

A GAME OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE:  
RAPE MYTHS INVOLVING COLLEGE ATHLETES IN MEDIA COVERAGE

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by

Jenna Candelaria Guzman

Dr. Amanda Hinnant, Thesis Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

A GAME OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE:  
RAPE MYTHS INVOLVING COLLEGE ATHLETES IN MEDIA COVERAGE

presented by Jenna Candelaria Guzman,

A candidate for the degree of master of arts,

And hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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Dr. Amanda Hinnant

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Dr. Cristina Mislán

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Dr. Kate Lockwood Harris

---

Professor Amy Simons

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## **Abstract**

This study explored rape mythology and racialization in the rhetoric surrounding two college athletes accused of rape: Jameis Winston, a black football player, and Brock Turner, a white swimmer. The researcher conducted a thematic analysis of 54 print articles, 27 for each case, to research media coverage of each rape accusation, trial and conviction (if applicable) from a variety of news sources to evaluate the discussion of race, the influence of sports culture, and the incorporation of rape mythology in the resulting media coverage. Specifically, this study reviews rape mythology involving perpetrator support, victim blaming and community victimization.

The discussion of sexual assault in the United States inherently includes racialization and rape mythology, but coverage of college athletes accused of rape provides insight into discourse of sexual assault, to include race, college culture and sports culture. This study found significant use of rape mythology and racialization in each case, including praise of colorblind justice in the case of Jameis Winston and suggestion that race influenced a relatively light sentencing for Brock Turner, who was convicted of three counts of sexual assault. This study provides insight into discourse of racialized sexual assault cases within sports culture.

## **Introduction**

He's the starting quarterback for the National Football Team (NFL) Tampa Bay Buccaneers, and before that, he led the Florida State University (FSU) Seminoles to a National Championship. As a college freshman, he was the youngest player to win the Heisman Trophy. He was drafted as the first overall pick in the 2015 NFL draft. He is a famous black football player. His name is Jameis Winston, and in 2012, he was accused of rape.

He was an All-American athlete from Ohio, where he still holds records for the sport of competitive swimming. He was recruited by several large universities to participate on their swimming teams, eventually settling on a prestigious education at Stanford University, a school with historically successful athletic programs. While at Stanford, he showed potential to become a star swimmer in a premier sport program, starting varsity as a freshman. He is a well-known white swimmer. His name is Brock Turner, and on March 31, 2016, he was convicted of rape (Lee & Keller, 2015).

Both cases contain many similarities: the alleged perpetrators were young adults during the crime, both are males, both were suspected of raping a white female, and both accusations resulted in major network coverage of the case. In addition, both cases involve popular athletes who were heavily recruited for their athletic abilities to universities known for strong athletic programs. The cases also include various differences: Winston was a college student at FSU, while Turner attended the prestigious Stanford University at the time of each accusation. The socio-economic status of the two men is very different. But there is another major difference between the men: Winston is black. Turner is white.

Race continues to be a major factor in coverage of sexual assault or rape, particularly in high profile cases. Many high profile cases include famous individuals as either the perpetrator or victim: in both cases mentioned here, the accused rapist was the high profile individual, as Jameis Winston is a famous football player, and Brock Turner was an up-and-coming swimmer.

The rhetoric of sexual assault in the United States contains ideas or stereotypes that have been formed over the country's existence, with some ideas founded during periods of slavery (Wriggins, 1983). One of these ideas is the fear of a black man raping a white woman, an accusation represented here by the claim against Jameis Winston by his white female accuser. This accusation carries serious historical implications: black men convicted of raping white women "receive more serious sanctions than all other sexual assault defendants" (Wriggins, 1983).

However, other stereotypical sexual assault ideas are indicated here and rooted with racial bias: the idea of a good man (normally white) not being able to commit such a crime, a community (in this case, athletic) victimized by the claim, and the thought that a victim's actions can lead directly to the crime in what is known as victim blaming.

This study provides insight into the current narrative of sexual assault in the United States, a topic that has incredible relevance to a great majority of the female gender. Research indicates that one of every three women in college will experience a form of sexual assault (RAINN, 2009), which means that every woman in a college setting will either experience sexual assault or rape, or will likely know someone who has experienced it. When statistics include such a vast majority of one gender, how the research is reported is an increasingly important function of journalism.



Sexual assault, particularly on college campuses, is a topic that is only gaining traction. The release of *The Hunting Ground*, a 2015 documentary on the role universities play in reporting sexual assault or rape, has catapulted this topic into the limelight. Sexual assault in college has been a reality for several years, but the conversation is only just beginning to expand. How universities report rape, how journalists report rape, and how the world sees rape are all tied together in a conversation of terminology, accountability and responsibility. Beyond that, how sports culture influences sexual assault reporting and communication introduces a sublevel of the college culture itself.

This research attempts to address some of the journalistic trends in reporting rape on college campuses involving college athletes. By studying two case studies, I identify and group themes surrounding reporting on the two similar yet different alleged crimes. Both occurred on or near college campuses, and both included significant involvement by the authorities in question, whether the involvement was positive or negative.

The purpose of this research is to identify themes emerging from thematic framing techniques used by local and national print media in covering rape accusations involving athletes: black college football athlete Jameis Winston, compared to white college swimming athlete Brock Turner. Unlike most other crimes, rape and sexual abuse cases have the unfortunate side effect of societal acceptance and judgment about the credibility of the accuser, the circumstances of the assault or rape, and the resulting framing by media, police or university officials who are often considered credible sources. However, when the crime includes a sports figure and a college setting, the coverage of the case widens to include not only school news and local media, but also

national mainstream media, thus expanding the potential thematic framing of the event and the people involved, for both the victim and his or her reported assaulter.

To maintain a reputation as a safe place for students, schools feel pressure to under-report crimes, particularly sexual crimes, to ensure they do not discourage potential students from applying and potentially to avoid public response (Culp-Ressler, 2015).

Due to the Clery Act, schools are required to report sexual assault cases on their campuses, but after a Government audit, a researcher and law professor found the schools that were audited increased reports of sexual assault by 44 percent, a number that dropped immediately following the audit (Culp-Ressler, 2015). Because rape is underreported, many students and even administrators may believe that rape or sexual assault is rare, encouraging use of rape myths and a circular result of lack of reporting (Hefling, 2014). Rape mythology is a particularly powerful rhetoric.

Rape mythology refers to the belief of societally accepted and embraced ideas of circumstances of rape and/or sexual abuse (Burt, 1980). Some of these myths were established centuries ago and perpetuated through stereotypes, while some are relatively more recent and include victim blaming and societal blaming. There are many rape myths that have become part of the normative culture including myths: the victim is lying, only bad people rape, rapists are only looking for sex, the victim was asking for it, rape only happens to “bad girls”, rape only happens between strangers, or the community is equally hurt by a rape accusation (Burt, 1980; Varelas & Foley, 1998; Hust, et al., 2013).

Another common part of rape mythology is the stereotype of an African-American male perpetrator attacking a white female, which is relevant because Winston is an African-American male and his accuser is a white female. Some believe that “the

history of rape in this country has focused on the rape of white women by Black men” (Wriggins, 1983, pg. 103), which Varelas and Foley (1998) traced the origin of this myth to the days of slavery; rape crimes against women of color by black or white perpetrators were rarely prosecuted (Wriggins, 1993). Like the others, this myth is also usually false: 93 percent of rape cases contain victims and perpetrators of the same race (Varelas & Foley, 1998). Unfortunately, race does play a role in the acceptance or believability of a rape accusation (Hust, et al., 2013). Varelas and Foley (1998) found that rape myth is prevalent in legal actions, as white women who report a rape by a black perpetrator are more quickly believed than those with white assailants. The Winston case seems to be an anomaly for this research: Winston’s case was very loosely investigated even after the victim went back to the police with the identity of her reported rapist (Bogdanich, 2014).

Coverage of crimes can include framing and bias formed in themes, which can provide support for the accused Winston and Turner in the promotion of rape myths. How media organizations discuss crime like rape can differ in many ways, and potentially when an athlete is involved. In the Kobe Bryant rape accusation, rape coverage included significant rape myths, with many media organizations utilizing a potential myth that the victim is lying (Franiuk, et al., 2008). In addition, other coverage of rape myths involving athletes can include two other documented rape myths: that the community is negatively impacted by the accusation, and that the athlete is a good community member who could not have committed such a crime.

There are a wide variety of articles that research rape myths and rape myth utilization in various applications. However, by analyzing rape myth usage through thematic analysis with a literature review of these current studies, I provide a theoretical

and substantiated foundation of rape myth usage on which to build a discussion of cultural influence on rape myth acceptance, focusing in particular on the college sports culture and race. To accurately identify themes in both the Winston and Turner rape cases and to narrow my thematic analysis, I focused specifically on the myths that the victim is to blame (by asking for it or lying), the community is a victim or can be equally hurt by a rape accusation, and the idea that the perpetrators are good people and therefore could not have committed the crime of rape. However, due to the subjective nature of thematic analysis, other themes and mythology may arise.

The purpose of this study is to provide a foundation of thematic textual themes identified in existing rape coverage of two high-profile crimes. While studies of rape, athletic aggression and rape myth acceptance in relation to the societal sports culture have been published before by Boeringer (1996); Caron, Haltman and Stacy (1997); and Crosset, Benedict and McDonald (1995), there is little existing information on media framing of rape coverage of college athletes involved in a rape accusation. In addition, the importance of how rape is handled on the college campus is a topic that will only grow in importance. To study the influence of college sports culture and on rape myth perpetuation, I attempted to identify rape myth themes from two high profile cases in a thematic analysis: the rape accusations of Brock Turner and Jameis Winston.

In this thesis, I include a connection between my theoretical framework of normative media culture theories with existing literature, particularly the themes that the victim has culpability in rape cases, the community is an intimate part of a rape accusation or trial, support for the perpetrator, rape sensationalism and the athletic culture that surrounds both of these rape cases. These themes include a number of rape myths,

which are discussed at length to provide context of thematic coding for the textual analysis.

I also provide more information about my methodology, which is a thematic analysis of online articles written from various local and national media sources, which provide insight into emerging and perpetuated themes for each case, and provide a foundation of information about the culture surrounding rape and athletics. Both cases are relatively recent, so there are a wide variety of online and print articles about such high profile rape accusations. Thematic analysis allows for patterns of communication and behavior to be translated into social themes, which have been included in discussion of the rape myths and racialization. By identifying themes put forth by media outlets regarding both cases, one involving a black college athlete and the other involving a white college athlete, I provide a foundation of study regarding racialization in sports culture and the perpetuation of rape myths in this culture.

## **Theory and Literature Review**

This research is supported by the idea of normative media theory, popularized by *Four Theories of the Press* by Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson and Wilbur Schramm (1956), which supports the idea that the press is a reflection of the social and political foundation it supports, based on the beliefs that society holds. This theory would hold that in a society that supports and perpetrates rape myth discourse, the press would be a reflection of these assumptions.

In social responsibility, free press is allowed without censorship, but with recognition that public response and professional suggestion should be accepted to allow for professional ethics. The media standards will concern all class audiences, rather than focusing on a single class or group (Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1956).

Coverage of rape crime can highlight various aspects of an entire rape case, particularly victim privacy, victimization of the accused, and effects on the community. Each of these themes offers multiple opportunities for either rape myth acceptance or rape myth counterstatements. Because how an event or situation is presented can change how society accepts or perceives the event itself, presentation of an event is a critical part of media coverage process, and therefore an important part of journalism itself.

### **Race, Masculinity and Rape**

A major aspect of rape mythology relates to what is considered normative culture (Worthington, 2014). This idea can be applied to the fact that legal proceedings for rape cases in the United States began almost entirely as the act of prosecuting black men for raping white women (Wriggins, 1983). If a white man was convicted of rape of a white woman, the punishment was much less severe. Because of the nation's history with

slavery and race-focused prosecution, normative culture is a reflection of the society's progress, or lack of progress in some cases. This is likely due to the fact that during the American period of slavery, the justice system focused on only one "racial combination of rape – rape involving a Black offender and a white victim", which often resulted in lynching (Wriggins, 1983, pg. 106). Since this time, United States culture has continued to focus on the race of the perpetrator, specifically "instances of black male sports figure who physically abuse their female (often white) partners" (Enck-Wanzer, 2009, pg. 2). The idea that black men are sexually insatiable relates to stereotypes that black men are feral, criminal rapists of white women (Boyd, 2015; Wriggins, 1983).

Masculinity continues to be a driving focus in the narrative of rape, particularly relating to race. Media coverage of black athletes naturalize black masculinity as "aggressive", allowing the public to associate "rage" with black masculinity (Enck-Wanzer, 2009, pg. 3).

Worthington (2014) found a high incidence of media reports on rapes occurring with non-white perpetrators, particularly immigrants or refugees, whose race becomes a focus of the coverage. In particular, Worthington (2014) focused on the gang rape of an eight-year-old girl by four male juveniles in a Lebanese refugee area of Phoenix, Arizona, as an example of suggested cultural morality. In the comparison of two rape cases involving athletic perpetrators, the culture and ethnicities of the two athletes is drawn into the discussion. Marasescu (2012) studied the moral status of sports, including moral sensibilities and the acceptance of aggression in the culture. The Marasescu (2012) study investigates the actions of the reported perpetrator, including aggressive behavior, while this research proposal focuses on media framing of the resulting event.

Because athletes are expected to maintain aggressive behaviors in the pursuit of success in their sports, Marasescu (2012) argues that some athletes carry that drive into sexual engagement, and then believe that the team pursuit and power struggle are more important than the resulting assaults. Boeringer (1996) found that athletes are more likely to use force in a sexual encounter, particularly if the likelihood of punishment is low. While athletics may not conform to other cultural norms such as societal expectations, athletic culture may play a role on the expectation of those involved, and may include different societal norms based on gender and ethnicity.

Research shows that athletes are expected to be more aggressive, but within athletics, race continues to play a role. Non-white bodies have been continuously on display in performance areas, which includes dance, entertainment, and athletics (Boyd, 2015). However, Boyd (2015) asserts that “the white body on display threatens the authority of white male power” due to the risk of showing “inadequacies of whiteness predicated on difference” (pg. 678). While both Turner and Winston were college athletes, Winston’s value to society had a much larger expected payoff, particularly to the community in which he lived and played football.

If aggression and power are seen as a positive thing expected from the athletic culture, the resulting attacks may be seen as a result of these positive attributes, and then perhaps framed differently by media due to the cultural norms. The discussion of the effect that a community has on rape culture is hard to explicate; however, its influence on rape coverage and resulting ideas of the rape in question is hard to ignore.



## **Rape Myths in America**

Rape myths refer to generally false ideas and attitudes about rape, often accepted by people who believe in sex role stereotypes, have distrust of the opposite sex, are more sexually conservative and are receptive to interpersonal violence (Burt, 1980). One such rape myth is that rape commonly occurs between a black man and a white perpetrator, likely because this was the main type of sexual assault case that went to trial and punishment in the early days of the United States (Wriggins, 1983).

However, there is a wide variety of rape myths utilized in current cultural mythology, including the idea that “only bad girls get raped”; “women ask for it”; “rapists are insane”; or the idea that women often lie about rape (Burt, 1980, pg. 217). However, for the sake of focus on specific and encompassing rape myths, I focus on the mythology of victim blaming, support for the perpetrator, and community victimization within the discussion of rape crime racialization.

These three rape myths provide context for the culture surrounding athletic rape cases. The idea that the victim has culpability in rape is a very commonly used rape myth and is still relevant to rape myth study (Franiuk, et al., 2008; Burt, 1980; Korn & Efrat, 2004). Because societal presence is such a large part of this study, the idea that the community is also a victim provides cultural context and understanding (O’Hara, 2012). In addition, I study how a rape case involving a popular black athlete (Winston) incorporates rape myths and rhetoric differs from and relates to themes emerging from a case involving a popular white athlete (Turner).

Sexual assault case handling involving college athletes is often seen as a reflection of not only the individuals, but also the university or college itself. FSU’s

victim advocate office received 113 sexual assault reports over 2014, but the administration only reported 14 to the federal government, according to former FSU Victim Advocate Director Melissa Ashton (Dick, 2016). Even of those reported, 98 percent of sexual assault perpetrators will not serve jail or prison time for their crime (RAINN, 2009). According to these numbers, most Americans will either experience sexual abuse or know somebody who has experienced it, yet few perpetrators will see any jail time or repercussions for their actions.

Research has shown that media has a significant influence on how rape myths are accepted and perpetrated through media representation, though the extent is a changing and continuously studied topic. Hust, et al (2013) conducted an online survey of 111 male and 241 female freshmen at a northwestern university in the United States to evaluate rape myth acceptance and intentions to intervene in the event of sexual assault situations based on exposure to sports media, and found that exposure to sports media was negatively associated with the male's decision to intervene in a sexual assault. In addition, Hust, et al. (2013) found that sports commentators often address trivial parts of a sportswoman, such as her physical appearance and her role in relation to men, such as her position as a wife or mother, which can frame how a woman fits into society.

In 2000, Messner, Dunbar and Hunt (2000) identified a televised sports manhood formula that not only promoted male domination, but also reinforced female sexual objectification. In rape coverage involving an athlete, sports media can have a direct involvement of the framing of the victim and the reported perpetrator through perpetuation of themes including aggression, gender and race to construct masculinity (Messner, et al., 2000).

Previous research, such as that from Hust, et al., has addressed some areas of female representation in media. The idea that the accuser (usually a woman) is lying is another rape myth perpetuated in today's society (Burt, 1980). However, representations of rape trials have run the gamut from little coverage to long term national trial coverage. The conversation of sexual violence, sexual assault and rape begins with the crime itself, the perpetrator and the victim. A discussion of the nuances of rape attacks and rape statistics by gender, race, age and economical status would also be a vital piece to understanding rape in the United States in the future. However, public awareness and understanding of rape and sexual assault is guided by media, and unfortunately can be driven by rape myths. With hundreds of thousands of sexual abuse or rape occurring in the United States, how rape and the subsequent victims are represented are important to understand the future of racial discourse of crimes, in addition to public understanding and victim support or discouragement.

### **Rape Myth: Community as a Victim**

A focus on the rape's effect on a community is often seen as a disregard for the rape victim's pain, as was seen in a rape case in Cleveland, Texas. Most of the resulting media coverage does not mention the harm done to the victim and instead mentions the rape's negative bearing on the community. Headlines of the articles include, "Cleveland on edge after rape charges" while quotations in the articles include, "It's just destroyed our community", which shows little focus on the actual crime or the result of the crime on the victim (Horswell, 2011, as cited in O'Hara, 2012, pg. 252). Another article, headlined, "Vicious assault shakes Texas town", included the quote, "if the allegations

are proved, how could their young men have been drawn into such an act?” (O’Hara, 2012, pg. 254).

In thematic framing of athletes in rape cases, community rape myths are a major part of framing of the event. Athletes are often seen as representatives of the area, and again, a major part of the cultural idea of success. Because “sports participation teaches athletes the importance of power, control and dominance”, success in these fields can blur the moral actions of the athletes outside of the sports area (Marasescu, 2012, pg. 152). In Boeringer’s (1996) study of athletic participation (as well as fraternity membership and male living arrangements) for 477 undergraduate males, 16 percent were intercollegiate athletes and 80 percent lived in an all-male environment. Boeringer (1996) found that both athletes and fraternity members reported a significantly higher use of coercion in sexual encounters.

Statements or headlines such as “Vicious assault shakes Texas town”, also indicate that the community is an active part of the crime and can be equally victimized as the actual victim himself or herself (O’Hara, 2012, pg. 254). Victimization of a community is often seen as a tactic to focus attention on the reasons for a rape, instead of on the rape itself (O’Hara, 2012). In the case of Winston, the community was seen as a potential victim of the accusation, as seen through the words of the Tallahassee detective who referred to Tallahassee as a football town (USA Today, 2013). Many articles that covered the Turner accusation included reference to his involvement on a prominent swimming team while at Stanford. Sexual abuse by athletes can also include other rape myths, including the potential public perception that athletes have a greater tendency toward violence (McMahon, 2014).

Perpetuation of rape mythology can also serve as the response to false rape accusations. In March 2006, Crystal Magnum, an African-American erotic dancer reported that she had been raped at the party for the Duke University lacrosse team (Subotnik, 2012). Magnum's name became public, particularly as events unfolded suggesting that she had fabricated events, including the actual sexual abuse. While the accused Duke players claimed innocence, two athletes were arrested and students across the campus began protesting the team, and demanding justice for Magnum (Subotnik, 2012).

Despite no students' DNA matching the DNA found on the victim, Durham District Attorney Michael Nifong continued the investigation and indictments against three students, leading Duke University to cancel the lacrosse season, and fire the Duke Lacrosse coach (Subotnik, 2012). Soon into the case, Magnum admitted to lying about the rape assault, creating a lasting backlash against those who report true rape or sexual assault (Subotnik, 2012).

While journalists strive to provide pure, unbiased facts, media is not immune to sensationalism, as seen in the Duke case. While the journalism code of ethics requires a journalist to seek the truth and report it, as well as avoid stereotyping by race, gender, etc., professor of media studies Jane Kirtley (as cited in Subotnik, 2012, pg. 908) concluded that most media coverage accepted the story provided by the prosecutor, particularly if that version included reversed class and cultural stereotypes, as seen in the Duke rape charges. Media is also obligated to present all sides of a story, which can lead to accidental portrayal of other people or groups as victims in a rape case, other than just the actual victim of the crime.

Rape crimes are often dismissed due to the Just World Theory (Lerner, 1980, as cited in Stromwell, Alfredsson, & Landstrom, 2013). This theory has led to the belief that there are no innocent victims, and that if something bad happens to someone, “he/she must have done something to deserve it, or even cause it” (Stromwell, et al., 2013, pg. 208).

### **Rape Myths: Victim Culpability**

Identification and acknowledgment of rape myths have roots in social and feminist theories about sex role stereotypes, sexual beliefs and interpersonal violence (Burt, 1980). Framing and utilization of rape myths often are a direct response to characteristics of the victim, including background, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic standing (Burt, 1980). Some rape myths include the idea that the victim is asking for the crime, through actions (such as drinking or flirting) or dress (wearing provocative clothing) (Burt, 1980; O’Hara, 2012).

Rape myths can stem from misunderstanding about the events leading up to the rape, but they can also stem from outside factors, such as pressure to report a decrease in violent crimes, including rapes. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) estimated that in 2013, 79,770 rapes were reported to law enforcement, a 6.3 percent drop from the 2012 report, and a 16.1 percent drop from the 2004 report (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2013). While 14-25 percent of women experience sexual assault, less than half are reported to authorities (Martin, Warfield, & Varelas & Foley, 1998). The fact that women suffering from sexual attack do not always report the crime relates to the community response to the victim to include victim shaming, which can often be more damaging than the actual assault itself.

Yung (2014) determined that cultural forces provide a subtle method of discouragement toward rape accusations, noting “the result of cultural opposition to rape stories is to enable and embolden intentional undercounting of rape.” (pg. 1218). Because of the inherent cultural suspicion of rape accusation in the United States, as well as the pressure for police forces to be proactive and efficient in lowering violent crimes, police forces are not only allowed to undercount rape or discount and discredit rape victims, but are actually encouraged to do so (Yung, 2014). Unfortunately, underreporting rape statistics can lead to misrepresentation of how often rape occurs in the country, particularly when it comes to public understanding of rape.

How the press frames rape victims can also influence public opinion. In a study of two cases of rape, the reports focused on the victims’ behavior before the rape rather than the crime of rape itself, suggesting that the victims’ actions contributed to the resulting crime (Korn & Efrat, 2004). Description of the victims’ behavior was limited to behavior that would suggest culpability for the crime, such as previous sexual history, clothing or seduction (Korn & Efrat, 2004). Public opinion can also manifest in many other ways, such as hedging, a feature of discourse often used in litigation (Ponterotto, 2014). Hedging, a dialogue function used to downplay a statement, is used in rape trials during cross-examination and can discredit testimony of the event as well as the victim herself (Ponterotto, 2014).

O’Hara (2012) expanded on another case in Cleveland, Texas, in which an 11-year-old girl was repeatedly gang-raped by a group of men in her town, some of whom filmed portions of the attack. While some of the stories mentioned her intelligence, others referenced her age and clothing, suggesting she dressed older than her age and sought out

teenage boys at playgrounds, inferring that she put herself in vulnerable positions that lead to the rape (O'Hara, 2012). While ethical journalism guidelines prohibited much of her personal information being reported to the public, most articles did not address any harm done to the victim, but instead the harm done to the community (O'Hara, 2012). This attention on the victimization of the community is common in media coverage of rape; O'Hara (2012) noted that in the Cleveland, Texas rape case, only 16 percent mentioned the victim's physical trauma or harm, while 28 percent of the articles addressed the pain of the community.

There is a significant issue of the division of victims as "a whore or a virgin", and furthermore, dividing the virgins into "Lolitas" or virgins (O'Hara, 2012; Korn & Efrat, 2004, pg. 1062). The "whores" are seen as promiscuous women who are a culpable party for inviting the rape, while the "virgins" are seen as victims attacked by these "monsters" and "perverts" (O'Hara, 2012, pg. 248). Even the virgins are not protected, as even some young children can be at risk for accusation of causing the rape, as seen in the rape of an 11-year-old girl in Cleveland, Texas who was portrayed as promiscuous and sexually experienced due to flirtatious behavior (O'Hara, 2012).

### **Rape Myths: Support for the Perpetrator**

Fame or popularity can also provide a skewed result of accepted rape concerns. In 2003, a woman reported that Los Angeles Lakers basketball star Kobe Bryant sexually assaulted her, leading to a formal charge of felony sexual assault (Franiuk, Seefeldt, Cepress, & Vandello, 2008). Rape myths in the Kobe Bryant case were rampant, as many people noted that the woman's story changed variably, leading to the "she's lying" myth (Franiuk, et al., 2008). Franiuk, et al (2008) note that one significant reason for rape myth



acceptance is that in general, one believes his or her society is one of personal integrity and also justice: by maintaining that true sexual assault is very rare, society can pretend that it is handled appropriately every time it is honestly encountered, which again, is truly rare. This is another extension of the Just World Theory, the idea that truly bad things only happen to people who deserve it; this is often true for those who have never experienced sexual assault or rape in their own life (Stromwall, et al., 2013).

Rape myths are an unfortunate part of transmitted culture, and media can have a powerful influence on acceptance of rape myths. How the media treats sexual assault crimes “not only primes and reinforces rape myths in those who already hold them but also may construct these thoughts for those who do not already have them.” (Franiuk, et al., 2008, pg. 291). In the case of Kobe Bryant and sexual assault, 24 percent of the articles had a positive comment about Bryant, particularly about his actions as an athlete (Franiuk, et al., 2008).

Crimes involving athletes are often publicly profiled because of the high involvement of the community and the value associated with the alleged perpetrators. This value was seen in the media coverage in Steubenville, Ohio regarding several athletes accused of raping a young student. Media focused extensively on athletes and sports culture in the high profile rape case in 2012, when several members of the Steubenville High School football team were accused and charged with raping a young girl at a party and spreading photos of the unconscious female over social media (Macur & Schweber, 2012). The photos, videos and posts suggested that the girl had been sexually assaulted and potentially urinated on, with Twitter labels including the words “rape” and “drunk girl” (Macur & Schweber, 2012).

The two 16-year-old football players were arrested for raping the 16-year-old girl and kidnapping her by taking her to several parties while she was unconscious or too drunk to resist (Macur & Schweber, 2012). The girl, who attends a smaller school instead of Steubenville High School, was allegedly drunk and stumbling by 10:30 that night, after which the players, identified as Trent Mays and Ma'lik Richmond, took her to two other parties where the players flashed the girl's breasts and penetrated her digitally, as seen in videos taken that night (Macur & Schweber, 2012).

Due to the quick spread of information and posts on social media, the community took sides either against the football team members or in support of them, with some blaming the girl for putting herself in a sexually vulnerable position by getting drunk at the party, and others blaming the "hero-worshiping culture built around the football players who think they can do no wrong." (Macur & Schweber, 2012, pg. D.1).

In 2013, after the Steubenville High School athletes were found guilty of the rape, CNN correspondent Poppy Harlow wrote, "Incredibly difficult, even for an outsider like me, to watch what happened as these two young men that had such promising futures, star football players, very good students, literally watched as they believed their lives fell apart..." (Harlow, 2013, as cited in Duke, 2013, pg. 1). Harlow focused on the boys as star football players in an unfortunate situation instead of convicted rapists, despite the extensive physical evidence in the form of photos, posts and videos taken that night (Duke, 2013).

The assumption in this thesis is that the culture of the athletic society that surrounds Winston and Turner provides a different level of support for reported rape perpetrators. Crosset, Benedict and McDonald (1995) reviewed criminal claims of rape in

30 Division I institutions from 1991 to 1993 and found that student athletes comprised 3.8 percent of the total male population, but represented 5.5 percent of the total sexual assaults reported to campus police. This statistic indicates a relatively significant higher instance of reports of assault coming from an athlete as opposed to other representatives of the college community, which is newsworthy again due to the interest in sports culture, and the high expectation of those within that community. However, the relationship of rape myths to athletic culture based on race has not been studied in depth.

### **Athletes in Rape Cases**

Sports, particularly male-oriented sports, can create a type of rape culture for many suggested reasons. Crosset, Benedict and McDonald (1995) suggest that this rape culture is created due to sexual segregation, hostility between teams and the stressed importance on dominance over others. This rape culture can also be connected to internal sport culture: in a study of more than 700 intercollegiate student athletes from five universities, rape myth acceptance was found to be higher in male athletes, particularly those who play a team-based sport such as football, the chosen sport of Jameis Winston, rather than individual sports, such as swimming, the chosen sport of Brock Turner (Sawyer, Thompson, & Chicorelli, 2002). Meng and Pan (2013) suggest that sports public relations, mixed with fans' craving to support their players regardless of allegations, elevate the potential for a rape myth utilization in response to rape cases involving athletes. This study and others help researchers answer the question of whether an individual's acceptance of rape myths influences their definition of rape, and furthermore, whether it influences his or her likelihood to rape (Burt, 1980). The sports public relation strategy in response to rape allegations includes several stages, such as

denial, reduce direct responsibility, bolster personal character, and initiate corrective action. (Meng & Pan, 2013).

Rape accusations in college are often settled without a trial, but many cases go to trial without much media coverage. There are hundreds of examples of rape cases involving college athletes, with a variety of punishments, if any, and justice procedures. In addition, several high profile professional athletes have been accused of, if not charged with, rape or sexual assault, including NFL quarterback Ben Roethlisberger, professional golfer Tiger Woods and NBA star Kobe Bryant (Meng & Pan, 2013; Franiuk, Seefelt, Cephress, & Vandello, 2008; Leonard, 2004). Coverage of Roethlisberger's case included heavy focus on the accuser and relatively rare mentions of the words sexual assault, likely due to the fact that Roethlisberger was not formerly charged with rape (Meng & Pan, 2013). Coverage of the Kobe Bryant case included doubt on the story of the victim, while also including statistics on Bryant's successful basketball career (Franiuk, Seefelt, Cephress, & Vandello, 2008) However, articles regarding the allegations against Woods focused mainly on the affair, and very little on the rape or sexual assault allegations (Meng & Pan, 2013).

Because of the status that successful athletes can bring to their teams and schools, athletes are seen as "elite" and taught to use force to gain the edge (Caron, Halteman, & Stacy, 1997, pg. 1381). Due to their status as high profile members of college communities, rapes or reported rapes committed by athletes may be reported more often due to the celebrity status; however, it is equally likely that the additional publicity involved with a rape allegation and trial could deter victims from reporting actual incidents (Caron, Halteman, & Stacy, 1997).

There are several important studies on the connection between athletes and rape, particularly on the connection of the athletic culture (Caron, Halteman, & Stacy, 1997; Boeringer, 1996; Hust, et al., 2013), the community as an active participant in the accusation (Duke, 2013; McMahon, 2014; Stromwall, et al., 2013), and aggression as a positive attribute in sports (Caron, Halteman, & Stacy, 1997; Hust, et al., 2013; Marasescu, 2012). Crosset, Benedict and McDonald (1995) found a positive correlation between college athletic activity and reports of sexual assault. Caron, Halteman and Stacy (1997) also note a relationship between competitiveness, athletes and rape, specifically focusing on competitiveness as a predictor. This is also shown in the higher instance of rape myth acceptance in athletes in team-based sports rather than individual sports (Sawyer, Thompson, & Chicorelli, 2002).

### **Masculinity and Race**

The decision to research two case studies separated by race incorporated the idea of societal value added by the alleged perpetrator, as well as the expected facets of masculinity between each race. An established rape myth involves the fear of a white female being raped by a black male, an allegation portrayed in the Jameis Winston case. Does the Winston case involve different rape rhetoric than a case involving a white perpetrator, both within the college sports culture? If so, why?

The Kobe Bryant case provides an example of black men as a commodity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is a perceived idea of colorblind adoration “toward the Kobes and the Denzels”, the athletes and entertainers who provide a sense of colorblind value to their communities (Leonard, 2004, pg. 286). However, once this adoration is perceived as exploited, such as in expected or believed support for an alleged rapist, this support can

switch to blame and racial tension very quickly. While colorblind rhetoric is prevalent in the United States, “Whites are able to rework America’s contemporary racial reality” to include examples of racial equality that often reflect direct perceived value from the person (Leonard, 2004, pg. 287). In 1995, Lorraine Kees wrote an article about the downfall of role models, including the phrase, “Three sport stars, three African-American men, have struck out after hitting the big time” (Kees, 1995, pg.1), immediately providing both value and race attached to the three men. This article also discussed the “fall from grace and the gravy train” of Darryl Strawberry, Mike Tyson and O.J. Simpson, whom Kees noted did not provide any contribution to their communities “other than being professional athletes” (Kees, 1995, pg. 1).

With the exception of a few politicians such as President Barack Obama and activists such as Martin Luther King, Jr., many of the world’s examples of racial progress are athletes or entertainers, therefore providing an enjoyable service to their communities, which may be a reason for their perceived value (Leonard, 2004). Indeed, the value of an athlete, particularly a college athlete that cannot legally be paid for his or her sport, has not been overlooked by the college community. College athletes can significantly affect a sport program, selling tickets, jerseys, memorabilia, and influencing alumni donations. There is an incredibly high over-representation of black athletes performing on high revenue teams, though this population often experiences lower graduation rates compared to other students (van Rheenen, 2012). With this trend continuing, it is easy to assume the value of most of these students is directly tied to their athletic performance, particularly since college athletics, particularly football and basketball, have generated more than \$6 billion in annual revenue, more than the NBA (van Rheenen, 2012).

Historically, black men were seen as a commodity for white men during the days of slavery. During this time particularly, many states allowed for the death penalty or castration as a punishment for rape when the perpetrator was black and the victim was white, and mobs consistently broken into jails to lynch slaves alleged to have raped white women (Wriggins, 1983). Penalties for white men convicted of raping white women were much less severe, while the rape of black women by either black or white men was legal (Wriggins, 1983).

Black men have historically been cast in two opposing representational areas of infantilization (wherein a black man is “symbolically castrated”) and overly aggressive (Boyd, 2015, pg. 678). These representations developed from the history of black individuals forced to perform for white audiences, which developed a significantly different narrative of masculinity between black and white males.

Masculinity plays a significant role in the narrative of athletics and sexual assault as separate topics, and an even bigger role in the discussion of athletics and sexual assault in connection with one another. Even today, the discussion of race can “rapidly turn to sports”; alternatively, the discussion about sports “will eventually turn to race” (Sigelman, 1998, pg. 892). In a study that asked African Americans to discuss how they believe white Americans see them, the group ranked athleticism behind only violence, and ahead of other images such as immorality, laziness and whining (Sigelman, 1997).

Studies into how race and gender intersect provide insight into expectations for different races, both in positive and negative attributes. Social expectations for black men include aggression due to a history of athleticism, including potential for both violent

sexual crimes and domestic abuse (Enck-Wanzer, 2009). Black men are also expected to exude hypermasculinity for heterosexual encounters (Bucholtz, 1999).

On the other side, white masculinity involves a certain amount of expectations as well. All males are expected to project masculine actions or features, but only certain features are culturally acceptable to each race (Bucholtz, 1999). White men are expected to show power and dominance, particularly in the masculine dominant style (Bucholtz, 1999). The idea that different races have different masculine expectations shows the dramatic difference in societal value, potentially leading to support for the perpetrator in the form of normative rape myths.

While expectations for different races exists, an even larger issue is legal response to crimes allegedly committed by the different races. While most instances of lynching bypassed legal proceedings, legal lynching was a term used specifically for severe punishment against black males, as the “appropriate response to acts of defiance by African Americans” (Mikkelsen, 2009, pg. 467). Between 1882 and 1946, close to 5,000 people were lynched, with about three-quarters of that number being black, and the most common reasoning for the lynching being the claim that a white woman was raped by a black man (Wriggins, 1983).

There is a rising need to not only identify the presence of rape myths in coverage of high profile rape cases, but also the type of rape myths used. Franiuk et al (2008) found in the Kobe Bryant rape case, rape myths in the framing of the story led many to believe in victim culpability and also unreliability of the victim’s story (Franiuk, et al. 2008). Many of the articles involved with the Bryant case also included information



about his athletic abilities, subtly incorporating his societal value to the story (Leonard, 2004).

In a study of 156 articles from 76 online sources, including major news outlets, Franiuk, et al (2008) looked for endorsement of rape myths and influencing information about the rape case involving Kobe Bryant. By running a search and connecting Kobe Bryant with sexual assault, the researchers identified articles written about the trial. Franiuk, et al (2008) found there were 1.66 myth-endorsing statements per rape coverage article, with just over 65 percent of the articles including one or more myth endorsements. Just over 42 percent of articles included a question of whether the victim was lying, while 31.4 percent of articles noted that the victim potentially invited the assault (Franiuk, et al., 2008).

The coverage and support of rape victims and their claims in the United States relies upon the believability of their story, the victim's willingness to tell the story, the reputation of the accused and the action of authority figures, or people in power of sharing the crime or prosecuting the accused. Media coverage of rape and sexual assault cases can provide framing for societal acceptance of victimization and rape mythology.

Rape myths are commonly accepted by various people from various cultures, of both sexes, of all backgrounds and socio-economic foundations. However, few studies have evaluated perpetuation of rape myths in a comparison of two rape cases, both involving high profile athletes, while also addressing potential thematic identifiers such as race and college community. Rape cases often involve a theory of colorblind rhetoric, but how the alleged perpetrators are portrayed is a reflection of the society that either supports or condemns these people (Leonard, 2004). In the case of basketball star Kobe

Bryant, a rape accusation turned public opinion against him in a lasting way, introducing the “centrality of race in both the adoration and condemnation of contemporary Black athletes” while also dismissing the idea of including race in the event (Leonard, 2004, pg. 286). Does sports culture follow a standard practice in condemning all alleged or charged rapists, regardless of race? Or does race within that culture mirror race standards in non-sport rape cases?

Sports culture provides an additional layer of value to the perpetrator. Athletes provide a service to the community, particularly the college community, and the extent of the influence this service has on the community can provide insight into rape myth rhetoric, particularly when researching rape cases involving two different races. This method evaluates how rape myths are utilized in support of an athletic perpetrator:

RQ1: In an analysis of two college athletic rape accusations, how does race influence rape mythology?

In the midst of thematic analysis, I also had a unique opportunity to research which types of rape myths are used in each case, as well as which rape myths are used in conjunction with one another, if any, regarding sports culture.

RQ1-A: Which rape myths are used, and how do they manifest differently in the two narratives?

RQ2: How does sports culture discourse address or perpetuate rape mythology in an analysis of rape accusations against two college athletes of differing ethnicities?

## Methodology

### Cases

Rape coverage, particularly perpetuation of rape myths, presents a unique opportunity to investigate framing, but there is some question about the inclusion of rape myths into general media coverage of rape, as well as the influence on the audience who perceives this news coverage. On December 7, 2012, an FSU student filed a sexual battery incident with the Tallahassee Police Department and the FSU Police Department, later naming FSU quarterback Jameis Winston as her reported rapist (USA Today, 2013). However, investigation into the case did not begin until November 2013, almost a year after the incident, though the woman underwent blood toxicology reports immediately after the incident (USA Today, 2013).

Bruises appeared on the victim as she spoke to campus police, indicating recent physical trauma (Bogdanich, 2014). DNA provided by Winston at a later date matched the DNA lifted from the reported victim's underwear soon after the claimed incident (USA Today, 2013). However, three weeks after Winston was identified as a suspect, the prosecution announced that the department lacked evidence to charge Winston with rape, despite an examination by *The New York Times* of police records and interviews with those involved with the case revealing no investigation to speak of from any police department (Bogdanich, 2014). Bogdanich (2014) also noted that another woman had sought counseling after a previous sexual experience with Winston, though the first experience was not considered rape by the police because the woman did not say "no" (pg. 1).

It took 34 days for the police to identify Winston as a suspect, even after the accuser reported his identity, and Tallahassee police did not contact Winston until 47 days after the incident (Bogdanich, 2014). Just 66 days into the investigation, lead investigator Scott Angulo closed the case without interviewing witnesses or initially obtaining DNA from Winston (Bogdanich, 2014). In addition, the family stated that a Tallahassee detective told the accuser's attorney that Tallahassee is a football town, and that her client's life could "be made miserable" if the sexual assault case continued (USA Today, 2013, pg. 1).

In February 2016, the *Tampa Bay Times* published testimonies relating to the lawsuit the victim took to FSU, one that was recently settled (Dick, 2016). One particularly important testimony was from FSU Victim Advocate Director Melissa Ashton, whose testimony revealed not only that Winston had been identified in two separate sexual assault accusations, but also that the Florida State Chief of Police and the Dean of Students worked together to halt these investigations of Winston, likely to keep him on the football team and diminish any scandal against the school (Dick, 2016).

On January 18, 2015, Turner was discovered laying on top of the victim near the Kappa Alpha house on Stanford's campus. The two male graduate students who came across the couple first thought that it was a consensual act, but then noticed the victim was not moving. After a confrontation between Turner and the graduate students, Turner ran away from the students, who then chased Turner and held him while the police were summoned. The police arrived to find the reported victim lying unresponsive behind a dumpster with her dress around her waist and her underwear on the ground nearby (Phillips & Beyda, 2015).

Turner admitted to taking off the victim's underwear and penetrating her with his fingers, but stated he did not take his pants off or penetrate her with his penis. He denied running away from the graduate students (Phillips & Beyda, 2015). He pleaded not guilty to one count each of: rape of an unconscious person, rape of an intoxicated person, sexual penetration by a foreign object of an unconscious person, assault with intent to commit rape, and sexual penetration by a foreign object of an intoxicated person (Molinet, 2015; Svriuga, 2015).

On March 31, 2016, he was found guilty of assault with intent to rape an intoxicated woman, sexually penetrating an unconscious person with a foreign object, and sexually penetrating an intoxicated person with a foreign object (Kaplan & Lee, Stanford sex case: Brock Turner found guilty of assault on unconscious woman, 2016). Prosecutors suggested a minimum of six years in prison, but Turner was sentenced to six months in county jail and probation, a length chosen because judge Aaron Persky considered Turner's young age (20) and lack of previous criminal history as factors in the shorter sentencing (Levin, 2016). Persky, who was also a college athlete at Stanford, noted "a prison sentence would have a severe impact" on Turner (Levin, 2016, pg. 1; King, 2016).

Turner's father Dan Turner spoke out in favor of probation for his son, saying a prison sentence was "a steep price to pay for 20 minutes of action out of his 20 plus years of life" (Miller, 'A steep price to pay for 20 minutes of action': Dad defends Stanford sex offender, 2016, pg. 1). Several outlets, including Buzzfeed, published sections or complete text of the letter that the victim read aloud to Turner during sentencing, which

detailed the night before the assault, her memory of the incident, and the routine at the hospital, which included a full body examination (Baker K. J., 2016).

### **Thematic Analysis**

To answer the research questions and determine how the reported rapes were discussed and framed in the Jameis Winston and the Brock Turner cases, I initiated a thematic analysis to identify and analyze themes within the data. A major measure of a thematic analysis is to analyze how each person in each case is framed or portrayed: if there are major differences in the discussion of individual value, this indicates a difference in racial expectations and value.

Racial overtones have been included in societal acceptance of value since the days of slavery, in which strong, masculine men were considered valuable to the white slave owners. The value of black men includes traits that supported the needs of the slave owners, such as physical fitness and strength (Enck-Wanzer, 2009). White men, however, are expected to exude power as a major masculine trait, particularly over other ethnicities, and certainly over women (Wriggins, 1983). This thematic analysis allowed me to seek an overall understanding of the way the rapes were portrayed in the college sports culture involving a black athlete and a white athlete, while also identifying patterns and themes repeated or perpetuated in online reports of the events. This analysis of the sports culture allows investigation into themes of race, as Winston is black and Turner is white. A thematic analysis allowed me to incorporate societal responses and potential framing reactions to the alleged sexual assaults.

Entman (1993, 2007) focused on thematic framing, which falls directly in line with the methodology of this thesis. Thematic analysis allows the researchers to evaluate

the utilization of rape myths, as well as the specific rape myths used, both of which determine the framing of the event, and the salience of the framing for the public.

Thematic analysis often includes sub-themes, which were determined through discussion of rape myths and rape myth utilization.

Overall, this thematic analysis provides an idea of how the rape is portrayed from media sources. However, investigation of the texts themselves introduce potentially expanded or different themes than the ones identified. This thematic analysis offers a narrative of the rape cases in very different societal cultures by reviewing college athletes. When discussing thematic analysis, it is important to make note of the difference between inductive and theoretical thematic analyses. Inductive analysis refers to the study of themes linked to the data itself, as the researcher codes the data without trying to incorporate the information into a pre-existing frame (Braun & Clark, 2006). However, I used a theoretical thematic analysis, in which I investigated how the collected data from print and online sources on the Turner and Winston rape cases to see how the results fit in with existing data on rape myths and sexual assault discourse, particularly on college campuses.

Thematic analysis also includes an interpretive level of research, in which the researcher can describe and interpret latent content and the broader implications on connecting research and society itself. This type of analysis identifies the development of the themes, as well as repeating patterns of themes (Braun & Clark, 2006).

A thematic analysis allowed me to investigate the way that rape crises are handled in the college sports culture with two different ethnicities. While investigation of incorporated themes and prevalence may include coding and direct comparison of rape

myth perpetuation, a thematic analysis provides a detailed account of the resulting groups of themes identified in the separate data sets.

### **Sample**

This thesis contains results of a thematic analysis of 54 articles, 27 articles for each case. These 54 articles are listed in the Appendix. Using purposive sampling, I narrowed my final articles for analysis to focus on the most applicable and in-depth articles about the case, rather than analyzing articles that simply mention the event without detail surrounding sexual assault or safety on college campuses. Articles chosen were not just the ones that dove into the history and implications of each case, but the ones with individual journalistic themes included, rather than just factual statements. Length and type of publication (major versus regional, etc.) were not considerations when deciding which articles to include. These results are discussed and connected through themes.

Through analysis of news coverage of the rape cases, starting from the date of the incident: December 2012 for Winston and January 2015 for Turner. This timeline allowed me to investigate potential framing themes for a similar time period, starting with the initial incident and continuing through the following investigation and charges. With the addition of news notifications, which alerted me to any new articles involving the names of each accused perpetrator, I was able to pull articles from the start of each case until June 15, 2016, when this thesis was in the process of being finalized. This qualitative analysis includes print and online news reports from a variety of sources, both local and national news, but only covers print or textual news coverage without inclusion of any broadcast, due to time limitations.



## **Inclusion of Texts**

To find the articles written about the specific rape cases involving Winston and Turner, I ran an initial search engine and database analysis on articles that cover rape cases. This was completed through a keyword analysis to include combinations of keywords such as “rape”, “sexual assault”, “Jameis Winston” and “Brock Turner” through search engine database Google News.

This general analysis introduced hundreds of articles, in part because I did not search specifically for or eliminate national news sources, local news sources, or independent news sources, and initially reviewed all articles with the relevant search phrases involved. After initial collection, I eliminated all repeated articles picked up across the wire, as well as those relating to other individuals with similar names. I did not eliminate articles that merely mentioned the men or event in my initial data pull, and instead included any article that mentioned the key words in a way that is relevant to the situation. After the initial data pull, I utilized purposive sampling to find actual, in-depth coverage of each event. These rules allowed me to narrow my result to the final, applicable articles. The continuous data pull resulted in 250 articles about Jameis Winston and 150 articles about Brock Turner, from a variety of news sources, which was narrowed to the final 27 articles for each, for a total of 54 analyzed articles.

The readership of each site varies greatly, but each caters to a specific audience that was considered when addressing the alleged rape cases and/or the individual perpetrators or victims. Because of this, major themes were prevalent across many articles, regardless of readership, source or location.

## **Sampling Strategy**

To identify the final articles for thematic analysis, I used a purposive sampling process. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling, which relies on the judgment of the researcher for inclusion of a text to be studied. Unlike other sampling, such as random sampling to create a general representation of a population, the goal of purposive sampling is to focus on particular characteristics, which is common for qualitative research designs.

In purposive sampling, articles are selected due to having similar characteristics. In this case, articles were chosen when they included expanded information about the case beyond strictly facts. For example, an article that discussed Jameis Winston's athletic achievements was included while an article that just discussed the code of conduct determination without additional insight into his athletic or the case itself was not included. This purposive sampling was utilized to be able to address repeating themes, such as what people choose to discuss when researching or reporting on these specific college athlete rape accusations.

In purposive sampling, I utilized maximum variation sampling. This is also known as heterogeneous sampling, designed to capture a wide range of perspectives relating to rape and/or race discourse regarding sexual assault cases involving college athletes (Devers & Frankel, 2000). Heterogeneous sampling includes a variety of perspectives, including some extreme ideals, and may incorporate a wide range of attributes, experiences, beliefs, etc. Maximum variation purposive sampling was chosen to gain increased insight into a specific topic, and is used to identify common themes.

In purposive sampling, three types of cases have the greatest payoff: typical cases, negative cases, and extreme cases (Devers & Frankel, 2000). These case types were considered when including cases for study. While this sampling method provides specific insight into a phenomenon, in this case rape discourse involving college athletes of differing races, purposive sampling can be prone to researcher bias. However, this subjective component is based on clear criteria, including rape myth and repeating themes.

The initial data pull resulted in 250 articles about Jameis Winston and 150 articles about Brock Turner, from a variety of news sources. Sources for articles for Brock Turner include *ABC*, *Business Insider*, *Buzzfeed*, *the Daily Beast*, *Daily Mail*, *The Daily Trojan* (Stanford University newspaper), *ESPN*, *LA Times*, *NBC*, *Palo Alto*, *San Jose Mercury*, *Santa Cruz Sentinel*, *The Washington Post*, *Stanford Daily*, *Swimming World Magazine*, *New York Daily News*, and *the Guardian*.

Sources for articles on Jameis Winston include *Bleacher Report*, *CBS News*, *CBS Sports*, *CNN*, *Daily Mail*, *Dallas Observer*, *Deadspin*, *ESPN*, *Forbes*, *Fox Sports*, *Florida State University News* (FSU newspaper), *Huffington Post*, *Miami Herald*, *Newsweek*, *New York Daily News*, *Slate*, *Tampa Bay Times*, *USA Today*, *Yahoo Sports*.

After the initial data pull, I used purposive sampling to narrow my results down to a manageable thematic sample of 27 articles for each case, resulting in a total of 54 articles. During the purposive sampling phase, I attempted to find the original source if at all possible, instead of including pieces that just cite the original source. However, I did not want to discount articles that refer to the event and expand upon the journalist's own thematic framing, as these also provide pieces of the narrative of sexual assault for

college athletes in differing races. By narrowing the initial data pull, I was able to weed out articles that happened to mention either case, but did not exactly focus on the true case or allow for any themes to develop. Some of the initial data pull included round-up articles that just included one sentence of the arrest or the conviction of Turner. By using purposive sampling, I read all articles pulled, and then focused on the three types of samples that provide the most insight into the rape mythology and rape discourse phenomenon: typical cases, negative cases, and extreme cases (Devers & Frankel, 2000). Typical cases serve as a foundation of societal response to rape accusations and rape mythology. Negative cases and extreme cases can show trends of media in either direction, which will be valuable for future research, as this study is just another snapshot of the discourse of sexual assault in the United States.

The resulting 54 articles were read through multiple times each to gain an idea of the overall feel of the article, as well as to allow time for multiple themes to emerge and develop.

### **Data Analysis Procedure**

Because of the exploratory nature of this study, I completed an in-depth thematic analysis of the articles. Thematic analysis is also known as thematic interpretation, and interprets themes as conceptualization of interactions, as well as relationships and events related to recurrence, forcefulness and repetition (Owen, 1984). Recurrence, forcefulness and repetition helped the researcher identify the themes and relationship between each theme in thematic analysis (Owen, 1984). Recurrence occurs when the same meaning is present multiple times in each data set; this meaning does not need to manifest itself in the same wording as it would with repetition, as long as the same meaning is present

(Keyton, 2006). Forcefulness is a feature that occurs when the writing indicates dramatic pause or inflection used to stress a point (Owen, 1984).

Because I used a theory-driven method of analysis, I investigated the theme of rape myth utilization including racialization themes, such as discussion of victim culpability, community response, and support for the perpetrator in my initial review. How rape myths are perpetuated in print coverage of the crime can introduce many other theme patterns, which I identified in my results section. While context can be difficult to explain, different data points can fit into different themes if necessary, including sensationalism and how women are portrayed in media. In addition, while a quantitative content analysis identifies strict codes in text, thematic analysis allows the researcher to interpret suggestion of rape myth utilization or racial coding, which was more valuable to identify inferences and suggestion of rape myth utilization and racial disparity instead of just statements that explicitly state rape myth or racial statements.

Once I completed the first phase by reviewing all textual content and collating all potential codes, I began phase two of connecting the codes into potential themes. To connect the codes into themes, I incorporated the constant comparative method (CCM), which allowed a researcher (myself) to connect data with theory, as well as questions that arise during the process of analysis (Boeije, 2002). This level of analysis allowed me to focus on comparison of phenomena, as well as categories and the relationship between these categories, while still maintaining the foundation of interpretation of analysis. These themes include relevant coded data from the texts themselves, which present a descriptive narrative of how rape is framed for high profile athletes (Boeije, 2002).

Once the themes themselves and the supporting data separated, I was able to start refining the themes to identify patterns. Patterns provide a thematic map that reflects and meaningful narrative of the overall discussion: in this case, rape in two different societal cultures.

Because this case included an analysis of sexual assault narrative within college sports culture of black college athlete and a white college athlete, race was continuously considered when identifying themes or phrasing. To answer RQ1: “In an analysis of two college athletic rape accusations, how does race influence rape mythology?”, I first looked for phrasing that was used in one case and not the other. For example, while Winston was actually younger than Turner at the time of each assault, sources were far more likely to refer to Turner’s youthfulness in coverage, indicating dispersion of guilt, which is a form of the rape myth of perpetrator support. In addition, while both Turner and Winston earned the honor of being named All-American, only Turner was called an All-American, which indicated thematic framing of Turner as a wholesome, American boy.

These thematic frames allowed me to address racialization in each case, particularly in relation to college sports culture, to help answer RQ2: How does sports culture discourse address or perpetuate rape mythology in an analysis of rape accusations against two college athletes of differing ethnicities?

## **Results**

### **Themes**

Because thematic analysis thrives on the development and investigation of results identified through unbiased reading, I did not include codes or proposals set forth from the researcher during the analysis phase. Instead, I read through each text several times and identified themes that arose, and grouped those into several sub categories. These themes included racial notes (The Race Game), the rape myth of victim blaming, the rape myth of perpetrator support, the rape myth of community victimization, the value of a man, police involvement, and question of blame of authority, expanded below.

### **The Race Game**

This section addresses RQ1: In an analysis of two college athletic rape accusations, how does race influence rape mythology? Race was mentioned directly in several articles, almost exclusively for the Winston case. Rather than discussion of crimes committed by a certain race over another, the repeating theme was the discussion of colorblind justice, and often praising the path of the investigation for not assuming Winston was guilty just because of the color of his skin. Jones (2013) inferred that race is often involved in rape decisions, and wrote positively about the progress of society in allowing justice to be served through the belief that a suspect is innocent until proven guilty. On the same extreme, some sources believed that the victim and her supporters were potentially accusing Winston because of his color, as Kostidakis (2015), wrote of the “crusade” against Winston, and said Winston will just need to focus on fixing his image after the accusation (pg. 1).

This praise of progress was not just inferred, but often mentioned outright. Cowlshaw (2013) suggested that the decision to drop the sexual assault investigation represented “significant progress”, and told of a story from 1949 in which black men were accused of rape with no basis (pg. 1, 2013). A response to this article mentioned lynching in the title: “Dallas Morning News: Jameis Winston may have raped a girl, but at least he wasn’t lynched”, by Amy Martyn for *the Dallas Observer* on December 16, 2013. Martyn noted that race is often involved in rape decisions, and said while discounting race in legal proceedings is justice, discounting crimes due to race is equally unjust. Martyn, (2013) used this to respond to Cowlshaw’s overt racial tone in an article in which she recognized progress but also noted that the victim should be the true focus.

Even with historical records indicating race is involved in rape cases, to include some more recent cases as well, no sources included in this study included statistics on race and rape, or any other information that would lead to a theme of guilt due to prejudice. The overall story of Jameis Winston’s rape accusation is one of “an accuser who is either being unfairly harassed or is wrongly accusing a 19-year-old African-American male” (Walters, 2013, pg. 4).

The case of Brock Turner included significantly more overt racial discussion, particularly after Turner was sentenced to six months in county jail, a sentence many felt was extremely light due to his white race (Stack, 2016). Breanna Edwards (2016) compared Turner’s case, conviction and sentence to those of Brian Banks, a black man who was wrongly accused of rape when he was 16 years old. Like Turner, Banks was a promising young athlete, playing high school football. Like Turner, Banks had no previous criminal history. Like Turner, Banks was young (16). (Edwards, 2016)



However, the similarities end there. Turner's actions of touching an unconscious woman were confirmed by eyewitnesses who intervened on the spot, chasing him as he ran and holding him for police. Turner's victim bore evidence of the crime, including internal swelling and abrasions along her body. Turner was identified via DNA from physical evidence. For Brian Banks, his story began and ended with a he-said-she-said case, when he was accused of rape and convicted without physical evidence or eyewitness account (Edwards, 2016).

This disparity in justice is seen by many, including Edwards (2016), as a matter of privilege. The middle to upper class white man was excused from a harsh sentence despite evidence and eyewitness accounts, while the minority man from a different neighborhood was convicted without evidence, with what Edwards suggested was nonchalance (2016).

In a more direct comparison to a similar case, Shaun King (2016) compared Turner with Corey Batey, a former standout football player at Vanderbilt who was convicted of rape (with ample evidence showing the unconscious victim being carried into the room, along with cell phone videos and photos of the assault). While Turner was sentenced to six months in county jail, Batey will serve a mandatory minimum of 15 to 25 years in prison (King, 2016).

King (2016) suggested this sentence disparity is due to the color of each man, as "black men consistently pay the harshest possible price for crimes they commit" (pg. 1), citing Kalief Browder (a teenager who spent three years on Rikers Island on suspicion of stealing a backpack) and Jasmine Richards (convicted of felony lynching after standing up for another person she thought was being brutalized by police). However, Batey was

found guilty of three felony counts that included aggravated rape, and two counts of aggravated sexual battery, while Turner was not convicted of rape, but was convicted of assault with intent to commit rape of an intoxicated woman, sexually penetrating an intoxicated person with a foreign object, and sexually penetrating an unconscious person with a foreign object (Kaplan & Lee, Stanford sex case: Brock Turner found guilty of assault on unconscious woman , 2016). The charges carry vastly different sentences.

Turner's light sentence brought outrage, particularly in relation to the statement from the judge, who justified the six-month sentence due to his worry that a harsher sentence would have a "severe" impact on Turner, who he referred to as a young man who is not a threat to others, despite recent convictions of sexual crimes (Stack, 2016, pg 1). This was seen by many as a reference to his race, suggesting he was a normal, nice white guy who was not a danger to others (King, 2016; Merlan, 2016, Geiselman, 2016).

Other journalists made additional indirect coded references. Turner and Winston were both under 20 at the time of each accusation, but several media sources referred to Turner as innocent or young. Others made reference to how Turner was dressed during his trial, wearing a nice suit and looking very respectful. With his status as an All-American athlete, the term "All-American" was also used, both a reference to his athletic achievement and also his classic (white) looks. This idea of racialization was significant, because while Winston was also an All-American, this honor was rarely used in discussion of his character or alleged crime.

The following three sections attempt to discuss RQ1-A: Which rape myths are used, and how do they manifest differently in the two narratives? These rape myths include victim blaming, perpetrator support and community victimization.

## **Rape Mythology: Victim Blaming**

One recognizable rape myth is the blame placed on the victim. This can manifest itself in many different ways, including a question of whether or not the victim had been drinking, what time the incident occurred, at what location the incident occurred, what the victim was wearing, etc. Victim blaming is a rape myth that “makes excuses for a rapist based on the victim’s behavior” (Karasik, 2015, pg. 1). In the case of Jameis Winston, this myth was identified through several uses, particularly in the question of the timing of the accusation.

The victim had gone to the police immediately after the incident, but many sources questioned her motives due to the timing of the initial news reports, suggesting the victim had timed the reemergence of the information with the FSU football postseason. This was actually a misinterpretation of the facts: the victim had gone to the police immediately after the incident, and the case had been in a stagnant state until the police report was requested in late 2013.

Several others questioned the other DNA lifted from the victim’s shorts, identified as belonging to her boyfriend (who was not a suspect), suggesting she was untrustworthy because she had multiple partners, such as Mark Schlabach (2013), ESPN, who mentioned, the police department revealed “some new information, saying while Winston’s DNA was present in the sexual assault kit, the DNA of another male was found, complicating the investigation” (pg. 2-3). Schlabach (2013) also mentioned the fact that the victim’s blood alcohol level was too low to be considered a cause for loss of memory, and lack of drugs in her blood did not support her claim that she did not remember the event, without noting the fact that the victim reported that she had

sustained a head injury at the bar, and said the victim's "lack of recall proved to be another critical aspect in the state's decision not to move forward" with the investigation (pg. 3).

Victim blaming for Winston's alleged victim included narratives compatible with previous stereotypes of black masculinity, which includes themes of over-sexualization and aggression (Wriggins, 1983). The discussion was not whether or not Winston could have committed a sexual crime, but whether the victim invited it, suggesting that Winston, an aggressive, black athlete, cannot be held responsible for his actions during the act of invited or suggested sex.

In the case of Brock Turner, blame on the victim was a much more careful consideration. In an article for the *Daily Beast* published January 28, 2015, Emily Shire wrote that the situation was "ideal" for victims' rights due to the witness reports and immediate intervention (2015, pg.1): this indicates surprise that the situation was handled appropriately, and suggested that sexual assault crimes do not often have so many credible eyewitnesses and immediate intervention.

However, some referenced a question of previous consent, a claim made by Turner during the trial. He claimed the victim had previously consented to sexual activities, and only became unconscious at the very end of their encounter, around the time of bystander intervention (Karasik, 2015). Many referenced Turner's testimony that he and the victim had previously been dancing and kissing with complete consent, while also drinking heavily. An expert who testified for the trial said that consent given while blacked-out (or unable to create long-term memories due to advanced inebriation) can be seen as consent given, though this expert was questioned by the prosecuting attorney

(Kaplan, Sex assault trial: former swimmer Brock Turner testifies drunk woman consented, 2016; Kadvany, 2016).

This suggestion created a gray area that had previously been unidentified: if the victim had given consent, was there a possibility that she had been awake until the very moment the witnesses came by and decided to intervene? This doubt was referenced in the coverage of the trial and the conviction.

Other evidence of victim blaming in the Brock Turner case included discussion of the victim's actions that and other nights, in particular the amount of alcohol consumed the night of the attempted rape, including "the vodka she chugged at the party" (Lee J. , 2016, pg. 2). Discussing the victim's actions and detailing the amount of alcohol she voluntarily consumed implies responsibility for the resulting crime. Under cross-examination, the woman said she had been partying heavily in the past and had several experiences when she blacked out (Lee J., 2016).

This victim blaming was addressed in a letter the victim wrote and read to Turner at sentencing, in which she mentioned the questions asked that suggested victim blame, including questions about her alcohol intake, what she was wearing, why her phone was set on silent, and what she remembered (as cited in Baker, 2016). These questions are increasingly considered victim blaming mythology, as they suggest that other actions taken by the victim (such as not drinking alcohol, wearing conservative clothing, not staying out late, etc.) would have eliminated the crime.

The narrative of victim blaming in the case of Brock Turner involved much less expectation than that in the case of Jameis Winston. Sources placed blame on the victim

for making herself vulnerable, but did not seem to be willing to suggest that Turner is a sexual, aggressive male, as done with Winston.

### **Rape Mythology: Perpetrator Support**

The vast focus on Winston was on his athletic achievement, and very little on his other personal positive attributes. One such focus came from Perry Kostidakis (2015), for *FSU News*, who wrote Winston, who was almost 19 at the time of the reported rape, is a good person and mentioned that his age was likely a factor in the event, suggesting he had simply made a youthful mistake.

Kostidakis, for *FSU News*, provided insight into the college culture response to the accusation and case. In an article, “The many faces of Jameis Winston: on the most divisive athlete in recent years” (2015), Kostidakis quoted several students with whom he had discussed Jameis Winston, who called Winston “as smart as Peyton Manning”, “actually smart, too, like in school”, while also quoting one who called Winston “just a n\*\*\*\*\*”, to show the range of opinions of Winston as an individual, student and athlete (as cited in Kostidakis, 2015, pg. 3). Quoting an individual who allegedly called Winston “n\*\*\*\*\*” (as cited in Kostidakis, 2015, pg. 3) serves as an extreme case in purposive sampling, and was used for Kostidakis to show the range of support or anger held against Winston.

However, the rest of this article incorporates many positive perpetrator support messages, including an anecdote of the first time Kostidakis met Jameis Winston, when Winston “sounded like a professional athlete” and talked about his “faith in his teammates” (2015, pg. 4). This statement, as well as significant review of his statistics for games against Clemson, Pitt and Wake Forest, preceded any information about the

victim. Using the alleged quote using the derogatory term served as an opportunity for Kostidakis to include more perpetrator support in response to this anonymous statement.

Roxanne Jones (2013), for CNN, included several rape myths in coverage of the Winston case, including notes that victims often lie and that rape numbers are down, suggesting that there are other motives for rape accusations that may have been incorporated in the Winston case. She also mentioned that an accusation like this can ruin the life of a good person, placing little blame on Winston for the situation. However, even this idea seemed focused more on lack of trust in the victim, and less on the idea that Winston was too good of a person to have possibly committed such a crime.

In contrast, Turner's event seemed to stimulate surprise, with Michael Miller calling him "baby-faced" (2016, pg. 1) in an article for *The Washington Post*. Miller expounded on Turner's athletic achievement, noting that he had tried out for the U.S. Olympic team before his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, only to find that "suddenly he was accused of rape" in a "stunning fall from grace" (Miller, All-American swimmer found guilty of sexually assaulting unconscious woman on Stanford campus, 2016).

A major theme for Turner was not whether or not the girl was lying, what she was wearing, or what the community would think, but rather the surprise and doubt that such a person would commit such a crime on purpose. This idea clouded the trial, as the investigation addressed prior consent, whether the victim was conscious for the event, and Turner's true motivations. Miller even noted Turner's "squeaky clean image and exalted status as a Stanford athlete" (2016, pg.1), and stated that critics thought the jury was harsh on Turner after an alcohol-driven situation. Others wrote about sympathy for

the aggressor, including student columnist Caitie Karasik who said she repeatedly heard what a terrible situation it was for Turner, but not for the victim (2016).

Turner's image as a young man with a bright future continued not only through the trial, but into the sentencing, when the judge sentenced Turner to six months in county jail (though his convictions carried a maximum of 14 years in prison), stating that a longer sentence could have a "severe impact" on Turner (Miller, 'A steep price to pay for 20 minutes of action': Dad defends Stanford sex offender, 2016, pg. 1). Some sources even indicated surprise that he would take the option to withdraw from Stanford, "despite his athletic talent" (Frazin, 2015, pg. 2).

This is a stark contrast to the image of Winston. While few sources cited his youth as an excuse for the alleged crime, there was little discussion about his image or individual honor as a person, and much more of a focus of the motives of the accuser due to his status as a football player. In the case of Brock Turner, there was no suggestion of motive from the victim herself, and instead doubt that Turner could have committed a violent sexual crime. This idea of a fall from grace was addressed by Anna Merlan (2016), who expressed frustration with the idea that the focus is on the value of the perpetrator, as opposed to the action he or she took. Merlan (2016) mentioned the expectation for conviction to be followed by sadness: not necessarily for the victim, but for the loss of a potentially good future, stating, "...it's time for someone to write a story about his 'once-promising future'" (pg. 1).

Perpetrator support is one of the most used rape myths, due to the feeling that a seemingly good guy could not commit such a violent sexual crime. In the case of Jameis Winston, the perpetrator support was commodity-based: while a few sources did refer to



Winston's character directly in a positive way, the other sources incorporating perpetrator support were based on his value as a football player. This is not necessarily individual value, but rather his value as a football player who can bring attention to his team and school, as well as the high potential of money. Winston's status as a hot commodity includes distinct racial overtones: historically, black men have been valued for the service they can provide to white men (from slavery to sports) (Enck-Wanzer, 2009). This is the same situation, in which Winston's character or societal value was based on one outlet.

Because black men have historically been valued for their value to white men through strength, aggression and entertainment from slavery to sports, media coverage of Winston continues to place value not on the individual, but on the value he offers to those around him, to include the school, the team, and the sports culture itself (Enck-Wanzer, 2009). However, this should not detract from the actual accusation, as a potential violent crime occurred and was hidden due to this commodity and the opportunities he provided for those around him.

Perpetrator support for Turner instead included focus on his accolades that make him a well-rounded man with a bright future. Reference to his dreams and achievements, both academic and athletic, serve as another racial theme of a white man's place in society, so identified due to the lack of reference to any future other than football for Jameis Winston.

### **Rape Mythology: Community Victimization**

This section includes discussion both about rape myths used in commentary of the cases (RQ1-A: Which rape myths are used, and how do they manifest differently in the two narratives?), as well as answering RQ2: How does sports culture discourse address or

perpetuate rape mythology in an analysis of rape accusations against two college athletes of differing ethnicities? While each individual community was referenced in discussion of the crimes, the clear focus on the additional victims of the rapes was on the athletic community, both as a whole, and specific to each school

The value that an individual provides to a community is often placed directly on their future, but this value frequently extends to athletic achievement. When the news of Jameis Winston's rape accusation exploded onto national media outlets, many reported that the family stated that a Tallahassee detective told the accuser's attorney that Tallahassee is a football town, and that her client's life could "be made miserable" if the sexual assault case continued (Bogdanich, 2014, pg. 1).

Other reports also focused heavily on the athletic community's place in the event, in both positive and negative ways. Ryan Gorman (2013) mentioned that Winston's historic athletic achievement had meant a great deal to the athletic community. Kostidakis (2015) even wrote that Winston had an overall positive reflection on the school thanks to his immense athletic influence, dismissing the sexual assault accusation due to lack of evidence, suspicion of timing, and belief that the victim's story changed. After the prosecution decided not to continue with the case against Winston, Kostidakis said readers "can be happy that Winston can move on with his life and also concerned with how sexual assault is handled", suggesting the case was handled appropriately and justice was served in legal terms (2015, pg. 2). Kostidakis even noted that the perceived threat from the detective about Tallahassee being a football town was not a threat, but instead a "warning", indicating that the detective was sharing true information that would, naturally deter a victim from reporting rape (2015, pg. 1).

This theme extended to sympathy for the school and the football team due to the event. Bob Gabordi expressed a neutral opinion on guilt, instead placing his trust on the authorities and system that did not charge Winston with a crime, but also expressed sympathy for the football team. Gabordi wrote that “it is time to give this guy – and team – a break”, and based his idea of harsh community response on the increase of the betting spread from FSU being eight point underdogs to over nine point underdogs (Gabordi, 2014, pg. 1). There was no mention of sympathy for the victim’s ordeal.

The fact that Winston was a contender (and later, the recipient) of the Heisman Trophy was a major theme in articles surrounding both Winston’s athletic prowess and the integrity of the sport. The Heisman Trophy is awarded to the most outstanding college football player, but it also requires a level of integrity, according to Johnathan Zimmerman for the San Francisco Chronicle, and Christine Brennen, USA Today Sports.

While there was no question about Winston’s athletic performance of the year, Zimmerman wrote, the police report and information following the event (in particular, that Winston’s friend admitted that they regularly bring women to the apartment to have sex with both men in succession) “should make you question the integrity of Winston, and of the hundreds of reporters who cast their ballots for him” (Zimmerman, 2013, pg. 1). Zimmerman was one of the few to question integrity of Winston’s actions that night, while others seemed to accept that a popular athlete would be eager bring a stranger home for potentially negative sexual intercourse, and it was her fault to assume something bad would not happen.

While the criteria for the Heisman was not included in all articles, a vast majority of articles written about the rape case included mention of either the Heisman or

Winston's statistics as a direct focus on the team's hard work. Fowler, for CBS Sports, focused on the achievement Winston had in the sport of football and also consensual sex versus rape, combining the athletic community's interests with inferred belief that the situation was consensual sex rather than rape.

Some of these themes arose when Winston's accuser filed and later won a civil lawsuit against FSU, holding the university partially accountable for the actions surrounding the rape accusation. There were significant attempts to separate the university and the football program from the incident, and conversely, to blame the university and football program for not being able to control Winston (Weinstein, 2013).

In the case of Brock Turner, former standout Stanford swimmer, a significant number of sources cited his swimming, enough for the victim to reference media references to athletics in articles on the case, saying she found details of the assault after "his swimming times" (as cited in Baker, 2016). Inclusion of his involvement on the swim team was not used as a discussion of swimming, however, and more to provide insight into Brock Turner's integrity and value as a man.

Michael Miller (2016) mentioned athletics as the reason the case gained attention, stating "Turner was a member of Stanford's varsity swim team, one of the best in the country" (pg. 1). He went on to mention that Turner "was an All-American swimmer in high school in Ohio, so good that he tried out for the U.S. Olympic team before he could vote" (Miller, 2016, pg. 1). This type of discussion not only provided perpetrator support, but also discussed the loss that Stanford's swim team, "one of the best in the country", sustained once Turner was "suddenly" accused of rape (Miller, 2016, pg. 1).

## **The Value of a Man**

This section continues discussion of RQ2: How does sports culture address or perpetuate rape mythology? An extension of the rape myth of support for the perpetrator is the idea of individual value. What value an individual can provide to the world differs with each person, and in the rape myth of support for that individual, the type of value they provide can bring out different community responses.

In the case of Jameis Winston, the sources covering the rape case made it abundantly clear that his value as a human came mostly from his actions on the football field. A majority of articles referred not only to his position as a star athlete, but also to the accolades he won or was primed to win: The Heisman Trophy, conference champion, national champion, eventual NFL star, etc. Fowler (2013), while discussing the facts of the case, noted, “Winston, considered a Heisman front-runner, is not expected to speak with the state attorney” (pg. 2). This type of discussion includes positive statements about a man who is refusing to speak with attorneys about a sexual crime of which he was accused.

The majority of sources referenced his statistics, either with direct reference to the number of touchdowns he had scored in a recent game or his overall season statistics, combined with the FSU football team statistics as a whole (to include wins and matchups). Fineout (2013) noted “Winston, 19, was a top freshman recruit and backup quarterback at the time of the alleged Dec. 7, 2012 assault” when covering suspicion of the incident for the Huffington Post. The suspicion of timing of the rape case’s emergence in media even focused on football: FSU’s football team was continuing a successful post-season streak, one that would eventually end in a National Championship

and a Heisman Trophy for the team's star, freshman Jameis Winston. This timing suggested the victim was planning to time her accusation with a time when FSU football was in the spotlight of national athletics.

Coverage of the event seemed stimulated by football, with little to no reference to Winston as providing value in any other way. There was no major focus on his grades, his character or other positive attributes other than football. Ben Kercheval (2013) wrote for *Bleacher Report* that the accusations will not distract Winston or the team from the FSU game against Syracuse, stating "Since there seems to be little to no evidence indicting Winston at the moment, he should be able to proceed with his life" by starting the game against Syracuse (pg. 3). Kercheval also mentioned that the description of the suspect did not match Winston's official height or weight, and stated that if he is innocent, his name should be cleared, as this "is about people's lives, not sports" (2013, pg. 2).

Conversely, Brock Turner's value seemed rooted in his individual person, which included good grades, hard work, big aspirations, and successful swimming career. While a great deal of articles mentioned his position (current or previous) on the Stanford swim team, the reference seemed to just be utilized to give the reader a sense of the entire well-rounded individual himself. There was no mention of specific statistics of his performance on the any swim team, any records or wins or major successes of the Stanford swim team. Sources instead focused on the success he had to make the team, and his goal to someday swim in the Olympic Games. More sources focused on his status as an All-American, a distinction that takes into account academics and athletic excellence in a sport.

This distinction may have little to do with the individuals in question, and more to do with their potential level of value. Before his arrest, swimming for the Olympics could have been a dream that came true, but it was less of a guarantee with a relatively low monetary return. In the midst of the Winston accusation, he was on his way to being a young winner of the Heisman, and a path directed to the NFL, one of America's favorite and most lucrative past times, was laid out in front of his feet. Nobody mentioned the goals of the victims.

### **The Police: Serving and Protecting?**

In the situation of Jameis Winston, these are the facts: In the early hours of December 8, 2012, a woman reports an off-campus incident to the FSU police, who refer to the Tallahassee police, who perform a rape kit. On January 10, 2013, the woman identifies Winston as a suspect. On January 23, Winston declines an interview. On February 11, the Tallahassee police move the case to inactive. (Bogdanich, 2014) Between April 22 and November 8, police review toxicology reports and receive the rape kit analysis, before the *Tampa Bay Times* request a copy of the police incident report (Baker, 2013). Even more damning is the report of the warning or threat given to the victim by the detective, who called Tallahassee a football town, and warned her against getting into a situation she is not prepared to handle (Bogdanich, 2014).

While opinions and framing range from article to article, one of the more continuous themes in the case of Winston was the lack of effort from police involved in the case. There were differing opinions on whether athletics played a part in the event, whether the school could or should have been more involved in mentoring athletes, whether the victim is lying, or whether Winston committed the crime, but when the

police were mentioned, their efforts in this case were seen poorly, ranging from low effort to outright failure. DNA evidence from Winston was not collected until after the report was requested by the *Tampa Bay Times*, even after the police received the rape kit analysis and identification from the victim, who correctly identified Winston as the man she had intercourse with that night, whether or not it was consensual.

The police efforts in the Winston case were also seen more of an investigation into the accuser, rather than the perpetrator. While the police did not obtain DNA samples from Winston until almost a year after the incident, the lead detective issued a search warrant for the victim's cell phone and social media accounts (Kemp, 2013).

The Tallahassee Police Department was also investigated for its handling of the sexual assault case, after a request from Patricia Carroll, who represented the victim (Fineout, 2013). According to Carroll, significant documents were not released with the rest of the case file, including notes written by the nurse who had examined the victim the night of the encounter, in which the nurse describes pain, vomiting, and blood in her underwear (Dahl, 2013). Carroll also questioned the urine sample tested over a month later, and asserted that the missing paperwork included "the clinician's opinion that the woman was the victim of a sexual assault" (Dahl, 2013, pg. 2).

FSU Victim Advocate Director Melissa Ashton testified in the recently settled case that Winston's alleged victim brought against FSU, revealing collusion between the Florida State Chief of Police and the FSU Dean of Students. This collaboration was initiated to make sure allegations against Winston did not result in punitive measures, which would have likely kept him off the field in a critical time for the FSU Seminoles



football team during a hot postseason run. This collusion supported claims by those who believed the police did not handle the situation to the full extent or power of the law.

In the case of Brock Turner, police involvement was mentioned but never questioned. Turner was detained after being pinned down by the bystander, and was later arrested and booked into Santa Clara County Jail, later transferred to the San Jose Main Jail (Phillips & Beyda, 2015). Turner was charged with five felony counts, including rape of an unconscious person and two counts of sexual penetration with a foreign object (Shire, 2015).

While the police were never questioned about the actions or response given on the night of the Brock Turner incident, some themes emerged about the ease of the situation, noting the smooth procession of the case thanks to the two witnesses, the immediate intervention, and the police presence (Shire, 2015). Because the victim was unconscious and the police were able to speak with the witnesses who intervened, the case did not have the inclusion of the “he said, she said” aspect that many sexual assault cases contain, such as the accusation against Jameis Winston. Frazin (2015) noted that while “it is bizarre in itself that this case has yielded actual consequences for the assailant”, this case differs from other sexual assault cases due to the “involvement of law enforcement professionals”, stating that local police were involved immediately, rather than campus authorities (Frazin, 2015, pg. 2).

However, significant focus was placed on the actions of the judge who sentenced Turner, due to the fact that he sentenced Turner to six months in a county jail on convictions that carried up to 14 years, because he worried a stricter sentence would have a “severe” impact on Turner (Stack, 2016). This consideration was seen as extremely

light due to the nature of the crime, which had previously been seen as an ideal case due to the two credible witnesses, police involvement, and Turner's withdraw from Stanford, saving the school from having to make a decision that few trusted the institution to make (Shire, 2016).

In addition, the criminal investigation was not completed through the university, but instead through city law enforcement, which was seen as a positive event, indicating that the university itself would not have ensured the correct justice issued to all involved. This theme in the Turner case is interesting in comparison to the Winston case: both included local police immediately, but in the case of Turner, the police involvement was seen as a positive attribute to allow immediate conviction, investigation and arrest. In the case of Winston, the police involvement was overwhelmingly seen as negative, due to the confirmed lack of investigation and delay in reporting and investigation.

The rape myth of perpetrator support includes dispersing responsibility across other people or organizations. In addition, discussing the actions of authority figures is a vital part of the entire story of a rape accusation and/or rape case.

In the case of Jameis Winston, the police's involvement included significant community victimization, particularly when the detective suggested to the victim that her actions were harming the community (Bogdanich, 2014). The lack of accurate legal action in the accusation against Winston shows significant focus on Winston as a community commodity.

While the police involved in the Brock Turner investigation were not questioned or doubted, other authority figures did hinder what many see as the correct path of

justice, particularly the judge who sentenced Turner to six months in county jail, when his convictions carried up to 14 years in prison.

The question of authority involvement provides insight into the discourse within and around sports culture, helping us to answer RQ2: How does sports culture discourse address or perpetuate rape mythology in an analysis of rape accusations against two college athletes of differing ethnicities? In this section and the following, the discussion of responsibility addresses the influence sports culture has on authority response to an alleged crime involving athletes.

### **Who Is Responsible?**

In both cases, there were many sources with a similar, recurring theme questioning responsibility. Were the victims responsible, for dressing a certain way, flirting with the men, or drinking too much? Were the city and university police departments responsible for the events following the accusation against Jameis Winston, for not providing a complete and thorough investigation? Was the judge responsible for not holding Brock Turner to a stricter sentence? Was it a combination of alcohol and free college independence? Were the universities responsible, due to the lack of control and the previous history of lack of action in response to sexual assault on campus? Was society responsible for creating an environment that allowed and encouraged sexual deviance, therefore extending guilt to those who stayed quiet and refused to decry sexual assault? Were the perpetrators themselves solely responsible?

The sources reporting on these instances placed blame on a combination of all the sources involved, including the universities and the athletic programs. The involvement and actions of each school in question, Florida State University for Winston and Stanford

University for Turner, were major themes in both situations. For Winston, there were significant sources that stated FSU handled the situation correctly, but a majority held that FSU did not handle the situation correctly. Stanford was saved from having to make a decision, as Turner withdrew before the school had to take action against him, if action would have been taken at all.

Many of the sources in the Winston case placed equal blame on the victim (for putting herself in a dangerous situation) and the perpetrator (for taking advantage of the situation). One source summed it up, “If either Winston or [victim] had acted morally, this entire fiasco never would have happened” (Whitley, 2016, pg. 4). [Victim name redacted.]

However, a majority of the questioning for the Winston case focused on authority figures. Kostidakis, who had previously written articles supporting Winston in 2013 and early 2015, wrote in May 2015 that Winston’s actions had reflected poorly on FSU, and that the school could not have provided any more support or control over Winston.

However, others focused not just on FSU’s involvement in the Winston case, but in the history of giving preferential and unchecked treatment of athletes. FSU teacher Adam Weinstein, who gave many examples of preferential treatment for athletes, including situations of intense pressure to pass or support the best athletes to make sure they play, and noting that the players even feel the pressure to play, suggesting stimulant use (2013, pg. 1). Weinstein seemed to place part of the blame on the university, saying that “superstars” received special assistance from handlers who are expected to keep the players playing no matter what, using methods such as begging, intimidation and, Weinstein suspected, even potentially completing some of their classwork (2013, pg. 5).

In the case of Brock Turner, Stanford responded in a way that many reported with a positive note (Frazin, 2015). After the arrest, the *Stanford Daily* reported the incident in a quick note in the Monday police roundup, but the incident exploded onto the student scene when the *Fountain Hopper*, an email newsletter that claims to reach almost 80 percent of undergraduates, reached out to prosecutors, police and administrators following the arrest (Glenza & Carroll, 2015).

In the discussion of how society is responsible for creating an environment that allows sexual assault, Jessica Glenza and Rory Carroll of *The Guardian* wrote about student activism, placing more focus and attention on the culture of the university and its response on the assault. Websites and cell phone applications like Yik Yak, a social networking and commenting site, can give students an opportunity to get involved in social justice. This was seen in the case of Stanford student Leah Francis, who sparked outrage over her five-month process to bring her rapist to justice through the school's disciplinary process, leading into student protests and use of the hashtag #StandWithLeah on social media (Glenza & Carroll, 2015). However, social networking also allows unchecked rape mythology. According to Glenza and Carroll (2015), in the Turner case, this included victim-blaming and "outright misogyny" (pg. 4).

Kate Geiselman (2016) suggested the town of Oakwood, Ohio (Turner's hometown) is a community that does not place appropriate blame or responsibility on individuals. While the community is strong, she also notes the nickname for the town is "The Dome", so named for the fact that "so sheltered are its residents from violence, poverty and inconvenient truths" (Geiselman, 2016, pg. 1).

Geiselman blamed Turner's actions on the fact that he has never been denied any of his previous wishes, and asks the question, "When he gets caught, why wouldn't his first impulse be to run...?" (2016, pg. 1). This suggestion of entitlement is a blame on the society that raised Turner, one that Geiselman calls "unchecked privilege" (2016, pg. 1).

One of the biggest sources of blame was the alcohol. In both cases, each party had been drinking, and in both cases, the victims had been impaired by the drinking (though with the victim in the Winston case, her claim was to have been drugged in a shot given to her by Winston). Because the victim was drinking, there was some inferred question of moral character: Tracey Kaplan, in covering the trial for the *San Jose Mercury* on March 23, 2016, covered the witness testimony which reported that people can consent when blacked out from drinking. To black out refers to losing the ability to make long-term memories when in a state of extreme inebriation, as was the case that night, a situation the victim in the Turner case had said happened to her previously (Kaplan, Sex assault trial: former swimmer Brock Turner testifies drunk woman consented, 2016, pg. 1)

In the Winston case, some sources placed equal blame on both parties, blaming alcohol and bad choices for the reasons why the victim left the bar with strangers, summing up the experience with the quote, "he's a cad and she's a vamp" (Whitley, 2016, pg. 3). Bazelon, 2013, for *Slate* said the case boils down to the question, "Did she lie, or did she make an accusation of rape that is credible but too difficult, in the view of this prosecutor, to prove in court?" (pg. 3).

As with the section above, this section addresses the community influence that sports culture carries, particularly regarding college athletes, to help answer RQ2: How

does sports culture discourse address or perpetuate rape mythology in an analysis of rape accusations against two college athletes of differing ethnicities?

In addition, the previous two sections provide insight into the discussion of race and its role in sexual assault coverage and dispersion of responsibility, which is a subsection of perpetrator support. This will help provide a foundation to RQ1: In an analysis of two college athletic rape accusations, how does race influence rape mythology?

## Discussion

In both cases of Jameis Winston and Brock Turner, there was significant question about culpability, which is an extension of the rape myth of perpetrator support by providing other sectors of responsibility as opposed to just blaming the individual. The idea of responsibility seemed to be a question up for debate. Was it the university's fault for previously allowing athletes free reign, and historically not taking legal or punitive action against alleged rapists? Should equal parts blame be placed on the perpetrators (for allegedly sexually assaulting these women) and the victims (for drinking and going willingly with the men to another location, whether it was to Winston's apartment or outside of the fraternity party with Turner)? Was it the fault of the police for not ensuring justice? Was it society's fault, for perpetuation of rape mythology through placing blame on the victim, expressing empathy for the perpetrator, and allowing other entities (such as the community) to serve as victims instead of focusing on the victim herself? Who is to blame?

A vast majority of articles questioned the events or actions that led to each sexual assault, and the blame was spread across all entities, including the teams, the schools, the communities, the victims, society, and the perpetrators themselves. The question itself contains indirect reference to several rape myths: question of the victim's culpability, as well as suggestion that the community (athletic, campus and overall community) created an environment that not only allowed this to happen, but encouraged men to take what they wanted, either by privilege (Turner) or reinforcement of aggression as a masculine feature (Winston).



In the case of Jameis Winston, the overall major rape mythology theme was support for the perpetrator, based on the fact that nearly all of the articles mentioned his athletic achievements and often blended the story with statistics about his most recent games or game notes about his upcoming matchup. This theme, however, did not include personal anecdotes about what a wonderful student or great person Winston is, but rather his value to the community, both FSU and the athletic community as a whole: as a great football player.

Another major theme and rape myth included was victim blaming, shown through questioning of the timing and her actions, including drinking and going home with Winston, before the alleged assault. Several sources mentioned the fact that the victim had other DNA on her pants, despite the fact that the other DNA belonged to her boyfriend, who was never a suspect, in order to question the girl's character.

An extension of perpetrator support included themes of blame placed on authority for not containing Winston or ensuring a thorough and unbiased investigation. This blame was placed almost equally on the police and FSU, both entities seen to have responsibility to both Winston and the victim. After the victim received a settlement in a lawsuit against FSU, FSU Victim Advocate Director Melissa Ashton's testimony revealed the Florida State Chief of Police, along with the Dean of Students, worked together to halt sexual assault investigations against Winston and prevent Winston from going through due process (Dick, 2016). The most damning evidence was that shortly after the victim decided to move forward with her complaint against Winston after hearing of another victim, FSU dismantled the mandate to investigate all reported cases (Dick, 2016).

Race was also a major theme in the Winston case, but the majority of racial themes were centered on the fact that black men have historically never been given justice in rape trials, a fact that seems misplaced considering the Winston case never went to trial.

In the case of Brock Turner, articles published during the investigation and trial suggested the case was an ideal process of justice for a victim of sexual assault, due to the immediate and continuous action by the witnesses and the fact that police noted the girl was unconscious for several hours after the event, all facts that are often left for debate in sexual assault. In addition, Turner withdrew from Stanford after the assault, preventing the university from making the decision of expulsion, suspension, or other punitive measures, if any would have been taken.

However, after Turner's conviction, the attention turned to the judge who sentenced him to six months on convictions that carried up to 14 years, after prosecutors had requested six years due to the nature of the crime. The judge, Turner, and Turner's father were all perceived to be reluctant to hold Turner himself accountable for the crime: the light sentence seemed to not take the sexual assault conviction seriously, while Turner's father fought for probation, citing his opinion that only "twenty minutes of action" should not result in a life-ruining sentence (Miller, 'A steep price to pay for 20 minutes of action': Dad defends Stanford sex offender, 2016).

Several journalists also questioned the light sentence for Turner, suggesting men of color would not have received a similar sentence. Edwards (2016) wrote about Brian Banks, a black man who was falsely accused and convicted of rape at the age of 16 in and sentenced to six years in prison, compared to Turner, who was sentenced to six months

(Edwards, 2016). Banks and Edwards (2016) suggested this disparity is due to Turner's life of privilege as a white male.

The other major rape myth utilized for the Turner case included support for the perpetrator, who was noted to have a bright future ahead of him as an elite athlete and scholar. Many reports mentioned Turner's status as an All-American athlete and noted he was dressed nicely for the trial; one source even called him "baby-faced" (Miller, 2016, pg. 2). This theme was specifically utilized after Turner was found guilty of felony charges, which require him to register as a sex offender and can result in a sentence of up to 10 years, and after he was sentenced to only six months in county jail on convictions that carried up to 14 years. Miller quoted critics who said the jury and judge were "harsh" on Turner (Miller, All-American swimmer found guilty of sexually assaulting unconscious woman on Stanford campus, 2016, pg. 3). Some sources focused on the idea that Turner did not "intend" to rape (Phillips, 2015, pg. 1), allowing ambiguity in a case that had previously be identified as an ideal case for sexual assault victims (Shire, 2015).

While few reports mentioned Turner's race directly, a great deal of articles written after his sentencing suggested he had been given a light sentence because he was a nice white man. His value was seen to be on an individual basis, with mention of his bright future and previous accolades. This value did include athletics, with several sources mentioning his status as a swimmer with an elite swim program, and his aspirations to try out for the Olympic team. However, despite being close to the same age as Winston at each crime, Turner was far more likely to be called innocent, All-American, and baby-faced, potential coding used to refer to a white individual.

The overall value of each perpetrator was extremely different, despite (or perhaps because of) the fact that Turner was convicted and Winston was not. The value of Jameis Winston was almost exclusively athletics related: a great majority of articles mentioned his Heisman award or statistics about his athletics, even suggesting the accusation was based on his fame as a great football player. The athletic community was much more invested in the Winston accusation and case, and even on the opposite extreme — the athletic community was mentioned as a victim in the case by those who felt justice had not been served in the investigation. Winston's value was his service as an athlete, not his actions as a human being.

Brock Turner's value was not necessarily of his capabilities as an athlete, but rather his potential as a human. Discussion of his value seemed to be a focus on Turner as a well-rounded person: good student, nice dresser, good swimmer, All-American with big goals. The overall athletic community did not rise up to defend, support or decry his actions, with the minor exception of sects of the swimming community. Rather, the overall case was a discussion of how the world (to include the university, society, the victim, and the perpetrator) could have let such a terrible event happen, with the end result not being just justice for a victim, but also the destruction of an extremely bright future from a great scholar, great athlete and great person. It is interesting to note, however, that while Jameis Winston had earned the All-American honor, this was a term rarely applied to him or his case, while the term was frequently used for Brock Turner.

One might speculate that a great deal of this difference in value is due to the difference between revenue sports, such as football, and non-revenue sports. Winston was seen as a savior to the FSU football team, a leader who could not only bring them to a

major athletic accomplishment (a National Championship), but also use his talents to be a stand-out player in the NFL. For the school, Winston was a draw for alumni donations, ticket sales, merchandise, and overall prestige. For the sport, Winston was an up-and-coming star who would be poised to make an immediate impact when he entered the professional league. One could argue that those involved with Winston's career (the school, the coaches, the community, and of course Winston himself) had a great deal to lose by a conviction of a crime, mostly monetary.

However, Turner's athletic contribution had a much lower monetary potential, for both Turner himself and Stanford. Turner's goals in swimming included winning an Olympic medal, which can include endorsement contracts and other lucrative deals. However, swimming is, generally, a non-revenue sport. Turner's contributions as a swimmer did not have a comparable potential for immediate and profitable gains for the sport and the school itself. His societal effect was based entirely on his value as a good, well-rounded, kid with a bright future ahead of him.

Race continues to be a major consideration in rape cases. Black men and athletes are often cast as "naturally more aggressive", while reflects larger social attempts to protect "white" society to distance the idea of abuse from white males (Eck-Wanzer, 2009, pg. 3). Because so many sources seem to accept the idea of a rape accusation from a black man and respond with surprise at the rape conviction of a white male, this idea of natural aggression from black men seems to be a major issue in our world today.

The narrative around violence against women, and particularly sexual violence against women, focuses on the old rape myth of a black man raping a white woman. This discounts rape or sexual assault against men or women of color. In addition, this thesis

reviews rape mythology and themes arising in coverage of a black athlete in comparison to a white athlete, which introduces not only racial themes, but also athletic overtones. A popular athlete can be seen as a “likely domestic abuser due to his (often black) (hyper) masculinized form”, which holds with what was found in this thematic analysis (Wriggins, 1983).

While other studies have provided insight into rape or sexual assault on college campuses with college athletes, I believe this study provides a snapshot of the narrative of sexual assault involving both black and white college athletes. Sexual assault in the United States continues to include racialization, so this study provides an understanding of the discourse of value of a perpetrator in terms of rape mythology used in each narrative, which will provide an understanding of sexual assault discourse involving athletes today.

### **Limitations**

Limitations to this thesis include sample size, timing, and method restriction. Because this study utilizes a print thematic analysis, any rape myth utilization in other mediums, such as broadcast or radio, was not incorporated or analyzed due to time constraints.

Thematic analysis is a subjective procedure: different individuals interpret the same information in a variety of ways (Entman, 1993). Because of this subjective interpretation, findings can be difficult or impossible to replicate.

In addition, both cases include a significant amount of national attention. While this allowed me to pull my samples from a larger sample size, this also means that continuous discussion and references to the cases are ongoing. Turner was convicted of

his felonies in March 2016 and sentenced in June 2016, and Winston's alleged victim was involved in a 2015 documentary about sexual assault on college campuses titled *The Hunting Ground*. For both cases, extended discussion and further review of sexual assault on each campus will continue, and will unfortunately be published after this thesis is complete.

## Conclusion

The consistent presence of themes including rape mythology, racial bias, societal blame and individual value in coverage of sexual assaults leads to questions about how the public is encouraged to view rape crimes, but also how the public is encouraged to view rape accusations. In 2016, colorblind justice is seen as the standard for rape accusations, as several sources mentioned the progress in the lack of charge or conviction of a crime for Jameis Winston. However, in the case of Brock Turner, race was seen as a major factor in his relatively light sentence and overall discussion of his looks and value. This discussion of race and rape mythology allowed me to answer RQ1: In an analysis of two college athletic rape accusations, how does race influence rape mythology?

Each case included rape mythology in various ways. Rape myths used in coverage of the Jameis Winston case included perpetrator support, athletic community victimization, and significant victim blaming. In addition, other themes included police blame, blame of the school, and blame of society's worship of athletics.

In coverage of the case of Brock Turner, rape myths used included perpetrator support, victim blaming and significant societal blame. Other themes included race-motivated justice, individual value, and blame of the community. These themes helped us answer RQ1-A: Which rape myths are used, and how do they manifest differently in the two narratives?

In both the Winston and Turner cases, there was relatively little physical evidence of rape, though semen was found on the underwear of both victims (Schuppe, 2015; Schworm, 2015; Sports, 2013). The rest of their stories diverge pretty significantly: Winston's case ended in a battle of individual accounts, resulting in Winston not being



charged with any crime, while Turner was charged and convicted of several counts of sexual assault, thanks to the intervention and testimony of bystanders.

Regardless of the themes produced, this thematic analysis shows that media continue to have a significant and notable role in how rape accusations are accepted, through thematic framing techniques and bias perpetuation, such as rape myths. This study demonstrates the importance of understanding cultural differences in narrative rape coverage. A thematic analysis allowed for inference and suggested rape myth identification, which allowed me to provide a true contextual understanding of the reflection of ideals surrounding the Winston and Turner rape accusations and resulting investigations.

Usage of rape mythology and its surrounding themes is often a question of media ethics in reporting rape or sexual abuse. How journalists present the story can influence cultural response, while perhaps also reflecting normative culture (Entman 1993, 2007). By perpetuating any number of rape myths, but in particular victim blaming, perpetrator support, and community victimization, media also have the distinct ethical decision to report on questions that are typically asked of rape victims or to avoid victim-blaming actions.

Historically, rape involving a black perpetrator and rape involving a white perpetrator are traditionally handled very differently. Conviction and harsh sentencing were often the automatic results in the case of alleged rape involving a white victim and a black aggressor (Wriggins, 1983) or even when the interaction was mutually consensual. Black masculinity is often tied directly to physical violence as physicality is a positive attribute for an athlete, but negatively involved with a violent crime (van Rhee, 2012).

How this masculinity is portrayed in each race provides a direction and foundation of rape myths for the sports culture, as well as for each race within that sports culture, when rape accusations involve both race and athletics.

While the progress of allowing suspects to remain innocent until charged is a positive trend, the lack of investigation into a potentially legitimate crime seems to be connected solely to the perpetrator in question: Jameis Winston, outstanding football player, and leader of a team that won the coveted, prestigious National Championship in football, which brought national acclaim, money and talent to the school and the program, compared to Brock Turner, elite, young, All-American swimmer for the prestigious Stanford University varsity swimming team from a good town. In the case of Brock Turner, race was included through references to his innocence and youthfulness, despite the fact that he was close in age to Winston at the time of each rape accusation. Several sources also questioned the light sentence given to Turner after being convicted of three charges, suggesting his background and skin color influenced the judge's decision, citing other cases involving athletes accused of rape who were convicted and sentenced to much longer sentences for their sexual assault crimes.

Despite the facts of each story, rape mythology was used in each case: Winston's case included more focus on victim blaming and community victimization, while Turner's case included significantly more individual perpetrator support. Both cases included immense responsibility dispersement, in questioning who had culpability in allowing these crimes to happen.

How rape mythology was used in the different cases also addressed RQ2: How does sports culture discourse address or perpetuate rape mythology in an analysis of rape

accusations against two college athletes of differing ethnicities? Winston's high revenue potential as a star football player has a much higher influence on the athletic and university community, due to his effect on ticket sales, alumni donation and potential for a National Championship. In Turner's case, swimming does not have the same potential for high earnings for either himself or the school – rather, his value to society was individual.

The effects of rape myths in media are likely influential to viewers or the audience exposed to the news. Future qualitative and quantitative research on this topic will be valuable to explore cultural forces in understanding or accepting rape myths, which demographics are more likely to be influenced by rape myths in media, and information about whether local or national news organizations are more likely to utilize rape myths. Because my method did not separate rape myth utilization by medium, such as newspaper, online or television, nor the difference between local and national news, my results were dependent on whether media coverage reports were accessible by search engines and which types of rape myths are most utilized.

The results from this study could lead to further research about correlating rape myths, or myths commonly used together. Future studies can also address the connection between various factors such as gender, ethnicity and personal experience with rape. For example, a question for future study may research whether people who have never experienced rape crimes against themselves or anyone they know are more likely to be believers of rape myths, regardless of gender. Future studies may also include an analysis of rape myth perpetuation in local news coverage versus national news coverage, campus news vs. national media, or from sports pages to other sections of media.

Another valuable study would be a comparison of rape myth usage across various media ownership. Predictive studies of media ownership could shape research of agenda-setting in each conglomerate. Future research into rape myths can also include a wide variety of research into media coverage. What are the variables that impact rape reporting and the resulting rape coverage, for both local and national media coverage of a rape involving an athlete? How do colleges communicate sexual assault within their systems? How does the college athletic community perpetuate rape mythology? What cultural factors can affect the victim's decision to report rape, and within those factors, what is the most societally powerful?

Understanding the variables in sexual assault, including authority figures who can affect society's perception of rape, the society in which the rape occurred, and additional athletic factors involved, can provide a theoretical future path of rape coverage and sexual abuse reports in the United States. Rape myths, and their inclusion in media coverage of rape, can not only identify a society's reliance on the thematic framing and societally accepted media ethics, but also potentially determine the likelihood of rape reporting from victims in the future, depending on the type of community response he or she will receive when reporting the crime. Coverage of sexual crimes include many unfortunate variables of rape mythology, community influence, and racial bias, and with full understanding of these effects on newsmakers and news audiences today, we can understand how they will be incorporated in our realities tomorrow.

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## APPENDIX

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