a self-identified feminist anti-violence activist seeking social justice. I am also white, cisgender, and female-identified, and have been raised with the privileges that come from being a member of the middle class with unfettered access to education and health care. Additionally, my position as a researcher is heavily influenced by my background as a graduate student of feminist theory, but also as a member of the university community in which I have conducted my research. While my connection to campus life has varied considerably over the years, my research is influenced by my pre-existing knowledge of the campus community. I entered this project with knowledge of national and international incidents of campus rape culture. I also entered it as a student whose knowledge of the local campus included incidents of rape culture occurring in recent years (such as the scandal involving the Faculty of Engineering that I write about in Chapter 1). Furthermore, I have strong connections to the local anti-violence activist community, especially groups concerned with sexual violence and rape culture. I served as a volunteer on the provincial sexual assault crisis and information line for almost three



years, working directly with survivors and their families both over the telephone and in-person during hospital visits to the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner. The experience has deeply affected my thoughts and understandings of sexual violence. It was, therefore, important for me to acknowledge that my participants would perhaps not have the same background as I do in terms of an awareness of feminist politics in the community. Indeed, while I might wish them to speak passionately against incidents of rape culture on campus, I had to acknowledge the possibility that they would be unaware of any such violence or harassment. Being truly self-reflective means acknowledging that such experiences will always shape the lens through which I view participants' responses and it is an important consideration throughout the analysis of the collected data.

Within this project and in examining feminist methodologies more broadly, I have discovered that there is no one way to conduct feminist research. Instead, the overarching principles of the methodology seem to be what defines it as feminist. Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith Cook (1986) present five fundamental principles of feminist methodology: acknowledgement of the pervasive influence of gender; focus on consciousness-raising; rejection of the subject/object separation; examination of ethical concerns; and emphasis on empowerment and transformation. My research conforms to these general principles and is thus undeniably based in a feminist methodological approach. For instance, the research centers on the influence of gender in its detailed exploration of masculinity as it relates to a specific form of gender-based violence. I feel that this project focuses on consciousness-raising in the way that participants engage in conversations that (I hope) encourage continued thought about rape culture and its

pervasiveness within campus life. The overarching goal of the project is also one of consciousness-raising, by contributing to societal understandings of how violence against women can be challenged through the continued negotiation and challenging of violent conceptualizations of masculinity. Finally, my self-reflexivity and questioning of objectivity as researcher is a rejection of the subject/object separation. In later writing, Fonow and Cook (2005) emphasize the influence of social action within feminist methodology. This project is rooted in the need to find solutions for a troubling epidemic of sexual violence. While it may not directly affect university policies or hegemonic masculinity, it is contributing to a larger conversation about the need for change.

Conscientious researchers working directly with human participants must take into consideration the inevitability of a power imbalance arising between researcher and participant. This has been a particular consideration of feminist researchers (Doucet & Mauthner, 2006), and a question surrounding feminist methodology. For this project I found myself attempting to negotiate any possible imbalance by maintaining a casual conversation style in conducting the interviews. The informal approach was important to me, not only to put my participants at ease, but also to try to mitigate the power imbalance, and “build a relationship” (Hesse-Biber, 2014, p. 186) with them in which honest answers might be forthcoming. While I found this did seem to help put my participants at ease and draw out more in-depth answers, it is not a solution which would work in all interview contexts. I approached this research as someone close in age to my participants, and with a similar level of education (with the exception of first-year students). My status as a young, unintimidating woman seems to have helped mitigate the

power imbalance that might have been present had I approached this research later in my career or with a population that differed greatly from myself. Furthermore, as male-identified individuals, my participants already had a culturally prescribed power over me as a female-identified individual.

## **Methods and Research Design**

The methodology and methods for this research are also inspired by feminist researchers in the field of masculinity, particularly Raewyn Connell, whose work has also informed my theoretical framework as discussed above. I was especially influenced by her use of qualitative interviews in conducting research for *Masculinities* (1987). Connell's work for that particular project drew on data collected from multiple sets of interviews, providing rich material for analysis from the real-life experiences of her participants. The account of her participants' experiences allowed Connell to tease out various intricacies of masculinity, expanding on understandings of male identity in the group with which she was working. Messerschmidt (2000) made similar use of qualitative interviews for his own research on masculinities in *Nine Lives: Adolescent Masculinities, the Body, and Violence*, and as with Connell, was able to access a level of insight into his participants' experiences that might otherwise have been overlooked in other methods of data collection such as surveys. Inspired by the level of analysis achieved within their research, and the impact of their work on the field of masculinities, I used qualitative interviews as my primary method of data collection.

Over the course of two months in the fall of 2015, I conducted a series of 12 interviews with male-identified individuals. In line with my research objectives, and

given the strong connections between rape culture, youth, and university campuses, I sought out post-secondary students between the ages of 19-25 who self-identified as male. The small sample size of 12 participants does not allow for broad generalizations about masculinities as a whole, nor is it representative of the entire male university population of St. John's. It is important to note that while the individuals in this study are members of that population, they each are representative of it in different ways. No one individual stands in as a perfect example of the male university population in St. John's. However, the sample size does provide the opportunity to formulate an in-depth narrative analysis of the participants' individual life experiences, as well as providing insights into youth perspectives of violent masculinity and the ways in which young men are contesting, resisting, or reproducing violent hegemonic masculinity. The small sample size, common in research conducted using qualitative interviews, offered the opportunity for participants to answer questions expansively, thus allowing for the exploration of accounts of masculinity that reveal opportunities and possible futures for a society with less violence. It is within complex experiences and imperfect reproductions and repetitions of masculinity that the possibilities for change can be found, a point I believe to be critical to my research. As described below, I have used an in-depth narrative analysis for this work precisely in order to examine those complex experiences and imperfect reproductions.

The interviews were semi-structured and informal in nature, with questions designed to guide the direction of interviews without restricting the participants' answers or leading their responses. As part of the informed consent process, I sought permission

from each participant to record the interviews to ease data collection and interview transcription.

I sought and received ethical clearance for the project through Memorial University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR). This clearance was contingent on my taking measures to ensure my own personal safety during the interviews. The committee felt that the difficult and at times contentious nature of the topic of rape culture in particular could draw negative reactions from individuals, ones which might compromise the safety of a researcher working alone or in an isolated location. Therefore, all interviews were conducted in a private office located on a busy hallway in a heavily populated building on campus, and were scheduled only during regular business hours when it could be assured other people would be in the building should an emergency arise. I was also required to have my personal cell phone on and within easy reach during the interview for the same reason. Additionally, I was asked to notify my supervisors via email to inform them of the time and location of each interview ahead of time.

The topic's difficulty was also an important consideration in conducting the interviews with each participant. Discussions of sexual violence and rape culture as well as in-depth consideration of one's own formative experiences can lead to distress for some individuals. To mitigate this possibility, all participants were provided with the contact information for local resources which might assist them should they experience any distress after the interview (those resources were the Campus Counselling Centre, the MUN Sexual Harassment Office, and the provincial Sexual Assault Crisis and

Information hotline; see Appendix A). Participants were also notified during the informed consent process (see Appendix B) and throughout the interview that they were not required to answer any question with which they were uncomfortable, nor were they required to complete the interview. Participants were given a period of one month upon completion of the interview to request that their data be withdrawn from the project.

I began participant recruitment immediately upon receiving ethics clearance from ICEHR. All participants were recruited from within the university community through the use of posters around campus (Appendix C), social media posts on networks popular within the student population (Appendix D), and emails circulated within the university network (Appendix E). Additionally, multiple instructors within the Department of Gender Studies informed their students of the opportunity to participate. All participants received a one-time compensation of \$25 for their time, the funding for which came from a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarship. Interviews were scheduled to take up to 90 minutes; however, they lasted between 20 and 70 minutes, with the time being dependent on the depth to which they answered the open-ended questions.

## **Participants**

Of the 12 participants, one was an international student and 11 were Canadian, with eight of those 11 being raised primarily in Newfoundland and Labrador. Ten racially identified as white, one as white-Aboriginal, and one as Chinese. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 25 with the average age being 22. Participants raised in religious households all indicated Christian backgrounds. Their individual family structures

differed greatly, with some being raised in nuclear families with both parents, and others living between two homes, or with step-parents. Their number of siblings/step-siblings also differed. They also came from differing economic backgrounds, as indicated by their parents' employment status and areas of work. The study's nature determined that all participants were university students; however, the majority (10) were undergraduates while others (2) were graduate students. One participant was working towards his PhD. Finally, students were from a wide variety of disciplines, including engineering, biochemistry, business, English, French, and sociology.

## **Analysis**

Upon completion of the interviews, I transcribed all collected data word-for-word manually, an extensive process which took several months and which eventually necessitated the hiring of a research assistant to ensure completion (see Appendix F). I then coded the data for common themes. These themes were then divided into two larger, overarching categories: reproductions of traditional concepts of masculinity and challenges of those traditional concepts. My in-depth analysis of these two categories can be found in Chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

I have approached the data using narrative analysis. Narratives are part of a larger methodological approach of life histories, providing researchers with in-depth source material from which to conduct their analysis. This is a popular method of analysis in research conducted with in-depth qualitative interviews; indeed, any research working directly from stories of participants' experiences is a form of narrative analysis (Reissman, 2005). By allowing participants to talk in detail about their experiences, this

method gives them the opportunity to provide a narrative to work from, detailed stories of their lives from which a rich body of information and insights can be drawn (Sosulski, Buchanan, and Donnell, 2010). In fact, Connell (1995), Messner (1992) and Messerschmidt (1993; 2000) all engage in the use of narrative analysis within their research.

For this particular project, I make use of a thematic analysis, examining participants' narratives for common themes which I have then discussed in relation to theoretical insights from the literature on masculinities. By coding the interview data by theme and making use of a thematic analysis, I am further able to examine the details of what would otherwise be an overwhelming amount of data. In her discussion of thematic analysis, Reissman indicates that this form of narrative analysis focuses "on the content of a text"(2005, p 2), allowing the researcher to "[theorize] across a number of cases" (p. 3). The individual experiences of participants differ greatly and yet thematic analysis allows me as a researcher to examine the similarities that exist across those experiences. Furthermore, it enables me to show how those experiences reproduce current narratives of hegemonic masculinity, or challenge and alter those conceptions. Narrative analysis allows the participants' experiences to speak for themselves and to be studied in relation to relevant theory. In addition, as Sosulski, Buchanan and Donnell point out, the extensive content and details provided within a narrative research method allow researchers to "enhance [their] basic understanding to inform practice, policy, and future research" (2010, p 30). Within this research, I have emphasized my desire to work towards social change, and this potential of narrative analysis as a method to inform



practice and policy is critical to that change. Furthermore, my participants' experiences offered several interesting insights into masculinities that would need more detailed exploration. I briefly review the possibilities for future research that arise from this project in my conclusion chapter (Chapter 5). The detail of analysis conducted necessitates small sample sizes with this method, particularly when the research is conducted by a single-person research team. For this reason, I limited my sample size to 12 individuals.

### **Interview Questions**

Participants were asked several questions to collect demographic information and to ease into the interview before tackling more complex concepts. These questions included gathering information about their family backgrounds (parents' marital and employment status, siblings), their age, race, hometown and religious affiliations, as well as their program of study. Moving forward from demographic information, I began to ask a series of questions on their experiences of masculinity. These questions, which are included in Appendix G, were designed to prompt participants in their own thinking about how they perceive masculinity, how they self-identify and what factors in their lives may have influenced their identity. The interviews focused on participants' conceptions of hegemonic masculinity and violence, their negotiation of their own masculine identity and current conversations (in both popular media and on campus) about rape culture. Interviewees were also asked questions about their individual experiences with hegemonic masculinity in the formation of their own sense of masculinity and how they conform (or not) to hegemonic conceptualizations. The questions focused on childhood

experiences, role models, and parental and peer expectations and pressures as well as participants' understandings of and dealings with rape culture, sexual violence generally, and their own experiences of gender-based violence within the university community.

As a former student of psychology, I have long been intrigued by the influence of early experiences on development. I have found in my research that others have also emphasized this influence (Freeberg & Payne, 1967; Kochanska, 1993; Birch, Fisher, Grimm-Thomas, Markey, Sawyer & Johnson, 2001). As discussed in the literature, early experiences can impact development of gender identity and conformity to hegemonic norms, and childhood is a formative period for individual development. Consequently, I asked participants several questions about their childhood experiences, in particular, about their parental influences, role models and peers, to gain insights into how they have shaped their masculine identities.

Participants were also asked about their thoughts and feelings about associations between violence and masculinity. These questions were designed to access their ideas about the acceptability of violent behaviours and the way they perceive violence within the media and their everyday lives. I intended for these questions to connect the current research to the larger discussion of violent hegemonic masculinity. The final interview questions tackled participants' knowledge and experiences surrounding the concept of rape culture. Did they have any pre-existing thoughts about rape culture? How would these ideas be revealed in their answers? Several participants did not have a lot of experience with the term rape culture, so I provided a definition within the interviews to clarify as necessary. I also asked participants about their thoughts on how it is being

addressed, and whether there were other methods to be used in combating rape culture within our society. My participants provided unique and valuable insights into my research questions, ones which I will explore in depth in the following two chapters of this thesis.

Perhaps most importantly in terms of developing further questions, I wish that I had been less strict in following my guiding questions. I feel I could have greatly expanded on responses if I had not, in some cases, redirected the conversation to the guiding questions as quickly as I did, but instead continued with follow-up questions (such as about role models or athletics) to further engage participants in the topic. This might have proven particularly effective with those participants who were reluctant to expand upon their answers without prompting (resulting in a great deal of variability in interview length).

Additionally, within this project I chose to limit the number of participants interviewed. While I feel that 12 has provided a great deal of material to work from, I also feel that a slightly smaller number of participants may have resulted in the ability to analyze each interview in more depth, as I would have been working with a significantly smaller data set. I found the volume of data to be transcribed from the interviews challenging, as not only was the transcription process time consuming (and indeed, required the hiring of a research assistant for completion), but it also resulted in a great deal of information to be examined by a single researcher undertaking their first major solo project. With a smaller number of participants (perhaps a maximum of 7) I might have been able to better allot my time spent transcribing to the analysis of the data. This

being said, the current project was shaped in many significant ways by the contributions of each participant and I would not wish to remove any of their insights.

### **Conclusion**

Within this chapter I have outlined both my theoretical framework and the methodological approach used within this research. Taken together with the contextual information examined in Chapter 1, they lay a foundation for my analysis of the interview data collected throughout the course of this project. I detail this analysis in Chapter 3: Reproductions of Norms of Hegemonic Masculinity and Chapter 4: Possibilities for Change, dividing the analysis into two distinct chapters in order to demonstrate the depth and variety of participant attitudes. Throughout the analysis, I revisit the theories previously discussed within this chapter, drawing connections to individual responses, and demonstrating the ways that they relate to the actual lived experiences of young male-identified individuals.

### **CHAPTER 3: REPRODUCTIONS OF HEGEMONIC NORMS OF MASCULINITY**

I now begin my analysis of the data compiled from the research interviews. In this chapter, I explore the ways in which participants comment on and possibly reinforce hegemonic norms of masculinity while applying the various theoretical aspects of masculinity that I have previously examined. In Chapter 4, I analyze participants' answers that demonstrate possibilities for change within our societal understandings of masculinity. While in both chapters I draw connections to the theoretical concepts outlined in previous chapters, at the same time, I allow the participants to speak for themselves without drawing too many inferences from their words. This is an important consideration in examining my data. The individuals I worked with are real people, imperfect human beings like anyone else, who were willing to share their experiences, ideas, and understandings with me. Often, as someone who is critical of the impact that rape culture has on society, it is far too easy for me to see only the negative aspects of what someone says, but it is vital that I not judge my participants based on any utterances that may reinforce concepts of rape culture, gender inequality, or the gender binary. It is not the purpose of this thesis to infer individual motivation or to judge participants, but rather to examine the ways in which young male-identified individuals are negotiating their gender identities, experiences, and understandings of rape culture and masculinities, and to allow them to speak for themselves about the complexities of living within a society in which violent masculinities have become the norm.

Throughout the interviews, I asked participants a series of questions designed to gain insights into their understandings of masculinity and their own masculine identities.

This chapter delves into their responses to some of those specific questions, and the way in which those answers reflect and potentially reinforce hegemonic norms. That is, I demonstrate how, in my reading, participants' answers aligned in many instances with Kimmel's Rules of Manhood and with Connell's theories of masculinity. More specifically, I inspect each of Kimmel's rules in depth with the responses that align to them. Finally, I look at the ways in which participants talk about rape culture conceptually, in order to examine how their ideas align with and/or deviate from the definitions I outlined earlier in Chapter 1.

The participants in this study all offered unique insights into masculine identity and how it is lived and negotiated. If nothing else, their participation in the research highlighted the realities of Connell's theory of multiple masculinities. While many of the participants had similar responses, conceptions of masculinity, and ideas about manhood, no two men presented the exact same masculine identity. Each individual's unique experiences and background informed their masculine identity. Participants in the study grew up in different areas of the province (from the metro St. John's/Mt. Pearl area to small communities on the coast, and within the often-isolated communities of Labrador), as well as other areas of the country (notably, British Columbia, Alberta, and Ontario), and around the world (one participant grew up in China and is studying at Memorial with an international student visa). As illustrated in my theory chapter, geographical location is just one factor which shapes unique masculine identities. Additionally, participants came from a wide range of family backgrounds, some being raised in a nuclear family, while others were raised by step-parents or between multiple households.

### **“What Does it Mean to You to be a Man?”**

Participants' individual understandings and conceptions of masculinity reflected a wide and varied range of ideas, one that also reflected common understandings of societal expectations of “being a man”. To help conceptualize how masculinity is understood by young, male-identified individuals, I asked participants to describe some of their thoughts around stereotypical masculinity and manhood with the questions: *What do you think of when you think of the stereotypical man? What does it mean to you to be a man? What does masculinity mean for you?*<sup>17</sup> Their responses were representative of not only their unique life experiences, but also the blend of media and role models to which they had been exposed, as well as their own ideas about gender identity as a whole. I have created a Word Cloud (see Figure 1) to visualize the variety of those responses and highlight some of the key ideas that participants responded with in their descriptions of masculinity. Repetitions of words and phrases are emphasized by increasing font sizes. I found it interesting as I examined the word cloud to see that many of the prominent words displayed within it parallel concepts that I am examining within my analysis. For example, the emphasis on family and responsibility demonstrates Kimmel's Rules of Manhood as well as multiple participants' ideas about masculinity in connection to family life. Overall, the word cloud is a useful tool for visualizing participants' responses, particularly as these initial questions often garnered short answers as they rushed to express a series of ideas and concepts without necessarily providing any further

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<sup>17</sup> I wish to acknowledge the limitations of asking these particular questions in such quick succession during my interviews, I found that it was difficult to disentangle participants' answers to different questions, and as a result, the data received from their responses was perhaps more muddled than would be ideal. This is another reason why I have chosen to present their answers to all three questions within the Word Cloud.

explanation. I have chosen to comment on several aspects of this word cloud below; however the sheer amount of data presented within it means that I have had to curb that discussion to highlight primarily the most interconnected and prominent words as opposed to addressing each on its own.



Figure 1 Participants' responses to: What do you think of when you think of the stereotypical man? What does it mean to you to be a man? What does masculinity mean for you? Do you identify as masculine? Created using [www.wordclouds.com](http://www.wordclouds.com)

Some of the participants chose to highlight physical attributes associated with masculinity, such as facial hair, height, and strength, or anatomical sex traits such as



genitalia, such as when Dr. Rogers<sup>18</sup> described the stereotypical man as being “perfect, handsome wind-swept hair, little bit of stubble, not too much”. Others highlighted societal aspects of gender identity, such as clothing, shoes, and the products used in everyday life (using male-marketed deodorants, driving large trucks). Answers tended to highlight media portrayals (the bumbling idiot of sitcoms and comedies, or the stoic and handsome action hero) and conceptions of heterosexuality, as well as ideas of the nuclear family (wife and children were mentioned by multiple participants). Several participants associated masculinity with heterosexuality by referencing behaviours such as “hitting on women”, being “straight” or a “womanizer”, and having a “wife”.

A few participants also chose to highlight employment and work ethic as important to their definitions of manhood and masculinity. Several made references that relate to employment, including physical attire, such as a “suit”, “collared shirts” (Dr. Rogers) and “briefcase” (Pagan Man), or “coveralls” (Tony). Others referenced being the “boss”, or a “high-power business man”. There was also reference made to “work[ing] on an oil rig” (Tony), being a “working class citizen” (Trevor), and being a “financial provider” (Walter). Tony’s response was clearly influenced by his geographical and social location, having been raised in rural Alberta before moving to Newfoundland for school. He described the stereotypical man as

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<sup>18</sup> All participants are referred to throughout this thesis by their chosen pseudonyms to maintain their privacy: Robert, Dr. Rogers, Eric, The Master, Pagan Man, Edward, Dan, Tony, Walter, Trevor, BioChemist and Greg. Both Dr. Rogers and The Master were referencing popular science fiction television series *Dr Who* in selecting their pseudonyms. Pagan Man was referencing his spiritual identity, and BioChemist was referencing his area of study. The rest of the participants gave little to no indication of their reasons for selecting their chosen pseudonyms.

someone who works on an oil rig, is wearing coveralls all the time, or dirty... Uh, they drive a truck. Like a really nice kind of truck... a diesel because they're very dirty trucks, they make a lot of noise and stuff too.... Probably swearing, something like that, more vulgar language.

Dan chose to emphasize the confidence he sees within the stereotypical man, saying

I would think of someone who, um, would be really ambitious and would kind of put their own goals ahead of the people around them. And that they would also imagine that they, like the question of their skill and abilities to attain those goals isn't really, um, that's not really questioned... That they kind of know what they want and they think they know how to get it.

Overall, the image of the stereotypical man painted by participants is one of the classic breadwinner, and highlights Michael Kimmel's rule regarding masculinity pertaining to the ambition of achievement.

Additionally, several contradictions are made apparent by the word cloud as the responses blend participants' stereotypical views with their own personal beliefs. For example, some individuals highlighted crude or vulgar behaviour as stereotypical while also highlighting that men need to be respectful as part of their own personal beliefs. These contradictions point to an important concept that I will explore in greater detail in Chapter 4—the idea that participants' personal views of masculinity are challenging what is expected of them as men, and may not be simply reproducing hegemonic norms.

## Bro Masculinity

What is a bro? The non-academic nature of the term means that I have struggled with how to define what I have come to think of as “bro masculinity”. For the panelists on “BC Bro Culture” at Boston College, the bro was the embodiment of a masculinity that arose from a hegemonic hypermasculinity. It was strongly linked with hookup culture, emotional detachment, and misogyny (Ocasio, 2016). This form of masculinity is also one which is often used to describe individuals who perpetuate rape culture. I have found that this understanding of masculinity fits well within my own assumptions and biases of how some young men present themselves. Throughout my research, and particularly in my reading of Peggy Reeves Sanday's (2007) *Fraternity Gang Rape*, the “bro” was the view of masculinity that most often came to my mind in attempting to conceptualize what an active participant in rape culture might look like, and how that masculinity jostles with other constructions of masculinity to become hegemonic. Reeves Sanday focuses on the “brotherhood” found within fraternities, the solid connections between members that can lead them into more and more problematic behaviours (within her research specifically, sexual violence) as a group, because they compel one another to participate. Additionally, Sanday’s research highlights the culture created by that brotherhood, the commitment to it, and the benefits of inclusion (e.g., a lifelong team that has your back and which often includes men in influential positions). Outside of the culture of fraternities, the concept of the “bro” is still an important one because of its popularity and representation within popular culture. For example, North American media is heavily populated by images of bro masculinity from film and television (for example, the character of Barney Stinson on the popular sitcom *How I met your Mother*, Thomas & Bays, 2014; or the representation

of a hard-partying fraternity in *Neighbors*, Goldberg, Rogen & Weaver, 2014). The concept of the bro has become an increasingly popular representation of North American masculinities, one which includes a distinctly high level of aggression and competitiveness, as well as an emphasis on derogatory treatment of women, and gender and sexual minorities.

Several participants<sup>19</sup> referred implicitly or explicitly to the concept of the “bro” as a stereotypical man. They spoke of the attitude, clothing, physique and behaviours associated with a “bro” and referenced how frequently they see men fitting this description on campus. My participants generally spoke of the “bro” with a tone of derision, placing an emphasis on obnoxious mannerisms and traits presented to society within popular media. For one participant, The Master, the stereotypical man centered entirely on his ideas about the “pop-collar bro”. His description focused on both physicality, describing the bro as a “muscular, beefy guy”, and on behaviours, saying the following about the bro: “he’s hitting on women. They don’t want him there, nobody wants him around. He’s being sleezy”. He also highlighted the idea that the bro would “sooner call you a name than be nice to you”. For Robert, the “bro” was “the guy in the group that all the other guys wanna be like. They don’t say it but like they admire him”. Walter did not use the term “bro” but he highlighted the idea of the “tall, good-looking womanizer”, making particular reference to actor Charlie Sheen, famous for his misogynistic behaviour. None of the participants who referenced the “bro” self-identified

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<sup>19</sup> Participants discussed the concept of the “bro” in indirect terms, with only one specifically using the term in their descriptions. However, it was clear from their descriptions that they were referring to the form of masculinity colloquially described as a “bro”.

as one. Indeed, they seemed to hold some disdain for that concept of masculinity. My understanding of “bro” stereotypes is that they are associated with (generally white) privilege, obnoxious and degrading treatment of women and other gender minorities, and a disgust for male homosexuality demonstrated in a personal aversion to any association with homosexual behaviours (hence the phrase “no homo” being used to distance oneself from homosexuality after any close physical or emotional contact with a male friend). Robert also referenced this aversion to any association with homosexuality when he spoke of “wrestling without losing the status of cis-gender straight bro”, highlighting the thin line of behaviours that allow “bros” physical contact with other men, while still limiting those interactions and reproducing heteronormativity. Despite the fact that this depiction of masculinity is not an academic one, but rather a concept found in popular culture, it is important to consider due to its pervasiveness as a concept in both society and in the interviews. Further, as Connell’s theories of masculinity highlight, hegemonic masculinity is not necessarily the masculinity embodied by most men, but rather the one that is held in high esteem. My participants’ responses and discussion of the “bro” indicated that it was not a masculinity which they actively sought to embody, but it was one whose cultural importance and prevalence they recognized.

### **Kimmel's Rules of Manhood**

**Inexpressiveness-Independence.** At the beginning of the interviews I asked participants about their primary male role models, interested in gaining insights into who had shaped them and influenced their ideas about masculinity (*Growing up, who acted as your primary male role models?*). Overwhelmingly, participants responded with members

of their families, particularly fathers and grandfathers, but brothers, uncles and cousins made their appearances as well. This emphasis on family members as role models illustrates the importance and lasting impact that family and home-life play on the development of gender identity, an impact which has also been seen in other areas of development as well. Indeed, extensive research has been conducted on parental influence on children's cognitive development (see Freeberg & Payne, 1967), conscience development (Kochanska, 1993) and even children's eating habits (see Birch, Fisher, Grimm-Thomas, Markey, Sawyer & Johnson, 2001). Additionally, some participant responses about role models included references to sports coaches as well as favourite authors and musicians, and in one case, action figure heroes (Robert), while in another, the fictional secret agent James Bond (Dr. Rogers). Even in cases of role models outside of the family, however, all participants still mentioned the influence of their family, highlighting the importance of parents and siblings as first teachers in learning how to behave, whom to emulate, and how to approach gender identity (Werrbach, Grotevant, & Cooper, 1990; Witt, 1997; de Valk, 2008).

This importance of family impact ties in well with the question of parental expectations about gender identity (*How have parental expectations shaped your behaviour in relation to your gender identity?*). On this question, there was a significant range of responses. Some participants indicated that they felt few or no parental expectations around traditional gender roles, such as Trevor, who felt that he participated (and was expected to participate) equally in traditionally gendered roles such as housework and renovations, or Pagan Man, who said, "I've always just acted as I saw fit".

Others felt very strongly about that influence and highlighted memories of specific instances as well as more generalized reinforcement of gender norms by their parents, with a few expressing strongly that this had negative results. For example, The Master remembers his mother raised him to “be a good, strong man”, and to avoid crying despite being “an extremely sensitive kid”. He further stated that this stoicism is “not who I am. But that is definitely the way I was raised... It’s only in the last year or two that I’ve really started admitting that I have emotions and feelings and expressing them”. Eric, too, recounts parental influence focusing on incidents of changing the channel from TV shows that his dad might have deemed too “girly”. He viewed his mother, by contrast, as more laid back about gender norms. Several participants mentioned that although they felt no overt pressure, they acknowledge having been subjected to subtle reinforcements of gender norms (such as being told not to play with their sisters' dolls). The topic of examining parents’ reactions and responses to children who do not conform to their ideas about gender roles has been researched by gender theorists (see Kane, 2013), and it speaks to the influence of role models on the development of masculine identity.

Family and responsibility became recurring themes brought up by several participants in explaining their own personal conceptions of what it means to be a man. Tony in particular felt very strongly that although he may be an adult male, he was not yet a “man” because he did not have a family to provide for. He mentioned this during the interview, and reiterated it at the end too, as a summary of how he felt about his own masculinity. He said:

I know I'm a male, and I'm an older male; like I've of course went through puberty and all those things but I don't think I'm technically a man yet to be honest because I don't have a family to provide for yet.

His responses to several questions throughout the interview highlighted patriarchal norms of family, such as the role of men to act as provider for their spouse and children, and the need to be continually working. He observed that a man is

someone who comes home after work and, uh, expects to be there with family.

Uh, probably comes home and say hi to the kids and the wife, and isn't very lazy.

Like is always on the go. Like if they're not at work or spending time with family, they're outside doing work or building things.

For Edward, too, there was an emphasis on responsibility in his statement, "I am a man so I take responsibility for the whole family and take care of my children and my wife and my parents".

The ideal of providing for a family, and emotional detachment or stoicism (as expressed by The Master above) call to mind Kimmel's theory of Inexpressive-Independence, or the traditional Sturdy Oak. My readings on masculinity and inexpressiveness led me to believe that in embodying a masculinity which is unemotional and acting as a stable rock within the family, men risk cutting themselves off from deeper connections with loved ones and shouldering financial burdens of family life without support systems to assist them. The quashing of one's emotion was only highlighted by



one participant, The Master only recently allowed himself to begin to acknowledge his own emotions.

Additionally, the emphasis that many participants placed on the idea of men as providers (whether they felt it relevant to their own masculinity or were discussing stereotypical concepts) illustrates the paternalism and benevolent sexism present in hegemonic masculinity within North America. It is the idea that men play a role of protector for women because the latter cannot protect themselves. Tony has intrinsically connected the idea of being a responsible provider with his masculine identity: “I know I’m a male, but I don’t technically consider myself a full man right now because I don’t have a family to provide for”.

**Antifemininity.** Kimmel speaks of hegemonic masculinity’s avoidance of femininity as the masculine rule of antifemininity. It is, simply put, acting in such a way as to disconnect and distance oneself from the weaker, less desired traits of femininity. Kimmel's Antifemininity can be seen in the Inexpressiveness-Independence examples previously explored, such as when The Master avoided crying and suppressed his emotions despite being a sensitive child, an action enforced by his mother's desire for him to be “a man” and therefore, avoid being feminine.

Antifemininity as a concept came through in several aspects of my discussions with participants, including when I asked about their relationships to their peers growing up, and whether or not they felt those relationships had an effect on their masculinity (*How have peer expectations shaped your behavior in relation to your gender identity?*).

Greg said, “You understand the way you're supposed to act, I guess, from friends—not always in the best, in the best light”, emphasizing the idea that his peers did influence his behaviour at times, and that he was able to reflect on it as problematic now. For his part, Trevor highlights the way he talks with male friends about dating. He also details the influence of friends on his athleticism and drive to look a certain way through physical fitness because, as he jokingly said, “men are supposed to be bigger”. His athleticism, which he states is primarily “more of a healthy living thing,” is also driven by conversations about physical appearance with his friends and peers. He talks about “always having to go to the gym to you know, look like... a certain way, to you know, attract people that you’re attracted to and whatnot...” For Walter, peer expectations meant that on Friday nights in his small hometown, he and “the boys” would go out, “drink beer and rage”. And while his female peers also engaged in social drinking, the choice of drinks was highly specific for him and his friends, sticking to “masculine drinks like beer and whiskey as opposed to cocktails or wine”. This gendering of drink choices is one which is consistently reinforced within media, and particularly advertising (Towns, Parker & Chase, 2012). For Walter, there was a clear policing of how one was expected to behave based on gender identity, and while he did not seem to feel any regret for having been policed in that way, he did acknowledge clear gender divisions, and the way they were self-maintained by the youth in his community. The Master, on the other hand, indicated clearly that he felt a positive effect from peer relationships, stating that his “base in feminism comes from men” and that as he grew up he learned from his brother's feminist friends. This aspect of masculine identity will be explored in greater detail in Chapter 4.

Participants were also asked about their behaviour in terms of being pressured into actions in order to establish or maintain their masculine identity (*Have you ever felt pressured into an action or behaviour with which you were uncomfortable because you wished to avoid labels that are degrading to you in general or to your own masculine identity, however you define it, in particular?*). Dr. Rogers references the fact that his father used to make fun of his long hair in high school, saying that he “looked like a girl”. Although, by his own admission, this did not influence Dr. Rogers' decision to cut his hair, it still stands out in his mind. For other participants, the wish to avoid contemptuous or degrading comments from peer groups resulted in chugging beers, jumping off bridges (Dan), and other behaviours that felt outside of their comfort zones, but which allowed them to avoid seeming “feminine” in the eyes of their peers. Trevor, in particular, referenced the pressure within male peer groups around dating and socializing with women:

Especially downtown, you hear you know, a lot of guys like to just go up and talk with random girls and whatnot, and that's kind of not my thing. So there have been times when people say [deep voice], ‘oh just go up and talk to her, don't be a pussy, you know just you know just go up and say something, blah blah blah, go dance with her’ [normal voice]. I guess it's something I'm not comfortable with.

It is clear that Trevor was uncomfortable with that approach to socializing with women, and yet he felt a degree of pressure from his friends, duress that, in some ways, felt like a reproach to his masculinity.

Several participants were involved in sports growing up and I asked them how they felt that might have affected their masculine identity (*Did you participate or do you currently participate in sports? Do you feel that your participation reflects your masculinity?*). In this, there was no clear consensus amongst participants, as some felt athletic involvement was more a reflection of their interest in sports while others spoke of the social currency that came from playing on school teams, or the tough, strong reputation that came from playing certain sports. Tony referenced his friend on the football team, who had immediately been drafted on entering the public school system for his height and large build. Dan referred to his time on the high school hockey team as “a public display” of his masculinity, a fantasy of acknowledgement and status, whereas his local league outside of school provided the opportunity to engage in a sport he enjoyed. This act of a “display” is an important concept, and one which is reflected throughout participants’ responses to questions about peer expectations and athletic involvement. Participants spoke of their experiences in a way that emphasized displaying masculinity over femininity. Indeed, there is a desire to avoid any associations with femininity, as when Walter chose beer and whiskey over “girly” drinks or the way in which Dr. Rogers’ father emphasized the perceived femininity of his long hair.

**Adventurousness-Aggressiveness.** Dan's description of activities in his youth also fit well with Kimmel's concept of Adventurousness-Aggressiveness, highlighting risk-taking behaviours “like riding snowmobiles without a helmet, knowing that your parents would be livid if they found out. But like, you can't because men don't protect their heads [laughs]”. The recklessness of the behaviour is commonplace enough in rural

regions where snowmobile use is common. Dan is originally from a small farming community in Ontario, and many of his experiences of/with masculinity growing up revolve around that rural context. For example, in his small high school, the hockey players carried a level of social currency not held by others in the school community (hence his decision to join the team as part of a display of masculinity). Additionally, Dan talked about aggression in the context of physical fights in his hometown:

If you're, like, at the bar in a farm town, you know fights are gonna happen.

Where I live, there would be a fair every year and it's kind of a big, like, thing for the town. This is, like, the town bigger than mine ... where all the sort of collector towns come to .... And if you're, like, 17 or 20 or something, the whole reason you go is to fight or to watch fights. Even though it's supposed to be, like, ya know, it's a fair for kids but after like 9 or 10 o'clock all the kids go home and then it's fighting time.

In the interview, I jokingly called this example the County Fair Fight Club, referencing the Chuck Palahniuk (1996) novel and blockbuster movie of the late 1990s (*Fight Club*, Linson, Chaffen, & Grayson Bell, 1999). Dan agreed, laughing, that this was indeed the right label for the aggression displayed at the fair, a moment of unleashed aggression without consequences or fear of reprisal. Indeed, Palahniuk's novel and the subsequent film have been examined by multiple researchers studying masculinity, aggression, and what Kevin Boon refers to as a "nostalgia for violence" (2003; see also Craine and Aitkin, 2004). Within the interviews I asked participants' how they felt about violence and masculinity (*Do you feel that violence is associated with masculinity in mainstream*

*media? If so, what effects do you feel this has, if any, on the way men and women interact?).* Most agreed that aggression is linked with men in the media, although some doubted the effects that this would have on real life interactions between men and women. I also asked participants about the degree to which they believe aggression is associated with men (*Do you think that aggression is something people expect of men? Why/why not? Is it context dependent? How does this expectation (or lack thereof) affect your behaviour or your idea of yourself as a man?*). Here, the conversation often turned to the importance of context (recall how participants described violence as allowed on the hockey rink or in the bar as opposed to in the workplace). Walter agreed that society expects men to be aggressive “in certain situations. It is a contextual thing”. Eric, too, emphasized the importance of context, referencing both the workplace and sports as situations in which aggressive behaviours have very different results. For sports in particular he stated, “If you want to be recognized and you want to get the glory, you’ve gotta be offensive, you’ve gotta be aggressive”. Dr. Rogers discussed men’s aggression in the context of popular television saying: “On TV, you either see men who are masculine and violent or the complete opposite, which is kind of reinforcing... not a lot of in-between”. His comment aligns well with my discussions of role-modeling throughout this research, as the violent masculinity modelled on television is, as Dr. Rogers states, potentially “reinforcing”.

**Status-Achievement.** Several participants highlighted ambition in their initial descriptions of masculine stereotypes, emphasizing the role of status-achievement in hegemonic masculinity. Throughout their own stories however, the emphasis was rarely

on status or achievement, but geared instead towards avoiding the reprisals associated with behaviours considered to be not masculine enough, or outright feminine. These reprisals would come primarily in the form of gender policing from parents and peers. There are, however, two distinct areas in which status-achievement was clear. The first was the emphasis on family and responsibility. In seeking to provide financially for a family, and to take responsibility for their well-being, participants were implying the need to achieve, in that they would require successful careers to be primary breadwinners. In this sense, there is increased pressure placed on men to succeed in the workplace.

The second area in which status-achievement became pronounced was in the area of sports and athletics. This is seen in discussions of social currency held with student athletes, or in Dan's fantasy of receiving acknowledgement from his peers by playing on the high school hockey team. As I discussed in Chapter 2, athletics generally, and celebrity athletes in particular, represent an apex of hegemonic masculinity to which young men can aspire. None of the participants in this study reflected specifically on athletes as their role models; however, several did highlight the importance of sports. Athletics, in many ways, act as the epitome of success and status-achievement. As Dan said about his membership on the school hockey team, he wanted to be known as a player, to be included with and acknowledged as one of "the hockey boys".

### **Understandings and Definitions of Rape Culture**

As I introduced questions about campus rape culture, I sought first to determine how familiar participants were with the concept (*Are you familiar with the term rape culture? What does it mean to you? Do you feel that rape culture affects you, and your*

*experience of masculinity? How so? Can you think of any examples of rape culture from your own experiences?*). A few participants indicated that they were not familiar with it at all and I provided them with the Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth (2005) definition,<sup>20</sup> while others sought my definition because they felt that while they had heard the term before they did not feel capable of defining it. Other participants provided me with their own definitions in answer to my question about what rape culture meant to them. These definitions varied significantly, and illustrated differing levels of understanding around the topic. I will further explore participants' understandings of rape culture within Chapter 4: Possibilities for Change. Several themes also became clear within participants' definitions, including the role of media in altering perceptions of sexual violence and sexual behaviour more generally, consent, and the assigning of blame in cases of sexual violence. Several definitions combined aspects of these themes. For example, with his definition, Dan explored the idea that media alters our perception of perpetrator blame; he defined rape culture as "the collection of media images and popular responses that either normalize rape, sexual violence, perpetuate it, cause it to happen and give the perpetrators kind of an out... or at least our responses to the perpetrators are also dampened". Dan's definition addresses the way that living in a rape culture affects our perceptions of sexual violence.

Eric shared an interesting point about rape culture when he spoke of making a conscious decision to explore feminism in his final semester of his undergraduate degree. He felt that he was not getting a clear understanding of topics such as rape culture from

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<sup>20</sup> See page 5.



the articles he was encountering on the internet. Instead, he was seeing only “small, sensationalized articles that don’t really give you a lot of information”. He was reading a lot about “feminazis” as opposed to getting at the root of the issues and concepts. In talking about this, Eric demonstrates his desire to learn more about feminism and gendered violence, while also addressing a clear issue facing young people. The internet provides misinformation about topics just as often as it does clear insights, and for those who do not review the topics with a critical lens, there is the risk of perpetuating myths about rape culture and counteracting the efforts of those who are trying to end gender-based violence.

For some men, and for one of my participants in particular, the term “rape culture” seems to incorporate the idea of blame, one which they must shoulder, regardless of their own perceived involvement in the creation of such a culture. This widespread blame was rejected by some interviewees. Walter, for example, expressed a certain degree of outrage at the term and its connotations, explaining rape culture as “the assumption that all men are potential rapists”. Walter continued his explanation by saying:

I feel pretty bad about some of the discussions I hear. Like, if I can give an example, there was a university that required all their freshmen to go through a seminar on sexual consent. And I don’t agree with that, because I don’t think it’s fair to assume that I don’t know what is consent. I don’t think it’s fair to assume that I’m automatically going to rape somebody.

Walter acknowledged that this would not necessarily be a popular opinion, but he wanted to highlight what he perceived as an injustice towards men that arises from the popularity of the concept of rape culture (not of the culture itself). His suggestion that rape culture assumes all men are incapable of understanding consent and implies all men are potential rapists is indeed a damaging concept, and one that I argue is not embodied by feminist depictions and critiques of rape culture, as discussed in Chapter 1. While Walter acknowledged “that protecting people from violence is more important than anything else,” he also emphasized how “hurtful” it is to men to be degraded by the idea that they might be rapists. He felt the concept of rape culture (his perception thereof), is counter to the feminist movement because it is not focused on equality. He stated:

They say women shouldn't be objectified and no one should ask a victim what she was wearing. I agree with that. Then they say, maybe we should teach men not to rape. I don't agree with that part. I think that men and people in general should not assault people sexually or otherwise but coming back with that comeback, it hurts when people say that. You don't need to teach me not to rape. I know not to rape.

Walter has clearly spent time thinking about rape culture, and has developed strong theories and opinions about it. He also self-identifies as a feminist. His analysis, however, seems to miss a great deal of the complexities of rape culture and feminist conceptions of equality. While I acknowledge that not everyone accepts the validity of rape culture, Walter's opinion clearly highlights the lack of knowledge and awareness around rape culture and feminist depictions and critiques of the concept within mainstream media. Walter is oversimplifying the critique to a case of assigning blame to all men as opposed

to the complex negotiation of power imbalances and structural inequalities that feminist analysis of rape culture strives to illustrate. His analysis is missing key components, particularly the separation of the concept itself from feminist depictions and critiques thereof, and it strengthens my resolve to increase education around sexual violence, consent, and violent hegemonic masculinity.

Tony was another example of a young person who had misunderstood the concept of rape culture. While he demonstrated an interest in the topic, he also seemed, at least in some instances, to have conflated the idea of a rape culture with that of a hookup culture. He cited the inclusion of condoms in the university's orientation packages as evidence of a rape culture as opposed to the university's efforts to encourage safe sexual practices between consenting adults. It is important to note, however, that Tony did provide interesting insights into masculinity throughout the interview, and that this conflation of terms was likely a result of his conservative nature. He highlighted throughout the interview that he refrains from using profanity (particularly around women), believes in a man's responsibility to provide for the family, and embraces a few other conservative and paternalistic notions of masculinity, particularly, that a man is someone who is always working ("if they're not at work or spending time with family, they're outside doing work or building things"), and that he himself cannot be a real man until he has a family for whom he can provide.

Overall, I found that participants' views on rape culture demonstrated that there is a great deal of misinformation about the topic, one which I believe stems from a lack of education and from the popularity of victim-blaming ideas about sexual violence more

generally. While some participants did demonstrate deeper understandings (which I will explore in Chapter 4) others seemed to have had little awareness of the concept. I feel that this was demonstrative of their privilege as male-identified youth, in that rape culture was something that they could largely ignore. This privilege to ignore the issue results in a reproduction of hegemonic masculinity.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout the participant interviews and my transcription and analysis of the collected data, I was often struck by the clear examples of and parallels between their experiences and the rules of masculinity explored by Michael Kimmel. Examples of inexpressiveness-independence, antifemininity, adventurousness-aggressiveness, and status-achievement all made an appearance within their shared stories, whether about their perceptions of masculinity more largely, or within their own personal experiences. In examining the reproductions of hegemonic norms of masculinity found within my participants' responses to the interview questions, I demonstrate the ways in which young male-identified individuals negotiate their masculine identities, but that is just one aspect of the complexity of participants' responses. They were speaking not only of their own experiences, but also their larger understandings and perceptions of masculinity, focusing on popular media concepts that surround masculinity, the way they see men around them, and their thoughts around masculinity and violence.

#### **CHAPTER 4: POSSIBILITIES FOR CHANGE**

In this second data analysis chapter, I examine some of the ways in which participants appear to be challenging violent hegemonic conceptions of masculinities and moving towards a future with less violence —what I like to refer to as possibilities for change. As I spoke with my research participants, I paid special attention to the ways in which they implicitly or explicitly challenged hegemonic norms of masculinity, and therefore potentially opposed rape culture. If, as a society, we conceptualize the hegemonic masculinity as one that is violent and aggressive (as the wide body of literature on masculinities suggests), then it becomes far too easy to overlook the ways in which that conceptualization is being challenged. However, as I explored in Chapter 2, Connell’s theory of multiple masculinities speaks directly to the idea of challenging hegemonic masculinity. Because of the existence of multiple masculinities, there will always be masculine identities that differ from hegemonic expectations and therein lies a possibility for change. Throughout their interviews, several of the participants offered insights into counter-hegemonic masculinities and demonstrated complex negotiations of masculine identity. They also provided complex definitions of rape culture and of masculine identity, which I explore in this chapter. Finally, I also consider the responses that participants provided surrounding solutions for rape culture, and the limitations of those solutions, drawing heavily on research from the field of masculinities to support my analysis. Overall, this chapter explores participants’ presentations of masculinity that I argue are challenging hegemonic norms, and offering new, less violent iterations of masculinity and what it means to be a man.

## **“What does it mean to you to be a man?” Revisited**

### **Context**

As seen in Chapter 3, participants were asked several questions about masculinity, both in terms of stereotypical views, and their own personal masculine identities (*What do you think of when you think of the stereotypical man? What does it mean to you to be a man? What does masculinity mean for you?*). While their answers clearly reflected certain common ideas within society about what it means to be a man, they also offered insights into participants’ unique relationships with masculinity. For example, Dan’s sense of masculinity was affected by the context in which he found himself:

Growing up, I didn't feel very masculine. But when you're encountering people with radical politics or something like that, and you're in a room with a whole bunch of radical feminists, then I do feel very masculinised and traditional. But when ya know, you meet with other farm boys [laughs], I don't feel like I fit in very well there.

From this it is clear that Dan is differently conscious of his own masculine identity and presentation depending on the setting. In settings where the heteronormative patriarchal conception of masculinity was being challenged, Dan became hyper aware of his own status as male. At home, in rural Ontario, he saw his masculinity as failing to live up to the standards of the other “farm boys”. Dan's example is important because it highlights the role that context plays in constructions of masculinity. It also demonstrates the way an individual’s awareness of their personal masculinity shifts within different contexts. Dan

is negotiating the complexity of masculinities by acknowledging how his perception of his own identity shifts contextually. Furthermore, Dan's example calls to mind the shame that can be experienced when an individual does not live up to the perceived expectations of masculinity, as when Eric would change the channel to avoid his father's judgement of certain "girly" cartoons. This relates well to Noble's understanding of multiple masculinities, and the conflict associated with being a member of the "wrong group" of masculine identified individuals. While Noble is referring primarily to trans men and the lack of masculine privilege that they experience as a result of being trans, Noble's theory can also be applied to the differing levels of acceptability of behaviours within hegemonic masculinity.

Dan's explanation also reveals, as he stated during the interview, that "there are many different forms of being a man". Dan's statement is clearly a reflection of Connell's theory of multiple masculinities, a concept which is evident in participants' lived realities. As I discussed in Chapter 2, the existence of multiple masculinities and the specifics of context are important considerations in studying hegemonic masculinity. Connell's discussions of multiple masculinities emphasize that the hegemonic masculinity in one setting or context will not necessarily be revered in all contexts, and yet it remains hegemonic with other forms of masculinity remaining subordinate to it (although, less so in some contexts). In the case of the overarching Canadian hegemonic masculinity, while that masculinity will be hegemonic throughout the country, it may hold differing sway in certain contexts. For Dan, finding himself in a space of "radical feminists", there is the clear knowledge that hegemonic masculinity, and indeed his masculinity, is not venerated

to the same degree (or, indeed, at all) in this space. At the same time, it is important to consider all factors that affect masculinity and which have the potential to contribute to the strengthening of counter-hegemonic constructions of masculinity. Within this project, for example, I have chosen to focus on a very small section of the population, young, male-identified individuals who are students at a large university in Atlantic Canada. Were I to examine a different section of the population, for example, if I spoke only with members of an older generation, the context of the research, and the masculinity explored, might differ significantly. For Dan, his awareness of his masculinity changes based on those around him, but this is a strictly personal experience, one which has no effect on larger norms of hegemonic masculinity.

### **Privilege**

Among participants' conceptions of masculinity there were a lot of short, one-word responses, which is why I included the Word Cloud in Chapter 3. There were also more detailed explanations, such as Tony's emphasis on family and responsibility, or Dan's exploration of multiple masculinities. For The Master, being a man meant reflecting on the social justice responsibilities of masculine identity and an acknowledgement of privilege:

I guess as opposed to being identified by any other gender, I think that being a man in our society now means standing up for minorities and standing up for people that are not visible and being an ally. Because being a man means recognizing your privilege as a man and saying "Hey, if I'm going to be a good person, it's not enough to be equal, we need to be fair and we need to actually



sometimes help out people like women and trans people who haven't had the same kinds of opportunities and help bring them up to the same level of privilege that we have.” So it's more about being okay when people say “men do this and men do that. I don't like when men do this.” They're not talking about you, they're talking about the typical douche bag bro man that I don't identify as. And trying to defeat that idea and actually boost the people where you are. That's what it means to be a man in my opinion.

The Master's deeper reflections on social responsibility and male privilege emphasize a masculine identity that acknowledges the complexities of life affected by layers of privilege and differences in equality. It is a conceptualization of masculinity that seems to grasp the complexities of living a male identity in a way that does not further oppress marginalized genders.

Several theorists have examined privilege, perhaps most notably Peggy McIntosh, who has written extensively on white and male privilege. McIntosh (1988) describes privilege as a “package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in every day” (p. 2). McIntosh frequently comments on the unwillingness of those with privilege to acknowledge those benefits, and she highlights the need not only to acknowledge it but to work to lessen the power imbalance created by privilege. This is clearly an idea that The Master wishes to express in his above response, and it is an important aspect of his negotiation of masculinity. Privilege is a complex issue and yet the role it plays can be felt in nearly every aspect of life for those to whom it is denied.

I also noted examples of unacknowledged male privilege in the interviews I conducted with Pagan Man and Greg. Both participants expressed strikingly similar ideas when I asked them about their masculine identities (*What does it mean to you to be a man?*). Pagan Man said “I don’t really identify myself genderally (sic)... I consider myself to be a human being before my gender”. Greg too, expressed the idea of being a human being before male, “I guess it’d just be congruent with my views on how you should act as a person. It wouldn’t be so gender-oriented.” I found these responses interesting, not only for how similar they were to one another, but also for their expression of privilege, and the seeming lack of consciousness of that privilege. Michael Kimmel shares a similar story in his lecture *Mars, Venus or Planet Earth: Women and men in a new millennium* (2008), of an interaction he had had with colleagues:

So the black woman said to the white woman, “When you wake up in the morning and you look in the mirror what do you see?” And the white woman said, “I see a woman.” And the black woman said, “You see that’s the problem, because when I wake up in the morning and I look in the mirror,” she said, “I see a black woman. To me race is visible, but to you it’s invisible. You don’t see it.” And then she said something really startling; she said, “That’s how privilege works. Privilege is invisible to those who have it.” It is a luxury I would say to the white people sitting in this room not to have to think about race every split second of your life. That’s what privilege is about. Privilege is invisible to those who have it. Now you’ll remember that I was the only man in this group, so when I witnessed this I kind of put my head in my hand and kind of groaned and went oh no. So

somebody said what was that reaction and I said well, “When I wake up in the morning and I look in the mirror, I see a human being. I’m kind of the generic person. You know, I’m a middle class white man. I have no race, no class, no gender. I’m universally generalizable.”

Kimmel’s anecdote reveals the deep-rooted male privilege of Pagan Man’s and Greg’s statements about seeing themselves as human beings. They have the privilege to look past their gender in identifying themselves, a privilege which is, in many ways, denied to women and other marginalized genders. This is an important concept when studying contemporary masculinity and analyzing how young male-identified individuals navigate their masculine identities within larger contexts. Particularly in the context of this chapter and the analysis of how participants are challenging hegemonic norms of masculinity, the recognition of privilege plays a critical role, allowing male-identified individuals to question how their privilege alters their ability to navigate through social context. The Master was the only participant to explicitly acknowledge his male privilege within the interview.

## **Masculinities and Rape Culture**

### **Deeper Understandings of Rape Culture**

Several participants struggled with the concept of rape culture and, as I discuss in Chapter 3, presented ideas that reflected misinformation in popular media. Other participants had little knowledge on the topic, not having encountered it before. There were, however, several participants who had clear, well-formulated ideas about rape

culture, and who had clearly devoted a great deal of time and energy to thinking about it and discussing it with friends and peers. In particular Dan, Trevor, Eric, and The Master all expressed relatively more complex understandings of the concept, ones which demonstrated their knowledge and awareness of the phenomenon.

While I am not writing an in-depth analysis of media and gender, or the effects of media content on masculinities, I would be remiss to exclude entirely any discussion of media as, within their definitions of rape culture, both Dan and Eric chose to highlight the role that various forms of media (referring primarily to advertising, television and film) play in perpetuating rape culture:

I would say it means, um, the collection of media images and popular responses that either normalize rape, sexual violence, perpetuate it, cause it to happen and give the perpetrators kind of an out... or at least our responses to the perpetrators are also dampened. (Dan)

It incorporates a lot more than rape. Like it includes, probably even, ads, like you know sexualization of women in media, uh, umm, comments, like sexual comments, stuff like that, uh, so, it, uh, yeah it incorporates a lot more than just the act of actually raping or whatever but it's... I understand that it's kind of a sensationalized word... (Eric).

By including the influence of media within their definitions, both Eric and Dan are emphasizing the role that they believe popular media (e.g., television, film and advertising) has in shaping masculinities. In this case, they are suggesting that media

contributes to rape culture by shaping the masculinities in which the violence associated with rape culture is the norm. Dan emphasizes a “dampened” response to perpetrators, a concept which struck me as quite central to the complex idea of rape culture. Indeed, as a society, our responses to incidents of sexual violence (particularly in the case of language and threatened violence, the Frosh week chants, and the culture of campus drinking to avoid responsibility for consent) often remove responsibility from perpetrators. Within a rape culture, the idea that “boys will be boys” reinforces negative and harmful behaviours and does nothing to reduce or eliminate violence against vulnerable populations.

By presenting women in a hyper sexualised manner, the media (in the form of advertising, for example, as discussed by Jean Kilbourne in *Killing Us Softly 4*, 2010) is sending messages about the acceptability of objectifying women. “Media” was used throughout my conversations with participants, primarily in reference to mainstream television and film, including advertising, but also in reference to social media (especially articles which appear frequently on an individual’s social media feeds) and in some cases new media, or even video games. A great deal of research has been conducted in various areas of study on the effects of media in our daily lives (again, on various and diverse forms of media). Kilbourne’s work in *Killing Us Softly 4* is just one such example. Several others also examine the effects of media on masculinity and rape culture. For example, Thomas Keith’s (2008) *Generation M: Misogyny in Media and Culture* explores film, television, popular music and video games for their clear portrayals of misogyny, and highlights the acceptability of that misogyny in North American society. Kilbourne (1999) has written extensively on the topic of advertising’s effects on masculinity,

highlighting the damaging effects not only on young women (self-image, etc.) but also on men who come to view women through the lens of the male gaze.

Trevor touched on the influence of media in his definition of rape culture when he talked about the male gaze:

Rape culture I guess, uh, stems from... the term that I learned in a sociology course: the male gaze. And it's almost invisible underlying impression that it leaves on people within society. So women feeling pressured to dress certain ways, look certain ways in order to impress men. Men feeling the need to act in certain ways and... maybe unfortunately in the case where you think it's okay to take advantage of women that are dressed in certain ways or just in... not just in certain ways cause obviously people dressing... that whole argument... Um, yeah, just the, just the, you know obviously male rape does happen as well, but it is overwhelming majority of male... [perpetrators]. Yeah, but just like, in society, male attitude for going to get it... you know? (Trevor)

Trevor is drawing attention to the, often unacknowledged, pressures that individuals feel to act in a specific way in order to conform to gender norms. In the case of rape culture, these behaviours for men are ones which reinforce violent norms. Trevor's definition indicates that he has been paying attention to (and potentially resisting) those pressures and also that he has developed an understanding of the effects of the male gaze in everyday life. Simply put, the male gaze refers to “treating women’s bodies as objects to be surveyed” (Chandler & Munday, 2011) and is most frequently associated with the

sexualization of women to the point of distancing them from their humanity. Trevor's reference to it demonstrates the dehumanizing nature of rape culture.

The Master's definition of rape culture also showed a great deal of understanding and depth:

I think rape culture is sort of the, it's the intersection of all sorts of different, um, public sphere, ah... It's the result of a lot of public sphere interactions where men have the privilege to feel comfortable in society, outdoors, in public, at large in general, and women don't often, not all women have that and a lot of it is because of the power imbalance because men are traditionally aggressive, traditionally violent, traditionally dominating, and traditionally powerful. Um, and rape culture comes into it when we start talking about, um, when we start talking about the like derogatory, we talk about the differences between men and women. We start looking at, well, I can make a rape joke because it doesn't affect me and I don't get offended by it, but this can have a very damaging effect on somebody. So, it's the environment, the culture that people propagate that makes it seem like rape isn't a big deal or makes it seem like rape isn't that important because it's propagated against women and not against men and because men are the loudest and most aggressive people in society. Typically, um, we minimize it. So to answer your question in complete, it is the minimization of rape in a male-dominated culture.

(The Master)

Here again, as in his explanation of what it meant to him to be a man, he touches on privilege. He also touches on other aspects of a patriarchal society in which violence is normalized as a trait of masculinity. More than any other participants' definition, The Master's highlights aspects of hegemonic masculinity as violent. This is an important consideration and one which emphasizes and validates the purpose of this study. It also calls attention to the fact that some young men are considering masculinities from different perspectives, and within that, are rejecting violent conceptions of masculinity.

The Master highlights the need to eliminate violence as an acceptable part of hegemonic masculine identity. Moving beyond the idea of physical violence (hitting, punching, etc.) that has dominated other interviews with participants, The Master speaks of physical aggression in terms of the way that individuals occupy space in their day-to-day lives, specifically his own decisions to avoid aggressive actions. He gives an example in which he is striving to improve:

If I get angry and I start banging my fists on the table, which I have done in debates before, I stop myself, and I realize that was actually a very aggressive thing to do, and if someone did that to me, I'd feel scared. So those kinds of expectations make me stop and pause and try to remember that it's important not to exhibit overly aggressive characteristics.

He has become, in his own words, "so much more conscious of which of my actions take up space and which of my actions are very aggressive".



## **Impacts of Rape Culture**

Living in a rape culture affects the way that men view themselves. Participants were asked to describe the ways in which they are personally affected by rape culture, whether or not they can provide examples of it from their own lives, and how rape culture has different impacts on individuals of differing gender identities. For some, this led to a discussion of the ways in which living in a rape culture is harming men. For Walter, this was expressed in the form of anger and frustration. He thought that rape culture implies men are incapable of understanding consent and he found this to be a very damaging idea. He appeared to have an overwhelming need to express the “not all men” argument, a frequent response to commentary on men’s violence against women, and currently popularized by internet/twitter discussions making use of “#notallmen”. He repeatedly voiced to me that he was not a rapist, that consent was important to him in his sexuality. At first, I read this as him joking around and not taking the topic seriously by saying so often, “I am not a rapist”. But on further examination I began to believe that his frequent repetition indicated a desire to separate himself from those men who do perpetrate violent sexual offences. I found myself questioning on a deeper level than before how rape culture negatively affects the way young male-identified individuals feel about their male identity. Walter’s argument is based on the negative personal effects for men of living within a culture in which hegemonic masculinity is perceived as violent and aggressive, but it does not take into account the systemic nature of living within a rape culture. His perspective highlights the complexity of negotiating male identity when that has very specific and negative connotations. It is an important consideration because when one lives in a society where hegemonic masculinity is violent and aggressive then it becomes

necessary to disassociate oneself from that concept of masculinity and a violent identity. Walter's arguments about rape culture are centred around not only distancing himself from violent masculinity but also reiterating the idea that there are other possibilities for male identity, ones which are not violent, but are overlooked due to the focus on aggressive masculinity. In this way, Walter offers insights into the very complex negotiations of male identity that he and his male peers face.

Walter's frustrations are countered within the interviews by the idea presented by both The Master and Dr. Rogers that we need to articulate criticisms of rape culture in such a way as to ensure people, and specifically men, understand that they are not being personally attacked but rather that we, as a society, need to be critical of violent conceptions of masculinity. Dr. Rogers provided his insights into why people are so hesitant to accept the concept of rape culture:

I think a lot of people think they need to challenge it because it is highlighting a division between men and women with women as victims and men as these horrible rapists. I think that narrative gets reproduced a lot and it's bullshit. But, uh, you know challenging people who focus on issues like that is important. I think a lot of guys who don't put a lot of thought into it are really hyper focused on how men are being attacked all of a sudden but it's not an attack on men, it's an attack on rape which happens to be predominantly done by men.

Dr. Rogers is showing that men are affected by the concept of rape culture in different ways, but that a lot of the negativity and opposition to the concept is based in

misunderstanding, and lack of knowledge on the issue, primarily the belief that rape culture acts as a personal attack on individual men as opposed to a commentary on the systemic nature of male violence and the manner in which all men are privileged by living within a rape culture (even those who do not engage in acts of sexual aggression or violence). That there is a lack of understanding around the discussion is a critical consideration for activists and academics alike. That lack potentially alienates valuable players in the fight against rape culture, and must be addressed if we, as a society, are going to change the response to rape culture and violent masculinity.

Again, in this area, The Master offered an insightful answer, one which drew on the complexities of gendered experiences:

[Rape culture] affects me personally certainly but men in general, not at all I think. Well, I shouldn't say that. Much less; it affects men a lot less. Um, I think that it affects men in the sense that if you're a feminist and you could observe it, it doesn't scare me' but it is one of those things that I empathize with and I feel really bad about and I want to try to fix. But I fear these stereotypical bro type men; the idea of rape culture angers those types of people usually. So they are affected in that way because to have their rape-y tendencies pointed out to them is a negative thing in their mind and so they get angry about it. For women, I think it's a very fear-based thing. It's a very fearful thing. And it can be from mild annoyance to, like, "Eugh he made a rape joke, what an idiot" to, like, "He made a really, really horrible comment about rape and I, like, can't" ya know? (The Master)

The Master is acknowledging the way that many ignore rape culture in their day-to-day lives, as if it were, as Buchwald, Fletcher and Roth state, “a fact of life, inevitable” (2005, p. xi). At the same time, he highlights how much more evident sexual violence is for individuals who choose to acknowledge its existence—in this case, for him, with his self-identity as a feminist. He is also looking at the complexities that arise for female-identified individuals, and expresses how that becomes about fear, whereas he, as a male, has the privilege and/or opportunity to empathize without that fear.

### **Challenging Rape Culture**

Participants were asked how society and individuals might be able to confront or challenge rape culture, with the hopes of eliminating or at least significantly reducing violence within society. For some, there was an emphasis on challenging personal beliefs (Dan’s continued questioning of his own behaviour to ensure he does not fall into damaging patterns of masculinity), acknowledging micro-aggressions (as when The Master realized the aggressive nature of pounding his fist during debates), and the harm of rape jokes. The Master suggested the collective solution of “broad stroke policy changes” designed to get more female-identified individuals in government here in Canada. Greg emphasized the need to speak up against violence and “[vocalize] that it is a bad thing. Um, it seems obvious to say but somewhere along the way, we kind of lost the, uh, idea that it is as wrong as it is. Um, I think yeah, just people talking about it would help a lot and, uh, recognizing how bad it is”. Overwhelmingly, however, the majority of responses to this question highlighted the need for one of two things:

education and role modelling. Both offer the potential for significant impact in combating the problem.

**Education.** In discussing the need to put better educational programs into place as a preventative measure against rape culture, participants offered different ideas of how those programs might look. Eric felt that they needed to begin early, saying “don't give us the option in university. Start us off in [...] primary school”. He acknowledged that speaking about sexuality and sexual violence in particular is not an easy topic and therefore is perhaps beyond the scope of young children's education, but that there were ways around this. Instead of teaching consent from a strictly sexual perspective, education programs could focus on the idea of respect. “Start off with that and build into it. Or maybe you won't even need to build into it eventually because it will all be there anyways”. Trevor felt that:

the more educated people become on the issue, the more it will be dissolved within our society .... Education on rape culture and that whole field is important in determining whether or not it is alleviated at some point. Because if people aren't aware of it then they're not going to try to deviate from those norms. They're just going to say “oh, it's not okay”. And the more people are educated on the reasons why it's not okay, the more they'll believe it, and the more they'll act towards acting that way.

Participants saw the importance of education as a method of reducing rape culture within our society, and while they had different ideas as to when to approach that education, the need for change to curricula was clear.

**Role Modelling.** Several participants addressed the idea of role modelling as important to challenging rape culture. Dan called attention to the way that mainstream media presents masculinity and violence in relation to how we can confront or challenge rape culture, suggesting that “not having horrible stereotyping forms of media and entertainment is really important” while emphasizing the need for role models and having positive anti-sexist messaging portrayed by individuals to whom young boys and men can relate. Tony called on the idea of celebrity influence as a way to combat rape culture, again in the form of role modelling. Greg, too, drew on the idea of role models, saying:

I think if men in authority, like authority figures that are men, start talking about it, and people see that people [you] look up to are talking about it, it would help. I dunno, especially get some, like, I dunno, uh, I guess a showbusiness, like, Hollywood-type deal where it seems like that type of things happen more often, but if people there spoke out about it as well it might, might be a good thing.

This idea of role modelling and challenging media representations is important, especially as I had previously asked participants about the influence of their own role models. It becomes clear that role models can have a significant impact on the way that young men self-identify. Activist Jackson Katz (1995) developed a program to work specifically with role modelling, Mentors in Violence Prevention (or MVP), which works to emphasize

changing masculine norms as a precursor to ending male violence against women. Additionally, Blake Spence of the Calgary Sexual Health Centre (2017) has developed a program called WiseGuyz which also aims to address norms of masculinity as a root cause of men's violence and works directly with male-identified Canadian youth to rethink what it means to be a man and to provide positive male role models.

### **Feminist Identities**

Role modelling also became relevant in discussions of feminist identity. The Master spoke of the influence of his older brother's friends on his feminism, as they were the first to teach him feminist ideals. These ideals, are of course, fundamental to changing public perceptions of rape culture. The Master's feminist values grew further as a result of the influence of "a series of really excellent, tolerant partners [...] in the last three or four years who ha[d] all been self-identified feminist." Their tolerance of him and their expectations that he "be a better person" is what caused him to change behaviours. He mentioned these "incredible partners" repeatedly in our conversation, emphasizing how grateful he was for their impact on him, and he stated, "Every one of my friends is a feminist. I don't associate with people who don't understand feminism mostly because that's the kind of person I am now." Again, this shows the impact of role models, in the form of peers, and the potential importance of a partner's expectations.

For Eric, feminism became an area of interest as he neared the end of his degree, and realized how often he was encountering ideas about feminism without gaining a great deal of knowledge or understanding:

That's why I took gender studies classes was because I'm always seeing articles pop up, like feminist articles or rape culture articles, and a lot of the times, they're kind of just like sensationalized small articles that really don't give you a whole lot of information and a lot of the times they just kind of degrade men and say men are awful, there you go. But I took these two gender studies classes because I wanted to learn more about it, because I know that this is a topic that's very much talked about these days and it's only gonna become more talked about. So before I get left behind and become outdated, we'll say, I kind of wanted to learn about that.

He knew that he wanted to gain a deeper understanding and used the last few elective course choices of his degree program to take classes in Gender Studies. We talked a lot about the misinformation that is circulated surrounding feminism and rape culture,<sup>21</sup> and he indicated that for a lot of people, there is a lack of access within mainstream media to real knowledge about the concepts. He said, "They're only seeing that sensationalized garbage that's being tossed around all over the place. They're not actually seeing or reading about the real issues" and that "before I started going out of my way to start learning about it, for the most part, yeah that's what I saw." It became clear to me throughout our conversation that Eric has strong feminist leanings, and he indicated that he has been talking about rape culture recently with a friend ("I was actually talking about this with a friend the other night"). He has made a conscious effort to learn more about

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<sup>21</sup> Many feminist writers and activists are fighting against these far too common misunderstandings of feminism and rape culture; for example, Jessica Valenti (2014) frequently writes about feminism within mainstream media in an effort to clarify issues for readers.



the concept and he has taken an interest in the work being done by local feminist grassroots groups.

Dan also referred to feminism, highlighting the issue of misappropriating the label. He spoke of individuals who self-identify as feminist and advocate against rape culture while still demonstrating behaviours associated with rape culture or practicing poor understandings of consent within their personal lives: “I know men who would call themselves feminists but they still, in their personal lives, aren’t necessarily practicing it right”. He made a clear point to say that he still continues to question himself, in his own feminism, because it is easy to claim a label, but to enact the values aligned with it is a continuous and conscious effort.<sup>22</sup>

### **Moving Forward: Possibilities for Change**

In this chapter I focused on the possibilities for changing hegemonic norms of masculinity as expressed within the participants' negotiations of masculinity. This examination shows how they are taking note of and even challenging pre-existing norms, how they are reacting to violent conceptions of masculinity, and how they are working

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<sup>22</sup> Men’s engagement with feminism is an important aspect of the work being done to end male violence. There are several groups for male-identified individuals who support anti-violence efforts, many of whom are led by activists and academics whose research has been featured in this work. For example, the White Ribbon campaign, a Canadian-based group initially founded by academic Michael Kaufman, is concerned with outreach, activism, and education efforts to end male violence against women (White Ribbon, 2017). While the organization does not explicitly label itself as feminist, its ideology clearly links to feminist principles. Furthermore, as with several programs which focus on role modelling as a key aspect of ending violence against women, the White Ribbon Campaign has partnered with multiple sports teams (namely, the Toronto Maple Leafs and the Toronto Argonauts) to further their efforts. At the local level, the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis and Prevention Centre (NLSACPC) has a Men’s Committee, which aims not only to engage men in anti-violence efforts but to further the centre’s outreach and education efforts.

towards presentations of masculinity that offer new imaginings of gender identity. In many ways, participants had clear ideas of how to move away from toxic conceptualizations of North American manhood, and they addressed issues in our conversations with passion and detail. Whether they were reinventing what it means to be a man or addressing how we as a society and as individuals can challenge rape culture, they presented conceptualizations of masculinity that implicitly or explicitly can find roots in the ideals presented by feminist ideology. Many of their understandings of rape culture were rooted in feminist theories of the concept, and for those who drew on their previous (or ongoing) course work for their definitions, from within feminist academia.

What I wish to highlight most within this chapter is the possibilities for change that exist within counter-hegemonic masculinities. My participants frequently demonstrated masculine self-identities that moved away from cultural preconceptions and this was an encouraging finding. As I have stated throughout this thesis, it is after all within imperfect repetitions and reproductions of masculinity that the possibilities for change can be found. The participants in this study are not simply reproducing a hegemonic masculinity that is violent and aggressive but rather negotiating their identities in such a way as to reconcile their personal beliefs about violence, aggression and “male” behaviours with what is expected of them as male-identified individuals living in the specific context of a Canadian university. As an activist, this is a key lesson to take away from my research experience.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION**

I have lived, as most North Americans do, within a rape culture my entire life. As a former volunteer on a sexual assault crisis line, I have had survivors disclose their assaults to me on a regular basis throughout the years. And yet, despite being acutely aware of incidents of sexual violence and closely following stories of rape culture, there are still incidents that surprise me: incidents of sexual violence so seemingly clear cut or acts of rape culture so offensive that I believe it impossible for those in authority to ignore them. And yet, they are ignored, systemic change does not occur, justice is not served, and the incidents are allowed to happen again and again without consequence for perpetrators. One particular such incident occurred during the process of writing this thesis.

It was a bitterly cold day at the end of February 2017, with the type of wind that cuts through layers of winter clothing to chill you to your bones. Despite this, a crowd of hundreds gathered in front of Fort Townshend, the headquarters of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary (RNC) in St. John's. Their voices chanted together, "Fire his ass, fire his ass", protesting the continued employment of Constable Carl Douglas Snelgrove on the provincial police force. Snelgrove had been acquitted the week before in a troubling sexual assault case. He is alleged to have picked up an intoxicated woman from George Street (the local drinking and partying headquarters) and driven her home, where he engaged in sexual activity with her despite her state of intoxication, a state which left her unable to provide consent, and his own position of power over her, which further inhibited consent (CBC News, 2017, McCabe, 2017). The public outrage at his

acquittal is understandable. Snelgrove was on-duty at the time of the assault, and as a member of our public police force, should be held to a higher standard of behaviour. But there is a cultural bias affecting this case, seen in the inability of the prosecution to prove lack of consent, and in the judge's instructions to the jury, reiterating the importance of proving lack of consent, as opposed to proving consent. It is seen in the media headlines reporting the survivor as being "too drunk to remember" (The Canadian Press, 2017), vilifying her in the eyes of the public and damaging the prosecution's case. It is seen in the emphasis placed in media reports on Snelgrove's emotional state in court, instead of on the damage to the survivor.

The anger felt within the community around this case was palpable at the protest. Speakers shared their personal stories using megaphones as they stood on the steps leading into the building. They raged against a broken system, against their distrust of our police force, and the helplessness they feel when faced with yet another injustice in a case of sexual assault. To fight that helplessness, the only tangible action the crowd could take was to call for the termination of Snelgrove's employment with the RNC, an achievable goal, and one around which they could rally. And so, on that frigid day, students, young mothers, retirees and people on their lunch breaks gathered outside the RNC offices, their presence carefully monitored by members of the force stationed at the parking lot entrances to "guide traffic". The police presence did not surprise me; this is, after all, their turf, and the crowd was angry enough to do real damage if provoked. What did surprise me, however, was the number of young men present at the rally. They stood together in groups, or with partners, and added their voices to the chants. They crafted signs with

powerful messages condemning Snelgrove's actions and the culture of violence which allowed them. They were just as angry and enraged as any of the women present. And despite my anger, and despite the cold, I found myself heartened by their presence. These are the young men I have been writing about, the ones who are crafting a new masculinity, one which challenges violent conceptions of manhood and creates possibilities for change.

### **Major Findings**

The interviews conducted for this research offer several interesting insights into how young male-identified individuals are negotiating their masculine identities in a society in which violent iterations of masculinity have become the norm. Throughout the interview process the participants revealed how they define masculinity and the many factors which have helped shape their masculine identities, providing insights into the formation of masculinity in contemporary society and the ways in which male-identified individuals perceive their own relationships to masculine identity. Participants' responses to the interview questions offered several considerations for me as an activist and academic about hegemonic masculinity. The insights provided by participants offer useful information that can be applied to broader responses to rape culture, particularly on university campuses. In this concluding chapter, I review the major findings of my project, explore the potential it has created for further research and discuss some of its limitations.

Within Chapter 3, I explored the ways in which participants are reproducing hegemonic norms of masculinity. The wide variety of participants' answers about how

they define masculinity demonstrated the complex and varied nature of contemporary masculinities. This complexity and variety reinforced the work of Raewyn Connell, Bobby Noble and other gender theorists on the idea of multiple masculinities. Participant's responses demonstrated that masculinity, even within such a small subsection of the male population, is diverse and encompasses a variety of traits, behaviours and values. Furthermore, in the differing ways that participants identified their own masculine identities from that of the perceived stereotypical understandings of hegemonic masculinity, they showed that they were interested in crafting masculine identities (whether consciously or subconsciously) that moved away from norms of violence and aggression.

My questions in the participant interviews also focused on the pressures experienced by male-identified individuals, particularly during their youth, to conform to societal concepts of masculinity, examining peer and parental relationships, sports participation, peer pressures, and role models. My background in psychology led me to pay particular attention to early experiences, and the influence of family was undeniable within participants' responses to questions about their early lives. The vast majority of participants spoke about their fathers (or in some cases uncles, grandfathers or brothers) in our discussions of male role models. Furthermore, several cited their parents' influence on certain behaviours, such as emotionality, or even their choice of television programming. Others mentioned the influence of their male role models in their feelings about what makes them a "man". For one participant in particular, true "manhood" would be available to him only once he became a caretaker and had a family to protect and

provide for. This emphasis on family and on parental influence demonstrated a concept found consistently within the work of Jackson Katz and Blake Spence, about the need for positive male role models in the development of male identity, particularly in the forging of a masculinity which counters current norms of aggression and violence.

Within the interviews, participants engaged in discussion about violent masculinity, addressing it in terms of appropriate contexts (e.g., the acceptability of aggressive behaviour on the hockey rink, in response to some perceived slight in a bar, or when defending a woman's honour), as well as presentation in the media. They spoke about how they are being affected by and negotiating a masculinity defined, in many ways, by violence, and in many ways, their responses corroborated with the literature on hegemonic masculinity as violent. One story of particular note was that of Dan, the PhD candidate from rural Ontario, who spoke of what we came to label as the "County Fair Fight Club", a series of brawls that would occur each year during a local fair. The fights acted, according to Dan, as a cathartic experience in which petty arguments could be settled without consequence. Other participants spoke briefly of the context in which violent or aggressive behaviours are deemed permissible, such as the aggression demonstrated on the hockey rink as opposed to within the confines of the office.

Finally, participants also engaged in a discussion about rape culture, demonstrating their understandings (or lack thereof) of the concept. Several participants expanded on rape culture by offering examples of incidents they had seen and encountered, whether on campus, online, or in other areas of their lives. Several went into detail about their feelings around the often contentious issue, and this was especially

interesting in the cases of participants whose understandings of rape culture differed drastically from the standard feminist definitions. One participant in particular, Walter, highlighted his irritation with the concept and the ramifications that its popularity and (in his mind) misuse was having for men. While I disagree with his approach to this, he does offer valid insights about the way that men are being affected by the negativity associated with contemporary masculinities. As I mentioned, some participants demonstrated a lack of understanding of the concept, and this is an important point to note from the research. Tony in particular, conflated rape culture with hook-up culture. I think this lack of understanding around the term as well as the effects of the concept on men is an important insight from the research and demonstrates the need to integrate education about rape culture into the public's consciousness.

In Chapter 4, my analysis shifted to examining how participants are challenging or changing reproductions of hegemonic masculinity. Here, I highlighted their commentary on male privilege, particularly, that of The Master. I also included an examination of participant responses that reflected deeper, more nuanced understandings of rape culture and its effects, highlighting their own personal engagement with feminism or their coursework in sociology and gender studies as a source for their knowledge. At the end of our conversations participants were asked to offer strategies to counter rape culture as a society. The overwhelming response was to tackle the issue through education initiatives. For Eric, this meant addressing concepts of respect and diversity with children at an early age in school and building on those concepts so that conversations about rape culture would flow naturally from those initial ideas.



While there were several important conversations about change that arose from these interviews, I feel that the overall implication of this project is the need to revisit, as a society, the ramifications of violent hegemonic masculinity, and the influence that media and role models have on the development of masculine identity, particularly as it relates to violence and aggression. I further believe that the ways in which some participants misconstrued the concept of rape culture, or lacked understandings of the topic, demonstrate the need to create educational programs that highlight sexual violence, consent and respect.

### **Study Challenges, Limitations and Next Steps**

The current project has suggested ideas for further research even as it presented several challenges and limitations. For example, while I did ask participants about participation in athletics, I may have missed the opportunity to gather further information about competition and aggression in sports, particularly as they were growing up. Hockey, a sport known for being particularly aggressive, is a Canadian institution, and asking more questions of participants who played about the aggression on the ice, about how competition translates off the rink and how they have responded to that aggression could have provided further valuable insights into contextual violence. Several theorists explore aggression within athletics, including Michael Kimmel with his *Rules of North American Manhood* (Kilmartin and Alison, 2007) — which offer insights into competition and aggression — and Michael Messner (1992) who has addressed athletics and masculinity within several of his works. It would be beneficial to explore, in further

research, that competitive and athletic form of masculinity further, to see if participants' responses could be linked with the work of Kimmel and Messner, among others.

Another area that would have benefitted from further questions was the concept of role models. As I mentioned, my background in psychology led me to focus on developmental experiences for their contribution to masculine identity, and I feel that role models have a large role within that development. In further questioning participants about their role models and their influences on their lives and identity, I might have opened up new insights about their family relationships, their peer group experiences, and their connection to popular media figures, celebrity athletes and fictional characters.

Moving forward from this project, there are many different areas of masculinities to explore. I have always wanted to speak with convicted perpetrators of violence to understand their masculine identities. Understanding the move from theoretical to actual violence would offer interesting insights into the factors that shape violent masculinity, and what might be needed within society to address violence levels and decrease recidivism. In other words, changing the group of individuals being interviewed is a way to access different interpretations and understandings of masculinities, violence, and rape culture. For example, how are female-identified youth negotiating their gender identity while living with the context of a society of violent hegemonic masculinity? How are older males relating to rape culture (as the current study limited participant ages to between 19 and 25 years old)? How are students in skilled trades programs negotiating violent masculinities? How are individuals outside of the university entirely (e.g.,

community members as a whole) responding to concepts of masculinity and violence.

The opportunities for future study are limitless.

I find myself particularly intrigued by the insights this project offered about the potentially troubled culture within the university's Faculty of Engineering. The Master indicated during his interview that he actually transferred out of the program as a result of the culture. If a cis-gender male is that acutely aware of the toxic gender environment within the program, it demonstrates the need to re-examine the culture. I think that there is valuable information to be garnered from a study within that student population, particularly if that study spoke with both male- and female-identified students. To study the masculinities practiced within that department would provide insights into not only a large sector of the university community, but also a very specific profession, as individuals in that program are training for specific work in a field that has always been male-dominated. To speak with female engineering students would provide a great deal of information about their perceptions of masculinity in a field in which they are overwhelmingly the minority.

Finally, in light of recent events here in St. John's involving a member of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, interviews with RNC cadets in training at Memorial University would provide an interesting opportunity to examine the motivations and understandings of individuals in positions of authority within the province. To address issues of violent masculinity with such a population would not only provide insights into participants, but it would also provide a unique opportunity to engage future law enforcement officers in difficult conversations about the work they would be engaging in

on a daily basis, particularly as it relates to sexual assault, sexual harassment, rape culture and domestic violence (among other forms of gender violence) within the province.

This research has proven to be both challenging and rewarding. Working with texts on violent masculinities and reviewing the literature on rape culture was an emotionally draining undertaking, serving as it did to highlight the aggression and violence that have become all too common within hegemonic masculinity. This research draws attention to troubling statistics on male violence. The current rate of male violence towards women is disproportionate and disturbing, and the harm and vulnerabilities, such as long-lasting psychological effects, trauma, chronic health problems, and social inequalities created by it are even more problematic. Therefore, male violence against women must be addressed in greater detail and understanding young men's perceptions of and participation in that violence, and of their negotiation of masculine identities more generally can assist in developing more effective prevention programming. Insight into the complex negotiation of masculinity allows service providers to better address the needs of young people, and highlights areas of concern. This research has provided some of that much needed insight (although on a small scale), and I believe it demonstrates the importance of addressing sexual violence, aggression, violence and rape culture within our education curriculum. This concept of addressing rape culture through education is one which was reinforced by several of the research participants who viewed changing curriculums at the grade school level as an important way to address these difficult topics by building on fundamental concepts such as respect.

Further, for service providers developing programs to address male-identified youth, the impact of positive role models is clear throughout this thesis, not only from the research of other activists, but also in the way that participants emphasized their own role models growing up, and the impact of media. Even if they felt that they were not directly affected by watching portrayals of violent masculinities in movies and on TV, the vast majority of participants did reference it in some way, outlining the effects of mass media as a source of potential role models. Together, academics, activists, and service providers can create programming which directly addresses the needs of our communities, and work towards a society with less gender-based violence. Despite the negativity associated with this research, as I reflect back on my work within this final chapter, I feel a buoyant sense of hope at the insights this work has provided when it comes to changing the norms of hegemonic masculinity and challenging rape culture and sexual violence.

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## **Appendix A: Participant Debrief Information**

The topics discussed in this research project can be unsettling or disturbing to participants. If you feel you need support following your participation, please do not hesitate to contact one of the following resources:

- MUN Counselling Centre (UC 5000)  
864-8874
- NLSACPC Sexual Assault Crisis and Information Line  
1-800-726-2743
- MUN Sexual Harassment Office (ER 6039)  
864-8199  
Sexual Harassment Advisor 864-2015, 864-8199

## **Appendix B: Informed Consent Form**

### **Informed Consent Form**

Title: *Hegemonic masculinity and campus rape culture: Negotiating manhood at a Canadian university*

Researcher(s): *Lesley Derragh, Department of Gender Studies, lsd543@mun.ca*

Supervisor(s): *Dr. Vicki Hallett, Department of Gender Studies, vshallett@mun.ca*  
*Dr. Carol Lynne D'Arcangelis, Department of Gender Studies, carollynneda@mun.ca*

You are invited to take part in a research project entitled “*Hegemonic masculinity and rape culture: Negotiating manhood at a Canadian university.*”

This form is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. It also describes your right to withdraw from the study. In order to decide whether you wish to participate in this research study, you should understand enough about its risks and benefits to be able to make an informed decision. This is the informed consent process. Take time to read this carefully and to understand the information given to you. Please contact the researcher, Lesley Derragh, if you have any questions about the study or would like more information before you consent.

It is entirely up to you to decide whether to take part in this research. If you choose not to take part in this research or if you decide to withdraw from the research once it has started, there will be no negative consequences for you, now or in the future.

### **Introduction:**

My name is Lesley Derragh and I am a graduate student in the Department of Gender Studies, in the process of completing the research component of my Master of Gender Studies (MGS). This research is being completed under the supervision of Dr. Vicki Hallett and Dr. Carol Lynne D'Arcangelis, both faculty members in the department of Gender Studies, and has been funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

### **Purpose of study:**

This study has been designed to look at the way in which young male-identified individuals negotiate the complexities of masculinities in a culture where violent expressions thereof have become dominant. In interviewing young men about their experiences with masculinity and the phenomenon of rape culture (particularly as it relates to university life), the study will attempt to increase understanding of violent masculinities as a whole. The study will contribute to the growing body of literature on

masculinities. Specifically, this study examines concepts of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity refers to the dominant presentation of masculinity within a society. While the hegemonic masculinity may not be the most common expression of male identity, it is perceived to be the most desirable. Based on current research, this study moves forward from the idea that violent expressions of masculinity have become hegemonic and seeks to understand how young people are negotiating manhood (their approaches to identifying as male, the ways in which they challenge or change what it means to be male) in that context.

**What you will do in this study:**

Participants will be asked a series of open-ended questions by the researcher, with the aim of engaging in an in-depth conversation about their experiences with masculinity. Participants may decline to respond to any question with which they are uncomfortable. Some demographic information (e.g., age, family status, etc.) will also be collected.

**Length of time:**

Participation in this project will require a maximum time commitment of approximately 90 minutes from the participant.

**Compensation:**

Participants will receive compensation of \$25 for their participation in the interview process.

**Withdrawal from the study:**

Participants will not be penalized should they choose to withdraw from the study. They may end their participation at any time before completion of the interview. All data collected up to that point will not be included in the study. It will be destroyed. Participants will still receive compensation for their time.

After completion of the interview, participants may choose to contact the researcher to withdraw their data from the study up to one month after completion of the interview. After that point, data cannot be withdrawn due to time constraints placed on the researcher.

**Possible benefits:**

Participants' involvement in this study will benefit the academic community by contributing to the growing body of literature on masculinities, and by contributing to research and activism designed to reduce sexual violence within society.

**Possible risks:**

There is little risk to the participant associated with participation in this study, however, due to the sensitive nature of the topic, some participants may find themselves

emotionally distressed. All participants will be provided with contact information for the Campus Counseling Centre, to which they have free access as MUN students, before leaving the interview.

**Confidentiality:**

The ethical duty of confidentiality includes safeguarding participants' identities, personal information, and data from unauthorized access, use, or disclosure.

Participant's identities, and personal information will be excluded from the final thesis. Access to the transcribed interviews will be limited to the principal researcher and her academic supervisors. Interviews will be transcribed by the principal researcher.

**Anonymity:**

Anonymity refers to protecting participants' identifying characteristics, such as name or description of physical appearance.

All names and identifying features will be removed from the transcriptions of the interview. No identifying information will be included in the final thesis.

Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure participants' anonymity; and you will not be identified in publications without your explicit permission.

**Recording of Data:**

The interview will be audio-recorded for ease of transcription. Audio-recordings will be accessible only by the principle researcher.

**Storage of Data:**

Data will be stored electronically on a password-protected external hard drive, accessible only by the principal researcher. Hard copy versions of transcriptions will be stored in a secure location, a locked filing cabinet accessible only by the principal researcher. Consent forms will be stored in a separate secure location, also accessible only to the principal researcher.

Data will be kept for a minimum of five years, as required by Memorial University's policy on Integrity in Scholarly Research. After that time, all data will be destroyed by the principal researcher.

**Reporting of Results:**

The thesis will be publicly available at the QEII library. There is a possibility that the results of this study may also be published in the form of an academic journal article.

The information gathered during this study will be reported using direct quotations, and in summarized form. All personally identifying information will be removed.

### Sharing of Results with Participants:

Participants are invited to read the final thesis. It will be available at the QEII library as *Hegemonic masculinity and rape culture: Negotiating manhood at a Canadian university* under the principal researcher's name, Lesley S. Derraugh.

### Questions:

You are welcome to ask questions at any time before, during, or after your participation in this research. If you would like more information about this study, please contact:

Lesley Derraugh (principal researcher), [mun.masculinities.research@gmail.com](mailto:mun.masculinities.research@gmail.com)

Dr. Vicki Hallett (supervisor), [vshallett@mun.ca](mailto:vshallett@mun.ca)

Dr. Carol Lynne D'Arcangelis (supervisor), [carollynneda@mun.ca](mailto:carollynneda@mun.ca)

The proposal for this research has been reviewed by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research and found to be in compliance with Memorial University's ethics policy. If you have ethical concerns about the research, such as the way you have been treated or your rights as a participant, you may contact the Chairperson of the ICEHR at [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca) or by telephone at 709-864-2861.

### Consent:

Your signature on this form means that:

- You have read the information about the research.
- You have been able to ask questions about this study.
- You are satisfied with the answers to all your questions.
- You understand what the study is about and what you will be doing.
- You understand that you are free to withdraw participation in the study without having to give a reason, and that doing so will not affect you now or in the future.
- You understand that if you choose to end participation **during** data collection, any data collected from you up to that point will be destroyed.
- You understand that if you choose to withdraw **after** data collection has ended, your data can be removed from the study up to one month after completion of the interview, \_\_\_\_\_.

I agree to be audio-recorded

☐ Yes ☐ No

I agree to the use of direct quotations

☐ Yes ☐ No

By signing this form, you do not give up your legal rights and do not release the researchers from their professional responsibilities.

**Your signature confirms:**

☐ I have read what this study is about and understood the risks and benefits. I have had adequate time to think about this and had the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered.

☐ I agree to participate in the research project understanding the risks and contributions of my participation, that my participation is voluntary, and that I may end my participation.

☐ A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

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Signature of participant

---

Date

**Researcher's Signature:**

I have explained this study to the best of my ability. I invited questions and gave answers. I believe that the participant fully understands what is involved in being in the study, any potential risks of the study and that he or she has freely chosen to be in the study.

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Signature of Principal Investigator

---

Date



## Appendix C: Recruitment Poster



# MALE-IDENTIFIED PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH IN *MASCULINITIES*

We are looking for male-identified MUN students, aged 19-25 to volunteer to take part in a study of hegemonic masculinity and campus rape culture.

Participants would be asked to answer several questions about gender identity, experiences, life history, and opinions. Participation would involve an interview, approximately 90 minutes in length.

In appreciation of their time, participants will receive  
\$25

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study,  
please contact:

*Lesley Derragh, Candidate, Master of Gender Studies*  
Department of Gender Studies  
Email: mun.masculinities.research@gmail.com

This research is being conducted as part of the requirements of the Master of Gender Studies Program.

**This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance**

**by Memorial University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research.**

Contact Lesley Derragh mun.masculinities.research@gmail.com	Contact Lesley Derragh mun.masculinities.research@gmail.com	Contact Lesley Derragh mun.masculinities.research@gmail.com	Contact Lesley Derragh mun.masculinities.research@gmail.com	Contact Lesley Derragh mun.masculinities.research@gmail.com	Contact Lesley Derragh mun.masculinities.research@gmail.com	Contact Lesley Derragh mun.masculinities.research@gmail.com
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**Appendix D: Social Media Recruitment Graphic**

# **MALE-IDENTIFIED PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR RESEARCH IN MASCULINITIES**

We are looking for male-identified MUN students, aged 19-25 to volunteer to take part in a study of hegemonic masculinities and campus rape culture.

Participants would be asked to answer several questions about gender identity, experiences, life history, and opinions. Participation would involve an interview, approximately 90 minutes in length.

In appreciation of their time, participants will receive  
\$25

**For more info, or to participate,  
contact: Lesley Derragh  
[mun.masculinities.research@gmail.com](mailto:mun.masculinities.research@gmail.com)**

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance by Memorial University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research.



## **Appendix E: Recruitment Email**

**E-mail Subject line:** Memorial Study - Hegemonic masculinity and Rape Culture

I am inviting you to participate in a research project examining masculinities and campus rape culture. This study is being conducted as part of the requirements of completion for the Master of Gender Studies program here at Memorial University. I am interested in learning more about how young male-identified students are negotiating the complexities of masculine identity in a society where violent forms of masculinity have become normalized.

Participation in the study would require a private interview taking approximately 90 minutes in length. You would be compensated for your time and your confidentiality as a participant would be assured.

You can stop being in this study any time during the interview and afterwards up to one month after completion.

To be eligible for this study you must be:

Between 19-25 years of age  
Male-Identified  
Current students at Memorial University

For more information, or to set up your participation, please contact Lesley Derrough at [mun.masculinities.research@gmail.com](mailto:mun.masculinities.research@gmail.com).

This study has been reviewed and cleared by Memorial University's Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research. If you have any concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way the study is being conducted you can contact:

Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research  
Telephone: (709) 864-2561  
Email: [icehr@mun.ca](mailto:icehr@mun.ca)

**Lesley Derrough**  
Masters Candidate in Gender Studies  
Department of Gender Studies  
[mun.masculinities.research@gmail.com](mailto:mun.masculinities.research@gmail.com)

## **Appendix F: Research Assistant Confidentiality Form**

### **Research Assistant Confidentiality Agreement**

This study, *Hegemonic masculinity and rape culture: Negotiating manhood at a Canadian University*, is being undertaken by Lesley Derragh at Memorial University of Newfoundland.

The study has several objectives:

1. To explore contemporary masculinities in the context of a Canadian university
2. To examine negotiations of masculinity in the context of rape culture within the university community

Data from this study will be used to provide context for the study, form the basis for analysis and draw conclusions about rape culture and contemporary hegemonic masculinity in the context of the university community at Memorial.

I, [RESEARCH ASSISTANT], agree to:

1. Keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g. disks, tapes, transcripts) with anyone other than the Principal Investigator(s);
2. Keep all research information in any form or format secure while it is in my possession;
3. Return all research information in any form or format to the Principal Investigator(s) when I have completed the research tasks;
4. After consulting with the Principal Investigator(s), erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the Principal Investigator(s) (e.g. information sorted on computer hard drive).

Research Assistant:

_____	_____	_____
(print name)	(signature)	(date)

Principal Investigator:

_____	_____	_____
(print name)	(signature)	(date)

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

Lesley Derragh  
Department of Gender Studies  
709-749-5534  
lsd543@mun.ca

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) at Memorial University of Newfoundland. For questions regarding participants rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the ICEHR Office at (709)864-2861.

## Appendix G: Interview Questions

Collection of demographic information:

- a) Family background
  - i) Parents' marital status
  - ii) Parents' employment status
  - iii) Siblings (# of and gender)
- b) Age
- c) Educational background
- d) Hometown
- e) Race
- f) Religious Background

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### Guiding Questions

1. Growing up, who acted as your primary male role models?
2. How have parental expectations shaped your behaviour in relation to your gender identity?
3. This study looks at hegemonic (or mainstream) masculinity. What do you think of when you think of the stereotypical man? What does it mean to you to be a man? What does masculinity mean for you? Do you identify as masculine?
4. How have peer expectations shaped your behavior in relation to your gender identity?
5. Did you participate or do you currently participate in sports? Do you feel that your participation reflects your masculinity?
6. Have you ever felt pressured into an action or behaviour with which you were uncomfortable because you wished to avoid labels that are degrading to you in general or to your own masculine identity, however you define it, in particular?
7. Do you think that aggression is something people expect of men? Why/why not? Is it context dependent? How does this expectation (or lack thereof) affect your behaviour or your idea of yourself as a man?

8. Do you feel that violence is associated with masculinity in mainstream media? If so, what effects do you feel this has, if any, on the way men and women interact?
9. Are you familiar with the term rape culture? What does it mean to you? How do you think rape culture affects society? Do you think it affects different genders differently? Can you think of any ways in which it might affect you/impact you personally?
10. Do you think we have a responsibility, either collectively or individually, to challenge rape culture? How, as a society, might we/do we do this? How might men, specifically, do this?