

MY BROTHER'S KEEPER: QUEERING MASCULINITIES  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION DISSERTATION

by

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## **DEDICATION**

Sufi poet Hafiz wrote:

Even

After

All this time

The Sun never says

To the Earth,

“You owe me.”

Look

What happens

With a love like that.

It lights the

Whole

Sky.

This was dedicated to the boys and men who feel they have to put on the mask of masculinity daily for survival. This was dedicated to those boys and men who choose to boldly live in a space of love and courage. This was dedicated to the boys and men who live in a space of worthiness and engage one another in support of each other's authenticity. This was dedicated to the women who pushed us to lay down the mask and provided us with a love that lights the whole sky.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Flowerparts

-- *Bob Schneider*

Tell me how do you make a superman?

With courage and a steady hand,  
Conviction and a damn good attitude,  
Spiritual and moral fortitude?

But don't forget the flowerparts  
A soft touch and an open heart.  
A rainbow and some empathy.  
Compassion and sympathy.

Don't forget the, 'I love you's,  
Oh, and, 'I forgive you's too.  
It's the little things that separate  
The good from the great.

So tell me how do you make a superman?

With honesty, and discipline,

Endurance and stamina,

An icy stare, a steely jaw?

But don't forget the flowerparts

A soft touch and a bleeding heart,

A rainbow and some empathy.

Compassion and sympathy.

Don't forget the, 'I love you's,

Oh, and, 'I forgive you's too.

It's the little things that separate

The good from the great.

It has been both a privilege and a pleasure to cultivate relationships and to engage in meaningful ways with scholars and administrators who know an extraordinarily great deal about adult male learners in postsecondary education. These scholars and administrators have become mentors of mine and have guided me along this path and taught me to be intentional about the care we invest in the well-being of our adult male learners.

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## ABSTRACT

“The male has paid a heavy price for his masculine ‘privilege’ and power. He was out of touch with his emotions and his body. Only a new way of perceiving himself can unlock him from old, destructive patterns and enrich his life.”

- Herb Goldberg, *The Hazards of Being Male*

Guyland was the world in which young men live. It was both a stage of life, a liminal undefined time span between adolescence and adulthood that can often stretch for a decade or more, and a place, or, rather, a bunch of places where guys gather to be guys with each other, unhassled by the demands of parents, girlfriends, jobs, kids, and the other nuisances of adult life (Kimmel, 2008, p. 4).

The 21<sup>st</sup> century adult male learner lives a multidimensional life with multiple identities impacted by their notion of masculinity and manhood. Guyland offers enormously consequential stakes for adult male learners enrolled in post-secondary institutions. If a man graduates from college without the opportunity to explore his notions of masculinity, his lived experience and to make meaning of his masculine identity, he was likely to remain in the realm of guyland and perpetuate behaviors and beliefs that negatively affect not only him, but women and other men he comes into contact with.

This study was designed to examine and present the experiences of five diverse undergraduate adult male learners at an institution of higher education as they explore the ways of knowing and make meaning of their own notions how they experience their

masculinity regulated and how their perception of other men's notion of masculinity shape their relationship with other men.

This study highlighted both the benefits and concerns of the participant's notion of masculinity and their perception of other men's notion of masculinity as it impacts relationships. The illumination of turning point moments and the adult male learner's developmental trajectory as they made meaning of how their masculinity was regulated was described in this study. In order to provide a comprehensive and rich understanding of the complexity of the issues presented in this study, Queer Theory was used as a methodology, a theoretical framework and a critical lens. Normative social ordering of identities and subjectivities was often problematized through Queer Theory. The heterosexual/homosexual binary in addition to the constant privileging of heterosexuality as a lived reality of all adult male learners as a means of identifying as a masculine man as natural was also challenged through Queer Theory.

The findings from this research will help those stakeholders who want to be seen as an anchor for men who are willing to contest dominant ideologies surrounding their masculine identity and their own perceptions of their masculinity and the perceptions of their peers. This study hopes to help stakeholders in postsecondary education that aim to support and provide safe spaces for men to engage in well-guided exploration about the ways of knowing surrounding their masculine identity. Implications for student affairs administrators and future areas of research are discussed.

## I. INTRODUCTION

“After hundreds of years of anti-racist struggle, more than ever before non-white people are currently calling attention to the primary role white people must play in anti-racist struggle. The same was true of the struggle to eradicate sexism – men have a primary role to play... in particular, men have a tremendous contribution to make... in the area of exposing, confronting, opposing, and transforming the sexism of their male peers.”

- bell hooks, *Men: Comrades in Struggle*

Michael Kimmel advances the argument that “men both police and validate the gender performance of other men. Although it has been widely assumed that men perform masculinities to attract the attention of women, ultimately other men are the targets of men’s masculine performances” (Kimmel, 2009, p. 18).

It was my belief that men are always sizing one another up. It appears as if we often do not know how to engage one another in healthy conversations that support one another through engagement, dialogue and inclusion – in essence, it could appear we are in a constant state of policing and validating gender performance (Bannon & Correia, 2006; Byrne, 2006; Davis & Wagner, 2005; Edwards & Jones, 2009). Consider the last time you listened to a conversation between two men: when we first meet one another we often start off the conversation with “what do you do?”. This question was used as a tool, and allowed men to inquire about employment while attaching significance to a person’s masculinity. This question also allows men to size each other up and see where the other falls in the hierarchy of masculinity. Men use one another for validation and as an

assessment to understand where they measure up on the masculinity hierarchy (Bannon & Correia, 2006; Byrne, 2006; Davis & Wagner, 2005; Edwards & Jones, 2009). In order to do any type of justice to this qualitative study, I had to be willing to engage in a healthy amount of introspection and self-reflection. I realized I have been complicit in legitimizing this sizing up process with other men. As a student affairs professional working in higher education, I know that I have sized other men up by their job titles and have measured myself against other men based on employment. Additionally, I have used other hierarchies to size men up including social status and physique. My measurement was not based on whether the man was a good individual, showing kindness or exhibiting compassion or if he made positive contributions to the world, but to how he defined within the masculinity hierarchy attached to his job title.

Plato argued that leaders need to reach a certain level of enlightenment – colleges and universities across the globe use liberal education to help adults ascend to that level. Furthermore, Nussbaum (1977) stated:

Citizens who cultivate their humanity need, further, an ability to see themselves not simply as citizens of some local region or group but also, and above all, as human beings bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern.

The world around us was inescapably international. (p. 446)

The reality was classrooms, workplaces, neighborhoods and society in general are becoming intertwined with the multiple intersections of identities that make the world so interconnected. The research that I conducted was grounded in socio-political discourse structured in male gender normativity, white privilege and upper-middle class status. As the researcher, I recognized that while my sexual identity of gay was pressed into the



margins, my white, male, Christian, educated and currently able-bodied identities allow me to take a privileged position in many spaces. In order for me to locate myself in this dissertation, I disclosed the positionalities that shape and influence the lens in which I view the discourse surrounding masculinity through and how my multiple identities challenge me as a researcher doing this study.

One could see the correlation between the intersections of identities, educational philosophies, and developmental theories and how auto-ethnography shapes the system level study. Queer theorist Toynton asserted, “validation of an auto-ethnography was helped where the ‘interplay with others’ becomes central” (Toynton, 2006, p. 4). As I approached this study I believed it was necessary to assess it in terms of acknowledging my positionality within the subject because as an adult learner I can easily identify myself in various stages that are similar to those of the men that I researched. Throughout my life I have constantly asked myself “am I adequate enough?” along with “where do I fit in?” regarding masculine identity and perception. Without knowing it, I was engaged in what Turner identified as a liminal time span.

I was raised by a single-mother all my life and my father was absent for the majority of my life, which was a key event that shaped my life. His absence truly affected my developmental stages towards adulthood. I hurt as a child and young adult, and at times, still do hurt a great deal at the loss of not having a father figure in my life. That absence in my life made me constantly question my own worth as a man and made me question my own masculinity. With the absence of a father coupled with growing up gay and living in a society that does not send affirming messages towards gay youth,

especially gay boys – I suffered low self-esteem and never quite felt like “one of the boys” and this left me in a constant state of struggle.

As an adult learner, I now understand that pre-college socialization influenced my perceptions and notions surrounding masculinity and my own establishment of my masculine identity. Furthermore, I realized if I, as a well-educated, professional man experienced the legitimizing of a hierarchy of masculinity, some of the college men I work with on a daily basis may also be engaged in this unhealthy struggle internally and with other men. I realized I had fallen into perpetuating a rigid gender script that I received as part of my socialization and this made me question how many times I had perpetuated this gender script with college men that I work with. I also began to question how are our institutions of higher education providing college men with rigid gender scripts during their socialization on our campuses (Kellom, 2004 & Strayhorn, 2012)?

This led me to think about what we, as men, are doing to take care of each other and to take responsibility for one another on our campuses. As men, are we challenging and supporting one another? Are we trying to build inclusive, meaningful connections with each other to make sure that none of us are left behind? Are we working together to make sure we each cross the stage and receive that diploma? This reminded me of the quote “am I my brother’s keeper?” which comes from the book of Genesis in the Bible and tells the story of the two brothers Cain and Abel, children to Adam and Eve. Cain was a farmer while Abel was a shepherd. When it was time to offer sacrifices to God, Cain provided fruit and Abel provided a sheep from his flock. God favored Abel’s sacrifice and this rejection made Cain angry. Upon seeing this, God admonished Cain to do what was right and his sacrifice would be accepted. Cain disregarded God’s

admonition. Instead, he took his anger out on his brother and murdered him. Later God approached Cain about the whereabouts of Abel and Cain replied with the infamous question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” I would argue that Cain’s words have come to symbolize a generation of college age men who are so disengaged, so disconnected and who are so unwilling to challenge and contest the scripts offered to them through hegemonic masculinity (Harper, 2012). The truth was, we must be our brother’s keeper. We must learn to be fully invested not only in our own pursuit of living authentically, but to help support other men around us to do the same (Kimmel, 2010).

It does not take much to find headlines that depict college men in a state of crisis. Troubling headlines related to conduct, academic progress and retention rates concerning men on college and university campuses seem endless. In January 2007 a large picture of a lone male was featured on the front page of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. In the photograph the picture shows the lone male student in the classroom surrounded by women who appear to be engaged, active and enjoying the class discussion while the male appears disengaged, uninterested and aloof. The bold, attention-grabbing headline read: “The Case of the Missing Men”. This bold headline and photograph begged the question how “multilayer was this phenomenon” and “how do the distorted realities of masculinity impact men on college and university campuses?” The picture displayed on the front page of the *Chronicle of Higher Education* would suggest the lone male student was experiencing some form of gender-role conflict. According to Pleck, (1974), “Gender-role conflict was a psychological state where gender roles have negative consequences or impact on a person or others. The ultimate outcome of this conflict was

the restriction of the person's ability to actualize their human potential or the restriction of some else's potential" (p. 39).

### **Positionality**

It would be remiss of me to engage in this study of research without fully situating myself in this topic and explain why the issues of masculinity and manhood, specifically the issues surrounding regulation have such a deeply moving and profound impact in my life. As the researcher I struggled with just how much I would be willing or how much I actually could delve into this area of study because of the ways regulation changed my life ... forever. Throughout much of my personal and professional life, I have always worked with our adult male learners in order to help them make meaning of their own experiences and provide them with tools to aid in the assistance of introspection and self-reflection; I have frequently worked with men to help them deconstruct notions of masculinity and to enhance their own understanding of multiple masculinities. Countless hours have been spent processing how each man has been impacted by his own masculinity and how he impacts the lives of others based on the effects of regulation. I have listened to their stories. But I have rarely shared my own. I now realize my silence was the masculine self-regulation I was actively engaged in.

Up to the point of this study, I came to the understanding that the silence of my own story that is situated within the regulation against my masculinity was also based on the struggles and secrets I kept around finding my own voice involving the ultimate regulation of my masculinity. Bishop Yvette Flunder (2005) describes this struggle and silence by stating,

I have found that it is of vital importance that people who have been silent and silenced far too long be given an opportunity to give voice to their struggle. Secrets kill and silence often equals death. People often speak forth the answers to their own issues as they talk it out in a supportive environment ... The experiences that at one time horrified now become a resource from which to draw life, both for the teller and the listener. In order for a community to share in each other's failures and triumphs, occasions must be provided for testifying and sharing ... even those things that seem obvious (p. 26).

Therefore, in order to speak forth the answers to my own issues, I need to interrupt the regulation I am imposing on myself and give voice to the struggle that situates me so deeply within the work of masculinity and regulation.

### **An Experience That at One Time Horrified**

In May 2014 I suffered the ultimate regulation of my masculinity by two men who chose to regulate my masculinity through a vicious and brutal assault on my body and my sense of safety, security and being for months to come. I survived a hate crime that lasted three hours – each taking turns to beat me, humiliate me and crush me – both physically and mentally. I was robbed, both financially and of my sense of safety and threatened throughout the ordeal with a knife. Each of the men outlined ways they were going to kill me because I was a “faggot” – the lowest form of a man. My masculinity was not only cut by the knife wielded by the two assailants, but it was cut by the hate and regulation I was experiencing from the two men who controlled whether I lived or died in that moment. I was left broken – literally and figuratively. My body was slow to heal from the multiple traumas it received, but my mind and emotional well-being took even

longer. I was diagnosed with extreme post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and severe depression. My days became filled with anxiety, anger and sadness. And, for the first time in my life, I had to realize I was not invincible.

As a man, I have never given much thought to my safety – I accepted the male privilege that I was born into – and walked freely to and from my car at night without concern of attack. I never gave much thought to noticing my surroundings or the need to be concerned with what I was wearing, because in my mind, those concerns did not seem to apply to men. Then the hate crime happened. Now, those concerns, are the only things I seem to think about.

### **A Resource From Which to Draw Life**

The regulation of my masculinity halted me in my tracks and stopped me from moving forward. I became so depressed and fearful that I rarely left my house, met up with friends, or did any of the other seemingly insignificant daily interactions with my own life that I once found joy in. I never allowed myself to acknowledge my pain. I never talked about it. I certainly never allowed myself to talk about “the incident,” which I referred to it as. I never allowed myself to name it for what it was – a vicious, destructive hate crime ... one that I would have to build myself up from and a significant marker in my life that will forever impact how I view myself and others. Rofes (1996) states,

All sufferers of overwhelming loss must find their own way back into the land of the living. There is no road map, no singular prescription for the revival of the human psyche. Each story shares elements of heroism and triumph, progress and relapse, success and failure (p. 49).

In order to return to the “land of the living” meant that I had to engage in and be willing to sit with some very difficult work of my own. I have a master’s degree in Counseling and work with students daily in counseling sessions and promote the use of counseling for success and well-being in all areas of our lives. However, until this moment, I did not fully realize how hard it would be to interrupt and disengage with my own notions of hegemonic masculinity and socialization until I had to come face to face with my own pain and invite myself to the process of sitting with it, battling with it, understanding it, winning small battles against it, oftentimes losing battles against it, but most importantly moving beyond it.

This work required me to meet with a counselor who specializes in trauma. I was intentional with selecting a man as my counselor. I knew my masculinity had been regulated ... violated, even – and I needed to push myself to have open, honest and courageous conversations with another man. I still meet with him today. For the most part, our conversations have moved past the hate crime and now I explore different topics surrounding my masculinity – pieces of my masculinity that impact me but also have great impact on those around me. What I have learned is that sometimes I get it right, and sometimes I do not. I am a work in progress. The beauty of it all is that I am healing and I am growing and developing into my masculinity.

### **The Lens in Which I View This Story**

In *The Cancer Journals*, Lorde (1980) writes “I have come to believe over and over again that what is most important must be spoken, made verbal and shared, even at the risk of having it bruised or misunderstood” (p. 12). It is my own critical experience of the hate crime, the ultimate regulation of my masculinity, and in turn the self-

regulation I enacted – these are my stories – my truths. These stories are related to the study and influence the ways in which I move, see, interpret and analyze the lived realities and stories of regulation shared by the college men I shed light on. Undoubtedly, the participants in this study are informed by my experiences; my stories – from a time once horrified to building a resource from which to draw life, inform how I operate and develop this study. Accordingly, I want to be obvious about framing this study with a theoretical framework that helps to encompass the personal and critical experiences that shape the lens of this study and informs my thinking. It is this lens that enables me to disrupt the silence and helps me to speak my truth, even if my voice shakes.

### **Statement of the Problem**

College men across the country are struggling both in and out of the classroom and this was largely due to how men construct their masculinity and perform it daily on university of college campuses across the country (Harper & Harris, 2010). Landreau and Rodriguez (2012) assert this struggle was based on the hegemonic and very limiting role of masculinity within the United States that directly impacts men's ability to make meaning of what it means to have a healthy understanding of their gender and therefore directly links men to roles with violence, poor academic performance and health decisions (Harper & Harris, 2010; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Sallee, 2011). Due to socialization, predominantly hegemonic masculinity served as the foundation in which college men base their behaviors, actions, relationships and daily actions through (Bannon & Correia, 2006; Byrne, 2006; Davis & Wagner, 2005; Edwards & Jones, 2009). Based on oppression, hegemonic masculinity was very damaging to college men



and served as a guide as to what it means to be a man in American society (Kimmel & Davis, 2011).

Hegemonic masculinity set the discourse that dominates college men concerning the notions of masculinity and regulates their masculinity based on achievement, strength, dominance, aggression, power and control. The dominant discourse on the notions of masculinity often led to negative and harmful effects for college men (Askew & Ross, 1988; Connell, 2005; Harper, 2006; Kimmel & Messner, 2007; Messner, 2007). By the time men arrive on college campuses hegemonic masculinity has been embedded into their identity which impacted their ability to navigate the college environment in responsible, healthy and meaningful ways that can produce successful results (Laker & Davis, 2011). A growing body of research asserted that men are falling behind women in comparison to categories of leadership opportunities and degree attainment (Ferguson, 2004; Harper, 2004; Strayhorn, 2009). Furthermore, data indicated “females of each racial and ethnic group generally earned more degrees than their male counterparts for each type of degree” (source: Percentage of degrees conferred by sex and race <http://nces.ed.gov>). According to Kimmel (2004), “The crisis of males in higher education had to do with masculinities – both the multiple definitions of masculinity articulated by different groups of men and the intersections of gender relations with other lines of identity and inequality” (p. 98). Poor retention rates, underachievement in academics and disengagement with leadership opportunities in college characterized this crisis (Harper & Harris, 2010; Laker & Davis, 2011). College men, particularly first and second-year students who have their masculinity regulated by other men due to hegemonic masculinity, are often less engaged in clubs and organizations, are placed

more frequently on academic probation, engaged in high-risk alcohol related incidents, had higher student conduct issues and participated in risky sexual behavior while in college (Capraro, 2004; Courtenay, 1998; Harper & Harris, 2010; Kellom, 2004; Laker & Davis, 2011).

Rigid gender norms prevented men from being fully human, living authentically and reaching their full potential. Rigid gender norms also manifested on college campuses resulting in a host of gender-related problems and outcomes. Sax (2008) explained that “recent reports conclude that men are underrepresented among college students who enroll, persist, and graduate from college; participate in campus service and leadership activities; and seek help at campus health and counseling centers” (p. 42). In addition, “despite being a quantitative minority on most campuses, men are overrepresented among students who commit acts of violence, perpetrate sexual assaults, and abuse drugs and alcohol while enrolled in college” (Harris & Harper, 2010, p. 20).

Statistics from the U.S. Department of Education (2005) showed that men (Caucasian) narrowly made up the majority of undergraduates by 52% in 1976. There was even a larger disparity seen with men of color. According to the College Board Advocacy and Policy Center, “The educational achievement of young men of color demands significant dialogue; currently, just 26 percent of African Americans, 24 percent of Native Americans and Pacific Islanders, and 18 percent of Hispanic Americans have at least an associate degree. In addition, in each racial and ethnic group young women are outperforming young men with respect to the attainment of high school diplomas, with even more pronounced disparities at the postsecondary level”

(<http://youngmenofcolor.collegeboard.org/research-landscape/higher-education>, 2013).

Men slipped behind women in 1980 as 52.3% of individuals earning bachelor's degrees were women, and in 2008, 56.9% of all undergraduate enrollments were women. So why was this a big deal? According to Harper and Harris (2010), it was because "the student who has become increasingly missing from the college campus was someone's son, brother, friend, former teammate, or future co-parent. The effects of their dwindling presence in higher education were finally being felt in middle class and financially affluent White families, not just among minority and lower income groups" (p. xvi).

Harper and Harris (2010) expanded on the statistics that help to highlight the multiple layers within this problem by providing starting statistics including an alarming concern of gaps in degree attainment. For example, in 2007 men earned "only 37.8% of all associate's degrees; 38.9% of bachelor's degrees awarded to Latinos; 28.6% of master's degrees awarded to Blacks; and 38.6% of doctorates awarded to Native Americans" (p. xvi). Statistics like this were a sobering reminder that educational interventions addressing college men are urgently needed (Harper & Harris, 2010). Furthermore, 375,000 associates and bachelor's degrees were awarded – 40.9% of them earned by men. Harper and Harris (2010) assert:

[T]o send nearly one million college-educated men into the world with troubled masculinities, underdeveloped gender identities, and erroneous assumptions concerning women and other men with whom they co-occupy society makes contemporary institutions of higher education one of the guiltiest culprits in the perpetual maintenance of patriarchy, sexism, and homophobia in America (p. 13).

Harper and Harris (2010) went on to suggest empirical evidence and theoretical support indicated the largest layer of this problem lie with college men's inability or avoidance

with contesting the dominant discourses surrounding men and the binary notions of masculinities.

Laker and Davis (2011) suggested problems college men face will continue to persist regardless of how many or how few are enrolled. Additionally, attempts to bridge the gender gap in higher education along with degree attainment would not be successful without an understanding of what the real problem was: a clear understanding of how men's masculinities are constructed and manufactured in a way that limits them from having authentic, healthy and successful college experiences. Hong (2000) explained that boys and men were most often perpetrators of interpersonal violence including homicide (Gilligan, 1982; Blazina, 2009; Ludeman, 2011; Richardson, 2006), physical assaults (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007), sexual assaults (Blazina, 2009; Muses & Kiang, 2009), domestic abuse (Hong, 2000; Laker & Davis, 2011) and bias-related crimes (Byrne, 2006). Researchers over the past 30 years have documented a considerable amount of empirical support connecting college male populations with diagnoses such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, and suicidality (Edwards & Jones, 2009; Fassinger, 1998; Lee, 1991; Nel, 2013). According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2007, 2.72% of college aged (17 to 23 years old) men committed suicide in the United States (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007).

### **Purpose Statement and Research Questions**

Many men wear the mask of hegemonic masculinity on a daily basis and bring this mask with them to college:

In an important sense there was only one complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports. Every American male tends to look upon the world from this perspective, this constituting one sense in which one can speak of a common value system in America. Any male who fails to qualify in any one of these ways was likely to view himself-during moments at least – as unworthy, incomplete, and inferior. (Goffman, 1963, p. 128)

Like Goffman (1963) asserted, middle-class, white, heterosexual masculinity was used as the barometer for what other masculinities are measured against. While Goffman noted this in 1963, much of what he researched was still supported by scholars today with regards to gender roles, norms and performance (Harper, 2012; Harris, 2011; Laker & Davis, 2011). The construct of White, middle-class, heterosexual masculinity was seen as normative – and was most often seen as what was normal. This type of masculinity perpetuated power and privilege through the use of oppression. Heterosexual men maintained their social status by oppressing gay men, middle-class men exploit working-class men and white men maintain a status of supremacy over men of color (Kaufman, 1987).

The overarching research question that guided this study were: How do college men negotiate the regulation of their masculinity? The supporting questions included:

1. How do college men's perceptions of other men's notion of masculinity shape their relationship with others?
2. How do college men interrupt or transgress the regulation of their masculinity?

Through focus groups, individual interviews and artifact analysis, this dissertation was completed by providing five undergraduate male participants the space to share their unique perspectives, stories, and thoughts on how they make meaning of their masculine identity while enrolled as a full-time college student.

### **Purpose of the Study**

In her book, *Daring Greatly* (2012) researcher Brene Brown defined daring greatly as a verb that means to have “the courage to be vulnerable, to show up and be seen. To ask for what you need, to talk about how you’re feeling, to have the hard conversations” (p. 27). That was my hope for this qualitative study. My hope was this research led men to lean into the discomfort and find the courage to become vulnerable, to engage in the hard conversations and to have the strength to show up and live an authentic life.

This study adds to the existing literature on males in higher education by concentrating on how undergraduate students conceptualize their notion of masculinity and providing a base for future inquiry into how those notions impact their relationships. The primary focus of this study was to capture the experiences of five college men as they examine, contest and negotiate their masculinity. Reporting their lived experiences and insights will help other students, faculty, staff and university stakeholders gain a much deeper sense of understanding and how these manufactured constructs of masculinity impact the success holistically of our college men.

Data found in this study provided information about men in the postsecondary context to help make it possible to draw implications for practice for institutions of higher

education as student affairs administrators' work with college men on developing ways to discuss issues of masculinity and performance while implementing realistic systems and structures of support on their campuses. The transference of findings from this study will also advantage student affairs professionals and faculty as they work through a host of gender-related conflicts that are typical among college men including poor help-seeking, homophobia, violence and vandalism, anxiety, depression and suicidality that impact universities and colleges across the country (O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David & Wrightsman, 2010). Landreau and Rodriguez (2012) suggested results from studies like this will allow student affairs professionals the ability to provide "programming and learning interventions aimed at putting gender on the radar screen for men" (p. 12). Just as we need to help White students see themselves as racial beings, we need to facilitate men learning about themselves as men. Davis (2010) stated that "helping men become more aware of their gender should help to promote identity development to the extent that unconsidered gender roles are keeping them from making reflective identity commitments" (p. 63).

Study findings shed light on how college men experience their masculinity were regulated and how this regulation impacts relationships with other men on college campuses. Studies have been completed within the past ten to 15 years surrounding male identity development in various stages (Butler, 1993; Cass, 1979; D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995; Erikson, 1968; Fassinger, 1998; Fausto-Sterling, 1985; Heasley, 2012; Hennen, 2008; Reeser, 2010; Whorley, 2004), but the number of studies that spoke about the perceptions of men's masculinity and how that impacts relationships for today's adult male learners. These studies did not use adult male learners between the ages of 18 to 24

as the primary subject of inquiry. Moreover, the current body of knowledge does not speak to how college men see their masculinity regulated and how their notion of masculinity was shaped by other men along with how that shapes their relationships with other men. Furthermore, there was a gap in the literature about what “good” masculinity looks like from the perspective of college men and what can student affairs and higher education administrators do in order to help students achieve it.

### **Conceptual Grounding and Methods**

In order to fully and accurately address the research questions, this study utilized qualitative methodology. It was researched with a queer theory lens that applies directly to contesting masculinity and established on the notion that social constructs create, reinforce and maintain the hegemony (Connell, 2005, Edward & Jones, 2009; Harper & Harris, 2010; Harris, 2010; Landreau & Rodriguez, 2012). Queer theory grounded my research of how men’s notions of masculinity and relationships with other men are shaped by social, political, cultural and traditional gender notions which often place college men in difficult, uncomfortable, constraining and often times conforming and destructive gender-based masculinity structures. This theoretical framework provided an intervention against the assertions of hegemonic gender/masculinity and sexual heteronormative identities, practices and politics, especially within the context of the concerns surrounding college men (Landreau & Rodriguez, 2012). Utilizing Queer Theory in the context of higher education with adult male learners allowed for a queering of masculinity in order to investigate assumed binaries of male/female, straight/gay in order to disrupt normative attitudes, beliefs and behaviors experienced and perpetuated by college men (Heasley & Crane, 2012).



Queer theory helped me to delve into the work centered on masculinities to help understand how men's notion of masculinity influences the decisions they make about friends, choices they make about how to spend their time outside of class, decisions around choosing a major along with career exploration and how they engage in sexual and romantic relationships. An approach to exploring masculinities through queer theory allowed for a focus on how masculinity situates men in a nuanced understanding of the fluidity of multiple axes. This theory allowed the researcher to analyze a comprehensive range of masculinities in order to understand the positions within the continuum. Maher and Tetreault (2001) explained the idea of positionality, "In which people are defined not in terms of fixed identities, but by their location within shifting networks of relationships, which can be analyzed and changed" (p. 164). Data for this study included interviews, focus groups and artifact analysis. In triangulating the data, my intent was to provide a comprehensive view of college men's view of their own masculinity and how it impacted their relationships with other men.

### **Overview of the Dissertation**

Chapter One of this dissertation provided some context and information on the issues that help to frame my argument. This introduction helps to discuss the importance of experiences men as they come to understand their own notions of masculinity and the impact on their relationships with other men. The statement of problem, purpose of the study, research questions, and definitions were also offered in this chapter. The remainder of the dissertation is provided in four chapters. Chapter Two provides an examination of the literature surrounding the socialization of gender for boys and men, a discussion of hegemonic masculinity, along with how masculinity impacts the navigation of college for

men. The review of literature also explores retention rates for college men, masculine identity development and programmatic efforts for student affairs administrators to implement for college men along with the gap in the research body on college men and masculinity. Chapter Three provides the methodology and research design used in this study including a review of the epistemology, methodology, research methods, data collection, data analysis along with validity of the study. Chapter Four introduces my five participants and allows an opportunity to hear their lived experiences and gain a sense of understanding about their reality as they negotiate the concept of masculinity on a college campus. The data from the participants will build upon the theoretical and analytical framework by adding to the multiple realities faced by college men examined in this study. To conclude, Chapter Five offers concepts and insights, presented through the findings of this study. The results of the study are summarized along with providing insights of the use of photo voice in this project. It also presents implications for best practice and further explores ideas for future research. It also offers a call for more investigation a commitment for student affairs professionals and higher education institutions to engage in courageous conversations about this critically, time-sensitive topic.

### **Definition of Terms**

The terms listed below were used throughout this study and have been defined as follows:

Adult learner: “Student populations are becoming more obviously diverse with regard to age, ethnic and national origin, family configuration, socioeconomic status, reason for enrollment, level of pre-college preparation, and full or part time

student status” (ACPA Journal of Student Development, 2014; ACPA/NASPA *Learning Reconsidered*, 2004). The diversification of adult learners was represented through demographic categories, socioeconomic status, degree of preparation for college work, needs for support services while in school, and motives for post-secondary education.

Gender: “Gender was always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed... There was no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity was performatively constituted by the ‘expression’ that are said to be the results” (Butler, 1993, p. 33).

Hegemony: A system of unequal production along ideological justifications for the creation of inequality (Greene, 1986)

Hegemonic masculinity: Refers to the “virtually unattainable privileged model of living life as a man. The perpetuation of this as the ultimate way to enact masculinity adversely impacts all of society as individuals knowingly and unknowingly contribute to its potency and are influenced by the sociocultural scripts teaching us how it was performed” (Barone & Harris, 2011, p. 50). Also defined as “the socially dominant form of masculinity” (Heasley & Crane, 2012, p. 99).

Homophobia: Fear or hatred of homosexuals and homosexuality (Plummer, 2001).

Ideology: The organized, collected, un-interrogated, and frequently contradictory collection of ideas where discursive practices and cultural norms become a mass, common sense foundation and justification for uneven development, the reproduction of inequality, and hegemonic social stratification (Butler, 1993; Elliott, 1994; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007).

Masculinity: Socially constructed behaviors associated with being male (Harper & Harris, 2010).

Masculinity ideology: Refers “to beliefs about the importance of men adhering to culturally defined standards for male behavior” (Pleck, 1974, p. 19).

Male and man: Used interchangeably throughout this study, however, male was a biological concept whereas man encompasses social meanings and culturally defined as masculine (Harris & Barone, 2011).

Photo elicitation: A technique that has been used extensively in the social sciences.

“Photo-elicitation refers to the use of a single or sets of photographs as stimulus during a research interview. It aims to trigger responses and memories and unveil participants’ attitudes, views, beliefs, and meanings or to investigate group dynamics” (Harper, 2006). This method was also referred to as photo interviewing, photo voice, and photo feedback. “Photo elicitation as a technique allows researchers to insert a photograph into a research interview, whether the researchers supply those photos or participants are asked to bring their own. In either case, the participants are supplied “guiding questions” which help them talk about the photo and/or select their photo” (Buckley, 2014; Harper, 2002).

Qualitative research: “A qualitative approach was one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (i.e., the multiple meanings of individual experiences, meanings socially and historically constructed, with an intent of developing a theory or pattern) or advocacy/participatory perspectives (i.e. political, issue-oriented, collaborative, or change oriented) or both” (Creswell, 1998, p. 18). This study utilizes qualitative methods

because “Qualitative methods are those most often used in studies of masculinity;  
(b) survey-based approaches tend to reify masculinity, treating it as a static  
psychological trait; and (c) qualitative methods provide the best insight into how  
men present themselves as gendered beings” (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009, p. 279).

Queering: Defined as “the disruption of the normative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors  
evidenced to support hegemonic masculinity” (Heasley & Crane, 2012, p. 99).

Sex and gender: Sex was determined biologically while gender was a social construct  
(Harris & Struve, 2009).

Shame: “Shame needs three things to grow exponentially in our lives: secrecy, silence,  
and judgment” (Brown, 2010, p. 14).

Vulnerability: Uncertainty, risk and emotional exposure (Brown, 2010, p. 12)

they say:

“sticks and stones can break bones  
– but words can never hurt”  
yet, I’ve seen stones and sticks  
break lips and bones in hips  
after words commanded such action  
or seen violence in metaphor  
or pushed in minds before  
children were four years or four months old  
tell me – what are words worth?  
code words signify the marginalized  
letting the hateful be normalized  
spoken through glances and thoughtful eyes  
that disguise disgust  
with laughed off comments  
like “what a faggot”  
or “she’s a bitch”  
and “look at those tits”  
on that “greasy spic”  
do you “‘speak-a’ – ‘speak-a’ English, bitch?”  
words can hit...hard  
and lead to violent fits,

pounding fists,  
or slit wrists

- An excerpt from “*Words Worth*” by Carlos Andres Gomez

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

“Funny thing, ‘[Curley’s wife] said. ‘If I catch any one man, and he’s alone, I get along fine with him. But just let two of the guys get together an’ you won’t talk. Jus’ nothing but mad.’ She dropped her fingers and put her hands on her hips. ‘You’re all scared of each other, that’s what. Ever’one of you’s scared the rest was goin’ to get something on you.’”

- John Steinbeck, *Of Mice and Men*

This chapter has been developed in order to review the pertinent literature surrounding manhood and masculinity that was relevant to elements of this study. The purpose of this study was to produce research that will add to the field and allow higher education administrators the ability to draw from research addressing how college men negotiate the regulation of their masculinity. Qualitative study designs “cannot be conducted without the conscious or unconscious use of underlying theoretical perspectives. These perspectives informed methodology, guiding theory, questions pursued, and conclusions drawn” (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 434). In this study design, queer theory was central to the study design in order for the queering of the central construction of hegemonic masculinity (Beasley, 2005) through literature and the interpretation of the data collected throughout this process. According to Strauss and Corbin (1994):

The important point for the researcher to remember was that the literature can hinder creativity if it was allowed to stand between the researcher and the data.

But if it was used as an analytical tool, then it can foster conceptualization. (p. 53)

The literature review developed seven areas: queer theory and masculinity studies; identity acquisition; reverence for hegemonic masculinity; power relations; homophobia and sexism; schools and socialization and implications for educational practice. The literature gathered in this study provided insight into the social constructions and lived experiences of men within the context of postsecondary education.

### **Queer Theory as a Framework for Masculinity Studies**

Queer Theory offers unique challenges that contest the naturalizing of sexual and gender identities through epistemology, ontology and politics (Rodriguez, 2011). Queer Theory encompasses theory that “critically analyzes the meaning of identity, focusing on intersections of identities and resisting oppressive social constructions of sexual orientation and gender” (Abes & Kasch, 2007, p. 620). Post structural theories of Foucault (1977), Derrida (1967; 1976) and Lyotard (1984) provided the foundation for the emergence of Queer Theory. Sullivan (2003) contended, “Post structural theorists such as Foucault argue that there are no objective and universal truths, but that particular forms of knowledge, and the ways of being that they engender, become ‘naturalized’ in culturally and historically specific ways” (p. 39). Derrida (1976) maintained that:

Every text was a contested terrain in the sense that what it appears to ‘say’ on the surface cannot be understood without reference to concealments and contextualizations of meaning going on to mark the text’s significance (e.g., the use of specialized jargon). (p. 112)

Moreover, Derrida’s (1976) claim about concealments leading to the support of dominance was further supported by Rooke (2010) who argued “certain strands of queer theorizing, in rejecting a representational theory of ‘truth,’ and used various forms of



discourse and textual analyses to consider how power relations are constituted and maintained in the production of social and political meanings” (p. 27). The representational theory of truth was rejected through the use of exploring fluidity of binary identities. Queer theory was able to offer a sense of liberation, especially with hegemonic categorizations through the rejection of the traditional notions of categorization (Beasley, 2005). Queer Theory was situated in three main tenets which contest the broader context of a heteronormative construct. A heteronormative social order prescribed categories of sex (male/ female), gender (masculine/ feminine) and sexuality (heterosexual/homosexual) without ever being queered. Queer Theory denaturalized these categories while problematizing the hegemonic construct of male masculinity with heterosexuality (Rodriguez, 2010). These ideas were applied to gender and sexuality, which according to Queer theorists are socially constructed (Butler, 1993). The field of education, as stated by Pinar (2004) was “a highly conservative and often reactionary field” (p. 2) that Queer Theory settled into. Within this field “queer theorists sought to disrupt ‘normalizing’ discourses” (Tierney & Dilley, 1998, p. 61), like the dominant narratives that police men’s notions of masculinity. Queer Theory was antinormative in nature. Though deconstructive critique normalized ways of knowing are examined in a broader level within power relations, historical contexts and hierarchical binaries (Rodriguez, 2010).

Some critique of Queer Theory argues that it does not often lead to effective change (Richardson, 2006). Scholar Taylor (2014) writes:

Transgressions are tied up with the material possibilities of everyday life and often left largely unexplained was how the ability to experience the variability of

a self was embedded in power relations that limit and/or open up certain possibilities and not others. (p. 13)

Richardson (2006) indicated that in order for Queer Theory to be effective, critiques need to be firmly connected to the historical, societal, and economic contexts in order to make real progress. Browne and Nash (2010) argued Queer Theory must be used as a contemporary form which was anti-normative by its very nature. Browne and Nash (2010) explained, “Queer scholarship, seeks to subvert, challenge and critique a host of taken for granted ‘stabilities’ in our social lives. ‘Queer’ was, a way of knowing that was a ‘situated inquiry’ that relates to specific ways of knowing in particular locations” (p. 38).

Scholars Cronin, King, Rooke and Taylor (2010) explained Queer Theory and methodological approaches must always work in concert with the issues of intersectionality including race, age, sexuality, gender and socioeconomic status. These scholars claimed these subjectives were always interlinked to the critique that was being challenged (2010). Browne and Nash (2010) stated the intersectionality “offers the possibilities of writing ourselves into new ways of being and becoming” (p. 198). Queer Theory was important because it allowed for those engaging in the study to not be restricted by strict binaries and specific categories. Queer theory disrupts the status quo and challenges normative ideologies. Browne and Nash (2010) stated Queer Theory “seeks to create transformation and liberation in ways that recognize and embrace fluidities and contingency, opening up more ways of being in the world” (p. 184).

**Queer theory and masculinity studies.** This qualitative study was framed using queer theory as an intellectual theory to examine masculinity in order to focus on the

binary lens used a theoretical resource. Queer theory leads to the reconsideration of assumptions based on a destabilization of the assumed binaries of male/female and gay/straight (Heasley & Crane, 2013) and queering was defined as “the disruption of the normative attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors evidenced to support hegemonic masculinity” (Heasley & Crane, 2012, p. 99). Queer theory aimed to create equitable spaces through the disruption of binary ideologies that discipline bodies (Ruffolo, 2013). Moreover, queer theory revisions inequitable spaces that create an even greater gap for majoritized and minoritized bodies (Rodriguez, 2007; Ruffolo, 2013). Queering masculinity required individuals to reconsider boundaries linked with the category of masculinity connected to gender while also reconsidering masculinity’s connection to sex (male) and sexuality (heterosexuality) (Ruffolo, 2013). Queer theory was useful in relation to how we understand social constructs surrounding identity (Butler, 1993, 2004; Gamson, 2000; Sedgwick, 2011). Specifically, queer theory provided an insightful view of identity that promotes our grasp of how individuals make meaning of who they are. Men have been taught to comprehend their place in the world according to fairly rigid categories related to identity. Kate Bornstein (1998) describes:

But the need for a recognizable identity, and the need to belong to a group of people with similar identity – these are driving forces in our culture, and nowhere was this more evident than in the areas of gender and sexuality. Hence the clear division between fashion statements of male and female, between the fashions of queer and straight. (p. 3-4)

Sexual orientation and gender identity were problematized through the use of queer theory. Furthermore, queer theory sought to obtain comprehension between the constructs of sexuality, gender and power dynamics (Bornstein, 1998).

Queer theory helped to explore how identity was an outcome of power relations (Butler, 1993; Foucault, 1978). Queer theory was established on the notion that social constructs create, reinforce and maintain the hegemony. O'Malley and Capper (2014) explains:

There was a 'deeply embedded nature of heteronormativity' (Koschoreck & Slattery, 2010) [with which men measure themselves against]. Queer theory, as an epistemological stance was less a colonizing gaze onto the queer subject than a perspective from within queer experience that troubles the presumed stability of heteronormative structures and assumptions. [It considers] equity through questions, insights, and analysis arising from queer experience rather than from a culturally dominant heteronormative perspective. (p. 13)

Heteronormative structures allowed men to measure one another through the dominant narrative of male bonding, masculine culture and the male perspective based on expectations constantly reinforced by the heteronormative perspective. O'Malley and Capper (2014) went on to state queer theory was used to:

[D]isrupt both the binary logic through which gender and sexual identities are most often constructed as well as notions about the stability of identity. Binary representations of human experience and identity such as homosexual/heterosexual, gay/straight, woman/man, feminine/masculine, and transgender/gender arise from the philosophical priorities of modernity and serve

to reinscribe the very conditions which make identity politics both possible and intractable. (p. 360)

Judith Butler identified the understanding of gender through arguments that men and women function as a construct that privileges hegemony, in particular, heterosexuality (Butler, 1993). Butler claimed systems discourse both regulate and construct the individual; therefore, the only way to dismantle the dominant narrative was to deconstruct the binaries of gender, sex and sexuality (Butler, 1991, 2004). Masculinity identity development will continue to manifest in harmful ways, only allowing men to develop in a limited manner if these hierarchical notions are not challenged. Men will be unable to experience liberation from a construct that has been framed for oppression.

Moreover, Butler (1993) argued gender was established as performative and “the effect of reiterative acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance of a natural sort of being” (Butler, 1993, p. 33). This supported the claim that men perform masculinity in front of one another. The categories of sex, gender and sexuality are reframed through Butler’s work as she posits they are socially constructed and often systematized through recapitulation and recognition. These constructs are not innate but are grounded and developed in the culture we live in.

Male students arrive to college already practicing the mainstream perception of gender as an identity marker, having learned it through witnessing normalized social performances as indicated by Butler (1993):

Gender ought not to be constructed as a stable identity of locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender was an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. The

effect of gender was produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (p. 140)

The challenge for student affairs practitioners was to create programming that will break down traditional gender constructs in a significant manner in order for college men to interrupt oppression on multiple levels. Scholars asserted sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia are interrelated through the constructs of sex, gender, and sexual identity (Blumenfeld, 1992; Pharr, 1988). Pharr (1988) explains:

Homophobia works effectively as a weapon of sexism because it was joined with a powerful arm, heterosexism. Heterosexism creates a climate for homophobia with its assumption that the world was and must be heterosexual and its display of power and privilege as the norm. Heterosexism and homophobia work together to enforce compulsory heterosexuality and that bastion of patriarchal power, the nuclear family. (p. 16)

Many college men based their perception on what it means to be masculine based on a heteronormative narrative which was founded on patriarchy and strict gender roles. Queer theory allowed for an examination of a direct correlation between homophobia and sexism and the impact this has on male gender roles, performativity, and male peer relationships. Blumenfeld (1992) states “[g]ender roles maintain the sexist structure of society...” (p. 24). In essence, patriarchy and strict gender roles continue to hurt both men and women on college campuses. Queer theorists aim to make hierarchy futile through careful examination of traditional identities (Rodriguez, 2013, Ruffolo, 2013).

Utilizing queer theory to analyze a topic that was generally viewed as normative helped situate the study around the acceptance or rejection of multiple variations of male identities in relation to how men perceive themselves, peer groups and manhood. Queer Theory allowed for queering masculinities – which provides a non-heteronormative way of thinking about and enacting a wide range of possible masculinities. Queer theory provided a lens which rejects hierarchy and challenges categories in order to gain a deeper understanding of masculinity and manhood as it relates to interpersonal relationships. As Butler (2004) posed the question in *Undoing Gender*, “of what it might mean to undo restrictively normative conceptions of sexual and gendered life” (p. 1). Butler discussed the process of becoming undone. Normative concepts of gender were constraining and men’s true sense of self can become undone as they struggle with normative gender embodiment (Rodriguez, 2007). Queer theory in masculinity studies was one way to “relate the problematic of gender and sexuality to the tasks of persistence and survival” (Butler, 2004, p. 4).

**Queer theory and power dynamics.** Foucault (1978) contended discourse was historically situated in systems that produce ways of knowing about a particular topic. Discourse constructed the way the topic was talked about and interpreted. Additionally, discourse “governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. Discourse also regulates the conduct of others” (Hall, 1997, p. 72). Foucault (1977) articulated discourse regulated what was appropriate or inappropriate concerning a topic. Hall (1997) argued that discourse works to normalize one set of knowledge while minimizing others. Therefore, according to Shaun Harper (2011) discourse frames the way systems produce knowledge about manhood and masculinity. This discourse was

reproduced through patriarchy and heteronormative behavior (Foucault, 1978). hooks (2004) argued in support of Foucault's claim about patriarchy and heteronormative behavior by stating:

Patriarchy demands of men that they become and remain emotional cripples.

Since it was a system that denies men full access to their freedom of will, it was difficult for any man of any class to rebel against patriarchy, to be disloyal to the patriarchal parent, be that parent female or male. (p. 84)

### **Identity Acquisition**

Gender acquisition begins when children are categorized as male or female by biological characteristics. Once the categorized biological characteristics were established, children are then developed into masculine and feminine adults (Hare-Mustin & Maracek, 1990; Harris, 2010; Laker & Davis, 2011). Valliant & Beardslee (2008) wrote "identity was an internal anchor that defines one's interaction with the world" (p. 7). That anchor was what lens the individual will view the world through. According to hooks (2004) parents were responsible for perpetuating the strict gender norms by "embracing patriarchal thinking, like everyone else around them, they taught it to their children because it seemed like a 'natural' way to organize life" (p. 18). Andocentrism (male-centeredness) and gender polarization situate the child to experience the social construction of a gendered identity with restrictive norms (Bem, 1993; hooks, 2004). Writers such as Brannon (1985), Chodorow (1978), Harper (2012), Harris (2011), Laker (2011) and O'Neil (1981) indicated that little boys are raised with the construct of avoiding femininity. These scholars believed antifemininity was a central guiding principle to the construction of a male identity. Children were not born with specific



gender stereotypes, therefore, they are informally taught how to be male or female in their particular society. According to Kaschak (1992) and Landsberg (2012), children are taught attributions and expectations according to the dualistic gender system. hooks (2004) affirmed Kaschak's statement by writing:

Many mothers in patriarchal culture silence the wild spirit in their sons, the spirit of wonder and playful tenderness, for fear that their sons will be weak, will not be prepared to be macho men, real men, men other men will envy and look up to. (p. 137)

According to Landsberg (2012), gender conditioning began at the child's earliest experience. The clothing the child wears, the physical handling, the toys they play with, the tone of voice used to speak to the child, and their surroundings are all very different. Landsberg contended gender differences are acculturated.

When children see social practices repeated that support different social experiences for men and women, a gender-polarizing assumption takes place in the child's psyche (Capraro, 1994; Connell, 2001; Courtenay, 2011; de Viser, 2009; hooks, 2004; Renzetti & Curran, 1995). For instance, when a child saw their father was the one who always repairs things around the home or the mother was the only one who does the laundry, this helped to create a view of gender identity for the child. Not only did boys learn what it means to be a boy – they also learned what it meant to be different from a girl and that trying to look like, or be like a girl was unacceptable (Renzetti & Curran, 1995). While we know research indicates girls do receive severe punishment, however hooks (2004) expands on the concept presented by Renzetti and Curran by asserting:

Sexist roles restrict the identity formation of male and female children, but the process was far more damaging to boys because not only are the roles required of them more rigid and confining, but they are much more likely to receive severe punishment when they deviate from these roles. (p. 154)

Lansberg (2012) explains that male conditioning starts very early and that it was not only informed by the parents, but by advertising stereotypes and branding as well. Moreover, O'Neil (2011) suggests social stereotypes are used to establish and justify hierarchical relations. A study conducted by Whorley and Addis (2006) in 25 countries identified that some adjectives are used to describe girls and women while others are primarily assigned to boys and men.

Table 1

*Adjectives Attributed by Gender*

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Adjectives attributed to women include:

- Affectionate
- Anxious
- Attractive
- Caring
- Charming
- Chatty
- Curious
- Dependent
- Dreamy
- Emotional
- Fearful
- Sensitive
- Sentimental
- Sexy
- Submissive
- Sweet

Adjectives attributed to men include:

- Adventurous
  - Aggressive
  - Ambitious
  - Arrogant
  - Courageous
  - Cruel
  - Dominant
  - Independent
  - Lazy
  - Logical
  - Nasty
  - Opportunistic
  - Pragmatic
  - Rational
  - Rude
  - Strong
- 

Moreover, these social stereotypes took a greater account of social conditioning to a child than anything naturally inherent (Cuyjet, 2006; Dennis, 2012; DeSousa, Gordon, & Kimbrough, 2004). Children were inundated with messages telling them what was right and wrong for their gender identity and behavior. Lansberg (2012) writes:

The sociologist Raphaela Best observed long ago how strenuously the boys in a grade one class denied themselves the affection freely offered by mothers and female teachers in order to prove their ‘hardness’ to one another. The value of being accepted into the macho boys’ inner circle was so superior to all other rewards that the boys in her study were willing to suffer emotional pain and loss to gain that status. (p. 5)

Gilligan (2011) also wrote about the age when boys become sanctioned for what was deemed as inappropriate gender role behavior while this comes later for girls. hooks (2004) agreed with Best and Gilligan and writes of her own experience with her brother by stating “My brother was taught that a boy should not express feelings . . . that girls could and should express feelings, or at least some of them (p. 19).

When boys have a dispute during play, they are likely to actively resolve it. When girls have a dispute, they are likely to quit playing in order to maintain the relationship – this responsibility connotes an act of care rather than restraint of aggression (Gilligan, 1982). Gilligan (1982) argued “since masculinity was defined through separation while femininity was defined through attachment, male gender identity was threatened by intimacy while female gender identity was threatened by separation” (p.12). Gilligan (1982) claimed men's desire to limit interference vs. women's desire to respond was consonant with men's desire for separation vs. women's desire for connection and this was taught at an early age through gender scripts. To that end, it was important to understand that performativity was learned. Adopting the script that females may be threatened by separation was a learned performance and there was fluidity within this. Gender does not have to work this way. hooks (2004) suggested “violence *was* boyhood socialization. We pull them away from their own expressiveness, from their feelings, from sensitivity to others. The very phrase ‘Be a man’ means suck it up and keep going. Men cannot speak their pain in patriarchal culture” (p. 135). By assuming silence, men continued to enact the gender identity they have been taught. Men learned to suppress emotion and vulnerability in order to demonstrate the gender script that has been presented to them in the home and in society. hooks (2004) explained “the masculine

pretense was that real men feel no pain” (p. 6). Many men were conditioned to express their masculinity through a numbing of pain and emotion. hooks (2004) stated:

Whenever women thinkers, especially advocates of feminism, speak about the widespread problem of male violence, folks are eager to stand up and make the point that most men are not violent. They refuse to acknowledge that masses of boys and men have been programmed from birth on to believe that at some point they must be violent, whether psychologically or physically, to prove that they are men. (p. 42)

Blazina, Settle, and Eddins (2008) explained that boys are conditioned to learn that anger can be associated with power and Harper (2008) reported that adolescents who hold typically hegemonic views could be seen as more aggressive and lacked self-confidence as related to their peers who displayed less hegemonic views.

### **Reverence for Hegemonic Masculinity**

The Oxford Essential Dictionary (1998) defined masculinity as “characteristic of men” (p. 367). However, this begs the question – how does one decide what was “of a man” or “of a woman”? What are the individual and societal costs associated with these labels? (Levant & Pollack, 1996). Boys were socialized into the concepts defined by the Oxford Dictionary (1998) as young boys – “having qualities traditionally ascribed to men, as strength and boldness” (p. 367). Boys were taught to be the opposite of females and in many ways develop negative concepts of women (Kimmel, 2010). These negative concepts became as extreme as having a fear of any type of association with anything related to the construct of what was feminine. In relation to masculinity ideology development, fear of femininity was used to validate one’s worth as “manly” when

developing a traditional masculine identity. Boys learned to apply the rules of traditional masculinity ideology to their lives because boys are taught that other boys and men police their performance within the gender rules. As indicated by Harris and Struve (2009), men's practice of gender has been theorized as a homosocial enactment, in which the performance of manhood was in front of, and granted by, other men.

Although there were multiple masculinities or multiple ways of being a man, a distinct form of masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, has become the dominant and most widely accepted form (Connell, 2005; Donaldson, 1993; Hare-Mustin, Marecek, 1990; Harper, Harris & Mmeje, 2005; Kimmel, 2008, 2010; Kimmel, 2011). Hegemonic masculinity in North America was primarily reflected in white, heterosexual, and middle-class males (Connell, 2005; Donaldson, 1993; Harper, Harris & Mmeje, 2005; Kimmel, 2008, 2010; Kroger, 2004). Ideals espoused throughout hegemonic masculinity encourage men to internalize a rigid gender script that supports a limited idea of masculinity (Harper, 2012).

In *Becoming Human*, Jean Vanier (1998) wrote of a young man who, "cannot help but think that what he has been taught was the only way of being and living" (p. 44). These words reflected many of the college men with whom student affairs professionals work. Societies, including individuals, organizations, and systems, are influenced by the male perspective (Bannon & Correia, 2006; Byrne, 2006; Davis & Wagner, 2005; Edwards & Jones, 2009). Men were often placed in roles that society has defined for them (Kimmel, 2010; Landreau & Rodriguez, 2012). When one thinks of masculinity, thoughts of strength, power, fitness, aggression and stability were often associated as components of the term (Connell, 2005). Male bonding was based on the dominant

narrative, which included negative messages about women and a significant distinction from females (Harris & Struve, 2009). Anderson (2008) stated that traditional masculinity ideology also “...represent[s] a reverence for hegemonic masculinity through institutionalizing, gender-segregated, racially exclusive, sexist, and highly homophobic masculine peer culture” (p. 604). The sentence “One was not born, but rather becomes, a woman” was the opening line of Book II in de Beauvoir’s book *Second Sex* (1949). This historically powerful and groundbreaking work was used to support her argument that femininity does not develop based on differences on biology, intelligence or psychology. Rather, femininity was a construction of the society one lives in. Essentially, a woman learned her role, her situation and men. Kimmel and Messner (2007) suggested “[T]o be a man was to participate in social life as a man, as a gendered being. Men are not born; they are made. And men make themselves, actively constructing their masculinities within a social and historical context” (p. xvi). Sociologist Kaufman (1987) asserted there was fragility in masculinity. He claims:

Masculinity was power. But masculinity was terrifyingly fragile because it does not really exist in the sense we are led to think it exists; that was, as a biological reality – something real that we have inside ourselves. It exists as ideology; it exists as scripted behavior; it exists within ‘gendered’ relationships. But in the end it was just a social institution with a tenuous relationship to that with which it supposed to be synonymous: our maleness, our biological sex. (p. 7)

Traditional masculine ideology has impacted a societal level but also has a great impact on individual men (Johnson, 1997). According to Johnson (1997), “a society was patriarchal to the degree that it was male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centered”

(p. 5). Men attending college arrived on campus with a number of issues negatively related to traditional masculine ideology. Johnson added that men who grapple with gender-related issues connected with their masculinity often feel lost on college campuses. Kimmel (2008) discussed men's grappling of gender-related issues by relating it to directions, "If men have a difficult time asking for directions when they are lost driving in their cars, imagine what it feels like to feel lost and adrift on the highway of life" (p. 42). Many men avoided seeking help (Heasley & Crane, 2003) which was correlated with loneliness and isolation (Blazina, 2008), along with shame, hostility and mental health concerns (Jones, 2009 & Rodriguez, 2010). Caruthers (2006) added that traditional masculine ideology also correlated to power and privilege dynamics that control and create dominant constructs regarding women's bodies and sexual health, along with perpetuating hegemonic ideology with beliefs around sexism and racism (Wade & Rochelen, 2013). Harmful and negative attitudes towards gay men (hooks, 2000) and views surrounding relationship violence (Katz, 2013) have also been attributed to a traditional masculinity ideology. Research indicates that when men align themselves with traditional masculinity ideologies negative consequences can occur not only to the individual, but to others and to society as a whole (Quevillon & Banks, 2006)

**Hegemonic dominance.** College men's gender was regulated based on a gendered nature of power and privilege. Connel (2001) suggested:

Hegemonic masculinity was hegemonic not just in relation to other masculinities, but in relation to the gender order as a whole. It was an expression of the privilege men collectively have over women. The hierarchy of masculinities was an



expression of the unequal shares in that privilege held by different groups of men.

(p. 209)

The active construction of masculinities created a dynamic gender order that establish a regulation of men's communication and interpersonal relationships (Connell 2005). Messner (2007) examined the regulation of men by other men by stating that "social systems are constantly being created, contested, and changed, both in the relationships and power struggles between men and women, and in the relationships and power struggles between men" (p. 18).

A study found that men continually displayed signs of restrictive emotionality, which can be dysfunctional (Cuyjet, 2006; Kaschak, 1992; Katz, 2006). An additional study found that college men placed value on hierarchical thinking over systemic thinking. This type of thinking avoids thinking about, being inclusive of and responding to other's thoughts and feelings (Washington & Wall, 2006). Student affairs practitioners must critically consider dominant discourse around hegemony as they create programming for men to help foster and build authentic interpersonal relationships. A critical paradigm suggested in order to discuss masculinity, one must always situate it in relation to hegemony – "the power, privilege, and patriarchy that men have had and sustained over women and men who do not live up to or subscribe to the dominant discourse" (Donaldson, 1993, p. 38). Donaldson also summarized hegemonic masculinity using scholars in the field of masculinity studies. Hegemonic masculinity, particularly as it appears in the works of (hooks, 2012; Jones, 2009; Kaufman, 1987; Kimmel & Bridges, 2011; Nardi, 1992) involved a specific strategy for the subordination of women. In their view, hegemonic masculinity concerns the dread of and the flight from women:

A culturally idealized form, it was both a personal and a collective project, and was the common sense about breadwinning and manhood. It was exclusive, anxiety-provoking, internally and hierarchically differentiated, brutal, and violent. It was pseudo-natural, tough, contradictory, crisis-prone, rich, and socially sustained. While centrally connected with the institutions of male dominance, not all men practice it, though most benefit from it. Although cross-class, it often excludes working class and black men. It was a lived experience, and an economic and cultural force, and dependent on social arrangements. It was constructed through difficult negotiation over a life-time. Fragile it may be, but it constructs the most dangerous things we live with. Resilient, it incorporates its own critiques, but it was, nonetheless, unraveling. (p.4)

Therefore, student affairs practitioners must understand the concept of hegemony refers to the “cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life and the dominant discourse of masculinity was one that was rooted in hegemony” (Connell, 2005, p. 11).

**Gender role strain.** As Harris and Struve (2009) identified, masculinity was performed by men for men. Being identified as a man and being seen as the quintessential man can take the highest priority, even to the point where emotional and mental health needs are ignored or not attended to (Capraro, 2004). Oftentimes based on the policing of gender, “Males seek the approval of other males, both identifying with and competing against them” (Harris, 2011, p. 15). Hegemonic patriarchal systems placed men in roles already defined for them, and if they didn’t live up to the perceived expectations of what it means to be a man, a gender role strain exists, which produced cultural expectations

that can cause damage and trauma to a man (Kimmel, 2008). Moreover, hooks (2004) wrote about the trauma caused and enacted by gender role strain:

Men do oppress women. People are hurt by rigid sexist role patterns. These two realities coexist. Male oppression of women cannot be excused by the recognition that there are ways men are hurt by rigid sexist roles. Feminist activists should acknowledge that hurt, and work to change it—it exists. It does not erase or lessen male responsibility for supporting and perpetuating their power under patriarchy to exploit and oppress women in a manner far more grievous than the serious psychological stress and emotional pain caused by male conformity to rigid sexist role patterns. (p. 78)

The idea of masculinity that was based on men perpetuating the idea of social hierarchies, physical prowess, sexual achievement and occupational achievement keeps systems in place for men to stereotype and judge one another (Harris & Struve, 2009). Pleck (1974) asserted that “violating gender role stereotypes was common and can lead to social condemnation and negative evaluation from others” (p. 21). Pleck (1974) made the assumption that “not conforming to these standards has negative consequences for self-esteem and other outcomes reflecting psychological well-being because of negative self-judgments” (p. 21). Therefore, a man who does not meet the expectations of the traditional masculinity ideology faced damage and trauma by being seen as unworthy by other men; oftentimes not living up to the standards of manhood and being viewed as weak. hooks (2004) claims “Men learn to cover up their rage, their sense of powerlessness” (p. 138).

**College men and conflicting ideals.** Dancy (2011) indicated college men perform masculinity for their peers, often acting as if they do not care about academics or relationships, because they believe this will make them look more masculine. College men represented conflicting ideals because they “are more likely than female college students to present themselves with a disorganized academic self-presentation” (Dancy, 2011, p. 479). Additionally, Dancy (2011) found “men with pronounced masculine attributes who present themselves as unconcerned about academic performance to be more socially attractive and more masculine than men who were concerned about test performance” (p. 486). College men often experience conflict within their identity based on the policing of gender exhibited by other men. Miville, Darlington, Whitlock & Mulligan (2005) explain “racial and gender identity statuses that reflect conflict or confusion are significantly related to ego identity statuses reflecting crisis or confusion” (p. 162). Men are expected to act as if academics are not a priority, and the focus should be on parties and avoiding emotions. Normative should’s and should not’s are used in regulating behavior. Male college students fell into a dejection-related affect and agitation-related affect (Kilianski, 2003).

**Invisibility of male gender.** According to Michael Kaufman (2011), college men often thought of themselves as “genderless, as if gender did not matter in the daily experiences of our lives. We see the biological sex of individuals, but we rarely understood the ways in which gender – that complex of social meanings that was attached to biological sex – was enacted in our daily lives” (p. x). Kaufman went on to claim in his explanation of the invisibility of gender “we treat male political figures as if masculinity were not even remotely in their consciousness as they do battle in the political arena”

(2001, p. xxi). The same argument was applied to men in leadership positions, athletes and other male dominated arenas on a college campus.

Bannon and Correia (2006) explained that gender has remained synonymous with women. Programmatic efforts and gender-related policies were rarely inclusive of men on college campuses. The male side of programming often surrounds conversations about men's role in eliminating oppression and providing equity for women. Bannon and Correia (2006) asserted:

Student activities, resources, and courses offered on 'gender' are almost always about rape and sexual assault, empowering and protecting the rights of women, and illuminating consciousness of women's experiences around the world.

Though each was undeniably essential, they are examples of how gender was misused as a substitute for women. (p. 5)

Furthermore, when colleges do not plan programs that actually teach men that they have a gender too they miss an opportunity which allowed men to perpetuate the hegemonic norms social constructs. The result was that these men were allowed to avoid recognition of their own gender identity and their role within power and privilege constructs (Bannon & Correia, 2006). Furthermore, when colleges do not plan programs to teach men about recognizing and understanding their gender identity, a missed opportunity occurred because "gender was relational, the status of women cannot be improved without a corresponding emphasis on tending to the social forces that misshape men's attitudes and behaviors and helping them develop productive masculinities" (Bannon & Correia, 2006, p. 5).

**Developing relationships.** Rigid gender scripts college men receive during socialization correlates with fractured and negative relationships with other men (Johnson, 2001). hooks (2004) contended:

To create loving men, we must love males. Loving maleness was different from praising and rewarding males for living up to sexist-defined notions of male identity. Caring about men because of what they do for us was not the same as loving males for simply being. When we love maleness, we extend our love whether males are performing or not. Performance was different from simply being. In patriarchal culture males are not allowed simply to be who they are and to glory in their unique identity. Their value was always determined by what they do. In an anti-patriarchal culture males do not have to prove their value and worth. They know from birth that simply being gives them value, the right to be cherished and loved. (p. 39)

When a man was not allowed to live an authentic life, he was unable to interact and engage authentically with other males. Research produced by O'Neil and Casper (2011) identified the need to value differences. The researchers stated "mature interpersonal relationships imply appreciating individual differences and having capacities for human intimacy with others. Numerous masculinity concepts negatively affected developing mature relationships" (O'Neil & Casper, 2011, p. 31). O'Neil and Casper (2011) further asserted that masculinity concepts affecting college men include: "antifemininity norms, power over women, dominance, playboy, disdain for homosexuals, avoidance of femininity, fear and hatred of homosexuals, nonrelational attitudes toward sex, subordination of women, success/power/competition, restrictive affectionate behavior

between men, dominance, and aggression” (p. 31). When men are confined to performing rigid gender scripts based this type of socialization, it marginalized others while also creating hostile environments and negative attitudes for others (O’Neil & Casper, 2011). hooks comments on the issue of marginalization that men face with regard to authenticity and the marginalization they place on others when she wrote “if they dared to love us, in patriarchal culture they would cease to be real men” (hooks, 2004, p. 3).

Kimmel (2010) suggested that college men who fail to contest traditional masculinity ideologies often times do not have the capacity for intimacy in developing relationships with other college men. O’Neil and Casper (2011) claimed “intimacy in mature relationships implies making commitments based on honesty, responsiveness, and unconditional positive regard. Intimacy did not imply dominance or dependency but the development of interdependence between two equals. There was an acceptance of each other’s flaws and personal assets and a commitment to long term relationships that last through difficulties and separations” (p. 32). Research produced by Kimmel and Messner (1992) states:

The important fact of men’s lives was not that they are biological males, but that they become men. Our sex may be male, but our identity as men was developed through a complex process of interaction with the culture in which we both learn the gender scripts appropriate to our culture and attempt to modify those scripts to make them more palatable. (p. xx)

The words by Kimmel and Messner (2007) helped to provide an accurate portrait of the developmental journey college men take as they search for a masculine identity that

either supports or negates building interpersonal relationships with other males (Laker & Davis, 2011).

### **Power Relationships**

Hegemonic masculinity was viewed as masculinity which asserts power over women and other men. Institutionalized forms of power were seen in government positions, U.S. corporations, school administration and law firms. Essentially, hegemony ensures power relations for a group that gains and sustains the prominent position in social situations (Connell, 2005). Kimmel (2013) noted many men actually view themselves as powerless: “These are the feelings that come inevitably from the discontinuity between the social and the psychological, between the aggregate analysis that reveals how men are in power as a group and the psychological fact that they do not feel powerful as individuals” (Kimmel, 2013, p. 29). Some men feel little to no power when they are alone versus when they are in a group. The dimension of power was impacted by individual or group dynamics (Kimmel, 2013). Philosopher Hannah Arendt (1970) explained “power corresponds to the human ability not just to act but to act in concert. Power was never the property of an individual; it belonged to a group and remains in existence only so long as the group keeps together” (p. 18). Furthermore, Kimmel (2008) wrote about the power of masculine identities:

Our culture’s definition of masculinity was thus several stories at once. It was about the individual man’s quest to accumulate those cultural symbols that denote manhood, signs that he has in fact achieved it. It was about those being used against women to prevent their inclusion in public life and their consignment to a devalued private sphere. It was about the differential access that different types of



men have to those cultural resources that confer manhood and about how each of those groups then develop their own modifications to preserve and claim their manhood. It was about the power of these definitions themselves to serve to maintain the real-life power that men have over women and some men have over other men. (p. 125)

This would support research conducted by Harper (2012) that suggests individually men feel conflicted regarding their masculine identity but when surrounded by other men feel powerful, dominant and in charge. According to Kimmel (2012), an overwhelming majority of men in the United States were disempowered from their masculine identity due to the oppression and discrimination of marginalized identities such as race, ethnicity, age, sexuality or class. Exclusionary practices were used by those men who identify within the hegemony to relegate disempowered men into the margins (Kimmel, 2010). According to psychiatrist Fromm (1973), the experience of manhood was being consumed by men who identified as feeling powerless:

Man's awareness of himself as being in a strange and overpowering world, and his consequent sense of impotence could easily overwhelm him. If he experienced himself as entirely passive, a mere object, he would lack a sense of his own will, of his identity. To compensate for this, he must acquire a sense of being able to do something, to move somebody, to 'make a dent'. In studying depressions and boredom one can find rich material to show that the sense of being condemned to ineffectiveness, i.e. to complete vital impotence was one of the most painful and almost intolerable experiences, and man will do almost anything to overcome it, from drug and work addiction to cruelty and murder. (p. 2)

## **Homophobia and Sexism**

Masculine gender performance allows sexism, homophobia and aggression to be codified because of the abhorrence to femininity. Manhood was often thought of as a quality that an individual does or does not possess. Men watched each other, perform for each other, rank each other and grant each other the acceptance into the established hierarchy of manhood (Kimmel, 2010). According to poet Robert Bly (1990), “The structure at the bottom of the male psyche was still as firm as it was twenty thousand years ago” (p. 230). Many men were taught to prove themselves worthy of acceptance by other men. David Leverenz (1991) stated “ideologies of manhood have functioned primarily in relation to the gaze of male peers and male authority” (p. 769). Kimmel asserted the conflict that men live in creates a fear – one where men are afraid of each other. Kimmel (1994) claimed this fear was the “great secret of American Manhood” (p. 125). Men were in a constant state of conflict, trying to navigate how they respond to specific situations and people while avoiding showing emotions which may cause them to be considered less manly (Harris, 2011). This constant state of conflict affected how they interact with women and how they refer to women with their peers (Harper, 2012). Males were more likely to adopt stereotypically masculine behaviors such as speaking about women and sex in objectifying ways and focusing on physical attributes in order to impress their peers to gain acceptance and to avoid being seen as unmanly (Sallee, 2011). Brod and Kaufman (1994) described the fear of being seen unmanly this way:

Being seen as unmanly was a fear that propels American men to deny manhood to others, as a way of proving the unprovable – that one was fully manly.

Masculinity becomes a defense against the perceived threat of humiliation in the eyes of other men, enacted through a ‘sequence of postures’ – things we might say, or do, or even think, that, if we thought carefully about them, would make us ashamed of ourselves. (p. 135)

Additionally, many college men framed masculinity in regard to gender objectification. Many college men viewed women as objects to elevate their statuses and reputations as men among their peers. Respect was given to men by other men based on their involvement in a “hook up” culture. Women were only there to use for sex and the more sex men had, the more masculine they were seen (Sallee, 2011). The phenomenon of objectifying women was also continued with the emergence of social media sites. Sallee (2011) shared an example that stated “one time, like four of us were all just going through people on Facebook and running them down, like head to toe, and say well, you know I don’t like her face. Her forehead was too big; her hair was nappy or whatever. She has some buck teeth. She’s got some big tits, she’s got a big ass, she’s got a small ass, small tits” (p. 417). Based on traditional notions of masculinity, men often felt the need to make explicit remarks about women in order to avoid being policed by other men (Harris, 2011).

Men have learned to prove themselves through positionality, power, wealth, status, and with conquests with women. All of this, as indicated by Kimmel (2010) was done in front of other men. Most men did not compare themselves to women. Kilianski (2003) addressed the concept of a possible aversion to femininity which could potentially

perpetuate the traditional framework of masculinity that was based on an unconscious fear of femininity. Kilianski (2003) explored:

Targets for whom gender-inconsistent role and trait information are provided are thought more likely to be homosexual. Heterosexual masculinity may be equated with not appearing to be homosexual or with the expression of homophobic attitudes. Therefore, heterosexual men's prejudice against gay men may plausibly be linked to aversion to femininity in the self. (p.3)

Homophobia was also a crucial element in the construct of masculinity.

Homophobia was much greater than the fear of gay men or even the fear of being perceived gay (Kimmel, 2010). Homophobia was the fear of humiliation. It was the fear that another man would emasculate you, dominate you in front of other men and reveal to the world that you are not as strong as you pretend to be (Blumenfeld, 1992; Kellom, 2004; Kellom and Groth, 2010; Kimmel, 2010). Failing to take home a woman from the bar, to score the needed points in the game, to be initiated into the fraternity, or showing emotion can result in being excluded from the group of men one was performing masculinity for and ultimately becoming shunned for not measuring up to the set standards of masculinity. Terms associated with fear of femininity, such as being called a "pussy" or "fag", were used by men to regulate others during the manhood process (Kimmel, 2008). Kilianski (2003) indicated the use of slurs, often associated with feminine connotations, are used to further uphold a social hierarchy and sustain hegemony. Hegemony was deconstructed through the use of Nelson's (2013) definition of heteronormativity:

Simply put, heteronormativity was an institutionalized ideology that positions heterosexuality, heterosexual identity, and heterosexual sexual practices as normal, natural, and universal. As a form of hegemony, heteronormativity or sometimes called “heteronormative heterosexuality” must continually reproduce itself in order to maintain its hegemony over non-normative sexual identities and practices. (p. 11)

Slurs are used to reinforce and regulate masculinity and boundaries are put in place to combat the fear of appearing feminine (Kimmel, 1987; Kimmel, 2008; Ludeman, 2011; Peralta, 2007; Pharr, 1988; Powell, 2003). In his research, Kilianski (2003) explored the diatribe that was often directed towards men by other men such as “what kind of tackle was that, Remko? You’re a pussy, a goddamn pussy! No, you’re worse than that ... you’re a faggot, a goddamn fag” (p.3). The epithets mentioned in the quote were directed at a high school football player by his coach but many men could relate to experiencing similar encounters with men who are meant to serve as a “paragon of masculinity, the quintessential man’s man, after whom many cohorts modeled their own personae” (p. 5). Kilianski indicated that the gap in existing knowledge surrounds the psychological mechanisms that underlie the relationships and influence the behavior.

Many men lived in fear they will be perceived as anything less than strong; anything that was considered less than the hegemonic ideal of what was masculine. Howe (2016) states: “Heterosexuality’s power lies in perception, not physical truth – as long as people think you’re exclusively attracted to the right gender, you’re golden. But perception was a precarious thing; a ‘zero-tolerance’ policy has taught men that the way people think of them can change permanently with one slip, one little kiss or too-intimate

friendship. And once lost, it was impossible to reclaim” (p. 1). For many college men, perception was everything and living up to the masculine stereotype, even if it was a myth, was what so many strive to do. Howe (2016) goes on to assert “the zero-tolerance policy was legitimately scary, then, not just because it sticks you with a label, but also because it erases a lifetime of straightness” (p. 1). Some college men’s irrational fears that if they are too close to a man, they will be perceived as gay or feminine. Dilley, (2010) stated “homosexual and feminine are parallel concepts and are negative in reference to masculine identity” (p. 20).

To that end, stereotyping was consequence that men use to police masculinity. As one college student mentioned, “If someone confronted me about being gay, I would fight up and down and tooth and nail that I’m straight” (Patton, 2011, p. 88). Few men actually believed they meet all the standards for masculinity and due to their insecurities, few college men actually believe they meet expectations that other college men have of them (Capraro, 2004). In order to avoid the slurs, damage, trauma and stereotyping, men often engaged in acts considered to be masculine which include underage drinking, unsafe sex practices with women, sports and fighting (Kimmel, 2008).

### **Schools and Socialization**

Undoubtedly schools played a critical role in the socialization of masculine identity development (Ferguson, 2003). Kimmel (2008) suggested boys learn to subscribe to hegemonic masculinity from an early age which begins the disturbing trend of underachievement in the K-12 education system and ultimately accompanies them to post-secondary institutions. Nelson (2013) suggested: “As with other institutions in American society, the institution of education consciously and unconsciously, willfully

and unwittingly, reproduces the ideology of heteronormativity in both macro and micro ways” (p. 12). Boys and men were taught through the lived realities of heteronormativity in the classroom to diminish emotion and take on the mask of hegemonic manhood.

Kimmel (2008) reports:

From elementary school to high school boys have lower grades, lower class rank, and fewer honors than girls. They’re 50% more likely to repeat a grade in elementary school, one-third more likely to drop out of high school, and about six times more likely to be diagnosed with attention deficit and hyperactivity disorder. (p. 65)

Data from national sources cited the numerous gender-related problems that boys and young men under the age of 25 face in society. The United State Census Bureau, (2005) found that boys were three times more likely to be enrolled in a special education class than the typical girl and that 14% of 18– to 24- year-old males were high school dropouts. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2007) added that 16% of school-age boys had been diagnosed with an attention deficit disorder and three times as many boys were expelled from public schools compared to girls (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). In addition, 12% of high school boys reported being threatened or injured with a weapon on school property (Centers for Disease Control, 2007).

These trends also continued as students entered into postsecondary institutions. Sax (2008) reported that a significantly disproportionate number of males compared to females had gone through universities’ conduct review system because of problematic behavior and college men compared to women spend more time partying, skipping

classes, and watching television. Sax added that a national study concluded that 14% of college men reported depression in the past school year and that on average, college men consumed 8.41 drinks per week compared to women's 3.62 drinks per week. In separate studies conducted by Fisher, Cullen, and Turner (2002) as well as Hong (2000) Peralta (2007), Schrock and Schwalbe (2009) 25% of college men reported engaging in some type of sexual assault. hooks (2004) supported the studies conducted by Fisher, et al. (2002) as she asserted "little boys learn early in life that sexuality was the ultimate proving ground where their patriarchal masculinity will be tested" (p. 79).

Nationally, men accounted for 75% of deaths of people between the ages of 15 and 24 and five times as many 15 to 24-year-old males commit suicide when compared to females (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2007). Sallee (2011) also found that 95% of state and federal prisoners under the age of 25 are male. This data suggested that many young men face significant problems during the first 25 years of life and that men are not coping with these problems.

A common theme identified in the research was that men incorporate alcohol into the construct of what it means to be a man. Many college men saw a direct correlation between performing masculinity in front of other peers and alcohol use. Among White men alcohol use was found to symbolize the embodiment of hegemonic masculinity (Peralta, 2007). The notion of identifying what was considered acceptable masculine identity includes trying to impress, perform and outdo each other with risky and dangerous levels of drinking. Peralta (2007) also indicated that men rate one another on the range of masculinity with "relevance of drinking too little or not at all, which symbolized weakness, homosexuality, or femininity" (p. 741).



**College males and retention.** There has been a decline in the rates of men attending college compared to women during the last 20 years (Sax, 2008). Nationally, only 43% of undergraduate students are male (Cardenas, 2007). The first year of college was critical for men and once they arrive at college, men depend on their male peers to identify to them what was acceptable in terms of masculinity. Decisions were unresolved as to whether they will leave or stay and grades are impacted based on disorganized academics (Tinto, 2006). Harper and Harris (2010) explained that contemporary issues facing men on college campuses include lower rates of enrollment, persistence, and graduation in comparison to college women. Additionally, they found that men held fewer leadership positions, were disengaged in educational experiences, and were overrepresented as judicial offenders on college campuses (Harper & Harris, 2010).

The contemporary issues men face in college can lead to lower rates of enrollment, persistence, and graduation (Barefoot, 2008). Traditional notions of masculinity caused gender-related issues which impact student retention in a negative manner. Gender was correlated to retention, with 30% identified as men and 70% being female (Barefoot, 2005; Tinto, 2006). Men have experienced fewer gains than women in post-secondary education and research indicates definite disparities in enrollment, persistence and degree attainment for college men (Strayhorn, 2009). According to Tinto (2006):

To be serious about student retention, institutions would recognize that the roots of attrition lie not only in their students and the situations they face, but also in the very character of the educational settings, now assumed to be natural to higher education, in which they ask students to learn. (p. 2)

Therefore, students were more likely to persist and graduate in settings that provide academic, social, and personal support. Most students, especially those in their first year of college, require some form of support. This was especially true of men, who have the tendency to avoid seeking out opportunities for support. Some required academic assistance, while others needed social or personal support. Personal or social support programs should be structured to help meet the needs of male college students and help them understand their identity development. Support may be provided in structured forms such as in summer bridge programs, mentor programs, and student clubs or it may arise in the everyday workings of the institution such as in student contact with faculty and staff (Tinto, 2006).

Laker and Davis (2011) provides critical commentary on the issue of college men and retention:

As one of the few rites of passage existing for young adults, college attainment, retention, and completion trends suggest an emerging crisis of identity for American men. One of the fundamental missions of student affairs staff was to facilitate the developmental transition of students from adolescence to adulthood. Since fewer men are coming to college, this removes an additional opportunity for men's guidance through maturity. (p. 66)

In order to retain males enrolled in postsecondary education, Barone and Harris (2011) explained that institutions of higher education are going to have to understand:

The lived experiences of college men necessitate our attention and enhanced capacity for better understanding the impacts of hegemonic masculinity on all students. Hegemonic masculinity was the virtually unattainable privileged model

of living life as a man. The perpetuation of this as the ultimate way to enact masculinity adversely impacts all of society as individuals knowingly and unknowingly contribute to its potency and are influenced by the sociocultural scripts teaching us how it was performed. (p. 50)

Student affairs practitioners need to collaborate with academic affairs faculty to help to develop programming that will actually keep the interest of men and keep them returning. Typically, these types of programs occurred within the “first six weeks of school and entice men to continue to attend these types of programs or events that focus on their identity while they still want to attend” (Ludeman, 2011, p. 9). Learning about the male experience was a critical component to the success of this goal for the student affairs professional (Laker & Davis, 2011). Student affairs practitioners needed to be aware of how to create spaces on campus that allow men to seek the support that was needed without feeling as if their masculinity was in jeopardy for doing so (Laker & Davis, 2011). Intentional thought needed to be considered when developing these resources that will enhance student affairs professionals’ ability to respond to the needs of male students and particular focus will need to address the gender experience of men (Laker & Davis, 2011). College males were not taught the skills of introspection and self-reflection and fail to engage in the critical work of examining their own identity while also reflecting on the impact of their identity on those around them, including the systemic effects male and white privilege (McIntosh, 2015).

**Implications for student affairs and higher education practice.** In order for college-aged men to make healthier choices that will impact their college experiences in safer, less harmful ways, these men will need to be challenged and supported by faculty

and staff on their campuses (Capraro, 2004; Courtenay, 1998, 2011; Harper & Harris, 2010; Kellom, 2004; Kimmel, 2008; Laker & Davis, 2011). How do administrators make issues of masculinity and manhood central to the work that was done in student affairs? How do student affairs build programs that impact men in a way that allows them to go inward and engage in the necessary introspection and self-reflection around these issues? O'Neil and Casper (2011) brazenly state, "If we gave a letter grade to student affairs for their programming for men over the last three decades... a C- would probably be very generous" (p. 17). Laker and Davis (2011) asserted:

The student affairs field must concede an inability to address male student development, or it needs to confront a vacuum in the knowledge about male identity development. Neither the graduate preparation programs nor the workplace of new student affairs professionals are filling this knowledge gap.  
(p.68)

Therefore, student affairs administrators must admonish the false assumption that "boys will be boys" which reinforced the repudiation of college men's issues (O'Neil & Casper, 2011). When faculty and staff in higher education allowed for men's misbehavior to be chalked up to gender expectations, it mistakenly leads to notion that this behavior was acceptable and perpetuates a cycle that allows for hegemonic masculinity to continue (Harris & Barone, 2011). It was important to recognize that in helping men to understand their gender, this will in turn support the gender equity for women. Moreover, Harper and Harris (2010) indicated "because gender was relation, the status of women cannot be improved without a corresponding emphasis on tending to the social forces that misshape men's attitudes and behaviors and helping them develop productive masculinities" (p. 5).

In order for student affairs practitioners to make a connection with students on our campuses, one area to look at was how we educate around the bystander approach. According to Katz (2006), a bystander refers to someone who was:

Not directly involved as a perpetrator or victim of an act of sexual harassment or violence, but was indirectly involved as a friend or family member. A bystander can also be a member of a group, team, workplace, or any other social unit. The aim in focusing on bystanders was to empower them to speak up – and not to be silent and complicit – in the face of abusive behavior. (p. 116)

By utilizing a bystander approach in effective programming, student affairs practitioners taught students the need to care and intervene as an act of citizenship and engagement. Student affairs practitioners utilized the bystander approach to teach citizenship and responsibility as a way to interrupt harmful behaviors exhibited by men towards other men and women. A bystander approach can be introduced as an act of responsibility such as when students are in party environments where alcohol was involved and men engage in sexual activities without receiving consent or at bars where arguments can quickly turn into acts of physical aggression. Katz (2006) asserted:

Clearly, a lot of men are uncomfortable with other men's behaviors, but they have not figured out what to do about it – or have not yet mustered the courage to act on their own. So there was great potential to increase dramatically the number of men who commit personal time, money and institutional clout to the effort to reduce men's violence. But in order to achieve this we need to think outside the box about how to reach into the mainstream of male culture and social power. (p. 255)

Therefore, intentional work must be done on university campuses to engage men to commit their personal time, energy and efforts to examine their interpersonal relationships with other men and how their masculinity impacts those around them. Research shows that groups need to be created for men that specifically address male gender dynamics. The groups should develop rules and norms in the very beginning stages of meeting in order to develop inclusive, safe and confidential groups (de Viser, 2009). Intentional activities should be developed so the college men participating in these groups can build foundations of trust with one another that are guilt and shame free (Harris & Harper, 2008).

Edwards and Jones (2009) identified that traditional masculinity ideology suggests men have to be naturally good at everything rather than developing competence in the area through practice. Davis and Wagner (2005) asserted that college men believe they are responsible for always showing independence and are to never be seen as vulnerable – this mentality prevents men from seeking the physical and mental health services they need. Programs that addressed male issues needed to be inclusive of the services men need to seek and provide them with information about these services in a safe space. The space needed to incorporate techniques that help teach men how to develop authentic communication with one another and help men reject the prescribed notions of masculinity which can influence dangerous behaviors. Katz (2006) suggested these spaces need to have curriculums and methods to help men dig deep and to have the courage to look inward:

A key requirement for men was their willingness to examine their own attitudes and behaviors about women, sex and manhood. This was similar to the sort of

introspection required of anti-racist whites. It was not an easy process, especially when men start to see that they have inadvertently perpetuated sexism and violence through their personal actions, or their participation in sexist practices in male culture. Because defensiveness was the enemy of introspection, it was vital that men develop ways to transcend their initial defensive reactions toward a place where they are grounded enough to do something about it. (p. 260)

## **Summary**

This chapter presented a review of literature that examines and provides provocation against the notions of hegemonic forms of gender/masculinity along with sexual/heteronormative identities specifically around adult male learners. The literature review was bound together and provided a knowledge production for those involved in this study to engage in queering masculinities across the sphere of adult male learners. This literature framed an analysis of how significant identities and identifications are made surrounding hegemonic masculinity. Additionally, the literature discussed gender as a performance and how it operates in the micro- and macro contexts.

The review of the literature provided support for this study by highlighting research about masculinity, and identifying the comprehensive study of masculinity—hegemonic or destabilized notions of hegemonic masculinity—should contemplate the political and theoretical impact the notion of queer masculinity adds to a more inclusive and nuanced appreciation of masculinity itself. The literature explained the theoretical framework utilized in this study and explores heteronormativity and develops the multiplicities of gender. Queer theorists reviewed in this chapter utilize the multiplicities in order to create space and distance from traditional binaries situated

around gender which creates a greater emphasis on agency. Hegemonic dominance appears to permeate through the multiple layers of constructs associated with masculinity and impacts gender role strain, socialization, power relations and homophobia. All of these issues then impact the success and retention rates of our adult male learners on college campuses across the nation.

As a student affairs professional, the adult male learners I work with challenge me to try and develop ways we can help them navigate their experiences with interpersonal relationships with their male peers. According to Smith (2012) the job of educators was to prepare students not to “be queer but rather to engage in queer bodily practices that enable them to disrupt the gender order while keeping a hold of a sense of self” (p. 13). Literature reviewed in this section helped aid this study by building upon the ideas of deconstructing traditional ideologies of masculinity and help foster an understanding of the need to retreat from traditional masculine roles in order to gain intimacy in male relationships. The literature reviewed in this chapter also helped foster an understanding of how student affairs professionals can help college men during the meaning making of their experiences with other men. The literature provided a lens which helps student affairs professionals grasp the perception that normative assumptions held by professors and administrators are unwarranted and augment the performance of heteronormative masculinity, creating institutionalized hegemonic dominance. According to Rodriguez (2012) “schools represent an opportunity to provide a setting where a broader menu can be introduced and gender/sexual meanings, expressions, and experiences boys and men encounter can create new possibilities of what it can mean to be male” (p. 263). As a student affairs professional, I must work with men to help process feelings of



vulnerability in a healthy way with one another. As Dr. Brene Brown (2010) states,  
“Vulnerability sounds like truth and feels like courage. Truth and courage aren't always comfortable, but they're never weakness” (p. 117).

May I be a Man  
Whose confidence comes from the depth of my giving  
Who understands that vulnerability was my greatest strength  
Who creates space rather than dominates it  
Who appreciates listening more than knowing  
Who seeks kindness over control  
Who cries when the grief was too much  
Who refuses the slap, the gun, the choke, the insult, the punch

May I not be afraid to get lost  
May I cherish touch more than performance  
and the experience more than getting there  
May I move slowly, not abruptly  
May I be brave enough to share my fear and shame  
and gather the other men to do the same  
May I stop pretending and open the parts of me that have long been numb  
May I cherish, respect and love my mother  
May the resonance of that love translate into loving all women and living things  
Love

- *The Man Prayer* by Eve Ensler

### **III. METHODS**

“Well, the tyranny of masculinity and the tyranny of patriarchy I think has been much more deadly to men than it has to women. It hasn't killed our hearts. It's killed men's hearts. It's silenced them; it's cut them off.”

- Eve Ensler

This chapter addressed the research questions presented in chapter one and describes the methods used throughout this study. The methodology, in this particular study, empowered adult male learners to fully examine how they make meaning of their masculine identity based on their perceptions and the perceptions of their peers in addition discovering who they are while creating change in their relationships with one another. The goal of this study was to add to the literature existing around adult male learners by producing information that can assist those working in higher education as they work to retain and help college men towards matriculation. This dissertation implemented a queer theory methodology design to examine manhood and masculinity as they relate to perception and relationship building with males. In order to do this, dominant power structures were questioned and a critical paradigm allowed for an understanding of positionality in relation to social structures.

#### **Qualitative Inquiry**

Examining the meanings that participants make of their lived experiences in order to better understand a particular situation, group dynamic, event, or interaction was the primary intent of qualitative research (Creswell, 1998). Merriam (1998) described the purpose of qualitative research as understanding the meaning attributed to individuals' experiences. The focus on the meaning people attribute to their experiences was on the

process rather than the outcome. Likewise, the intent of qualitative research was to study individuals' understanding of their experiences, not researchers' perceptions of individuals' experiences. Merriam (1998) expanded on qualitative research by stating: "Drawing from a long tradition in anthropology, sociology, and clinical psychology, qualitative research has, in the last twenty years, achieved status and visibility in the social sciences and helping professions" (p. 3).

Researchers use multiple practices when exploring the concepts of how meaning was made (Merriam, 1998). Qualitative research was grounded in constructivism with reality being constructed by individuals as they interact within a certain environment (Merriam, 1998). The intent of basic qualitative research was to understand the meaning individuals have attached to a certain phenomenon they have experienced (Merriam, 1998). Merriam (1998) stated that researchers conducting basic qualitative research would be primarily interested in "(1) how people interpret their experiences, (2) how they construct their worlds, and (3) what meaning they attribute to their experiences" (p. 23). Qualitative research was also identified as research that results in data not produced through statistical means or other procedures of quantification (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). With qualitative study, the researcher attempted to understand the phenomena without attempting to manipulate the phenomenon of interest (Patton, 2002).

There was limited study in the area of adult male learners negotiating the regulation of their masculinity from a queer theory lens. Due to the limited study, this provided the researcher the ability to conduct the study through a qualitative design because there was little data to explain this phenomenon. This study strove to grasp and

make meaning of the experiences of the adult male learners involved through their insights and perspectives.

Qualitative research involves a great deal of time and commitment because the researcher has to engage with the participants in the study (Patton, 2002) since qualitative research tells a story (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, Patton (2002) asserted the researcher can be considered an instrument throughout the study because of how the data was collected. As the researcher, I made no attempt to alter the phenomenon being studied and did not manipulate the setting in order to examine the study (Patton, 2002).

Additionally, a qualitative approach was best suited for this study because qualitative studies focus primarily on smaller sample sizes. Generally smaller sample sizes in qualitative studies allow for a more intentional sampling that aligns with the goals of the study in order to develop “insight about the phenomenon, not empirical generalization from a sample to a population” (Patton, 2002, p. 40). For this sample, I included five adult male learners enrolled at a large public university. Participants and sampling will be discussed further in the chapter.

### **Queer Theory Methodology**

Queer Theory provided the researcher with the theoretical lens to examine the notion of masculinity and its regulation based on the intersection of identities. For example, rather than just examining one identity, such as “man”, the researcher focused on multiple identities such as “Latino man”, “able-bodied man”, or “fraternity man” (Abes & Kasch, 2007). Qualitative research has been regarded as the “...study of people’s conscious experiences of their life-world” (Merriam, 2009, p. 25). My goal as a researcher was to understand male interpersonal relationships with other men and how

that impacts the notion of masculinity and manhood. I analyzed and interpreted the data that describes the shared experiences and lived realities of men surrounding the phenomena of the regulation of perception of masculinity. In order to utilize this type of research, I acknowledged, explored and interpreted my own experiences with the phenomena in order to account for my own personal lens. This process, known as *epoche*, assisted the researcher in gaining awareness of personal viewpoints and assumptions, suspending prior beliefs so the phenomena can be carefully researched (Merriam, 2009).

Furthermore, as I began conducting the literature review, it was evident gender-related incidents are having negative impacts on adult male learners at institutions of higher education across the country. Communities of adult male learners impacted by negative gender-related scripts are causing damage on a societal level. Therefore, as the researcher I chose a methodology that best served the purpose of this critical study. Many queer theorists argue, in concert with various feminist, gay, and lesbian scholars that normative understandings of sexuality and gender are central, organizing principles of society, social relations and social institutions and are designed to preserve this hegemonic ordering (Sedgwick, 2011; Sullivan, 2006).

While queer scholarship was most often interested in examining the experiences of sexual/gender minorities, some scholars argue for a ‘queering’ of heterosexual relations as well as including a rigorous analyses of the category of heterosexuality, its disciplinary processes and the heterosexist assumptions embedded in much social science scholarship (e.g. Butler, 2004; Chodorow, 1978; Dennis, 2012; Green, 2016; Gamson & Warner, 1993, Landreau & Rodriguez, 2012). ‘Queer research’ can be any form of

research positioned within conceptual frameworks that highlight the instability of taken-for-granted meanings and resulting power relations (Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007). Jackson (2001) stated:

Further, the nature of the ‘subject’ of research, previously envisioned as a unified, coherent and self-knowledgeable individual, was redrawn as contingent, multiple and unstable; constituted within historically, geographically and socially specific social relations. Seemingly fixed attributes of the self, such as sexuality and gender, are re-imagined as social constructs rather than biological certainties and their contingent appearance and interconnection taken as a matter of analysis and investigation. (p. 32)

For some, queer theory examined these realignments and then works to specifically unravel the normalized connections between gender and sexuality in order to make their contingent connections. As Murray (2008) asserted “the notion of queer asserts the multiplicity and fluidity of sexual subjects ... and seeks to challenge the processes which normalize and/or homogenize certain sexual and gender practices, relationships and subjectivities” (p. 99). Browne and Nash (2010) suggested for many queer scholars, effects of the heterosexual/homosexual, male/female binary ways of knowing of sexuality and gender and a must include alternative approaches that do not fit into the traditional hetero/homo categories. Additionally, queer theory literature explored a large developing body of interdisciplinary scholarship which focuses on the needs, lived realities and intersectional identities that disregard binaries and disrupt epistemological and methodological assumptions underpinning much of the work on gender and sexualities (Browne & Nash, 2010; Fausto-Sterling, 1985; Fisher, Cullen &

Turner, 2002; Flunder, 2005; Jackson, 2001; Murray, 2008; Taylor, 2014). Queer scholars have argued indeterminate subjectivities and for an interruption into traditional norms and practices in order to challenge heteronormative sexual and gender assumptions.

As Taylor (2014) argued “certain strands of queer theorizing, in rejecting a representational theory of ‘truth,’ use various forms of discourse and textual analyses to consider how power relations are constituted and maintained in the production of social and political meanings” (p. 85). By utilizing queer theory as the methodological framework for this study, the researcher was able to explore the ideas of ‘truth’ as it pertains to perceptions of masculinity with the adult male learners in this study. As a methodological framework, queer theory, allowed the researcher to explore how men incorporate or reject social and political constructions surrounding masculinity into their daily lives and how this impacts their perceptions of masculinity.

This study benefits from the specific model of Queer Theory as a means of accessing the world view of the adult male learners in this study. Queer theory deconstructs and provides an appropriate analysis of the dominant narratives that construct the participants’ realities (Gumbs, 2010). Using adult male learners in this study that have been raised in a society that reinforces heteronormativity, hypermasculinity and hegemony requires a methodology that facilitates an interruption to and an analysis of the world view that has been constructed for men and by men. By studying the adult male learners through Queer Theory, Gumbs (2010) asserted “this offers a rival model of production, interrupting a development timeline with the possibility for a radically

transformed society that their respective ‘cover stories’ would beg us forget” (p. 41).

Gumbs (2010) claimed that:

Queer temporality brings queer spatiality with it, pointing out that one can see the existence of queer time in queer spaces. Queer spaces are produced by queer practices and the existence of queer subcultures and alternative publics. I argue that the classrooms were queer spaces that they created in order to project their energy, views and concerns past their ‘here and now’. (p. 53)

Hegemonic masculinity was not a topic that was often examined, studied, discussed and deconstructed with college men. Queering this topic provides a space for adult male learners to examine their own meaning making and authenticity. Undertaking a qualitative study utilizing interviews and photo elicitation interviews (PEI) provided a queer space in order to address the concerns of the “here and now” surrounding masculinity for college men. Photo-elicitation was a concept that introduces a photograph as a means of research data into an interview (Harper, 2006).

Moreover, this study does not attempt to dialogue with the participants about the specific framework of the research methodology, however, the study design allows me to infuse the study to the degree appropriate with my participants and myself as an emerging researcher. This was especially true with the examination of intersectionality as referenced earlier. Gumbs (2010) goes on to argue queer theory “allows me to think critically about the legacies and limitations of the categories of intersection and margin that have been so instructive in anti-oppressive theoretical work” (p. 47).

Challenging dominant narratives and positionality, including intersectionality of identity was a welcome characteristic of this methodology. Gumbs (2010) stated:



Sebastian Margaret, a genderqueer disability activist who organizes around access and power, critiques the way that intersectionality was usually framed as some collection of ‘Tupperware boxes’ and instead argues for an understanding of multiplicity that resembles the tide, particular issues move to the foreground and others move to the background depending on the particular facet of oppression a multiply oppressed person was experiencing or responding to proactively. In other words, the ground that we stand on shifts, which was also a diasporic concern, highlighting the way that displacement, the violence of dispersal and queer relationships to the hegemony of the nation make the boundaries of political units and identities unstable. (p. 57)

Therefore, this methodology attempted to offer an interruption rather than a counternarrative. What happens when a college man, raised under hegemonic masculinity becomes a partner in a relationship, a father, a teacher or some type of public servant? This methodology allowed for an interruption to the lived realities of our adult male learners on college campuses and allows them to really inhabit a space of inquiry in order to deconstruct what it means to have their masculine identity regulated. This research claimed that dominant narratives reproduce our lived realities daily, however, according to Gumbs (2010) “we will remake it by remembering, and enacting the queer survival of a poetic difference in our reading” (p. 58).

### **Research Questions**

The research questions used in a qualitative study are important to consider. Moustakas (1994) believed that research questions have definite characteristics and should “reveal more fully the essence and meaning of human experiences... [and]

uncover the qualitative rather than the quantitative factors in behavior and experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 105). As a researcher, I tried to carefully select questions that would help to shape a natural flow and progression to this study and engage the participant to provide a rich source of answers. The overarching research question that guided this study was: How do college men negotiate the regulation of their masculinity? The supporting questions included:

1. How do college men’s perceptions of other men’s notions of masculinity shape their relationship with others?
2. How do college men interrupt or transgress the regulation of their masculinity?

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was twofold: to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of the adult male learner as they make meaning of how their masculinity was regulated and to understand the impact around the construct of masculinity and manhood as it relates to interpersonal relationships. To gain this understanding, a researcher develops the area of study that has been experienced by people and uses interviewing as a tool to describe their experiences. For the purpose of this study, the male experience at a large public institution of higher education located in the South will be used to facilitate the interviewing and the constructs of masculinity and manhood were introduced to the participants in order to gain insight and perspectives surrounding regulation. The purpose of this study was also to enable workplace learning for the student affairs professional in navigating the tensions surrounding male privilege based on hegemonic ideology and societal constructs and the emotional needs of adult male learners. This study examined

how adult male learners make meaning around issues of diversity, gender identity, privilege and power and other critical issues affecting their personal growth.

The declining rates of men attending college shows less engagement of men in academic and campus life and shows that men are choosing to take on fewer leadership roles as compared to women (Gamson, 2000; Harper, 2004) while in college. Masculinity identity development, behavior and interpersonal relationships exhibited by college men are important areas of focus for student affairs professionals as part of a retention initiative to help increase male success and to help foster male college student growth (Laker & Davis, 2011). Learning about the male experience was a critical component to the success of this goal for the student affairs professional (Laker & Davis, 2011). Data collected from this study will be used to aid student affairs administrators to help develop programs that will support emerging adult males to make meaning surrounding their identities in order to make significant contributions to their college campuses.

### **The Study**

The context for the study was a large, public, emerging research institution located in the Southern region of the United States. The university was a residential campus with over 6,000 students living on-campus that are considered emerging adult aged students (Tinto & Bok, 2006). Forty-two percent of the student population are ethnic minorities and forty-four percent of the overall student body population are men. Creswell (1998) explained “when qualitative researchers provide detailed descriptions of the setting...the results become more realistic and richer” (p. 192). The researcher used naturalistic approaches to inductively understand the experience of the emerging adult male learners in this context-specific setting. These naturalistic approaches allowed the

researcher to engage and make meaning of the data from participants in a natural setting where the phenomenon occurred (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

This university campus was a prime location to study masculinities, in relation to dominant power structures because of its large fraternity system, and the unique designation of HSI status. Harris (2010) stated that “literature on college men and masculinities suggest that these factors may have observable effects on male behavioral norms and the ways in which college men perform masculinities” (p. 301). Conducting the study and collecting the data in a place where the phenomenon occurred helped to ground the study and helped to establish trustworthiness and a level of comfort for the participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997).

### **Sample Selection of Study Participants**

In order to conduct a successful and thorough analysis of a phenomenon, the researcher must make sure to have information rich data (Patton, 2002). Creswell (1998) suggested using purposeful sampling to select the participants. Purposeful sampling required the researcher to select individuals “because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem in the study” (Creswell, 1998, p. 125). A chief purpose of qualitative research was to gather data by interacting and connecting with people who are impacted or affected by the phenomena under study (Morse, 2003). To this end, participants has an understanding and awareness of the issue that was being studied along with the ability to examine and evaluate their experiences (Morse, 2003). In this study the participants were chosen because they meet the required criteria of wanting to discuss their lived experiences and the reality of masculinity and manhood as it relates to their perceptions and relationships with other men.

Additionally, participants for this study were obtained through snowball sampling (Maxwell, 1996), which occurs when researcher selects some participants and then, while interviewing a participant was told about another participant who they decide to ask to participate in the study as well. As stated by Patton (2002), snowball sampling “seeks excellent or rich examples of the phenomenon of interest, but not highly unusual cases” (p. 234). Researchers who use purposeful sampling do not select an entire sample at the start of a study; instead they locate some participants who then refer them to other individuals (Merriam, 2009). A diverse group of five male undergraduate students were be used in this sample and participants were be full-time students age 18 and older who are in good academic standing across different class years. This study was interested in destabilizing notions of hegemony as masculinity was examined. Therefore, participants were including individuals that offer a broad range of complexities and intersecting identities that will support this study through learning across the lifespan including race, sexuality, military status, age, ability status, and academic classification.

### **Data Collection Sources**

While this study was not an ethnography, there are ethnography methods that was used in this study. For instance, the researcher incorporated secondary data analysis, record field notes and observations in addition to conducting various forms of informal and semi-structured interviewing.

**Interviews.** Corbin and Strauss (2008) identified the benefits of gathering multiple types of data to investigate a problem. Three data sources used in this inquiry: semi-structured interview (Patton, 2002) and photo-elicitation interview (Harper, 2002), and a brief demographics sheet (see Appendix A). The nature of the semi-structured

interview allowed for some fluidity within the interview process if emergent themes develop and need to be discussed.

In order to understand the meaning making process that participants used for their experiences, qualitative research often uses interviews. The researcher engaged the participants to examine their perceptions surrounding the notion of masculinity through a series of two interviews for the data collection of this study. Interview techniques used in qualitative research can help provide a deeper meaning of the lived experiences for the participant (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). A chief goal of the interview in qualitative research was to comprehend the interview topic from the perspective of the participant and grasp why the individual has that specific point of view (Josselson, 2006).

Interviewing was essential in qualitative research because it provided the very foundation and purpose the work that was being done in a qualitative study. A study was designed to decipher an essence of the experience. It was imperative that participants in qualitative studies experience the opportunity to engage in the process and share their unique perspectives and realities. The goal of interviewing in a qualitative study was not to “quantify or predict the experiences but to obtain the vivid and accurate renderings of the experiences” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 105).

Creswell (1998) stated interviewing offers the opportunity to obtain the in-depth information needed. Van Manen (1990) stated interviews serve to make the experiences very clear and in-depth. Interviews were a “means for exploring and gathering experimental narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomenon” (p.66). The interview also establishes a “conversational relation” (p. 66) between the researcher and the participant. As a

researcher, I felt interviews about the regulation of masculinity, dominant power structures and what it means to be a man in relation to other identities and locations afford me an opportunity to build a connection with my participants about the phenomena being studied. Seen as a conventional tool for qualitative research, the interview offered a comprehensive interaction between the researcher and participant (Barbour, 2008).

Throughout this process I used an interview guide developed for the study that supports an open-ended interview methodology of inquiry. The questions were developed by the researcher to elicit descriptions of the lived experiences rather than generalities, opinions or interpretations of the phenomena (Wertz, 2011). I strove to ensure that questions were carefully worded in order to maintain clarity. The researcher developed questions that would obtain specific information related to the research questions used in this study. Although semi-structure interviewing does not ordinarily assume exact same wording across interviews, participants in this study were asked similar questions and in some cases, probing was used when needed in order to gather rich data.

Individual interviews were audio-recorded and all audio-recorded content were secured in the researcher's home in a locked container in order to ensure confidentiality. Each participant was asked to complete an informed consent and verbally respond to interview questions. A general orientation for the participants in the study was provided by the researcher in order to provide participants with an explanation of the study, the process of the interviews and to establish trust amongst the group. With any data analysis the researcher organized "what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can figure out what you have learned and make sense of what you have experienced" (Glesne, 1992, p. 184). In order to make sense of the data gathered, I recognized that I needed to create an

orientation prior to the start of data collection that allowed the participants to fully understand the expectations of the study and create a comfortable atmosphere for their participation. Icebreakers and team builders were used during the orientation in order to have the participants engage with each other. My goal was to establish some familiarity with participants and with each other so they would feel comfortable in the individual interviews, participating in the photo elicitation piece and focus group. In order for the adult male learners to feel open enough to have honest conversations in the focus group, I felt they first needed to come together as a group during an orientation process.

Interview one was conducted after the orientation and utilized a series of open-ended questions that lasted around 60 minutes. I created the interview questions but I was also very intentional about leaving an opportunity for some unstructured time so the participant can choose if he wants to delve deeper into answers or stories. It was necessary to remain open while engaging in this inquiry because as the researcher, I had to ensure that I avoid research designs that “eliminate the responsiveness and pursues new paths of discovery as they emerge” (Patton, 2002, p. 40). I made sure there were enough flexibility in the interview for ideas to emerge and a possibility for the structure and design of the interview to change depending on what was identified and shared by the participant in this learning process (Rubin & Rubin, 1998). The interview involved questions about what it means to be a man, particularly the participant’s notion of masculinity as it related to other identities that men experience surrounding regulation (Appendix D). The questions were designed to determine if the participants are able to identify how privilege comes into the notion of masculinity or if there was a lack in awareness of how privilege works in the perception of masculinity.



## **Photo Elicitation Interviews**

The second interview involved another series of open-ended questions that focused on photographs taken by the participant. Participants were instructed to bring in seven to ten photographs representing various forms of masculinity. The pictures taken by the participant should capture what it meant to be a man in relationship to other identities (i.e.: other men, women, work, spirituality, an athlete, musician, student leader, etc.). In addition to this, the photographs represented how the participant was impacted by their own masculinity as well as how others are impacted by the participant's masculinity. The questions for the second interview remained the same in the focus group interview because as the researcher, I am interested in seeing if the participants share the same responses in front of other men during the focus group or if they minimized what they shared. This second interview was the first step in the photo-elicitation process.

Researchers (Blinn & Harrist, 1991; Buckley, 2014; Harper, 2002) urged scholars to utilize visual methods with their data collection during the interview process. The third interview, conducted using a focus group, used photographs to provide a rich context of data to produce photo-elicited discussions. Photo-elicitation interviews (PEI) was a concept that introduces a photograph as a means of research data into an interview (Harper, 2006). As a qualitative interview technique, photo-elicitation deepens the understanding of lived experiences, the lens in which people view their reality, beliefs, and experiences (Harper, 2006). PEI had been utilized in a number of disciplines (Blinn & Harrist, 1991; Buckley, 2014; Harper, 2002) and had been used much more frequently (Baruchel, Epstein, McKeever & Stevens, 2006, p. 2). Harper (2002), and Harper (2012) indicated using photographs and determining what was in the photo along with the

process of how the participants presented the photos allows the researcher to probe participants on (how photos were presented), researchers can probe participants to discuss the phenomenon in greater depth.

In this study on the regulation of masculinity that college men experience, the photos helped participants make meaning of their notions of masculinity and their experiences of the regulation of their masculinity. In order for the PEI to be successful all participants needed to submit photographs. Photo-elicitation was an appropriate method to help participants discuss their understanding of masculinity along with regulation and how it impacts their relationships with others (Harper, 2012). During the orientation and again after the first interview, participants were given specific probes to consider surrounding issues of their masculinity as it pertained to their lived experience. A disposable camera was offered to each participant but all participants with a camera on their smart phone can opt to use their own phone. Participants uploaded their photographs to the TRACS site the researcher established.

Prior to having the participants participate in the photo elicitation process, I provided each of them with a handout (Appendix E) that explained expectations and guidelines for the photos. The participants were instructed to take pictures of people, places, locations, events, or things that they felt represented the guidelines of the photo elicitation interview and focus group. If the photos included a person's face, they were instructed to take caution to either blur or conceal the identity of the person in the picture. Each of the participants in the study were instructed to submit seven to ten photos that will help them describe how adult male learners at an institution of higher education explore their own notions of how they experience their masculinity regulated and how

their perception of other men's notion of masculinity shape their relationship with other others.

Probes were provided to help guide the participant as they took and chose the pictures for the interview and focus group. These probes were used to help the men choose which photographs to take, introduce into the study and analyze during the interview. The probes included:

1. How do the pictures identify what it means to be a man in relationship with (other men, women, work, spirituality, an athlete, musician, student leader, etc.)?
2. How do the pictures exhibit how others are impacted by your masculinity? (Ex: choices, behavior, emotions, etc.). Do the pictures represent the influence of your masculinity on others? Do the pictures reflect an experience where you regulated, policed or controlled someone else's masculinity?
3. How do the pictures indicate if there are aspects of your identity impacted by your masculinity (body image, putting on the "mask", emotions, choices, behavior, etc.)?
4. How do the pictures represent a change in masculinity based on a particular location? Event? Time in your life? Are there photos that indicate how your masculinity changes based on places, particular people, locations, or specific times in your life?

After this orientation session, the men were provided this information again at the conclusion of the first interview, prior to the photo elicitation interview and focus group. I went over the instructions with them and reminded them of guiding questions to help them make meaning of what it was they wanted to capture. Then, in the individual photo

elicitation interview, I asked questions that were created to help the participant analyze their photographs. These questions included:

1. What does this photo mean to you?
2. How do the pictures identify what it means to be a man in relationship with \_\_\_\_\_ (other men, women, work, spirituality, an athlete, musician, student leader, etc.)?
3. How do the pictures exhibit how others are impacted by your masculinity? Do the pictures represent the influence of your masculinity on others? Do the pictures reflect an experience where you regulated, policed or controlled someone else's masculinity?
4. How do the pictures exhibit how you are impacted by your own masculinity? (possible probes include: participant experiencing peer pressure, body image issues, decision making, etc.). How do the pictures indicate if there are aspects of your identity impacted by your masculinity?
5. How do the pictures represent a change in masculinity based on a particular location? Event? Time in your life? Are there photos that indicate how your masculinity changes based on places, particular people, locations, or specific times in your life?
6. Do any of these pictures ever represent the mask?
7. Do you see your real self in any of these pictures? Why or why not?
8. If you could interrupt, change or do something different for the person, place, event or location taking place in this photo, what would it be?
9. Was there a picture you wanted to take but were afraid to take? If so, why?

10. How did you feel when selecting these pictures?

These probes helped the participants shape the knowledge that came from this interview and the focus group during their analysis of the photos.

Focus groups are usually interviews of a small group of people on a very specific topic (Patton, 2002). A focus group was used for the PEI in order to develop rich data in a context where the participants consider their own views in relation of the views of the other participants in the group (Patton, 2002). Conducting the focus group for the PEI allowed the researcher to gather information from multiple participants at one time and to determine what factors and emergent themes are most important to the adult male learners involved in this study. Each participant showed their photo and then other participants in the room made meaning of the photograph by observing the photo and then explained what it means to them. After the others have provided their insight into the photos, the participant that took the photo then shared his thoughts and what the photo meant to him. The questions centered around the images the participants included; each participant talked about the two most powerful images they brought in and why they related to the specific probes they were given by the researcher (Appendix F). Elizabeth Elsworth (2005) defined knowledge as "... continuously evolving through our understanding of the world and our own bodies' experience of and participation in the that world" (p. 1). The photos provided this research study and those participating in it, the continued process of becoming. Elsworth (2005) went on to assert "Thinking and feeling ourselves as they make sense was more than merely the sensation of knowledge in the making. It was a sensing of ourselves in the making, and was that not the root of what we call learning?" (p. 1).

## **Developing Trust Among the Hinges**

When I began working with the men in this study, I informed how I developed my interactions with the participants through Ellsworth's text, which produced a possibility for us to conceptualize our work together in this study at the intersection of these areas of study (DeLuca, 2007). What enabled this sweeping and comprehensive ways of knowing around the multiple complexities offered throughout this study was Ellsworth's notion of hinges. Consequently, Ellsworth (2005) articulated, "hinges are pedagogical pivot points" (p. 7). As she shared, "pedagogy, like painting, sculpture, or music, can be magical in its artful manipulation of inner ways of knowing into a mutually transforming relation with outer events, selves, objects, and ideas" (p. 7). Occurrences like this typify the notion of learning- in- the- making in "which relationships are made between the past and present, the inner and outer, and the self and others. Hinges prompt learning" (DeLuca, 2007, p. 69).

Ellsworth (2005) distinguished learning as an engaged system of transformation that links "body, mind, space, and time" (p. 17). According to DeLuca (2007), she [Ellsworth] argued,

Effective pedagogical hinges engage transitional objects, sounds, and environments that push an individual from being a learner of compliance to becoming a learning self. Compliant learners assume that knowledge is pre- made where the goal of learning is the acquisition of such knowledge (p. 69).

In comparison, a learning self undergoes knowledge- in- the- making and was established "in transition and in motion toward previously unknown ways of thinking and being in the world" (Ellsworth, p. 16).

In order to help the participants, move through and co-create a pedagogical process that enhanced our understanding of the study, themes and inquiry, I incorporated much of Ellsworth's hinges into our time together. Prior to our time together at our orientation and teambuilding session, I asked each of the men to spend some time thinking about marking the moments in our lives and in our journeys. Our lives are marked by so many moments. I asked the participants to consider how we measure them and understand our role in them. Once we met together, I explained to the participants, in order to fully engage in this work, each of us would have to be committed to sharing stories, creating community and speak our truth.

The only way this study would work and produce the uniquely rich truths, full of vulnerability from each of the participants, would mean that I had to lead by example. I had to role model what I hoped each of these men would display throughout this study: an openness to commit to the process, a willingness to set aside the mask and speak about the joys and heartaches, the successes and falls and an ability to challenge ourselves and one another to grow through introspection and self-reflection. Therefore, I started by sharing my story of the heinous act against me that nearly took my life. I explained to them that a hate crime served as the ultimate regulation of my masculinity and therefore I stood before them nervous and hopeful that we could build something from the experiences that created the multiple stories within all of our lives that informed our masculinity practices. Once this was done we processed what I shared with them and then each of the men were asked to share a song or poem that helped them make meaning of their masculinity and had significant impact on their development. As a researcher, I was using sensory processes to connect the participants with the sensation construction that

connected the pedagogical experience to the mind and body of the men involved.

Ellsworth (2005) states these processes

...arise out of the imbrication of material elements of the mind/brain and body.

The resulting paths, juxtapositions, sounds, interruptions, durations, and rhythms actually impinge on the body/mind/brain in a multiplicity of ways and attempt to provide sensations that create the conditions for potential learning experiences (p. 27).

Hence, we listened to each participant's song or poem and discussed the connections from head and heart along with examining the potential learning experiences we each shared from listening, learning and creating knowledge about one another.

Finally, to conclude our time together, I role modeled my own set of photographs that I had taken so the men could see my journey and see the "hinges" that influenced my sphere of reality concerning the outer events, myself, objects and ideas impacting regulation in my life. I talked in detail about the power of photo elicitation and how useful this tool is when creating meaning-making around the learning that takes place at the intersection of our lives. As a researcher, I knew masculine identity would be an arduous construct to research. Specifically, regulation; regulation is not frequently articulated explicitly. Therefore, I explained to the participants they would have to examine their own individual understanding of regulation, society's influence on regulation and systems and organizations impact on masculine identity and regulation – each of these would be necessary to consider and photo elicitation would be a useful method to approach this phenomenon. I then went over the handout (Appendix E) that would guide each of the participants as they engaged in the work around photo elicitation



which helped provide them with information assisting them to analyze the photos through their own understanding and ways of knowing.

I believe this orientation allowed each of us to be in community with one another and to establish a sense of trust, vulnerability and a knowledge that we were in this together. As the researcher, I knew I had to be extremely intentional with how I developed the orientation to the study and teambuilding for the participants involved in the study. It was my belief that if I did not design time for us as the start of this study – a place to develop knowledge together and to share my own vulnerability – in a sense, unmasking myself, then I could not expect these men to do the same.

The use of photos in this investigation as a learning tool was critical to this study. As Elsworth (2005) stated “Places of learning reconsiders pedagogy as the impetus behind the particular movements, sensations, and effects of bodies/mind/brains in the midst of learning, and it explores the embodied experiences that pedagogy elicits and plays host to: experiences of being radically in relation to one’s self, to others, and to the world” (p. 2). The analysis was developed surrounding whether or not the overall comments appear to extend, contest or depart from what the study has produced thus far.

### **Member Checking**

Qualitative research involves stories and conversations about experiences in order to learn and make meaning from the participant’s realities. Merriam (2009) identified the researcher as the primary tool in qualitative research. By using qualitative research, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the lived experiences and realities the participants shared and I used an iterative process of data analysis which allow me to member check (Saldana, 2009). Maxwell (2005) stated:

This was the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what was going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstanding of what you observed. (p. 111)

This was when data, analytic categories, interpretations and conclusions are tested with members of those groups from whom the data were originally obtained. This can be done both formally and informally as opportunities for member checks may arise during the normal course of observation and conversation (Creswell, 1998). Typically, member checking was most commonly thought to provide validity and accuracy of a participant's account. Derrida (1976) Lincoln and Guba (1985) posit that member checking was what helps provide the crucial tool for accuracy in a study. This tool allowed me to gather a range of multiple perspectives related to the data gathered in this study. My goal as a researcher was to make sure I present the participants' experiences as they intended.

Member checking includes data triangulation and was actually be built into the PEI focus group because from what I learn in interview two from the participants about their photographs that can help me shape how we move the discussion for the focus group. The member checking was also used during the focus group through informal means (in process) by me using statements like "what I heard you say was..." and "it sounds like you are saying ....., am I correct?" This gave participants the opportunity to verify if I understood their comments correctly or not. By utilizing this built-in method of member checking during the focus group, I was able to verify the preliminary findings by checking for bias or extending the relationship to the participant by asking for their input on the validity of the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Saldana (2009) indicated that

member's checks were an additional tool that offers a means of data generation in the feedback from a participant that was probed and examined by the researcher. In addition to informal member checks, participants involved in terminal member checks when the researcher has gathered the data and organized it by themes. These themes were shared with participants during the focus group and participants were asked to confirm, clarify and offer amendments as necessary to what the researcher has analyzed and provided.

### **Sequential Description**

The following was a sequential description followed by the researcher in order to gather and collect data for this investigation:

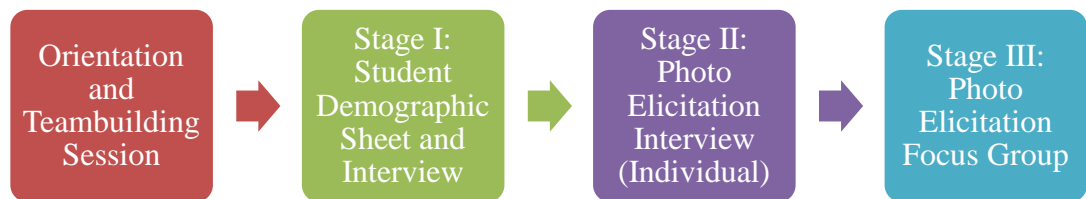


Figure 1. Sequential Description

## **Data Analysis**

The procedure of data analysis “treats text as a window into human experience” (Ryan & Bernard, 2000, p. 769). As a researcher, I listened to my observation notes, then I re-listened to the audio recording of the interviews several times before I transcribed them. At this point, it was time to utilize coding methods for my data. Saldaña (2009) stated “a code in qualitative inquiry was most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 5). As I listen to the recordings I listened for words or short phrases that resonate throughout that could be used as codes to analyze the data. Saldaña (2009) asserted “the data can consist of interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journals, documents, literature, artifacts, photographs, video, websites, e-mail correspondence, and so on” (p. 6). At this point in my research I relied on transcripts of the photo elicitation focus group, field notes and the journal that I created throughout the data collection process.

As a researcher, I am aware of the need to view my data multiple times to ensure I am understanding what exactly the data was telling me. Saldaña (2009) explained:

The portion of data to be coded during First Cycle coding processes can range in magnitude from a single word to a full sentence to an entire page of text to a stream of moving images. In Second Cycle coding processes, the portions coded can be the exact same units, longer passages of text, and even a reconfiguration of the codes themselves developed thus far. Just as a title represents and captures a book or film

or poem's primary content and essence, so does a code represent and capture a datum's primary content and essence. (p. 7)

Throughout this process I used descriptive codes, which are often one-word capitalized code on the right-hand side column of my data that summarize the primary aspect of my topic from the excerpt.

### **Trustworthiness and Credibility**

As the researcher of this study, I am extremely intentional with the choices I make to enhance trustworthiness and to reduce any threats to validity (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997). Erlandson (1993) stated:

If intellectual inquiry was to have an impact on human knowledge, either by adding to an overall body of knowledge or by solving a particular problem, it must guarantee some measure of credibility about what it has inquired, must communicate in a manner that will enable application for its intended audience, and must enable its audience to check on its findings and the inquiry process by which the findings were obtained. (p. 28)

Criterion used in quantitative research in order to determine validity are not necessarily effective in determining trustworthiness in qualitative research. Alternatively, terminology including "consistency," "truth value", and "neutrality" are supported (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) asserted that one aspect of trustworthiness was about finding a response to the question: "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audience (including self) that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, worth taking account of?" (p. 290). The primary role of the researcher was to collect data. Therefore, I

needed to understand my own biases and assumptions as I go into this process. There was no impartial instrument that prevented a researcher from bringing in his or her own assumptions into the research, so that was why it was critical for the researcher to acknowledge his or her experiences or background so they do not affect the final analysis.

Qualitative research provides a richly rewarding experience. Patton (2002) explained that ‘qualitative analysis seeks to grasp and elucidate the meaning, structure, and essence of the lived experience for a person or group of people’ (p. 482). Additionally, Lincoln & Guba (1985) asserted “research findings are credible if they represent a plausible and substantiated conceptual interpretation of the data drawn from the participants’ original data” (p. 269). Lincoln and Guba (1985) and Saldana (2009) suggested multiple strategies that would ensure the validity of the study. I used these tools in order to increase the precision of my findings. To enhance the likelihood of credible interpretations of the data, I engaged in maintaining field notes from all interviews, reviewed transcripts for accuracy, examine the use of triangulated data, compare coding to the data and artifacts collected along with peer debriefing, member checking and positionality reflection. In addition, I used a peer review as another tool to support the truth value to my study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A peer reviewer was someone who can serve the study by providing a critical examination of the study by asking questions and providing feedback on the methods, interpretations and analysis used within the study. The peer reviewer offered feedback that was objective for the researcher since they are not directly involved in the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

These methods were implemented to ensure that my work as a researcher provides integrity and high ethical consideration as the study was conducted (Merriam, 2009).

**Ethical considerations.** Prior to collecting data, a request was submitted to the institution's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Upon approval, the study was conducted in accordance to the standards and regulations set forth for the protection of human subjects by the IRB. Adult male learners were identified for participation in the student. They were told that their participation was voluntarily and that they may withdraw from the study at any time. Before participating in the research, the participants received a participant consent form (Appendix C) that outlined the purpose of the study and their rights as participants involved in the study along with the interview protocol (Appendix D). Each participant was asked to carefully review these documents and contact the researcher prior to participation in the study if they have any questions or concerns. This information was repeated and further explained to participants during the orientation session to the study. As stated earlier in this chapter, consent forms, audio recordings, transcripts, and artifacts from the PEI were stored carefully in a locked filing cabinet that only the researcher will have access to. Additionally, confidentiality was carefully maintained throughout the study because participant names did not appear anywhere in the transcripts, and all participants received pseudonyms.

### **Methodological Limitations**

There were limitations worth noting in this study. As a researcher, I was honest with myself and be intentional with acknowledging that while every effort for bias has been minimized during the course of this research, I am still a man. I acknowledged that I was raised in a society that helped shape my construct of masculinity and I would be

remiss if I did not include the possibility that my own construction of masculinity and manhood may influence pieces of this study. Furthermore, while I planned for the participants to be diverse, a common myth was that males are a monolithic group in higher education. Some aspects of subpopulations in the male population may be overlooked or not explored in this study. As a researcher, I would like multiple subpopulations in future studies. Lastly, the study's effectiveness may be lessened because this research was collected at a single institution which will make it harder to generalize. However, the purpose of research was to study a phenomena in-depth (Patton, 2002). As a researcher, I expected this study to be challenging and rewarding; one that helped me to gain a deeper understanding of the construct of masculinity and manhood and one that assisted as I continue to develop my research in this area.

## **Summary**

The information in this chapter of the dissertation study was written in order to provide a comprehensive and clear explanation of the methods that will be employed while conducting the research. Research methods identified throughout this chapter helped accomplish the purpose of research and discover how college men experience their masculinity. The researcher sought to understand the unique perspectives and experiences of these adult male learners through the lens in which they view masculinity and make meaning of their identity based on the theoretical lens of queer theory. Chapter Four of this research study will discuss the findings of the data collection and Chapter Five will provide the conclusions and recommendations for further study of this topic.

The bar was a fever pitch, a mob of testosterone.  
bones writhing in our moat-flanked bodies,  
the paradox of trying to stay a safe distance



from each other while craving to be touched.  
My shoulder brushes the chest of another man;  
“Bitch, are you fuckin’ crazy? I will fuck you up.”  
Stepping forward, his fist was a cocked revolver, brandwashed with the safety off.  
My eyes swell up like overused sponges. The bruise spreading across my body,  
four tears fall in one gasp down my face.  
I’m about to fight eight men in a dark New York City nightclub  
and I am crying.

- Excerpt from “*3AM*” by Carlos Andres Gomez

## CHAPTER 4

### Data Analysis and Results

'Who are you?' said the Caterpillar.

Alice replied, rather shyly, 'I — I hardly know, sir, just at present — at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I think I must have been changed several times since then.'

Lewis Carrol, *Alice in Wonderland*

Chapter Four provides a comprehensive narrative of the research data collected in Stages I, II and III. The narrative includes tables, summaries, direct quotations gained from the interviews and focus group photo elicitation along with the emergent themes identified by the researcher. The narrative informing this chapter highlighted both the benefits and concerns of the participant's notion of masculinity and their perception of other men's notion of masculinity as it impacts the participant and others. The illumination of turning point moments and the adult male learner's developmental trajectory as they made meaning of how their masculinity was regulated was described in this chapter.

### Presentation of Findings

The data presented in Chapter Four are organized in the following manner: (1) Stage I – Student Demographic Sheet and Interview I; (2) Stage II – Photo Elicitation Interview (Individual); (3) Stage III – Photo Elicitation Focus Group, which provided a space for individuals to make meaning by accepting, contesting or rejecting the notions of masculinity presented in the photos. The data gathered are presented throughout the

chapter in tables and figures with summary narratives, direct quotations taken from Stages I-III. The findings were examined by the researcher in order to identify emergent themes developed by the data analyzed.

### **Research Question**

Chapters One and Three of this dissertation provided the framework which utilized Queer Theory to examine the experiences of five college men as they examine, contest and negotiate their masculinity. The overarching research question that guided this study was: How do college men negotiate the regulation of their masculinity? The supporting questions included:

1. How do college men's perceptions of other men's notion of masculinity shape their relationship with others?
2. How do college men interrupt or transgress the regulation of their masculinity?

### **Participants**

This chapter included a narrative about each participant used in this study and how they negotiate the regulation of masculinity in their lived realities. Participants were selected because of their willingness to discuss their lived experiences and the reality of masculinity and manhood as it relates to their perceptions and relationships with others. The student sample utilized in this study was comprised of five male students enrolled full-time between the ages of 18-23 who are in good academic standing across different class years. Participants included individuals that offered a broad range of complexities and intersecting identities that supported the diversity of this study through learning across the lifespan including race, sexuality, military status, age, ability status, and academic classification. This was a story about these adult male learners who, through

the data, are involved in various stages of destabilizing notions of hegemony as masculinity was examined in their own lives and in the lives of those around them. Although this was not a criterion for selection, the data produced that each of the participants was involved in some level of destabilizing the notions of hegemony. However, it was also a depiction of social reality, which includes stories of paradox and complexities that each of these men face as they live with the realities the mask of hegemonic masculinity presents them with daily. The goal of the researcher was to present the authentic stories shared by these adult male learners using their own words and expressions as they made meaning of the constructions of their lived realities and masculine identities through the individual interviews, photo elicitation interview, and focus group. Each of the men's personalities varied; although they all had similarities including hanging out with friends, being involved in campus activities and organizations, drinking, wanting to do well in school and their romantic relationships. While the participants had many similarities, they also had differences. Each of them had different academic majors, coming from a variety of rural or urban backgrounds, and they all displayed varied introverted and extroverted characteristics in their personalities. Despite the fact they all agreed to be interviewed, some were more forthcoming with the information they shared than others.

In order to support a confidential study, participants chose their own pseudonym, replacing their names. Table 2 provides brief information for the participant profiles, including pseudonym, major, and classification, ability status, military status, involvement in co-curricular activities, sexual orientation, race and ethnicity. Below was a table with a summary of demographic information for the participant profile and then

each participant was introduced by alphabetical order based on their pseudonym.

Table 2

*Participant Demographic Information*

<u>Participants</u>				
<u>Name &amp; Age</u>	<u>Classification &amp; Major</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Race &amp; Ethnicity</u>	<u>Sexuality</u>
Jessie, 19	First Year, Mass Communication	Male	Black, Nigerian	Gay
Alejandro, 19	Sophomore, Transfer, Criminal Justice	Male	Hispanic	Straight
Lamon, 19	Sophomore	Male	African American	Bisexual
Oliver, 22	Junior	Male	White, South African	Straight
Maximus, 23	Senior	Male	African American	Straight

*Participant Profiles*

<u>Participants</u>					
<u>Name &amp; Age</u>	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Generation College Student</u>	<u>Military Status</u>	<u>Undergraduate Involvement</u>	<u>Relationship Status</u>	<u>Disability Status</u>
Jessie, 19	Yes	No	Multicultural organizations	In a relationship	None
Alejandro, 19	No	No	Resident Assistant; Fraternity member; Christian organization; Club sports	Single	None
Lamon, 19	Yes	No	Multicultural organizations; Student Activities Council	In a relationship	Yes, Invisible Disability
Oliver, 22	Yes	No	Resident assistant	Single	None
Maximus, 23	Yes	Yes, Army Veteran	Multicultural organizations; academic organizations	Married	Yes, Invisible Disability

Each profile of the participant began with a quote, poetry or song lyrics chosen by the participant that reflected their thoughts on the complex issue of masculinity and manhood. Each of the poems, songs or quotes selected by the participant were based on a team building activity scheduled by the researcher prior to individual photo elicitation interview. The use of the song, poem or quote allowed the participant to share personal views and reflections on the topic of masculinity with the researcher, by having to choose something that aligned with their personal views on this complex topic. During interview one, after each participant went over the student demographic sheet with the researcher, they also shared their song, poem or quote with the researcher as well. This activity allowed the researcher to gain insight into the participant's perspective through the use of poetry, song or quote. During the photo elicitation focus group interview, the men used the songs, poems or quotes as a team builder to informally introduce themselves to the group and explain their individual analysis of the song, poem or quote. The participants also shared how their chosen material directly related to their lives and their lived reality of masculinity and manhood. From a researcher's perspective, this team builder helped establish trust, credibility and helped to create an atmosphere where the participants wanted to know about one another, share their own perspectives and engage each other through deep connection about issues of masculinity.

### **Jessie**

*Bad Religion* - Frank Ocean

This unrequited love/ To me it's nothing but/ A one-man cult  
And cyanide in my Styrofoam cup/ I could never make him love me  
Never make him love me/ Love me/ Love me //

Taxi driver/ I swear I've got three lives/ Balanced on my head like steak knives  
I can't tell you the truth about my disguise/ I can't trust no one  
And you say allahu Akbar, I told him don't curse me/ But boy you need prayer, I guess it  
couldn't hurt me/ If it brings me to my knees/ It's a bad religion //

Jessie, an 18-year-old first year mass communication major believed the song lyrics from Frank Ocean's "Bad Religion" provided the framework for the multiple identities he carries and supports the foundation of his interpretation of masculinity. Jessie interprets the lyrics in relation to his own life as a man as follows:

I am Nigerian, Black, gay but the biggest part of my childhood was church. As a lot of African Americans, I mean church was where it was at most of the time. That has a lot to do with my regulation of masculinity in a sense that my whole life has been this journey. I felt caged growing up, depressed, alone. Yeah. And then he goes on to say, this unrequited love was a one-man cult. I feel as though that's so relevant to me in a sense that feels as though I've always tried to love me for me. I never got love back in return, this voice in my head told me it was wrong. He goes on to say I could never make them love me. I swear I've got 3 lives balanced on my head like steak knives. I am Nigerian, black, gay. Pick a struggle because it's a lot. That's relevant to me in a sense that the walls, the regulation of my masculinity has forced me to create separate lives.

I met with Jessie three times during data collection stages; each time he engaged the conversations with great vulnerability and a willingness to dig deeply into his own understanding of the multiple identities that impact his masculinity. I found him to be open about sharing his experiences and insight along with an eagerness to have someone listen to his truth. Jessie was a first generation college student, active in multicultural

clubs and organizations on campus and was involved in a relationship that began once he started his freshman year. Interviewing Jessie was easy because from the depth of conversation to the length of our conversation, it was obvious Jessie wanted to talk – even more so, needed to be able to talk about this topic as it relates to his lived realities.

Jessie, a U.S. resident, born of a family who immigrated from Nigeria, indicates the two most important parts of his male identity are being Nigerian and being gay. “Those two cultures are very beautiful and I love them very much”. Throughout the data collection stages, Jessie talked about contradictions he felt in his masculine identity. He explained he was extremely proud of each of these identities but realized there was contradiction within the love and pride he feels within these identities that impact his masculinity:

To be a gay Nigerian male was like jail. In the sense that, it’s like jail. (Long pause, tears running down his cheeks) We were reading something in English the other day, the girl’s tongue was cut and she couldn’t express herself. She said if her childhood were a painting, it would be black. I related with that so much because my ability to express myself as an individual was cut short multiple times just by default. Mine would be black too if my childhood was a canvas. It was dark, lonely, and cold. A lot of ways it still was. (Long pause, tears streaming down his cheeks) So to be a gay Nigerian male was ... it’s a long cold dark journey just because no one was willing to talk about it. In an African household, no one was talking about it. It’s just really dark, it’s really hard to thrive. It’s hard, you have to mask yourself with whatever you can mask yourself with. Sports, drugs, playing around, like I told you I was very imaginative and creative. Just



because that was the only thing I could draw from. You come out and you're risking being on the side of the street. (Long pause) You're risking your whole life. It's better to just stay in the closet as a Nigerian man because I need to eat and go to school, have my books, food, and water, whatever the case may be. (Long pause) Whew, it's hard. I'm not even going to act like it's something that it's like oh eventually you get over it. No, it's traumatizing, even for me, it's something I always ask myself. Eventually, I would like to go through checking if I'm ok mentally, if I'm mentally healthy. It's a lot... every day was a fight. It's a lot you have to battle. It's a lot... (long pause) you have to just put on your grown man shit and say I'm about to stick this out till I'm a smooth ass grown man, get my shit together so I can have my own life.

As a first generation college student, Jessie also felt this identity impacted and influenced the lens with which he views his masculine identity. He said he wished he had a larger population of first generation Nigerian students to relate with on campus. He specifically wished he could talk to other first generation Nigerian males about the pressures they face from their family and their American peers while navigating college. He talked at length about the multiple pressures he felt from both family and peers as a Nigerian man on a college campus. He explained:

There's so much pressure on you because you're dealing with immigrant parents. The males in the family especially get the pressure. Are you going to change the way we do things? Pick up our traditions? There's so much pressure on you as your parents are immigrants they automatically enclose themselves to just automatically try to do things in Nigeria. Enclose themselves to what they've

been taught in Nigeria. They are immigrants, they are the minority. They aren't going to be exploratory, the world was smaller. The world was one way rather than 16 different ways. There's this big ass burden on first generation kids, especially the guys... (long pause) are you just about to fuck everything up? Or are you about to do what we expect of you? And they say, if you were in Nigeria this was the way you do it. You're not from here. With that on top of being a black man in America at this time in society, and on top of being gay. It's so fucking hard. And that's when you get into shit like suicide [*researcher's note: the participant was offered a referral to the counseling center and to a free mental health clinic within the community*] and stuff. I never really like... I feel for it. I've become so desensitized; it doesn't surprise me. People don't understand how much bullshit you actually have to survive. I'm so proud of myself even to be here... (long pause, voice shaking and tears in his eyes) here, right now, where I'm at. I could've been in so many different things. It's tricky.

Jessie had joined an international organization on campus and was actively seeking to establish camaraderie and friendships with some of his male counterparts.

### **Alejandro**

"Masculinity was not something given to you, but something you gain. And you gain it by winning small battles with honor."

- Norman Miller

This quote was chosen by Alejandro because he believed he has a responsibility to win these small battles that can represent his masculinity to those around him. He believed being a Hispanic male in college was a small battle he was winning. He believed

that whatever he can do to support his mother and sister was a small battle he can win. He also believed that he must focus diligently on his career goals – again, a small battle that he can win. Alejandro was a 19-year-old Hispanic transfer student committed to his academic studies and has been on the Dean’s List since arriving to this institution. Alejandro transferred from a smaller, regional college because he wanted to experience a larger campus and was attracted by the majors offered and to the diversity this campus offered. He was proud of his Hispanic heritage and loves experiencing new cultures and travel. Alejandro participated in a study abroad program and identifies as an “adventure seeker”; he even ran with the bulls during the fiestas of San Fermin in Spain!

Alejandro was from a single-parent home; his mother has raised him while his father has been absent throughout much of his life. Alejandro’s mother was unemployed, and he works multiple jobs on campus in order to send money back home to his mother and younger sister. He explained his mother’s unemployment was not covering the necessary expenses like car notes and rent. He would send money home each month from each paycheck to help with these costs.

As a man, Alejandro believes he has the pressure to “produce.” He goes on to say “I have pressure to support her (mother) in a way because I have the status of male in the house.” He explained this pressure stems from the fact that he was a man, and he believes there are societal expectations that help inform his beliefs that he needs to help support his family financially even on his very limited student worker pay. Alejandro experiences stress and anxiety from trying to help his family back home in the westernmost part of Texas. “I’m a college student and ummm... I’m barely getting by ... so I know I definitely feel stress trying to make sure my expenses are covered as well as helping my

mom and sister to cover their expenses. (Long pause) If no one else does that, who will?" Having been the only male in the house growing up, and even now, as he was away at college, Alejandro indicates he has received messages growing up in the home and in the media and from society that make him feel as if "the male in the house should turn out to be really successful and help out the women in the household."

The quote was also important to Alejandro because he believes masculinity was a competition. He believes men are taught "...you have to earn everything. Basically, you are a product of what you do. Masculinity was all about producing in this world. Proving your worth." Alejandro felt there was never a time where he was not trying to prove his worth – whether it be in his personal life or his academic life. He recognized this even with his interests in sports on campus. His real sporting passion was soccer but feels that was considered "less manly" by many of his male counterparts, therefore he plays basketball instead, which he believes has more respect from his peers. He recognized the competition piece of masculinity even plays out in the sports he feels comfortable playing and even discussing with other men. He explained that shows up in just choosing the sport to participate in, but the competition piece always shows up when you are actually playing sports with other men. He goes on to share that "competition against each other, on and off the court, it's just programed into us."

Alejandro was driven by his vision for his future. He considered justice to be a fundamental virtue that he aligns himself. Upon graduation from college, Alejandro wanted to work in a career within the criminal justice field. Alejandro's ultimate goal was to work for the FBI.

## **Maximus**

*Love's Deceit* – Big Rube  
Pleasure turns to the pain  
Of the lessons learned from the strain  
Of the questions burned in my brain about whether love was humane in its touch  
I'm left surrounded in darkness, but I refuse to be swallowed by it  
My loneliness like the night air; invisible to the eye, obvious to the touch, in its cold  
uncomfortableness  
Yet If I could do all over again  
I'd do it in the same skin I'm in  
To lay down and let love die, just stay down and let love lie  
No, no, no, no, not I  
I'd rather stay 'round and let love fly  
Even though I've seen its darkest form; deceit  
Nothing else could taste this warm or feel this sweet

Maximus was a 23-year-old African American army veteran and a graduating senior.

He was also a student with an invisible disability and recently married his longtime college girlfriend. He and his wife both aspire to work in the health professions field. As a child, Maximus moved around a lot. His mother battled with drug addiction, and he was often left to raising himself. At one point he moved in with his father, who had been absent most of his life and also battled addiction. He chose this poem by a spoken word artist because he said it impacted him as a man the first time he heard it.

I was with my dad, a total stranger, and it really just invoked those emotions. Not seeing them, feeling them, and putting up a front all the time. Barricade myself within myself which makes people human. That's one thing, the other was the content. It's cool to hear, it's like a grown man. It's a deep ass voice, it sounds so black. Like an old school, your uncle's uncle. Its comfortable hearing a grown full bodied man talk about love. How he would take the pain of love, not sounding

like he's doubting himself on being comfortable. Wow, it woke me up. Not all the way, but turned my eyes to something different.

Between the ages of five to 12, Maximus lived in seven different cities in four different states. His mother moved frequently and because she worked several jobs, she was not physically or emotionally available to him. He was left to raise himself and often looked for connections in each of his new environments in the neighborhoods he was raised. He said he became aware of the expectations taught to him from other boys and men he hung out with in each of the neighborhoods he hung out in, looking for affirmation, acceptance and guidance from those older than he.

Maximus talked openly about the "rough" high school he attended. He explained it was a "violent" environment and male students were expected to be "tough, emotionless" and "powerful." Maximus shared that in order to be seen as powerful, and to earn respect from other men in the school, he had to enact a persona that was not who he was. Maximus began working out regularly and bulked up because he learned from what he witnessed daily in the hallways and classrooms in his school and in the streets of his neighborhood that if he were not bigger than most of his male peers, he was "not in control of any given situation." During his freshman year of high school, Maximus was arrested because he said his math teacher made a comment about his mother's parenting skills during class to him. Once the comment was made, Maximus said he knew he could not let the comment slide because all the other men in the class were watching him to see what he would do – therefore, he made the decision to attack his teacher during class. He was arrested and spent the remainder of the year in alternative school. He said he knew

he wasn't "that guy" that was always looking for fights, but he shared he knew he would be seen as a "punk" if he didn't fight the teacher for the comment.

...[I]t's so barbaric, and it's crazy because we call ourselves an advanced civilization, but I mean you have like all the primitive mindsets with men, you have to sleep with so many women and be better than other men, I mean that's what it comes down to, sex and power. I was scared to go to high school, because people...(pause) some people died in my high school from violence, that how rough my high school was. So my freshman year in high school, I was like okay that's what I'm going to do... (pause) if someone talks mess to me, I'm gonna have to beat them up. And that's what I did. I got arrested by an officer, like you know if you didn't go to alternative school, people would mess with you or try to mess with you, it's kind of like the mentality you need. You're only a man after you went to prison or something. That's how my cousins thought, and it's funny how it starts at such a young age... (pause) well you won't be respected in the streets if people don't fear you. If you can't be feared, then you're not doing what a man was supposed to do. It tripped me out because love has so much more strength over fear. And like it just trips me up that men are always taught power comes from fear.

Maximus often struggled with the conflicting feelings around wanting to express emotions as a child and a young man versus what he was taught and what was role modeled for him. He believes men are taught to measure love by "how much pain can I give to you, and you still come back and be with me?" This lesson on manhood came early to him from his mother. As a little boy, she would tell him men were not supposed

to cry. He remembers her hitting him in the chest and saying “you better not cry.” During the interview, he became emotional at this point and as tears were in his eyes he stated “[b]ut like wow, that’s a real thing. I was only a boy.” He said he also learned this lesson on manhood from his father who did not give him any lunch money and told him that as a man he better learn how to “get fed.” He talked about how he went for three weeks without eating lunch at school since he did not have any money and finally he figured out he would flirt and sleep with women in his high school so they would buy him lunch. He said he “hated it” because he did not want to be a “hoe” but the “reality of sleeping with women in order to get food as a man was real.” He explained that he struggled with his feelings because he did not like what he was doing and did not like playing with “these girl’s emotions” but knew that he had to prove to his dad that he could “get fed”.

### **Oliver**

*White Shadows* — Coldplay

When I was a young boy I tried to listen/ And I want to feel like that  
Little white shadows blink and miss them/ Part of a system, I am //

If you ever feel like/ Something's missing/ Things you never understand  
Little white shadows sparkle and glisten/ Part of a system a plan //

All this noise I'm waking up/ All the space I'm taking up/ All this sound was breaking up  
//

Maybe you'll get what you wanted/ Maybe you'll stumble upon it/ Everything you ever  
wanted in a permanent state/ Maybe you'll know when you've seen it/ Maybe if you say it  
you'll mean it/ And when you find it you'll keep it/ In a permanent state/  
A permanent state//

When I was a young boy I tried to listen/ Don't you want to feel like that?/ You're part of  
the human race/ All of the stars and the outer space/ Part of a system a plan//



Oliver was a white South African 22-year-old Public Relations junior who moved to America from South Africa as a teenager. He was engaged in the campus community, works on campus and was involved in campus organizations and events. He was passionate about his role as a resident assistant on campus. He works hard to meet residents and make them feel at home on campus and places great value in building connections across similarities and differences. He chose the song “White Shadows” by Coldplay because he first heard it during a “transitional period” in his life. He said the song conveyed a “simple truth” to him during that period of “boyhood to adolescent” while moving from his home in South Africa to an unfamiliar experience in America. He explains:

Growing into a man, I didn’t understand myself because I was changing so much. My surroundings had changed. I longed for simplicity of being a child. Not questioning anything, want to be dependent on someone else’s reason. Not having to make my own decisions or understanding the consequences of my actions. Toward the end, all this noise... (pause) I’m making up... (pause) the more I saw around me, the more I understood. Gradually throughout my adolescence I continued to listen to this song. The more I hear, experience, learn, and understand, my mind was in a way waking up. Whether I understand people or not, misinterpret or correctly interpret what they’re trying to convey, it’s all relative I guess.

Oliver was passionate about photography and was especially enthusiastic about the photo elicitation phase of the data collection. He spent a considerable amount of time photographing people and nature and often reflected on the significance of the

photograph in his life. Deeply introspective and self-reflective, Oliver eagerly agreed to participate in the study because of his commitment to doing the “work” on the multiple identities he carries and how each of those influence and impact his masculinity. Oliver was currently serving in an assistantship with a major public relations company and enjoys gaining the variety of experiences offered in the assistantship.

### **Lamon**

*We All Try* – Frank Ocean

I believe that marriage/ Wasn't between a man and woman but between love and love/  
And I believe you when you say/ That you've lost all faith//  
But you must believe in something/ Something, something/ You gotta believe in  
something/ Something, something//  
I still believe in man/ A wise one asked me why/ 'Cause I just don't believe we're wicked  
I know that we sin but I do believe we try//  
We all try/ The girls try, the boys try/ Women try, men try  
You and I try, try, we all try//

Lamon was a young man driven by the lyrics of Frank Ocean’s song and was convinced that men must continue to try. Lamon was a highly active and engaged student leader and activist. Lamon’s participant demographic sheet listed a number of student organizations and clubs in which he was a member. Lamon was 19, a public relations and diversity studies major who was passionate about issues of social justice and inclusion. He works hard to raise awareness around national incidents of racism and discrimination. Lamon was passionate about his black male identity and his bisexuality. Part of the passion towards social justice and inclusion was his own need to see himself “at the table.” In listening to Lamon, you hear his passion for both identities but you can also get a sense he struggles with how the two intersect with one another. Essentially, Frank Ocean’s *We All Try* represents Lamon’s need to keep trying, despite his inability to

always have faith in what he was trying to accomplish. He talked about being an activist to speak out for both of those identities because they inform the lens of how he views his masculine identity. Lamon explained his masculine identity by stating:

I wish people just knew that although like, although I'm like a black bisexual male and I have a higher pitched voice I am just as capable of doing things that they are. They know my true authentic self. I am still 100% capable of doing anything. I don't want people to doubt me. Because my whole life I was doubted, because you're different, you're weird, you can't do this because of this. My whole life I'm trying to prove things to people that I can do things they can. Also, being a Black man ... (long pause) it's very exhausting for the simple fact that you have to work just to prove what you know. You can have all of these qualifications on paper but that doesn't mean anything. You can have people back you up but that doesn't mean anything. You have to push; prove to people you know what to do. In the social aspect, people look at you a certain way, you see the looks when you walk into the room. They shy away from you because of your skin tone. You're unapproachable, a ticking time bomb. You see what happens to your brothers and sisters, you have another person being killed or beaten and nothing has been done about it. That's basically me, I can walk out the house and this could happen to me and nothing would be done. That's exhausting.

He believed he has spent his entire life responding to people who challenge his masculinity based on his sexuality or his race. In many ways, Lamon feels that as a Black man who identifies as bisexual, he has to be strategic with how he presents his masculinity. He said he was very aware of the image he presents, on campus and on

social media. As a Black man and in order to gain the respect of other men, he must be strategic in how he presents himself on campus and online, even though it may not be true to who he authentically was. For instance, Lamon admitted that he has placed photos online posing with women so that it was assumed he was dating a woman. He also explained that if a gay friend of his comments on his photo or compliments one of his pictures, he will delete the comment because he was afraid his association with a gay man will impact his masculinity status with men on campus. He said he knew he has struggled throughout his time in college with trying to find a space where he fits in as a man on his campus and walks around constantly “battling” and trying to figure out who he has to “show up as” in the different spaces as a man on a college campus. Lamon was the President of a multicultural organization. He works incredibly hard on campus engaging with his peers and serves as a peer mentor for freshmen and transfer students.

#### **Data Related to Primary Research Question – How Do College Men Negotiate the Regulation of Their Masculinity?**

The participants of this study discussed the regulation of their masculinity and the various ways they try to negotiate it on different levels through their one-on-interviews, photo elicitation interviews and the focus group. Their answers to this question and the stories they share provide data, through a Queer Theory lens, that reflects how college men negotiate regulation as a “challenge to existing social practices” (Brady, 2006, p. 58). As the researcher, I suggest these participants challenged the regulation of masculinity by participating in this study and through their deep reflection and very candid responses during the interview. Alejandro, Jessie, Oliver, Lamon and Maximus all shared stories and photos that demonstrate the negotiation of the regulation of their

masculinity in a number of ways, but all discussed feeling challenged or conflicted in how they responded to the regulation of their masculinity and certainly felt it was not easy. During the individual interviews with each participant and the focus group, a theme emerged from each conversation that dealt with masking and how location impacted the regulation of their masculinity.

**Negotiating through a mask.** Alejandro discussed the experiences of being a Hispanic male who was from a low socio-economic status and being a member in a predominately White fraternity. He explained that within that group, he has to negotiate his masculinity by constantly wearing a mask in order to “be seen as a man” with “those guys.”

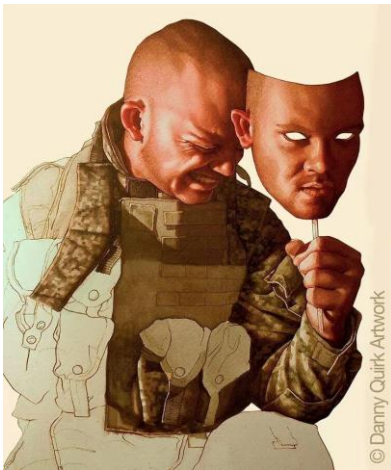


Figure 2. The Weight of the Mask

As one of the very few men of color in the fraternity and coming from the socio-economic background that he believed to be considerably less compared to the other men in the fraternity, he explained “[T]he mask always stays on, man. I try to negotiate my masculinity by seeming like a real tough guy – a bro. I always try to have a very firm

handshake with these guys. Doesn't that sound stupid? But it's gotta be firm, man. It's about power." Apart from the physical aspects, Alejandro also said he masks what he talks about with these other men. "I don't really like to mention my economic status to other males, I just tell them, 'yeah everything was good man' but they don't have a clue that I'm constantly sending money home and that I'm freaking out about paying dues, tuition and helping my mom and sister. I think if they found that out, that would be a game changer."

In order to gain acceptable masculine status within the group, Alejandro does not want the other men to know about his financial struggles because "with men, money was important. If they knew I was poor they'd think I'm some useless, broke ass beaner. Unfortunately, I'd lose all points as a man, and they'd not look at me as the same." He explained he makes a conscious choice to not bring up those topics in order to maintain his status with the other men in the fraternity. Alejandro negotiated the regulation of his masculinity by stating "I guess... I guess I sort of wear the mask to maintain my power with other guys." For Alejandro, there was no other choice other than to not allow the men around him to know of his real burdens. In his mind, these are considered weaknesses. According to bell hooks (2010) "Men learn to cover up their rage, their sense of powerlessness" (p. 138). Alejandro has learned to mask his emotions and his sense of powerlessness through firm handshakes and not showing vulnerability to others. For Alejandro, covering up the rage means becoming void of emotionality. He refused to display signs of emotion and counters those feelings by trying to gain back some of the power through physical strength – the tough, strong handshakes as a sign that he was in control.

While Alejandro actively works to not show vulnerability to the men in his fraternity, Jessie's story of regulation was situated in vulnerability. Jessie told of his experience of negotiating the regulation of masculinity when he came out to his parents as a gay man. Jessie talked about always knowing he was gay, even as a little boy and that he finally felt the need to tell his family about his true identity as a gay man. However, to Jessie's dismay, his coming out process to his parents was extremely painful:

My family, the people I needed to love me the most when I was sharing this news ... when I was so vulnerable ... (long pause) They always say it's the people that love you the most that hurt you. I shit you not, I got put into conversion therapy twice by family to pray the gay away – and why? Because I told you I wanted to be normal? To stop living a lie and be myself? The minute I told them who I was they immediately put me into conversion therapy. The next thing they made me do was go get a STD test – they kept saying they thought I might have AIDS. It felt like it was a 911 emergency type of deal how quick they were trying to rush me to get a damn STD test – all because I told them I wanted to be who I always knew I was. Took me to five different pastors and put all my business out there each time telling everything to these strangers. Then I had to sit and listen to these pastors telling me I needed to be prayed over. Two of the pastors said I had an evil spirit living within me that had to be cast out. To be honest with you, dude, I was so heartbroken because I never thought someone could feel so low. I was real low and I just felt so backstabbed and so hurt by my family.

Jessie felt his family would serve as a safe space as he decided to tell them about his identity as a gay male. However, their reaction and his sense of loss – both of his family and from his perceived masculinity – sunk him into a state of depression. “When my parents treated me that way, they regulated the hell out of my masculinity. They continued to regulate my masculinity by telling me I had to date girls and bring girls home to meet them.” To quote bell hooks (2010):

The wounded child inside many males was a boy who, when he first spoke his truths, was silenced by paternal sadism, by a patriarchal world that did not want him to claim his true feelings. I want there to be a place in the world where people can engage in one another’s differences in a way that was redemptive, full of hope and possibility. Not this ‘In order to love you, I must make you something else’.

That’s what domination was all about, that in order to be close to you, I must possess you, remake and recast you.

Jessie’s story of the mask would support hooks’ statement about the wounded child inside many males. It ultimately caused Jessie to put back on his mask.

There was a parallel between Jessie’s story and the experiences caused by family that triggered Maximus to wear his mask. Maximus also talks about the regulation of masculinity with his own lived experiences. Maximus describes himself as being aware of the different situations, specifically from his high school graduation to now, when he has to put the mask on in order to negotiate the regulation of masculinity.



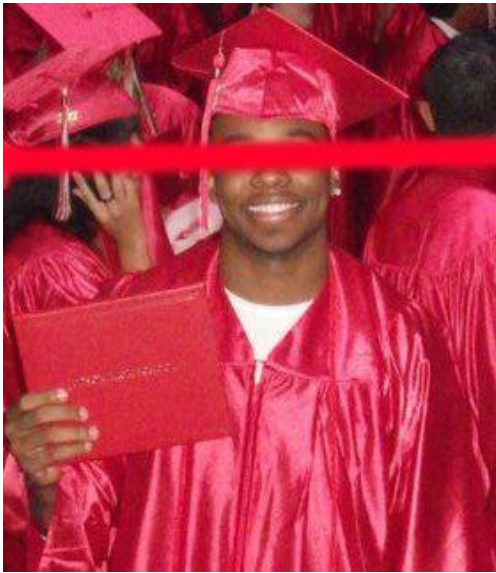


Figure 3. What was Behind the Smile?

Maximus was the first male in his family to graduate high school. Graduating high school for Maximus was a huge achievement – despite the odds of having moved around constantly, having two parents addicted to drugs and having to raise himself much of his life, he made it. He explained how proud he was to be the first male in his family to walk across that stage. He also recalls a time that he regulated his own masculinity and how the impact of his regulation caused him much pain:

No one in my family made it to my graduation and it hurt. Really hurt. Graduated pretty much alone. I saw all those families on the field hugging and kissing their graduates and I just stood there – wanting to cry. No one was there to hug or kiss me. My cousin took this picture of me when I came home and I remember smiling really hard but being so sad. I was happy I got this piece of paper. It was so strange because I was so happy to graduate and I was so sad because I felt so alone. I pretty much forced myself to swallow my feelings and never discuss

them. At the time I regulated my own masculinity because of my own bullshit belief in what it was to be a man kept me from expressing feelings. From being able to have my own emotions. You're supposed to laugh, cry. I deprived myself of that. I felt it was unacceptable as a man to do that, especially in front of 564 people. As a black man you're supposed to be brick solid. I just swallowed it up and smiled but I was so miserable and depressed and I just left it alone. I masked all that hurt, all that pain up in a smile when I should have really been okay with crying.

The actions that 18-year-old Maximus took would be reinforced by hooks (2009) when she states "Men cannot speak their pain in patriarchal culture" (p. 135). Now, at age 23, and as a graduating senior from an emerging research university, Maximus has used the years since his high school graduation to reflect on that mask and his idea of masculinity. Since then he has renegotiated his own regulation of his masculinity by engaging in courageous conversations with his absent family members. Before getting married, Maximus sat down with his mother, father, brother and sister and explained to them the wounds from his childhood and his adolescent years. He shared with them all the emotions he swallowed up for years. By sharing his pain and speaking his truth, he explained he was able to renegotiate the regulation of his masculinity. Maximus shared,

"I would never let my children feel the way I felt as a boy growing into a man.

Life was going to be rough, it's ok to have emotions. I wish there was someone to tell me that a man can be sad, a man can be joyful and it's ok for a man to express each of those."

Lamon described the mask he wears to negotiate the regulation of his masculinity as a form of strategy and survival. Lamon talked at length about wanting to join a historically black fraternity, one of the divine nine organizations. He explained the strong history of the fraternity, discussed their values, shared stories about their philanthropic nature along with the social capital and networking opportunities he would gain if he were accepted into this fraternity. Lamon also explained the fraternity was homophobic and constantly makes homophobic slurs, and was known for not allowing gay men to cross over into the fraternity. He shared that in order to get in to certain places and positions on campus that he would like to be, as a black man he must always present a certain image. For instance, he shared with me a picture of himself posing with a female friend that he recently posted on social media. Without knowing differently, it would appear as if Lamon and his female friend are a couple. They are standing next to one another, and according to Lamon, the two look “intimate.” Lamon chose to place this picture on social media because “it’s a representation of image. It’s what other men want to see of me. It’s what you have to show in order to prove to society you fit in.” In order to gain acceptance into this fraternity, Lamon believes he must brand his identity into one that was commonly accepted by his male peers. He believes when they look at this photo, the conversation will be “oh he’s a mack, look at the way she was looking at him. He pulls all the ladies. He can bring ladies to our fraternity parties.” Lamon explains this representation as a type of strategy he uses to advance in the circles that are dominated by men. He fears men in the fraternity would challenge his masculinity by questioning his sexuality, making homophobic comments and ultimately, blocking his acceptance into the fraternity. Lamon rationalized,

I have to wear this mask for protection. More than that actually, its survival. I have to regulate myself until I get to that position – until I’m brought into the circle. Once I’m in there, then I can reveal my authentic self and you can no longer take it away from me. You can see the proof. You have no choice but to accept it and deal with it now. You can’t take the accomplishment away from me, because I’ve already gotten there. I just have to regulate myself long enough to get in – so they can see I am man enough – just like them. Man enough to claim my place in the fraternity.

Essentially, Lamon, like Jessie, was having to silence his own masculinity through the use of regulation in order to gain acceptance from the people he desires to be in community with. To quote Warner (1993),

Every person who comes to a queer self-understanding knows in one way or another that her stigmatization was connected with gender, the family, notions of individual freedom, the state, public speech, consumption and desire, nature and culture, maturation, reproductive politics, racial and national fantasy, class identity, truth and trust, censorship, intimate life and social display, terror and violence, health care, and deep cultural norms about the bearing of the body. Being queer means fighting about these issues all the time, locally and piecemeal but always with consequences. It means being able, more or less articulately, to challenge the common understanding of what gender difference means, or what the state was for, or what ‘health’ entails, or what would define fairness, or what a good relation to the planet’s environment would be (p. xiii).

As Warner states, Lamon was having to regulate his own masculinity based on heteronormative gender norms that leave him facing stigmatization.

In contrast to the other men, Oliver's story about regulation was quite different. Oliver talked quite openly about always being seen as an outsider since he was South African. He shared he has always been on the outside of the circle and never experienced being in the inner circle with groups of men since arriving to America. Oliver stated,

“Yeah, it's true. I've always been the outsider because I'm the South African guy. I've always automatically been different from others so I think it was easier for me not to have to fall into this whole masculinity and regulation of me and my masculinity crap.”

Oliver explains he was able to reject negotiating his masculinity because he did not have to worry about his masculinity impacting his acceptance with other groups. As someone who self identifies as an outsider, Oliver says in many ways he has been able to reject traditional notions associated with the regulation of masculinity.

One of the stories Oliver shared included the fact he made the decision to no longer drink alcohol at parties. Oliver understood that,

I think that's the main reason I don't have a lot of friends. (pause) I have been encouraged to drink at parties; they look at me; they look in my cup. And I'm like water. And they're like whaaat? (laughing) Why the fuck aren't you drinking? (pause) I don't feel the need to drink to have a good time. I used to, but I found I have a different kind of good time when I'm not drinking and it has a better quality in most instances. That's why I don't drink, that's a regulation. You need to drink to have a good time and I call bullshit on that kind of regulation.

Oliver went on to explain that even when he explains to men at the party he was choosing not to drink, the men will often try to regulate his decision not to drink by making him feel as if he was choosing to stay sober so he can “creep” on the drunk women at the party. He explained how quickly his choice to reject regulation was then actually regulated by men at the party. Oliver recalled,

First the guys come up and joke about it. Other people are like, ‘something was off here. We know he wants to drink.’ Which was not true. ‘He’s got some ulterior motive here,’ and sometimes I get flack for that. ‘What the fuck are you doing, man? You’re creeping!’ I don’t know why that’s creeping but yeah. I put myself out there and reject their regulation of me. They try to put me in a defensive position. I’m used to having people try to corral me into a defensive position. They try that, not to say I let them. With that being said, when they say ‘oh, drink, drink, drink. Stop being a pussy.’ And I’m like nah, I’m good.’ I feel like if you’re needing to drink in order approach girls as if that were the end goal, then who’s the creep? I’m not having to alter my mental status, I’m more confident, I’m more self-assured than you are. I don’t say that to them because I don’t want to get hit in the face, but at the end of the day that’s the reality. I don’t have to alter my mental status to make new friends.

Therefore, for the majority of the participants, the mask represented a very real and lived reality of what it means to be a man navigating their existence on a college campus and in life.

**Stuck in the locker room.** All of the participants discussed an awareness of negotiating masculinity based on location. Each participant spoke about how the locker

room contributed to how their daily experiences and interactions around masculinity were framed by their unique understandings of unwritten code of masculinity in that space.



Figure 4. The Locker Room

Teams can often place value on competition, rather than reciprocal support and devalue emotional intelligence as “Kellom and Groth (2010), Kaufman and Kimmel (2011) and Kilianski (2003) all explain that the pressure imposed on an athlete by his peers can cause a male to behave in a manner that was not consistent with the way he would otherwise behave” (Harvey, 1996, p. 12). For some men, the locker room was a physical space that carries over into social spaces, often reproducing regulatory norms that men do not necessarily believe but feel they must enact based on location and who they are around. Participants in this study agreed they did not necessarily agree with the behavior or attitudes presented in the locker room, but felt they would need to take on those actions and beliefs in order to avoid having their masculinity regulated.

Jessie's story of negotiating the regulation of masculinity took us back to his high school locker room, where he says he had to "wear a mask 99% of the time." To Jessie, the locker room signifies "boy's talk – which was basically a lot of meaningless shit, very ego-full and driven. That's where you learn to put the mask on so you can protect yourself. That was where I learned how to mask in order to protect my masculinity." He looked to his peers that he believed to be masculine and mirrored what they did or said. If the other men in the locker room picked on someone they believed to be gay or effeminate, Jessie said he would follow their lead and do the same because as a gay man, it felt there was no other way. Jessie argued,

I knew I was hanging out with alpha males so I knew I had to be seen as an alpha male so they wouldn't come for me. As soon as I stepped into that environment, I already knew the list I had goin' on in my head of these stupid ass conversations that would come up. Prepare myself for that bullshit. And that mind process comes from this because I already knew every day stepping into that locker room, this was the routine, these are the types of fake ass conversations we'll have. Yes I had to lie about everything. As a gay dude, I had to lie in order to survive so I talked about what girl I was fucking. Who I kissed, who I made out with, how much pussy I was getting. I was boosting this fake ass ego, just so they wouldn't come after me. It wasn't even who I was. I knew it the whole time... (long pause) the whole time, man.

As Judith Butler (1990) writes: "Gender was the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts... that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (p. 33). In many ways, Jessie was enacting what Butler refers to as



the stylization. He was trying to produce the appearance of hegemonic masculinity.

Similar to Jessie, Lamon talked about the locker room as a space where masculinity was regulated constantly. Lamon shares a similar identity, because of his marginalized sexual identity, he too, understands how the negotiation of regulation works in a locker room and how the locker room still impacts his masculinity to this day:

The locker room regulates the fuck out of your masculinity. As a guy you know it's about who the alpha was. I have to be the alpha male in this locker room. I have to talk up every person in here. I have to be more masculine. I have to pick on someone, I have to fight, bully, talk about how many bitches I'm fucking, how much weed I smoke, how bad I am on the court. I do these things... and the locker room, ... (long pause) it's supposed to be a safe haven of masculinity... (pause) a place where you celebrate achievement and success, but in reality it's the insecurity of masculinity. Not only does it regulate masculinity, you're regulating others and they're regulating you. It's a non-stop cycle of regulation and you have to constantly fight and think how do I manage and control this regulation.

In support with Jessie and Lamon's stories, Oliver, Maximus and Alejandro agreed and explained they also participated with lying in order to negotiate the regulation of masculinity or participated in the regulation of other men's masculinity while in the locker room. Alejandro commented "the locker room, it's kinda like a place where you learn to put the mask on ... (pause) and at least ... (pause) like in my life, I'm not sure that mask has ever really come back off." Maximus echoed the sentiments expressed by Alejandro and with carrying the mask throughout his life as well:

I think about the locker room, football, wrestling, different sports that didn't amount to anything. Other than being exposed to stupidity. You have people literally stuffing people in lockers ... (pause) Man, I thought that was some shit you saw on Disney channel. And damn, you are in a locker. I am not about to help you because then they'll come for me. You just keep it moving. I learned you have to keep it moving, otherwise it'll be you next. It's like as a younger man, where you grow up in was the locker room and then as you get older, the locker room turns into the barber shop. Especially in the barber shop, where masculinity gets regulated all day, every day. What I've learned was the barbershop was basically the adult version of the locker room. The locker room and the barbershop was pretty much your whole life, and as a man the locker room and barbershop are the most crucial parts of your life... where you spend your time. And what I see now, was that it was a big joke. We've carried all that shit from the locker room into our adult lives and it just switched locations into a barber shop. I'm shakin' my damn head man. This shit was crazy... (pause) how we keep doin' this shit to ourselves and each other.

Oliver, united in the sentiments shared by his peers stated "Sitting here and listening to each of you and talking about this, I realize we've all done it. Each of us has grown from boys to men but yet we are still trapped in that locker room mentality. Wow, this was crazy." Each of the men nodded, giving visual confirmation to what Oliver shared. Lamon then described the insight he made from their shared experiences:

It's fucking up your head, now you leave here with this stuff, I have to prove to the world how masculine I am. It started back in the day with those dudes who I

thought were masculine. They are doing all this stuff, getting all this attention. I want to be seen as that macho type of dude. I needed to be as big. As strong. I will go out and do all of this stuff. I will take the regulation out of this locker room into the world and spread this poison. Damn... (long pause) so what I'm figuring out now was I'm basically still spreading poison... the regulation ... I'm still doin' it, even now. Damn.

Lamon's data presents evidence to support Heasley and Crane's (2003) insight into hegemonic dominance and power structures that explains how a group with power controls and dominates a person who was seen without any power. Like the other participants, Jessie also made the connection his peers made about the locker room. Through his behavior in the locker room towards other men, Jessie talked about being seen as the alpha male in the locker room. He goes on to say:

I definitely regulated people's masculinity. I would do it at the cost of my own masculinity. I didn't want to get with that in any type of way... I didn't want to get treated how I saw the other guys treating dudes who were weaker. And I was gay... (pause) and knew it at the time. I didn't want to be treated the way I was treating others. But that's why I had to do it, man. As hard as it sounds, that's what men would do, as a man you are supposed to have this I don't give a fuck mentality. Bitches, hoes, sex, weed. That's where it was, that transition period. You learn in that space that this was what I have to do to get this. You learn the ins and outs of finessing your way as a grown ass man. The sad thing was I don't even like referring to women as bitches and hoes but yet that was what you gotta do to prove your worthy to other men... (pause) What I get now, and what's

really sad... (pause) You see all these 40 year olds and 50 year olds talking all this bullshit. This where they're stuck. They are the little boys, stuck in the locker room. I make decisions today, and I am still stuck in the locker room.

For these men, the symbolic mask was something that was negotiated, learned and worn throughout different times in their lives. The locker room was a location that each of them had to negotiate the regulation of masculinity, which they carry with them today. Martin and Harris (2005) state, "...hegemonically masculine behaviors and attitudes (e.g., violence, aggressiveness, and physicality) are not biologically determined. Instead, they are learned behaviors that are produced in social institution and reinforced through human interactions" (Martin & Harris, 2005).

**Hennessey and a blunt.** Each of the participants spoke about their varied experiences with using either drugs, alcohol or both as a response to negotiating the regulation of their masculinity.



Figure 5. Alcohol and Drugs

Each participant discussed at some point during their journey through masculinity development they were either expected to drink heavily because "you've got to drink with your bros, it's what you do" or they felt pressure to smoke marijuana. Participants

talked about the normalcy of the presence of alcohol and drugs when men gather together. “It’s just always around, and if it’s not, you know somebody’s gonna mention it and get it” remarked a participant.

After Jessie attempted to come out to his family and experienced the negative reactions of his loved ones, depression sank in. During this depression, Jessie turned to drugs as a form of escape. “Honestly, I was trying to escape my family. I started using, smoking weed and what not because that was my way of negotiating the regulation of my masculinity that I was experiencing. By escaping. Getting high. A lot. And then telling them I was straight.” Comparably, Lamon also dealt with depression stemming from issues of anxiety around his sexuality and the regulation of his masculinity. He, too, turned to drugs and alcohol as a way to negotiate how he was feeling. Lamon described,

Guys, most dudes, ... (pause) they’re going to hold who I am as a man against me to regulate my masculinity. That’s why I’m closed off, it affects my relationships, friends, and family. That makes me mentally distressed as a person because I’m in the back of my head. I get depressed, I think about it, I get so low, and they are like you were just so happy. But I’m an ‘I’m fine’ type of person. When I drink I drink a lot to forget that, it’s always on my mind.

Similarly, Alejandro talked about having to drink with his “boys” and what that experience was like along with the peer pressures that many men face with alcohol and drugs. Alejandro expanded on this idea,

I would say that I used to drink and smoke quite a bit. Not nearly as much as my friends, I don’t know how they got that high. (Laughs) They were always calling me a pussy and always calling me a wuss because I wouldn’t go as far as they

would. I would take two hits and I'm good. I was like "bro, I'm good, but they would be like no come on. Don't be a little bitch. Take another hit." So yeah, the pressure was always there. With alcohol I would go hard.

Scholars link college men's drinking to low academic performance, unhealthy sexual choices, sexual assault and violence (Bannon & Correia, 2006; Bly, 1991; Capraro, 1994; 2004; Fisher, Cullen & Turner, 2002; Wechsler, 1996). Maximus talked about how the expectations of drugs and alcohol were presented to him at an early age. He explained that because he was a male, he had family members setting expectations that men participated in the experiences of alcohol and drugs. He said this notion was common throughout his adolescence.

Weed was a big factor, especially in my life. My grandma smokes weed to this day, mama smoke weed. It's an anticipated thing, 'you're going to smoke weed and drink, that's what men do.' That's what I was taught. I remember I didn't like it, it burned my lungs. I was losing my handle on things, my thought process. I was 15, 16... it was malt liquor and I was drinking it ... a lot of it. It was a part of growing up, but now reflecting that's so fucked up. You're not supposed to be drinking, in middle school... (pause) what was going on there? I'm taking my abnormal psychology class and I'm seeing all the disorders you get from drinking young. And I was taught this simply because I was born a male? Looking back now, that's wild.

When connections are found between men, masculinity and alcohol consumption, drinking, specifically when referencing college men, was identified as a "male domain" (Capraro, 2004, p. 2). Capraro goes on to suggest that drinking was male dominated,

male identified, and male centered (2004). Capraro (2010) continues with “Men outnumber women in virtually every category of drinking behavior used in research for comparison-prevalence, consumption, frequency of drinking and intoxication, incidence of heavy and problem drinking, alcohol abuse and dependence, and alcoholism” (p. 3). While many college men and women indicate drinking as a way to engage socially, research suggests men are most likely to drink or engage in drug use for escapism (Capraro, 2010).

Jessie further explained how some men use alcohol and drugs to negotiate the regulation of their masculinity as a way to suppress or forget about what they are going through but to also fit in with the crowd. Capraro (2010) asserts “Masculine gender-role stress was a term used to describe the stress resulting from a man’s belief that he was unable to meet society’s demands of what was expected from men or the male role or from having to respond to a situation in a feminine-typed manner” (p. 4). Jessie supported Capraro’s assertion about male domain by sharing that some men are also conditioned to the thought that in order to have a good time, to have fun, alcohol and drugs need to be present. He reflected,

It represents that men go through all of this shit and we find our safe haven. Was it dangerous? Yeah. But fuck it, this was all we got and this was how we get by. In a way, I know we talked about masks in our interview. This was one of them, using drugs and alcohol. Definitely if you’re trying to fit in. Even if you’re not trying to fit in, and have a good time. You know your limits, but if a dude’s like ‘come on nigga, take another shot!’ you do it so you don’t look like a pussy ass bitch.

The participants also presented data on how regulation of alcohol was present in what men choose to drink. Four of the five participants described being aware of what they drank, especially if other men were around them. Oliver explained,

I drank at an early age, as a man you're not supposed to drink fruity drinks. You drink jack and coke, or you drink whiskey. You might drink some vodka, depends on who you're drinking with.

The majority of the participants nodded their heads in agreement with Oliver's statement. Maximus commented "Only time I order a margarita was with my wife, she's at the table. If I'm with my family or my boys or something, its Jack and coke."

**An assault on women.** According to Gomez (2012) men use specific language to police one another. The "three staple words at the center of that enforcement are faggot, bitch and pussy. All three of those words share something in common: Men use those words to devalue the feminine" (p. 81). Language usage, according to Katz (2006) "always has a political context (p.87). The fear of femininity creates socially constructed masculinities (Kimmel, 2011). The fear of femininity was defined as "a strong, negative emotion associated with stereotypic feminine values, attitudes, and behaviors ... learned primarily in early childhood when gender identity was being formed by parents, peers, and societal values" (O'Neil, 1986, p. 337). Scholars have explored the role of homophobia in creating customary masculinities (Askew & Ross, 1988; Kimmel, 2001; Kimmel & Messner, 2004; Messner, 2004; Plummer, 1999). Homophobia immediately correlates to men's fear of being perceived as gay or feminine, and their considered desire to remove their gender identities from those associated with women. Young boys developing into men learn to disassociate from characteristics or behaviors associated



with girls and women (Hennen, 2008). Participants in this study describe how the regulation of their masculinity was used to feminize them. However, when talking about their own regulation and how they regulate others, it then becomes a doubled move dynamic that both feminizes the adult male learners and subjugates and dehumanizes women. “Pussy,” “bitch,” “hoe” and similar dynamics are deployed frequently in the data. Not only was the masculinity over the participants in this research overridden by an assertion of femininity, but that women are also degraded and assaulted in the dynamic. The men talk about the pain they feel when their masculinity was regulated and how they are often dehumanized by other men but fail to recognize the role they each play in degrading and assaulting women as they reflect on the dynamics that impact their regulation. According to Connell, (1995) hegemonic masculinity was defined as “the maintenance of practices that institutionalize men’s dominance over women” (p. 185). One way this was done was through the restraint of emotions or practices that do not align with notions of manhood and masculinity (Connell, 1995; Rodriguez, 2007; Landreau & Rodriguez, 2012). Therefore, men’s subordination of women was also directly connected to men’s subordination of other men, in terms of homophobia and policing for undesirable gender expression (Kimmel, 1987; Kimmel & Bridges, 2011; Messner, 2007; Messerschmidt, 2000; Nel, 2013; Rodriguez & Pinar, 2007).

Regardless of sexuality, any man perceived to be transgressing the established gender roles by enacting feminine traits may be seen as inadequate, unconvincing or having gender role incongruence (McCormack, 2012, & Taylor, 2005; Eagly & Diekman, 2005). Many boys and men have often been taught that differences related to gender equality to status gaps and that power and control are crucial to men’s self-identity

(Kimmel, 2008; Kimmel, 2013; Kimmel & Bridges, 2011; Kimmel & Messner, 1992 & O'Neil, 1982). Evidence to power and control, and the language used to posit masculinity against femininity was evidenced throughout the data. However, Katz (2006) would argue men need to own their language and their behavior and work to change both. He states "We need more men with the guts, with the courage, with the strength, with the moral integrity to break our complicit silence and challenge each other and stand with women and not against them" (p. 57). Gomez (2016) would agree with Katz. Gomez explains,

The men who hurt women – they're not who we really are. They're dark shadows of ourselves, the aching parts of us projecting out our pain, harming ourselves and harming women. It's time to let in the light on those shadows, exposing them for the true fears they are. It's time to break the rules of that culture and make a new one (p. 3).

The framework used in this study helps adult male learners and educators understand there are other possibilities that allow for reimaging masculinity and shaping a masculinity that was inclusive to the multiple needs of men and women. Gomez (2016) goes on to state,

By challenging male conformity we put the onus of ending violence against women where it belongs – with the men who perpetrate it. The solution wasn't just to stand up for women, it's to hold men accountable. We can do that one moment at a time – on the sidewalk, in the subway, at the dinner table, at the game, on the bus, at the bar, with ourselves. So yeah, man. Want to start something?

Let's start a movement – a movement of men who aren't afraid to stop violence against women (p. 3).

**Data Related to Secondary Research Question #1 – How Do College Men's Perceptions of Other Men's Notions of Masculinity Shape Their Relationship with Others?**

For many men, emotions are restricted, often removed and replaced by reason. When a man restricts his emotions and feelings through rationalization, he also restricts the display of those emotions and feelings to others (Kimmel, 2013; Kroger, 2004; Lee, 1994). Many men are taught to believe that outward expression of any emotion or any evidence of displayed vulnerability was impossible (Balswick, 1982; Connell, 2011; David & Brannon, 1976; Harper, 2013; Meth, 1990). Displaying affection, a sense of care or concern for their same sex peers was expression that men are taught to reject (Connell, 2011, Courtenay, 2011). Since emotional knowing has been coded within the feminine domain, men often avoid displaying elements of emotional intelligence because it may be seen as “weak” or “unmanly” (McCusker & Galupo, 2011). While patriarchal hegemony has coded restricted emotions as rationale, vulnerability and outward expression of emotions are oftentimes degraded and devalued (Davis, 2002; Kellom, 2004; Kimmel, 1987; Messner, 2007).

**Keep it short, keep it simple.**



Figure 6. Male Communication

Alejandro's data present evidence to support the previous research findings. "This ... I know, I know (laughs) this was going to sound stupid, but I try to leave emotions out of the conversations I have with guys." Alejandro explains he believes he communicates and interacts differently with men and women. For example:

It's a competition out here on a college campus for men... (pause) especially for guys trying to come out here and make a name for themselves. I'm trying to make a name for myself and in order to do that I cannot be seen as emotional or weak. I have got to be strong and successful. When I talk with guys, I tend to tell them, 'yeah school was great,' I'd never let them know I was having a hard time in a class. Really, I don't even talk about academics with them that much. It's more like football games, sporting events, that stuff. Man, I can never actually be real with these guys because... um, ... (pause) if I ever brought up the fact that I was upset, struggling with something or having a hard time ... I'd be told 'quit crying,

you sound like a little girl.’ So forget about talking about insecurities. There’s no way I could do that.

Again, the data present masculinity was posited against femininity and authentic communication, displaying vulnerability and emotions are considered of lesser value. Men learn at an early age that homophobia and the fear of femininity was one of the most attainable ways to declare their male identity (Plummer, 1999). Alejandro shared with me that he communicates with women more freely, easily. He says his conversations with women include emotion and he talks about what he was experiencing and how he feels about it but with other men, he often limits or restricts those emotions:

Umm, I tend to keep it short with guys, even when I’m texting. I reread texts I send to guys to make sure it was just short and simple. No emotion. I build stronger conversations with different females definitely. Most of my guy friends, it’s just the same conversation. It’s constant. Same level. Same quality, I guess you can say. Umm so yeah, my perception of other guy’s masculinity definitely keeps my conversations at surface level with them. It’s pretty much about what we can go do together rather than what we are feeling.

Similarly, Lamon expressed his conversations with most men are surface level. “If you and I haven’t been through the fire together, then I can’t hand over any vulnerability to you. So in order to survive, I put that deep voice on, bulk up my chest, that mask goes back on and we really don’t talk about shit.” Oliver explained since living in the United States, his relationships with men have also been more surface level. He considers himself much closer to female friends than to his male friends but he believes

this was a learned behavior. He believes boys learn at a very young age how the notions of other men's masculinity impact and shape relationships. Lamon discussed,

Men don't want to get emotional. They don't want to go there. They don't know how to and I think that was generational. You have a society that was saying this was how you be a man: you've got to be strong, you can't cry, you're being a wuss if you do that. No, bottle those emotions up, shove them inside you. Be cold, be calculated... (long pause) Umm, but if you have that from age birth to age seven, that was when you are most influenced. And then you have your dad around, and he was like this guy who goes to work and you only see him in the evenings, and you look up to him because, like, he's your dad but you don't communicate with him because he doesn't communicate with you and you don't know how to communicate. You learn things. You learn things or you don't learn things and those things you don't learn, don't apply and so I think most guys honestly never learned anything from their dad. It's just rational – this type of not learning how to communicate goes from generation to generation to generation.

Oliver explains he believes this lack of communication he observed with his father as a child shows up in his life as a young adult. He notices the patterns of communication in his own life with men:

With male friends, I try to focus externally. The relationship was all about external stuff, like 'oh hey, let's go do something. Let's play ping-pong. Let's go to dinner, not let's sit in my room and talk for several hours. I can't do that with guys because they are not willing to involve themselves emotionally. Guys are

taught to always think logically so it was kind of awkward to talk to a guy about emotions.

Like Alejandro, Oliver also explains he approaches his conversations and interactions differently with men and women:

When I'm with a girl, uh, you know, we talk about our feelings and our life and that's where I draw my emotional support from. I get it from women. But when I just want to have a good time, I will hang out with a guy friend. It's face value, you know, it's like a physical need as opposed to an emotional need. Yeah, like I really needed to go for a run, I go with my guy friends. Cool. We bonded 'cause we both have an external factor that we drew from, you know? Whereas a relationship with a female was more drawing from each other. That's what I've found here.

Women's development theory, produced by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule (1986) explore women's ways of knowing. In this theory, subjective knowledge was explored with the understanding that truth and knowledge are designed as personal, intimate, and instinctive (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule, 1986). The data present that the adult male learners in this study privately place value on women's ways of knowing, and the relationships they build from that but many do not publically place value or explore these relationships in front of other men. Oliver believes his relationships with men and with women both meet specific needs. However, he does believe Western culture has impacted the relationships between men as women. "That wasn't the case growing up in South Africa. People are far more invested in each other's emotions, which I think was a beautiful thing."

**Code switching.** Each of the participants indicated they performed some type of modification to their dress, language, contextual and cultural insight, language and behavior in order to adapt to a dominant, hegemonic environment.



Figure 7. Hyper Masculinity

Oliver shared a picture with the focus group of a man that appeared by societal standards, a tough aggressive guy. The man had multiple tattoos, including guns, skulls, knives, and a tear droplet at his eye. Oliver exclaimed, “Whoa! That’s extreme. That means he’s killed someone. His whole look appears really aggressive and plays into everything we’ve been shown men have to be.” Each of the participants agreed with Oliver’s comments about the photo. As Oliver shared the photo with the group he explained how his perception of this man’s notion of masculinity automatically put him on the “defense.” He shared with the group



I already created a story about this guy and completely bought into everything I was telling myself about him. He was hard, dangerous, scary. I was playing out a story of how I was going to interact with him and we didn't even exchange any words.

Lamon jumped into the conversation and added his commentary about the perceptions of other men's notions of masculinity by stating:

When you see these men, you feel you have to be a certain way because of how he looks. You see the tattoos, he looks like this very hard individual, so for me, yeah I've definitely gotta switch it up, man... uh... I got to put up a shield. I have to come across as rough, because he might try to handle me a certain way.

Alejandro then shared,

No, I get that. You see with this guy; you anticipate a different type of man... (pause) uh... Just judging by the way he looked, the gun tattoo on his leg, skull tattoo on the other leg, tear drop from the eye... (pause) umm... that kind of depicted masculinity. Based on his exterior, I see the need to act a certain way around him too. Because, like, society says you have to act this way around this type of guy. You have to be tough. You can't cry, you could never be emotional around this type of dude. No way! You have to hold yourself up. Be strong, aggressive, and violent. You just can't be any other kind of way. You just can't. Not with what we are told about his type of masculinity.

According to Calvin Ho (2013) code switching was used to transition between dominant and non-dominant cultural contexts. "People code-switch — both consciously and unconsciously — to act or talk more like those around them" (p. 3). Each of the data

presented by the participants indicated they would code switch based on their perception of this man's notion of masculinity. For example, Jessie enthusiastically remarked,

No I feel you for real. The code switch game was for real. The conversation I have in my head about ol' dudes perception of masculinity makes me feel weird. I feel like I have to start bulking up my chest before I even get close to him to even have a conversation. The conversation in my head was, how close am I going to become to you? Let's say I walk into a shop and see him, and he may be a cool guy. But as I get closer, it's like ... (pause) awe, shit! You just get ready, try to not say as much, put some bass in your voice, don't make a lot of eye contact and watch what I say and sure as hell how I say it. But on the real, that's about survival.

Maximus also contributed to the conversation by explaining he knew the man in the photo. The man owns a tattoo shop in town and that he was a very nice, personable guy. However, he stated it was interesting to see how men's perceptions of other men's notion of masculinity impact the way men interact with each other. "I see how people tense up when they see him. Watching everyone respond to his presence. Some guy actually stood up one time and shouted 'What the fuck do you want' when he walked into the shop one time. And the other dude was just like 'Oh, hey... what's up.'" Maximus went on to state:

We... (pause) men, we code switch because... (pause) it gives you the space. I can gauge this in this way. So I know this was the boundaries I am going to keep this person at, just to protect yourself. You don't know, all you can go off of was what you see, and as human beings were always just scared of being unknown.

Since we don't know that, it's easier to take precaution than to adapt. I'm just about to be like...(pause) Uh... that dude I'm telling you. You wouldn't see me going up to him and saying 'good afternoon, how are you?' It'd be 'what's up bro, what's good?' Code switch. That's very big for me. And some cases it's not bad but like he said, its survival prep. It's a tool we use to get by because we as men have to get by. Yeah he's a nice guy, but I don't know that. And I don't trust him, and I am not trying to find out.

The conversation then shifted to the participants questioning if the man in the photograph actually got the specific tattoos because he really liked the images and concepts they represented or if the man felt pressure to get these specific tattoos based on the concepts of hegemonic masculinity. In the end, the participants believed the man was "manipulated into some of the tattoos" because of the unwritten code of masculinity. For the participants, code switching was used to tailor their perceived masculine identities to adapt to specific environments they found themselves in involving various perceptions of other men's notions of masculinity.

**Restricting joy.** Maximus fell in love and knew he wanted to marry the woman that made him feel as if he no longer desired the need to look for love anywhere else. At 23, Maximus married his fiancé and believes this was the best thing he has ever done. Maximus explains "I was vulnerable in the sense that I gave her my heart and my emotions and I shared that with her. I asked her to be my wife. It was a risk and I took it. I'm glad I did because we are so happy together."



Figure 8. Love and Expectations

He chose to open up and make himself emotionally vulnerable to the woman he loved so they could build a life together. However, he says some of his closest male friends, whom he considered brothers did not see it that way:

Getting married at 23, I lost a lot of masculinity points. I've got guys testing me, trying to get me to go out with them and still trying to introduce me to girls! That bothers me. The other thing that bothers me was not being able to express my love to some of my boys. To me, friendship was essential. It trips me out how I can call someone my friend, love them as my friend but I'm not supposed to tell them I love them? (Laughs) How does that make sense? I can tell my brother, 'I love you.' I can tell the new President of my multicultural organization 'I love you, I'm proud of you.' And you can see it bothers people. When I've told other men that I love them, you can see it causes guys to get weirded out. Some people have a physical reaction, emotional... (pause) they withdraw. They aren't comfortable with hearing anything about love. You're my friend and you're supposed to love

me, but you're not comfortable with me telling you so? Man get that mess outta your system. Bullshit. That's something that somebody told you that you got to get out of your system. How the hell can we not talk about love?

Jessie wants to experience the love Maximus has found. Jessie wants to make himself vulnerable to love. Jessie shared with the group that he wants to find love and as a gay man to feel good about expressing that love. He's not sure if he was there yet. He told the other participants he works hard trying to find joy in the idea that he wants to be in love, but without fail, the perceptions of other men's notions of masculinity interrupt that joy sooner or later. Jessie shared:

Every time I think about love, my original picture of me and my partner... my husband ends up changing if I start to think about the men in my family. If I get with a girl, woman, whatever, the picture in my head ends up smoothing on out. Everything would be easy, nothing to worry about. I feel as though, at times, at least in my head, sometimes I judge myself. I think I'm a good kid. I think everything with me, even all around me, I'm a pretty decent guy. But when it comes to relationships with my family, that's where we hit heads. Conflict. So yeah, sometimes I force myself, or I used to force myself into this mindset that if I get with a girl that it will somehow solve all those issues and I won't have the pressure I have right now from the outside. Really from my family. So yea, I definitely feel a huge pressure to get with a girl, everything will be okay. My parents, especially my dad, pressure me into talking to girls and forcing me into bringing girls home to meet them. I've tried to do it. I've tried to force myself into an unnatural space, unnatural for me. It made me feel uncomfortable in order to

please other people around me. I felt useless, like what's the point of even living?  
At that point you're not living for yourself. You're living for people around you.  
And this was supposed to be about me wanting to experience love. But I feel so  
much pressure now... (pause) now there was no joy in love.

To quote bell hooks (2012):

Relationships are treated like Dixie cups. They are the same. They are disposable.  
If it does not work, drop it, throw it away, get another. Committed bonds  
(including marriage) cannot last when this was the prevailing logic. Most of us are  
unclear about what to do to protect and strengthen caring bonds when our self-  
centered needs are not being met.”



Figure 9. Joy Rising

Each of the participants in the study agreed the church was a location that can impact masculinity. Participants shared data that talked about their perceptions of other men's notions of masculinity impacting their relationships with others in the church.

Jessie commented that the women in the photo looked joyful but then men appeared as if they were uncomfortable with expressing joy during the church service. Maximus agreed:

And like, you know you grew up in this place, you've been taught to have this strong faith or belief in something. You're not happy for the simple fact you've been taught all these things, but they go against a lot of things you are as a person. As a human being, and its housed in a place that we call a church. Supposed to be a safety net. I think that ties back into people realizing that everyone's walk with their spiritual being was different. The conversation I have with mine was different from yours. No matter if overall the church doesn't like gays, tattoos, earrings, but you know me and God have had a conversation, we got this. With this picture, it shows how in the place that's supposed to be the safest place in the world was the most regulation. The most hatred, it's supposed to be the safest most loving place. And yet the dude's act like they can't even be happy about being in this house of love. The women look happy to be in God's presence but the men, yeah, they look like they are too worried about what the other guys are gonna say about them if they get their praise on and really express what's in their heart.

Similar to Jessie and Maximus, Oliver believed perceptions about masculinity was a reality in the church.

I started reading the Bible and its crazy seeing other people's interpretation of it. I feel like the book we're reading and the one they're reading are different books. Men and women both... (pause) They worshipped God, fell to the ground. Men were supposed to be vulnerable. If you get saved, you have to do it in front of

people. It's ass backwards, masculinity has taken over every aspect of your life. Even religion... (laughs) that was something that was supposed to be good. Cry out to God, get on the ground. Signs of total submission and it seems that's absent in my church, at least with men. It's crazy how all the men are sitting down. Yup there you go. Women don't get caught up in all of that worrying about what other women are going to think about their femininity for showing praise. But men are so caught up in that. Women are like 'wahhh' crying out to God. But men are like let me sit here quietly so I don't get judged. It's crazy, I don't even know.

Alejandro interjected by sharing with the participants that it was not God making men feel like they could not be authentic in their joy and express themselves in their spiritual lives, it was the church. Oliver then shared,

With my experience with the church, I think that the church was regulatory and it ostracizes people. In my experience, with people from the church it's going to be like that with every religion, but it's not going to be like that with God. God's heart for people was not judgmental, its forgiving, its love. Its graceful, it's not coming to you with this or that. There was no grace for you, that's people. That's religion. That's society, but that's not God. I think a lot of people can't make that differentiation. What prevents a man from getting emotional for his love of God? What prevents a man from crying because he's overwhelmed with feelings while in church? The men around him. His fear of what they will think. They end up hating God for what the church does. The church was people, the church was not God.



Upon hearing that, the men all laughed and snapped, stating that Oliver had just taken all of us “to church.” Jessie continued the commentary by concluding with a powerful question:

While the majority of the men are sitting down, you see the women on their feet with the hands up. I feel as though this right here was the reason for many issues, perception of what a man should be. You see these men, they can’t even show up and show appreciation to a God that they so publicly claim to love because they are afraid the guy in the pew behind them are gonna think they a punk. The women that are praising this God, they expect these men to show them love at home. But I wonder how many of these men are afraid to express emotion in other parts of their lives?

Data the participants present reinforce the research produced by hooks (2000), Connell (2005), Davis (2002), Cronin, King, Rooke & Taylor (2010) Harper (2012), and Harris (2011). The communication in many of the male relationships exhibited by the participants also affirm Kimmel’s (2008) research that explains how men reinforce traditional gender stereotypes and roles that perpetuate traditional ideals of masculinity. These ideals prescribe to the rules of masculinity, which are unwritten but provide very limited, restrictive ways of expressing masculinity with others.

## **Data Related to Secondary Research Question #2 – How Do College Men Interrupt or Transgress the Regulation of Their Masculinity?**

As the researcher, I felt as if I observed a moment where the participants interrupted an instance of regulation that unknowingly Alejandro had enacted. Alejandro was sharing a photo that was most important to him. It was a photo of Alejandro and his mother. In the picture, he was smiling widely and looks very happy to be with his mother. He described the photo to the participants and explained he had not seen his mother during the spring semester since she lives in El Paso and during the summer he studied abroad. Alejandro shared with the group:

This was me and my mom. I haven't seen her since Christmas and all summer I was gone and I saw her for a day. I had to come back for RA training so this was my goodbye picture with her. I love this picture. (long pause) Guys, I'm sorry for cheesing. Shouldn't have smiled so big. I was just really happy to see her but I probably look stupid for smiling that big. Sorry.

Without realizing it, Alejandro apologized to the group for the emotion he was displaying in the photo. Lamón interrupted Alejandro by stating "Whoa, man! Even the fact that you say that though... (pause) with that photo with your mother. Don't ever apologize for that shit!" Jessie also interrupted the self-regulation Alejandro was participating in by stating "Man, that was pure happiness. She was such a huge part of you, just be happy dude and be cool with showing that happiness man. (laughs) That's why we are all sitting here talking about this stuff. We're all learning how, man! (laughs). Maximus engaged the situation by stating "It looks like men are screwed. You're supposed to repress any emotions of life. You can't be sad, you can't cry. And now we add smiling to the list."

Oliver laughed and then shaking his head added “it seems like the only thing men are allowed to be joyful about was sexual activity, violence or some type of sport. We’ve got to reject this crazy ass notion that men can’t have any emotions.” hooks (2008) would agree. “Violence *was* boyhood socialization. We pull them away from their own expressiveness, from their feelings, from sensitivity to others. The very phrase “Be a man” means suck it up and keep going” (p. 60).

**Take the risks.** Each of the participants presented data that indicated a transgression of the regulation of their masculinity.



Figure 10. Masculine Risks

Maximus explained that in order to transgress the regulation of masculinity, men are going to have to learn to take the risks. For example, he shared a story about transgressing the regulation of masculinity at his university that highlighted some of the experiences shared by the participants. He spoke about a situation that occurred in a student organization that he served as President. Maximus critiqued,

As a straight man, I'm an ally. I believe in advocating for homosexual males. I especially think it's important for a Black man to be an ally. I was President of my multicultural organization. I organized our event multicultural organization and it was about inclusion, it was called love the community, and it was homosexual men, some were bisexual in the room, and we were discussing what it was to be straight and gay. We were talking about why Black heterosexual men don't feel comfortable around homosexual men. Some were saying they feel endangered. Me I was like, 'I don't know why, it's never bothered me that someone was gay. Y'all are trippin. Gay men are our brothers. We have to love and appreciate everyone in our community. We gotta work to make everyone feel like they belong here.' It tripped me out, men were freaking out, saying shit like 'yeah, I gotta go, I have class to study for. The exec board tried to scold me for doing it. I feel like it was something that was necessary, sometimes men have a problem with feeling that it's ok to be who you are and love who you love. After that I was alienated from the group and asked to step down as President but you know what? You better believe I'd do that shit again.

Alejandro echoed his support about having to take risks and shared a similar story. Like Maximus, he too, was regulated for interrupting the regulation of others but felt it was necessary to step in and challenge the hegemonic dominance he was observing.

Yeah, umm there was a there was a kid, umm a resident last year at one of my residence halls, he would always get picked on and he was a homosexual. He would always get picked on, big time too. You know they would call him names. They would call him like queer, faggot. You know, just real mean things and

disrespectful. They would fuck with him all the time because... (pause) they were bigger and there were several of them and he would just take it. They would continue to do it and do it, until finally one time they were, they were talking to him in the lobby, and they kept going, so I stopped by and I talked to the guys and I said 'hey man, that's not cool, you don't know what he was going through. You don't know how that affects him, you don't even know the guy, why are you judging?' Once I did that the guys also looked at me funny and started you know putting me down and calling me a faggot too. It's so bad man. It's like guys can't take being challenged for behaving like a dick, and when you do challenge somebody on it, men feel they have to start trying to regulate and fuck with the guy that tries to stop it.

Lamon agreed with Maximus and Alejandro. "You're right, we've got to be willing to take the hits to interrupt this junk. It's not always going to feel good but, hey, we've got to stop this regulation crap." The language used by participants to describe homophobic behavior was fascinating, specifically in terms of the arrangement of words and the images they convey.

**Do it, anyway.** Participants realized that their experiences as men were collectively varied but they all experienced a time where they interrupted or transgressed the regulation of their masculinity by continuing to try and hold on to aspects of their identity or some of the cultural or moral values taught to them. Alejandro explained how his mother taught him men should always take the time to be respectful and cordial to men and women. She taught him to believe it was his job to be "that guy" that displays the qualities of "kindness." Alejandro expressed,

I guess I am a bit sensitive in a way in that I remember what she said, I have a good heart and try to do nice things for women and other guys. Umm... I tend to hold door for everyone. Even males. It's important to hold the door open. Umm.. I was taught that. And some males will tell me, you know, 'why did you hold the door for me? It's kind of gay dude.' I've always been taught to be respectful and be a gentlemen... (pause) in that sense I do feel like males view that as weird. As if being a nice guy makes you weird. Maybe that was my biggest quality and I guess that males will kind of umm... label you as gay, you know? I still hold the doors open though. I do it, anyway.

Comparably, Maximus also believed that it was important for men to transgress the regulation of their masculinity by actively choosing to reject the limited allowances of emotions and creativity that men are allowed to display. Despite the fact that men often face risks or consequences for transgressing regulation, Maximus believes that in some cases, "do it anyway, be bold." Maximus argued,

I love dancing on the Wii, Michael Jackson. Me and my wife do that, it's like our thing. One time I went to visit her and her family, her uncle and brothers were criticizing me for dancing with the MJ thing. They were just drinking on the couch watching sports, and they were like "what are you doing? Men don't dance. Sit down. You look stupid." It seemed stupid to me. Also, I'm just about liking different things. I like to draw. I like creativity. Dance. And it seems like that's rejected. It seems like as a man you're supposed to be stern, straight forward. On a path. Your life was supposed to be about sports, drinking, women, sex, money and some type of crazy career where you have no life. But I have a life. When

they talked about sports, I tried to pretend like I was interested. But finally after a while I was like “I don’t wanna bullshit y’all, I don’t like sports. I don’t follow sports, it doesn’t interest me. What interests me was molecular biology, understanding why people are the way they are today, social evolution. Psycho social situations. The process that happens when people are doing things. Emotions.” They looked at me like I was crazy, but I had to be straight up with them... (pause) have to protect that part of me.

Maximus also shared another story with the participants that illustrated interrupting the regulation of another man’s masculinity. Maximus talked about a private he served in the army with who identifies as gay. Maximus explained that soldiers would intentionally alienate the private and abuse him physically and mentally. Maximus explained how he physically placed himself in between the private who was getting beat and taunted and his other soldiers in order to stop the harassment and abuse. He said he demanded that it stop or they’d have to deal with him. From that point on, he said he kept his eye on the private and made sure he was safe. Maximus recalled,

That’s how I grew up also. Just do what you go to do. They lost respect for me. They called me a private lover. Just vulnerable, seen as weak, was a private lover. If you look after them or defend them, that’s the type of person you are. Someone of equal rank or below messing with them, look at me sideways. People were trying to ostracize him, he’s a soldier, he does the same job we do. Why make him feel less than or contemplate suicide? Imagine being 18 years old, going to a war zone for a year. That’s stressful. To have that stress and stuff like that, your family turns their back on you, soldiers turning their backs on you and that’s

when you contemplate suicide. People don't mess with him anymore. For a while, people didn't talk to me either. They wouldn't talk to me, eat with me, and said they wouldn't have my back... over stupid stuff. You are a grown ass man.

Overwhelmingly, each of the participants believed despite the resistance they would receive from other men, each of them were committed to interrupting regulation in their individual way. All agreed it would look different for each man based on the context around the regulation but they felt the need to “do it anyway”, each in his own way. Three of the participants talked about having to make a choice to which “part” of them would be showing up in relation to their masculine identities.



Figure 11. Juxtaposition

Oliver captured the sentiments of the participants who described the need to hold on to and honor all pieces of their masculine identity, including those identities rejected by the unwritten code of masculinity:

You have the cactus growing and a daisy or some sort of flower next to it. It portrays the juxtaposition of masculinity and how humans are beautiful beings,



yet society says that males have to be hard and callous and have thorns. Endure hardship and be tough like a cactus, they can live a long time without water. The beauty and delicacy of a flower... (pause) I think everyone was delicate in certain areas, to a certain extent. It's kind of what society says you need to be and who you actually are. Maybe you're a tough person and feel you have to put up walls, but at the end of the day I don't think anyone likes doing that.

The males in this study also came to the conclusion that men need to take opportunities to talk, engaging in authentic conversations without the presence of the mask that was so often used in the regulation of masculinity. Some talked about being nervous and hesitant when they initially agreed to participate in this study, but each agreed that through the study they enjoyed the opportunity to "really talk" and to do so without having to slide into some type of hyper masculine pose. Jessie illustrated this point,

And it's just, it's really... umm... It's tough, which was why I fuck with stuff that was like this. This was what I would like to do, talk to people just like me.

Specifically African people like me. The thing was, through this experience I see how much of a bully I've been to others. A bully. In the sense that, because I couldn't be myself I would pour my insecurities on other people. And so, yeah if I see a gay person I'll say look at that faggot over there, his daddy don't love him.

And what I get now was that I'm involved in regulating someone else's masculinity because I'm scared and tryin' not to get mine regulated. That's kinda like ... (pause) a big thing to realize. So yeah, we have to be able to sit down and talk about this stuff and answer these hard questions. This was good because I feel I could just talk freely.

Each of the participants nodded with Jessie's revelation as Lamon interjected, The participation [with regulation] comes from when you're trying so hard to be accepted. You're trying so hard that you start to turn on the people who are just like you. You want some type of acceptance so you start to participate. You start to be the person you said you could never become. You start to change your authentic self. You start to not love yourself for who you are, you are chastising who you are. The people just like you, you put them down. You're basically saying you don't love yourself. And you're making fun of the people who are just like you, who go through the things you go through. You do all of this just to survive in society, you see these things. It's so sad and frustrating and you do these things to survive and its mind blowing. But I'm sitting here thinking, man, we've actually really, like ... (pause) talked, like really talked to one another through this whole project. Hell, it felt good to do that.

Maximus agreed with the sentiments shared by Jessie and Lamon and stated "talking in spaces like this, you know, where you feel safe, was going to be the only thing that interrupts all that other mess."

Participants believed more colleges and universities should create intentional spaces with trained facilitators to help men open up in honesty and truth with one another. The participants believed that in order to transgress the regulations of masculinity, then continued conversations were crucial. Jessie provided insight by stating,

We've got to have programs and stuff where you can just be, and not have all these different negative perceptions of what a man should be. That's where you

experience growth; I would hope that one day I meet some more men like that.

Some I can grow with, I don't want to be stuck in that locker room phase. I know men die like that, men die because they stay stuck in that phase, but it's the truth. I've learned not to blame them for that, you get stuck in this perception of I'm alone in this world and you get used to being a loner but talking like this really helps.

Similarly, Oliver agreed to the statements expressed by his peers. He expressed he was pleased he got to meet these other men and felt like this was a real bonding experience. He expanded,

Talking like this helps me see the best person I can be was being myself, feeling how I feel, voicing my opinion. Doing things that might not fall into the normal guidelines of what masculinity was. I am a heterosexual male, having a friend or standing up for someone who's homosexual, not matching up with other guys, it comes back. It's having the heart and the mindset, what you do and how you do it, inspiring people to move forward. It's worth something bigger than me.

Sometimes it's intimidating, you may lose your friends for what you believe in.

And yeah, just inspiring change. Talking to people, not being scared and being a genuine person.

Lamon echoed the words shared by Oliver and felt moved to share,

Men have to be conscious about making a pledge to yourself that you won't be the person that regulated you. You won't do that to other people. Educate people on the importance of being an ally, being important for someone else. Taking time to reflect, use my experiences to help people grow, I can be an ally to myself and

to other men. Take that time back for self-reflection, telling myself it's going to be okay.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter presented seven major findings by centering the lived realities of five adult male learners in higher education by using queer theory to amplify their voices and perceptions about the negotiation of the regulation of their masculinity. This chapter provided an opportunity to evaluate the “tensions among voice, signature, and audience” (Brower, Abolafia, & Carr, 2000, p.149). Findings were presented in this study through emergent themes in order to highlight the research questions developed for this dissertation and to consider what the literature indicates about these topics. In-depth individual interviews, a focus group interview, and photos taken by the participants provided the primary sources of data for this study. The data presents jarring tolls both placed upon men and enacted by men. Gomez (2012) states,

I recognized that day one of the harshest tariffs that comes along with this masculinity I had struggled against: fear of love. Fear of being held and kissed and knowing someone attributes that word to us. We keep our distance because it comes with responsibility and expectation and commitment. There are so many kinds of love, but one thing they all have in common was giving” (p. 237).

And, as seen by the participant data, there are certain kinds of giving more acceptable to their masculine socialization than others. Rarely are men taught that stepping into their power includes stepping into their vulnerability along with the inclusion of all people and multiple masculinities (Askew & Ross, 1998; Anderson, 2008). The challenge ultimately

remains on whether or not the adult male learners choose to step into their vulnerability, therefore embracing their power or remain stuck in the locker room.

Hermano, we aren't what we call each other.  
Hermano, we've lost too many of us already.  
Hermano, me llamo Carlos. Ya nos conocemos.  
That's Spanish for, "I'm Carlos. We already know each other."  
I'm your brother. Tu eres mi hermano.  
Let's start something.

- Excerpt from *How to Fight*, Carlos Andres Gomez

## V. CONCLUSIONS

“A traveler, who has just left a vast city, climbs the neighboring hill; as he goes farther off, he loses sight of the men whom he has just quitted; their dwellings are confused in a dense mass; he can no longer distinguish the public squares, and can scarcely trace out the great thoroughfares; but his eye has less difficulty in following the boundaries of the city, and for the first time he see the shape of the whole.”

- Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore men’s notions of masculinity, specifically around issues of regulation. The research questions that guided this study included: How do college men negotiate the regulation of their masculinity? The supporting questions that helped inform this study included: How do college men’s perceptions of other men’s notion of masculinity shape their relationship with others and how do college men interrupt or transgress the regulation of their masculinity?

The data were collected in multiple stages while in-depth, semi-structured interviewing served as the primary collection source for the data (Patton, 2002; Saldana, 2009). The tenets of Queer Theory and methodology were used throughout this research to frame data and analysis. Stage I was a participant demographic sheet and a 45-60 minute individual interview with five adult male learners enrolled in higher education. The second stage included a photo elicitation interview with each participant that lasted between 60-90 minutes. Each participant shared 7-10 photographs with the researcher and examined the photographs related to concepts of masculinity and regulation. The third stage of data was collected through a photo elicitation focus group interview lasting four hours. The participants offered their insights, thoughts and experiences from their lived realities and made multiple meanings of the photographs taken by the participants

in order to gain understanding of the questions posed in the study. With each interview, an increasing degree and intensity of responses were shown by each of the participants. Harris and Harper (2010) wrote of the same experiences in their research with college men, expressing, “After some initial hesitation, these men shared very insightful and poignant thoughts regarding their identities and experiences as men. In this way their [masculinity] was like an egg shell. It appeared firm and impenetrable, but once cracked everything poured out” (p. 57).

The meaning-making process was developed as I explored the data by identifying themes within the stories shared by my participants. Throughout this process I used descriptive codes, which are often are one-word capitalized code on the right-hand side column of my data that summarize the primary aspect of my topic from the excerpt. These codes then helped me to determine what parts of the participant’s story should be applied to the theoretical framework. I then explored the data by “clumping the codes” and placed them “into categories and subcategories” so I could establish relationships between the data (Glesne, 1992, p. 195). While establishing codes that would be useful for the scope of this study, I also was able to determine codes that were not useful within this framework.

Themes emerged from the data which included masking, the locker room mentality, using drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism, limited communication styles, code switching, restricting joy and emotion. Chapter four provided an opportunity to problematize masculinity in order to help us understand what issues exist. The data discussed in chapter four also serves as a context for theorizing possible future research, which was explicated in this chapter, along with recommendations for practice for

student affairs educators and K-12 educational leadership. Chapter five serves as a base to take us forward.

### **Guiding Principles**

While many stages of “Guyland” seem dated and limited for present day masculinity, it was a tough protocol for men to break free. As the men in the study shared, this hegemonic code came with its own set of rewards and punishments, a model that perpetuates the limited allowance of males to move beyond the adherence to these notions of male behaviors (Harris & Harper, 2008; Kimmel, 2008). Failure to move beyond the traditional roles of male behavior happened because men become triggered to societal expectations when experiencing vulnerability and they can often avoid vulnerability at all costs. Essentially “Guyland” and this hegemonic code of masculinity are particularly destructive because they place men into an either-or position that does not allow a space for cooperation or flexibility when trying to gain new perspectives or for another person’s insight and point of view to be considered (Hennen, 2008).

The adult male learners who participated in this study shared that at some point in their lives they all learned how to perform or “do” masculinity. Butler (2004) wrote,

If gender was a kind of doing, an incessant activity performed, in a part, without one’s knowing and without one’s willing, it was not for that reason automatic or mechanical. On the contrary, it was a practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint. Moreover, one does not “do” one’s gender alone. One was always ‘doing’ with or for another, even if the other was only imaginary. What I call my ‘own’ gender appears perhaps at times as something that I author, indeed, own.

But the terms that make up one’s own gender are, from the start, outside oneself,



beyond oneself in a society that has no single author (and that radically contests the notion of authorship itself). (p.1)

Several authors postulate gender as a performance or a type of doing (Butler, 2004; Connell, 2005; Hennen, 2008). This provided a frame that the adult male learners in my study have at times performed (or “do”) masculinity based on their negation of a broader societal view, along with how masculinity was performed within their communities and their daily lives. For instance, some of the participants in the study discussed enacting masculinity in a way that was not naturally a part of their identity, but the participants took their cue of how to express masculinity based on their environments. Some participants stated they did not enjoy enacting this type of masculinity but felt the pressure to do so because of fear of rejection from the men around them based on the location of where they were and whom they were with.

**Unmasking normalized performance of masculinity: Problematizing.** The data from this study suggested masking was a regular occurrence in the lives of some men. Kimmel (2008) found that adult male learners in higher education often try to cover up areas of their life they are unassured in by masking it in ostentatious behavior, and false bravado. Landreau and Rodriguez (2012) and Ludeman (2011) posited that most college-aged men neglect relying on their own beliefs, standards or ideas and often compare themselves to the men they believe to be their ideal of masculine stature. Negative attitudes toward intimacy, connection and help-seeking skills are a reflection of what Munoz (2009) explained as a masculine self-reliance and rejection about the need to be mutually connected to others; these create barriers to college men’s identity formation and development (Harris & Barone, 2011; Kellom & Groth, 2010; Howe, 2016; Kimmel,

2008). “Cis-hetero-normative socialization was why men get disconnected from themselves and can’t cry even when their hurting and sad. It’s why it’s just a little too costly for males to show tenderness and love to their male friends...they get labeled with the same pejorative terms that we women folk get labeled with” (Christianity: A Queer Theology, Sermon 1, Benn, 2016).

The act of performing gender associated with masking appeared throughout the study. Participants in this study indicated they performed gender roles based on their location or the people they would encounter in order to fit in. Participants also indicated they felt the need to hide aspects of their masculinity and distance themselves from certain masculine behavior. The men in this study openly discussed placing on a mask, which further creates obstacles and restrictions. Gender role conflict, which often leads adult male learners to masking has been empirically connected to disruptive and oftentimes problematic behavior exhibited by college-aged men (Capraro, 2004; Davis & Wagner, 2005; Harper & Harris, 2010; Jones, 2009).

Laker and Davis (2011) posited that masking “reflects a zero-sum framing of identity issues that reinforces the idea that we are competing against each other” (p. 9). Some participants in this study questioned whether or not they would ever be able to fully take off the mask and leave it off. Butler (1990) argued “There was no gender identity behind the expressions of gender... identity was performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results. This was specific to the subjectivity of who was performing, a mix of subjective experience and encounter with contesting discourses that frame and interpret that experience (p. 103). As suggested in this study, both hegemonic and the more emancipatory discourses create subjects with identity and

agency and subjugate, that was force a knower into ways of understanding and acting – as seen in the data from the participants in this study. There were times during the study when the mask came off, for instance with Alejandro, who openly talked about a topic that men rarely comment on: issues around body image. Alejandro stated,

I am very careful with the pictures that I post on Facebook and Instagram. I am constantly looking at my arms to see if they look big enough and I'd probably not ever post a pic of me shirtless. I would say men struggle... (pause) We struggle with the way we look just like women, but we don't tell them that. I want to. I want to say 'I get it,' but I don't say it often because I'm not supposed to. But I did tell one girl that I'm close to. She was really doubting herself one day and was so upset about her weight and so I told her... (pause) hey, I understand because I struggle too. I started pointing out what I'm insecure about and it seemed to make her more comfortable. So yeah, I guess sometimes the mask comes off... (pause) because we have to support each other. Lift each other up, you know?

Some felt their need to belong and feel included would not allow for the mask to stay off. Strayhorn (2012) explained that a sense of belonging was a basic human need; all people want to belong. It's a fundamental motive sufficient to drive human behavior; people do things, say things, and even adapt their own behaviors and thought to satisfy belongingness needs. It appears that some of the men in the study experienced a need for belonging and an unwillingness to rely on their own beliefs or standards interrupts the opportunity to put down the mask. As data from Lamon indicated,

You're trying so hard that you start to turn on the people who are just like you.

You want some type of acceptance so you start to participate. You start to be the

person you said you could never become. The people just like you, you put them down. And you're making fun of the people who are just like you, who go through the things you go through. You do all of this just to survive in society, you see these things. It's so sad and frustrating and you do these things to survive and its mind blowing.

Lamon's words described the complexity of his experience surrounding the multiple identities he holds and the masculine identity he performs in order to feel included. In order to feel accepted, this consistent reproduction of hegemonic masculinity has led to college men failing to understand the paradox of enacting a gender ideology to the impairment of their personal relationships and academic achievement (Davis & Wagner, 2005; Harris, 2010; Laker & Davis, 2011; Kellom, 2004; Strayhorn, 2012).

**The locker room as a metaphor for hegemonic spaces: Interruptions.** Each of the participants in this study had their own experience of regulating another man's masculinity or having their own masculinity regulated in the locker room. Kimmel () claims that male influence manifest as policing by peers creates the construct of masculinity for many men. It was evident from the participants' responses that each of them earned credibility by performing and exhibiting hegemonic masculine behaviors, actions and beliefs. This finding was in accordance with recent research on college men and masculinities (Capraro, 2004; Davis & Wagner, 2005; Harper, 2006; Ludeman, 2004). Bonds formed between men are developed out of relationships that allowed and encouraged men to exhibit aggressive, demeaning and injurious behaviors through insults and jokes (Strayhorn, 2009).

Each of the participants described the locker room, a place established for men to come together to learn how to work together, build teams and establish bonds (Erhman, 2013). However, each of the men described the locker room as the actual place where the largest amount of policing of gender occurs. Furthermore, the locker room serves as a representation for the dominant narrative around masculinity. Slurs like “faggot,” “pussy” or “bitch” were used to designate how specific activities or characteristics displayed by men are not considered masculine by others. According to Butler (2004), “You only trust those who are absolutely like yourself, those who have signed a pledge of allegiance to this particular identity” (p. 2). Therefore, men enacted the performance of hegemonic masculinity displayed in the locker room in order to gain trust and acceptance with one another. In essence, this type of masculine performance was a man’s allegiance to one another. The man perpetrating such constructed violations was then relegated to a lesser status by others in the locker room. Participants explained how this policing of gender was an ordinary occurrence that takes many forms. The locker room represented a mentality where men are constantly reminded that certain behaviors and choices are frequently prioritized as masculine. If men displayed any type of behavior that contests the rigid boundaries placed on masculinity, then the locker room became a place where men are relegated to the margins; they are made to feel less and their masculinity was controlled through name calling, physical acts of violence, humiliation, coercion, peer pressure and bullying (Wade and Rochelen, 2013).

Recently, three 17-year-old high school football players were accused of sexually assaulting a 14-year-old freshman teammate by penetrating his rectum with a broom handle in the locker room on “No Gay Thursday,” at a high school in the northeast

(Grindley, 2016). It was reported the victim's screams were heard by others in the locker room, but none of the students on the team or in the locker room did anything to stop the assault. According to reports, "No Gay Thursday" was established by the team as a tradition where players would harass any of the males in the locker room who were deemed as gay or not masculine enough by members of the team. This type of hazing was routine and other acts used to regulate masculinity included tactics used to cause humiliation and power differentials. Hazing in the locker room included assaults involving upperclassmen putting their genitals on the face or head of the underclassman and then pressuring them to clean the bathroom in front of everyone with nothing on but their underwear while they taunted and harassed the individual. Despite the taunts, bullying and assaults, this tradition has gone on for three years and school administrators indicate they had no idea this was occurring on their campus (The Advocate, 2016).

While the above example actually describes the regulation taking place in an actual locker room, the data from this study showed how the locker room mentality has transgressed beyond the physical space of a locker room and into all aspects of masculinity. Each of the participants talked about the sense of being watched and having to alter their behavior or actions in some way in order to perform what was deemed appropriate masculine behavior. Essentially, there are now other venues where masculinity was performed and observed by male peers. The locker room has now transcended into the board room, the barber shop, employment, the family home, etc.

The locker room can be harmful to men because a man knows his actions are being watched and policed – ultimately, a decision will be made about his worthiness in relation to his masculinity. The locker room, as place, was a metaphor, rather than one

specific place. College men are encountering the metaphorical locker room in their daily lives – in the very places where they live, work and play. However, what can become even more harmful for a man was staying stuck in the locker room through internalized policing. When men internalized the locker room mentality, they began to make changes to their own masculine behavior based on their own internalized policing rather than from external forces. This internalized policing reflects Foucault's (1977) notion of panoptic regulation. For Foucault, knowledge came from gaining power and producing it. Power exists in every situation; power was the critical concept because it serves as a key component between people. Power also played the lead role in complicated forms of strategy while being able to influence people's behavior (Mason, 2016). For Foucault, power served as the producer of reality. Many of the male participants in this study recognized and addressed power dynamics that impacted their reality. The importance for Foucault resided in the effect of power. The effect of power within systems, practices, and the power dynamics within all aspects of the world around us – how power impacts our behavior and decisions was what Foucault found interesting. (Mason, 2016). The panoptican regulation was clearly seen in the northeastern high school during the "No Gay Thursday" hazing events. Foucault (1978) stated,

Knowledge linked to power, not only assumes the authority of 'the truth' but has the power to make itself true. All knowledge, once applied in the real world, has effects, and in that sense at least, 'becomes true.' Knowledge, once used to regulate the conduct of others, entails constraint, regulation and the disciplining of practice. Thus, there was no power relation without the correlative constitution of

a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time, power relations. (p. 27)

The locker room and the policing of gender that takes place in that space ultimately assumes the authority of truth, and as experienced by the men in this study, had the power to make itself true. Some men became so accustomed to this type of reality and truth that they no longer need the admonition from peers because the admonition has been learned and internalized by the men themselves. Katz (2013) argued “We’ve been witnessing a culture in retreat – a narrative that tells men that the best way to respond to change was not to adapt, but to re-claim traditional masculine control and dominance from the forces of ‘feminization’” (p. 14). Essentially, this retrenchment continued to be the subtext in that portrayed in violence against other men, violence against women and in even in the extreme political rhetoric we are experiencing in society today.

In a sermon series entitled “Christianity: A Queer Theology,” Rev. Benn preaches in her second sermon that “Queering” was at least three things, inclusive, transgressive and blurring...blurring with regard to fixed boundaries. She states that the “transgressive nature of queer was a decisive behavior. Specifically, it was a way of being 1) deliberately oppositional in stance against the way society normalizes something, 2) it was the decision to embrace and then reclaim somethings use and then 3) to re-appropriate its use for something other than what society intended it to be used for” (Christianity: A Queer Theology, Sermon 2, Benn, 2016). This relates to the ways in which some collegiate men are choosing to queer masculinity in the way that Foucault discusses.



In spite of all of this, queering the metaphor of the locker room provides Student Affairs educators with the opportunity to create space for emancipatory narratives as well. Foucault (1976) writes,

We are informed that if repression has indeed been the fundamental link between power, knowledge and sexuality since the classical age, it stands to reason we will not be able to free ourselves from it except at a considerable cost: nothing less than a transgression of laws, a lifting of prohibitions, an eruption of speech, a reinstating of pleasure within reality, and a whole new economy in the mechanism of power will be required (p. 87)

In other words; this will not be easy, in fact this was going to be a struggle and a constant transgression. However, it was possible. Take for example the data presented from Maximus. For Maximus, the locker room metaphor transcended into the student organization in which he served as president. The data presented by Maximus would support the declaration provided by Foucault concerning considerable cost Maximus stated,

As a straight man, I'm an ally. I believe in advocating for homosexual males. I especially think it's important for a Black man to be an ally. I was President of multicultural organization. I organized our event with another multicultural organization and it was about inclusion, it was called love the community, and it was homosexual men, some were bisexual in the room, and we were discussing what it was to be straight and gay. We were talking about why Black heterosexual men don't feel comfortable around homosexual men. Some were saying they feel endangered. Me, I was like, 'I don't know why, it's never bothered me that

someone was gay. Y'all are trippin. Gay men are our brothers. We have to love and appreciate everyone in our community. We gotta work to make everyone feel like they belong here.' It tripped me out, men were freaking out, saying shit like 'yeah, I gotta go, I have class to study for. The exec board tried to scold me for doing it. I feel like it was something that was necessary, sometimes men have a problem with feeling that it's ok to be who you are and love who you love. After that I was alienated from the group and asked to step down as President, but you know what? You better believe I'd do that shit again.

At the cost of his presidency in the organization, Maximus understood the need to transgress and move beyond the laws of the “Guyland” – he realized that in order to move forward, he had to act boldly and with confidence in order to interrupt the metaphor of the locker room. According to Katz, (2006) “The argument that 'boys will be boys' actually carries the profoundly anti-male implication that we should expect bad behavior from boys and men. The assumption was that they are somehow not capable of acting appropriately, or treating girls and women with respect” (p. 23) In essence, Foucault’s (1978) work has helped Student Affairs educators work with men to gain an understanding of how power dynamics can command our moral code and through queering these dynamics, our adult male learners can challenge, contest, expand and augment those codes. Following Foucault, Student Affairs educators found themselves at the intersection of challenge and support: educators are now in a space to work with our adult male learners as we head down the path to a “whole new economy” (Foucault, 1978, p. 87). Gomez (2016) would agree that Student Affairs educators have the

opportunity and the responsibility to teach adult male learners how to challenge, contest and interrupt outdated masculinity codes that harm other men and women. He stated,

And what are we afraid of? We're afraid of our fathers, our brothers, our friends, our potential to be our fullest, best, most authentic selves. We're afraid that we won't do a good job, that someone won't like us, that we'll look weak. We're afraid to say, "I love you", or "I'm sorry", or "I can't", or simply, "Hey, dude, can you please stop catcalling random women on the street?" Our actions don't have to meet outdated notions of chivalry. We don't need to step in to protect women. We need to step in to check each other – to stop other men. Like the time when I was 13 and some random guy tried to bond with me on the L train platform in Manhattan, as he ogled a girl passing and then looked at me to join in. I was in middle school, the man was maybe 35 and the person he was ogling was, at most, 15. I just shook my head and said: 'Naw, man.' The dude looked at me like I'd just set myself on fire. He looked horrified, stunned, and confused.

Or the time recently I was playing basketball with a friend. We were talking junk during a game of one-on-one and he called me a 'bitch'. I was like, 'Whoa, dude. All joking aside, that's a word we need to stop using.' He immediately apologized, and the moment became a discussion point for us later that night.

(p. 3).

Student Affairs educators can help adult male learners see these interruptions can happen daily, and be done with ease and little risk. These types of interruptions can carry great influence with other males and begin to shift the culture of how men engage with and interact with each other.

**The burden of emotional distance: Evoking.** Participants in the study reported restricting emotions to those seen as adequate or reasonable for men (Connell, 2005; Kimmel, 2010). Hence, emotions that were perceived with femininity or weakness were often avoided by most of the participants. Participants discussed being aware of restricting the emotions they were currently experiencing at the time in order to display the appropriate level of masculinity needed in the situation, despite what they were feeling. Many of the data revealed participants became unwilling to show vulnerability because of the perceived policing they believed they would receive from the men around them. Participants shared they denied the feelings experienced because they felt that by showing any vulnerability, they would be associated with femininity. As Brown (2015) declared,

There are too many people today who instead of feeling hurt are acting out their hurt; instead of acknowledging pain, they're inflicting pain on others. Rather than risking feeling disappointed, they're choosing to live disappointed. Emotional stoicism was not badassery. Blustery posturing was not badassery. Swagger was not badassery. Perfection was about the furthest thing in the world from badassery (p. 27).

The conceptions of hegemonic masculinity oftentimes did not allow for men to display vulnerability. Katz (2013) explained "The emotional damage men suffer from being around violence – whether in combat or in civilian society – was compounded by the fact that men are taught to suffer in silence out of fear of being seen as weak and less than a man" (p. 7). Socializing factors influenced men to not acknowledge or process feelings they are experiencing (Sallee, 2011; Patton, 2011; Pleck, 1974; Reeser, 2010). However,

data presented in this study show some participants resiliency and willingness to dig deeply to explore the intersecting issues surrounding masculinity, manhood and regulation. As indicated by Jessie, communicating your emotions allows for growth. He stated,

We've got to have programs and stuff where you can just be, and not have all these different negative perceptions of what a man should be. That's where you experience growth; I would hope that one day I meet some more men like that. Some I can grow with; I don't want to be stuck in that locker room phase. I know men die like that, men die because they stay stuck in that phase, but it's the truth. I've learned not to blame them for that, you get stuck in this perception of I'm alone in this world and you get used to being a loner but talking like this really helps.

As Jessie shared, avoiding the male code of silence and emotional distance can be lifesaving and certainly life changing. Evoking emotions and processing the experiences that college men face can help serve as a deterrent against the locker room phase that some of our college men find themselves locked into.

Furthermore, Oliver's data would support the data presented by Jessie. Oliver challenged the notions of emotional distance by exploring the multiple contexts of masculinity in the photo he shared with the cactus and the flower. Oliver shared,

You have the cactus growing and a daisy or some sort of flower next to it. It portrays the juxtaposition of masculinity and how humans are beautiful beings, yet society says that males have to be hard and callous and have thorns. Endure hardship and be tough like a cactus, they can live a long

time without water. The beauty and delicacy of a flower... (pause) I think everyone was delicate in certain areas, to a certain extent. It's kind of what society says you need to be and who you actually are. Maybe you're a tough person and feel you have to put up walls, but at the end of the day I don't think anyone likes doing that.

The reality explored by some of the participants in this study was that college men are multi-dimensional and hold multiple intersecting identities attached to their masculinity. Several of the participants expressed the desire to have a space where men could process fully, evoke freely and communicate openly with one another. To further explore this principle, Munoz (2009) explained the opportunity that queering provides for creating a new reality. Munoz stated,

We have never been queer, yet queerness exists for us as an ideality that can be distilled from the past and used to imagine a future. The future was queerness's domain. Queerness was a structuring and educated mode of desiring that allows us to see and feel beyond the quagmire of the present. The here and now was a prison house. We must strive, in the face of the here and now's totalizing rendering of reality, to think and feel a *then and there*. Some will say that all we have are the pleasures of this moment, but we must never settle for that minimal transport; we must dream and enact new and better pleasures, other ways of being in the world, and ultimately new worlds. Queerness was a longing that propels us onward, beyond romances of the negative and toiling in the present. Queerness was that thing that lets us feel that this world was not enough, that indeed something was missing. Often we can glimpse the worlds proposed and promised

by queerness in the realm of the aesthetic. The aesthetic, especially the queer aesthetic, frequently contains blueprints and schemata of a forward-dawning futurity (p. 6).

Munoz's work in Queer Theory helped Student Affairs educators construct new ways to engage men evoke emotions and explore vulnerability in a new way that was courageous, and brave, providing hope for a brighter future with our adult male learners.

### **Limitations of Study**

The limitations to this qualitative study are threefold: First, this focused on the notions of masculinity and the impact these notions had on relationships with other men. Data collected from this study came from a large Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). Findings from this study should not be considered the experiences of all men who attend a HSI. Second, the process of qualitative research was informed heavily by the researcher (Creswell, 1998). It was imperative to note the differences of interpretation from one human researcher to another (Creswell, 1998). Third, participants were selected through purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). This approach "identifies cases of interest from people who know people who know what cases are information-rich, that was, good examples for study" (p. 182). Male students were identified by student affairs professionals who work directly with male college students. The referral asked to identify students who either appeared to be experiencing some type of gender-related struggle or men who seemed to contest the scripted gender expectations. Obviously, the Student Affairs professionals would not have access to all men on the campus that would fit this category and some could be overlooked or excluded based on the purposeful sample

(Patton, 2002). Further, the study did not attempt to include men who appeared to readily accept hegemonic or normalized scripts of masculine performance.

### **Implications of the Study**

Research (Edwards & Jones, 2009; Saldana, 2009) indicated adult male learners battle with their gender identity and development prior to college during their K-12 socialization, during college and even after college, based on messages they received during these times of socialization. Research also explained that men shield their authentic truth in terms of identities, beliefs and actions as it relates to the performance of their gender. The data gathered in this study proved each of these men have multiple identities they carry with them. However, conflicts within those multiple dimensions (such as race, sexuality, nationality) arise because their performance of masculinity often times does not allow them to fully operate out of those authentic intersections (Gomez, 2012; Harper & Harris, 2010; Kimmel, 2010). I propose that implications from the data raise questions of how to intentionally create opportunities for adult male learners to examine the multiple dimensions of regulation including college men's perceptions of other men's notion of masculinity and the interruption or transgression of the regulation of their masculinity.

To this end, Munoz (2009) would argue that Queer Theory provides that opportunity. By utilizing Queer Theory as the lens to ground our work with college men, Student Affairs educators are deconstructing concepts and futuring new realities for the adult male learners on campus throughout the country. As Munoz (2009) stated,



Turning to the aesthetic in the case of queerness was nothing like an escape from the social realm, insofar as queer aesthetics map future social relations. Queerness was also a performative because it was not simply a being but a doing for and toward the future. Queerness was essentially about the rejection of a here and now and an insistence on potentiality or concrete possibility for another world (p. 7).

Therefore, for educators working with men in communities, K-12 educational settings and in higher education, recommendations for future research must also be a call to action to address what opportunities we are providing for unmasking. Similarly, this call to action needs to be inclusive of interconnection between educational and community settings. I propose K-12 leadership and Student Affairs educators examine how they are working to actively make sure they are not supporting, allowing and continuing the locker room mentality in our educational settings. Because once the locker room mentality causes boys and men to pick up the mask in our classrooms, that mentality then bleeds into the barbershop and into our community spaces ... ultimately never allowing an opportunity for the man to let the mask slip. Specifically, what recommendations can be made to allow the mask to slip off or to be removed in critical spaces? Future research and recommendations have implications for educational leadership in K-12 settings and for Student Affairs educators in higher education settings. The recommendations provided in this chapter were created based on this research study and the men that I worked with in order to support adult male learners navigate the regulation of masculinity. However, I suggested these recommendations will benefit the lived realities of all people.

Many K-12 leaders and Student Affairs educators were concerned with the experiences of boys and men, and know these experiences lead to and have a direct impact with the experiences of girls and women. Therefore, we must help adult male learners break the code of silence that covers up and perpetuates egregious and extreme behaviors based on the regulation of masculinity. Kimmel (2008) wrote,

As a culture, we need to drive a wedge in between the perpetrators and the bystanders, severing the few from the many, and isolating their behavior. This wedge requires that some young men need to begin to challenge their peers, and this was risky. Think of all those whistleblowers – the ones who broke the culture of silence that surrounds military torture, corporate malfeasance, or other nefarious behaviors. At great personal risk, they threw back the veil that shields perpetrators from scrutiny. Their actions, in some cases, brought about drastic change. But being a whistleblower in Guyland was neither safe nor popular. We need to learn to support the guys who take this stance (p. 280-281).

As the researcher of this study, I asserted creating spaces to help men break the silence ultimately creates spaces for all people to live healthier, more whole-hearted lives.

However, Student Affairs educators and educational leaders in K-12 settings must examine who are we asking to break the silence? O'Malley (2014) insisted,

It remains a common expectation that if these silences are to be broken, persons who experience themselves as queer or gender nonconforming have a responsibility to 'come out,' which was to say individuals must opt to publically make known their desire in areas as vulnerable as sexuality and love, visibly

perform transitions across gender, or discuss the intimate complexities of biological difference amidst largely unaware audiences (p. 355-356).

Educational leaders should work to understand it would benefit the educational settings they lead to begin teaching communities that are often viewed with the most privilege (White, male, Christian, heterosexual, able-bodied) to use their voices to speak up and out for members of the community who often find themselves pressed into the margins (Katz, 2013). If educators developed alliances with individuals with dominant identities to contest hegemonic narratives, provide counter-narratives and break the silence, then we could see understanding across difference (Landreau & Rodriguez, 2012).

The recommendations provided for Student Affairs educators have been developed with a Queer Theory lens applied. They were recommended based on the concept of queering as a potentially “transgressive intervention that may disturb, contest, and challenge some of the basic assumptions that underpin the concept of masculinity (Mac an Ghaill, 2012). These recommendations were transgressive in nature because in order to create spaces for vulnerability and courage, educators must be willing to disrupt how we produce masculinity. As Brown (2015) declared,

I want to be in the arena. I want to be brave with my life. And when we make the choice to dare greatly, we sign up to get our asses kicked. We can choose courage or we can choose comfort, but we can’t have both. Not at the same time.

Vulnerability was not winning or losing; it’s having the courage to show up and be seen when we have no control over the outcome. Vulnerability was not weakness; it’s our greatest measure of courage (p. 87).

The recommendations developed in this study are meant to reflect our greatest measure of courage ... our vulnerability.

### **Recommendations for Student Affairs Educators**

1. Student Affairs educators must work to acknowledge the different dimensions within masculinity for the adult male learners within their respective institutions (i.e. What does it mean to be a man on a college campus with a disability? What are the realities facing men of color on campus? What does it mean to be a man in a fraternity? What does it mean to be a gay, Muslim male on campus?) Once the different dimensions of masculinity have been acknowledged, educators can frame alliances across difference. Student Affairs educators cannot begin to extend the learning beyond the classroom if that extension does not include programming for a multidimensional male learner to participate in that extension.
2. Student Affairs educators should be strategic with campus and human resources when developing intentional, critical learning spaces that allow adult male learners to explore how to construct a more inclusive, progressive, and multidimensional lens of masculinity. Some of these critical learning spaces could include:
  - a. Establish Living, Learning Communities (LLC) in residence halls that invite men (and women who choose to explore) to explore aspects of the multidimensional masculinity that resides within them and to surround themselves in an environment where they live with other men who are committed to exploration beyond the hegemonic masculine archetypes. Additionally, if this was a co-educational residence hall, engage women in

this experience and invite all living in this community to explore identity development through scholarly connection with Queer Theory, Feminist Theory, etc. while exploring the intersections of identity within relationships and community.

- b. Male group counseling sessions established by the university Counseling Center that engenders a space for vulnerability among male participants so they may ruminate the impact of the regulation of masculinity within their own lives and how each of them may perpetuate the cycle of dominant narratives.
  - c. Supporting groups, clubs or organizations that are inclusive of progressive constructions of masculinity (i.e. Men Against Violence) that invite men and women to explore the impact of masculinity on the college campus while working together to provide education, support and solutions.
3. Student Affairs educators have the opportunity and responsibility to present counter-narratives that contest hegemonic masculinity present within the discourse. This could consider:
- a. What type of male students are featured in university-wide advertising, recruitment campaigns and marketing?
  - b. Using large scale and high profile educational programming initiatives to invite speakers to campus that understand and can raise awareness as to why adult male learners who have identities that are not within the dominant, hegemonic narrative often feel they must “mask” their internalized feelings, emotions and behaviors in order to continue social

cohesion (Edwards & Jones, 2009). These speakers must also go beyond the why to action in order to challenge all students to engage in the necessary work.

4. Student Affairs educators must carefully observe non-classroom spaces. For example, Student Affairs educators must be aware if the physical spaces on campus are potentially creating threatening situations or unwelcoming environments for our multidimensional adult male learners. Spaces to consider could include residence hall programs or programs offered through Greek Affairs offices. Are the programs created with unintentional hegemonic masculine themes that could support the regulation of some of the college men in attendance or have negative implications for women attending programs? Spaces need to be inclusive and reflective of the men enrolled in higher education. Are we providing gender inclusive restrooms? Are there spaces in the residence halls where our adult male learners feel safe and secure while in their living environments? Student Affairs educators should work to require spaces on campus be inclusive and reflective of the students we serve.
5. Problems surrounding men and the student conduct process have been identified by many scholars (i.e. Davis, 2002; Davis & Wagner, 2005; Ferguson, 2003; Gehring, 2000; 2004; Gamson & Warner, 1993; Harper & Harris, 2005; Laker & Davis 2011; Sommers, 2000; Strayhorn, 2012). Therefore, Student Affairs educators should necessitate educational sanctioning within the student conduct process that incorporates a model that both supports and challenges adult male learners involved in egregious acts of misconduct involving hegemonic ideals of

masculinity. Incorporate sanctions that compel men to investigate the connections to hegemonic masculinity to the behavior displayed through their actions on campus. Student conduct officers are well positioned to engage in developmentally appropriate dialogues centered around introspection and self-reflection for men to examine issues related to their masculinity. If a sanction were educational in nature, rather than strictly punitive, the adult male learner may be more inclined to engage in the experience and alter his behavior (Gehring, 2000). This could include:

- a. The structure of the conduct meeting and how the conversation was framed.
  - b. Engaging in restorative justice concepts and incorporating restorative justice involving community members impacted by the behavior into the conduct setting.
  - c. Develop sanctioning tools that encourage adult male learners to actively engage in reading scholarly journal articles around issues of masculinity, masking and regulation. Creating male retreats that men participate in that create spaces for deep conversation to help build the connection between the regulation of masculinity and the behavior that was exhibited.
6. Employ gender under the broader framework of diversity and inclusion and invite adult male learners to join a male initiatives committee comprised of student affairs staff and faculty in order to support programming related to diversity and inclusion with a curriculum created for men, written by men that allows for courageous conversations to take place around issues of diversity and inclusion

that are situated within the adult male learner's lives. Student Affairs educators must help campus communities understand men and masculinity are a sound and legitimate multicultural competency topic that should require attention and accompanying training. This could include:

- a. Documentaries, movie screenings or book readings that depict multiple masculinities.
  - b. Male retreat's where men gather together and spend time away from campus exploring a progressive curriculum and challenging the notions of hegemonic masculinity they may have grown up with. The weekend was spent doing tasks that build trust and deeper connections with other men.
  - c. Build strong coalitions with Women's Resource Centers on campuses to help adult male learners understand hegemonic masculinity impacts both men and women. Partner together with Women's Resource Centers to plan programs for the campus community.
7. Student Affairs educators could utilize multiple ways for adult male learners to make meaning of their masculinity through creative expression and performance art. This could include:
- a. Spoken word poetry performances.
  - b. Role plays and theater troupes.
  - c. Photoelicitation and gallery walks.
8. For some men, the impact of parental involvement made a critical difference during their identity development and behavior choices (Gehring, 2000).

Therefore, Student Affairs educators could invite families back to campus for



events such as Homecoming and Family Weekend and host informative sessions for students and family to attend together centered on student identity development, in order to support college men and women.

9. Campus recreation centers could take the lead in creating intentional programming around the multidimensional masculinities that men encompass. Campus recreation centers draw in a large number of adult male learners who utilize their facilities and services; therefore, this department could present counter-narratives of hegemonic masculinity in their programming initiatives that engage men in task oriented events, sports and activities.
10. Student Affairs educators should develop resources and support to be a public ally to women. Support the work of women's centers on college campuses and attend "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" events or "Take Back the Night" rallies or other similar events. Organize and assist students in fundraising initiatives around these events.
11. Student Affairs educators should endeavor to develop opportunities for adult male learners to consider issues of stigma related to help-seeking behavior. Ruffolo (2013), Whorley & Addis (2006) advised that self-stigma often occurs in men when then man becomes aware of the public stigma that exists, and then forms personal attitudes and beliefs that may support the public stigma and then applies the personal stigma to the self. Opportunities to explore the various ways Student Health Centers, academic tutoring, Counseling Centers, Disability Resource Centers, Student Diversity and Inclusion offices, Financial Aid offices, Campus Recreation and Career Service Centers can intentionally provide help and

support to men, utilizing progressive male programming initiatives will help decrease stigma associated with help-seeking behavior. These departments should also work together and review the literature on men's help-seeking in order to better understand why adult male learners are underutilizing these critically important services.

12. Student Affairs educators should utilize Queer Theory as an interruption versus a counter narrative when working with our adult male learners on our college campuses. Student Affairs educators should understand that queering masculinity is liberating for those involved and compels individuals to act. However, in order to do this, Student Affairs Educators, especially those who identify as male, should understand the concept that we have no business being in the business of supporting students until we can support ourselves in the healing process.

According to Bowen (2009),

Hurt people hurt people. We are not being judgmental by separating ourselves from such people. But we should do so with compassion.

Compassion is defined as a "keen awareness of the suffering of another coupled with a desire to see it relieved." People hurt others as a result of their own inner strife and pain. Avoid the reactive response of believing they are bad; they already think so and are acting that way. They aren't bad; they are damaged and they deserve compassion. Note that compassion is an internal process, an understanding of the painful and troubled road trod by another. It is not trying to change or fix that person (p. 23).

Accordingly, Queer Theory provides a disruptive way Student Affairs educators can view training and development programs for the staff and students they support (Landreau & Rodriguez, 2012). For instance, if hosting a male retreat designed to deconstruct hegemonic masculinity and reimagine new potentiality for multiple masculinities is planned as an event within the division, Student Affairs educators should queer their training and development program for that event. Many times in Student Affairs we send an “all-call” out for those staff members who would like to provide assistance to support programming initiatives. However, Student Affairs educators should choose to be disruptive in this process in order to determine staff members selected for this program have actually done their own work around dominant ideologies, hegemonic masculinity, power and privilege in order to avoid perpetuating these concepts onto the students. For example, I planned a male weekend retreat for those involved in the conduct process. I invited male staff from Student Affairs to participate in the weekend and to assist me, but I had to utilize the disruptive elements of Queer Theory by conducting a “Train-the-Trainer” retreat for the male staff members prior to our retreat with the students. In this retreat, we each did the activities that our students were going to participate in and we each engaged in challenging conversations that allowed us to confront and interrupt notions of hegemonic masculinity that invaded spaces in our lives. It was eye opening and provided us a space that allowed us to grow and develop as individuals so we could do our own self-work prior to trying to support the males on our campus during the student retreat. I recommend that Student Affairs

educators employ this Queer Theory framework when developing programs for students to ensure the staff working in these programs have done their own work around the issues involved and addressed through these programs.

### **Educational Leadership – K-12 Schools**

The data presented in this study provided compelling evidence for queering masculinity in educational settings. Queering masculinity in education involved “resisting a conventional identity politics logic that secures and approximates identities through the collection of educational experiences, processes, and practices” (Mac an Ghail, 2012). Data presented in this study indicated adult male learners are entering into higher learning carrying the trauma, damage and burdens placed on them from the locker rooms in their earlier educational experiences and are transferring that trauma into their current spaces (home, work, school) in their lives. Sedgwick (2011) explained that we must “twist” the way we view the concept of masculinity in order to reimagine and recreate it. Mac an Ghail and Haywood (2012) wrote,

Conventional theorizing of masculinity provides the boundaries through which the possibility of queering masculinity can be mobilized and has significant implications for how we see the relationship between gender and sexuality. If masculinity was queered, whereby the constituent features of the gender category become soluble and sexual object choice becomes dislocated, the edges of masculinity become less defined (p. 69-70).

This was a call to action for K-12 educational leaders to understand that without making the edges of masculinity less defined, we will continue to see boys grow into men that

hurt women and other men. This hurt will continue to cause damage in our communities, where we live, work and play.

Essentially, educational leadership should incorporate the concept of queering education, which meant challenging normative patterns of gender and welcoming prospects not typically considered (Heasley & Crane, 2012). Queering calls for systemic change that represented, and encouraged multiple expressions of masculinity that might otherwise be degraded based on their affiliation with homosexuality (Heasley & Crane, 2012). Queering educational frameworks allowed for new realities, experiences and opportunities that will impact men and women on campuses.

### **Implications for Future Research**

The findings of this study revealed how participants understood themselves as adult male learners in a higher education context. The findings also supported existing scholarship on college men and masculinity. Upon the culmination of this study, the following topics are recommended for future research:

1. Data collected throughout this study identified the double-move dynamic (Lather, 2009) that both feminizes the adult male learners and subjugates and dehumanizes women (i.e. “bitch” and similar dynamics seem deployed frequently in this data). What the data revealed was it was not only that their (male participants’) masculinity was overridden by an assertion of femininity, but that women are also degraded and assaulted in the dynamic. In order to examine the language dynamics, one must recognize the “multiplicity of relations of power” (Lather, 2009, p. 223). The use of Lather’s work for future study will help provide context to the efforts of liberation that perpetuate

relations of dominance. This current study was developed to consider ways to provide emancipatory opportunities for men to engage with their pain and traumas experienced through liberation. However, in that process, the men perpetuated relations of dominance against women, continuing the “othering” process. Lather’s (2009) work examines language used to objectify when trying to break down hegemony – the double move dynamic that requires one to consider agency and subjectivity. Further research into this dynamic would be beneficial.

2. The language, moreover, the arrangement of words and images the language presents illustrated by the data in this study was fascinating in terms of being used to describe homophobic behavior. An exploration of this in relation to Pinar’s work on anxiety of the black male body to further understand this phenomenon could serve as excellent future research.
3. The present study was conducted with adult male learners from diverse backgrounds (i.e. race, sexuality, age, ability status). It would be interesting to use the methods and interview protocol developed in this study to queer masculinities within a specific race. For example, what would the study present had all the participants been white males? Queering white masculinities, queering Latino masculinities, queering black masculinities, etc., all raise the question of how racialized knowledge production influences and impacts the queering of masculinities.

4. Masculinities are embedded in “white and non-trans, essentialized sex/gender systems and colonial white supremacies” (Noble, 2012, p. 141).  
This study was conducted with adult male learners whose gender identity and gender expression aligned as male at birth. Scholarship in the area of masculinity seems to occlude female-to-male trans masculinity (Noble, 2012).  
An extension of this study could focus on participants who all identify as trans men and how trans people transform spaces of masculinity.
5. An area of future research could focus on the discourse surrounding hegemonic masculinity from the viewpoints and interactions of cisgender women on college campuses. Research from this study would provide important insight for Student Affairs educators and K-12 educational leadership to learn from cisgender women who navigate the realities and impact faced by masculinity along with seeing if there was a counter-narrative produced in the data with the role these women play in either shaping or producing hegemonic masculinity on college campuses.

### **Personal Reflection**

I always knew this study would be a powerful experience for me. I have always had a strong desire to work with men in order to help build healthy masculinities. I made it my business to create programs for male students to explore male privilege when I was an assistant principal in London, England. I worked with college men in a social justice and activism group when I worked at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and I specifically created sanctioning to address behavior exhibited by college men involved in

the conduct process when I served as the director of Student Conduct in the Dean of Students Office at Tulane University. Throughout my career I made the decision to mentor male students in order to help them disconnect from the deeply embedded forms of hegemonic masculinity. So, yes – I always knew this study would be a powerful experience for me, but a powerfully explosive, violent night in May – in the face of my own fear, suffering and possible death – this study became transformative for me.

From that point on – I knew how powerful regulation truly was. The regulation of my masculinity caused me great trauma – that still shows up in my life to this day and impacts my worldview. The hate crime damaged me ... it changed me. But in that change, I realized my ability to heal, grow and become stronger. Through my healing, I found my voice and realized the power of my story is strong. It would help me to build community with the adult male learners in this study and through our work together, the stories we shared out loud, the stories that were put into writing, all of these stories would establish reality for the future of masculinity.

As a man, I had to face my own Guyland code that was rooted within me. Whether I chose to believe it or not, I had to learn to disrupt the hegemonic masculinity that lived within my daily framework. Working to disrupt those notions was not easy, and it took a great deal of vulnerability. I owed it to myself. I owed it to the men in this study. Once I spoke, I witnessed a shift with the men in the story and saw a disruption of their own Guyland codes. As Lorde (1980) shared,

I was going to die, sooner or later, whether or not I had even spoken myself. My silences had not protected me. Your silences will not protect you.... What are the words you do not yet have? What are the tyrannies you swallow day by day and



attempt to make your own, until you will sicken and die of them, still in silence?

We have been socialized to respect fear more than our own need for language.

I began to ask each time: 'What's the worst that could happen to me if I tell this truth?' Unlike women in other countries, our breaking silence is unlikely to have us jailed, "disappeared" or run off the road at night. Our speaking out will irritate some people, get us called bitchy or hypersensitive and disrupt some dinner parties. And then our speaking out will permit other women to speak, until laws are changed and lives are saved and the world is altered forever.

Next time, ask: What's the worst that will happen? Then push yourself a little further than you dare. Once you start to speak, people will yell at you. They will interrupt you, put you down and suggest it's personal. And the world won't end (p. 87).

I had already faced death, so like Lorde, I had to ask myself what's the worst that will happen? I break the silence against Guyland? I have some men turn their backs on me for speaking out against hegemonic masculinity, patriarchy and dominance? Okay, I can handle that. These men that I had the pleasure of working with in this study also had to ask themselves that very question ... and, they returned each time, willing to dig deeper than they had the time before.

Specifically, the stories shared by the adult male learners in this study are ways to and are characteristics of a "challenge to existing social practices" (Brady, 2006, p. 58), as a "challenge to hegemonic forms of discrimination" (p. 58), and through "creative engagement in which complex images, contradictory discourses, canonical themes and stories, and supposedly common sense versions of reality are disputed" (p. 59). The men

found their voices in this study and used them – they used them to speak truth to power and shed light on past trauma, pain and hurt. But they also found their voices were a tool that could be used to dismantle, disrupt and disengage from unhealthy forms of masculinity. As Lorde (1980) stated,

And the speaking will get easier and easier. And you will find you have fallen in love with your own vision, which you may never have realized you had. And you will lose some friends and lovers, and realize you don't miss them. And new ones will find you and cherish you. And you will still flirt and paint your nails, dress up and party, because, as I think Emma Goldman said, "If I can't dance, I don't want to be part of your revolution." And at last you'll know with surpassing certainty that only one thing is more frightening than speaking your truth. And that is not speaking (p. 88).

What I learned was, that despite the pain that each of us experienced in speaking our truth, we all knew we no longer had the choice to remain silent. The men in this study felt they had a responsibility to speak their truth in order to empower other men to do the same and to interrupt oppressive forms of masculinity. The speaking became easier and easier ... for each of us.

I am forever grateful for the stories shared by the participants in this study and their ability to want to create reality. Josselson (2006), when speaking of research and ethics explains,

... the researcher is now left to grapple with the problems ensuing from analyzing a narrative that has changed ownership. What was once the participant's story now becomes a co-constructed text, the analysis of which falls within the

framework of the interpretive authority of the researcher ... The written word, at least in Western society, has a power far beyond that of words that are spoken. Thus, access to print and the authority to indelibly inscribe a point of view in regard to participants gives the narrative researcher special (even if unwanted) powers that must be acknowledged and ethically managed in a published report (p. 548).

This study provided me with the great privilege and responsibility to ascertain and articulate bold, courageous stories that not only transform my own knowledge and understanding, but potentially the knowledge and understanding of others. As the researcher, I have the duty to ensure these stories are handled with the responsibility and respect they deserve and are replicated in a manner that is ethical and effective for others.

There were noteworthy concepts that developed as I conducted my research.

These included:

1. Queer Theory served as an exceptional theoretical framework to utilize in this study. As the researcher, queering masculinity through this framework allowed me to disrupt the concept of regulation by making it “impossible to continue doing business as usual” (Noble, 2012, p. 10) for the men involved in this study and for myself, as well.
2. I particularly enjoyed Ellsworth’s conceptualization on pedagogical hinges. I appreciated the intersections of learning created throughout the study and the willingness of the adult male learners to engage fully in those intersections. I used poetry – poems, song lyrics and spoken word to engage the participants during our time together. It is my belief that poetry

greatly impacted how they chose to respond to expectations set forth in this investigation, and to each other. Samuels (1987) states, “a poem might contribute an additional impact on the emotional and spiritual levels as well as on the cognitive level” (p. 55). Poetry used in this study provided us “to experiment with language, to create, to know, to engage creatively and imaginatively with experience” (Leggo, 2008, p. 165). I believe these pedagogical hinges, described by Ellsworth, allowed the participants and I to build rich conversation.

3. Our lives are marked by so many moments. Our job was to learn how do we measure those moments and then understand our role within in them. How do we measure the first time we experienced regulation in our lives? What did we learn the last time we regulated someone else? Conducting this study and working on a college campus allowed me to understand that some colleagues would have you believe that working with men on college campuses and in communities around issues of masculinity, power and privilege will always be faced and overshadowed with a deficit model. Some colleagues believe the depths of hegemony are too deeply rooted in men and you will never see change. However, this research has strengthened my belief that one must move beyond a deficit model mentality to an asset model mindset in order to realize the power to shift the reality that positive, multiple masculinities already exist within our adult male learners on our campuses. We must also understand that our current notions of masculinity will not survive this process ... but these

notions were never meant to survive. These current notions of masculinity  
our outdated, unrealistic and harmful. Our men will not survive the current  
notions set forth by masculinity, and this disruption to what they thought  
they knew about masculinity will be painful, difficult and necessary. We  
as men were not meant to come out of this surviving, remaining who we  
always were. Each of us are meant to heal, to learn. Through this  
disruption on hegemonic masculinity, our college men will grow and  
develop into men that represent love, inclusion and humanity; dynamic  
forces and role models for younger generations. Essentially the men in this  
study, and hopefully others impacted by this study will emerge from their  
silence and concurrently invest and renew themselves with their new  
understanding. Lorde (1995) says it best through her poem *A Litany for  
Survival*:

For those of us who live at the shoreline  
standing upon the constant edges of decision  
crucial and alone  
for those of us who cannot indulge the passing dreams of choice  
who love in doorways coming and going  
in the hours between dawns  
looking inward and outward  
at once before and after  
seeking a now that can breed  
futures  
like bread in our children's mouths  
so their dreams will not reflect  
the death of ours;

For those of us  
who were imprinted with fear  
like a faint line in the center of our foreheads  
learning to be afraid with our mother's milk  
for by this weapon

this illusion of some safety to be found  
the heavy-footed hoped to silence us  
For all of us  
this instant and this triumph  
We were never meant to survive.

And when the sun rises we are afraid it might not remain when the sun  
sets we are afraid it might not rise in the morning  
when our stomachs are full we are afraid  
of indigestion  
when our stomachs are empty we are afraid  
we may never eat again  
when we are loved we are afraid  
love will vanish  
when we are alone we are afraid  
love will never return  
and when we speak we are afraid  
our words will not be heard  
nor welcomed  
but when we are silent  
we are still afraid

So it is better to speak  
remembering  
we were never meant to survive

At the completion of this study, I realized there is an amazing space where people either breakdown or breakthrough – it is in these spaces that each of us often face our very own crucible. Each of the participants in this study were able to break through and disrupt the harmful notions of hegemonic masculinity that had been prescribed to them since birth. As the researcher, I witnessed character building in the most extraordinary ways during the break through from these men in this study. I also realized my own breakthrough during this study: if I did not tell my truth, I would be giving myself permission to not tell my truth at any time from that point forward. I choose to live in truth.

## Conclusion

Research utilized for this investigation and some of the data collected during the investigation indicated that masculinity and manhood was founded in inflexible distinctive features determined by society (de Visser, 2009). Gomez (2016) explained his unrest for this culture of manhood and these inflexible features when he declares,

Fellas, I'm tired. Are you tired? Aren't you tired of being that one-dimensional caricature of a man someone told you to be? The kind that was quick to use his fists, feels stuck and afraid but can't show it, the kind destined for prison or anguish or pretending to be anything less than our dreams. I am tired of us hurting each other, ourselves and women. Because that's what the culture of masculinity that we've inherited has us do. It has us hurting (p.3).

The data presented in this study supported the pain that Gomez described. Katz (2013) argued “The pressure to conform to cultural ideas of traditional masculinity cuts across racial, ethnic, and class lines... the test of being a ‘real’ man often comes down to how well you live up to a made-up cultural script” (p. 12). The narrative, which was tired, outdated and played out teaches our boys and men that showing emotion, engaging in sensitivity, appearing smart, utilizing thoughtful, self-reflection and introspection techniques are sure signs of weakness and femininity, while physical toughness, endurance, strength and self-control are the true test of real masculinity (Katz, 2013).

In the United States a real boy climbs trees, disdains girls, dirties his knees, plays with soldiers, and takes blue for his favorite color. When they go to school, real boys prefer manual training, gym, and arithmetic. In college the boys smoke pipes, drink beer, and major in engineering or

physics. The real boy matures into a ‘man’s man’ who plays poker, goes hunting, drinks brandy, and dies in a war (Brown, 1965, p. 21).

Despite fifty-one years passing since the writing of this quote much of what Robert Brown described about American masculinity still holds true, at least as projected cultural assumptions about what it means to be a man. The ubiquitous influence of hegemonic masculinity was an experience that adult male learners in higher education experience daily. Katz (2013) stated college men adopt a “tough guise to shield vulnerability and if men step outside of this rigid code of manhood, they risk being labeled ‘feminine’ or ‘gay’” (p. 9). Fifty-one years later we are witnessing men’s performance of hegemonic masculinity result in campus shootings, sexual assaults, hate crimes, alcohol-related violence, bullying, low retention rates in higher education and suicide (Davis & Wagner, 2005; Harper & Harris, 2010; Harris, 2006; Katz, 2013). Gomez (2016) argued the culture presented by Brown’s writing from fifty-one years ago was both destructive and dangerous for men and women. He claimed,

We are responsible because we belong to the current culture of manhood that allows this – a culture that says we can't show fear, we can't be wrong, and we are entitled to power over others, especially women. But that culture was wrong. And unless we actively work to change it, women will keep getting hurt.

A culture that tells us we're not allowed to be afraid was a culture that denies our own humanity. And if we're not allowed to be human, then we become something else (p.3).

Student Affairs educators must come to realization that a “boys will be boys” mentality was not working (Katz, 2013). How much violence and pain must be inflicted



by men onto other boys, men and women in order for Student Affairs and K-12 educators to understand our traditional notions of how we influence and raise boys to men was broken? How long will Student Affairs and K-12 educators continue to allow males in positions of leadership and authority to model unhealthy, dated, ineffective versions of hegemonic masculinity for our boys and men? (Strayhorn, 2012) The aim of this study was to provide us with the possibility of queering masculinity in order to understand how adult male learners negotiate the regulation of their masculinity. The data presented clear evidence for educators to consider the role of agency. As educational leaders in K-12 and higher education systems, we must understand that agency was negotiated in contextualized moments (Ruffolo, 2009).

My intention in writing this dissertation was to create other modes of evidencing surrounding issues of regulation and how college men's perceptions of other men's notion of masculinity shape their relationship with others. Additionally, this research addressed how college men interrupt or transgress the regulation of their masculinity. The qualitative data presented in this investigation illustrate the leverage of hegemonic masculinity on the regulation of masculinity. This investigation provided support that adherence to hegemonic masculinity impacts gender role strain that influences masking, the locker room mentality and emotional distancing. While hegemonic masculinity was clearly present in the discourse related to the regulation of masculinity, so, too, are the counter-narratives, which dispute, disrupt and contest it.

Educators have the responsibility to investigate, further explore and implement policies and practices that are reflective of queering. Queering asserted multiple qualities of masculinity (Foucault, 1978). Queering provided a more affirming and inclusive

school setting (Rodriguez, 2012). Queering rattled confining hetero-masculine norms (Gomez, 2012). Queering amplified voice and perception to potentiality of masculinities not restrained by the need to control or by the dismay of being different (Rodriguez, 2012). Ultimately, this dissertation was informed by Queer Theory – the “theory of queer futurity that was attentive to the past for the purposes of critiquing a present. This mode of queer critique depended on critical practices that stave off the failures of imagination” (Munoz, 2009, p. 18). The Queer Theory framework used in this investigation supported critique on the regulation of masculinity while encouraging imaginative methods to inform the action that educators can participate. In closing, Student Affairs and K-12 educational leaders have an opportunity to examine and critique the narratives present in this investigation. The findings and conclusions of this investigation offer new information and fortification for support services, program development and initiatives for adult male learners that can greatly enhance and provide a deeply meaningful higher education experience for men and women. Ruffolo (2009) stated “Education was never predetermined but was negotiated in highly contextualized moments among bodies and spaces – it was a creative potential” (p. 305). Ultimately, there was great potential for Student Affairs and K-12 leaders to negotiate the highly contextualized moments surrounding the regulation of masculinity by developing creative educational opportunities. Heasley and Crane (2012) argue,

It was about improving conditions for all males, and all females. Such disruption makes possible a view of masculinities and sexualities that have a plurality of potentialities and expressions without hierarchical discrimination based on a presumed superiority of one way of being masculine over another. (p. 115)

By doing this, educators can develop a deeper understanding of the growth, learning and development contextualized by the realities that adult male learners on college campuses experience (Harris, 2011; Kaufman, 1987). Educators have the opportunity to teach boys and men the concept offered by Gomez (2012) that shakes hegemonic masculinity to its core: “1. Strong people are the ones who stay alive. If you never ask for help, that won’t be you. 2. We are all weak. Every one of us. Not always, but sometimes – and it’s alright. Yes, I said it” (p. 195). Clearly, this was a challenge and an opportunity for both educators and students.

Powell (2003) understood the potential power of queering masculinity in order to develop diverse experiences of masculinity. In order to truly develop a deeper and diverse masculinity, men must:

Understand that manhood has everything to do with striving to be a whole human being, one who can be both hard and soft, loud and silent, courageous and vulnerable, not afraid to show or admit these traits. [Men] are vehemently antipatriarcal and antisexist and thus willing to say that we need to think of some new and progressive ways of defining manhood, other than as conquerors and/or pimps, regardless of what form conquering or pimping takes. Men cannot be locked, intellectually emotionally, or spiritually, into a bygone era or a tired ideology, (p. 118)

Research indicates the more invested men are in traditional ideals of manhood, it was more likely they will behave violently toward women, lash out in violent ways when they perceive a threat to their masculinity and to be homophobic (Bannon & Correia, 2006; Belenky, 1986; Blumenfield, 1992; Dilley, 2010; Edwards & Jones, 2009; Gomez, 2016;

Harper, 2008; Harris & Barone, 2011; Harris & Harper, 2008; Katz, 2013). Too many men are harming themselves and others because of the unrealistic and unhealthy expectations set forth by the regulation of masculinity (Harris & Harper, 2008; Harris & Struve, 2009; hooks, 2012; Howe, 2016; Katz; 2006; 2013; Kaufman, 2013; Kimmel, 2010). As a society, we cannot allow the literal and metaphorical locker room to seep into every part of men's lives. Brown (2012) talked about the struggles men faced around vulnerability when she stated, "Men walk this tightrope where any sign of weakness elicits shame, and so they're afraid to make themselves vulnerable for fear of looking weak" (p.37). Educators have experienced the response to shame and fear from men and boys. As Katz (2013) states,

We've seen men and boys using violence to overcome the shame and humiliation of not being seen and respected as real men. These dynamics have been especially acute in a number of high-profile mass shootings, from Pearl, Mississippi and Aurora, Colorado to Columbine High School, the Boston marathon bombing, and the Newton massacre.

Gomez (2016) can relate to the shame and vulnerability discussed by Brown and Katz. Gomez lived the reality of vulnerability first hand during an incident in a crowded nightclub in New York City that caused him to radically reframe his entire view surrounding the regulation of his masculinity. Gomez states,

When I was 23, I got into a confrontation at a nightclub after accidentally bumping into another man. Just as we were about to fight, my eyes inexplicably welled up with tears. Everyone jumped back, as if my conspicuous emotion was the craziest thing they had ever seen, as though my vulnerability was a grenade

dropped in the middle of that room. It was then that I realized that my life-and-death stakes performance of being a man was a path leading to my own destruction. It inspired me to dedicate my life to trying to diffuse the walking time bomb of destructive masculinity. It starts with interrupting and changing the way we bond as men, creating a new culture of brotherhood.

Student Affairs educators and K-12 leadership have the responsibility to help “diffuse the walking time bomb” - to teach boys and men that vulnerability was strong, courageous and only enhances masculinity – a multi-dimensioned, diverse masculinity. Katz (2006) would argue a need to redefine the narrative around strength –

“We need to redefine strength in men, not as the power over other people, but as forces for justice” (p. 43). We owe this to boys and the men in our lives. We owe this to the girls and women in our lives. As educators, we owe it to ourselves and the academy to move beyond the outdated ideals of manhood. Katz (2006) states,

We owe it to women, there’s no question about it, but we also owe it to our sons. We also owe it to young men who are growing up all over the world in situations where they didn’t make the choice to be a man in a culture that tells them that manhood was a certain way. They didn’t make the choice. We that have a choice have an opportunity and a responsibility to them (p. 18).

This will require Student Affairs educators to critically examine our cultural codes and ideals of manhood and press forward with queering these codes as we engage with the men on college campuses. We find ourselves at a critical time and space – we are presented with our very own crucible. We are faced with the challenges of working with adult male learners who, many, have grown up with traditional male power and authority.

As Student Affairs educators, we are challenged to examine, contest and challenge the violent, sexist, and homophobic messages boys and young men receive from virtually every corner of the culture – from television, movies, video games, and advertising, to pornography, the sports culture, and U.S. political culture” (Katz, 2013, p. 7). The framework and data presented in this investigation can help Student Affairs educators engage in this process.

President Theodore Roosevelt (1910) gave a speech entitled “Citizenship in a Republic,” a powerful speech about giving it all you’ve got despite the outcome. This speech teaches one to lean into the discomfort, embrace vulnerability and try to imagine something new, achieve something greater. In this speech, Roosevelt stated,

It was not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who was actually in the arena, whose face was marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs, who comes short again and again, because there was no effort without error and shortcoming; but who does actually strive to do the deeds; who knows great enthusiasms, the great devotions; who spends himself in a worthy cause; who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly. (p. 7)

Student Affairs educators have the opportunity to teach our students to dare greatly ... utilizing Queer Theory as a framework, Student Affairs educators can reimagine how masculinity impacts lives and boldly reimagine what an affirming and inclusive identity looks like for adult male learners on college campuses (Landreau & Rodriguez, 2012). As

Katz (2013) stated there was a need as a society to reframe the way we envision gender – we must teach our men and boys that “strength was about adapting to change, not about retreating from it and lashing back with violence or fear. If we want things to change, we need to work toward a culture-wide re-definition of manhood capable of meeting that challenge” (p. 7). This study provides the tools for Student Affairs educators to envision a “changeable cultural system” that challenges the notions of hegemonic masculinity in order to re-envision how we work with college men on our campuses (Landreau & Rodriguez, 2012, p. 33).

The data in this study allowed us to understand how patriarchy was learned, internalized, perpetuated and transcended by each of these men. The data also explained how regulation was involved with shaping, impacting and influencing the participants lived experience while also providing counter narratives to contest hegemonic discourse. It was in this space that Queer Theory allows Student Affairs educators to become “thoroughly disruptive of mainstream ‘truth regimes;’ Queer Theory challenges either/or, essentialist notions and emphasizes shifting boundaries, ambivalences, and cultural constructions that change depending on historical and cultural context” (Booker, 1999, p. 36). Our students will stumble and fall sometimes during this reimagining, but they will also succeed. Our role as educators was to teach them to enter into the arena that President Roosevelt described and teach them to learn to support one another in this process. “As Rumi says, ‘We’re all just walking each other home’” (Brown, 2015, p. 123).

I conclude this dissertation with an excerpt from Kai M. Green, a filmmaker and a spoken word poet who examines through film and poetry questions of gendered and

racialized violence. Green was a participant in “Brothers Writing to Live,” a campaign where Black men write letters to each other and the community in order to promote and create an open discourse around self-care and healing. One of the assignments for the men involved in the campaign included writing a letter to their childhood selves. While this letter was written to “Baby Kai,” I believe it was a good reminder for many men to tell themselves and teach younger generations of boys who are becoming men. Green (2016) writes,

You will carry a collection of scars and a bag full of crap (guilt, shame, trauma, violence...) a long way before you reach a place where healing can begin. The healing process doesn't end, it changes, but you will always need to be healing. Be patient with yourself.

I'm telling you this because I love you. I'm telling you this because as much as I want to go back and rescue you, I cannot. But know this, you will survive. I need you to survive.

Life was a dialectical struggle. Keep going and you'll see what I mean. It ain't all good, but there are parts so sweet—It's worth the struggle. I'll see you when you get here.

Will you recognize you? (p. 2)

We two boys together clinging,  
One the other never leaving,  
Up and down the roads going – North and South excursions making,  
Power enjoying – elbow stretching – fingers clutching,  
Arm'd and fearless – eating, drinking, sleeping, loving

-- Excerpt from *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman



## **APPENDIX A**

### **Adult, Professional, Community Education Ph.D. Timeline**

#### **SPRING, 2014**

- ED 7322: Human Resource and Professional Development - In progress
- ED 7352: Beginning Qualitative Design and Data Analysis - In progress

Consider / interview / Approach possible Committee Chair to discuss exploratory topic

#### **SUMMER, 2014**

- ED 7378: Grassroots Community Development
- ED 7354: Intermediate Qualitative Design and Analysis
- ED 7324: Problems and Strategies in Programming Planning Seminar

Formally appoint APCE Dissertation Chair - Submit Form A.

#### **FALL 2014**

- ADED 7325: Teaching Adults - Principles and Practices
- ED: Data Analysis

#### **SPRING, 2015**

- ED 7341: Dissertation Proposal Development

Comprehensive Exam - January, 2015

Form full Dissertation Committee - Submit Form B - January, 2015

Proposal to Committee two weeks prior to Defense of Proposal - March, 2015

Proposal Defense - April, 2015

At Defense complete Form 2 and Form C

Apply for IRB - April, 2015

Proposal to Graduate College and apply for candidacy - April, 2015

IRB approval of research - April/ May, 2015

### **SUMMER, 2015**

- ED 7199A: Dissertation in Education

Collect, analyze, interpret data, write - Establish Round 1 of Data Collection - May, June, July, August, 2015

Collect, analyze, interpret data, write - Establish Round 2 of Data Collection - August, September, 2015

### **FALL, 2015**

- ED 7399A: Dissertation in Education

Analysis and writing - September, October, November, 2015

### **SPRING, 2016**

- ED 7699A: Dissertation in Education

Apply for graduation - January, 2016

Dissertation to Committee two weeks prior to Defense - February, 2016

Dissertation defense - March, 2016

Pass Dissertation defense - March, 2016

Final approval of Dissertation and abstract by Graduate Dean - April, 2016

Graduation - May, 2016

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Participant Consent Form**

#### **An Investigation Contesting Masculinities**

You are invited to participate in a research study of how male learners at an institution of higher education explore their own notions of how they experience their masculinity regulated and how their perception of other men's notion of masculinity shape their relationship with other others. This study will also help foster an understanding of how student affairs professionals can help create effective male programming that will assist men as they make meaning of their experiences with others and with their own male identity. You were selected as a possible participant because you were identified as a male undergraduate student involved on campus. This research has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Texas State University. Please read the information on this form thoroughly and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. Questions may range from risks and benefits of participating in the study, or the rights that you have as a volunteer in this. This process was called "informed consent". You will retain a copy of this consent form for your records.

The study was being conducted by Dr. Michael O'Malley and Clint-Michael Reneau from Adult, Professional, and Community Education in the College of Education.

#### **STUDY PURPOSE AND BENEFITS**

The purpose of this study was twofold: to gain a "deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences" (Van Manen, 1990, p. 9) around the construct of masculinity and manhood as it relates to regulation. The purpose of this study was to

create other modes of evidencing surrounding issues of regulation and how college men's perceptions of other men's notion of masculinity shape their relationship with others.

### **PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:**

This study will be conducted during the fall 2015 semester.

If you agree to be in the study by serving as a participant, you will participate in and complete the following:

- Complete a demographic information sheet
- Participate in two 60 to 90 minute individual interviews with the researcher
- Gather and submit photographs after the first interview to present during the second individual interview and the focus group interview. (Instructions will be provided at the end of the first interview)
- Participate in a focus group that incorporates the photos
- Brief check- in with Clint-Michael Reneau at the conclusion of the study (via phone, email, or in-person)
- Agree to have the interviews audio-recorded using a pseudonym
  - I consent to having information collected from:
    - \_\_\_\_\_ Audio recordings of interview 1; audio recordings of interview 2;
    - \_\_\_\_\_ Photographs and audio recordings from photo elicitation focus group

## **RISK, STRESS OR DISCOMFORT**

There will be minimal risk associated with your participation in this study through the two personal interviews or the photo elicitation exercise and focus group. During the interview process we will discuss topics like the regulation around masculinity, gender norms, experience as a male at a large university, along with experiences with alcohol, sex, sexuality, male friendships and fitting in, etc. These conversations will be inclusive and supportive of your needs. The information you share will be received in a non-judgmental environment. If at any point you feel upset during this process or need some type of emotional support, a list of University and community resources will be provided to you.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Participant confidentiality was considered highly important throughout this process. It was important to understand that your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your name will be coded to ensure confidentiality throughout the study. All data will be transcribed using a pseudonym rather than your real name, and all personally identifiable material will be kept by the researcher and destroyed after one year.

## **SUBJECT'S STATEMENT**

All information in this study has been thoroughly explained to me. Any questions I have about this study, I can contact Clint-Michael Reneau at Reneau@txstate.edu. If I have questions regarding my rights as a participant, I can contact the Texas State University Institutional Review Board at 512-245-2314.

Researcher Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Participant Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**APPENDIX C:**  
**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

Introduction

My name was Clint-Michael Reneau and I am a doctoral student at Texas State University in the College of Education. I am conducting a study about how college men experience their masculinity regulated and how their perception of other men's notion of masculinity shape their relationship with other others. I also want to see how student affairs professionals can develop effective programming to help males make meaning of their masculine identity.

Before we begin, you will read and sign the informed consent form. I am also going to record this conversation so I can transcribe the interview after we are done. In order for this to be as confidential as possible, I'd like for you to select a pseudonym that I will use throughout the written sections of this investigation.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study.

INTERVIEW ONE

1. If you were asked to write an autobiography what would be about the most important aspects of your life you would be sure to include?

Possible probe: Family, age, hometown, major, school classification, race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, religion?

2. How would you describe your identity? How would others describe your identity?

- a. Possible probe: What identities were significant to you growing up (e.g., Latino, able-bodied, male, poor, Catholic, heterosexual, first generation college student, military status, etc....)?
3. If I changed the question and said what does it mean to be a \_\_\_\_\_ (Latino, Black, White, Gay, Heterosexual, Able-bodied, college student) man, how does that change your answer or does that change your answer in any way?
4. What does it mean to be a man?
5. Do any parts of your identity not fit in with what you've been told by society in regards to what it means to be a man?
6. Do you ever feel like you wear a mask, pretending to be someone different from the real you?
7. When do you think this happens? Why do you think it happens?
8. Do you find that you pretend to be someone who you are not in response to certain settings, places or people? If so, explain how.
9. If you feel you have to wear a mask, why do you feel that way?
10. What would happen if you took the mask off and showed up as your real self in different settings?
11. Have there been times in your life where you have experienced, observed or participated in men controlling/ policing/ regulating another man's masculinity? If so, can you explain that?
12. Have you ever challenged, confronted or interrupted this type of regulation of yourself or others? Have you have gone against whatever traditional notions you have learned or experienced of what it means to be a man? If so, please explain.



13. What do you wish people knew about you, really?

14. What prevents you from letting people know?

## INTERVIEW TWO

### Photo Elicitation

1. What does this photo mean to you?
2. How do the pictures identify what it means to be a man in relationship with \_\_\_\_\_ (other men, women, work, spirituality, an athlete, musician, student leader, etc.)?
3. How do the pictures exhibit how others are impacted by your masculinity? Do the pictures represent the influence of your masculinity on others? Do the pictures reflect an experience where you regulated, policed or controlled someone else's masculinity?
4. How do the pictures exhibit how you are impacted by your own masculinity? (possible probes include: participant experiencing peer pressure, body image issues, decision making, etc.). How do the pictures indicate if there are aspects of your identity impacted by your masculinity?
5. How do the pictures represent a change in masculinity based on a particular location? Event? Time in your life? Are there photos that indicate how your masculinity changes based on places, particular people, locations, or specific times in your life?
6. Do any of these pictures ever represent the mask?
7. Do you see your real self in any of these pictures? Why or why not?

8. If you could interrupt, change or do something different for the person, place, event or location taking place in this photo, what would it be?
9. Was there a picture you wanted to take but were afraid to take? If so, why?
10. How did you feel when selecting these pictures?

### FOCUS GROUP

#### Photo Elicitation

1. What does this photo mean to you?
  - a. Each participant will share what the photo means to them in relation to their identities, lived realities and experiences. If needed, questions from interview two will be used as probes to help participants through this conversation.
2. As the photographer, what does this photo mean to you?

## APPENDIX D

### Demographic Information Sheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Pseudonym \_\_\_\_\_  
Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone number \_\_\_\_\_  
Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_  
Major/ GPA \_\_\_\_\_  
Minor \_\_\_\_\_

What was your year in school?

\_\_\_\_\_ First year student                      \_\_\_\_\_ Sophomore  
\_\_\_\_\_ Junior    \_\_\_\_\_ Senior

Which of the following would you use to identify your gender?

\_\_\_\_\_ Man    \_\_\_\_\_ Genderqueer  
\_\_\_\_\_ Transgender

I identify racially/ ethnically as:

\_\_\_\_\_ African American / Black                      \_\_\_\_\_ Asian/ Asian American/ Pacific  
Islander  
\_\_\_\_\_ Latino/ Hispanic/ Chicano/                      \_\_\_\_\_ South Asian / Middle Eastern  
Puerto Rican/ Dominican                      \_\_\_\_\_ Biracial/Multiethnic  
\_\_\_\_\_ Native American/ American Indian                      \_\_\_\_\_ White / Caucasian  
Indigenous/ First Nation  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other

I identify sexually as:

\_\_\_\_\_ Heterosexual    \_\_\_\_\_ Gay  
\_\_\_\_\_ Bisexual    \_\_\_\_\_ Other

I am involved on campus                      \_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, in what organizations / roles / positions?

## APPENDIX E

### Photo Elicitation Interview Checklist

Instructions: To complete this portion of the interview, please adhere to the following:

- Submit 7-10 photos that will help you describe how adult male learners at an institution of higher education explore their own notions of how they experience their masculinity regulated and how their perception of other men's notion of masculinity shape their relationship with other others. You may use the questions below to help guide you as you take / choose the pictures for this interview.
- Take pictures of people, places, locations, events, or things that you feel represent the guidelines of this photo elicitation interview. If your photos include a person's face, please take caution to other blur or conceal the identity of the person in the picture. Please see an example below:



- Agree to take the photographs using either a provided disposable camera (if needed) or personal camera/ camera on your phone.
- After completing this task, you can upload your photographs to a TRACS site.
- The photographs need to be uploaded no later than October 5, 2015. Please make sure you are referring to the questions to help guide you as you complete this task.

If you need additional instructions or need further information, please do not hesitate to contact Clint-Michael Reneau at [Reneau@txstate.edu](mailto:Reneau@txstate.edu) .

### QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN TAKING THE PHOTOGRAPHS:

1. How do the pictures identify what it means to be a man in relationship with \_\_\_\_\_ (other men, women, work, spirituality, an athlete, musician, student leader, etc.)?
2. How do the pictures exhibit how others are impacted by your masculinity? (Ex: choices, behavior, emotions, etc.). Do the pictures represent the influence of your masculinity on others? Do the pictures reflect an experience where you regulated, policed or controlled someone else's masculinity?
3. How do the pictures indicate if there are aspects of your identity impacted by your masculinity (body image, putting on the "mask", emotions, choices, behavior, etc.) ?
4. How do the pictures represent a change in masculinity based on a particular location? Event? Time in your life? Are there photos that indicate how your masculinity changes based on places, particular people, locations, or specific times in your life?

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