

HUMOR AND PERSONALITY:
AN EXPLORATION OF THE PREDICTORS
AND EFFECTS OF RAPE HUMOR
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Rape humor (i.e., jokes about sexual assault) has recently become a subject of controversy in the United States. To date, the question of whether rape humor plays a role in perpetuating a broader rape culture has been largely unexplored by researchers. Further, the question of why some men choose to endorse rape humor has not yet been systematically investigated; however, it is possible that rape humor endorsement may function similarly to sexist humor endorsement (O'Connor, Ford, & Banos, 2017) in that it may serve as a compensatory tool after a man's masculinity has been threatened. The current work sought to address these gaps in our scientific understanding of rape humor, including its predictors and effects.

Over the past few years, male comedians from Daniel Tosh to Dave Chappelle have found themselves under fire for their usage of rape jokes in their televised stand-up acts. Public outcry and pressure after using rape jokes has accumulated to the point that apologies have been issued (Hibberd, 2012). The question of why these comedians would think it is acceptable to use sexual assault as a punch line has been raised repeatedly in the media (Alptraum, 2017). The answer to this question is quite simple, though: While comedians do often attempt to test social boundaries, they largely perform using jokes that they believe their audience will find funny. The reality is that these rape jokes were met with laughter when the comedians told them on stage, and many who saw the jokes performed on television also took no issue with the content of the jokes. Although many scathing articles were written denouncing the comedians for their use of rape jokes, many were also written defending them (Corneau, 2012). The media remains divided on the issue of rape jokes, leaving the question about whether rape is acceptable as a punch line or not in murky waters.

On one side, those defending the use of rape jokes argue that such jokes are simply examples of harmless humor that should not be taken as anything more than light-hearted fun. On the other side, those against the use of rape jokes argue that it is not harmless to make light of such a serious social issue. In the United States alone, sexual assault affects millions. The statistic that one in five women report being sexually assaulted during college in the United States is well known (Muehlenhard, Peterson, Humphreys, & Jozkowski, 2017). Recent research has found that a majority (61%) of male college students self-reported acts qualifying as rape or attempted rape and admitted to committing repeated rapes (Lisak et al., 2010). The U.S. Department of Justice reported that women make up 91% of the victims of rape, making rape an issue that disproportionately affects women in this country (Rennison, 2002). Furthermore, according to the 2010 National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 1 in 5 women and 1 in 71 men in the United States reported being raped at some point in their lives (Black et al., 2011). However, according to the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) these statistics likely underestimate the frequency of sexual assault, as sexual assault remains the most under-reported crime in the United States (2018). It is estimated that approximately 310 out of every 1,000 instances of sexual assault are actually reported to police, meaning about 2 out of 3 sexual assaults are left unreported (RAINN, 2018). Male survivors report sexual assault even less than female survivors, an example of which can be seen in the United States military where 10% of male survivors compared to 43% of female survivors reported experiences of sexual assault (RAINN, 2018). Whereas most would agree that these findings are troubling, what cannot seem to be agreed on is whether making rape the subject of humor is harmful or not.

Humor may not typically be seen as having serious implications; however its use as a social tool is significant. Humor is a medium of communication that can affect how an individual regards a subject matter (Ford, Boxer, Armstrong, & Edel, 2008). The use of humor changes the

rules in a social context, rendering whatever sentiment is expressed as a matter of light-hearted fun (Ford et al., 2008). When joking around, the audience switches to a non-critical frame of mind and views the content of the jokes as material for benign amusement instead of reading into the joke's message (Ford et al., 2008; Mallett, Ford, & Woodzicka, 2016). This occurs even when the joke's subject is a serious issue, such as racism or sexism (Ford et al., 2008; Mallett, et al., 2016). For example, research has demonstrated that the use of humor in communicating a sexist message decreases the perception that the individual is sexist among women as compared to communicating a sexist message as a conversational statement (Mallett, et al., 2016).

Although regarded as benign, many researchers assert that sexist humor actually serves as a social tool that trivializes the oppression of women in society (Ford et al., 2008). Sexist jokes can be viewed as a form of derogatory language that contributes to a patriarchal ideology by supporting an unequal binary gender system where women are devalued (Behmiller & Zimmer Schneider, 2010). Sexist humor serves to justify a wider range of derogatory, violent, and discriminatory responses towards women (Ford et al., 2008). Supporting this idea, sexist humor has been linked to aggressive behaviors, rape myth acceptance, and self-reported rape proclivity among men (Ryan & Kanjorski, 1998; Viki, Thomas, & Hamid, 2006). Research has consistently demonstrated that exposure to sexist humor situationally increases tolerance of sexist behavior towards women (Ford, 2000; Ford et al., 2008; Mallett et al., 2016). Men and women become more tolerant of sexism, including both discrimination and harassment, immediately following exposure to sexist humor (Ford, 2000; Ford et al., 2008; Mallett et al., 2016). Some researchers even assert that the use of sexist humor is the most common form of sexual harassment women experience in the workplace, one which serves as a form of comradery between male coworkers (Pryor, 1995). These findings highlight the significant role humor plays as a social tool in furthering the oppression of women.

Prejudiced norm theory is a helpful lens through which to understand how sexist humor functions to harm women. According to this theory, disparagement humor effectively changes the rules in a social context that determine appropriate reactions to discrimination against members of the group being disparaged (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). Disparagement humor is defined as “humor that denigrates, belittles, or maligns an individual or social group” (Ford & Ferguson, 2004, p. 79) and often refers to racist or sexist humor. Prejudiced norm theory essentially argues that disparagement humor creates a norm of tolerance to discrimination and that hostility towards the targeted group is created and reinforced through disparagement humor. Effects of disparagement humor can be found at both the individual and macro level. At the individual level, disparagement humor reinforces prejudice towards the targeted group. At the macro level, disparagement humor is thought to work to maintain prejudice in a given culture or society (Ford & Ferguson, 2004). In this way, prejudiced norm theory posits that disparagement humor, such as sexist humor, has negative effects that impact the individual as well as the culture at large. Through a prejudiced norm theory lens, rape jokes are a specific type of sexist humor that create a norm of tolerance towards rape, further perpetuating a broader rape culture through the seemingly benign vehicle of humor.

To further understand the issue of rape jokes, it is necessary to understand who is likely to use rape jokes and under what conditions this likelihood is increased. In order to do so, we turn toward the social identity of gender. Social identities, or an individual’s sense of who they are based on membership in groups, can determine perceptions and behavior. The groups we belong to can provide us with a sense of identity or belonging in the social world. There is an emotional significance and value attached to your group identification, one that is thought to be powerful enough to affect self-esteem levels (Hahn Tapper, 2013). Gender is one of the most prominent social identities and, importantly, is one that necessitates constant performance of the identity

(Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2016). In the United States, gender norms are instilled very early in childhood and continue to be enforced as individuals age (Cahill & Adams, 1997). As a result of this gender norm socialization, men and women feel pressure to adhere to normative behaviors and characteristics of their gender identity (Cheryan et al., 2015). Whereas women feel pressure to adhere to traditionally feminine characteristics by being kind, communicative, caring, and quiet (Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2016), men feel pressure to adhere to traditionally masculine characteristics by being sexual, athletic, assertive, and agentic (Eagly, 1987; Gross & Blundo, 2005; McCreary, Saucier, & Courtenay, 2005). If these gender expectations are violated in any way, various social and even economic repercussions may occur (Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Glick & Phelan, 2012), making it very advantageous to avoid violating gender norms.

When an individual's sense of social identity is threatened, it is common to react by overcompensating in order to re-establish a feeling of membership in that social identity group (Cheryan, Cameron, Katagiri, & Monin, 2015). Both men and women who violate gender norms often try to avoid backlash through strategies of recovery. Although this occurs in both men and women, men's masculinity has been found to be more easily threatened than women's femininity (Winegard, Winegard, & Geary, 2014). This is due to the fact that manhood, more so than womanhood, is regarded as a precarious state of social identity that necessitates continual evidence and validation in order to maintain it (Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnafod, & Weaver, 2008). This concept of precarious manhood is thought to be a result of Western culture lacking formal rites of passage into manhood, leaving boys and men to prove their masculinity through informal social demonstrations of their manliness (Herek, 1986; Vandello et al., 2008). Because manhood is precarious, anything that calls the validity of that identity into question can cause a state of anxiety or threat to result over the fear of losing such a socially integral identity (Vandello et al., 2008).

When men feel their masculinity has been threatened, they will often turn to overcompensation techniques to recover their masculinity such as exaggerating their masculine qualities and disavowing feminine qualities (Cheryan et al., 2015). Research has demonstrated that men who receive feedback that they score lower than average on a masculinity measure are more likely to demonstrate aggression (Willer, Rogalin, Conlon, & Wojnowicz, 2013), derogate other men who are seen as non-masculine (Schmitt & Branscombe, 2001), and even harass women (Maass, Cadinu, Guarnieri, & Grasselli, 2003). These men demonstrate physical evidence of stereotypical masculinity to compensate for their masculinity being threatened. Men also avoid or disavow stereotypic femininity as another strategy to recover from a masculinity threat (Cheryan et al., 2015). Ingroup threats, such as a masculinity threat, can lead to individuals avoiding expressions of preference for an outgroup (White & Dahl, 2006). In these situations, the outgroup men are avoiding expressing preference for women, the group that is perceived to be more feminine and, therefore, weaker. These findings are significant because they demonstrate that threatened masculinity may be a potential cause for a portion of the sexual violence and discrimination that occurs so commonly towards women (Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2016; Jackson, 1996).

Research has also shown that men sometimes respond to masculinity threats by endorsing social inequality or discrimination for women and even gay men, with the common factor being perceived femininity in both cases (Weaver & Vesico, 2015). This trend may not be limited to heterosexual men, however. Some research has demonstrated that gay men, a group socially regarded as effeminate, also disavow femininity (Hunt, Fasoli, Carnaghi, & Cadinu, 2016) and even do so in reaction to threatened masculinity (Taywaditep, 2001). As such, it appears that this pattern may not be limited to certain groups of men but is perhaps evident among men overall. Further research is needed in order to provide clarity on whether this is the case, however.

The endorsement of rape jokes may serve a unique function of recovery from masculinity threat as they both denigrate the feminine and endorse the stereotypically masculine characteristics of dominance, aggression, physical strength, and sexuality that other subcategories of sexist humor do comprehensively disavow. Endorsement of rape jokes, therefore, may function as a particularly effective form of recovery from masculinity threat. Moreover, the attraction to/effectiveness of rape jokes as a recovery strategy from masculinity threat may help alleviate a gap in the scientific understanding of why rape continues to serve as a punch line in a society where the occurrence of rape remains high and its consequences remain widespread.

There are several factors that could potentially moderate the effect of a masculinity threat. One such factor may be masculinity contingency, or the extent to which a man's self-worth is based on his sense of masculinity (Vandello et al., 2008). Research has shown that men higher in masculinity contingency whose self-worth is based more on their sense of masculinity are more sensitive to and more affected by masculinity threats (Burkley, Wong, & Bell, 2016). Further, research has demonstrated that greater masculinity contingency is associated with negative outcomes such as increased prejudice towards marginalized groups and decreased self-esteem (Burkley, Wong, & Bell, 2016). Masculinity contingency may moderate the degree to which a masculinity threat is effective such that men higher in masculinity contingency might be more affected by masculinity threat, whereas men lower in masculinity contingency might be less affected. A second potential moderator is hostile sexism, or negative views towards women because previous research has demonstrated that the effect of sexist humor on tolerance of sexism may be moderated by this construct (Ford, 2000; Ford et al., 2008). These studies show that higher levels of hostile sexism are associated with increased tolerance of sexism following exposure to sexist humor. Thus, men who are higher in hostile sexism may be more inclined to

endorse sexist humor, such as rape jokes, following a masculinity threat compared to men lower in hostile sexism.

Just as it is important to determine which individual differences in ideologies predict the endorsement of rape jokes under a masculinity threat, it is important to consider how the endorsement of rape jokes may connect to harmful attitudes and behaviors to understand why, exactly, rape joke endorsement matters. Conceptually, changes in rape myth acceptance and self-reported rape proclivity would seem to be the two most likely effects following the endorsement of rape jokes. Rape myths are “prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, and rapists,” (Burt, 1980, p. 217) and justify or support the existence and perpetration of rape (Burt, 1980; Lutz-Zois, Moler, & Brown, 2015). Rape myths serve to perpetuate societal dismissal of rape as a serious issue in need of recognition. They also contribute to viewing rape survivors as somehow deserving of being raped (i.e. she asked for it) (Hammond, Berry, & Rodruiguez, 2011). Rape myths can even deter rape survivors from reporting their experience to authorities for fear of being blamed for the assault (Egan & Wilson, 2012). Rape myth acceptance attitudes have been found in a substantial minority of individuals (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994) and, despite beliefs that rape myths are decreasing, some researchers believe that rape myths are adapting to become more subtle and difficult to refute over time (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). Importantly, although women do endorse rape myths, men tend to endorse them at a higher rate than women (McMahon, 2010). Further, research has connected men’s rape myth acceptance to traditional masculinity ideologies and negative views toward women (Lutz-Zois et al., 2015). A large body of literature has established the harmful attitudinal and behavioral effects of rape myth acceptance (Aronowitz, Lambert, & Davidoff, 2012; Barnett, Hale, & Sligar, 2017; Bohner, Jarvis, Eyssel, & Siebler, 2005; Bohner, Siebler, & Schmelcher, 2006; Chappleau & Oswald, 2013; Hockett et al., 2009; Taschler & West, 2017).

One of the most alarming effects of rape myth acceptance is that individuals who are more accepting of them tend to report high rape proclivity (Bohner et al., 1998, Malamuth, 1981). Rape proclivity refers to self-reported accounts of an individual's likelihood of perpetrating rape (Chiroro, Bohner, Viki, & Jarvis, 2004). Related to the current work, previous research has found that exposure to sexist jokes increases rape proclivity among male participants, and especially those high in hostile sexism (Romero-Sanchez et al, 2010). If rape joke endorsement and/or rape proclivity is tied to increases in rape myth acceptance attitudes, such results would demonstrate the harmful effects of rape joke endorsement on individual attitudes.

In the current work it was hypothesized that higher rape joke endorsement would be correlated with higher rape myth acceptance (H1) and self-reported rape proclivity (H2). It was also hypothesized that men who receive a masculinity threat would attempt to recover from this threat by rating rape jokes as more humorous compared to men who did not receive a masculinity threat (H3). Additionally, the current research sought to examine whether hostile sexism and/or masculinity contingency would moderate the expected effects of the first hypothesis (H4 and H5). Hostile sexism scores were hypothesized to moderate the degree to which a masculinity threat is effective, such that higher (compared to lower) hostile sexism scores would be linked to greater endorsement of rape jokes (H4). Masculinity contingency scores were also hypothesized to moderate the degree to which a masculinity threat is effective such that higher (compared to lower) masculinity contingency scores would be linked to greater endorsement of rape jokes (H5). Finally, the current work examined whether differences in outcomes existed between heterosexual and sexual minority male participants (RQ).

Method

Participants

Participants ($n = 207$) included male undergraduate students from a Midwestern university who were recruited through a campus-wide email inviting male-identified students to participate in an online research study about humor and personality. Participants also included a general internet sample of male individuals who were recruited through listings on popular internet sites such as Reddit and various psychology forums. The general internet sample was used to increase the diversity of the participants in regards to age, race, and level of educational attainment. Power analyses for a multiple regression with three predictors and two one-tailed bivariate correlations were conducted in G*Power to determine a sufficient sample size using an alpha of 0.05, a power of 0.80, and a large effect size. Based on the aforementioned assumptions, the minimum desired sample size was 82 participants.

The sample was limited to English-speaking adult U.S. citizens in order to avoid language and cultural barriers in understanding the jokes included. The initial sample prior to exclusions included 328 men. Any participants who indicated they were not fluent English speakers ($n = 1$), and/or that they were not US citizens ($n = 6$) were excluded from analyses. Additionally, participants were excluded from analyses if they quit the survey prior to being assigned a condition ($n = 45$) or quit the survey upon condition assignment and answered no items following assignment ($n = 14$). Participants were also excluded from analyses if they incorrectly answered the manipulation check question and/or if they indicated knowing the purpose of the study or had knowledge of deception during debriefing ($n = 41$). Finally, participants were excluded from analyses if they indicated that they would like their data to be removed following debriefing ($n = 19$). The final sample after all exclusions was 207 participants.

This sample demonstrated diversity in age with participants ranging from 18 to 79 years old ($M = 27.07$, $SD = 14.13$). Diversity in sexual orientation was also reflected in this sample with 79.2% ($n = 164$) of participants identifying as heterosexual, 10.6% ($n = 22$) identifying as homosexual, 4.8% ($n = 10$) identifying as bisexual, 1.9% ($n = 4$) identifying as pansexual, 1.4% identifying as asexual, and 1.0% ($n = 2$) preferring not to report their sexual orientation identity. Compared to nationally representative U.S. samples, minority sexual orientations appear to be overrepresented (Herbenick et al., 2010). In terms of racial identity, the sample was 84.1% ($n = 174$) White; 14.0% ($n = 29$) were racial minorities. Two percent ($n = 4$) of participants chose not to provide their racial identity. This sample is less racially diverse than the U.S. population of men, which is 76.9% White according to the most recent U.S. Census data (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Finally, in terms of educational attainment, this sample included 1.0% ($n = 2$) of participants who indicated receiving less than a high school education, 9.2% ($n = 19$) who indicated receiving a high school diploma, 55.1% ($n = 114$) who indicated receiving some college education, 4.8% ($n = 10$) who indicated receiving an Associate's degree, 15.5% ($n = 32$) who indicated receiving a Bachelor's degree, 10.1% ($n = 21$) who indicated receiving a Master's degree, and 3.9% ($n = 8$) who indicated receiving a Doctorate or professional degree. This sample was more educated than the general U.S. population of men (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Sample demographics are reflected in Table 1.

Materials and Procedure

Participants read and completed an informed consent form before entering the online survey, which informed them that this study was about humor and personality, that their data would be collected anonymously, and they could end their participation at any time during the study. The study began with participants answering demographic questions about their gender, English fluency, U.S. citizenship status, sexual orientation, age, race, and educational attainment.

Following the demographics questions, participants took the Big Five Inventory-10 item (BFI-10), Hostile Sexism Inventory (HIS) and the Masculinity Contingency Scale (MCS). The aforementioned scales appeared in randomized order to avoid order effects. Next, participants completed the Gender Role Beliefs Scale Short-Form (GRBS-SF).

All participants were randomly assigned to either a masculinity threat condition or a no-threat condition. The participants in the masculinity threat condition received bogus feedback that their gender knowledge score, derived from the GRBS-SF, was below that of the average male participant (see Appendix A). The participants in the no-threat condition were given bogus feedback that their gender knowledge score was average for male participants. After the manipulation, participants rated a series of jokes for funniness (see Appendix B), answered the rape proclivity item, and took the Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (U-IRMA). Finally, participants answered a manipulation check question about their gender knowledge score to confirm the effectiveness of the masculinity threat manipulation (see Appendix A).

After completion of the study, participants were debriefed using a funnel debriefing method in which they were first asked about their impression of the purpose of the study, followed by increasingly specific questions aimed to determine whether participants were aware of the manipulation used (See Appendix C). Following the funnel debriefing questions, participants were provided with a summary of the research purpose, the deception used, and the deception rationale. Participants were reassured that their data was confidential and were provided with an opportunity to pull their data from analyses if they so chose. Finally, participants were thanked for their time and exited the survey.

Big Five Inventory-10 item. The Big Five Inventory-10 item is a shorter version of the Big Five Inventory-44, which consists of 44 items (Rammstedt & John, 2007). Respondents indicate how much each item represents them on a 5-point Likert scale (*1=strongly disagree, 5=*

strongly agree). Example items include “*I see myself as someone who is reserved*” and “*I see myself as someone who is generally trusting.*” The 10-item version is sufficient for research settings with time constraints that warrant the use of a shorter inventory. The BFI-10 has demonstrated high levels of test-retest reliability ($\alpha = 0.75$), discriminant validity (intercorrelations mean $r = 0.11$), and convergent validity (correlation mean with NEO-PI-R $r = 0.67$) in research (Rammstedt & John, 2007). Because the BFI-10 was used in the current work as a distractor in order to alleviate concerns that participants would become aware of the purpose of the study and to adhere to the cover story of a survey of “humor and personality,” the responses of the BFI-10 were not used in analyses.

Hostile Sexism Inventory. The Hostile Sexism Inventory (HSI) is an 11-item measure of subjectively negative views towards women. The Hostile Sexism Inventory is a subscale of Glick and Fiske’s Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, which measures both hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The HSI includes items such as “*Women are too easily offended*” and “*Most women interpret innocent remarks or acts as being sexist.*” In the HSI, responses to items indicating negative views towards women are reported on a 5-point Likert scale ($1 = \textit{strongly disagree}$, $5 = \textit{strongly agree}$). Higher scores indicate greater hostile sexism. The HSI has demonstrated adequate convergent and discriminant validity and is currently widely used as a measure of overt sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Reliability for the HSI has been consistently high (e.g., Greenwood & Isbell, 2002). In the current work, the HSI demonstrated moderate reliability ($\alpha = 0.59$); however, the Cronbach’s alpha was fairly low in comparison to prior studies. In examining the item-total statistics of the scale in the current work, the Cronbach’s alpha for reliability would be higher if two items regarding attitudes toward feminists were removed from the scale. These items were the only items in the scale that directly referred to feminists and included “*Feminists are making reasonable demands*” (α if item deleted = 0.71) and “*Feminists*

are not seeking more power from men” (α if item deleted = 0.73). It is possible that, in the current work, these items specifically related to perceptions of feminists were measuring something slightly different than the other items in the scale.

Masculinity Contingency Scale. The Masculinity Contingency Scale (MCS) is a 10-item measure that assesses the extent to which a man’s self-worth is based in his masculinity (Burkley et al., 2016). The MCS contains two subscales, MCS-Threat and MCS-Boost, which each contain 5 items. The MCS-Threat subscale measures the extent to which a man’s self-worth can be threatened through a lack of masculinity, whereas the MCS-Boost subscale measures the degree to which a man’s self-worth can be improved by confirmations of masculinity. The MCS-Threat subscale contains items such as *“I can’t respect myself if I don’t behave like a ‘real man’”* and the MCS-Boost subscale contains items such as *“When I feel masculine, I feel good about myself.”* Items are rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale ($1 = \text{strongly disagree}$, $7 = \text{strongly agree}$). The MCS-Threat and MCS-Boost subscales have a correlation of .57 (Burkley et al., 2016). Together, the two subscales create an overall composite score of masculinity contingency. The overall MCS ($\alpha = .92$), the MCS-Threat subscale ($\alpha = .93$), and the MCS-Boost subscale ($\alpha = .91$) have all demonstrated sufficient reliability and the MCS has also shown excellent test-retest reliability (Burkley et al., 2016). In the current work, the MCS ($\alpha = 0.92$) demonstrated high reliability. The MCS has demonstrated adequate convergent, discriminant, criterion-related, and incremental validity (Burkley et al., 2016).

Gender Role Beliefs Scale- Short Form. The Gender Role Beliefs Scale-Short Form is (GRBS-SF) is a 10-item questionnaire designed to measure endorsement of traditional gender role ideology. Responses are measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ($1 = \text{strongly agree}$, $7 = \text{strongly disagree}$). The GRBS-SF is an equally psychometrically sound, short version of the original scale created by Kerr and Holden (Brown & Gladstone, 2012). Additionally, the GRBS-

SF provides two factors, gender role beliefs of women's roles in the household and workplace and those related to protectionism or chivalry toward women, which can help researchers differentiate between endorsements of specific types of gender role beliefs (Brown & Gladstone, 2012). The two subscales can be combined to form a composite score of gender role beliefs with higher scores indicating more feminist gender role beliefs and lower scores indicating more traditional gender role beliefs. In the current work, the GRBS-SF demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.79$).

Jokes. Twenty jokes were drawn from a larger pool of jokes on the basis of a pre-test involving a general internet sample (Appendix C). Pre-test participants were recruited through social media for an online survey about humor and rated sixty text-based jokes on a 7-point rating scale (1 = *not funny*, 7 = *very funny*). Twenty of the jokes were rape jokes and twenty of the jokes were neutral jokes, or jokes unrelated to rape, violence, or sexism. Twenty distractor jokes of a sexual nature were also included in order to ensure participants did not become aware of the purpose of the survey. The jokes included in the survey were all found on the internet through Google searches for "rape jokes," "clean jokes," and "dirty jokes." Jokes were based on their apparent fit for the three categories included in the survey. The five rape jokes, five sexual distractor jokes, and ten neutral jokes participants rated highest in funniness were included in the current study. The rape jokes ($\alpha = .81$), neutral jokes ($\alpha = .85$), and distractor jokes ($\alpha = .75$) all showed sufficient reliability.

Rape Proclivity Measure. One self-reported likelihood of committing rape/sexual assault item was included in the present study, which asked: "*How likely are you to use force when an individual is unwilling to engage in a sexual act with you?*" Participants answered the item using a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = *very unlikely*, 7 = *very likely*). This item was included in the present study because past research has demonstrated that men self-report a higher likelihood of

committing rape/sexual assault than might be thought based on social desirability concerns (Romero-Sánchez et al., 2017; Viki et al., 2007).

Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale. The Updated Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale (U-IRMA) is a 22-item questionnaire used to measure acceptance of culturally held rape myths (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). The U-IRMA includes an overall composite score as well as four subscale scores. The four subscales are “she asked for it” (6 items), “he didn’t mean to” (6 items), “it wasn’t really rape” (5 items), and “she lied” (5 items). All items are answered using a 5-point Likert scale from 1 = *strongly agree* to 5 = *strongly disagree*. Higher scores on the U-IRMA indicate a greater rejection of rape myths. The U-IRMA includes items such as “*If a girl doesn’t physically fight back, you can’t really say it was rape*” and “*Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at guys.*”

The Updated IRMA is a shortened version of the IRMA, the most reliable and psychometrically sound rape myth scale (Diem, 2000). The IRMA is a 45-item questionnaire used to measure rape myth acceptance and has an overall reliability score of .93 and subscale scores ranging from .74 to .84 and has demonstrated both construct and predictive validity (Diem, 2000). A 20-item IRMA short-form was created due to the challenges of administering a lengthy scale. However, issues of validity concerning changes in language in college populations where the scale is most often utilized and an inability to capture the more subtle forms of rape myths were addressed in the creation of the Updated IRMA (McMahon & Farmer, 2011). In the current work, the U-IRMA ($\alpha = 0.91$) demonstrated high reliability.

Results

In order to test Hypothesis 1, a bivariate correlation analysis was used to determine whether higher rape joke endorsement ratings were correlated with higher rape myth acceptance. The bivariate correlation was significant ($r = -0.27, p < .01$). The negative direction of this

correlation is in line with Hypothesis 1 because a lower score on the U-IRMA indicates greater rape myth acceptance. Therefore, this correlation can be interpreted to demonstrate that higher rape joke endorsement is moderately correlated with greater rape myth acceptance.

In order to test Hypothesis 2, a bivariate correlation was used to determine whether greater rape joke endorsement ratings were correlated with higher self-reported rape proclivity ratings. The result of this correlation was non-significant ($r = -0.07, p = 0.40$). This non-significant finding is likely the result of a floor effect on self-reported rape proclivity, given that the vast majority (95.6%) of participants reported that they were “very unlikely” (on a Likert scale from 1= very unlikely to 7= very likely) to use force when an individual is unwilling to engage in a sexual act with them ($M = 1.06, SD = 0.38$). Further, 2.4% ($n = 6$) of participants indicated they were “moderately unlikely,” 0.4% of participants ($n = 1$) indicated they were “neither likely nor unlikely,” and 0.4% ($n = 1$) of participants indicated they were “slightly likely” to use force. No participants reported a moderate or high likelihood of rape proclivity in this sample. Although previous research has found success in anonymously asking participants to self-report rape proclivity and receiving a higher range in responses (Romero-Sánchez et al., 2017; Lisak et al., 2010; Viki et al., 2007), it is possible that social desirability may have contributed to participants’ responses to the rape proclivity measure in the current work. It is also possible that sampling differences or the timing during which the survey was conducted may have contributed to the low reported rape proclivity. A correlation matrix of the study variables is included in Table 2.

In order to test hypotheses 3, 4, and 5 a hierarchical regression was used to determine whether men who received a masculinity threat attempted to recover by endorsing rape jokes more than men who did not receive a masculinity threat and whether this effect was moderated by hostile sexism and/or masculinity contingency. In the hierarchical regression, the dependent

variable was rape joke endorsement. The first model included the demographic variables of age, sexual orientation, and educational attainment. The demographic variables of sexual orientation (0 = non-heterosexual, 1 = heterosexual) and educational attainment (0 = achieved less than a Bachelor's degree, 1 = earned a Bachelor's degree or higher) were dummy coded in order to be included in the hierarchical regression analysis. The second model added condition (dummy coded as no-threat = 0 and threat = 1), masculinity contingency, and hostile sexism. Finally, the third model added the interaction between masculinity contingency and condition as well as the interaction between hostile sexism and condition.

Overall, the results of the hierarchical regression did not support the hypotheses. In the first model, only sexual orientation was a significant predictor of rape joke endorsement ($\beta = -0.21$, $p < 0.01$) and accounted for 4.9% of the variance in rape joke endorsement. The nature of this prediction was such that sexual minority men were less likely to endorse rape jokes. In this model, age ($\beta = -0.12$, $p > 0.05$) and educational attainment ($\beta = -0.01$, $p > 0.05$) were not significant predictors of rape joke endorsement. These results generally do not support the initial hypothesis that age, educational attainment, and sexual orientation would all significantly predict rape joke endorsement. However, these results partially support the hypothesis as sexual orientation did significantly predict rape joke endorsement.

In the second model, hostile sexism emerged as the only significant predictor of rape joke endorsement ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$); age ($\beta = -0.12$, $p > 0.05$), educational attainment ($\beta = 0.04$, $p > 0.05$), sexual orientation ($\beta = 0.09$, $p > 0.05$), masculinity contingency ($\beta = 0.05$, $p > 0.05$), and condition ($\beta = -0.01$, $p > 0.05$) were non-significant predictors of rape joke endorsement. Although hostile sexism was the only significant predictor, the second model accounted for 22.2% of the variance in rape joke endorsement (R^2 change = 0.17, $p < 0.01$). The nature of this association was such that higher hostile sexism scores predicted greater rape joke endorsement.

Importantly, condition ($\beta = -0.01, p > 0.05$) was not a significant predictor of rape joke endorsement in this model, demonstrating that participants in the threat condition did not attempt to recover from a masculinity threat by endorsing rape jokes more highly than participants in the no-threat condition; thus, the primary hypothesis of the current work was unsupported.

Further, in the third model of the hierarchical regression only hostile sexism significantly predicted rape joke endorsement ($p < 0.01$), with higher hostile sexism scores predicting higher rape joke endorsement. The model again accounted for 22.2% of the variance in rape joke endorsement (R^2 change = 0.001, $p > 0.05$). The moderation hypotheses (4 and 5) were unsupported, given that neither the interaction between hostile sexism and condition ($\beta = -0.05, p > 0.05$) nor between masculinity contingency and condition ($\beta = 0.05, p > 0.05$) were significant predictors of rape joke endorsement. According to these results, neither masculinity contingency nor hostile sexism moderated the effects of the masculinity threat on rape joke endorsement. Because the only significant predictor in this model was hostile sexism, it would appear that hostile sexism alone accounts for 22.2% of the variance in rape joke endorsement. This finding is important because it points to an individual difference factor, hostile sexism, as a key predictor of the endorsement of rape jokes. Results of the hierarchical regression analysis are included in Table 3.

As planned, potential differences were explored between participants who identified as heterosexual and those who identified as a sexual minority (homosexual, bisexual, pansexual, or asexual). A MANOVA revealed that heterosexual male participants' scores of rape joke endorsement ($p < 0.05$), rape myth acceptance ($p < 0.01$), hostile sexism ($p < 0.01$), and masculinity contingency ($p < 0.01$) differed significantly than non-heterosexual male participants' scores. The reported endorsement of all of these variables was greater in heterosexual men compared to sexual minority men. A comparison of the means and standard

deviations of scores on these variables between heterosexual and sexual minority men is included in Table 4.

Discussion

The current study adds to the existing literature on whether sexist humor increases rape myth acceptance and self-reported rape proclivity by examining the phenomenon in a different context, specifically the context of rape jokes. Rape humor is an important area to study because it is conceptually included under the umbrellas of sexist and violent humor, but had not yet been tested for its effects on sexual attitudes and behavior. Since the current work was initially proposed, one study on rape humor has been published (Sriwattanakomen, 2017), which found that sexist jokes, including rape jokes, increased rape myth acceptance among men high in hostile sexism. The current study investigated whether rape jokes might increase rape myth acceptance and self-reported rape proclivity within the context of a masculinity threat, and whether hostile sexism and masculinity contingency would moderate these effects. In this way, the current research builds upon and adds a different perspective to the established body of literature on sexist humor and the emerging literature on rape humor.

The current study also examined whether men who received a masculinity threat would endorse rape jokes more highly than men in a control condition. The results of the hierarchical regression indicated that condition was not a significant predictor of rape joke endorsement, demonstrating that rape joke endorsement scores did not significantly differ between the threat and control condition. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was unsupported. This result is surprising because recent research has found that men endorse sexist humor more following exposure to a masculinity threat manipulation (O'Connor et al., 2017), and rape jokes are a subset of sexist humor. There are a few potential explanations for this non-significant result.

One possible explanation concerns sampling differences between the current work and prior research on masculinity threat and sexist humor. The current study was based on a sample that included both college students and non-student men recruited online. As a result, the average age and age range in the present study ($M = 27.07$, Range = 18-79) were higher compared to the majority of masculinity threat studies (Cheryan et al., 2015; Dahl, Vescio & Weaver, 2015; Fowler & Geers, 2017; Glick et al., 2007; Netchaeva, Kouchaki, & Sheppard, 2015; Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2016; Peralta & Tuttle, 2013; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2001; Weaver & Vescio, 2015). The sample in the current work also differed in its inclusion of diversity in sexual orientation identity. Only one masculinity threat study to date (Glick et al., 2007) has reported a sample including sexual minorities ($n = 3$, 5.66%) and no known masculinity threat studies have included a significant number of them. Therefore, it is possible that sampling differences may have contributed to the lack of effect of masculinity threat on rape joke endorsement in the current study.

Another potential explanation concerns the manipulation itself. A reasonably high number of participants (16.5%, $n = 41$) were excluded from analyses for indicating knowledge of the false feedback manipulation and/or the purpose of the manipulation, which may point to a problem with the manipulation. Prior research on masculinity threat has reported much lower exclusion rates based on suspicion (Dahl, Vescio & Weaver, 2015; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2011; Weaver & Vesico, 2015) ranging from 0% to 7.73%. However, a larger number of masculinity threat studies (Braly, Parent & DeLucia, 2017; Cheryan et al., 2015; Fowler & Geers, 2017; Glick et al., 2007; Netchaeva, Kouchaki, & Sheppard, 2015; Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2016) have not reported their exclusion rates, making it difficult to comprehensively compare the exclusion rate in the current work to the masculinity threat literature as a whole.

Moreover, in designing the current study, it was difficult to obtain the exact manipulation materials used in prior masculinity threat research. Most of the published studies on masculinity threat do not include their manipulation materials verbatim and many describe the manipulation with vague terminology about providing false feedback that made it difficult to exactly replicate the manipulation without obtaining the materials directly from the author(s). Further complicating this picture is the fact that throughout the masculinity threat literature, there are a variety of methods used to induce masculinity threat. This lack of uniformity in manipulation design and failure to supply or accurately report the details of manipulation materials used introduces a source of variability in the literature, likely contributing to variability in research results between studies.

Hostile sexism was an important factor in the current work. Because the only significant predictor in the hierarchical regression models 2 and 3 was hostile sexism, it would appear that hostile sexism scores alone accounts for almost a quarter (22.2%) of the variance in rape joke endorsement. This finding is important because it highlights an important individual difference characteristic in predicting rape joke endorsement and sheds light on what types of men tend to endorse rape jokes. Unsurprisingly, men who are more sexist tend to endorse rape jokes more highly than men lower in hostile sexism. This finding makes conceptual sense and supports previous findings of men high in hostile sexism tending to endorse sexist humor more than men lower in hostile sexism (Ford et al., 2001, Ford et al., 2008).

In support of Hypothesis 2, greater rape joke endorsement was associated with greater rape myth acceptance. Rape myth acceptance has been connected to a host of sexist and hegemonic ideologies of masculinity along with a range of negative outcomes in previous research (Aronowitz, Lambert, & Davidoff, 2012; Barnett, Hale, & Sligar, 2017; Bohner, Jarvis, Eyssel, & Siebler, 2005; Bohner, Siebler, & Schmelcher, 2006; Chapleau & Oswald, 2013;

Hockett et al., 2009; Taschler & West, 2017). Examples of variables that have been linked to rape myth acceptance include aggressiveness and anger, adversarial sexual beliefs, victim blaming, violent sexuality, and general negative affect, among others (Hockett et al., 2009). The connection between rape joke endorsement and rape myth acceptance found in the current work speaks to one of the ways in which the endorsement of rape jokes is connected to harmful ideologies that support rape myths and, by extension, contribute to the broader culture of sexual assault and sexism within the United States.

Further, the tenets of prejudiced norm theory (Ford & Ferguson, 2004), which state that disparagement humor creates and reinforces norms of tolerance to discrimination and hostility toward the targeted group, were supported by this result given that endorsement of rape jokes was associated with greater rape myth acceptance. The endorsement of rape jokes may have created and/or reinforced a norm of tolerance to discrimination and hostility toward women, particularly women who have experienced sexual assault, resulting in greater rape myth acceptance scores. Moreover, this finding supports previous research findings that exposure to sexist humor increases tolerance of sexist behavior towards women (Ford, 2000; Ford et al., 2008; Mallet et al., 2016).

The correlation between rape joke endorsement and self-reported rape proclivity was not significant and did not support Hypothesis 3, although a floor effect of very low reported rape proclivity likely affected this result. The current study also examined whether hostile sexism moderated the effect of masculinity threat on rape joke endorsement (Hypothesis 4) in light of previous research demonstrating the moderating role of hostile sexism on masculinity threat effects (Ford, 2000; Ford et al., 2008). The potential moderating effect of masculinity contingency (Hypothesis 5), or how much an individual's self-worth is tied to their masculinity, was examined as well. These moderation inquiries were pursued in order to gain a better

understanding of how individual differences might affect the strength of a masculinity threat. However, neither hostile sexism nor masculinity contingency were found to moderate the effect of the masculinity threat on rape joke endorsement, leaving hypothesis 4 and 5 unsupported. These results are unsurprising, given that the masculinity threat feedback did not lead to significant effects in rape joke endorsement; therefore, there was no effect to moderate. Further research is needed to examine other potential individual difference variables that may moderate the effect of a masculinity threat in men.

Interestingly, exploratory analyses found that heterosexual participants reported significantly greater rape joke endorsement, rape myth acceptance, hostile sexism, and masculinity contingency compared to sexual minority participants. These findings contribute to the literature on differences between heterosexual and sexual minority men in sexist and hegemonic masculinity ideologies. Although some research has shown that sexual minority men can endorse sexist ideologies such as anti-effeminacy attitudes (Hunt, Fasoli, Carnaghi, & Cadinu, 2016; Taywaditep, 2001) and rape myth acceptance beliefs (Schulze & Koon-Magnin, 2017) more so than women and/or as commonly as heterosexual men, other research has shown that sexual minority men are actually *less* likely to endorse sexist ideologies such as rape myths acceptance beliefs (Davies & McCartney, 2003).

Generally, however, there is a significant lack of research on how likely sexual minority men are to endorse sexist jokes, rape myth acceptance, hostile sexism, and masculinity contingency. In fact, the vast majority of the research conducted on precarious manhood theory and beliefs (Herek, 1986; Bosson & Vandello, 2011; Vandello & Bosson, 2013; Vandello et al., 2008; Netchaeva, Kouchaki, & Sheppard, 2015), masculinity contingency (Burkley, Wong, & Bell, 2016), masculinity threat (Braly, Parent, & DeLucia, 2017; Cheryan et al., 2015; Dahl,

Vescio & Weaver, 2015; Fowler & Geers, 2017; Netchaeva, Kouchaki, & Sheppard, 2015; Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2016; O'Connor, Ford, & Banos, 2017; Peralta & Tuttle, 2013; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2001; Weaver & Vescio, 2015), rape myth acceptance (Aronowitz, Lambert, & Davidoff, 2012; Barnett, Hale, & Sligar, 2017; Bohner, Jarvis, Eyssel, & Siebler, 2005; Bohner, Siebler, & Schmelcher, 2006; Chapleau & Oswald, 2013; Hockett et al., 2009; Taschler & West, 2017), rape proclivity (Thomae, & Viki, 2013; Thomas & Gorzalka, 2013; Viki, Thomae, Cullen, & Fernandez, 2007) and sexist humor (Ford, 2000; Ford, Boxer, Armstrong, & Edel, 2008; Ford & Ferguson, 2004; Ford, Wentzel, & Lorion, 2001; Ford, Woodzicka, Greenwood & Isbell, 2002; Triplett, & Kochersberger, 2013; O'Connor, Ford, & Banos, 2017; Romero-Sánchez et al., 2017; Rosenberg, Gates, Richmond, & Sinno, 2016; Ryan, & Kanjorski, 1998; Thomae & Viki, 2013; Viki, Thomae, Cullen, & Fernandez, 2007) only use samples of heterosexual men or fail to report the sexual orientation of the men in the samples altogether. The current work addressed this gap and suggests that sexual minority men may endorse sexist and hegemonic masculinity ideologies less than their heterosexual peers.

The differences found between heterosexual and non-heterosexual men in these variables are important because they carry implications for the focus of education and intervention efforts to decrease harmful, sexist ideologies which are supported and perpetuated through rape joke endorsement, rape myth acceptance, hostile sexism, and masculinity contingency. If heterosexual men are more likely to endorse these ideologies than non-heterosexual men, educational and intervention efforts may benefit from focusing more heavily on the heterosexual male population. Further research with a more representative population in terms of race and educational attainment is needed to provide more clarity on this issue.

These results also raise concerns about theory and research on manhood and masculinity, which often asserts broad, overarching claims about the precarious nature of manhood and the

toxicity of hegemonic masculinity ideologies generally (Bosson & Vandello, 2011; Burkley, Wong, & Bell, 2016; Herek, 1986; Vandello & Bosson, 2013; Vandello et al., 2008; Netchaeva, Kouchaki, & Sheppard, 2015). Research on masculinity threat as a whole is based upon the theory that manhood is precarious (Vandello et al., 2008) and, as such, threats to a man's masculinity induce a state of anxiety, causing psychological and physiological reactions of overcompensation in order to regain a sense of masculinity. There is a wealth of empirical research to support this claim in heterosexual samples of men (Brady, Parent & DeLucia, 2017; Cheryan et al., 2015; Dahl, Vescio & Weaver, 2015; Fowler & Geers, 2017; Netchaeva, Kouchaki, & Sheppard, 2015; Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2016; O'Connor, Ford, & Banos, 2017; Peralta & Tuttle, 2013; Schmitt & Branscombe, 2001; Weaver & Vescio, 2015), yet very little to support this claim in sexual minority men (Taywaditep, 2001). If one's manhood is less central to the sense of self of sexual minority men than heterosexual men as the current work has found, some re-thinking of the nature of manhood and masculinity in sexual minority men is in order. The differences found in the current research between heterosexual and sexual minority men in their masculinity contingency, how significant their sense of manliness is to their sense of self, is an important step in bridging the gap of understanding adherence to hegemonic masculinity and manhood in heterosexual and sexual minority men.

Strengths and Limitations

There are certain strengths to the current study. The majority of research that has been conducted surrounding sexist humor and masculinity threats has been limited to heterosexual undergraduate student samples. The current research sought to add to the literature by examining these phenomena within a sample of a diverse age range (18-79) and a higher mean age (27), thereby increasing the external validity of the findings. Furthermore, a more diverse sample was

collected in terms of sexual orientation compared to the majority of research within the referenced literatures, thereby further increasing the external validity of the findings.

There are limitations to the current study, however. First, the results of this study are likely limited to a patriarchal cultural context in which men hold more sociopolitical power than women. Further, the sample in the current work was less racially diverse and more educated than the general U.S. population of men, and therefore cannot be considered representative and the results should not be interpreted to generalize to US men overall. Further research is needed to examine these effects in a more representative sample of men. An additional limitation of this study is that the jokes used were sorted into categories by the researcher, as opposed to using independent judges. It is possible that this categorization system could have introduced error into the results; therefore, in future research, independent judges should be utilized to validate the categorization of jokes.

Another limitation of the current study is the number of participants who indicated knowledge of the manipulation deception and/or the purpose of the study during debriefing (n= 41). It is possible that the order of the funnel debriefing questions may have created an awareness in participants of the deception used and/or the purpose of this study. Several participants communicated in the open-ended response to the item inquiring about whether they thought deception was used in the survey that they were only aware of the deception and/or began to guess the true purpose of the study following the debriefing questions inquiring as to whether participants thought the 'gender knowledge' feedback was accurate, whether a 'gender knowledge' score could affect subsequent responses, and whether they believed their 'gender knowledge' score affected their subsequent responses. It is possible that less than 41 participants may have been aware of the deception used in the manipulation prior to the funnel debriefing

questions about the 'gender knowledge' score, reflecting a potential limitation in the design of the debriefing procedure.

There is also certainly a possibility of social desirability affecting the responses of participants in the current work. Although the data were collected anonymously online in order to reduce social desirability concerns, participant responses can always be affected by social desirability. This is especially true when collecting responses on subjects as socially undesirable as rape myths, hostile sexism, rape joke endorsement, and rape proclivity. The floor effect found for self-reported rape proclivity was particularly surprising, even given the socially undesirable nature of reporting rape proclivity, in light of previous research finding that participants report rape proclivity at much higher rates. A recent study found male participants reported rape proclivity around 35% of the time (Romero-Sánchez et al., 2017). Additionally, Lisek et al. (2010) found that 61% of the male participants in their sample reported actually having committed acts fitting the description of rape and/or sexual assault. Given that recent research has found much higher rates of reported rape proclivity, the fact that no participants reported rape proclivity is striking. One alternative explanation for this result is that they may be due to sampling differences compared to previous research. Another alternative explanation for this result is that social desirability concerns surrounding topics of sexual assault may have been particularly high during the time that the responses were collected (January and February of 2018) due to the salience of the #MeToo movement to acknowledge and ameliorate the problem of sexual assault and harassment gaining popularity in the U.S. media. As conversations surrounding the issue of sexual assault and harassment gained in popularity and multiple high profile reports surfaced of powerful men being exposed and socially punished for sexually harassing and/or assaulting (predominantly) women, the socially undesirable nature of sexual assault may have been particularly salient in the minds of the male participants in this study. As

social desirability was not measured, the extent of potential social desirability effects are unknown. More research is needed to examine whether social desirability in responding to items related to sexual assault is particularly high during this socio-political moment.

Concluding Remarks

Although the masculinity threat manipulation did not result in male participants attempting to recover by endorsing rape jokes more highly than control participants as hypothesized, the current work did uncover some noteworthy findings. Importantly, higher rape joke endorsement was moderately correlated with greater rape myth acceptance, highlighting a potential connection between the endorsement of jokes about sexual assault and harmful ideologies that perpetuate a broader rape culture. Further research is needed to explore additional ways in which the endorsement of rape jokes is linked to factors contributing to a culture of sexual assault and harassment. Exploratory analyses revealed that heterosexual male participants had significantly higher scores in rape joke endorsement, rape myth acceptance, hostile sexism, and masculinity contingency than sexual minority male participants, pointing to a trend in heterosexual men holding more sexist and hegemonic masculine ideologies than their non-heterosexual male peers. Future research might explore these findings in greater depth and, ideally, recruit a more representative sample of U.S. men and/or expand participation to men from other cultures.

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Table 1. Sample Demographic Characteristics

Race	White		Racial minority			
Percentage	84.1		14			
Number	174		39			

Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	Homosexual	Bisexual	Pansexual	Asexual
Percentage	79.2	10.6	4.8	1.9	1.4
Number	164	22	10	4	3

Education	Some high school	High school graduate	Some college	Associate's	Bachelor's	Master's	Doctorate
Percentage	1	9.2	55.1	4.8	15.5	10.1	3.9
Number	2	19	114	10	32	21	8

Table 2. Correlations among study variables

	Rape Joke Endorsement	Rape Myth Acceptance	Masculinity Contingency	Hostile Sexism	Rape Proclivity	Age	Education
Rape Joke Endorsement		-0.45**	0.27**	0.45**	-0.07	-0.19*	-0.20*
Rape Myth Acceptance	-0.45**		-0.40**	-0.63**	-0.19*	0.12	0.21**
Masculinity Contingency	0.27**	-0.40**		0.41**	-0.02	-0.15*	-0.17*
Hostile Sexism	0.45**	-0.63**	0.41**		-0.03	-0.09	-0.17*
Rape Proclivity	-0.07	-0.19*	-0.02	-0.03		-0.06	-0.06
Age	-0.19*	0.12	-0.15*	-0.09	-0.06		
Education	-0.20*	0.21**	-0.17*	-0.17*	-0.06	0.57**	

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Table 3. Multiple regression analyses predicting rape joke endorsement

Variable	Step 1		Step 2		Step 3	
	β	t	β	t	B	t
Covariates						
Age	-0.12	-1.48	-0.12	-1.59	-0.12	-1.63
Sexual Orientation	0.21***	3.17	0.09	1.47	0.09	1.50
Educational Attainment	-0.01	-0.18	0.04	0.60	0.04	0.60
Hostile Sexism			0.41***	6.10	0.44***	4.67
Masculinity Contingency			0.05	0.08	0.04	0.40
Condition			-0.01	-0.13	-0.02	-0.11
Hostile Sexism * Condition					-0.05	-0.43
Masculinity Contingency * Condition					0.05	0.22
<i>Df</i>	3, 230		3, 227		2, 225	
R^2	0.049		0.22		0.22	
<i>F</i> for change in R^2 from previous step			0.00		0.91	

Note: Sexual orientation identity coded as 0 = sexual minority and 1 = heterosexual, Educational Attainment coded as 0 = less than a Bachelor's degree and 1 = Bachelor's degree or higher, * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$

Table 4. Estimated means and standard deviations of study variables for heterosexual and sexual minority men

Construct	Heterosexual Men <i>n</i> = 164	Sexual Minority Men <i>n</i> = 39	F
Rape Joke Endorsement	13.15 (7.43)	9.92 (6.53)	8.92
Rape Myth Acceptance	88.35 (14.14)	95.64 (12.35)	9.41
Masculinity Contingency	36.55 (12.72)	28.74 (10.21)	12.78
Hostile Sexism	11.17 (8.91)	6.54 (9.34)	15.91

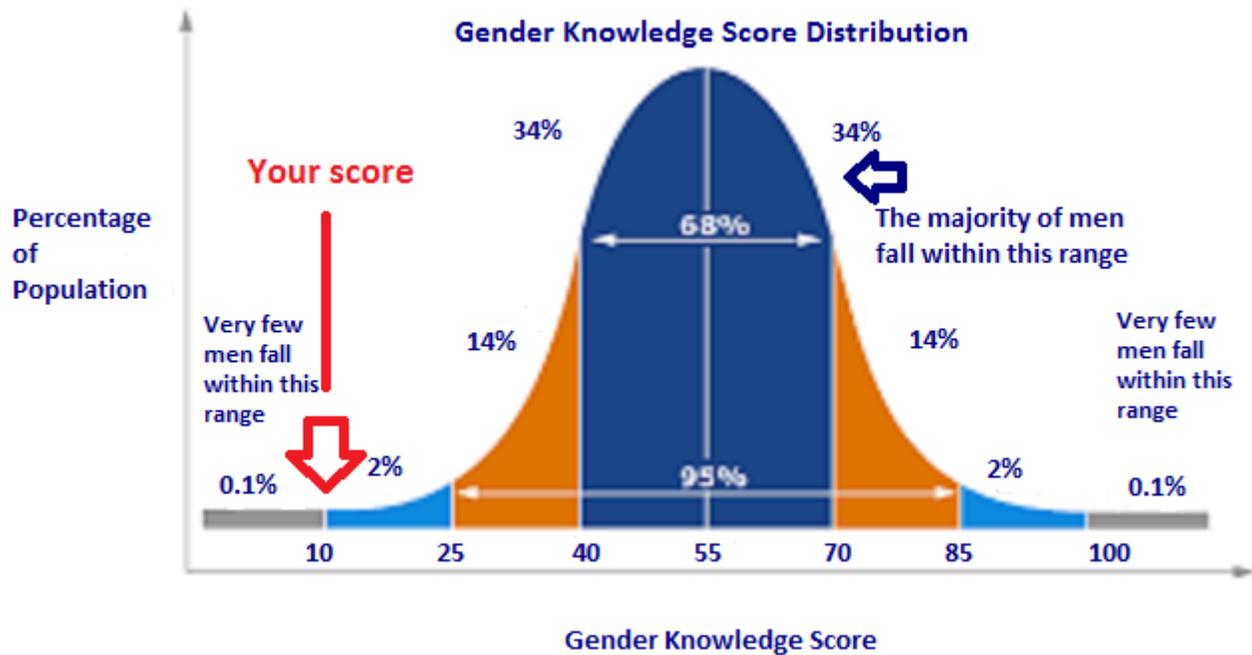
Note: Numbers indicate estimated means, numbers in parentheses indicate standard deviations.

Appendix A

Masculinity threat bogus feedback

Participants in the masculinity threat condition received bogus feedback that their gender knowledge score was below that of the average male. The bogus feedback was provided through the following diagram, which illustrates the participant’s bogus score among the supposed distribution of scores for “gender knowledge” and accompanying explanation.

Your score on the preceding gender knowledge test is provided below in red.



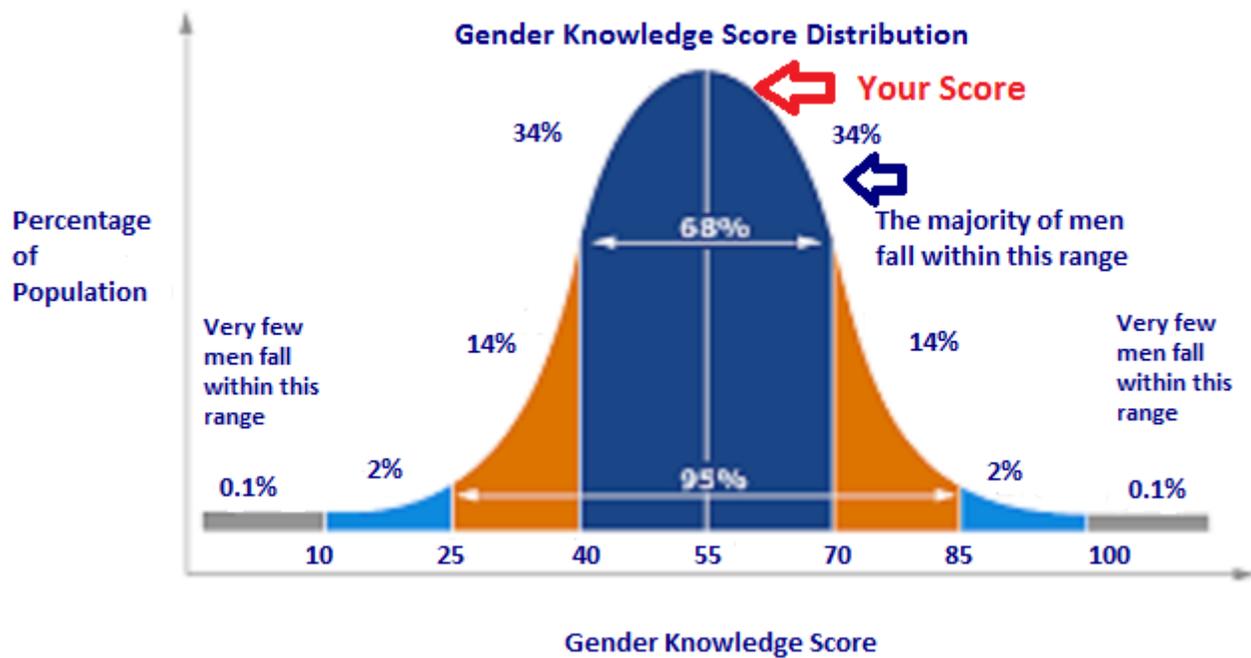
Your score: 10

Two percent of all men’s scores fall within the range of 10-25 when taking this test. Your score of 10 falls within this range. Your score indicates that you fell two ranges below the average score range (40-70) for gender knowledge among men.

No-threat condition bogus feedback

Participants in the no-threat condition received bogus feedback that their gender knowledge score was average for men. The bogus feedback was provided through the following diagram, which illustrates the participant’s bogus score among the supposed distribution of scores for “gender knowledge” and accompanying explanation.

Your score on the preceding gender knowledge test is provided below in red.



Your score: 58

Sixty eight percent of all men’s scores fall within the range of 40-70 when taking this test. Your score of 58 falls within this range. Your score indicates that you are within the average, or “normal,” range for male gender knowledge scores.

A manipulation check at the end of the survey asked participants to respond to the following item:

Which option best describes where your gender knowledge score fell in the distribution of male scores?

A. Below the average for most men (this answer is correct for the threat condition)

B. Above the average for most men

C. Average for most men (this answer is correct for the control condition)

Participants in the masculinity threat condition who did not choose answer A (Below the average for most men) and participants in the control condition who did not choose answer C (Average for most men) were eliminated from analyses.

Appendix B

Neutral Jokes

My mom said I'd never amount to anything because I procrastinate too much. I said "Oh yeah? Just you wait."

Never trust an atom. They make up everything!

I buy all my guns from a guy named T-rex. He's a small arms dealer.

Why did the golfer wear two pairs of pants? In case he got a hole in one.

Past, present, and future walk into a bar. It was tense.

What do you call someone who refuses to fart in public? A private tutor.

I couldn't believe that the highway department called my dad a thief. But when I got home, all the signs were there.

As a scarecrow, people say I'm outstanding in my field. But hay, it's in my jeans!

Did you hear the joke about the elevator? It was wrong on so many levels.

What happened when the semi-colon broke the grammar laws? He was given two consecutive sentences.

Distractor Jokes:

What type of bird gives the best head? A swallow.

What does the sign on an out-of-business brothel say? Beat it, we're closed.

What do you get when you cross a penis with a potato? A dictator.

How is sex like a game of bridge? If you have a great hand you don't need a partner.

What's the difference between a tire and 365 used condoms? One's a Goodyear, the other's a great year.

Rape Jokes:

What do Jedi and rapists have in common? They both use the force.

My wife was gang raped by a troupe of mime artists. They performed unspeakable acts on her.

If sex without your wife's consent is called rape, then shopping without your husband's consent should be called robbery!

Surprise sex is the best thing to wake up to! Unless you're in prison.

Are rape jokes funny? I don't know...some of them are a bit forced.

Appendix C

Funnel debriefing questions

Each of the following questions will be displayed on their own pages in sequential order.

1. “What is your impression of the purpose of this study?” (open-ended response)
2. “Do you believe the gender knowledge test score report provided was accurately reflecting your scores on the gender knowledge test that you took?”
 - Yes
 - No
3. If you answered no to the previous question, please explain why you don't believe the gender knowledge test score report provided was accurately reflecting your score. (open-ended response)
4. Do you think that a gender knowledge score report could have the ability to influence subsequent responses?
 - Yes
 - No
5. Do you think that your gender knowledge score report influenced your responses to subsequent items?
 - Yes
 - No
6. Is your impression that deception was used in this study?
 - Yes
 - No

7. If you answered yes to the previous question, please indicate what deception you believe was used during this study. (open-ended response)

Debriefing message

The purpose of this survey was to test whether responses to different types of jokes and social attitudes would differ depending on whether an individual was experiencing a threat to an aspect of their social identity versus when individuals were not experiencing a threat to an aspect of their social identity. The social identity this study used was masculinity, which is why this study only recruited male participants. Another question this study was designed to test was whether various ideological beliefs moderated the relationship between an identity threat and responses to different types of jokes and social attitudes.

Deception was necessarily used in this study in order to test these research questions. Half of the individuals who participated in this study were randomly assigned into a threat condition or a control (no threat) condition. The feedback provided about gender knowledge test scores was false in order to induce a temporary perception of threat to an individual's sense of masculinity in the threat condition, or to affirm an individual's sense of masculinity in the control condition. All participants in the control condition group were provided with the same false feedback that their gender knowledge test scores were average for male respondents. All of the participants in the threat condition were provided with the same false feedback that their gender knowledge test scores were below average for male respondents.

This survey was titled "Humor and Personality" in order to avoid selection effects that would occur in sampling if the study was more specifically and accurately titled as a study on social identity threat, humor, and social attitudes.

The responses you have provided in this study will help the researcher to answer their research questions about the relationship between identity threat and responses to jokes and social attitudes.

Again, the data you have provided is entirely anonymous and there is nothing which connects you to the responses you have provided within this survey.

If you would like the researcher to remove your responses from their anonymous data, please choose “no.” If you consent to the researcher using your anonymous responses in their data, please choose “yes.”

Yes

No

If you would like to learn more about this study or have any questions or concerns, please contact the researcher at aecipriano@bsu.edu or the researcher’s committee chair, Dr. Justin Lehmilller, at jjlehmilller@bsu.edu.