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# Young Men's Vulnerability in Relation to Women's Resistance to Emphasized Femininity

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## Abstract

This study uses a critical discursive approach to examine young men's vulnerabilities in relation to emphasized femininity. Since masculinity is inextricably defined in relation to femininity, men's achievement of masculinity is intimately dependent on, and vulnerable to, women's complicity with traditional or emphasized femininity. Analysis centers on men's negotiations of women's resistance to one of three forms of emphasized femininity: (1) compliance or receptivity to men's sexual advances and desires, (2) emotional caretaking, and (3) passivity. Rather than ratcheting up traditionally heroic and macho masculine responses, the young men managed vulnerability through self-deprecation, nonchalance, and scripting to construct an antiheroic and ordinary masculinity. Insights into the nature of men's vulnerability in relation to women's experience of emphasized femininity are discussed with the aim of expanding theoretical models of "men's pain," models that continue to pivot predominantly around hegemonic masculinity.

## Keywords

men's vulnerability, emphasized femininity, hegemonic masculinity, men's pain

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Over the last couple of decades, research within the new psychology of men's studies has revealed that traditional forms of masculinity may pose significant risks to men's psychological and physical health (Kimmel and Messner 1992; Levant and Pollock 1995). Certain male problems, such as aggression, violence, homophobia, sexism, detached fathering, hypersexuality, and neglect of health, have been shown to be significantly related to men's internalization of traditional masculine gender roles (Levant and Pollock 1995). These findings represented a historical shift in conceptualizations about "men's vulnerability." During the mythopoetic men's movement of the 1970s and early 1980s, men were thought to be vulnerable to and wounded by a kind of soft masculinity; men were thus encouraged to reclaim a wilder, more muscular masculine authenticity (for a review, see Kimmel 1995). As a more feminist-inspired, new psychology of men's research gained traction in the early 1990s, notions of "men's vulnerability" also shifted. Research began to examine the ways that men are vulnerable not to soft masculinity but to the effects of traditional and restrictive masculinities.

As a result, there has amassed a rich vein of research that has focused on the ways that various groups of men may become vulnerable within contexts where restrictive emotionality, competitiveness, achievement, antifemininity, sexual virility, homophobia, and self-reliance are normative (see Holland et al 1994, 1998; Hyde et al 2008; Kimmel 2003, 2009). For groups of men who conform to restrictive masculinities, research has shown that they may become vulnerable to the costs of such conformity, which may include sexual disease, depression, substance abuse, physical health problems, addiction, alexithymia, and body dysmorphia (see Frosh, Phoenix, and Pattman 2002; Mac an Ghaill 1994). Programs have thus emerged that help men avoid these costs by encouraging emotional disclosures and expressivity and discouraging risky sexual behavior and physical violence (see Izugbara 2008; Spencer 2007). For groups of men who do *not* conform enough to restrictive masculinities, research has shown that these men are vulnerable to ostracism, teasing, and even physical harm for failing to live up to traditional masculine standards. Consonant among these strands of research is an approach to men's vulnerability that is centrally conceptualized in relation to hegemonic masculinity, that is, in terms of the vulnerability of conforming too much (the collateral costs) or the vulnerability of nonconformity in environments tightly governed by hegemonic masculinity norms.

### **Men's Vulnerability in Relation to Emphasized Femininity**

Conspicuously absent in the empirical literature is research exploring men's vulnerability in relation to dominant and traditional models of femininity or in relation to what Connell (1987) has called "emphasized femininity" that refers to a range of traditional femininity norms that encourage women to accommodate men's desires for sex, attractive female bodies, power, and control. Broadly, traditional or "emphasized femininity" norms encourage female passivity, compliance with men's sexual advances, an unremitting desire to have a romantic partner, a pressure

to be sentimental and emotionally committed and caring, a pressure to attract the gaze of men, and a pressure to manufacture romantic feelings and mitigate unhappiness or abuse (see Bartky 1990; Fine 1988; Korobov and Thorne 2009; Lawes 1999; Phillips 2000; Tolman 2002). Since masculinity is inextricably defined in relation to femininity (Connell 1987; Cornish 1999; Gough 2001; Holland et al. 1994), men's achievement of masculinity is intimately dependent on, and vulnerable to, women's complicity with emphasized femininity.

Conceptualizing men's vulnerability in relation to emphasized femininity requires a focus on the ways men become vulnerable in relationship with women who resist emphasized femininity. When women resist the proscriptions of emphasized femininity, men are placed in a vulnerable position, since men often measure their masculinity against women's acquiescence to traditional femininity (Tolman 2002; Ussher 1997). When women resist emphasized femininity, their sexuality and the material reality of their bodies and desires constitute a potential threat to conventional masculinity. Men become increasingly vulnerable as restrictive femininity dissolves and women's embodiment of multiple femininities expands. As women conform less to the stereotypical cultural notions of emphasized femininity, men must negotiate the dilemma of incorporating women's resistance into their masculine identity projects.

While there is a rich tradition of feminist research on women's resistance to emphasized femininity (e.g., Herridge, Shaw, and Mannell 2003; Leahy 1994; Tolman 2002; Wilkins 2004), as well as a range of theoretical discussion concerning the ways women's resistance to traditional femininity norms places men in a vulnerable position (Cornish 1999; Holland et al. 1994; Seidler 1989, Ussher 1997), there is exceptionally little *empirical* research that examines how men negotiate their masculinity while partnered with women who resist emphasized femininity. In one apposite study exploring young men's vulnerability to women's sexuality, Janet Holland and colleagues (1994) found that when in relationship with sexually experienced or "knowing females," young men would mitigate their vulnerability by telling "performance stories" that featured boasts and even lies to firm up their own sexual experience and prowess, or else they would denigrate the sexually experienced woman by objectifying her, dismissing her, or by attributing negative attributes to her (see also, Hyde et al. 2008). In short, the young men managed women's resistance to emphasized femininity by ratcheting up traditional masculine bravado and sexism.

## **Managing Vulnerability through Ordinarity**

Although this male response is stereotypical and thus unsurprising, there is growing evidence that suggests that this traditionally "macho" or "heroic" masculine position may now exist in a synergistic relationship with a knowingly antimacho and antiheroic position of "ordinarity," particularly for young adult men in Western cultures. Evidence for this derives from two sources. First, critical-gender research

on media depictions of masculinity has revealed the popularity of the lovable-loser everyman who continually tries but fails to emulate the sensitive and domesticated “new man.” These depictions are legion in men’s lifestyle magazines, particularly in sections devoted to lifestyle advice (Benwell 2002). They are also a chief staple in television sitcoms where men are portrayed as hapless, yet affable dads and boyfriends who appear befuddled in relational situations with women (Benwell 2002; Brayton 2007; Messner and Montez de Oca 2005). There are also series such as MTV’s “Jackass,” where failure and bodily injury continually lampoon heroic masculinity (Brayton 2007). The “white-guy-as-loser” trope is ubiquitous in beer commercials (Messner and Montez de Oca 2005), such as Bud Light’s eminently successful “Real Men of Genius” ad campaign. Central to these media depictions are failed versions of hegemonic masculinity. What now appears heroic is the “average-Joe” who is routinely humiliated, not simply because he pursues women “out of his league,” but because he is unapologetically self-accepting about his inability to accommodate women’s increasingly higher expectations when it comes to the emotional maturity and sensitivity expected of male partners.

A second vein of research derives from critical-gender explorations of men’s everyday lives. A range of studies have begun to chart the ways that young men are adept at resisting heroic and macho forms of masculinity, often with irony, playfulness, nonchalance, or self-effacing candor (see Allen 2007; Benwell 2002; Brayton 2007; Messner and Montez de Oca 2005; Korobov 2005, 2006; Korobov and Thorne 2006, 2007). In remarking on the “generous nonchalance” in heterosexual college-aged men’s stories about heterosexual breakups, Gilmartin (2007) and Allen (2007) have reported how men appear invested and caring, but in ways that are casual, retractable, and easily jettisoned. In two similar studies, Korobov and Thorne (2006, 2007) identified that young men would openly display vulnerability in talking about romantic problems but would playfully mitigate the seriousness of such problems so as to appear nonchalant and at times mildly amused by their own and each other’s troubles. The common thread in these studies is that the heroic and macho response may no longer be the only male response to women’s subversion of emphasized femininity. Instead, young men may manage their vulnerability to women’s resistance by practicing ordinariness—that is, an antiheroic and antimacho everyman form of nonchalant masculinity. These newer and more contemporary strategies for accommodating women’s resistance are the focus of the current study.

## **Emerging Adulthood**

Men’s vulnerability to women’s resistance of emphasized femininity may be especially salient and developmentally meaningful for young men during the emerging adult years. Research suggests that emerging adulthood is a time not only when young women begin to resist emphasized femininity norms (Korobov and Thorne 2009; Tolman 2002), but that it is also a period when young men’s intimacy practices begin to expand, possibly so as to be able to cope with the erosion of traditional

gender roles and the impracticality of using stereotypical seduction scripts in real-life intimate relationships (Korobov and Thorne 2006; Tolman et al. 2004; Way and Chu 2004). It is thus during the emerging adult years that young men are likely to begin to experience unique vulnerabilities as an effect of being in more serious, non-parentally regulated, and protracted romantic relationship with women who are themselves beginning to experiment with resistance to traditional femininity norms.

The purpose of this study is to examine emerging adult men's vulnerabilities in relation to emphasized femininity. How do young men negotiate the vulnerability of their female partner's resistance to emphasize femininity norms? And how is the negotiation of such vulnerabilities, particularly during the flux years of emerging adulthood, part of the project of achieving masculinity? Of particular interest is the extent to which negotiations of vulnerability reflect more contemporary forms of nonheroic and ordinary masculinity as opposed to more traditional displays of machismo, seduction, and bravado. Insights into the nature of men's vulnerability in relation to women's experience of emphasized femininity may helpfully expand theoretical models of "men's pain," models that continue to pivot predominantly around hegemonic masculinity. What is needed are theoretical models capable of offering a broader and more relationally nuanced conceptualization of men's vulnerability as an artifact of an evolving engagement not simply with feminism and feminist critique in the abstract, but with the ways feminist-inspired resistance is concretely lived and expressed in actual women's lives.

## The Current Study

Twelve group discussions were conducted with three young, adult male friends per group plus an adult male moderator. Each triad was required to have known each other for at least six months and to have been "good friends" at the time of the study. Each of the thirty-six participants was between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three ( $M = 19.8$  years,  $SD = .8$  years) and was living away from home while enrolled in a public university in northern California. Although the study was open to young men from any ethnic group and sexual orientation, the large majority (89%) of the sample self-identified as either "Caucasian" or "white"; the remainder declined to state ethnicity, or indicated either "Asian" or "Latino" descent. The entire sample self-identified as "heterosexual."

Participants were enlisted informally through general requests for volunteers in both upper- and lower-level social science university courses. The study was described as a research project looking at how young adult same-sex friends talk about their romantic experiences (which included serious dating, casual dating, hooking up, etc.). Participants were told that they would participate in a group discussion where they would be asked to talk openly and casually about their own and their friends' romantic experiences. Small and casual group discussions among close friends were chosen because romantic experiences are one of the most frequently discussed topics within young adult peer groups (Feiring 1999). All of the group

discussions took place in a comfortable room in the alcove of the Psychology building. Each conversation was audio-recorded with permission and fully transcribed (see appendix for transcription conventions). Participants were given \$15 each for their participation. Each group discussion lasted approximately 1.5 hours and generated a total of approximately 980 pages of transcribed dialogue.

## **Identifying Women's Resistance to Emphasized Femininity**

Identifying women's resistance to emphasized femininity began in a quasi-deductive way. We initially perused all stories about romantic/sexual experiences for the features of emphasized femininity identified in previous research on women's relationship with "subordinate femininity," "compulsory heterosexuality," "compulsory romance," or "traditional romance narratives" (Griffin 2000; Hey 1997; Korobov and Thorne 2009; Tolman 2002). In coupling this research with our own awareness as members of a culture in which emphasized femininity norms figure centrally, we then developed our own set of conceptual heuristics to guide us through a quasi-inductive analysis of the men's stories of their romantic/sexual experiences.

This broad and quasi-inductive search revealed that when men narrated accounts of women's resistance to emphasized femininity, the resistance seemed to cluster around one of three broad types of emphasized femininity: (1) compliance or receptivity with respect to men's sexual advances and desires—that is, women resisted men's sexual advances and/or were noncompliant with men's seduction; (2) emotional caretaking—that is, women resisted being the committed, serious, and often primary emotional caretaking partner of the relationship; (3) passivity—that is, women resisted men's boorish behavior through active preemptive action, they were actively sexually promiscuous, or they actively initiated sexually puerile joking. The process of naming, defining, and identifying the parameters of these forms of resistance involved an extensive and iterative process of redefining, expanding, and collapsing definitions, and routinely checking them against the actual data.

### **Analysis**

What follows is an analysis of stories selected to elucidate a range of men's negotiation strategies with respect to the three main types of women's resistance to emphasized femininity. The stories presented here were chosen because they displayed a range of women's resistance formulations within each theme, as well as a range of men's discursive methods of negotiation, thus making for a more economical use of stories. Our attempt is to offer a broad and critical discursive analysis concerning the strategies men use to manage the vulnerability of women's resistance to various facets of emphasized femininity.

## Negotiating Women's Resistance to Compliance/Receptivity to Men's Sexual Desires

In this first story, Kyle's sexual advances are repeatedly rejected by Jamie. Noteworthy is the way Kyle describes his advances and reaction to her rejection.

### Excerpt 1

Participants: Kyle (K), Terry (T), Cal (C), Moderator (M)

1. K: like two weeks ago I went over to Ali's house and there was this girl
2.       Jamie that I'd hooked up with in the past a few times and I was trying
3.       to get her to go back to my place but she wasn't really having it
4.       ((laughter, 1.0))
5. M: what were you saying to try to get her to come back?
6. K: tha:::t's the thing uhmm(hahuh) ((laughs))
7. T: I was there I can vouch [it was like]
8. K: [yea what] I say?
9. T: pretty much that=
10. K: = just 'hey let's go back to my place'
11.       ((laughter, 2.0))
12. T: it's 'are you coming home with me' n'she's like 'nope I'm going to
13.       sleep' [ . . . ]
14. M: I think you got dissed ((all laugh, 1.0)) is that what you think?
15. T: I thought it was pretty funny when we were going home and he calls
16.       her again on the phone n'he's like 'so are you coming over soon?'
17.       ((laughter, 2.0))
18. K: an she did [°not°
19. T: [not ((laughing)) you tried
20. K: I tried (.) that's all that counts

Central to this story, and others like it, is the way Kyle formulates his failed seduction. Kyle formulates his sexual advances in a knowingly glib and unadorned way, assuming an underachieving and self-consciously sabotaging position. Flat pickup lines like "hey let's go back to my place," "are you coming home with me?" and "so are you coming over soon?" violate the masculine dictum to display seduction. Kyle's seduction and gamesmanship are lacking, but strategically so. One way to understand the logic of such staged failure is to interpret it on a broader gender-political level. Being ironic or self-mocking about women's rejection of men's sexual advances is a way of coping with the erosion of the emphasized femininity norm that encourages women to be sexually receptive to men's desires. Kyle's lazy seduction can thus be viewed as a tongue-in-cheek backlash against women's increasing autonomy and social power. Rather than risk being rejected for genuinely trying to attract women, young men might adopt a defensive self-sabotaging position. When

seen in this light, the “trying is all that counts” adage endorsed by Terry and Kyle in lines nineteen to twenty allows men to indirectly define themselves as victims of women’s resistance to the sexual compliance men often seek in response to their attempted seduction.

For the young men in this study, women’s resistance to sexual receptivity undermined the project of masculine seduction. The strategy for handling this usually involved reveling playfully in one’s failed seduction, which meant ratcheting it up through humor, self-effacing candor, and nonchalance so as to appear confident despite rejection. In this next story, Ben assumes an openly ironic and self-deprecating posture to manage rejection.

Excerpt 2

Participants: Ben (B), Chris (C), Kevin (K), Moderator (M)

1. B: that was the night that we took that the Night Owl home
2. K: an you tried to hook up with one of our friend’s little sisters
3. C: co::ld
4. K: a freshman
5. B: a fa:resh::man (.) that’s right
6. C: ((laughing)) oh that’s not bad
7. M: how old is she?
8. K: he got denied though (.) many times
9. B: ((laughing)) I:: didn’t even try
10. K: ((laughing)) hahahheheh
11. K: dude you were talking about it the WHOLE next day
12. B: I was talking about her (.) yeah
13. K: no (.) you were talking about her the WHOLE next day
14. B: yea I was talking about her (1.0) okay I was (.) GUILTY
15. M: he got rejected?
16. K: uh I guess (1.0) nah (.) not really but
17. B: no man (.) she made me her friend on *Facebook* the next day
18. ((everyone laughs, 3.0))
19. K: [NO DUDE (.) come on
20. C: [OH YEAH (.) A FRIEND (.) YOU’RE IN dude
21. B: fuck(huh) yeah::: ((laughing))

Ben strategically ironizes each aspect of the story that has the potential to threaten his alignment with traditional masculinity, that is, her young age (line 5), his failed gamesmanship (line 9), his subsequent preoccupation with her despite being denied (line 14), and her lack of romantic interest in him (lines 17 and 21). His friends collude in this project, playfully mocking her young age (line 6), his excessive interest in her (lines 11 and 13), and her lack of obvious romantic interest in him (line 20). Yet, at each of these junctures, he displays just enough ironic self-deprecation to



stymie his friends' critiques. In short, every aspect of failure that could potentially weaken Ben's alignment with traditional masculinity is inoculated against and subsequently transformed into fodder for Ben's personal project (which is equally masculine) of appearing self-reflexive, good-natured, and entertaining. What becomes obvious is that there is nothing necessarily lost in terms of masculine status by playing up romantic failure.

Far from being innocuous, celebrations of women's rejection of sexual receptivity often perpetuate misogyny. Celebrating rejection enables the relative stability of male power over women in heterosexual relationships. Rejection and failed seduction can thus be desirous for men, both personally and homosocially, if men can ironize their failure and smuggle in an image of confidence, independence, and nonchalance about such failure. For women, managing failure is trickier, since success in a romantic relationship is a central feature in the ideology of Western heterosexual romance for young women (Fine 1988; Tolman 2002). In contrast, men do not have to succeed at romance to satisfy the dictates of traditional masculinity; they simply have to "get laid." These first two stories, therefore, perpetuate a heteropatriarchal system where men have more freedom to fail, and thus more power, because there is less at stake in terms of a threat to their gendered status.

In some instances, the young men downplayed failure, as Terry does in the following excerpt. He reluctantly admits that he "got used," though he manages the vulnerability of this by insinuating that he did enjoy some sexual contact with her before she ended it (lines 9 and 15). His friends subvert this move, and instead position him back within a space of vulnerability and rejection, revealing how men may use women's rejection of sexual receptivity to both tease and affiliate with their male friends, thus policing masculinity and promoting sociality.

Excerpt 3

Participants: Kyle (K), Terry (T), Cal (C), Moderator (M)

1. T: I tried hooking up with her again and she rejected me [ . . . ]
2.       she would just kinda lead me on (.) kinda give me the
3.       feeling that she was like dumping her boyfriend
4. C: she has ANOTHER NEW boyfriend now (.) by the way
5. T: yea I know (.) I know (.) and uh (.) damn (.) yeah (.) she just
6.       led me on to believe that she was gonna dump her boyfriend
7. M: do you feel like you got used?
8. T: OH:: NO:: (.) no (.) I mean I guess yah (.) uh ((laughing)) but
9.       I did get some of what I wanted out of it
10. K: no you didn't (.) you got kicked out of her house
11. T: oh yeah ((laughs)) I mean I could've if I wanted gotten more
12. M: but you still were happy with like=
13. K: = happy [about getting rejected
14. M: [being around her (.) maybe?

15. T: ((laughing)) I did at least like the physical aspect of it [ . . . ]
16. K: =>she wasn't cool an she was playing you<
17. ((everyone laughs, 2.0))
18. T: okay (.) I guess she wasn't really COOL (.) like you Kyle

Terry's uses of hedges, the passive voice, and certain bald narrative phrases ("she rejected me," "she led me on") in his narration position him as vulnerable to this woman's rejection of his desire. Even his attempt to buffer this vulnerability by jocularly referencing that there was some sexual payoff for his efforts is enervated through concessions like "I mean I guess yah," modifiers like "I did get some," and laughter (lines 11 and 15) that soften both of his claims about sexual activity. Like the other excerpts, Terry playfully pivots between a vulnerable position and a position of nonchalance.

More interesting is the way this oscillation is taken-up by the other male friends in ways that were both mocking and self-protecting of Terry. For instance, Cal's "by the way" insertion of pejorative information about this woman's capricious dating life (line 4) does more than state the obvious. It indirectly derides her character, which implicitly suggests that Terry is in a better moral position without someone like her. It also functions as a critique of Terry for having been attracted to her in the first place. There is thus a double-edged quality in friend's receipts of men's rejection. This double-edged critique surfaces again in line 13 with Kyle's "happy about getting rejected," which indirectly constructs Terry as overly gracious about being mistreated. It also underscores that he was, in fact, rejected, thus affirming Terry's vulnerability. In line 16, Kyle interrupts Terry's rationalization with "she wasn't cool an' she was playing you." While this works again as a criticism of the woman, it also doubles as a critique of Terry's sexual desire for being naive and easily "played." Kyle's double-edged critique allows this sympathy to go on record, but in a way that is traditionally masculine (it involves teasing and appearing frustrated and thus protective). Evident here is a participation structure for managing the vulnerability of rejection that involves male friends encircling their vulnerable friend with a combination of derision and support.

### *Negotiating Women's Resistance to Emotional Caretaking*

Rather than using nonchalance and irony to play up their failure in relation to women's resistance to their sexual desires and advances, men also used dispositional or situational scripting to manage women's resistance to being the emotional caretaker or committed partner in the relationship. Scripting a person's disposition or a state-of-affairs entails constructing a generalized account of some phenomenon (e.g., the women's resistance) so that its cause is habitually located "in the object" (i.e., as a result of her general personality or some cultural gender norm) rather than being caused by the speaker, who could in the latter case could be held accountable (see Edwards 1995). In this next excerpt, Dane uses scripting to manage the threat

posed by his girlfriend's social independence. Instances of scripting have been underlined for emphasis.

Excerpt 4

Participants: Mark (M), Dane (D), Scott (S), Moderator (Mo)

1. D: yea the sorority thing (.) we went there an' I was thinking
2. 'yea like I don't know anyone but her (.) but it's fine cause
3. I'm going with her (.) so it's cool' (.) but then we get there
4. and she like ditches (.) like literally is hanging out with like
5. her other friends in like another room for like two hours
6. n' then like hanging around the bar and obviously flirting
7. with(uhha) the ((laughing)) bartender (hah)n' stuff (.) an' I'm
8. like 'what am I doing here' n' she's doin' the runnin' 'round
9. n' freaking one of her sorority girls thing ((laughs, 1.0)) n' I'm
10. just like 'this girl's all over the place'
11. S: not uh Dane's kinda girl
12. D: no(hahha) ((laughing)) no (.) like and that became more apparent
13. n'like I'm someone who wants to be like with someone who's not
14. totally random (.) like she's very spontaneous and stuff (.)
15. and for me (.) being the stable guy ((laughs)) yeah(ahha) I prefer
16. someone who's like not so like up in the air (.) n'what I didn't
17. notice was she comes off as being really sincere (.) but she's actually
18. very self centered (.) n'so if she wants to hang out with someone else
19. at a party even when she has like a guest with her (.) like you know
20. not even like a date I guess (.) she would just ditch 'em (.) yea (.)
21. so she's that type

Dane's girlfriend resists appearing socially dependent on him at parties, which undermines the traditionally feminine role of appearing subordinate and tethered to a man in social situations. To manage the vulnerability of this resistance, Dane locates the source of resistance not in the situation or in himself but rather in her by negatively scripting her behavior and general personality by using the iterative present tense ("she's doin' the runnin' "round n' freaking," "she's that type," "comes off as being really sincere," "she's actually very self-centered"), event pluralization (sorority girls thing), and manner expressions ("all over the place," "totally random," "very spontaneous and stuff," "up in the air"), as well as the use of the modal "would" (she would just ditch 'em). In short, her failure to prioritize his emotional comfort is a general character flaw of the young woman. To inoculate his scripting from appearing motivated by ill-will or misogyny toward his girlfriend, Dane (and Scott) script Dane's personality in a contrasting way, as someone more stable, so that their contrasting behaviors are located in a more general account of personality differences. Consider Dylan's use of scripting in the following excerpt.

## Excerpt 5

Participants: Brooks (B), Dylan (D), Austin (A), Moderator (M)

1. D: I don't have any idea what she thinks about us either (.)
2.       if she thinks its something that would continue on or if
3.       not (.) if it's something I could even deal with (.) moving
4.       on with (.) cause she's really intense and crazy
5. M: are you scared to ask her?
6. D: I think so
7. M: like what's the deal (.) the old DTR conversation
8. D: DTR?
9. M: define the relationship
10. B: agggh no
11. D: oh DTR (.) yikes
12. M: not formally (.) but like edge into it a little bit
13. D: she's kind of a wild free spirit sort of girl so I don't know
14.       if she would have any interest in (.) continuing a relationship
15.       or not (.) it could have been maybe part of why it worked
16.       out so far (.) because she knew she was leaving

Dylan displays confusion about his girlfriend's commitment to him. To manage the vulnerability of her ambivalence, he negatively scripts her personality ("she's really intense and crazy," "she's kind of a wild free spirit sort of girl"), her general thinking pattern ("I don't have any idea what she thinks," "I don't know if she would have any interest," "she knew she was leaving"), and uses modals to convey the difficulty of generally coping with her manner (if it's something I could even deal with). These script formulations portray her resistance to commitment and, by extension, Dylan's vulnerability, as phenomena caused primarily by her general way of being. In other words, because of the way she is, she knew she would eventually leave Dylan and was thus more liberated to be with him when they were dating (lines 15-16). As such, her resistance to being committed and to communicating this clearly to him has nothing really to do with Dylan, but rather has its genesis in some aspect of her general personality.

The young men sometimes scripted a general gender-normative state-of-affairs to manage women's resistance to commitment and caretaking. In the next excerpt, Austin constructs a former girlfriend's resistance to commitment as part of a culturally gendered cat and mouse script where her resistance fuels his pursuit.

## Excerpt 6

Participants: Brooks (B), Dylan (D), Austin (A), Moderator (M)

1. A: in high school I was with a girl that like (.) she didn't really
2.       like to like be like together together (.) so I felt a lot more free

3. then (.) cause she (.) it was more like me like trying to be with
4. her as much as possible (.) you know
5. M: so in that case you were chasing her more?
6. A: definitely (.) I made it like she was my dream girl and I was
7. chasing her (.) and she'd only let me get little pieces
8. M: so what do you think would happen if Brittany totally did like
9. an about face and became like (.) ultra independent and was
10. like do your thing
11. A: I'd feel a lot better (.) I'd be the I'd be pursuing her thing
12. M: or would you? (.) cause it could reverse and you'd be like the
13. co-dependent one
14. A: so ((laughs)) I think it's kinda funny how it works that way (.)
15. I know (.) its that classic thing where girls like tease (.) but they
16. do it because like it makes guys like them more (.) you know (.)
17. or something like the whole theory behind that (.) and it kinda
18. works that way with me (.) I've discovered

Austin is contrasting the independence of his prior girlfriend with his current girlfriend (Brittany). For Austin, his prior girlfriend's resistance to commitment is formulated as part of a regular and scripted action pattern of "him trying to be with her as much as possible," imagining her as his "dream girl," "chasing her," and only getting "little pieces." He scripts this general response in gender-normative ways as the "pursuing her thing." Interestingly, this script is "freeing" for Austin. It transforms her resistance to commitment from being a rejection of him to being an opportunity for Austin to realize his desire even more. By extension, her resistance to commitment is seen less as an index of her general independence, and more as part of a game where she is an object of his pursuit and potential conquest. It is this turning of the tables that Austin finds funny (line 14), even if it implies dependence on his part, since within this script he is dependent only on getting the girl, so to speak. In short, the use of this particular cultural script flattens her resistance, transforming it into a predictable move in a cat-and-mouse game of pursuit that allows men to remain aligned with traditional masculine norms.

### **Negotiating Women's Resistance to Passivity**

Resistance to passivity surfaced in three kinds of stories—first, men told stories about women acting in a preemptive and aggressive way after being treated dismissively; second, men told stories about women who were actively promiscuous; and third, there were stories where women initiated sexually carefree or puerile joking. These first two stories feature women asserting themselves aggressively after being broken up with and cheated on by the male narrators. These stories collapse both of the previous discursive strategies—nonchalance and self-deprecation as well as script formulations. In this first example, Gus

offers a colorful account about a recent run-in with his ex-girlfriend, Noel. Prior to this story, Gus reveals he recently broke up with Noel immediately following their first sexual encounter.

Excerpt 7

Participants: Noah (N) Gus (G) Chris (C) Moderator (M)

1. G: so I see Noel at a party last week and um she's like 'hey Gus' an
2. I was like 'hey' and she's like 'HEY I got something to tell you' and
3. I was like 'oh shit' so like she like walks over to me pretty upset
4. looking and she's like um just went off (.) she's like 'YOU THINK
5. YOU CAN HAVE SEX WITH ME AND JUST NEVER DEAL
6. WITH IT AGAIN' an blah blah an' she's like <'I oughta make you
7. feel the pain you made me feel'>
8. ((laughter 1.0))
9. G: and so she went like this ((makes clenched fist)) and she grabbed my
10. balls and was like <'I hope you're feeling the same pain I was'> an I
11. was like 'AGGHH SHOOT' an I didn't know what to do
12. N: ((smile voice)) and how long was she grabbin em?
13. G: for a good while like=
14. M: =and you just stood there?
15. G: well I put my hand over my balls and then she like she's like
16. 'it's a good thing you cupping em cause I'm squeezing really hard
17. right now' an I'm like 'ALL:::RIGHT' [...]
18. N: ((laughing)) it was AWESOME
19. G: she was freakin out (.) she grabbed my balls n'then like for a good
20. thirty seconds she was like ((inhales loudly)) and like staring in
21. my eyes [...] I didn't know what to say like I was trying to say
22. ((in falsetto)) 'I'm sorry' an trying to like explain myself but at
23. the same time my balls=
24. M: =you're talking in falsetto
25. G: there was no point in like trying to explain anything

Gus' story is a colorful and self-deprecating admission of Noel's public retaliation. In it, he comes off as the victim. Gus' self-deprecating story and the victim status that ensue work because he scripts her vis-a-vis the irrational "crazy bitch" script (see Gilmartin 2007). Importantly, her craziness is formulated in a hyperbolic way so that it serves as a clear foil to his relatively nonchalant response. As Gilmartin (2007) observed in her study of college-aged men's experiences of romantic relationships, young men expected to end relationships and break hearts and expected women to get really angry with them. Unlike sadness, anger enables a traditionally masculine response (remain stoic, take it, say nothing). Noel's resistance to passivity, therefore, confirms Gus' standing in the

gender order. Had she not cared and chosen not to aggress against Gus, Gus might be less certain of where he stood as a man. In addition, the stronger she resists passivity by retaliating, the crazier she seems and the more difficult it becomes to empathize with her anger. By extension, it becomes more difficult to condemn Gus for sexually exploiting her.

Central in these stories is a victim positioning that involves females aggressing against men's bodies. The men claim to be hit, punched, and physically attacked. In this next story, Chris suggests his ex-girlfriend sexually groped him at a party following a breakup caused by Chris' infidelity.

Excerpt 8

Participants: Chris (C), Tony (T), Kyle (K), Moderator (M)

1. C: she'll just walk by and like grab my crotch in front of a girl
2.     and keep walking and I'm just like 'oh my god please stop'
3.     ((laughing)) n' at this one party like I saw her approaching
4.     me so I ran outside to take a piss ((laughing)) n' she followed
5.     me and comes up behind me while I'm peeing and like grabs
6.     me and says some shit and I told her told her again like
7.     to piss off like leave me alone (.) and then so I run inside n' my
8.     buddy who drove us there and I told him like 'look I don't
9.     wanna deal with this shit right now just gimme your keys
10.    let me pass out in your car and then wake me up whenever
11.    we're goin somewhere else'
12. K: oh this gets even crazier
13. C: yea and then so I go in his car and I don't remember
14.    anything and this is just what my buddy he tells me
15.    later is that I guess the girl saw me go into the car and
16.    she she goes up to Obi and is like 'where's Chris?' and
17.    he's just like 'he left' and she said like 'no he's in your
18.    fuckin car (.) gimme your keys' and he's like 'no crazy
19.    ass bitch go away' n' she's like 'gimme your fuckin keys
20.    right now' n' he's like 'no' n' so she runs out of the house
21.    and like he follows her and then he sees her (.) this is what
22.    he tells me (.) he sees her like run up to the car and put
23.    her arm in the window and tries to touch me or something like
24.    ((all laughing, 2.0))
25. C: I don't know if she was maybe trying to rape me or something
26. M: like grope touch you (.) or like punch you
27. C: yeah I dunno (.) then once he saw that he's just like 'alright
28.    we gotta get the fuck outta here' and so we left
29. T: rolled up the windows too
30.    ((all laughing, 1.0))

Central in the above two stories is the spectacle of bodily injury. Gus has his testicles squeezed and Chris claims to have been sexually assaulted through the car window. In both stories, the male friends listening find such physical assaults entertaining. In Gus' story, Noah laughingly remarks, "it was AWESOME" (line 18). The story is "awesome" for these guys both for its physical comedy and for what it represents at a gender-political level. The punishment of the white male body is a prop in the project of creating white-male backlash rhetoric (Savran 1996). The effect of women's resistance is (yet again) not women's liberation, but is a victimized male identity, or more accurately, the simulacrum of a fractured abject hero (see Brayton 2007). Whereas emasculation in-and-of-itself is not "awesome," the *spectacle* of emasculation, doused in a stoic nonchalance for an overhearing male audience, is a useful way of affirming the misogynistic message that these women may be assertive and not passive, but their assertiveness is crazy and, though intense, the men can take it, laugh about it, and in the end normalize the type of masculinity that the women are reacting against.

The second type of resistance to passivity featured stories about women who actively sought out casual sexual experiences (or "hookups") and were thus seen as sexually promiscuous. In the following story, Hal recounts a recent dating experience in which his girlfriend reveals (after their first date) that she has been recently tested for venereal diseases. And shortly thereafter that, just prior to the beginning of their relationship, she might have contracted herpes after having sex with a guy in the back of a van at a party.

#### Excerpt 9

Participants: Hal (H), Gary (G), and Cory (C), Moderator (M)

1. H: maybe a week yeah I'd say about a week into the school year I got a
2.       phone call from her and she said 'um I'm sorry but I may have herpes'
3.       ((laughter, 2.0))
4. H: yeahha ((laughing)) whic(hah) was a fun phone call to get and then so
5.       she told me and what was funny was that on the first date uh one of
6.       the things she told me was like uhh 'hey I just got tested and I'm clean so
7.       you don't have to worry' and I said '<that's gre::at> that's wonderful'
8.       umm:: and so >but every time we had sex I used a condom< and so but
9.       she called me and she's like yeah uh about a week before she met me she
10.       said she was at this party and she ended up getting drunk and her (.) this is
11.       an exact quote '<ended up having sex with some Asian dude in the back of
12.       his van>'[ . . . ] and so I said '<okay::: um ((laughing)) let me call you
13.       back in like a day or two once I think about some things>'

Rather than position himself as angry or disgusted (we expected more of the men to call these women "sluts" and to denigrate them), Hal nonchalantly positions himself as amused and confidently detached. His casual position of ordinariness is



principally brought off through a series of carefully crafted juxtapositions between his girlfriend's reported speech and his own sarcastic or deadpan reactions. In response to her admission that she is disease-free, Hal slows his speech in an audibly long and drawn-out sarcastic way as he says "<that's gre::at> that's wonderful." Later, after she casually calls him up to alert him about her sexual encounter with "some Asian dude in the back of his van" and of the chance they both might now have herpes, he is again affectedly nonchalant as he replies "<okay::: um let me call you back in like a day or two once I think about some things>." His narration creates an ironic tension that illuminates the extraordinariness of his girlfriend's nonnormative actions in contrast to his own ordinary reactions. The principle work here seems not so much to denigrate her, though that comes off indirectly, but rather it is, again, about appearing relaxed and detached in the face of women's resistance.

In this next example, the young men are discussing a mutual friend (Sam), who is dating a young woman who makes Sam jealous by referencing past sexual experiences with other men.

Excerpt 10

Participants: Hal (H), Gary (G), and Cory (C), Moderator (M)

1. H: she would use other guys to make him jealous
2. G: like we'll be all sittin around in the living room
3.     n' she'll say something like 'cause I made out with
4.     so many guys last year' or something ((laughing)) and
5.     then like everybody'll look at him cause they know like
6.     he has a temper problem and everyone knows it so we'll
7.     just kinda look like seeing what he's gonna do n' SHE
8.     KNOWS THAT (.) she's like (.) look he's not even
9.     gonna do anything (.) like I tabbed this guy by the neck
10.    ((all laughing, 2.0))
11. G: he just sits there like this and like smiles
12. C: you know he's uncomfortable with it
13. G: yeah he's gotta hate it=
14. C: =you know he hates that she's made out a ton of guys
15. M: n' Sam just looks away and bites his tongue?
16. C: [yep]
17. G: [yeh] sure does

Like Hal's position, Sam is positioned as decidedly reserved and nonchalant. Like Hal, he is performing nonchalance. Consequently, the young men are orienting to the gender-political dilemma of wanting to take a certain kind of position (lose your temper, line 6) but instead staging a stoic nonreaction by openly "biting one's tongue" (line 15). In a way that parallels Hal's long and sarcastically drawn out deadpan staging of his response, Sam also engages in the discursive work of

“suppression” (Gough 2001). Acts of suppression interactively display that there is something at stake in terms of the speaker’s response. Were Sam to get angry and reject her behavior, he could appear guilty of perpetuating the double standard that men can be promiscuous but women cannot. Or, worse, he might actually look jealous, and thus vulnerable. Were he to genuinely not care, he may appear to his friends as truly “whipped,” gutless, or as Gus put it, “tabbed by the neck.” The suppression thus situates Sam as yet another example of a male victim in a no-win gender-political situation.

In contrast, the third type of passivity resistance featured stories about women initiating sexually carefree ways of bantering, thus resisting what Ussher (1997) calls “doing good girl.” Unique here is that the young men seem to embrace this type of women’s passivity resistance, albeit in qualified ways.

Excerpt 11

Participants: Josh (J), Rex (R), Zach (Z), Moderator (M)

1. Z: Kelly has like sort of a sexual sense of humor (.)
2.     joking around about stuff
3. J: oh god YEAH (.) so like she like buys like the house
4.     porno and ((laughing)) like she recently bought this like
5.     what is this you know the snowflake things you like
6.     shake it up (.) there’s like a picture of like a naked
7.     woman in there and like she got us these naked cards
8.     ((all laughing, 1.0))
9. J: and we’re just ((laughing)) it’s kinda like we think
10.     it’s like sort of funny you know (.) n’ she always talks
11.     about how open she is about that type of stuff n’ says that
12.     like her other apartment roommates are probably having
13.     sex in her bed right now at the house and stuff ((laughing))
14.     n’ just like random things (.) n’ I’m like uh:: oka::y
15. M: so it kinda shocks you a little bit?
16. J: ((laughing)) yeah (.) it’s you know (.) its fine
17. R: I think its fun (.) I mean I have just as sick as a personality
18.     as her (.) but I don’t like go round’ showing it (.) you know

The young men’s embracing of this type of resistance is qualified. Descriptions of her humor are marked with hedges (“sort of a sexual sense of humor,” “it’s kinda like we think,” “sort of funny”). In addition, rather than describing her as someone who is open about sexual topics, Josh describes her as someone who “always talks about how she is” open (lines 10 and 11), which orients to a “de jure versus de facto” distinction between who she wants people to think she is in theory (de jure) and who she actually is (de facto). This problematizing of her performance of sexual humor is further worked up by Rex in line 18 as he uses the iterative present tense in

dispositionally scripting her as being the sort of person who “goes around” “showing” it, suggesting that there is a staged quality to her humor. Josh’s evaluation of “n” I’m like uh::: oka::y’ in line 14 is a “display of a lack of understanding” (see Edwards and Potter 1992), which is discursive formulation that allows Josh to indirectly critique her resistance to doing “good girl” by appearing to have difficulty understanding it.

While the young men embrace, in principle (*de jure*), Kelly’s rejection of being passive with respect to sexual humor, they do not straightforwardly embrace it as it is lived (*de facto*) by her. This contrast between lip service to *de jure* egalitarianism and *de facto* resistance is relevant in terms of discrimination at a gender-political level. Examples like the one above reflect the ways *de facto* practices continue to promote discrimination despite the ways Western culture has shifted, at least at a *de jure* level, toward openness for women to embrace nontraditionally feminine gender roles. Because of the *de jure* attempts to stamp out discrimination, proving *de facto* discrimination, particularly in examples like the one above, can actually get quite tricky, because practices that promote discrimination are likely to be subtle and flanked with plausible deniability.

## Discussion

In contrast to research that examines men’s vulnerability in relation to hegemonic masculinity, the purpose of this study was to explore how emerging adult men negotiate vulnerability in relation to their female partner’s subversion of emphasized femininity. Rather than ratcheting up traditionally heroic and macho masculine responses, the young men in this study managed vulnerability through self-deprecation, nonchalance, and scripting to construct an antiheroic and ordinary masculinity.

In response to women’s resistance to being compliant or receptive to men’s sexual desires and advances, the young men mitigated vulnerability by (counterintuitively) celebrating the resistance through exploiting a self-deprecating and nonchalant position of jocularity. Enacting failure became masculine performance art, allowing men to mitigate the vulnerability of sexual rejection by reclaiming the masculine “virtues” of confidence, detachment, and self-assuredness. Using self-deprecation to perform failure indexes a victim identity that effaces the young men’s agency in stories about women’s rejection of their sexual desires. Self-deprecation thus creates a victim position that can be playfully tolerated and mocked by young men. Celebrating your own failure is not only self-inoculating but it also immunizes other men against the dreaded humor (and masculinity) killer, sympathy. Doing self-deprecation is thus a vehicle for male socialization, working as a method of highlighting your own flaws so others would not have to. It frees men to cope vicariously and laugh cathartically at their vulnerabilities from a position of safety and detachment. Rather than challenge oppressive gender relations, doing ordinariness through

nonchalance rearticulates power (and thus anchors it) at subtler and more difficult to detect and challenge levels of social practice.

In response to women's resistance to emotional caretaking, the young men mitigated vulnerability by engaging in dispositional or gender-norm scripting. In these stories, the women resisted enacting the normative female disposition of caretaker in heteropatriarchal relationships. The strategy most often adopted involved negatively scripting the woman's disposition vis-a-vis the irrational or "crazy bitch" trope. It is thus her generally capricious disposition, not the young men's, that causes her to be unable to commit, care, or be serious about the relationship. In some instances (see Austin's story, excerpt 6), women's lack of emotional commitment is managed through gender-norm scripting. Here, women's resistance is reconstructed as faux-resistance, as a move in a cat-and-mouse game of enticement and entrapment; her lack of investment amplifies his pursuit, making him want her more despite her resistance, which reinforces the traditionally masculine discourse of "scoring" or "conquering." This strategy normalizes the rape-myth of "victim masochism," which is the idea (widely circulated in pornography) that victims who resist really enjoy or want it (Ben-David and Schneider 2005).

Men's responses to women's resistance to passivity ranged, depending on the type of passivity. In narrating stories about women who actively responded with aggressive retaliation for being treated poorly, the young men used a combination of nonchalant jocularly (they found it funny) and dispositional scripting (of the female as "out of control" or "irrational"). In addition, in many instances, the men normalized women's retaliation not as a way of normalizing women's general right to reject men's boorish behavior but as a way of confirming the gender-normative idea that it is men's job to break hearts and leave women, and it is women's role to get angry about it (Gilmartin 2007). Normalizing this script allows men to adopt a victim identity once again, often using their bodies as a discursive prop to display women's resistance (the women hit, punch, squeeze testicles, and so on) and men's resilience (laughing and taking it).

In response to women who were actively promiscuous and who actively engaged in puerile joking and sexual humor, the men did not reject or denigrate them (cf., Hyde et al. 2008). Perhaps outright denigration is too risky, particularly in research-moderated settings, since men who use it run the risk of appearing hypocritical or, worse, jealous and insecure. Instead, the majority of men counterintuitively embraced this form of resistance but qualified their acceptance by orienting to a distinction between embracing it in principle (*de jure*; in theory, they like that women enjoy sex and sexual humor) and rejecting it in everyday practice (*de facto*; in real-life contexts, they indirectly reject women's actual performances). As Sprecher and Felmlee (1997) have found, egalitarian ideals are pervasive among young adults. Applied here, what may be pervasive is a lip service (*de jure*) to the politically progressive notion that women can co-opt traditionally masculine social practices like casual sex and telling dirty jokes, while in everyday contexts (*de facto*), young men may resist egalitarian practices.

It is possible that these men's discursive strategies for managing vulnerability were partly driven by the nature of the research setting. Since the performance of masculinity is a common method for achieving status within groups of heterosexual men, it is likely that displays of nonchalance, ordinariness, and self-effacing humor would be common. Same-sex contexts where men are left to talk among themselves are ripe sites for the kinds of self-presentation strategies found in this study. More expansive, naturalistic, and mixed-sex research settings would prove to be valuable contrasts. It is also possible that the discursive strategies identified in the current study are unique to certain kinds of romantic/sexual relationship experiences, such as "hookups" and very casual dating experiences. The bulk of stories in this corpus were about casual encounters rather than more serious, ongoing, or committed relationships. Stories about women's resistance to emphasized femininity within more serious and committed relationships might yield a different range of discursive strategies for managing vulnerability (or perhaps vulnerability would not be as much of an issue to manage). Stories culled from a wider range of relational constellations might prove to be another valuable contrast.

These findings have important implications for research on "men's vulnerability." The bulk of male vulnerability research is typically conducted in health/medical settings and is concerned with the effects of the "don't cry" and "don't ask for help" masculine dictums, suggesting instead that men engage with alternative masculinities that are less emotionally and relationally restrictive. While important, this approach to men's vulnerability may be too narrow. From a critical-gender perspective, heterosexual men are also vulnerable in direct relation to women in so far as women resist one of the mechanisms (acquiescence to traditional femininity) that enable traditional forms of masculinity to remain status-quo, normative, and thus potentially unhealthy for men. The current study complements existing research by examining vulnerability not as individual psychological struggle with hegemonic masculinity but as a fluid effect of certain romantic/relational social practices with women. Interventions would thus focus on creating relational contexts and partnership interactions where men are encouraged to align themselves with women's resistance (rather than stifling it) and to see this alignment as a means of their own emancipation. Reducing men's vulnerability thus becomes a relational project nested in male-female social practices, rather than a private internal psychological battle with restrictive forms of traditional masculinity.

Working to help young men accept women's resistance to emphasize femininity is, however, exceedingly complicated because contemporary forms of men's resistance are often far from straightforward. In his study of profeminist men, Cornish (1999) discovered that incongruence and conflict were at the core of men's experiential process of assimilating feminist ideas into their gender identity. The notion of "conflict" or dilemma was apropos in this study as well, though here the dilemmas appear discursively within social interaction. The majority of young men in this study did not straightforwardly reject women's resistance to emphasized

femininity. Instead, they subtly undermined women's resistance through a range of discursive strategies. For instance, instead of calling a sexually open or experienced woman a "slut" (a straightforward rejection), young men might instead ironically and nonchalantly celebrate her behavior, thus fetishizing expressions of women's resistance. Men may fetishize the image of a nonsexually compliant, confident, assertive, and sexually experienced women in the same way they fetishize a really good fart, a great wipe out on a skateboard, or getting rejected by an attractive female—all things that are so "uncool" that they become "cool." This double-voicing is the signature of "lad masculine discourse" (Benwell 2002; Korobov 2009) and is a burgeoning strategy for young men as they bluff their way into the egalitarian realm. If our goal is to facilitate men's acceptance of women's resistance to emphasized femininity, more attention must be paid to this type of maneuvering.

Finally, this study has direct repercussions for research concerning the relationship between men's vulnerability and the maintenance of sexism. Managing women's resistance through ordinariness is a method for circulating benevolent forms of "new sexism" (Glick and Fiske 1997; Swim et al. 1995), that is, forms of sexism that are indirect and subtle, often enacted paradoxically by the speaker espousing egalitarian values. As young men mitigate the vulnerability caused by women's resistance to emphasized femininity through ironic celebrations of it, they become adept at normalizing the new sexism found in contemporary forms of "lad-masculinity." Strategic displays of ordinariness, nonchalance, and self-deprecation become quietly dangerous discursive practices for managing vulnerability because they are used to recoup sexism. To date, very few social scientists have critically examined men's vulnerability this way. Many researchers view men's vulnerability as a negative consequence of complicity with hegemonic masculinity and understandably work to reduce it. The argument here is that men's vulnerability is also, perhaps, a positive effect of women's empowerment, and as such, men's strategies for managing vulnerability need to be assessed from a critical-gender perspective, with an eye on the ways such strategies resurrect and circulate contemporary forms of sexism. Our hope is that masculinity researchers will increasingly encourage men to view their vulnerabilities as potential paths toward relational intimacy that can be productively folded into their identity practices as a means of improving their health and relationships.

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## Appendix

### Transcription Conventions

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(.)	Short pause of less than 1 second
(1.5)	Timed pause in seconds
[overlap]	Overlapping speech
?	Rising intonation/question
°quieter°	Encloses talk that is quieter than the surrounding talk
LOUD	Talk that is louder than the surrounding talk
>faster<	Encloses talk that is faster than the surrounding talk
<slower>	Encloses talk that is slower than the surrounding talk
((comments))	Encloses comments from the transcriber
Rea:::ly	Elongation of the prior sound
=	Immediate latching of successive talk
[...]	Where material from the tape has been omitted for reasons of brevity

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## Bio

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