

# I'd Rather Go Along and Be Considered A Man: Masculinity and Bystander Intervention

MELANIE CARLSON  
*California State University, Chico*

This research examines the relationship between masculinity and bystander intervention in crisis situations. Three vignettes were used in vignette-based, semi-structured interviews with 20 college men aged 18 and 19, during which they were asked questions about masculinity and the pressures they feel to appear masculine. Findings indicate these men felt they must not appear weak. This research suggests the pressure to act masculine plays a complex and important role in these young men's decisions about intervening in violent situations.

*Keywords:* masculinity, bystander intervention, rape

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In October of 2002, the gang rape of an unconscious 15-year-old girl took place at an out of control party. The parents, having left their 21-year-old son in charge, were away for the weekend. The semi-conscious girl was led out of one room and directed to lie down on a pool table. After she passed out, she was assaulted by four perpetrators (one adult and three juveniles) in the presence of six bystanders. When interviewed about the crime, the District Attorney said that the reason none of the bystanders intervened was because they did not want to be considered "wusses" or "be made fun of." The idea the bystanders were more afraid of their masculinity being called into question than the violence potentially turning on them is essential to understanding the perplexing dynamics between gender, power, and violence. This research seeks to answer the question: What role does masculinity play in bystander intervention in crisis situations? For the purposes of this research, a crisis situation is defined as one in which violence is being directed toward another individual in the presence of bystanders or onlookers.

Melanie Carlson, Department of Sociology, University of Central Florida.

Correspondence concerning this article should be sent to Melanie Carlson, Department of Sociology, University of Central Florida, 4000 Central Florida Boulevard, Orlando, FL 32816-1360. Electronic mail: mcarlson@mail.ucf.edu

*The Journal of Men's Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Winter 2008, 3-17.

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jms.1601.3/\$12.00

DOI: 10.3149/jms.1601.3



### The Bystander Studies

Rosenthal's (1964) landmark book detailed the tragic death of Kitty Genovese who was raped and stabbed to death in the presence of 38 witnesses. The book is a descriptive narrative of the killing and its aftermath, and is the most cited work on an actual case of bystander apathy. In response to the Genovese killing and Rosenthal's published account, John Darley and Bibb Latane (1968) conducted several psychological experiments, considered seminal for later research on bystander intervention. Some of the features noted in their research was that the number of bystanders a research subject saw during a crisis had an important effect on whether the research subject would intervene (e.g., the more bystanders the less likely a research participant would intervene). However, contrary to the perception that non-intervention demonstrated a lack of empathy for the victim, they found that the non-interveners *were still in a state of indecision and conflict* about whether to intervene (Darley & Latane, 1968, emphasis added). In other words, their non-responsiveness was a sign of their moral dilemma. For the subjects who knew there were other bystanders present, the cost of nonintervention was lowered, meaning that if no one acted, then no one specific individual could be blamed for their non-intervention. However, the individual conflict over what to do was far more acute than was previously thought. Darley and Latane termed this bystander conflict the "diffusion of responsibility" (p. 90).

Shotland and Straw (1976) found that if a man attacks a woman, bystanders are less likely to intervene, if they are perceived to be married. Further, when the bystanders were given no information about the attack, they assumed a relationship between the man and the woman and, therefore, were less likely to intervene. In a comparable study with similar results, Borofsky, Stollak, and Messe (1971) asserted that male bystanders receive sexual gratification from seeing a woman being attacked. To test these findings, Harari, Harari, and White (1985) staged a series of simulated rapes on one college campus in areas where real rapes had occurred. They found most males did intervene to assist the women victims. Thus, the researchers argued that not all bystanders behave in the same ways and that this should be considered when conducting field research. One study found that the primary factor influencing men's willingness to intervene to prevent sexual assault was the men's perception of other men's willingness to intervene (Fabiano, Perkins, Berkowitz, Linkenbach, & Stark, 2004).

An important variable affecting bystander intervention is the status of the victim. If the victim is perceived to be of high status or in the "in-group," then they are more likely to receive aid from bystanders (Levine, Cassidy, & Brazier, 2002; Ridgeway & Diekema, 1989; Tisak & Tisak, 1996). Piliavin, Rodin, and Piliavin (1969) found that an apparently drunk person will not receive help even after collapsing because they might be "dirty or disgusting" (p. 290). Further, Piliavin, Rodin, and Piliavin found that bystanders are less likely to directly intervene, if intervention appears to have an unwanted physical or psychological consequence such as exposing oneself to danger or verbal harassment.



## Interviews

The study was based on qualitative interviews during which participants had three scenarios read to them. Each was based on real-life occurrences. The scenarios were:

On a typical Friday night, you are out walking around on Main St. here in Chico. A fight has broken out between three guys. Two of the guys have ganged up on the third one, and he is definitely losing. Other people are standing around paying some attention, but they are not intervening in the situation. You think the fight is unfair because it is two against one.

On a typical Friday night you are out walking around on Main St. here in Chico. You happen to see a guy shoving a girl around. The girl is crying and asking him to stop. He does not. Other people are standing around paying some attention, but they are not intervening in the situation.

You are at a party. You go upstairs to just sort of look around in the rooms. You decide to walk into one room. When you step into the room you see several guys standing around a table. One guy is having sex with a naked and unconscious woman on top of the table. Other guys are standing around watching and saying nothing. Still others are cheering him on and appear as if they are waiting to take their turn to have sex with her.

After reading each scenario individually, I asked the participants a series of open-ended questions based on their reactions to the hypothetical situation. The starting question was always what the participants thought about the male bystanders in each situation. I usually followed up with what they thought about the female bystanders in each situation, with the intention of discovering if they held different gender expectations of male and female bystanders. Subsequent questions were generated by the answers that each participant gave. I also asked them some open-ended questions about masculinity, i.e., how they defined masculinity and what pressures they feel they are under from their peers and society to act in a manly or masculine way. The interviews lasted between 20 and 90 minutes. The average interview lasted approximately 45 minutes, though I always endeavored to elicit longer interviews in order to generate as much of their experiences and viewpoints as possible.

I judged the participants' answers to be truthful because many of them struggled with the answers they gave. The majority of participants took time to formulate their answers and asked for clarification if they did not understand what I was asking. Although some of them could readily answer certain questions, such as what they thought society and peers thought of their behavior, other questions were more difficult. The questions that the participants found most challenging to answer were those that asked



about their own personal definitions of masculinity and what they think society's messages about masculinity mean to them in their personal lives.

### *Participants*

The participants were all men ages 18 or 19 who were college freshman or sophomores at California State University, Chico (CSUC).<sup>1</sup> Seventeen of them were Caucasian, one Philippino, one Southeast Asian, and one participant described himself as half-Asian. None were African-American or Latino. All except one is from California. Three come from inner cities, nine come from rural areas in Northern California, with eight coming from suburban Southern California. Only three of the participants mentioned having girlfriends.

### Findings

Many of the findings deal with men who would hypothetically intervene in a variety of crisis situations, not all of which focus on sexual assault. However, regardless of the type of violent situation, certain aspects of masculinity that the participants reported are highly relevant to the levels of aggression and violence that are acceptable to the participants. For example, the majority of participants in this study reported that they did not want to look weak in front of other men, which is an important finding when thinking about how male bystanders might weigh the consequences of intervening in a gang-rape. As some researchers have asserted, gang-rape is a male-bonding activity that reinforces alliances between men and boys, the participants' desire to be seen as manly by other men is relevant to the phenomenon of gang-rape (e.g., Messerschmidt, 1993; O'Sullivan, 1998). Further, for a majority of these participants, the context of how a violent situation starts determines whether or not they will intervene. Many of the participants asserted that they would not intervene in the fight scenario, because the guy might have "deserved it" or "asked for it." These same attitudes have often been cited as reasons why women are raped and blamed for their attacks. Accordingly, asking questions about violence aimed toward men and aimed at women enabled me to understand how men view aggression directed toward both genders and if they account for it in different ways.

Several themes emerged: men must not cry, men must be big and powerful, men must fight, men must be conscious of their physical stature, men must protect women, men must engage in heavy drinking, and many men think that they are different from their peers. However, one dominant theme became apparent and appeared to influence all other subsequent masculine ideals: Men must not be weak, appear weak, or show

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<sup>1</sup> This study was approved by the Institutional Review Board at California State University, Chico. Each participant gave informed consent, was paid \$10.00, and was promised full confidentiality.



weakness of any kind. Participant John Smith<sup>2</sup> illustrated this with his remarks, "I think that's, like, pretty much the general theme ... is just don't be weak. You know weak means being a pussy, being a wuss, being a crybaby."

The men in this study defined certain behaviors as weak and therefore unmasculine. Traits that adhered to traditional prescribed behaviors for females, such as compassion, crying, indecisiveness, or passivity are considered unmasculine and undesirable. Not responding to any perceived infringement of his rights or not responding to a demonstrated lack of respect from another man is also considered weak. For example, Steele said, "You can't be weak in the sense that you give up too easily, or you back down too much ... you have to stand up." Paul further exemplified this by stating, "You know, being tough, the whole tough thing ... like standing up in situations, rather than like bowing down, even when it's smart, you know." These quotes exemplify the expectations about masculinity that the participants have, and those expectations influence how they think they should behave.

In addition to acting tough and not backing down, another set of behaviors are defined as masculine. Men are expected to be decisive and should not appear to regret their decisions; Juco's comments illustrate these ideals:

To me being a man means basically having balls, that's what I think. I mean it doesn't matter what you believe, but like if you do something and you regret that decision move on ... basically you're not scared and you're not a pussy. You don't really care about the consequences for what you did.

Another weak behavior is crying. James' comments illustrate this belief: "Because from their standpoint they would definitely be like, 'Oh, you are a fag, you cried,' like only fags cry."

Besides not crying and seeking to avoid the verbal consequences of unmasculine behavior, these men are also receiving the message from society and their peers that to be masculine means to have muscled bodies and to be physically more impressive. Mike's comment illustrates this belief perfectly, "I am not a 'gym rat' but the guys in my fraternity talked me into it, so I feel very manly today as I worked out last night and my arms hurt." Being physically big and powerful is another example of how men must not appear weak, and Mike's quote demonstrates how these men are influenced by their peers to conform to perceived standards of masculinity.

The men were also conscious of how their size affects their behavior. Body consciousness influences whether or not they would intervene in certain situations. Five of the participants echoed the ideas that intervention would depend on how much bigger the other guys are. Wheaties stated, "Well, I'm not that large of a guy, so I wouldn't step

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<sup>2</sup> Participants' names have been changed to protect anonymity and confidentiality.



in because I don't think I could offer any help.... If you are a big person, you're kind of generally supposed to step in."

In addition to avoiding outward displays of certain emotions and wanting to be physically impressive, many of the participants believe that men are naturally aggressive and that fighting is a normal expression of this aggression. George's comments illustrate this notion:

I don't know. I personally ... I don't really like to watch the fights that much. I think it's just because they ... I don't know ... it's the *male thing* to do I guess, to watch fights. That's what they want to go do.... Because it's like you know, I'm tough, I want to see someone get beat up, you know ... I don't know, *I would beat that guy too if I was him* kind of like that image that they're trying to portray. (Emphasis added)

Some of the participants did accept that this is not an inherent biological feature of being male but the result of how boys are socialized in American culture. John Smith demonstrates this belief, "Guys like fights. I don't know ... maybe uh, that's what we've been socialized to think or something. We watch wrestling and watch you know USC fights and get into it. And we like fighting and wrestling with our friends, you know." Zack also mentioned this socialization, "It's been kind of reinforced that men are allowed to be violent in circumstantial settings, wrestling, boxing, events like that, hockey, for example, which is really violent."

The context of the fight also appears to be an important factor in whether a man will intervene. In their mind the possibility that the victim may have instigated their assault renders them at fault for their "beat down," a phrase commonly used on campus. Rusty's question is clearly illustrative of this rationale, "Was the losing person jumped or did he provoke the other two people?" Since it appears that violence is considered a normal and natural part of the male life experience, it is seen as the appropriate way to handle transgressions and exhibit masculinity.

Many of the participants draw the line at a certain level of violence. The criteria for intervention, regardless of how or who started the fight, is when the one being beaten has stopped moving, fighting back, or it appears to the observer that bones are being broken. Wheaties' statement acknowledges this conviction, "If they were seriously hurting him, like anything where like the police would have to be involved or he has to go to the hospital or anything like that, that's crossing a certain point." At that point, then intervention is deemed necessary.

Throughout the research, whenever the participants make the decision to hypothetically get involved, they consistently reported that they would choose direct intervention. Direct intervention is defined as getting directly involved in the situation (e.g., getting in the middle of the fight to stop it) to assist in a crisis (Darley & Latane, 1970). Bystander research has consistently shown that men use the direct form to intervene, as opposed to women who use indirect methods such as calling 911.



The existing research does not shed light on why men choose direct intervention over non-direct methods. However, given that men are socialized to see action as the appropriate response in many situations, it logically follows that they would engage in an action-oriented behavior during a crisis (Connell, 1987). Pauly echoed that masculinity is about action with his comments, "It's basically action not like sitting back and, uh, I'll deal with that tomorrow or something. It's go out, get it done."

One participant was the exception to this "rule." In regards to the fighting, Kevin never asked about the specifics of the fight. He very calmly stated that an unfair fight was wrong, and he would step in and attempt to break up the fight without "getting too involved." Once again we see how the type of intervention used is direct involvement, something that the majority of the participants reported as the chosen behavior.

Another significant masculine activity that men must engage in is to drink alcohol and to drink heavily. Steele asserted, "You have to drink, if you don't drink you're kinda considered weak." One consequence of not drinking or drinking heavily is commentary from the men's peers. For example, if these men do not drink or do not engage in heavy drinking, then they will have their masculinity called into question verbally. Not drinking or being a light drinker is associated with femininity and therefore considered weak. James' comments show this belief, "I like to drink. I like to go party but if I tell my friends I got smashed off of three shots. Like dude that's all you can handle? I'm expected to party more because I'm male. Totally."

Given these beliefs about masculinity, it is logical to conclude that the drinking also fuels the fighting associated with masculinity. Simply put, the link between alcohol consumption and violence is well-documented, and as fighting is considered a manly behavior, this combination appears to produce drunken fights that are often excused as just another "guy thing." As there seems to be a rationale that determines when it is a guy thing or when the victim has brought it on himself, I believe that this is partially why the context of how a fight starts is important to these men.

For some, drinking further fuels the level of aggressiveness should they decide to intervene. Note how once again intervention is in the direct form, a further example of how masculinity is demonstrated by the male bystander. Rusty stated:

If I wasn't intoxicated, I would hurry over there quickly grab the guy and push him away. If I was intoxicated, I'd run up there and beat the crap out of him.... Because I'd be under the influence and, like I said, I have a short temper and sometimes the alcohol takes things to the extreme.

Mike's remarks also support the relationship between drinking and fighting. Further his comments also illustrate how a certain level of violence is tolerable. As stated earlier, after a certain level of violence has been reached in a fight between two men, intervention is deemed acceptable.

If it got to the point where someone was unconscious, I gotta say honestly what we'd probably do is do equal damage to the well not



equal damage we'd probably just beat the other guy so he wouldn't be able to move and then we'd call the police. Say look there's a guy wearing this who was the instigator and we got him. But he got the other guy so we'd probably do it anonymously. I gotta say *most of the time we're probably a little drunk* so we're not going to do the most rational thing we should do. (Emphasis added)

Adding to the belief that being a man means demonstrating behavior that is action-oriented, several of the participants told me that they believe part of their masculinity means protecting women. When I asked Steele about his beliefs concerning masculinity, he told me, "I kinda have this, uh, weakness toward women so it's like I gotta protect them. Part of being a man is to protect women."

Many of the participants indicated that while men fighting each other is considered normal masculine behavior, men acting aggressively toward a woman is not. Some of the participants expressed this belief by talking about what they saw as the unequal physical attributes of men and women, or by stating feelings of anger toward the male aggressor. When I asked him why he would intervene on behalf of a woman being pushed around by a man, Rob echoed this principle plainly, "It just seems like the right thing to do. I mean someone who's defenseless, or can't really fight back for themselves."

Despite some of the participants expressing a responsibility to protect women, several of them asserted they understood why real-life bystanders to the gang-rape did not intervene. As evidenced by the quotes below, they comprehended the pressure the bystanders felt to avoid looking weak in front of their friends. This conflict between protecting women but at the same time feeling forced to avoid looking weak or sensitive in front of their peers is another important component of the relationship between masculinity and bystander intervention. When I asked Zack if he thought he would lose respect from his peers if he were to intervene in a gang rape he responded by saying, "Oh definitely.... Because I entered another man's territory. The man's territory being his girl and henceforth by entering his domain I've desecrated his territory supposedly." John Smith also said, "They're not going to leave; they're not going to do anything about it. 'Cuz they're too scared to look like a pussy leaving the room." George did as well, "I think they're pressured to cheer him on because they don't want to look weak in front of their other friends." Juco's comments are also quite clear on what the possible consequences might be, "Basically, if they tried to stop it, you know it would be over for them. People would give them shit about it all the time. They'd probably be looked down upon. They'd be viewed as too sensitive." These remarks are another example of how some men believe masculinity means avoiding the appearance of weakness, and how showing weakness is perceived to have undesirable consequences. These comments are telling in how men might weigh their options, should they find themselves in a situation where the need to preserve their masculine reputations may outweigh the victim's needs.

Though the majority of men in this study stated they would protect women in the aforementioned situation, some seemed to waiver in their conviction to intervene in



the rape scenario. Thus, it appears as if a distinction is apparently made between women who are being abused in a public venue and women who are raped in a private setting. As a result, two of these participants, asserted that they would not intervene in the hypothetical rape, even though these two participants were very clear that a hypothetical rape was being committed. A large majority said they would intervene in the hypothetical, with three more who seemed to waiver as to whether they would intervene or not.

Another important issue I noticed is something I call *gender distancing*. Simply put, some of the men in this study see themselves as different from other men and often stated so in various ways. Many of the participants told me verbally that they are not like other men, or that others do not hold certain values as highly as they do. Again, Zack's comments are illuminating:

I don't know. I would never ever ever have a situation like this at all like I would never forcibly do anything my girlfriend would not want to do but that's just me and I have a different set of morals than most people in my generation.... Other people do not hold this virtue as highly and because of that they may find themselves in these situations.

Tom echoed this need for not being just like other men, "I just—I kinda try to hold myself to a different standard and just live my life the way I feel that it should be lived."

Though these men believed that they did not exhibit these behaviors and indeed, that they were different from their peers, as evidenced by their previous remarks they did engage in many of the behaviors associated with masculinity. Nevertheless, when examining their comments more closely, the men who professed to be different did, in fact, still conform to expected gender ideals. Accordingly, they did not seem to be significantly different from their peers.

Though some of these men believe that they are different from their peers, they are still aware of the penalties of engaging in behavior perceived to be less masculine. In this study the men repeatedly used certain words to describe behaviors they considered unmasculine and weak. Words such as "fag," "gay," and "pussy" are the primary chosen vocabulary used to call the men's behavior into question. As George's comments show, he is one man who is aware of the consequences of "weak" behavior and how these words are used for this purpose:

I do think that guys in general have to like, kind of put up with a little bit more of a tougher image, or else they might get called like names like "gay" or something similar ... and everyone starts gang-ing up on—you get ganged up on by your friends or your peers or whatnot and people don't want to feel that way.

For one man these labels are painful and induce anger. James stated that for him:



It makes you feel terrible. Damn am I really viewed like that? I think like the word “fag” totally provokes a different mindset. That puts me at the mindset of, “Like dude, you need to stop, ‘cause I’m going to start to get pissed.”

Although some of the men believed that socialization played a role in how some men act, others believed that men and women were biologically programmed for certain roles and behaviors. This biological determinism is seen by the participants as the reason why men and women act in certain ways, and it is used to explain the many behaviors defined as masculine. Mike’s statement illustrates this well:

Oh well, it’s like because of the presence of testosterone in men and testosterone is responsible for a lot of different things, because of that like women tend to be more interpersonal or at least with children like when little girls play in nursery schools they are always playing house and exploring relationships, whereas boys are more like physical and then they’re more like things that do things like they like to play with trucks that can move sand. There’s obvious differences, it’s across other cultures too. There’s biological needs for one sex to do one thing and the other sex to do other things.

Although some men in this study recognize the role that socialization plays, Mike’s comments are highly indicative of the pervasive belief that men are the way they are because of their hormones. These beliefs are used to support the idea that men are supposed to act in certain ways, and when they do not, they are considered less masculine. Therefore, when men fail to act in gender appropriate ways, their competence as men is questioned. Further, as these men do not want to be viewed as less masculine, this complicated gender performance is something they feel they must engage in, in order to be viewed as masculine by their peers and society. Should they be seen as less masculine, they might suffer the consequences. Here Wheaties is describing the social cost to his roommate who decided he did not want to engage in a traditionally masculine activity:

He was telling me about this ... he went hunting with his dad like every day. And he was like finally, “Dad, you know I like shooting, I like going out and hunting with you. But it’s just not my thing. I’d rather be riding dirt bikes or something.” And it’s just spread all around town like within a week, that this guy’s son didn’t like hunting and he was like, disowned, like just by these people’s thoughts, just ‘cuz he didn’t like hunting.

Wheaties’ story demonstrates these men believe and have heard real-life experiences to support their fear of consequences from unmasculine behavior. Should they be seen as weak or unmanly, the participants believe they will suffer at the hands of their peers



and society. More importantly, they have some real-life experience to support these fears.

The importance these men attach to these beliefs cannot be dismissed. If these men's greatest fear is having their masculinity called into question, then they are arguably enslaved to a gender ideal that is dangerous to them and to the women they profess to feel responsible for protecting. These men appear to believe their masculinity centers on drinking, engaging in personal violence, and appearing physically larger than everyone else. Consequently, socially constructed gender expectations are often being excused away as a natural male behavior, even in the face of their obvious policing of each other's masculine identities.

In spite of the real and perceived consequences, not all of the men fit completely into these prescribed behaviors and patterns. One participant named Ian never mentioned drinking in his interview, and he did not feel that it was any of his business to intervene in a fight between other males. His feelings were strong enough that even if the male fight victim was injured badly enough to need medical care, he was insistent that he still would not intervene, directly or otherwise. Still in keeping with the expectation that women must be protected, he stated he would intervene if a woman was being abused in a public venue. Though he could not explain his logic as to why the victim's gender would yield a different response, his statement, "[G]irls tend to not be so aggressive, so if she's getting beat up, it's usually because of some aggressive boyfriend.... I would take it automatically as, 'He is an asshole.... So, I would want to break that up,'" is a telling one. As it appears to him that men tend to be more aggressive, perhaps this is the reason why he would not intervene on behalf of another man. By that same logic, if women tend to be less aggressive, it might seem more appropriate to him to protect a woman from another man.

Conversely, Pauly does not conform to any of the "typical" behaviors for men. While the majority of the participants drink and fight, he does not. Nor did he ever mention protecting women as a masculine behavior. Indeed, like many of the other participants in this study, Pauly asserts that he is different and from his account, he is. Pauly is a self-described "band geek" so arguably his standards of masculinity are different from the other men in this study. Nevertheless, when I asked him about looking weak in front of other men he replied, "There were times when I didn't fit in and didn't feel cool. But I made an effort to put myself out there and be the opposite of the rule." Pauly's account shows that though he does not engage in certain defined masculine behaviors, he is aware that there are "rules" about masculinity and, in the past, he has modified his behavior in an attempt to prove those rules wrong.

## Discussion

The findings in this study demonstrate that masculinity may be another factor in the complex behavior of bystanders to violent situations. The most important finding is that these men feel they must not be weak and, perhaps more importantly, must not appear weak to others, especially to other men. In addition, the desire to avoid looking



weak also appears to serve as the foundation for other subsequent behaviors such as drinking and fighting. Furthermore, the pressures the participants feel to be big and powerful, to act aggressively, to fight, and to drink heavily, are all potential factors in a gang-rape situation.

Another issue to consider is that apparently intervening in a public setting where both males and females are present is considered masculine, but for some of the participants intervening in a private setting where only other men are present is considered too weak and therefore unmasculine behavior. Further, the participants who stated they understood why the bystanders to the real-life rape did not intervene illuminates that masculinity may be a factor in a bystander's decision-making process. Therefore, it appears that when a man is exclusively in the presence of other men, he may feel he cannot risk intervening for fear of looking weak or unmasculine.

Another potential factor to consider is that should a male bystander intervene in a gang-rape, he may have to account for his heterosexuality. Some researchers have asserted that gang-rape is a test of manhood (O'Sullivan, 1998; Sanday, 1990). With that assertion in mind, it is possible that a man who intervenes to stop a gang-rape may find himself in the position of having to defend his sexual orientation. Both Connell (1995) and Kimmel (1994) have argued homophobia and maintaining a heterosexual identity are central organizing principles of masculinity. Accordingly, the role of masculinity in bystander intervention is situational. For that reason the answers the participants gave help to shape a clearer understanding of why some men may choose not to intervene in a gang rape situation.

The fighting and other behaviors that are accounted for as gender appropriate activities say a great deal about the participants' beliefs about masculinity. One could argue that since the participants' principle concern is avoiding the appearance of weakness, and aggression is constructed as normal male behavior, these two issues feed into each other. Further, if men are supposed to be aggressive, cannot be seen as weak, and must sexually pursue women, then does it not follow that rape is the "logical" outcome of this gender enforced dynamic? Several theorists have argued this exact point (Connell, 1995; Katz, 1999 Kimmel, 1994; Messerschmidt, 1993, O'Sullivan, 1998).

Previous research has asserted a victim's gender plays a role in how the victim is perceived (Chancer, 1998; Levine, Cassidy, & Brazier, 2002; Tisak & Tisak, 1996). The current research has a slightly different outcome to the previous scholarly work. Herein, the participants reported the hypothetical victim's gender in the gang-rape scenario did not appear to be as much of a mitigating factor to the degree it has been in real-life incidents. However, in the second scenario where a woman is being abused in a public venue, the majority of participants seemed much more firm in their conviction to intervene. They also expressed more anger at that particular situation, whereas only two expressed anger at the gang-rape incident. In the gang-rape scenario, another three participants expressed shock, but not anger at the hypothetical gang-rape. Overall, most of the participants took the gang-rape in stride and accounted for their lack of shock or anger by telling me they had heard of this type of scenario in the news and from their friends.



My research both supports and is also supported by the theory of “doing gender.” West and Zimmerman (1987) argue that, “gender is the product of social doings of some kind of sort” (p. 129). They also argue that, “a person’s actions are often designed with an eye to their accountability and how they might look and how they might be categorized by others” (p. 136). The participants reported they must avoid the appearance of weakness in its various forms because they do not want to be categorized as un-masculine. This is a main example of West and Zimmerman’s assertion that “a person engaged in virtually any activity may be held accountable for performance of that activity as a *man*” (p. 136).

West and Zimmerman (1987) also argue that doing gender means creating differences between women and men and that these differences are not natural, essential or biological. Differences that are constructed are used to reinforce the essentialness of gender. Several of the participants cited biological differences to support why men and women engage in certain behaviors. West and Zimmerman argue these supposed biological differences are seen as normal and natural behavior for men and women, but, in fact, these behaviors are constructed and then used to reinforce fundamental beliefs about gender.

### Conclusion

Masculinity, as the participants defined it, comes with serious physical, psychological, and social costs to men and women. For men, it is hard to imagine they are not being injured from the fighting and heavy drinking that appears to be taking place. This assertion is especially important when considering that the participants in this study stated that, hypothetically, they would not intervene in a fight unless someone has stopped moving or bones had been broken. Furthermore, men who cannot back down for fear of being seen as weak could potentially be more likely to engage in other types of violence to prove their manhood. Sabo (2006) argues that activities such as hazing, gang wars, and homicide are just some of the violent pursuits some men engage in to prove their masculinity. Other costs to men are emotionally shallow relationships, depression, poor health from being too masculine to go to the doctor for physicals, and higher morbidity rates (Harrison, Chin, & Ficaroto, 1992; Sabo, 2004).

For women, there are several potential consequences of masculinity. One possible consequence is that a rape culture is largely sustained by violent masculinity; therefore as a result of living in a rape culture, rape will continue to be a serious problem (Buchwald, Fletcher, & Roth, 2004; Sanday, 1996; Scully, 1995). However, one consequence that should be considered is the possibility a woman may find herself in a situation that puts her at risk for rape and discovering she does not have the male allies she may need to avoid a rape. Because showing empathy or sensitivity might be construed as weakness, a man may not feel he can risk showing these emotions. Indeed, the male bystander may feel he has too much to lose by showing any understanding of the potential victim’s predicament. Consideration should also be given to how a man may have to account for his heterosexuality were he to intervene to stop a gang-rape.



With these issues in mind, the male bystander may decide against protecting a woman for fear of being seen as weak or gay by his male peers.

As the previous research into bystander intervention has not explicitly-investigated the role of masculinity, my study fills some of this gap in the literature. These findings should serve to illuminate how masculinity may be influencing the male bystanders' decision making processes.

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