10.2478/genst-2021-0009

BOOK REVIEW: Aliraza Javaid. *Male Rape, Masculinities and Sexualities: Understanding, Policing and Overcoming Male Sexual Victimisation* (Palgrave Hate Studies) Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, 302 p. ISBN 978-3-319-52638-6/ ISBN 978-3-319-52639-3

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Aliraza Javaid's book, *Male Rape, Masculinities and Sexualities: Understanding, Policing and Overcoming Male Sexual Victimisation* (2018), embarks upon a project that is as necessary in the academic and the socio-political spheres as it is challenging to the researcher, due to associated stigma: the construction of male rape by police forces and voluntary agencies in England, within a broader frame where male rape remains mostly invisible and inefficiently dealt with in criminal justice and in the provision of victim support services. Javaid's undertaking is built upon the premise that heteronormative notions of gender and sexuality as well as the power relations manifest in the enactment of hegemonic masculinities are likely to shape the police officers' and the voluntary agency practitioners' attitudes and behaviours towards victims.

The author aims to fill gaps in theory and methodology, by proposing a sociological approach to male rape, designed to avoid the limitations of existing approaches, and in practice, by generating empirical data on an under-studied, but significant research object. At the same time, he seeks to raise awareness of male rape as a social problem in everyday, legal, institutional and cultural practices; he thus intends his research to contribute to the elimination of gender injustice and inequality. Not least, the catalysing force behind the study is Javaid's own trauma and stigmatisation as a (gay and Muslim) rape victim, for whom autoethnographic introspection and the process of writing are redeeming. If readers unaccustomed to feminist methodologies may regard his revealing accounts as too abrupt an incursion into the intimate sphere, the (occasional) acts of self-reflexive narration in the book achieve empowerment of the self and

attempt to empower other male rape victims by making public a devastating personal experience that often goes unacknowledged ('male rape does not happen'). Moreover, they add another layer of meaningfulness to the study and confront readers with their own prejudices and misconceptions.

The first two chapters of the book carefully set up the theoretical framework. At its centre are the concepts of hegemonic masculinity, a type of masculinity that "legitimizes unequal gender and power relations between men and women, between masculinity and femininity, and among masculinities" (Javaid, 2018, p.9), and heteronormativity. Heterosexual norms inform the construction and embodiment of gender(ed) and sexual identities, and sustain the articulation of hegemonic masculinities that relegate female, gay, bisexual and transsexual identities to inferior, subordinate positions in the gender order, thus minimising male rape and 'othering' its victims. "Male rape myths" (Turchik & Edwards, as cited in Javaid, 2018, p. 28), among which "men cannot be raped" or "only gay men are victims and/or perpetrators of rape", originate in and are perpetuated through constructs and performances of gendered identities and hierarchies, in everyday and institutional practices that Javaid connects to wider social structures, imaginaries and discourses.

Masculinities are defined as "configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action" in particular contexts (Messerschmidt, as cited in Javaid, 2018, p. 9), a notion that ties in well with the poststructuralist view of power as relational adopted in the study. Following the line opened up by R.W. Connell, this non-essentialist and non-determinist conceptualisation of masculinity enables the researcher to take into account multiple masculinities and femininities, and to deconstruct accounts that maintain inequalities by assigning fixed attributes to gender and sexual identities. The approach can therefore be used to show that all types of masculinity are vulnerable to rape, not only the gay one, and to ground the claim that male rape is a research and policy object that deserves to be investigated on an equal level with female rape. It similarly allows for refined interpretations of the ways in which the same social actors can perform hegemonic *and* non-hegemonic masculinities in different situations, as can be seen in Javaid's presentation of the empirical data (chapters 5, 6, 7). Just as male rape myths are reproduced to uphold the gender order, the dominant tendency that Javaid critically engages with in his study, they can also be contested. Both dynamics shape, for the worse or for the better, the male rape victims' ways of being and acting after the trauma, their decisions to report the crime, seek

specialist help or pursue justice, the police officers' and social workers' response to them, as well as the positions towards them of other social and institutional actors. Among the negative consequences, we encounter male rape denial, secondary victimisation (for example, victim-blaming for being gay), incomplete legislation and insufficient or inappropriate victim support. From the perspective proposed by Aliraza Javaid, male rape is an act of power, given that, through interrelated symbolic and sexual violence, it denies the victims any claims to hegemonic masculinity (by constructing them as feminine), which further exposes them to silence, stigma and marginalisation in society (state and voluntary organisations included).

Chapter 3 develops the previously introduced concepts, brings to attention a range of other notions that strengthen the framework, notably that of police cultures, wherein hegemonic masculinities and homophobia are cultivated, and explores other research areas to build up the theoretical scaffolding: male rape and related myths in prison and in the military; the reproduction of hegemonic masculinities in society, through material and discursive practices (including media representations); police recordings and statistics of male rape; police reforms; law and the treatment of male rape in courts, with a focus on the improvements brought by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1994) and the Sexual Offences Act (2003), and on their limitations, in particular the impossibility to criminalise women as perpetrators of rape on men.

The largest part of the methodological chapter (Chapter 4) dwells upon the difficulties in tackling a sensitive research topic such as male rape and centres upon the Goffmanian concept of "stigma by association" to explore the challenges and risks Javaid has been faced with as a gay researcher and writer, but also in a personal capacity (at home, among friends), and as a victim of male rape himself: being regarded with suspicion, threatened, shamed, becoming subjectively immersed in the data, not gaining easy access, etc. (Self-)reflexivity, as part of autoethnography, and positionality in relation to his respondents are to Javaid the chief instruments not only in coping with the difficulties of doing this type of research (enhanced by his personal history), but in better understanding the dynamics of identification and power relations. While it does not include a section on methods of data analysis (only data collection methods, semi-structured interviews and qualitative questionnaires, are presented), the chapter provides a useful tool for students and other researchers who contemplate engaging with similarly sensitive topics.

The empirical chapters (5, 6, 7) are rich in detail and excerpts from the corpus. As announced, the analysis in Chapter 5 is concerned with how the reproduction of hegemonic

masculinity and of the power relations it legitimates shapes the police officers' and the voluntary agency practitioners' construction of male rape and its victims. Importantly, the analysis also looks at contestations and counter-positions in the respondents' discourses. A central theme is the construction of male rape victims as subordinate (feminised) masculinities, both by the victims themselves, who come to question their masculinity after the rape, with a range of effects (such as non-reporting, withdrawal from society and from the justice system), and by the respondents, which may lead to views of the victims as abject, 'undeserving' or not 'real', with a number of consequences for how they are treated. Close attention is given to the reproduction of hegemonic masculinities among the police, sustained by police cultures, as a way of reinforcing a gender hierarchy that supports the officers' power positions. Although hardly surprising, these practices, both material and semiotic (a "silence discourse" on male rape), may impress the readers due to the clash with the expectations one harbours of police treatment of victims (an interesting aspect, worth developing, is the fact that many of the respondents are police women). Javaid examines male rape myths in the discourses of police officers and voluntary agency practitioners, emphasising how they can interfere with the recording and the processing of male rape and with the assistance provided to the victims (discretion based on such myths is exercised to trivialise or discard the cases or to marginalise the victims). The chief myths covered in the chapter encompass the following: if male victims do not put up resistance to rape or do not show emotion after the rape, they are not 'real' victims (or 'real' men in the former case); women cannot rape men; only gay men can be the victims of rape, a myth interlinked with homophobia, often favouring victim-blaming (amplified in the case of 'camps', gay men who perform femininity); the victims of rape are sexually promiscuous (also affecting female victims); 'real' men are invulnerable to rape, which brings up the issue of the vulnerability of gay communities and, hence, of their stigmatisation.

Chapters 6 and 7 take the discussion further, by analysing the police officers' and the voluntary agency practitioners' responses to male rape victims as well as the systemic problems they are confronted with, as they surface in the data. There is some repetition of themes and ideas, for example in the examination of the reasons for under-reporting male rape (also covered in the previous chapter) or of the respondents' views of the victims, but the focus shifts to the action taken by the police and by voluntary agencies to deal with male rape. Javaid registers and applauds the improvement made in some areas (the creation of Sexual Assault Referral Centers

and of Independent Sexual Violence Advisors, for instance); on the other hand, he engages critically with a myriad of remaining problems that are interconnected once we recognise the negative influence of the reproduction of hegemonic masculinity at organisational and societal levels, within a frame of institutionalised and normalised heteronormativity: gaps between the occurrence of male rape and its reporting and recording (police statistics); scepticism regarding male rape victims and their trauma; the impossibility to prosecute or convict women who rape men; non-specialised training for male rape (training is targeted chiefly to female rape victims, who are prioritised); the lack of choice of officers and counsellors by the male rape victims, according to their needs (either male or female); budget cuts and, in the case of voluntary agencies, insufficient staff and long waiting lists; inadequate follow-up of the cases. As suggested in the book, solutions for the problems identified could come from an awareness of the existence of multiple masculinities and femininities and from the critical interrogation of and gradual changes in the practices, relations and discourses that legitimate gender inequalities.

While readers may find that the interpretation of some interview excerpts could have been more convincingly supported, the analysis is generally thorough and insightful. It is also essential to note that Javaid is careful to point out exceptions from the reproduction of hegemonic masculinities and heterosexual norms, and to highlight cases of positive masculinity being performed by his respondents. In many situations, the respondents dismantle male rape myths and comment on how such misconceptions interfere with their professional work and with the victims' trust in the system (the data show indeed reflexivity among the respondents, an aspect that, even though not emphasised in the book, can be built upon in subsequent studies). This has the merit of ensuring a nuanced analysis, which avoids unfair generalisations, acknowledges progress in legislation and practice, and illustrates the anti-essentialist and anti-determinist approach announced in the theoretical chapters. Overall, the book is a relevant contribution to research on a topic that is marginalised and even ignored, and, if it crosses the academic boundaries into policy-making and practice, it could arguably make an impact in these areas.

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