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The purpose of this research was to study how work with men to understand the social construction of their own identities can contribute to creating a more socially just society. In this critical qualitative study eight participants of a critical, pro feminist college group shared their experiences of masculine and patriarchal norms, what happened socially, interpersonally and emotionally when these norms were disrupted, and what meaning and transformation came out of their involvement in a group dedicated to disrupting masculinity and patriarchy. The men realized the importance of accountability for themselves and others in creating social change around masculinity, and the need to better understand their own emotions and be more vulnerable in transforming their own masculine identity. The study provides important implications for student affairs practitioners and others in establishing and facilitating men's groups to create social change and better understand the social construction of masculinity. It provides a way to move beyond addressing individual issues such violence against women and instead fully address the negative effects of narrow gender role socialization on both men themselves and subordinate identities around them.

DISRUPTING MASCULINITY AND PATRIARCHY: STORIES OF MEN

TRANSFORMING

by

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Approved by

_____
Committee Chair

This dissertation is dedicated to my children Elizabeth and Jorge. You have forever made me better. This dissertation is also dedicated to my Father and Grandfather who have driven me to continue to positively shape masculinity because of their own stories and transformations.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation written by James A. Lorello has been approved by the following

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Finally, thank you to the participants of this study. Without their stories and experiences, this work would be incomplete. I hope that our journeys continue to cross paths.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In the Summer of 2010, as a graduate student and aspiring student affairs professional at Appalachian State University, my then supervisor asked me if I wanted to take on the task of leading a newly formed all male community. The residence hall was to transition to a newer and shinier building on the east side of campus, away from its former home which consisted of carpeted hallway walls, no air-conditioning and the stench of locker rooms from years past. The goal of this community was to remove some of the negative stereotypes of all male communities, such as high rates of conduct violations and smelly rooms, by promoting more positive behavior. I was excited for the opportunity to do something meaningful with my work and dove head first into creating some sort of community development model for these young men. I hoped to create a vibrant community where we could challenge these men to think differently than they had been socialized to as men in our culture.

During that year of graduate school, what I discovered was a group of men navigating a complex world of hyper-masculinity, and for me a disruption of my own identity as a man. I realized I had never thought of myself as a gendered being. I had never contemplated what it meant to "be a man." The community we created during that year was founded on the value of "brotherhood." This is a value I now realize was

problematic in many ways. Sure, we created a bond among many of the men in that hall, and somewhat disrupted some forms of hyper masculinity, but we also left some folks outside of our bond, and continued to uphold the tenets of hyper masculinity. Yet it was my initial work with the young men in the all-male community, and specifically the relationships I developed with the men who resided within those halls, that drew me to this dissertation work. Through working and living so closely together, I was able to see firsthand the impacts of socialization on these young men's lives. For example, there was the student who shared he could only cry in my office when he learned his dad was losing his leg to diabetes, because elsewhere he needed to be the strong leader of his group. There were the multiple students who passed out inside and outside of the building due to competitive drinking games. Yet, today there are those men who created such lasting bonds within those halls that they will see their children grow up as friends. From all of these experiences we shared, I realized there had to be more to this thing called masculinity. My contemplation led me to realize both negative and positive aspects of the ways in which most males are socialized to develop their identity. For the past several years since I started working in that all-male residence hall, I have been working with college men in developing their personal identity, helping them to gain a better understanding of themselves as socially-situated individuals, and encouraging them to work toward social justice and gender equity.

Activists and educators have recognized a number of problematic behaviors in men and recently have done much work to describe these behaviors as part of the growing scholarship in the area of masculinity studies (Harper & Harris III, 2010). In the

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past, most men have not thought of themselves as "gendered beings" due to the power and privilege they hold in patriarchal society. This silence and lack of reflection on identity has allowed men to adopt forms of masculinity that, when left unchallenged, can lead to harm for both self and others. Disrupting the status quo of hyper-masculinity and patriarchy may allow men understand and perform their identities differently in ways that can result in benefits for all members of society. As one participant in a pilot study that I conducted with students who had been involved in some of the masculinity workshops I facilitated shared, with more critical forms of thinking, men can figure out their own masculine identity instead of "unknowingly following a script that they don't even know exists."

bell hooks (2004) describes patriarchy as "the single most life-threatening social disease assaulting the male body and spirit in our nation" (p. 17). When patriarchy is conceptualized through the metaphor of a social disease, supported by hyper masculinity, it can be seen as a social disease in need of "healing." I use the language of healing often in my masculinity work because it is consistent with higher education practice and theory of identifying social problems and working to disrupt them and replace them with healthier ways of being in relationships. We can begin to heal the social disease of patriarchy by dismantling traditional forms of hyper masculinity, which in turn can produce transformative socially just change for all members of society. We all gain when patriarchy and hyper masculinity are disrupted. I use the metaphor of patriarchy as a disease in my work, describing men who are working to disrupt hyper masculine and patriarchal norms as in recovery. On their website, the Substance Abuse and Mental

Health Administration (SAMHSA) defines recovery from mental disorders and substance use disorders as "a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential." (para. 2) While individuals can never fully "recover" from hyper-masculinity and patriarchy in the same ways that someone might recover from addiction, since it involves a continual process of unlearning socialization, the language of recovery provides insight into the way I approach disrupting hyper-masculinity and patriarchy with the men involved in this study. It is also consistent with how these issues are discussed within the higher education field. Healing involves learning how identity is socially constructed and working to disrupt problematic aspects of that socialization.

The metaphoric disease of patriarchy, and its corollary of hyper masculinity, are evident in troubling data. Statistics show that men commit the overwhelming majority of sexual assaults, and regularly engage in risky behaviors, such as binge drinking, driving under the influence, and getting involved in violent altercations (Harris III, 2008). Men are more likely to commit violent crimes and are more likely to die by suicide than women (O'Neil, 2011). A 2013 Center for Disease Control study found that college men are four times more likely than their female peers to die by suicide. Approximately 32% of college men have reported watching pornography 3-5 times per week, and 93% of boys have had at least one experience with pornography by the age of 18 (Chisholm & Gall, 2015). Studies on pornography have shown significant negative effects on interpersonal relationships, sexual satisfaction, and attitudes of violence towards women (Chisholm & Gall, 2015). One study found that 10% of college men admit to at least one

occasion of interpersonal aggression towards a partner (Gallagher & Parrott, 2011). At one university, 63% of men self-reported acts that qualified as rape or attempted rape, while men in general are perpetrators of sexual assault 98% of the time (Lisak, Gardinier, Nicksa & Cote, 2010). College men are likely to be binge drinkers and associate the ability to consume large amounts of alcohol with their masculinity (Iwamoto, Corbin, Lejuez, & MacPherson, 2014, Capraro, 2000). These negative behaviors and outcomes have led some researchers to identify college men as a group in crisis (Shen-Miller, Isacco, Davies, Jean & Phan, 2012).

The litany of problematic behaviors that I touched on above are influenced by the socialization men have received about what it means to be a man. This socialization produces a range of impacts, which affect all members of society, including men. The problems of patriarchy related to inequality, such as domestic violence and unequal pay, are deeply connected to the problems of hyper masculinity in men. Few researchers have studied the potential benefits of efforts to disrupt masculine and patriarchal norms in young men, though this is a small but growing area of study. Work in this area began in 1976 with Brannon and David's *The Forty-nine percent majority: The Male Sex Role.* From their initial text to the scholarly work of Michael Kimmel, R.W. Connell, Jason Laker and others, we now know that most men develop their identity in response to societal norms, mentors, sports teams, and/or other all male groups (Kimmel, 1993).

Over the last decade or so, Harris III (2006) and Edwards (2007) have developed theories of college men's development. Even with this additional research, programs to help men develop their identities to disrupt patriarchy and hyper-masculinity are not

common. Programs exist to support men fighting against violence (specifically violence against women), but few appear to fully address the root of inequities: hyper masculinity and patriarchy (Harper & Harris III, 2010). Some programs support the social justice ally development of men (Davis & Wagner, 2005; Edwards, 2006). Research also exists on bystander intervention, recovery models, transformative learning and more general social justice programming, but few studies focus on addressing male identity to influence change in behavior (Degue, 2014). Others point to the use of positive masculinity in intervening in the lives of young men to create a more socially just society (Englar-Carlson & Kiselica, 2013). Despite some of these efforts to disrupt hyper-masculinity and patriarchy, both are still significant problems in our society and on college campuses. One of the most promising ways to begin to disrupt these is through education, particularly helping men to understand and perform their identities differently. This is one of the goals of the research I conducted for this dissertation.

Research Purpose

My goal in this dissertation research is to study how work with men to understand the social construction of their own identities can contribute to creating a more socially just society. I studied men who are engaged in work of learning about their male identity as part of disrupting patriarchy. If men are discussing and troubling hyper-masculinity and patriarchy, then perhaps they can work towards important social change, for example, confronting sexist jokes and behavior in their friend groups. Specifically, the men in this study were involved in masculinity programming at Appalachian State University called Men on the Mountain. The programming involves a curriculum which

asks men to explore their own history of masculine identity development. It calls men to think about exactly what they believe it means to be a man. From this starting point, additional sessions ask participants to explore their childhood history in terms of masculinity and eventually explore masculinity and patriarchy's larger role in systems of oppression and violence. Men are then challenged to think about how they might combat these systems with individual and collective actions. By opening the eyes of men to the problems inherent in hyper-masculinity and patriarchy, ideally we can produce change in their everyday actions with individuals and systems. This research will hopefully challenge others to think about possibilities related to masculinity programming aimed to bring all men into the fold of social justice and identify ways in which they can have an influence on their own lives and the lives of others. The goal is to help them to create lives in which they live in ways that challenge and disrupt the constraints of hyper-masculinity and patriarchy, to be better men for themselves and others.

Research Questions

Three research questions guide this qualitative study:

1) How have college men experienced masculine and patriarchal norms?

2) What changes occur emotionally, interpersonally, and socially for men when they work to disrupt hyper-masculine and patriarchal norms?

3) How do men make meaning of their experiences in a college masculinity program and how does this meaning making influence possibilities for transformation and social change?

Methods

In this dissertation, I use a critical qualitative approach to explore the experiences and stories of men and analyze the way in which they create new knowledge and meaning when masculinity and patriarchy are troubled as part of a college programming initiative. I use autoethnography to reflect on my own experiences coming to understand masculinity and individual interviews to study college-aged men who participated in Men on the Mountain, a reflection program at Appalachian State University designed to help these men understand how they have been socialized to be as men, and to disrupt problematic elements of this socialization. Understanding my own story and the stories of the men in this study may provide resources to build new ways to disrupt masculinity and patriarchy in men in order to create much needed transformation.

While my study was not an ethnography, I still drew upon this research approach in my use of the stories of the men in the study. Ethnography is an approach to research focused on human society and culture (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Typically, it involves immersion in a field and studying participants in their natural context. While I did conduct the masculinity sessions with the men in this study, and interact with them on numerous occasions, I based my findings from this study on the interviews that I conducted, not this field research. Nonetheless, culture and human understanding are at the center my research in exploring the lives of men. At the heart of ethnography is the use of rich description in data analysis to convey meaning and display interpretation. This data was generated from individual interviews with participants who have been part of the Men on the Mountain program. As I entered into relationship with these men as

members of this study, it was important to acknowledge my own reflections on the study as it was happening. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality and account for the relationship between the researcher and researched (Denzin, 2010, p. 13).

Given my own interests in disrupting patriarchy, as well as my own experiences of learning about the problematic aspects of hyper-masculinity, my involvement in this study allowed me to become what Behar (1998) calls the "vulnerable observer." In qualitative research, the researcher is the research tool and becomes deeply connected with the methods employed (Savin-Baden & Howell, 2010). I wrote an autoethnography of my own experiences with this topic to both illustrate deep reflection on this topic and so I could better understand the narratives of the men who I interviewed. I acknowledge that I have my own personal story that cannot be removed from such a project. Throughout this project, I practiced mindful inquiry, which springs forth from the life world of the researcher (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998), in sharing my own story of learning about navigating my masculinity. Specifically, a mindful inquirer is self-reflective in examining their own actions, experiences, and perceptions. Engaging in critical inquiry in this fashion also allows for better engagement with the reader. As Goodall (2000) writes, there is "power of rhetorical form to shape a reader's understanding" when researchers also share their own stories (p. 69).

As a first step in developing this dissertation project, I conducted a pilot study with a group of four college-aged men who participated in four sessions of Men on the Mountain in a previous semester. I interviewed each of these men about their experiences

in order to better understand this program and hone my methods, research protocol, and interview questions for conducting a small-scale ethnography of the program. I describe findings from this study and discuss the methods I used in this dissertation study in much further detail in chapter three.

Theoretical Influences

Using the lenses of critical theory and postmodern feminism throughout this study, I examine how traditional ways of knowing related to masculinity and patriarchy might be productively disrupted through educational programming. From there, I explore forms of new knowledge, meaning making, and social action that might be developed from this disruption of the status quo. Critical theory refers to the theoretical tradition developed by the Frankfurt school in the 1930's which involves a critique of culture and society and efforts to work toward social justice. Critical theory has developed in a number of ways since its inception, but its focus on disrupting an inequitable status quo is consistent (Kincheloe & Mclaren, 2002). Kincheloe and Mclaren (2002) describe critical theory as producing "undeniably dangerous knowledge, the kind of information and insight that upsets institutions and threatens to overturn sovereign regimes of truth" (p. 87). Critical theory as a theoretical lens provides a catalyst to disrupt traditional ways of knowing and displace the status quo as it relates to masculinity and patriarchy, helping us to cultivate more equitable social relationships. Critical theorists are ultimately concerned with issues of power and justice. This theory thus provides a good lens for this study as I am interested in how issues of power and justice interact with gender to construct social systems and understandings of identities (Kincheloe & Mclaren, 2002).

While I am hesitant to say this is a "feminist study," I draw upon postmodern feminism as a theoretical influence, which adds a gendered lens to the disruption of the status quo. Hesse-Biber (2011) writes, "Feminist research disrupts traditional ways of knowing to create rich new meaning" (p. 3). Specifically, post-modern feminist theorists study "the impact of culturally constructed meaning" on cultures, experiences and everyday life (Ardovini-Brooker, 2001, p. 5). Postmodern theorists call into question the dualisms of "man" vs "woman" to allow for multiple ideas, histories, and meanings of gender to be realized. While I use generalizable language such as the "men of this study" in this dissertation, I realize that male and female are complicated identity categories and one the goals of my study is to move a specific group of men who are participating in this study to understand multiple meanings of gender. While I rely on a somewhat stable notion of "man" in this study (and describe the specific group of men I work with in more detail in chapter three, all of who identify has cisgender), I also recognize the potential for gender essentialism. A men-women gender binary is my starting point when working with hyper-masculine college men to create an entry into disrupting previous held beliefs.

Understanding culturally constructed meanings is an important part of this dissertation, specifically the gendered natures of culturally constructed meanings. Drawing on postmodern feminism in this dissertation enhances the critical approach I take to explore gender and masculinity. My choice to use the specific qualitative methods of auto ethnography and interviews is directly connected to the theoretical lenses of critical theory and post-modern feminism. These types of methods allow me to deeply examine the social construction of identity, both my own identity and that of my

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participants. They also support the choice to center the stories and narratives of participants in my research. I also draw on these theoretical lenses to inform my interpretation of data, especially to understand how the men in this study construct new knowledge related to understanding of masculinity and patriarchy. In drawing from both critical theory and postmodern feminism in this dissertation, I address issues of power and justice through a gendered lens throughout my methodological approaches and my interpretation of data.

One issue I attend to throughout this research is working to make my language accessible, even as it is critical. Many struggle with the abstract language of critical theory. Kincheloe and Mclaren (2007) write "until we can teach people to use theory so that it helps with the immediate problems and concerns of their lives—private and public—the larger theoretical questions will dissolve, not simply in abstraction, but will potentially cause alienation and bitterness about the process of theorizing itself" (p. 63). Theory provides the academic lens through which I have constructed my study, but I also realize I must use it in accessible ways for the results from my study to be transformative. Kincheloe & Mclaren (2007) maintain critical work in "the contemporary era must be simultaneously intellectually rigorous and accessible to multiple audiences" (p. 10). While I draw on theory to illuminate the gender construction of norms, I also work to make my findings and the implications from this study accessible and useful to the broad higher education audience. Steinberg and Canella (2012) address this clearly for me in arguing that "critical pedagogical researchers often regard their work as a first step toward some form of political action that can redress the injustices found in the field site

or constructed in the very act of research itself" (p. 20). In this study I reanimate a "slice of reality" to stake a step towards disrupting hyper-masculinity and patriarchy on a larger scale in work with college men.

Background Context

In order to understand ways to disrupt problematic forms of masculinity and patriarchy, we need to understand how these systems operate. In this section, I explore the social construction of masculinity, performances of masculinity, and the system of patriarchy. In these three sections, I provide a foundational understanding of masculinity and patriarchy necessary to understand the research on this topic, especially efforts to construct more empowering and justice-oriented forms of masculine identity. In the social construction of masculinity section, I lay the groundwork for the ways I talk about masculinity and hyper-masculinity in this dissertation. In the performance of masculinity section, I provide a broad overview of current research on how men play out their masculine identity in society. In the third section on patriarchy, I offer a system-wide look at the effects of patriarchy on men and others.

Before I lay this foundation, it is important to acknowledge that the focus of my research is specifically on men and masculinities in the college setting with a particular group of students. I do not speak to or address all ways of thinking about "masculinity." For example, while important, I don't explore the areas of female masculinity and queer masculinity which are part of conversations about "masculinity" (Halberstam, 1998). The premise of female and queer masculinity is that masculinity is not simply the social and cultural expression of maleness and can indeed be separated from the male body

(Halberstam, 1998). I agree with this premise even as I am only studying performances of masculinity among cisgender men in this study. These are often the most hyper masculine men on our college campuses, and work to transform those individuals' understandings of the world around them is important.

Social Construction of Masculinity

All people are born into a specific culture. People then are socialized into this culture as they internalize the norms and characteristics of people living within the culture. For gender identity, these characteristics take the form of specific gender roles in society. For example, in most societies, women are expected to be caring nurturers while men should be the metaphoric stoic hunters (Acker, 2004). The gender roles men take on are typically comprised of a strict form of socially constructed masculinity in which men are expected to adhere to a set of tacit guidelines or fear being labeled as "not normal." Throughout this study I use the term "hypermasculinity" to describe this strict form of gender socialization. Kimmel (2004) defines hypermasculinity as the "sets of behaviors and beliefs characterized by unusually highly developed masculine forms as defined by existing cultural values" (p. 418). For men, these guidelines include showing little emotion, acting aggressively, being ready to commit violence, demonizing anything feminine, and enjoying sports and competition (Connell, Hearn & Kimmel, 2005). Kimmel (1994) further argues that these norms of masculinity are connected to homophobia, which is "a central organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood" (p. 1). Homophobia in this context is not the irrational fear of gay men, but is instead the fear that others will unmask us and reveal to the world that we do not measure

up to being real "men." While we may also call this fear "femphobia," or a fear of anything that might be deemed feminine, a pervasive climate of heteronormativity means that anything connected with female attributes often is marked as 'gay.'

Kimmel (1994) describes several markers of manhood, which I describe as the walls of the "man box." Brannon and David (1976) earlier described these masculine guidelines in relation to four dimensions: No Sissy Stuff: The stigma against all that is feminine; The Big Wheel: Power, status and wealth; The Sturdy Oak: Confidence, toughness and self-reliance, as a tree that shall not be moved and; Give 'Em Hell!: The aura of aggression and violence. While these categories and descriptions are still relevant, more recent work has expanded on these dimensions, with Tony Porter (2010) coining the term "man box." The man box is the societal gender role that men perceive that they must fit into to be labeled real men (Porter, 2010). The box can also be labeled a "mask" which men wear around in order seem more "like a man" to others, instead of perhaps exposing more vulnerable feelings or different sides of their identity (Edwards & Jones, 2009). The existence of a "man box" suggests that men have an unexplored identity underneath their mask of masculine performance. For example, perhaps they really wanted to be a dancer, or a poet, or hated playing sports as a kid, but did not pursue these options because of internalized fear and societal pressure.

Using Tony Porter's term "man box," I have expounded upon the term in my work with college men to describe the four walls that men are held hostage to within the man box: fear/shame, silence, violence, and peer policing. Fear is what I described in the definition of homophobia and femphobia: it is the fear of being seen as unmanly. Shame,

which results from fear, leads to silence. Silence allows the man box to continue to operate, as the norms of men are never questioned, because of fear and shame. Violence is a clear marker of manhood as it is the way men are socially conditioned to handle most conflict. The saying "let's take this outside" when two men get into an argument is a prime example of this. Violence is also a way in which men are forced inside the man box through bullying and other acts of harm. Finally, peer policing occurs daily, at home, at school and on the playground. Every day people around us police the process of becoming a man. From parents, to siblings, to friends and strangers, gender identity is constantly being negotiated and policed.

Chu (2014) devotes a whole book to understanding masculine identity development in boys in her work *When boys become boys: development, relationships, and masculinity.* Chu explores the intense social development and social norming that takes place from pre-kindergarten to the fifth grade. This development continues through childhood and into adulthood. A powerful example of this norming is the National Football Leagues' Richie Incognito and Jonathan Martin scandal from 2013. Jonathan Martin, a member of the Miami Dolphins football team was subject to intense bullying, name-calling, and harassment from teammates, most notably Richie Incognito. A report, which eventually came out of the league's investigation, showed that Martin was subject to harassment beginning in his rookie season of 2012. Martin was regularly called a "pussy," "bitch," and "faggot" by teammates in an attempt to humiliate him (Van Brennen, 2014). All of this was described as an effort to "toughen up" the "soft" Martin. Eventually Martin quit the team and disclosed major issues with mental health in part

because of the bullying he received (Van Brennen, 2014). This kind of behavior, while in this case a major headline, is not that unusual for boys navigating the world to becoming men. The four walls keep many men contained within the box in both conscious and unconscious ways.

The privilege and norm of masculinity allows the process of gender identity development to go mostly unnoticed by both men and women. While using the term "masculinity" here, it is important to recognize that masculinity is not a singular identity. There is not one prescribed form of masculinity and one does not have to identify as a man to perform masculinity; however, there is a dominant form of masculinity. Connell, Hearn and Kimmel (2005) write that heteronormative and hegemonic masculinity (the dominant form) hold the power and are the stereotypical norm in society. Heteronormative hegemonic masculinity is a form of masculinity that contains practices which promote heterosexual and heteronormative ways of being above all others (Connell, 2000). This form of masculinity is sexist and oppressive in the ways in which it is exercised and reinforced. In heteronormative and hegemonic masculinity, men are taught to devalue the feminine (Connell, Hearn, & Kimmel, 2005). Within hegemonic masculinity, men are trained to not act like women and to embody characteristics that are distinct from those typically performed by women, for example, to be stoic and aggressive. As hegemonic masculine values and ideology continue to be celebrated and normalized, the values and ideology of subordinate groups of men within the culture do not get reinforced or reproduced. Heteronormative and hegemonic masculinity are the forms of masculinity that fuel patriarchy. Often when we think of the idea of gender, we

only think of women and feminists. In reality, men have a gender as well. This is a gender performance that goes largely unexamined due to masculinity's central position in the system of patriarchy.

Performance of Masculinity

Masculine traits are taught and reinforced from birth by the large majority of individuals in society. The initial reaction to a young boy crying is often "stop crying," while girls often receive a much different response. Socialization occurs in every facet of culture from media and movies to schooling and life at home. In her book *Dude You're a Fag*, Pascoe (2007) studies the interworking of masculinity and sexuality in an American high school. What Pascoe finds is a culture that is created and reinforced through various rituals to fit men and women into their respective gender "boxes" (Pascoe, 2007). The gendering that occurs is sexist in nature and forces young men to demonize the feminine. The gendering is sexist because it leads to the discrimination of women and girls on a number of levels, whether it is limiting activity in sports or sexual aggression towards women. The demonizing of the feminine unconsciously (and consciously) trains men to place low value on women and creates prejudice against women. For example, a common phrase used to get young boys on sports teams riled up is to say, "stop playing like a girl." If we are telling young male athletes to stop "playing like a girl," what are we teaching them about girls? This devaluing is the product of learned prejudice against women, which then leads to sexism (Sensoy & Deangelo, 2012).

Michael Kimmel, in his 2008 book "Guyland," researches the world in which adolescent men explore and perform their masculinity. Young boys from birth learn

specific ways to be men in classrooms, playgrounds, churches, and homes. Men internalize the messages they hear about their gender. This sometimes results in gender role conflict. Gender role conflict is defined as "a psychological state occurring when rigid, sexist, or restrictive gender roles learned through socialization, result in personal restriction, devaluation, or violation of other or self" (O'Neil & Crapser, 2011, p. 22). Men are taught to do whatever they must to not be perceived as feminine or "like women." Edwards and Jones (2009), in their study of college men, called this "putting their man face on" in which men conform to the patriarchal standards established by our culture – also known as the "man box." Edwards and Jones (2009) found that the college men in their study went through three phases of performance. First, they felt the need to put on a mask because of society's expectations of them, which happened consciously and unconsciously. Second, they proceeded to wear the mask, this included "partying" as college men and performing masculine norms. In phase three, they experienced and recognized the consequences of wearing the mask. Harris III (2008) found similar performances occurring among the college-aged men participating in his study as well. These men and others put on a performance of masculinity or risk being seen as unmanly. Being deemed unmanly can come with consequences of alienation, marginalization, and even violence.

The intersection of identities in the development of masculinity is also important to consider when discussing the performance of masculinity. There is growing research on men of marginalized identities, along with a call to better understand the intersectional identities that men hold (Davis & Laker, 2011; Harper & Harris III, 2010; Harris III,

Palmer & Struve, 2011; Stewart, 2008; Tillapaugh & Nicolazzo, 2015) Research on men of color suggests the influence of whiteness and white supremacy in the construction of manhood and masculinity (Harper & Harris III, 2010). Specifically, African American men are groomed to devalue educational achievement, which is seen as white, and to avoid being associated with feminine qualities at all costs (hooks, 2004). Men of color can sometimes perform more enhanced hyper masculine norms because of internalized racism and other factors influencing their identity developed. Because of the intersections of racism and sexism, targeted support is needed for our young men of color in regards to their socially constructed ideas of gender and the ways it intersects with whiteness (Harris III, Palmer & Struve, 2011). In Tillapaugh and Nicolazzo's (2015) study of gay college male's conceptions of masculinity, they found that those men who performed hegemonic masculinity were rewarded by others while those who did not perceived themselves as "being in poverty" or deficient of the necessary and desirable qualities of gender identity. These studies on intersectionality in college men's identity point to the increased need to be conscious of diversity within the broad umbrella category of male. While there may be a variety of marginalized identities intersecting within the identities of college men, the majority of studies point to the reifying of hyper masculine and hegemonic norms, and the need to combat the harmful consequences of such performances.

Performing what others perceive as unnatural masculinity can cause problems for young men. Kimmel (2008) describes this concept in a humorous way, writing, "if men have a difficult time asking for directions when they are lost driving their cars, imagine

what it feels like to be lost and adrift on the highway of life" (p. 42). Statistics have begun to show a number of problems surfacing in the world of men and boys which are no doubt connected to rigid gender role expectations. In schooling, boys are three times more likely to be enrolled in special education classes, 16% of boys have been diagnosed with attention deficit disorder, and three times as many boys are expelled from public schools compared to girls (this number increases if we focus on Black boys in particular) (O'Neil & Crapser, 2011). Men also engage in frequent high-risk behavior, with college men consuming an average of 8.41 drinks per week as compared to women's 3.62 drinks per week (O'Neil & Crapser, 2011). Men have higher rates of suicide and depression, and are more likely to commit acts of violence, yet nonetheless they continue to operate within the man box (O'Neil & Crapser, 2011). In the United States, men have committed all of the mass shootings that have occurred in the past decade, yet we rarely discuss how these kinds of tragedies may be related to our societies' ideal of masculinity. We instead tend to blame them on mental illness or other causes. On the feminine side of the gender spectrum, we often blame the victim in acts of sexual misconduct, for example by suggesting that women lead men on, but refuse to educate the mostly male perpetrators of these heinous crimes.

Recently scholars have been attempting to understand what they perceive as a "decline of boys." For example, in her book *The War Against Boys*, Christina Hoff Sommers (2000) decries that feminism is to blame for the problems we see in boys. She argues that we must get back to the rugged individualism of young men and "allow boys to be boys." This argument is problematic as it fails to take into account much of the

research described in this dissertation, but the argument is a direct reaction to perceived problems of boys and men. This reaction is predicated on ignoring the power and privilege of men within a patriarchal society. Language such as "boys will be boys" allows for the continuation of harmful hyper-masculine norms. The authors of *Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys* suggest that we have to change our view of how boys should act emotionally to create more psychologically healthy young men (Kindlon & Thompson, 1999). Encouraging them to understand and display their emotions is an important component to more healthy boys but only one component. Both of these examples attempt to address perceived issues and problems with boys, but fail to address the system of patriarchy and reinforcement of masculine stereotypes that are at the heart of what some call the boy problem. This is why it is important to understand the system of patriarchy and how it influences constructions of masculinity.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy is a system of power and privilege marked by men as the dominant group within society who hold the majority of power. bell hooks (2004) writes that patriarchy is a "political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females" (p. 18). Because the culture is dominated and led by men, cultural norms that are valued and celebrated are also created and passed on by men. The history, ideology, norms, and customs create an androcentric culture since men have always been in positions of power within society (Sensoy & Diangelo, 2012). Such a system gives men an enormous amount of privilege since men hold power over what gets valued within our culture. Women are the

subordinate group in the culture and are then the subject of oppression by the dominant, privileged group. Oppression is historical, ideological, cultural, and institutional. The system of patriarchy is inherently oppressive of all that is feminine. The values and ideology of the subordinate group within a culture are not rewarded. The values and norms of patriarchy are actually the values and norms of masculinity. For example, the leadership qualities we value in society are commonly described as masculine. Both times Hillary Clinton announced she was running for president in 2008 and 2016, media personalities jumped on the idea that she would be "too emotional" (also a way of saying too feminine) to run for president (Friedman, 2008). In the most recent presidential election, she lost to a candidate who never served in public office and a candidate who was accused of sexual assault. We have been trained in our culture to believe that a great leader must have masculine qualities of assertiveness, stoicism, and strength. When these qualities are observed in women, they are often met with harsh criticism, as they do not fit within the assumed feminine gender role.

Joe Kincheloe (2001) writes that patriarchy exists within four general frames: "1) A system of government based on kinship; 2) a generalized form of masculine oppression; 3) a technology in the reproduction of capitalism; and 4) a system of gender and class relations" (p. 511). Kincheloe helps frame patriarchy so that we can see its influence in all aspects of society, from levels of government, to economic systems, to the systems of gender, specifically masculinity that I explore in this dissertation. Patriarchy has existed with these four general frames for much of human history. In most cultures, men have been the politicians and leaders of society. Women have often been

delegated to traditional feminine caring roles (Kincheloe, 2001). Since the rise of western

science, an even larger change occurred within patriarchy. Androcentric logic and reason

became the primary modes of acceptable analysis while traditionally feminine ideas of

intuition and emotion are not considered real science (Kincheloe, 2001). As capitalism

and industrialization spread, men comprised a large amount of the paid work force.

Women stayed at home while men worked in factories, built railroads, and developed the

first corporations. Connell (2000) argues that the institutions created during the spread of

the colonial world, including armies, states, bureaucracies, corporations, capital markets,

labor markets, schools, law courts and transportation systems "are gendered institutions,

and their functioning has directly reconstituted masculinities in the periphery" (p. 45).

Patriarchy would not exist were it not for clearly defined system of gender role

and class relations (Kincheloe, 2001). The oppression and sexism prevalent in a

patriarchal society can have such large-scale impacts as lower wages and differential

rights for women, but patriarchy can also operate in hidden ways. A good example is

victim blaming in sexual assault. Victim blaming is when we devalue an act or crime that

has occurred because we believe the victim of the crime has some level of responsibility.

We train young women operating within a patriarchal society to learn how to avoid being

raped (since men are the perpetrators 98% of the time) (Lisak, 2010). We teach women to

watch what they drink, not to dress too sexy, always stay with friends, and carry their

keys in a position ready for attack of a potential predator. We teach men little about

sexual aggression and violence, yet men are the majority of the perpetrators. Why don't

we teach men how not to rape? Male privilege allows this victimization to go unchecked.

Men are not forced to think about their gender on a daily basis within patriarchy because their identity is dominant. People can instead blame women for sexual assault by saying things like, "The clothes she was wearing were too revealing. She was asking for it!" Victim blaming rhetoric is one aspect of patriarchy and male privilege. The system of patriarchy also leads to violence against women.

Patriarchy is a system that is reinforced by all members of society. It is not just men who keep the cycle of patriarchy going. The engrained and unconsciousness nature of patriarchy creates internalized oppression and sexism. The internalization is evident in examples like women choosing not to go for higher positions of leadership, or believing that their place is in the home. Patriarchy tells women that the home should be their place, and convinces them of this fact through a variety of ways. The reinforcing of patriarchy in all genders also starts from birth. Young girls are told more often that they are pretty than being told that they are smart. This sort of language is a clear way to reinforce the role of the feminine within society. Our patriarchal attitudes enable such "status quo" stories, as "men should be better at math and science then women." While patriarchy is clearly oppressive of women, it does not leave men unharmed.

While patriarchy promotes men as the dominant group in society, it also harms men by forcing them to constrict to narrow gender roles (hooks, 2004). The masculine ideal is trained and reinforced by all members of society from media to parents. I am always reminded of an old home video my family archives. In this video, the family is seen opening Christmas day gifts. My older brother is putting together his new replica baseball stadium paying no attention to two-year-old me sitting in the corner. In that

corner (while eating gobs of wrapping paper), I am playing with my new favorite toy, a cabbage patch doll. From behind the camera comes the force of my father. "James! What the hell are you doing with that doll?" He shouts to my mother, "Liz, what the hell is James doing with a doll on Christmas, my child is going to be half a fag!?" With no response since my mom is presumably cooking Christmas dinner already, my father begins to tell me a different way to play with the doll instead of hugging it. "James, gauge the doll's eyes out, throw it around, play with it like a man!" This kind of masculine reinforcement is not uncommon for young boys and is not specific to the story of my family. I was being trained from the age of two to use violence as my primary means of activity and to guard my emotions. Playing with a doll was not proper for a two-year-old boy.

bell hooks (2004) tells a similar story of patriarchy being reinforced in her own life. She explains that her brother was actually the sweet and caring type while she herself was prone to more tantrums and acts of violence. Her brother was trained to act more violently while she was trained to be subordinate to men. She tells the story of her brother playing with marbles when they were just children. Naturally she wanted to play with the marbles as well. hooks was told by her brother that marbles was a game for boys and not girls. After some time of yelling and attempting to play, hooks father grabbed her to be spanked for not listening. Her father said to her "you're just a little girl. When I tell you to do something I mean for you to do it" (p. 20). After her spanking, hooks was consoled by her mother with her mother saying, "You need to accept that you are a little girl, and girls can't do what boys do." Patriarchy is deeply engrained in this story. Not only does

the father reinforce patriarchy, but the mother does as well. Patriarchy is a system which is dominated by men but perpetuated and reinforced by all members of society.

These two stories illustrate some of the ways in which patriarchy is harmful to all of those involved within it. Men are trained to subscribe to a socially constructed yet problematic set of standards. Men are also trained to value women less than other men, learning that women should be treated as objects and property. The sexism in a patriarchal system means that boys have a higher status than girls, but patriarchy also takes an emotional toll on boys. We break down the emotionality of young boys from birth to train them into a "man up" mentality. The rigid patriarchal socialization and toughening of men creates an outer shell, which must be broken through to get beneath the hyper masculine performance of identity.

As hooks (2004) describes them, hyper masculinity and patriarchy are "diseases" affecting all members of society. These diseases produce a range of symptoms from depression, to violence, to high-risk behavior. In many contexts, we continue to protect our "tradition" while it visibly and invisibly destroys the life of both men and women in our culture. The system of patriarchy must be challenged. One place to start is through inquiry and reflection about the system, as these are part of developing an understanding and possibilities for performing identities differently. Understanding the socially constructed and damaging nature of patriarchy and hyper masculinity can lead to healthy change for both systemic problems of sexism and problems recently termed as "men's issues." Transformative learning, social justice education, and sexual violence prevention

are a few of the ways that masculinity and patriarchy can be disrupted. I will discuss the research surrounding these possibilities in the review of the literature in the next chapter.

Significance of the Study

The literature on masculinity, patriarchy, and gender socialization point to the problems of hyper-masculinity and patriarchy, which create harmful effects for all members of society, including men. Scholars point to statistics of problematic behaviors and suggest that hyper-masculinity may play a role in behaviors, but limited information points to patriarchy as a core of the problem or a social disease in the ways that bell hooks describes. We know from the research that men are engaging in problematic high-risk behaviors, suicidal ideation and pornography use. We also know that other alarming statistics about men have concerning impacts on women and others in society as men commit the majority of violent crimes and account for the overwhelming majority of sexual assaults. Researchers have studied these specific symptomatic problems and suggest they may be influenced by the identity development of college men and others. While the existing research gives us an understanding of masculinity and patriarchy, it often fails to provide routes or strategies to disrupt the status quo. Much research still operates within and for the status quo by failing to address patriarchy as a root of the issue. While men may be facing cultural challenges, they also hold large amounts of power and privilege because of patriarchy. If we address hyper-masculinity and patriarchy holistically, by confronting the symptomatic individual problems such as lack of emotionality, while also addressing the negative effects on others, such as sexual violence, we can move towards individual and social transformation.

We need research on social change programs that involve the personal stories of men engaged in disruption of their identity, both the challenges and successes, in order to further develop our education of men in the fight for justice. Exploring the manifestations of the social diseases of hyper-masculinity and patriarchy in men can help us to build a holistic approach to addressing the symptoms and causes. Just as we would study a biological disease to learn how it develops and how it responds to treatment, we must do the same by analyzing the personal stories of men who are just beginning some form of intervention that can help challenge hyper-masculinity and patriarchy. This study informs the education of men to disrupt harmful masculine and patriarchal norms in order to create social change and transformational learning.

Overview of the Study

In this first chapter, I provided an overview of the problem and purpose of this study. I also offered some background context to the problems of patriarchy and hyper masculinity and an introduction to the issues and methods of my study. In Chapter Two, I will continue to build upon the background of this chapter by exploring research on men's identity development from boyhood to college. This will set the stage in understanding the cultural background of the men of this study. I will then examine current research on programming for men to disrupt hyper masculinity and to encourage reflection on their identity. I end this chapter by what this literature means moving forward, and what gaps exist in the literature.

In chapter three, I describe the methodology I employ in this critical qualitative research. I provide an in-depth description of the research design, participants of the

study, and methods of data connection and analysis. I also briefly discuss findings from my pilot study in this chapter and describe how they helped to shape this dissertation.

In chapters four and five, I present findings from the study. Chapter Four is an autoethnographic reflection of my own experiences, where I explore my journey of masculine identity development and how became involved in work to disrupt patriarchy and hyper masculinity. In chapter five, I share findings from the interviews with the eight participants of this study, all of whom participated in the Men on the Mountain program.

In chapter six, I review my key findings, answer my research questions, and discuss implications of the study. Given my background and position as a higher education administrator, I am particularly interested in what this research means for the work of student affairs professionals and the way in which we develop educational tools and programming for college men. I also provide suggestions for future research and provide a conclusion and final thoughts after the journey of this research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this literature review, I examine the body of work on men and masculinity as well as strategies and programs for the disruption of hyper masculinity and patriarchy. I divide the literature into two major sections, one on male identity development and one on disruption of patriarchy. To begin, I explore the literature on the development of boys and men throughout the lifecycle. By illustrating issues in the development of men across this timespan, I show the depth of the patriarchal socialization that I am attempting to disrupt as part of the Men on the Mountain program and through this study. I then review what disruption of hyper-masculinity and patriarchy might look like through analyzing current research on related topics such as transformative learning, social justice education, and sexual assault prevention. Limited research exists on disrupting masculinity and patriarchy specifically, so exploring parallel and related topics is necessary to provide a framework on the current climate of disrupting masculinity and patriarchy. I then provide a roadmap for how to build from the current literature that exists to explore efforts to disrupt hyper masculinity and patriarchy on a college campus.

Male Identity Development

Researchers in the fields of psychology and sociology have studied the identity development of men from boyhood to adulthood. It is important to study the identity

development of men to get an understanding of how deeply rooted patriarchal socialization is in the development of boys and men. Much of the research on identity development is focused on the period of adolescence with an analysis of boys developing identity within schools and their peer groups. I start this review of the literature with a recent study done with pre-k boys by Judy Chu and end with recent studies in the field of higher education and student affairs on college men.

Boyhood

The rigid patriarchal socialization and toughening of men begins from before birth as families and parents choose colors, clothes, and toys for their young children, sometimes even before they are born. Developmental psychologists discuss early childhood as a key developmental period for children when they construct and reinforce the dichotomous gender schemes (Chu, 2014). Studies such as William Pollack's (1998) *Listening to Boy's Voices*, describe the implementation of a "boy code," as early as ages three to five that shames boys away from vulnerability. These studies also discuss the negative consequences that result in the emotional and physical health of young boys. The "boy code" continues to develop and be reinforced throughout adolescence. This code shames boys away from engaging in vulnerability and creates what Pollack (1998) calls "gender straitjacketing."

Judy Chu's (2014) exploratory ethnographic study of six-boys in a pre-kindergarten class is one of the first to research the relationships and development of boys in early childhood. She conducted focus group interviews with the boys and observed them in-group settings in their classrooms. After spending two years watching

these boys in class and in interactions with their families, Chu did not simply

problematize boys' development, but looked for the ways the boys in her study resisted

socialization and showed their own agency and decision-making. Focusing on boys at

this young age, she was able to highlight the socialization of boys into masculine norms

in their peer groups. The ways in which the boys actively negotiate and navigate this

socialization are profound, particularly as Chu shows the changes that took place before

her eyes, as these boys learned to navigate the world of masculine norms.

The boys were attentive and authentic to the needs of others in the beginning of

the study but a shift also took place in which the boys became inattentive, and seemingly

inauthentic in their relationships with others. This shift occurred as the boys navigated the

norms and perceptions of their peer group and made decisions on how they were going to

perform their identities. One of the keys to this shift was a group the boys called "The

Mean Team." "The Mean Team" was a mischievous group led by Mike, whose main goal

was to bother other people and disrupt their games. The Mean Team was specifically

created as the enemy to "the Nice team," which consisted of the girls in the class. From

this early age, we can see the boys describing themselves as anti-feminine. In one specific

interaction with their teacher Jen, the boys explain that the girls are always doing "nice

things" and the boys "bad things" (p. 114). The boys describe some of the bad things they

have done such as "kicking and punching" and ripping up book covers (p. 114). The

teacher Jen then asks them "What's something nice you've done?," and one of the boys

Rob simply states "nothing," while the leader Mike replies with simple silence (p. 119).

Jen insists that she knows they have done nice things before, at which point Rob takes the

nametag of another student and attempts to hide it to prove he does not do nice things. Jen thwarts this by telling Rob that Rob will then be able to tell the student where his nametag is when he gets to class, and in turn do a nice thing. Rob immediately puts the nametag back to prove he is not nice. Chu describes this interaction thoughtfully by writing that Rob "is determined not to do a nice thing, not when his masculinity is at stake" (p.119).

This group was an influential factor in shaping the masculine norms of each of the boys. The leader Mike was aggressive and intimidating with the other boys. He would often bully others to get the specific toy he wanted to play with or play the game he wanted to play. However, Mike also showed an intense loyalty to the boys of his group as he would help and protect others in his interactions with them by sticking up for them in different situations. The boys of the group followed Mike's lead and would shape their actions based on how they thought Mike and others might perceive them.

All of the boys initially also showed a closeness with their parents, from giving them kisses and hugs when they left, to crying when they were leaving. Throughout Chu's time with them, a change occurred here in which the boys became less affectionate with their mothers, and would say that kisses were gross. This disconnection was often different from what Chu observed during her time with the families at home, where the parents described the boys as loving and affectionate. When the boys got to school, they needed to perform for their peers. The boys were keenly aware of others watching them and perceiving them at all times. The boys were perceptive to the group norms and eventually followed these norms throughout different interactions at school. One of the

boys in class Tony, loved to play with dolls, but his dad forbade playing with dolls at home because they were "girl toys." His older sister, also in the class, would remind Tony that dolls were girl toys and that he was a boy. In one interaction, Chu asked the boys if they ever play with dolls, the boys responded with emphatic no's and Tony responds by saying, "we'd kill'em and we don't like dolls!" (p. 103). Tony enjoys playing with dolls but in interactions with his peers, he is emphatically against them to protect himself from others. He knows that boys who play with girl things are not well liked. The boys even go as far as to call a boy who plays with dolls "a mutt" (p. 103).

Chu describes countless other examples of rigid gender socialization taking place among these pre-schoolers. What is profound is how the boys are active in negotiating and navigating this socialization. Chu shows how you can see the change take place before your eyes as these boys navigate the world of masculine norms. Over time, the boys transition to a performance in which they mirror the patriarchal culture around them. They are not passive participants, simply being infused with masculinity, but instead take an active role in negotiating and performing. Chu's work is the only in-depth research that I could find that focuses on boys of such a young age. To get to college we still have another fifteen or so years to go, with similar rigid socialization-taking place in each level and interaction the boys have with the world throughout schooling. These boys have many more influences that will continue to bombard them throughout boyhood and into adolescence.

Adolescence

Far more research exists describing the masculine development of boys in adolescence (ages 10-18), including Pollack's (1998), *Listening to Boys' Voices* and C.J. Pascoe's (2007) book *Dude you're a Fag* among many others (e.g; Way, 1997; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Kimmel & Mahler, 2003; Korobov, 2005; Klein, 2006; Marcell, Sonenstein, Eftim & Pleck, 2011; Steinfeldt, Vaughan, LaFollette, & Steinfeldt, 2012; Birkett & Espelage, 2015; Reigeluth & Addis, 2016). Many of these studies come from the field of psychology and focus on the socialization of men. Each year there are new studies and each year more results to better describe the socialization of men. All of this research highlights the pain and struggles associated with hyper-masculine socialization for adolescent boys and highlights some of the dangers that can be present to others who interact with these boys.

In her study from the field of psychology, Pollack (1998) interviewed 175 boys and performed a battery of tests measuring everything from self-esteem to unconscious attitudes and beliefs towards others. Pollack's findings led him to believe that boys are in crisis and in need of clinical help from practitioners to change their ideas of masculinity. The "boy code," which starts as early as 3-5 years old (as discussed previously), continues to develop and be reinforced throughout adolescence. This code shames boys away from being vulnerable and creates what Pollack calls "gender straitjacketing" (Pollack, 1998). Boys are programmed by language such as "Don't be a sissy," to retreat behind a mask of hyper-masculinity. Pollack believes that many boys seem to be doing just fine on the surface, but below that surface they face a host of issues involving

sadness and disconnection. Pollack (2006) synthesizes findings from his earlier interviews and psychological testing with boys into four main findings. First, boys feel deeply conflicted about what is expected of them as men, they are confused by the multiple messages that they receive from society. Second, boys' inner conflict (gender role conflict) continues to expand as they grow older, resulting in them hiding behind a mask of false self-confidence. Third, many boys see manhood as an identity filled with isolation, unhappiness, and disappointment. Fourth, their outward appearance hides feelings of isolation and loneliness. As one 16-year-old participant in Pollack's study explained after breaking up with a girlfriend, "you just keep it inside, don't tell anybody about it, feel sick inside, and then maybe after a while it just sort of goes away" (Pollack, 2006, p. 194). These four findings, among many others from his initial work, lead to Pollack to claim that boys are in crisis. Pollack calls for a gender revolution to dismantle the rules of the boy code so that young boys can break free of its confines. While Pollack's research is focused on the deep emotional and personal issues of young boys navigating hyper-masculinity, Pascoe's (2007) ethnographic research into the world of high school shows similar negative effects of masculinity, especially on boys from marginalized groups.

After spending 18 months conducting fieldwork in a suburban, working class, and racially diverse school, Pascoe (2007) argues that the formation of masculine identity in adolescence at River High School occurs through the repudiation of a "fag" identity. Masculine identity is created and reinforced through the repudiation of what are perceived to be feminine and gay characteristics. Pascoe highlights that a "fag discourse"

is central to boys joking and creating bonds. Pascoe also attempts to uncouple masculinity from the male body. She highlights ways in which all genders can perform and reinforce hyper-masculine norms. Specifically, the more masculine women of the high school (basketball players, etc.) seemed to enjoy more social capital and also reinforced hyper masculine norms through their interactions with others.

Overall, Pascoe offers a dark view into the world of masculinity in high school. Repudiation of the feminine and of a "fag identity" is central to the student culture of the high school she studied. This repudiation was present in every hallway and classroom as well as every school ritual from dances to sports events. Homophobic slurs and sexualized insults were a way of life and served for some student to establish their identity, especially in opposition to the categories they demonized. Hyper-masculine norms were essential to gaining social capital in high school. The result is a hostile environment for those of marginalized identities. This high school environment is an enhanced microcosm of the problems associated with hyper-masculine norms and patriarchal society. The school itself is a model for patriarchy on an adolescent level.

Other studies of boys have pointed to similar norms of masculinity (Way, 1997; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Kimmel & Mahler, 2003; Korobov, 2005; Klein, 2006; Oransky & Marecek, 2009; Marcell, Sonenstein, Eftim & Pleck, 2011; Steinfeldt, Vaughan, LaFollette, & Steinfeldt, 2012; Birkett & Espelage, 2015; Reigeluth & Addis, 2016). For example, Kimmel and Mahler (2003) examined school shootings from 1982-2001 and proposed a link between masculinity, homophobia, and violence. They found that most of the perpetrators of school shootings were teased and bullied for their lack of

display of hyper masculine norms resulting in them retaliating against these threats to their manhood. They also found that similar to Pascoe's work, much of the content and bullying centered on homophobia and homophobic comments. Oransky and Marecek (2009) conducted semi-structured interviews with twenty-three 15 and 16-year-old white boys at an independent preparatory high school to better understand the emotional expression and support of these boys within their peer groups. They found that the boys avoided displays of emotion or pain and disparaged such behavior in other boys. The boys adhered to the strict hyper masculine norms described throughout much of the literature and mocked or taunted boys who did not fit these norms through homophobic slurs or comparing them to women. Oransky and Marecek (2009) additionally described the significant power of peers' expectations of boys as compared to other individuals in their lives. The peer groups and friendships of these boys were incredibly influential in their display of hyper masculinity.

Way (1997) attempted to understand the nature of the friendships of adolescent boys. Way conducted a longitudinal study of the friendships of 19 urban and ethnically diverse adolescent boys from low income families. Way found that as the boys grew older they became more and more distrustful of their male peers. By the latter years of the study, many of the boys described a desire for close male friendships that they now lacked. Overall, researchers who study boys describe a number of shared behaviors and norms that constitute hyper masculinity in adolescence and detail some of the effects these behaviors have on the boys themselves as well as the world around them. Unfortunately, as boys move on from adolescence, the cycle of socialization continues to

ingrain in them hyper-masculine and patriarchal norms. This results in the same behaviors described above continuing and sometimes escalating as the boys continue to develop, notably during the college-age years.

College Men

Men are transitioning from adolescence to adulthood between the ages of 17 and 26 (Kimmel, 2008). Most commonly during these ages, boys make the transition from boyhood to manhood, a transition that is often celebrated with various rituals across different cultures. This area of masculinity is far less researched compared to adolescence. Since the research population for this dissertation study is comprised largely of cisgender white fraternity men, I provide the most depth in my literature review on studies that research college-age men. While I did not set out to study this specific group, these are the individuals who signed up to participate in Men on the Mountain thus I feel it important discuss the research that focuses on this population in depth. However, I do realize that there is a wider range of research in the area of masculinity studies in general. At the same time, a growing body of work exists in the realm of higher education which paints a picture of the hyper masculine norms and gendered expectations for college men (Davis, 2002; Edwards & Jones, 2009; Harper, 2004; Harper & Harris 2010; Harris & Edwards 2010; Harris, Palmer, and Struve 2011). Additional research has focused on specific gender expectations and performances of men from marginalized groups or who hold intersectional identities (e.g., Harper, 2004; Martin & Harris 2006; Harris, Palmer, and Struve, 2011; Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012; Tillapaugh & Nicolazzo, 2015). Other research has also focused on men in fraternities and their performances of masculinity

(Harper & Harris, 2013; Taylor, 2015). Most recently, Foste and Davis (2017) studied how college men make meaning of their gendered expectations in college. They used a self-authorship framework to explore how their gender expectations are reflected in meaning-making capacities.

To provide the foundation for my dissertation research, I focus on a few frequently-cited studies in depth. Michael Kimmel (2008), in his book *Guyland,* studies men in the college age range, though the men of his study were not necessarily attending college. I also explore two main studies in the last decade that explicitly focused on the identity development of men in college, one by Frank Harris III (2006) and the other by Keith Edwards (2007). Harris III and Edwards (2010) also jointly discuss commonalities between their grounded theory studies of college men.

In *Guyland,* Kimmel studies the transition to manhood as part of an interview-based study of 400 men in the age range of 17 to 26. Based upon this research, Kimmel developed what he calls "the Guy Code," which involves 10 values and attitudes related to what it means to be a man:

1. Boy's don't cry

2. It's better to be mad than sad

3. Don't get mad – get even

4. Take it like a man

5. He who has the most toys when he dies, wins

6. Just do it or ride or die

7. Size matters

8. I don't stop to ask for directions

9. Nice guys finish last

10. It's all good (Kimmel & Davis, 2011)

This "Guy Code" is a product of years of gendered socialization from boyhood to manhood. The tenets of adult masculinity for many men still revolve around limited emotionality, homophobia, and a fear of femininity. Men are evaluated, and evaluate each other, on the above criteria into their college years. Kimmel (2008) also identified three distinct cultures that help to support the "Guy Code." First, there is a Culture of Entitlement which involves a sense of male superiority and diminished empathy (Kimmel & Davis, 2011). Second, there is a Culture of Silence, which calls for silence about masculinity and any ills it produces. Third, there is a Culture of Protection, in which guys stick up for one another in events such as hazing or sexual assault. These three cultures Kimmel and Davis describe are similar to the walls of the man box I discussed in chapter one. These cultures reinforce a particular kind of masculine identity and support the maintenance of an unchallenged system of patriarchy.

Davis (2002) opens the door to better understanding the expectations and norms of college men. As part of his constructivist inquiry, he interviewed ten white college students at Western Illinois University, a public regional institution, with the purpose of exploring how social constructed gender roles impact men's identity development. Davis (2002) found that the men in the study feared femininity, held feelings of being overly challenged or left out of support structures (i.e. no Men's Center, but a Women's Center), and felt a sense of confusion and lack of understanding about masculinity. Davis'

research led to additional individuals within higher education exploring masculinity and men's identity development.

Harper (2004) examined conceptualizations of masculinity among high achieving African American college men. He conducted individual interviews with 32 high achieving African American male undergraduates at predominately white campuses in the Midwest. He found that their unconventional masculinity (meaning their masculinity did not adhere to the strict gender norms of many of their peers) was never questioned by their more hyper masculine peers and that these individuals role modeled healthy masculinity through their leadership positions for others at their universities.

Harris III and Edwards (2010) continued to build on these initial explorations of college men's identity development and offer a theoretical map for the identity development of college men. Their goal was to figure out why the issues of college men persist and how we can address them. Edwards' study involved 10 college men at a large public institution in the eastern region of the United States while Harris' study involved 68 men at a large private institution in the western region of the United States. Harris III and Edwards presented shared finding around three themes from their studies: "(1) external pressures and expectation to perform hegemonic masculinity, (2) consequences of hegemonic masculinity, and (3) efforts to transcend hegemonic masculinity" (p. 48). Related to the first theme, participants in both studies recalled the pre-college socialization that influenced their identity as men. Their recollections of masculine expectations came from youth sports, parents and other peer interactions in which these men learned acceptable forms of masculine expression. As one participant in Edwards'

study shared "You want to be the kid who beats your rival team, drinks that night to celebrate and has sex with a girl" (p. 49). Gendered external pressures and expectations seemingly grew more restrictive as the participants became older. These expectations did not end after high school but continued into college as the men felt a level of competition among their peers and a need to prove their manhood at the college level. While the participants conformed to many of the expectations of hegemonic masculinity, they also realized that doing so could result in consequences, as Edwards and Harris III discuss as part of the second theme.

One of the main ways for the men in these studies to prove their manhood was to express degrading and demeaning attitudes toward women in their conversations and interactions with other men. Men in both of the studies acknowledged that this behavior was often different from their actual beliefs about women. Many of the participants also discussed feeling a limited sense of connectedness with other men in their lives and an overall feeling of being disconnected from their "true" selves as men, especially as they felt limited in their expressions of emotion, specifically around other men. In describing the third theme, Edwards and Harris III capture how some of the men began to move past the pressure to conform to external expectations of hegemonic masculinity and instead focused on more authentic and less stereotypical ways of being. One participant in Edwards' study described this transition as "a general progression where you start to think about yourself [and eventually] you start to think about why you are trying to be something you are not" (p. 53). Men were at varying stages in this process of moving beyond hegemonic masculinity. Many of the participants shared stories about male

mentors in their lives who were significant influences on their views of masculinity. Participants also shared that critical self-reflection about gender and masculinity, and interacting with individuals from diverse backgrounds, helped them to disrupt hegemonic masculinity, at least to some degree.

The first two themes from Edwards' and Harris' studies resonate with the results of many other studies from across the lifespan of men, showing the deep socialization that occurs at all ages. The first two themes of their studies clearly show a connection to the negative statistics about men that I have shared throughout this dissertation. Their studies also showed that hyper-masculinity does not just change at the college level, but instead can become even more robust in the college environment. The final theme points towards some hopefulness and some guidance into some ways we can change behavior and move beyond hegemonic masculinity.

Up until this point, I have spent most of my time outlining the development of masculinity over the lifespan, as well as discussing the problematic patriarchal norms that men are taught to uphold. I now turn to exploring what might be done to disrupt masculinity and patriarchy. This will help to lay the foundation for my study of the men who participated in Men on the Mountain.

Disrupting Masculinity and Patriarchy

Our system of patriarchy operates in a continually reinforcing fashion. Because of the ways in which they are socialized into norms of masculinity and patriarchy, individuals and groups continue to reinforce the system of patriarchy through their everyday thinking, habits, and actions. Our education, our parenting, and our everyday

life operate within this socialization. We cannot escape patriarchy; however we may be able to challenge it through inquiring about the system, understanding how it operates, and working to disrupt it. Describing work to transform systems, Paulo Freire (2000) writes that liberation is the "action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (p. 79). Both men and women must be able to see their world in different ways in order to alter patriarchy. The first step to disrupting a status quo system of patriarchy is to be challenged to reflect on gender and the history of socialization.

A number of suggestions about what to do for education of men exist within the literature, though many of these suggestions do not state outright to "disrupt the patriarchy!" For example, Harris III (2010) calls for universities to realize that men are arriving on college campuses having been socialized into traditional forms of masculinity. He advises that we work with men in a variety of ways to create new meaning in their lives disruptive of patriarchy and oppression and to transform their identities. Edwards and Harris III (2010) together suggest that we create space for critical reflection on gender. Encouraging critical reflection is difficult because one of the central privileges of being a man is the opportunity to never have to discuss ideas of gender if you simply avoid the topic. At no point is a man forced to think about their identity through a gendered lens. Yet, classroom spaces, group spaces, and various forms of campus involvement can all be opportunities to engage with men in critical reflection. Edwards and Harris III (2010) also suggest mentorship and support opportunities as potential avenues to transform men's understanding of masculinity.

Shen-Miller, Isacco, Davies, Jean and Phan (2013) as well as Englar-Carlson and Kiselica (2013) suggest that campuses focus on the positive aspects of male socialization such as responsibility and strength, to create interventions for men. These researchers offer what they call the "Men's Center Approach" to help support college men and breakdown barriers to help seeking among college men. The Men's Center Approach (MCA) grew out of work at the University of Oregon's Men's Center, which is an office and organization located in the campus center devoted to developing and implementing culturally sensitive intervention with men. The MCA uses a lens of "possible-masculinities" to help men set goals for their own identities based on their future aspirations, their needs, and what their communities need from them. The center implements interventions and programming to challenge men to become better selves while also supporting their needs. By focusing on possibilities, they avoid what Jason Laker (2005) called the "bad dog" approach, where we simply reprimand men by telling them to stop doing something. The "bad dog" approach typically leads to resentment and creates men who learn little and instead may even become more hyper masculine. The goal instead is to challenge behavior without diminishing the students themselves, by acknowledging the fact that these men have been socialized into this patriarchal society (Laker, 2009).

Unfortunately, there is limited research on the MCA or on programs conducted through the "possible masculinities" lens. I found just one exploratory study of six men who took a two-credit academic leadership course for fraternity members. Isacco, Warnecke, and Ampuero (2013), studied a strengths-based approach to a leadership

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program with fraternity men. Guided by the idea of "positive masculinity" the group aimed to increase motivation to change among fraternity men. The study consisted of one in depth interview in two structured sections, one consisting of demographic questions and the other of 32 open-ended questions. Participants reported that they enjoyed the class, they were made of aware of male gender norms they previously had not thought of, felt the course improved their support among other men, and felt they needed to be more aware of other men in need of help. The results left much to desire as the participants merely self-identified their perceived change in attitudes and behaviors.

A focus on the positive aspects of masculinity is suggested to benefit clients in psychotherapy settings (Englar-Carlson & Kiselica, 2013). The goal of the "positive masculinity" approach is to help male clients embrace healthy aspects of their own masculinity. Englar and Kiselica, (2013) suggest this approach for counselors to help men navigate their own identities and replace dysfunctional male attitudes and behaviors to more positive versions of masculinity. Positive masculinity is a conceptual framework for counselors, but there is little research that exists on the topic.

What is lacking throughout the literature are studies on programs dedicated to critical reflection on gender among men. Many authors have ideas of what could work, including Harris III and Edwards, but few actually study programs dedicated to doing this work. Programs exist for bystander intervention and sexual violence, as well as social justice programs oriented to other forms of privilege, but few exist on specifically disrupting masculinity and patriarchy in men, and even fewer programs target our most hyper masculine groups of men. In the following subsections, I discuss higher education

programs that are at least in part dedicated to disrupting patriarchy. First, I explore one avenue that has become more prevalent in recent years to address sexual violence, bystander intervention. Since men commit most sexual violence, many of the themes address rape culture and attempt to reach men to prevent sexual assault and violence. Second, I explore literature on social justice education for men and third, transformative learning programs addressing privilege.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Bystander Intervention

Bystander intervention work grew from the introduction of a public health model for social change at universities. Bystander intervention is supported by the Center for Disease Control, Department of Justice, and the Office on Violence Against Women as displayed the Justice Department's website dedicated to protecting students against sexual assault (https://www.justice.gov/ovw/protecting-students-sexual-assault). Men are identified as a key constituency in bystander intervention as many groups have realized the influence of the socialization of men on the prevalence of sexual violence. A number of studies have been done to test the efficacy of such programs to create active bystanders, specifically in working with college men. (e.g., Berkowitz, 2002; Banyard, Moynihan, & Crossman, 200; Coker, Cook-Craig, Fisher, Clear, Garcia, & Hegg, 2011; Gidycz, Orchowski & Berkowtiz, 2011; Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Fouber, Brasfield, Hill & Shelley-Tremblay, 2011; Stewart, 2014). Additionally, I am aware of several other programs that exist at universities, but not of any published information or research about those programs. For instance, within North Carolina, at UNC Chapel Hill a "UNC Men's Project" and at Duke University a "Duke Men's Project" are offered, both with aims at

increasing men's engagement in preventing gender violence and building healthy

alternatives to the limits of masculinity. I know anecdotally of other such programs at

institutions across the nation from my attendance at conferences and involvement

nationally in higher education, but have been unable to locate any research related to

these programs.

Within the literature, one of the more popular programs advocated by One in

Four, Inc. (a non-profit dedicated to the prevention of rape) is entitled the Men's Program

developed by Alan Berkowitz in 1994. Two recent groups of researchers, Gidycz,

Orchowski, and Berkowitz (2011) and Langhinrichsen-Rohling, Foubert, Brasfield, Hill

and Shelley-Temblay (2011), studied the 1.5 hour prevention program. The program is

presented by trained male-peer educators to all-male groups and consists of conversations

defining rape, sexual assault, and consent as well as a video describing a rape experience

to gain empathy towards survivors. Participants explore their own behaviors in helping to

prevent rape and learn how to help a woman recover from a rape experience.

Langhinrichsen-Rohling, et al., collected data from 422 male students enrolled in the

program, however only 85 men produced usable data from both the pre and posttests.

Gidycz, Orchowski, and Berkowitz (2011), collected data from 460 male participants

who completed the administered pretest as well as two post-tests, one at 4 months after

they completed the program and one at 7 months. Both 2011 studies found that college

men who experienced the Men's Program increased their self-reported willingness to

help as a bystander as well as decreased in their self-reported sexual aggression.

Additionally, Langhinrichsen-Rohling, et al. (2011) found a self-reported decrease in

rape myth acceptance while Gidycz, Orchowski and Berkowitz (2011) found that the men believed their friends were also now more likely to intervene.

Stewart (2014) researched an 11-week long program for undergraduates called the "Men's Project" which addresses socialization, gender norms, privilege, sexual violence and bystander intervention. The program goal was to engage men in preventing sexual violence, particularly since we know most men are perpetrators and hold power within society. The Men's Project also acknowledged that masculine gender norms may play a role in promoting violence. The coordinators of this project believe that using male privilege to stop sexual assault and speak out against violence may have preventative effects for sexual violence on campuses. Participants were recruited to the program through a nomination process in which staff of the Women's Center solicited nominations from faculty and staff. Thirty-six male participants agreed to participate in the program (only 30% of those nominated). The program involved 2-hour long sessions once a week for 11 weeks. A survey was emailed to all participants before participating for baseline measure and two weeks after the program ended for a posttest. Twenty-three men ended up providing data for both baseline and posttest measures. The measures assessed changes in ideologies and behaviors using various inventories for sexism, rape acceptance myths, bystander efficacy, and feminist activism among others. The program was successful in creating change in the perceptions of the 36 male participants. Participants reported lower sexism and rape myth acceptance, and reported using less gender-biased language. While this study is promising, the details were limited. All of these results were self-reported by the participants. That is, they assessed their own

perceptions of their change in attitudes and behaviors based on the inventories provided, but their self-perceptions were not corroborated with other evidence.

McMahon and Dick (2011) completed posttest surveys with 41 men and individual interviews with 8 men completing a pilot bystander intervention program in a local community in a diverse urban area in the northeast. They found that nearly half of the participants (51%) had already been previously exposed to interpersonal violence prevention training. Many of the men also reported knowing someone who was a victim of violence (91%). The men of this study also self-reported changes in attitude on the posttest survey and a greater willingness to intervene in scenarios of interpersonal violence. However, during individual interviews they also expressed continued anxiety about intervening in social situations as well as the need to stay active with other men around the topic of violence prevention. The men who participated in the interviews expressed a desire for future meetings to support one another in engaging in bystander intervention. Similar to the other research discussed, McMahon and Dick (2011) claimed positive effects of the bystander intervention program but didn't answer questions about why or how these changes occurred, or if they were sustained.

Jackson Katz' (1995) program the "Mentors in Violence Prevention Project" or "MVP" is advertised as model program for young men, specifically athletes, to work to change the problematic behaviors of men. Katz began this program in September of 1993. It typically involves three 90-minute sessions each year with college athletic teams. It has since evolved into a program that has been adapted for a variety of settings and college campuses. The main goal of the program is to inspire male leadership in reducing

violence against women. The program covers issues around masculinity and challenging societal norms, though the program can be adapted to different constituents. Assessment and evaluations of the program have been published on the program's website, mvpnational.org. For the 25 years of the programs' existence, there are 10 evaluations with the most recent being from 2011. Most evaluations point to similar results of other bystander intervention programs with a significant change in participant perceived attitudes and behaviors toward interpersonal violence after completing the program. One specific report on a program at Syracuse University found that the students who participated in the program had less sexist attitudes and an increased sense of self-efficacy to prevent gender violence (Cissner, 2009). 424 fraternity and sorority life members participated in this program, which involved a mix-gendered, 2-day workshop (Cissner, 2009). Unfortunately, the researchers did not breakdown data by gender, but instead only by the difference between peer educators (those who helped lead the programs) and workshop participants. There is also not a description on the website of what exactly was changed in the program to make it a 2-day workshop or how much masculinity or gender related curriculum were a part of the program.

The MVP program is another example of a bystander intervention program displaying self-reported changes in attitudes and behavior as an outcome. Additionally, participants in Cissner's (2009) study reported an increase in the confidence they feel in intervening in situations of interpersonal violence, but the program provides no assessment on if they have actually ever intervened in such situations. It seems difficult to imagine creating lasting change on the basis of two days of studying habits,

dispositions, and ideas that have been cultivated with over 18 years of gender socialization, though it may be a start. Among of the central issues and causes of violence against women are patriarchy and hyper masculinity. Addressing those issues directly seems likely to be more prudent in work with students, as opposed to focusing on the symptoms of the problem such as interpersonal violence. Interpersonal violence is one symptom of patriarchy among many. A quote from Jackson Katz recounting his early presentations also highlights some of the challenges that arise when we disregard the central issues. Katz (1993) writes

> Byron asks the athletes to close their eyes. "Imagine, "he says, "that the woman closest to you—your mother, your girlfriend, your sister—is being assaulted by a man. It's happening at a party in a residence hall, on the street. "Now imagine", he continues, "that there's a man in a position to stop the assault but he doesn't. He just ignores the situation or watches." When the guys open their eyes, Byron askes them how they felt about the assault and then about the man that stood idly by. They reply that they're upset by the assault, and disgusted the male bystander didn't intervene. 'He's a punk', they offer, a 'coward,' a 'wimp.' (p. 542)

This quote highlights the problem of addressing just the violence and the abhorrence of the violence. For example, despite their critique, the men nonetheless continue to place hegemonic masculine norms on one another through language like "coward" and "wimp." While the program clearly helps to address a major issue of interpersonal violence, it fails to address the root of the problem, hyper masculinity and patriarchy.

In their recent essay, Labhardt, Holdssworth, Brown, and Howat (2017) reviewed 28 studies on bystander intervention on university campuses. They found that bystander intervention focused primarily on bystander intent and hypothetical behavior. The authors suggest that this focus fails to address the complexity of sexual assault intervention,

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suggesting that actual intervention needs to be observed. Overall, they suggest that bystander intervention research is still in its infancy with much more research needed.

One of the challenges of teaching men to disrupt patriarchy is that the large majority of men would never attend the kinds of workshops described by Katz (1993), Stewart (2014), and McMahon and Dick (2011). The men who are most likely to attend these workshops have been heavily recruited and often have prior knowledge or interest in participating (McMahon & Dick, 2011). Often the most hyper-masculine men are the ones who do not think they need to go to these types of programs. In many of the examples above, the program has been mandatory for certain people, or the individuals who show up have already had some sort of experience that made them want to get involved.

In my own work, I have found it easy to gather all of the pro-feminist men on campus to participate in programs, but much more difficult to find the other 90% or more of men engaging in our traditional forms of masculinity and patriarchy. I once asked Michael Kimmel why I was having such a hard time recruiting men to talk about gender related issues and he said "you have found all the feminist men on campus, in order to get the men who really need this information you have to trick them and call it 'leadership development' or something they are more likely to attend" (personal communication, April 15, 2015). It's clear that something is still missing from the research on bystander intervention trainings, and perhaps the programs themselves. While they address key aspects of the problem of masculinity and patriarchy such as socialization, gender norms and privilege, they do not typically address the transformation of self. We need to hold

men accountable to disrupting masculinity and patriarchy in their own identities in order to perform their identities in less oppressive ways. Participants in McMahon and Dick's (2011) study even suggested this by stating that they want to more conversations and programs on the topic with other men. The research points to the socialization of masculinity being a large part of the problems related to gender violence, but little research exists in suggesting how to transform the identities of men. Moreover, much of the research is quantitative in nature and relies on self-reported data interpreted through scaling measures, as opposed to complex descriptions of the engagement of men in these programs.

Social Justice Education and Men

Davis and Wagner (2005) call for student affairs practitioners to promote social justice attitudes and actions with male students. Their call is similar to that of scholars involved in anti-racist work, who maintain that we need to study and disrupt the primary role white people play in reproducing racism. Men playing a role in eradicating sexism begins with a transformation in their thinking about gender. The idea that men should actively work to end sexism is a more encompassing approach to changing ways of being, as compared to the violence prevention and bystander intervention work discussed above. Violence prevention is just one aspect (an important one) of ending sexism. It focuses on a specific symptom of the problem, but typically not the root causes. Social justice education attempts to create full and equal participation of all groups in society (Hackman, 2005). Social justice educators do not simply examine difference, but instead call for critical examination of systems of power, privilege and oppression.

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Davis and Wagner (2005) note several barriers to developing social justice attitudes among men; these barriers are rooted in both internal processes as well as the external influences of masculinity. It can be easy to attempt to dismantle sexism by simply holding individual men accountable for sexist actions (what bystander intervention and violence prevention does, hold others accountable), but doing so fails to attend to broad processes of socialization at work. As Davis and Wagner (2005) write, attending to the broad process of socialization, "in no way diminishes men's oppression of women or the responsibility men have for challenging patriarchal privilege. Rather, it suggests that men are also harmed by patriarchy" (p. 30). Now this does not mean that sexist acts should not be addressed. Rather, they suggest that because of a complex system of patriarchy at work, three barriers exist to engaging in social justice efforts with men: privilege, adherence to hegemonic masculinity, and men's contradictory experiences of power (Davis & Wagner, 2005).

Privilege is a barrier in social justice work because it is an invisible experience that men may never explore. A central aspect of male privilege is that men almost never think of themselves as gendered beings (Davis & Wagner, 2005). This blindness to themselves as gendered beings can inhibit their identity development and impede their ability to engage in social justice work. Men's adherence to hegemonic masculinity is a barrier because hegemonic masculinity entails a narrow gender role script in which men deny all traditionally-feminine-identified behaviors and characteristics. Yet traditionally feminine characteristics such as empathy and receptivity are necessary in forming social justice attitudes and actions (Davis & Wagner, 2005). Finally, men's contradictory

experiences of power create for them a confusing paradox. This contradictory experience is that "in objective social analysis, men as a group have power over women as a group: but in their subjective experience of the world, men as individuals do not feel powerful. In fact, they feel powerless" (Capraro, 2004, p. 192). The experiences of men are different based on the intersectionality of their identity categories, for example, a male identifying as gay, Latino, or working class. The feelings of powerlessness can manifest themselves in different ways based on their intersectional identities. Davis and Wagner (2005) argue that we need to acknowledge feelings of powerlessness yet not allow it to turn into men feeling as though they are oppressed in the same way as women. Men are the recipients of the power and privilege of patriarchy, but also experience powerlessness and pain because of strict adherence to hegemonic masculinity.

A first step to challenging men and engaging them in social justice education is by opening up their eyes to the multiple aspects of their identity. Through this exploration, they can begin to uncover their hidden privilege and understand the ways in which they may adhere to strict masculine guidelines in their own lives. Doing both can allow for men to understand why they might feel constricted emotionally and also challenge the role they play in supporting systems of power. As Davis and Wagner (2005) write "Men's pain can be a vehicle for initiating awareness about, developing understanding for, and ultimately promoting action related to social justice" (p. 37). Creating a personal connection to an issue or problem is critically important to engaging men in work around social justice and self-identity. Loschiavo, Miller, and Davies (2007) suggest that when confronted with information about patriarchy, men will become defensive about

privilege, which can be difficult to navigate. A personal connection and a space of dialogue are important to help men stay present during difficult conversations and to navigate resistance. Without both vulnerable connection and challenging dialogue, men cannot disrupt their history of socialization. Davis and Wagner (2005) claim that educational programs designed to help men develop understanding through critical reflection and self-awareness could result in stimulating social justice action. In looking to what else can spur disruption of problematic forms of identity socialization, transformative learning theory can be an important layer to incorporate into the identity development of men.

Transformative Learning and Privilege

Jack Mezirow first wrote about transformative learning theory in 1978. He described it as a theory of adult development that involves learning "how to negotiate and act upon our own purposes, values, feelings and meaning rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others" (Mezirow, 2006, p. 8). Transformative learning involves constructing new meaning through life experiences. Transformative learning opens the door for both individual and social change to take place (Cranton & Taylor, 2012). In the context of masculinity, engaging in transformative learning experiences may help both individuals and groups of men to become agents for change in the fight for equality. Taylor and Cranton (2012) write that transformative learning occurs "when an alternate perspective calls into question a previously held, perhaps uncritically assimilated perspective" (p. 8). By calling into question gendered socialization and the uncritical perspectives of men, we can promote learning and transformation both

individually and socially. Transformative learning is also an important theory to use in work with college students as they are in the beginning stages of adulthood and are in a prime space for perspective changes and meaning making to occur in their lives. Limited research exists on the use of transformative learning with men, but two research studies I discuss below point to the potential of this type of learning in transforming patriarchy. I also discuss some research which points to transformative learning in other areas of social justice education such as whiteness.

While a small-scale study involving only 8 men, York (2014) connected transformative learning to the development of 8 individuals in a specific program in Africa. The one-year program of workshops focused on the idea of Ubuntu, a South African concept of interdependence in which human meaning is derived from knowing others more deeply and caring for others. York (2014) began with the premise that all humans are interconnected and argued that collective solidarity should be reached among a people. With Ubuntu as the core theme, participants in these workshops explored subjects such as masculinity, gender, and violence through group and individual discussion and reflection. The program involved critical reflection, including a "diary project," to measure the transformation over time. The author found it necessary to challenge the traditionally held masculine beliefs in the Zulu culture in order to produce change. York found that the men began with the assumption that men's domination over women was natural and normal. Prior to engaging in the workshop, several of the men shared that they were previously involved in violent acts against women. In connecting the men to the concept of Ubuntu, the men were forced to look outside of their own

perspective and step into the shoes of another. In the end, the year-long workshop

produced self-reported transformation among the men. They all reported a change in their

mindset and activities to be more inclusive of women in their daily lives. The men

became more group oriented and focused on living Ubuntu in their everyday lives. The

men did note that when entering back into the "real world," it was not as easy to uphold

the learned values of the workshop due to being surrounded by men and others who were

living out the old masculine perspective. One of the respondent's explanations of this

phenomenon also points out some of the potential limitations of the workshop:

> There is a problem for young men trying to do this in our society because
> sometimes you will try to learn or do the so called women's stuff and your parents
> will say don't worry, your sister will do that, so that's hard, and sometimes if you
> keep on trying to help some will think that it's a sign of being gay. This will hurt
> you and you will start wanting to do something which will prove that you are man
> enough and you will stop doing so called women's stuff because you don't want
> to be labeled as gay. (p. 71)

This quote points to the need for the men in the group to continue to explore how they

may behave different in their everyday lives as they seemed ill equipped to act out their

transformation of mind in all areas due to peer pressure. The focus appeared to have been

on Ubuntu and gender-based violence, but the true socially constructed nature of

masculinity may not have been called into question. While in a different culture in Africa

(which is arguably even more heteronormative than the United States), there does not

appear to have been much conversation about masculinity related to homophobia or other

oppressed identities within the workshop. The men seemed to struggle to live out their

newfound perspectives with limited tools and environmental change to continue

transformation. The author concludes that a holistic community approach is necessary to combat the community pushback. Culturally appropriate forms of transformative learning and critical inquiry are important, but because much of the work related to this particular project was done in isolation with only 8 men in this specific group, the transformation of perspective seemed hard to sustain absent support outside of the group to continue to challenge the privileged masculine identity.

In her research, Ann Curry-Stevens (2007) focused more broadly on the transformation of privilege in advancing social justice, describing her attempt to create a "pedagogy of the privileged." Curry-Stevens conducted a qualitative life history study of 20 community-based practitioners involved in work to transform privileged learners on issues such as gender privilege. Curry-Stevens suggested that understanding and disrupting privilege is an important aspect of transformative learning. She challenged the assumption that social justice transformation must be initiated by people from minority groups and suggested instead that the challenging privilege may lead to greater social change. She found that the community practitioners she studied agreed with this idea and felt it was important to think of ways to better teach privileged groups to recognize and transform their identities. Curry-Stevens presented a new model for pedagogy of the privileged based upon transformative learning theory. The ten-step model consists of two processes: Confidence shaking (Steps 1-6) and Confidence-building (Steps 7-10). The steps are, awareness of oppression, oppression as structural and thus enduring and pervasive, locating oneself as oppressed, locating oneself as privileged, understanding the benefits that come from privilege, understanding oneself as implicated in the oppression

of others and understanding oneself as an oppressor, building confidence to take action, planning actions for departure, finding supportive connections to sustain commitments, and declaring intention for future actions. She suggested that pedagogy of the privileged needs to challenge individuals through this transformation in order to turn the privileged into activists. She implied that by transforming the privileged person, greater social change can occur, since the privileged are most often in positions of power. Curry-Stevens advanced the idea of pedagogy for the privileged and offers a call to action for educators, but lacks details about how privileged learners transform when pushed by critical reflection and dialogue to create change. That is, she doesn't detail this process of transformation over time, rather she just says it is necessary.

Additional research on transformative learning has also suggested that autoethnography may be a potentially useful tool in this process (Boyd, 2008). Boyd (2008) used autoethnography to reflect on the impact of whiteness on his actions, words, and attitudes. After an experience in an interracial dialogue group, the author used autoethnography as a way to engage in learning about the impact of whiteness and privilege on his behavior during the group sessions. Boyd realized how different his story was from other members of the group and reflected on the influence socialization had on his story. What was most evident to him was how he acted without reference to a historical context of White racism and slavery, as if these were problems of the past. He was able to see how whiteness distorted his interactions with people of color throughout the dialogues. At the end of his experience, Boyd (2008) wrote, "because of this experience, my cognitive and emotional paradigm has shifted significantly. I see my

students, my colleagues, the world, and myself in general with a new set of eyes. This new vision has motivated me to continue to explore the dynamics of white privilege in my life and to not let this transformative learning experience be the last" (p. 224). His individual critical self-reflection on group dialogue allowed for him to create new meaning.

The field of research on transformative learning theory has grown over the past decade. In addition to the three studies I discussed above, other researchers have found the need to "create a safe and inclusive environment, focus on individual learner's needs and build upon life experiences" in order to produce transformative learning (Cranton & Taylor, 2012, p. 45). Research has also shown the importance of relationships of trust in achieving new levels of understanding (Cranton & Taylor, 2012). By having strong group relationships as part of learning to disrupt privilege and work for social justice, there is a greater likelihood of social accountability and collective transformation. These additional findings from the literature show the need to create learning environments for men where they can be vulnerable and where thoughts and ideas can be discussed without fear of judgement. When this vulnerable space is created, men are positioned well to engage in critical reflection and dialogue around privilege and other difficult topics.

Transformative learning can be applied to work with college men challenging their own socially-constructed masculine identities. Research in the field of transformative learning theory provides some insight into what this learning experience could look like and how the learning environment can best be crafted to influence transformative change. Little information still exists on the transformation that can occur

in men when a disruption of their identity occurs. The only study I found which discusses this indirectly is York's (2012) research on Ubuntu, which I described earlier. Little in the transformational learning research is narrowly focused on gender identity and instead focuses on other forms of transformational learning. What is clear from the research, literature is that a multidimensional approach, encompassing not only narrowed efforts of violence prevention, but also social justice education, and transformative learning experiences is needed to disrupt hyper masculinity and patriarchy.

Moving Forward

The literature on masculinity, patriarchy and socialization is extensive and points to the problems of hyper masculinity and patriarchy, which together create harmful effects for all members of society, including men. Scholars identify problematic statistics related to aggressive male behavior and suggest that hyper-masculinity may play a role in problematic behaviors. Yet limited information points to patriarchy as a root of the problem, or as a social disease, as bell hooks described it. The roots of hyper masculinity and patriarchy are planted before birth and continue to take hold throughout the lifespan. Children as early as pre-kindergarten already display signs of conforming to a narrow view of masculinity. This conformity only continues to grow throughout adolescence and into the college environment.

We also know from the research that men are engaging in problematic behaviors in a number of ways such as high-risk behavior, suicidal ideation and pornography use. Other alarming statistics about men relate to the fact that men commit the majority of violent crimes and account for the majority of sexual assaults. Research on bystander

intervention and violence prevention has pointed to some signs of hope that attitudes and behaviors can be changed, but the narrow view taken by these programs often misses the opportunity to disrupt the status quo. Authors have called for a disruption of hyper masculinity through social justice programming, but little research exists on actual programs focused on disrupting masculinity. Studies about college men suggest using critical self-reflection as means to create change. Studies also call for the use of "possible" or "positive masculinity" to promote the positive aspects of male identity and root out the bad ones. Transformative learning theory also points to the need for critical self-reflection as well as a vulnerable space for dialogue. Berkowitz (1994) suggested vulnerable all male spaces, claiming "they allow men to speak openly without fear of judgement or criticism by women, [and thus] make it less likely that men will be passive or quiet, and avoid the gender based polarization that may reinforce men's rape prone attitudes" (p. 36). A balance needs to be found between encouraging men to be more vulnerable and acknowledging the harms caused by patriarchy and masculinity.

A tension exists in the literature between calling for challenging men's power and privilege to disrupt patriarchy and engaging with men in a supportive fashion to alter some of the negative and harmful effects of hyper masculinity. While men hold large amounts of power and privilege because of patriarchy, at the same time they are harmed in both conscious and unconscious ways by hyper masculinity. If we focus too much on encouraging vulnerability, we risk allowing the status quo to continue to operate; if we focus too much on understanding privilege, we leave out the personal connection to harm created by hyper masculinity and patriarchy. If we address hyper-masculinity and

patriarchy holistically, by confronting the symptomatic individual problems such as lack of emotionality, while also addressing the negative effects on others, such as sexual violence, we can move towards individual and social transformation. There is little research on if and how men transform when their masculine identities are disrupted. We know how men describe their masculinity, but we don't know what happens through the process of disruption. We also do not know how to get men involved in talking about these issues. Most research has limited involvement, as men do not see sexual violence or identity development as "their issue."

Research points to success in challenging assumptions and previously held beliefs but is insufficient in answer the "how" of addressing these problems. Research often shows that attitudinal change may occur through deliberate programming, but behavioral change is rarely studied. We know that sexual violence prevention programming can cause an individual to think differently on a posttest, but do they actually act differently in the world around them? A focus on the pedagogy of the oppressed exists in social justice education but a focus on the pedagogy of the oppressor is far less researched. I argue that we need research involving the personal stories of men engaged in disruption of their identity, both the challenges and successes, in order to further develop our education of men in the fight for justice. Exploring the manifestations of the social disease of hyper-masculinity and patriarchy in men can contribute to a holistic approach to addressing the symptoms found in men and all others in society. Just as we would study a biological disease under a microscope to learn how it develops, and manifests itself and how it responds to treatment, we must do the same by analyzing the personal

stories of men who are just beginning some form of metaphoric treatment for hyper-masculinity and patriarchy. This study informs the education of men to disrupt harmful hyper masculine and patriarchal norms in order to create social change and transformational learning.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this Chapter, I explain the methodology of this dissertation. I begin

by presenting the design of the study, the research purpose, and research questions. I then

explore the setting for the research, participants, methods of data collection and analysis,

as well as trustworthiness and limitations. I also include information about the pilot study

I conducted to gather information to inform the design of the research and preliminary

information in relation to the research purpose and questions.

Research Design

In this study, I use a critical qualitative approach to explore the stories of men and

analyze the way in which they create new knowledge and meaning when their masculine

identity is disrupted. Critical research is focused on critique and transformation of power

relations while qualitative research focuses on the why and how of phenomena.

According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), when we combine the two, critical qualitative

research "raises questions about how power relations advance the interests of one group

while oppressing those of other groups, and about the nature of truth and the construction

of knowledge" (p. 61). In this research, I study the stories and experiences of men to raise

questions about "the nature of truth and the construction of knowledge." Studying how

the men in this study make meaning of their lived experiences around gender is one of

my goals. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality and

acknowledge the relationship between researcher and researched (Denzin, 2010, p. 13). Who I am must be considered in the research project as my lived experience is inseparable from interpretation and involvement in this critical qualitative project. One aspect of my larger project is an autoethnographic reflection on my own experiences of gender identity development. The stories and narratives of the men involved in this research are central to understanding their realities, and the way in which they construct meaning and knowledge. Qualitative research as a method allows for a gathering of these stories and an examination of them for critical purposes. I used two key methods in this study: autoethnography and in-depth interviews.

In conducting this research through a critical lens, I can disrupt the traditional ways of knowing and create new meaning (Hesse-Biber, 2011). hooks (1994) writes that she is "amazed that there is so much feminist writing produced and yet so little feminist theory that strives to speak to women, men and children about ways we might transform our lives via a conversion to feminist practice" (pp. 70-71). In working toward social transformation, I hope findings from this research will be broadly accessible, especially to higher education practitioners, not just the academic elite. Traditional research asks the researcher to view the world from the margins to the center, but as a research with postmodern leanings, I view the world from the center to the margins in hopes of transforming the men at the center into individuals who incorporate the viewpoints of the margins into their own worldview. Through qualitative research, I will be able to view the changes and meaning making of men to create future considerations for transformational education. The goals of my research are embodied in a critical

qualitative research project using interviews and narratives to understand the lived experiences of those involved in the research.

Research Purpose

My goal in this dissertation research is to study how work with men to understand the social construction of their own identities can contribute to creating a more socially just society. In my literature review, I described a number of studies related to the construction of men's identity as well as studies that focused on changing behavior around more specific issues such as interpersonal violence. I was unable to find any research on this topic that used a critical lens to explore how men understand their own social construction, and what possibilities might be opened up when this social construction is disrupted. I study men who have previously engaged in work of learning about their male identity as part of disrupting patriarchy. If men are engaging in disruption of hyper-masculinity and patriarchy, then perhaps they can work towards important social change, for example, and as a start, confronting sexist jokes and behavior in their friend group. I specifically study men who have been involved in masculinity programming entitled Men on the Mountain at Appalachian State University. The programming involves a curriculum which asks men to explore their own masculine identity development. By opening the eyes of men to the problems inherent in hyper-masculinity and patriarchy, ideally we can produce change in their everyday actions with individuals and systems. This research will hopefully encourage others to think about masculinity programming in a new way, bring all men into the fold of social justice work, and identify ways in which they can have an influence on their own lives and the lives of

others. The goal is to help them to create lives in which they live beyond the constraints of hyper-masculinity and patriarchy, to be better men for themselves and others.

Research Questions

Three research questions guide this qualitative study:

1) How have college men experienced masculine and patriarchal norms?

2) What changes occur emotionally, interpersonally, and socially for men when they work to disrupt hyper-masculine and patriarchal norms?

3) How do men make meaning of their experiences in a college masculinity program and how does this meaning making influence possibilities for transformation and social change?

Pilot Study

In the Spring of 2017, as part of laying the groundwork for this study and testing out my methods, I conducted a pilot study with a group of four college-aged men who participated in four sessions of Men on the Mountain. I interviewed each of these men about their experiences, and observed the sessions they participated in to better understand this program and hone my methods, research protocol, and interview questions. Throughout this chapter I will discuss where the pilot study influenced my methodology to create a stronger final product for my dissertation.

Research Participants and Setting

The participants of this study were 8 cisgender, traditional college-aged men (18-26 years old) who attended Appalachian State University. The men range from current undergraduates at Appalachian State University to a few who have recently graduated or

entered graduate school. Appalachian State University is a predominately white, midsize university in a rural college town in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. The university enrolls around 18,000 undergraduate students and 1,000 graduate students with a significant split by sex with 56.5% of students being female and 43.5% being male. The men who I interviewed for this study participated in a program called Men on the Mountain between 2014 and 2018 that actively engages individuals who identify as male in discussions and learning opportunities around gender, violence, power, privilege, and media. The programming involves a 4-6 week long curriculum, which asks men to explore their own history of masculine identity development during weekly meetings. The sessions of the curriculum are conducted with no more than 12 participants to allow for the men to share openly and be vulnerable. The curriculum calls on men to initially think about exactly what they believe it means to be a man. The program begins by exploring the social construction of masculinity by examining the "man box." Additional sessions ask participants to explore their childhood history in terms of masculinity, unpack terms such as privilege and sexism, and eventually explore masculinity and patriarchy's larger role in systems of oppression and violence. Men are then challenged to think about how they might combat these systems with individual and collective action. Each week the men are asked to think about how new knowledge gained in these sessions influenced their thoughts and actions during the previous week. The program can be structured in a number of ways depending on the type of group. Most often groups meet 4-6 times for 1.5 hours per session covering a variety of topics. Men involved in the

program are often recruited from fraternities on campus, since such all-male groups often seek development activities for their members.

I developed the program in the Spring of 2014 with a group of students who met each week to discuss topics of masculinity and their individual struggles confronting hyper masculine behavior and overcoming their adherence to the strict gender roles associated with masculinity. I recruited these first men from their involvement in other pro-feminist organizations or classes at the university. They all brought their own friends to the sessions and eventually we had a fledging group of twelve to fifteen individuals meeting every week. I initially hoped it could become a peer led group that would conduct sessions all around campus, but this unfortunately never came to fruition as students graduated or simply weren't ready for such a leadership responsibility and were nervous to discuss such content in a leadership role with other men. Consequently, I have facilitated the groups for the past several years. Each semester since 2014 I have also recruited a graduate student from the social work department or student affairs program to help me in facilitating the groups. From the Spring of 2014 to the Fall of 2016, the group met weekly for education and discussion with anywhere from five to twenty individuals in attendance. Unfortunately, numbers dwindled in 2016 due to graduation of members and lack of resources and time (this is not my full-time job), resulting in my decision to offer a 4-6 session long group curriculum as programming to all male groups on campus. The group curriculum is also utilized by the Office of Student Conduct as a sanction for men engaging in high risk behavior such as fighting, alcohol or drug use, and some forms of sexual misconduct. At this time, I am the only individual who facilitates

the program on campus, though I have graduate students who sometimes serve as co-facilitators. I have presented many one-session introductions across campus for events such as fraternity and sorority life training, as well as for a variety of courses from recreation management to college student development. Now a Men on the Mountain program exists whenever there is dedicated group of five or more students ready to go through the curriculum.

I initially planned to select participants for this study by inviting them as they participated in the Men on the Mountain program and I hoped to observe all sessions of this program, as I had done for my pilot study. Unfortunately, in the Spring of 2018, I did not have enough individuals sign up for 4-6 sessions of the program. Instead I had many one session programs with groups across campus. I decided to change my original vision for this study of doing an ethnography of men going through the program, to instead interviewing individuals who have been involved in the program since its inception in 2014. I emailed all 14 past participants of the program asking them if they would like to participate in interviews for my doctoral work to further explore their understanding of masculinity and how their understanding may have changed over time. It was important criterion of the study that the participants were involved in the full 4-6 sessions of the program. All but one individual responded to my request to participate in the study with ultimately 8 individuals agreeing to participate. Five of the participants were members of a cohort of individuals who went through the program in 2015 while the other three individuals were members who went through the program in 2016. This allowed for more longitudinal data, as some of the men participated in the programming three years ago

and have now graduated from Appalachian. They were able to provide unique reflective insights about what masculinity programming did for them, and how they still struggle with certain aspects of masculinity today. While all the participants of this study did go through the Men on the Mountain program, this is not necessarily a study of that specific program (even as they all share that experience). Instead the program is a vehicle to study men who are working to disrupt their understanding of masculinity.

As I discussed in the literature review, college men are at an important age and in a prime space for identity development and reflection. The university setting brings new knowledge to individuals and forces them to make new meaning of the multitude of perspectives and ideas they interact with. Men involved in the program Men on the Mountain are engaged in reflective discussion around ideas of gender identity, often for the first time in their life. Earlier literature pointed to the limited reflection of men on their own gender identity, thus we can learn much from a group of students already engaged in this type of reflection.

Data Collection

Qualitative researchers rarely use just one method of data collection, instead drawing on multiple forms of data to strengthen their research findings. I draw on two key forms of data in my study. First, I wrote an autoethnographic reflection of my own experiences confronting masculinity. Then I conducted two in-depth interviews with 8 participants. As mentioned, I was previously planning to also observe session of the Men on the Mountain program, but due to the lack of individuals signing up for the 4-6 week

curriculum, I was unable to do so and decided to focus more on the narratives of individual past participants of the program. I describe each of these data collection techniques below.

Autoethnographic Reflection

Before conducting the interviews for this study, I used autoethnographic reflection to analyze my own experience in confronting masculinity. Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2010) break down the word autoethnography to define the method writing that autoethnography seeks to "describe and systematically analyze (graphy) personal experience (auto) in order to understand cultural experience (ethno)" (p. 1). Autoethnography as a process requires combining elements of autobiography and ethnography (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2010). I both wrote about personal past experiences (autobiography) while also investigating these past experiences within a specific cultural context (ethnography). I used a personal narrative approach to autoethnography where the author "view(s) themselves as the phenomenon and writes evocative stories specifically focused on their academic as well as their personal lives" (p. 45). This approach allowed me to better connect my own story and journey to the stories of the men who I interviewed as part of my data analysis.

As I wrote earlier, my journey into unpacking my own masculinity began during my time in graduate school. Dedicating a space for my own reflection side by side with the reflections of the men of this study provided me insight into how we move forward in educating men. I was able to analyze the disruption of masculinity and patriarchy in my own life by examining my personal narrative. This also helped me to provide a rich

description of my own experiences and what lead me to this research. Given my own

interests in disrupting patriarchy, as well as my own experiences of learning about the

problematic aspects of hyper-masculinity, my involvement in this study allows me to

become something akin to what Behar (1998) calls the "vulnerable observer" (even as

systematic observations were not part of my study). A reflection on my own experiences

with masculinity helped me to identify key moments, insights, and transitions that may

also be present in the narratives of those who I interviewed, as well as to better reflect

back upon some of the dynamic interactions that took place in the Men on the Mountain

program. Reflecting on my own experience may also provide insight to others facilitating

programs for men at other universities.

I acknowledge that I have my own personal story that cannot be removed from

such a project. Throughout this study, I worked to practice mindful inquiry, which

springs forth from the life world of the researcher (Bentz & Shapiro, 1998), in sharing my

own story of learning about navigating my masculinity. Specifically, a mindful inquirer is

self-reflective in examining their own actions, experiences, and perceptions. As Goodall

(2000) writes, there is "power of rhetorical form to shape a reader's understanding" when

researchers also share their own stories (p. 69). Writing my authoethography enhanced

the accessibility of this study, as well as provides a sort of in-depth case study of my own

experiences of coming to understand patriarchy and hyper masculinity, and working to

disrupt them.

Interviews

I initially planned to do an ethnographic study by combining interviews with participant observations. Due to my inability to conduct observations of current groups, I chose to focus solely on interviews with the men of the study. I still am influenced by the heart of ethnography in the use of rich description in data analysis to convey meaning and display interpretation (Goodall, 2003). Although this is no longer an ethnographic study, I still present the data with the use of rich descriptions of the narratives of the participants.

I interviewed 8 participants of the Men on the Mountain program twice each as part of this study, at a mutually agreed upon time and place. Since some of the participants no longer were at the University, several interviews took place over the meeting software Zoom. Zoom is video conferencing tool that allowed me to record the interviews for transcription. The first interview contained the bulk of the questions, focused on understanding the participant's story of masculinity, and their experience in the Men on the Mountain program. In the second interview, I asked follow up questions after an initial review of their interview transcripts. I provided the participants a copy of their transcription of their first interview before their final interview so they could provide additional clarifications or expound on any details during their final interview. I interviewed the participants for approximately 45 minutes – 1 hour during each interview. I initially intended for the first interview to be about an hour and the second interview to be 30 minutes but each participant was different, and many enjoyed the interview conversations, as it allowed them to discuss a topic they rarely discussed with

others, thus the second interviews were longer than I expected. The reason I conducted two interviews is because of what I learned when conducting my pilot study. The men in the pilot study had a difficult time answering some of the questions I posed such as "tell me your story of the development of your masculine identity" because they were so new to sharing this kind of information. The men were being asked this question for the first time in their lives, so it was difficult for them to articulate full responses as while trying to process and think of an answer. Having two interviews allowed for the men to process their first interview and return with some deeper insight about their previous responses.

I conducted interviews with individuals who I have already had several interactions with through their time engaged in the program. Some of the men still keep in touch with me even after their involvement in the program to process life events, or just to check in on how the program itself is doing. Therefore, I had already built strong rapport with the participants of the study prior to interviewing; this allowed for deeper conversation about their own experiences and understanding. I used a semi-structured interview protocol to allow for the ability for movement throughout the interview process. A less-structured interview "assumes that individual respondents view the world in unique ways" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2012, p. 110). The interviews needed to be fluid enough to allow me to hear rich experiences from the participants, and enable me to ask follow up questions to clarify statements and delve deeper into their stories. I used interview questions that are both narrative and ethnographic in nature, meaning they focused on gaining information about culture while also focusing on personal sharing and storytelling. I invited participants to provide their own stories of their journeys through

questions such as (*describe your journey of masculinity from boyhood to now*). The full interview protocol is attached in Appendix A. The interviews were recorded with an electronic device if conducted in person or through the Zoom software technology if the interview was online. I then transcribed them, verbatim, for use in data analysis. I analyzed and reviewed the data from the first interview before the second interview so that I was able to ask more focused questions to better explore the participants' individual stories in their second interview.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data collection and analysis often occur concurrently. Merriam and Tisdell (2012) write, "Analysis begins with the first interview, the first observation, the first document read. Emerging insights, hunches and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase of data collection, which in turn leads to the refinement or reformulation of questions, and so on" (p. 191). My refinement of the research began with the pilot study for this project. The pilot study helped me to identify useful methods, test out my interview protocol, and identify ways to strengthen both moving forward. It also helped me to see the types of data I gathered and to practice identifying emerging themes. For instance, one theme that I saw based on my four pilot interviews was related to relationships and language use about women. While this was not a theme of the data I collected for this project, I am now more attuned to the issue of how men talk about women in male only groups.

In terms of data analysis, I reviewed all my data thoroughly, coding it for recurring issues and topics, and then collapsing codes into categories and then into key

themes. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) write that "coding is nothing more than assigning some sort of shorthand designation to various aspects of your data so that you can easily retrieve specific pieces of the data" (p. 199). I used this approach to make sense of and organize the large amounts of data I gathered. From these codes, I then created categories. These categories were "responsive to the purpose of the research" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 212) and helped me to answer my research questions. I used an inductive approach, scanning the data manually to code the interviews. The categories and themes I developed were shaped by the methodology of ethnography. My focus was on the culture and social regularities of the men of this study and the data analysis I provide is rich and descriptive. I constructed categories using both an emic perspective (using the terms of the researched) and an etic perspective (terms created by the researcher) (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). After the interviews were transcribed, I annotated the transcripts to identify key phrases and topics. I was able to categorize responses based on how they connected to the research questions. I also tried to connect these categories and emerging themes to back to issues I discussed in my autoethnographic reflection. Though themes from each data collection form (interviews and autoethnography) were not perfectly aligned, I was still able to weave them together in describing the findings of my study. As part of my analysis of the interviews, I paid particular attention to frequently shared responses and those responses that most helped me to answer the specific research questions that I had for this study. I bracketed responses that were not clearly relevant to the research questions and that seemed idiosyncratic to individual participations into categories that I labeled as outliers. I found that there were many

different topics raised that are worthy of further research, even as I focus most directly here on the themes that help me to answer the research questions for this particular study.

Researcher Positionality

My own positionality and perspective are important to consider as I engage in work on the topic of masculinity. I identify as a white, straight, married, Italian, Christian, cisgendered, able-bodied male. I am the father of a four-year-old daughter and 2 year old son and have been engaged in pro-feminist work with men for the last several years. I grew up in the New York City and Pennsylvania among a very tight knit, Italian-American, patriarchal family. My father was the sole provider for our household as a butcher and my mother was a stay-at-home mom. At the University, I work in the Office of Student Conduct and have been a student affairs professional for seven years. I began my work with men while in graduate school at Appalachian State University. Since then I have been devoted to work with men, as I see the harm created by hyper masculine identity in their own lives and the lives of others. I believe that this type of work is necessary to create social change and to advance the fight for social justice.

I write about all of my identities here, and developed them further in my autoethnographic chapter, because I believe my own story is incredibly important in the work I am engaging in. There is no such thing as objectivity in my study as I come to my study with all that I am, and all that I have been socialized to be. Reflecting on my positionality helps me to understand myself more fully so as to better engage in authentic and deep conversation with the participants and the research. In my participation as facilitator and observer of the Men on the Mountain sessions that my participants reflect

on in this study, I actively modeled vulnerability and open sharing of my life history. Given the sensitive nature of this topic, it was important that I model vulnerable behavior and openly engage with the participants throughout the interviews to allow them to feel comfortable and willing to share their personal story. Vulnerable connection is important to allow for authentic communication and an examination of what the men were thinking on a deeper level.

Ethics and Trustworthiness

Through the research process, I maintained the confidentiality of each participant by making no mention of the stories of other participants and by creating pseudonyms to replace participants' actual names for the purpose of including direct quotes and references to participants within my dissertation. I also attained human subjects' approval with the Institutional Review Board of both the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and Appalachian State University. Maintaining a personal code of ethics throughout my research was also incredibly important. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest, qualitative researchers gain access to the private worlds of those being researched. This can provide rich data but also bring up painful or embarrassing memories or experiences for participants. Thankfully, I am a helper by training and was able to guide individuals to appropriate resources when needed. My role of researcher comes first but, I realized that if an act of abuse or sexual misconduct was discussed, I may need to address it and possibly report it. Fortunately, this has not been an issue in my past experience and it did not come up in any of the interviews.

I used three specific strategies for promoting trustworthiness in this research: triangulation, researcher reflexivity, and rich ethnographic descriptions (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Triangulation involves using multiple sources of data collection and reading across these forms to see shared themes as well as points of contention. In addition to my own autoethnographic narrative, I conducted multiple individual interviews as part of my data collection. The pilot study I conducted for this study added to the development of this project as it allowed me to refine my methods, for example, by showing that I needed to conduct multiple interviews instead of a single interview for each participant. Given the data I collected, I also provide rich and thick descriptions in my data analysis, just as a good ethnographer should. My engagement and rapport building with the participants is also a means to ensure trustworthiness. Through my own active engagement in the interview process, alongside the history I shared with these men as former participants in the program I ran, the men were able to be vulnerable and honest as they shared their experiences. Multiple meetings with these participants also allowed for clarifying questions to help me to confirm the findings as they emerged.

Researcher reflexivity is central to this project, as I conducted an autoethnographic reflection before conducting my interviews. In this reflection, I was clear and transparent with my own positionality and experiences as they relate to the research. In this autoethnographic reflection, I make my assumptions, biases and perspectives clear to the reader.

Finally, the rich, thick descriptions I provide in my analysis chapters also contribute to the trustworthiness and reliability of this research. While my own analysis

and perspective is present in the writing, I also use direct quotes and descriptions provided by the participants in my analysis. While interpretations are always subjective, rich description and multiple examples help to make some interpretations more persuasive than others. I present the findings chapters in an accessible fashion, drawing on the words, experiences, and examples from my participants.

Limitations

I recognize that there are a number of limitations to this study. First, the research is limited by the number of participants in the study. While the low number of participants allowed me to explore depth in their stories, I realize that my findings may not be generalizable to other populations. Moreover, the setting where I conducted this research – a mid-size, rural, regional University in the mountains – also influences my findings. Second, I have a previous relationship with the men I interviewed for this study which may have influenced their responses. I have known them for a number of years so they may not have wanted to "disappoint" me by sharing something contrary to what they learned in the masculinity program. However, many of the men were able to share direct examples during the interviews of disrupting masculinity which leads me to believe they weren't simply telling me what I wanted to hear. In addition they shared examples in which they knew they were not meeting their own expectations and were struggling to confront hyper masculinity in their own lives. They remained vulnerable with me throughout the interview process as evidenced by their responses to questions posed. Third, my inability to conduct observations of the group as originally intended leaves a specific portion of the interactions and group dynamics out of the research data. Based on

my pilot observation experience, I know observation data could contribute much to understanding group interactions among men in educational settings. One participant suggested getting the group back together for a reunion and further discussion; this could be a really interesting source of data for future research. Fourth, the participants of the study are all from different cohorts of participants in Men on the Mountain. Since it is a discussion-based program, different learning could have taken place in each cohort as the different stories and opinions were shared by the participants of the group. Not all of them have had identical experiences, though the program followed the same curriculum for each session. Fifth, some of the participants have graduated, and have created meaning outside the world of University in their new professional roles post-graduation. Though this provides more longitudinal data, the data from directly after implementation of the program is lacking. All participants had been involved in the program 1-2 years ago, and none had just finished the program.

Data Presentation

In the next two chapters, I present findings from my study. Chapter 4 is my autoethnographic reflection of my own navigation of masculinity and coming to the work that I do to disrupt patriarchy and hyper masculinity. In chapter 5, I explore the themes and stories of the participants that came out of my interviews. In chapter 6, I draw some conclusions from this study and answer my research questions directly. I am particularly interested in what this research means for the work of student affairs professionals, and the way in which we develop educational tools and programming for college men. I also provide suggestions for future research and practice and offer some final thoughts.

CHAPTER IV

AUTOETHNOGRAPIC REFLECTON

In this chapter I share a personal narrative of my own journey to understand and

make meaning of masculinity. I highlight key moments of reflection and influence

throughout my life from childhood to the present day. I do this in an ethnographic way,

by recreating the time, space, and place for readers as I explore the different experiences

of my life and link these experiences to larger cultural phenomena. I drew inspiration for

this approach from Warren (2011), who used narrative and reflection to imagine

qualitative research that was engaging, reflexive, and helps to illuminate power

dynamics. Autoethnography as a research method requires writers to be both deeply

reflexive and vulnerable in their work. Spry (2001) writes that "autoethnographic texts

reveal the fractures, sutures, and seams of self, interacting with others in the context of

researching lived experience" (p. 712). These fractures, sutures, and seams of self can

inspire critical reflection of the readers own fractures, sutures, and seams. I use what Ellis

(2003) calls a *personal narrative* approach to autoethnography where the author "view(s)

themselves as the phenomenon and writes evocative stories specifically focused on their

academic as well as their personal lives" (p. 45). Strategically, I first write a brief

narrative about a specific experience that connect to a theme within my own journey. I

then reflect on that narrative and theme as I think about my own journey of masculinity.

In ensuing chapters of this dissertation, I connect my own story with the stories of the

men of this research. I begin with a brief overview of who I am, and why I do masculinity work before starting with early memories of understanding masculinity.

My Background

I am a 30-year-old white, straight, married, Italian, Christian, cisgendered, able-bodied male. I am the father of a three-year-old daughter and one-year old son and have been engaged in pro-feminist work with men for the last several years. I was born in Queens, New York before moving to the Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania at the of 4, where I remained until the middle of high school, when my family moved to Florida to be closer to my older brother. My family is a very tight knit, Italian-American, patriarchal group. My father was the sole provider for our household as a butcher, a trade he learned as a teenager. It is easiest to describe my father as an old school, Italian Mafioso type who was born and raised within the intense hyper masculine environment of the mafia culture of Brooklyn. His mother died when he was young, and his father was more obsessed with money then actually being a father to his children. My father's claims to fame are that he's never paid taxes a day in his life and he's always been his own boss. My mother was a stay-at-home mom for my entire childhood (she has since started working again as my father can no longer work), not entirely of her own will (my father told her she needed to stay home), but she claims to have loved every minute of raising four children.

I spent most of my childhood in Pennsylvania with my mother, father, and three siblings. Most of my days when not at school were spent shopping with my mother and grandmother who moved to the Poconos at the same time our family did. It's easiest to

describe my family by simply saying that if you have seen the movie Goodfellas, then you have a sense of what my family acted and sounded like. Though we lived in Pennsylvania for most of my childhood, we were often in New York City visiting family, or family came to us in Pennsylvania to get out of the city and into the country. In the middle of high school, we moved to Florida where my older brother was living. He had his first child and my parents wanted to be close to him to watch the kids grow up. I finished my high school career and went on to get my undergraduate degree in Religious Studies and Anthropology at the University of South Florida. I then attained a graduate degree in College Student Development at Appalachian State University with a goal of having a career in student affairs and becoming a Dean of Students. While in graduate school in Boone, North Carolina, I met my wife Jessica. We have now been married for 5 years with two children and a lifetime ahead of us.

In my job, I work in the Office of Student Conduct and have been a student affairs professional for seven years. I began my work with men while in graduate school at Appalachian State University. I was placed as the Residence Director of an all-male residence hall, and this experience gave me the impetus to begin focused work with men. Since then I have been devoted to work with men, as I see the harm created by hyper masculine identity in their own lives and the lives of others. As part of my own self-discovery, I have found new area of growth in my own life as well as new motivation to continue to do masculinity work. As I will describe in this chapter, my parents, their relationship, and their own personal struggles with identity and life provide much of my inspiration for doing masculinity work, as I wonder what might have been different about

their own lives if they had learned a different type of masculine identity. Much of my story telling and sharing during masculinity programs is drawn from my experiences with my own family. My own life and masculine identity continue to evolve as I have become a father and a husband, an evolution which I am sure will not end.

For the last several years I have conducted presentations and programs on masculinity to a variety of audiences. Most commonly these participants have been on a journey in which they are navigating the complex waters of masculinity, a journey not unlike my own. In facilitation of the session I lead on masculinity, I have found that the men in my groups respond in powerful ways stories of my own journey. Hearing my stories allows them to connect with me and find commonalities that they can identify with. My own story becomes a pedagogical tool for understanding themselves and others better. I believe that a reflection on my own journey can provide additional insight into working with men to change for the betterment of themselves and others as they navigate their own complex lives.

"Don't Be Afraid of the Ball!" (Fear and Anger)

Remembering early childhood is a difficult task. I chose to start here because this is where I ask the participants of my study to begin during interviews. The blend between memory and home videos becomes increasingly difficult to differentiate at any age earlier than 5. I shared a story earlier in my writing about an incident of getting a doll for Christmas in 1990 and my father's response to such a toy. That, of course, is only a memory for me because of a home video found in the Lorello family archives.

My first memory of masculinity is in the summer of 1993 (to be fair I only know this date because my mother thankfully kept my participation trophy and team pictures). Five-year-old me began my young aspirations of baseball stardom as I stepped onto the tee ball field in Tobyhanna, Pennsylvania. I am playing 1st base for our team today (coach always moved us around so we can learn), a position I dreaded because everyone was throwing the ball at me and it was my job to catch it, or my team would lose. The main problem with playing first base was that I was afraid of the ball. What if I missed it and it hit me right in the face? I had a deep fear of being injured by the ball. Our team is in the field first and the umpires are encouraging us to move along with the game because of the threat of rain. I look over at the trees and see the dark storm clouds rolling in. Great. A thunderstorm, which is my only bigger fear than being hit in the face by a baseball. The combination of anxiety from both fears would surely render me helpless when a baseball is thrown my way. The first batter is up. I take a deep breath of fresh cut summer grass and the incoming summer storm. I can feel the sweat already dripping in my Rawlings glove. *Ding, * the batter swings and the ball flies straight into the sky. Thank God it went towards third base. There is no way he can throw it all the way to me before the runner makes it to first. He instead hangs on to the ball and gives it back to the coach. I fix my hat and wipe my brow in my best attempt to imitate Bobby Bonilla, my current favorite New York Met and as prayer to the baseball gods to not send a ball my way. Next batter is up. *Ding*. This one is a ground ball directly to me. I am glad it's not flying in the air, but I am thinking "please don't let it go through my legs, please don't let it go through my legs." Phew! I crouch down and touch my glove to dirt, scooping up the

ball. I only have to take a couple steps back to get on the bag, and I hear the umpire yell "You're out!" Dang I am pretty good at this baseball thing, maybe 1st base isn't so bad. Next batter's up and *ding*. A ground ball right to the pitcher. Oh no! He's gonna throw it to me. I am screwed. I see the laces of the ball as it turns in the air towards me. I move my body to the side, so the ball won't hit me anywhere and stick out my glove in desperation. I feel the ball hit my glove and I close the leather in time to squeeze the ball. But the umpire yelled "Safe!" Sure, I caught the ball but the only problem is, my fear of the ball and protection of my body has moved my foot far off the bag. He's safe, and now we have runners on 1st and 3rd. My teammates can't believe I missed the base, but at least I caught the ball. Coach yells "Don't be afraid of the ball James! Just step in front of it next time. You can do it!" The next batter is up. *Crack*. This time it's not the ding of the bat but instead a lightning strike I can see over the trees in the distance. The dreaded thunderstorm has arrived, and the game is called off for folks to run to their cars. Thank goodness I can get out of playing first base, but now I must deal with this thunderstorm. Maybe coach will count this as my turn at first base and move me to another position for the next game.

This story is one of many games played that summer. It's on that tee ball team that I met some of my best friends through grade school, and also the place where I first remember entering a world in which I was told what it meant to act like a man. I remember loving tee ball and always enjoying practice as it was a time to spend with my friends. I also remember a real anxiety about being "good enough" and not getting picked on when playing. This single story of tee-ball was really my first start into the world of

sports. I was always mediocre at sports, never the best and never the worst; I was just usually good enough to help the team and not make a total fool of myself. Unfortunately, the fear of the ball was not only a fear that manifested itself in tee-ball, but in all other sports in which a ball was involved. The fear of getting hurt or taking a ball to the face was constantly on my mind. A constant refrain among the coaches was simply "don't be afraid of the ball." This of course wasn't problematic as the coaches were simply trying to get me to play better and not be afraid, since if I protected myself and tried to catch the ball correctly, it would take a freak accident to get hurt. While tee ball exposed my initial fears of getting hit by a ball, this fear continued with all other sports. In football I didn't want to use a real football for fear it would hurt, so I would always want to use a nerf ball at all time. In baseball I wanted to continue to use a softer ball, instead of a "real" baseball. In basketball, I was always afraid of jamming my fingers on that enormous orange ball. I always wanted to be good at sports because the people who were good always got lots of attention. I wanted to be the person to save the team or score the last point and be a hero on the field.

My father always wanted me to play sports too. He loved playing on a softball team growing up in Brooklyn and was constantly watching all sporting events. Sports was a space that he could bond with me, whether watching me or teaching me. Once my father realized my fear was of the ball, he was not quite as encouraging as my many coaches were. He resorted to his methods of knocking the fear out of me. His methods included throwing the ball as hard as possible at me so I would no longer be afraid of it. My brother was always good at joining in on this one too. For instance, if I were using a

nerf ball, because I refused to use a football he would throw the nerf ball as hard as possible to prepare me for a real ball. My dad also resorted to name-calling and "man up" as form of motivation. "Quit sticking your glove out there like a pussy!" "Step in front of the damn thing." I once wasn't paying enough attention to catching a baseball and dropped several in a row so my father threw his glove at me and told me to quit being a baby and come get him when I was ready to play like a man. Now obviously, if I wanted to play sports or be any good, I needed to overcome my fear. There is nothing at all wrong with that. My father was frustrated with me, and he expressed his frustration with the tools he had; these were the tools he was equipped with his whole life. In Brooklyn, if you were afraid of the baseball playing stickball in the street in 1955, you probably would have taken a bat to the head instead of glove to the body. It's in this first story that I learned to be a man took toughness, strength, and a disregard for fear. And if you were frustrated with something, then you could go ahead and express that frustration in a form of rage. My own Italian temper only began to blossom from here on out.

"Grandma and Grandpa Were in an Accident." (Emotionality)

My second memory takes place in December of 1993. It's a memory that not only had a profound effect on myself but my entire family as my grandparents (my mother's parents) were involved in a head on collision with a drunk driver. The week before Christmas, December 18th 1993, the phone rings in the late afternoon. My mother answers the phone in the kitchen while I play my Sega Genesis in the living room. I am too focused on my game to know what has happened but immediately after my mom and dad gather us four siblings to tell us, "We need to go to the Hospital. Grandma and Grandpa

were in a car accident." I can see concern and fear etched in the faces of my family, though I have no idea the realities of what is taking place. My parents head to the hospital and we order pizza for the night, as they may be there for a long time. My sisters are crying, and I am not sure what to make of all this. It's just an accident? They will be okay, won't they? The next day we go to the hospital to visit grandma, we still can't visit grandpa as he is in ICU. The room is filled with my cousins, aunts and uncles. Everyone is filled with sadness and I am unsure what's going on. The women rub tear-filled eyes, while most of the men are trying to contain themselves. I learn that grandpa is in a coma and on life support and they can't quite decide what to do. In the middle of conversation my father quickly runs to the bathroom in the suite style hospital room. I can hear him burst into tears and sobs. It's the first time I have ever seen or heard my father cry, and the only time to see him cry until I am in college.

Six days later my grandfather, Edgar Stillman Munger, passes away from his injuries. It's Christmas eve, and folklore in the Lorello household says every drum ornament fell off our Christmas tree that night. I didn't get to know my grandfather very well, but I spent the entire funeral knelt next to his casket. I couldn't really tell you why, I just felt it was important for me to connect with him. My grandfather was a drummer, who loved to play and teach others in his drum studio in the basement. He was a quiet man, who loved his family (especially my mother), and reading. He overcame alcoholism after his eldest son died of ulcerative colitis. He too suffered from ulcerative colitis and hunch in his back, yet he still insisted on cutting wood with an axe.

Two men are in this story who led completely different lives but two men who still embodied an emotional struggle with masculinity in their own way. My grandfather was a stoic yet loving man who was driven to alcoholism after the death of his son. He was quiet and reserved, with his children always describing him as an individual who didn't say much yet, they felt love from him daily. My father was unable to express any emotion but anger until later years, all other emotions were bottled up inside. My grandfather became a role model for me from the after-life. I always felt a strange connection to him and was always told we both looked and acted similar from a young age. I attempted as a growing boy to embody both of these styles into my own identity. I was naturally more reserved being the baby of the family in a house filled with loud Italians. I attempted to live my life like my grandfather had; stoic yet compassionate. The reality is that I was and am living as a combination of both men. My calmness and stoicism blended with the bottling up of emotions like my father, ready for the final straw to break the camel's back. This combination meant that growing up, I rarely shared my emotions with anyone and instead pretended like everything was always just fine. Today I still struggle with both qualities of these men inside myself. I am often unable to fully express emotions and frustrations with my partner and others. I bottle emotions for no reason other than my lack of skill building in the area of emotion. Both men lived their lives in immensely different ways, yet both men struggled to express a full range of emotions. Both men were always wonderful role models for me in the ways that they loved and supported family, and both handed down their emotional struggle to me in coming to develop own identity and being.

"That's a Good Piece of Cheese." (Male Bonding)

Ever since I can remember I have always been watching sports with my brother or my father. Most memories with my dad center around sporting events or playing sport related video games (NBA Jam, Madden, etc.) and most conversations we have now center around "who the Yankees picked up" or "why the Miami Dolphins are such a terrible team." Sundays were something of a sporting and food ritual in my house and I still attempt to live out this ritual even today in my own home.

At 8am the smell of freshly made marinara sauce fills the house as my mother already began cooking. My dad and I are on our way to pick up Sunday bagels and head to the local deli to pick up fresh mozzarella, aged provolone, and hot and sweet soppressata. Our Sunday diet consisted of pasta, cheese, meatballs and soppressata. Nothing else was needed. At the store my dad reminds me to look for the oiliest provolone you could find, as it meant it had the sharpest taste. Shopping for meat and cheese with a butcher is somewhat of tutorial in food. On the ride back from the store we listen to a mixed tape of Frank Sinatra and Tony Bennett, while my dad sings off key, " I DID IT MYYYYYYY WAYYYYYYYY" the entire way. Back home we cut the cheese together in preparation for the day of games to begin. I'd been using a knife since I was 6 years old to help my dad in the butcher shop so cutting soft cheese was nothing for me. As my dad cuts the meat and cheese he reminds me what good cut of meat it is, or what a good cheese we picked up based on how it looks. In his thick New York accent, he again reminds me, "See all that oil James? That's gonna be a good piece of cheese right there." We are done cutting up everything and we lay it out on a platter to be seated on the coffee

table in the living room for us to devour throughout the game. Noon hits and my dad seats himself in his extra-large recliner, fully reclined, with a cup of ice tea next to him and a plate of cheese and meat resting on his belly. I find my place on the floor right in front of the coffee table for easy food access. The games begin, and I spend my time eating, watching football, and listening to my dad yell at the refs on the television. "What a bullshit call!" The rest of the game is spent in silence except for my dad asking for more food or iced tea, or my mother bringing in a tasting of freshly fried meatballs.

Within the silence of that space, somehow bonding and connection took place. Though not many words were exchanged, those Sundays together were a part of our family routine, a sort of male bonding time, that lasted over two decades with my brother and my father until I moved away for graduate school in North Carolina. Even during my undergraduate career, I spent at least one Sunday a month driving 45 minutes to my brother's house to spend Sunday eating and watching sports. This sort of silent, ritualistic event has always struck me because without this event, connection among my father, brother and I would not have been the same. I remember little to nothing about the games we watched, but I remember the feeling of the experience. These "male bonding" moments have occurred for me over the years with my closest friends, often in spaces of silence. My core group of two friends from college spend every other Friday or Saturday night playing video games online. We laugh at our lack of actual conversation on important topics (perhaps 15 minutes in two hours of gaming), yet this time keeps our connection and bond strong. When we again spend time with one another, it's like we never lived far apart. The strangeness of these relationships, seems on one end to be

problematic, with a continued lack of full emotional expression, or even conversation, yet at the same time these spaces of silence have promoted connection and intimacy, and continued bonds which may have otherwise been broken by distance. I wish these relationships had been more fully developed in those moments with a deeper connection. My father and I still struggle to talk about more than just sports, if only either of us had been equipped with the tools for deeper connection and conversation, I only hope I can do this differently in my own relationships with friends and family.

"The Cool Kids" (Performance)

Throughout school I was always one of the nerds. Band practice, science projects, you name it. Instead of cartoons, I enjoyed watching the Weather Channel and the Discovery Channel as a kid. I was voted most likely to be a weatherman in the second grade. I was always focused on my academics and if I didn't make an A in a class, I would not allow it to happen twice. This all changed when I got to high school. Most of my friend group up until this point was also a part of the nerdy crew. We were overweight, played a lot of video games and enjoyed science competitions over sporting events. Suddenly I was presented with the opportunity to be "one of the cool kids." The "cool kids" were a part of the popular crowd. They hung out with girls, slacked off in school, were good at sports and generally were fun to be around. I met my best friend during these first two years of high school before going to Florida to finish off my high school career. He is who opened my eyes to this popular world. You see, he was able to be both nerdy and one of the cool kids. It took sarcasm and athletic ability. He never fully was a part of the nerds as he would distance himself when necessary. He also was a

"ladies man," which gave him direct access to the popular crowd as he was always able to talk about how many girls he had been with. His athletic abilities also meant that he was able beat anyone in a mile race, which further gave him social capital in high school. He was also incredibly book smart, able to pass physics without studying or doing homework. This is where the slacking off mentality came into play. Better to crack jokes during physics than actually show how smart you were. Being smart and being cool did not always go together in the social world of masculinity and high school.

That year of high school I transitioned from being solely a nerd and entered the world of the popular crowd. I got invited out more, I joined the tennis team and golf team (a low-level entry to sports) and became less focused in school. I got my first C ever in physics class, prompting my mother ask what in the world was going on. As I made this transition, I started to alienate my old nerd crew. I still was in some clubs with them and hung out with them from time to time, but when with the popular crowd, I distanced myself. I even made fun of them behind their backs to better fit in with the cool kids. Cracking a great joke at someone else's expense was a sure way to gain more social capital in popular circles. I wasn't the best at sports, and I was still a bit chubby, so I found the best way for me to become more popular was through humor. Always making a joke, or poking fun at someone else became a way of life. It was an easy way to get past my own deficiencies and exploit the deficiencies of others.

By the time I left high school in Pennsylvania at the end of my sophomore year, folks chanted my name at the awards ceremony. My parents were shocked, they thought I didn't have any friends as I still rarely went out, choosing to stay inside and play video

games or read. I had found my place in high school. A place that alienated my old nerdy way of being, and my friends who were there with me for most of my schooling. I made great new friends, often at the expense of others, and was able to find humor as my masculine tool. Humor has always held power to help me to cover up any issues or concerns. It's a tool used by my family as well. When my mother was diagnosed with cancer when I was in middle school, my family resorted to making jokes about cancer instead of sitting with the sadness of it all. Still today my family often chooses jokes over real conversation. My brother, usually the ring leader of the jokes, has similar struggles with emotion as I do. The jokes and humor were a standard for my friend groups as well, especially groups of all guys. Better to make a joke than dialogue about a heavy topic. Conversation about a heavy topic meant you might show some sign of weakness or have to share feelings. Best to keep that buried inside, unless of course you had too much to drink.

"You Can Get Any Girl You Want." (Vulnerability)

High school was a rough time for me, as it often can be for many teenagers. At the end of my sophomore year in high school my parents decided to move to Florida to be closer to my older brother whose first child had just been born. Part of this was due to my mom having been diagnosed with cancer and wanting to spend time with family just in case. This move from Pennsylvania to Florida in the middle of high school resulted in a bout of depression that lasted over a year. I eventually befriended a group my senior year and had a girlfriend in time for prom at the end of senior year. This relationship would last on and off throughout my undergraduate career and into my graduate career.

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With it being my first real relationship and coming on the heels of depression, I was consumed by the relationship. In my first year of college I did not have many friends outside of her friend group, and rarely did anything without her. I was filled with a number of emotions in this relationship from infatuation on most days, to jealously at any hint of something amiss, to incredibly vulnerable and emotional when something wasn't going well. All of these things led to many jokes of being "pussy whipped" by friends and others. One college story highlighted these emotions for me and that was the first fraternity party I ever attended.

Within the first couple of weeks of school at the University of South Florida I was being recruited by several fraternities and was invited to one of their parties. They told me I could bring whoever I wanted to, so my roommate and girlfriend tagged along. A short walk to the Greek village on campus and we arrived at the house. I was feeling anxious walking up to the house as I knew this party would be filled with a lot of guys, specifically a lot of drunk guys checking out my girlfriend. We get to the door and one of the guys immediately recognizes me and lets us past the line. A keg of Natty Light awaits us in the kitchen of the house. Every person I walk past, I make sure to watch their eyes to see if they check out my girlfriend, as if I was going to do anything about it if they did. I get a beer and several of the guys are interested in talking to me about my interests and where I am from. As we talk my girlfriend moves to mingle as well and eventually makes her way back to the keg. Out of the corner of my eye, I see that she has been convinced to do a keg stand. Within seconds two guys pick her up and put her upside down. I am infuriated. I abruptly end my conversation and without saying much immediately storm

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out of the house, walking the mile back to my residence hall. What was she thinking? I know exactly what all of those guys are interested in doing. She is MY girlfriend. One of the guys trying to recruit me comes outside and tries to get me to come back in but I just keep walking. I end up just walking around campus to cool off. What I am even angry about? I just seem to know for sure how this will end, and it ends without me having a girlfriend, and her with some other dude. One verbal argument later that night and I end up apologizing for the first of many times after a fit of jealousy. I was reminded again that I don't own or control anyone else and shouldn't be acting like it. The next day, one of the main guys from the fraternities asks to meet up with me and go for a walk. He shares that he really thinks I would enjoy the fraternity. He says, "If you join, you can get any girl you want, because let's face it, that high school relationship with your girlfriend isn't going to last." Its here I make the decision not join any fraternities for the rest of my collegiate career. I appease him the rest of the walk but assure myself that I am not one of "those" guys: the guys who use and treat women like pieces of meat.

Several years later and the relationship does finally come to an end. This relationship had a lasting influence on my interactions with other women and led me to many realizations about myself. I always thought I wasn't one of "those" guys, but the reality is that I was, even if hidden behind the scenes of a long-term relationship. I was incredibly emotional and vulnerable in this relationship in both positive and negative ways. I was often crying when things weren't going well and being told to get myself together by even my girlfriend, but also displaying negative traits of jealousy and anger because someone looked at her the wrong way or she texted someone I didn't know. The

truth is, I swore not to treat women like objects, but it's still just what I did. My girlfriend was someone I could exercise my own power and control over. Someone who I still objectified. Someone I could get to do whatever I wanted. I spent too much money attempting to save the relationship by buying nice things because that's what guys are supposed to do. If I bought something for her, she might forgive me and in turn repay me by staying in the relationship. That's how I was taught relationships work, like a bank that you can invest actual money in and see a return on investment. Unfortunately, while I realized some of these things about the realities of how my masculinity manifested itself in relationships with women, the end of the relationship still scarred me emotionally. I further shut down and retreated to those stoic ideals of manhood. I decided I would never get so invested in a relationship again that it would break me the way I felt this one did. Ten years and a happy marriage later, I still struggle with vulnerability in my own marriage. I am still sometimes unsure of how to express my emotions appropriately or how to be fully open with my own wife. I am more self-centered than I had been before, afraid if I lose sight of myself, what might then happen? A combination of the ideals of masculinity instilled within me, and wreckage from this earlier 5-year relationship, became a part of who I was becoming as a man.

"Respect, Wisdom, Brotherhood" (Mentorship and Relationships)

As I mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, my real involvement in working with college men began in my second year of graduate school when I took over an all-male residence hall. When the idea came up to create an all-male learning community, I was immediately excited to create a bond and brotherhood within the

residence hall. I gathered the five Resident Assistants of the building together over the summer to give them my vision of a new and revamped community for men on campus. We ended up creating a logo with the core values of Respect, Wisdom, and Brotherhood. These values would be woven throughout each program we did and each experience we set out to create within the building. We created a competition in the building to get the guys active. Each floor would be pitted again each other and gain points by doing good things in their community such as helping another person with their homework or getting an A on a paper. We also created programs dedicated to talking about issues facing men such as alcohol and drug use, and even had the Chancellor at the time visit the building and give his life story as inspiration for the folks in the hall. We did some positive things in this residence hall but also further perpetuated stereotypes of masculinity. I found in my work with the men of this hall that they were struggling to find their place and identity. They were always posturing around one another, making fun of one another, often drinking way too much. At the end of the year, I found a hidden collection of about 30 empty liquor bottles in one of the hallway ceiling tiles. I know now I helped enable some of this behavior in the name of brotherhood and bonding. I too was guilty of posturing at times. To be respected by the guys in the hall, I had to earn it. They had to see me as someone they could both look up to, but also someone who could fit in and talk their language of masculinity. I was able to do this through playing lots of video games with the guys, joining flag football teams, and using my old tool of humor often at the expense of others. This led me to develop strong relationships with many of the guys, but I am also now cognizant of the group I may have left behind and not connected with.

My first mentor experience within the hall took place with a young man who lived right next door to me. He was the most popular guy on the hall. He was always quick with a joke and would swiftly defeat anyone who tried to cross him by making fun of them. He also was big and tall; his physical presence was daunting... He was brilliant with his course work, but extremely lazy. He often chose naps, football, and video games such as Madden over actually doing his course work. On the weekends, he chose binge drinking and smoking marijuana with negative groups of friends over studying or being involved with campus in other ways. He was someone who told me he could drink 10-20 beers in a night without feeling this was a problem (and this was something which made him even more popular on the hall). Throughout the semester, I was able to establish a relationship with him, in which he was able to express some of his feelings, talk to me about what was really happening on the weekend, and what was happening at home. His mother had passed away several years earlier and his dad had diabetes and was at risk of getting one of his legs amputated because of the disease.

I was home early one day from work and there was a knock at my door. It's him with big red eyes. I ask what's up and let him come in and sit on my couch. When I ask what's going on he shares that his dad is in the hospital again. Before I can share anything he immediately starts crying. A real sob. He apologizes for crying, "I'm sorry man I know I need to pull it together." and I respond, "It's ok man, this is difficult stuff." The doctors think his dad may lose one of his legs because he is having some complication from diabetes. He shares that he may need to go home for a few days and I let him know I will help him however I can. He says he's told most guys on the floor but

not in detail since he doesn't want to cry in front of them. I just sit in silence with him for several minutes, eager to find some window for a joke to ease the tension and the mood. He thanks me, gets up to leave and asks for a big hug, which I happily oblige. He gives me a double tap on the back during our hug which we laugh about as we just had a discussion a few weeks ago about types of "bro hugs," and without even thinking he does one. As he leaves my room I am struck by how much he is struggling with, and that he comes to me with this hardship instead of one of his friends. It's in this interaction that I begin to realize just how deep the influence of masculinity goes.

This student felt he could not talk about what was happening in depth with his group of friends as he was the leader of the group and was deemed to be the strongest and most masculine of all. He did not vocalize this in so many words, instead he shared it as "I don't want to cry in front of them." Crying means vulnerability, a sign of weakness. He was always the one proving his masculinity and position through jokes, drinking or women. Even though he had such difficult circumstances, he still could not break outside of the "man box" he was living in. He was always on the outskirts of some of this deeper conversation about masculinity we were having in the hall. He attended some programs yet, they did not seem stimulate change in his actions. At the same time, he confided in me and continued to develop a relationship with me. Towards the end of the spring semester, he got caught drinking on campus and found to be in possession of marijuana. He realized it was time to change his path and stopped smoking but continued to drink, although in much smaller amounts. A month before finals of that year, he tested positive for Adderall during a mandatory drug test for his possession of marijuana charge. He had

taken a friend's Adderall to stay awake while studying for finals he had procrastinated throughout the entire semester. The result of this failed drug test was suspension. He immediately visited my apartment in tears not knowing what to do, or how he got to this point. I still wonder how I may have been able to reach him or others. Could I have helped them develop a better sense of identity so that he could cope with the challenges he faced? How might others have supported him? How might their behaviors throughout the semester particularly towards women and other marginalized groups changed if I knew more at the time? Maybe additional positive mentorship from me and others could have better influenced the men of the hall.

"Play With Me Daddy!" (Recurrence)

Since I was a teenager, I always wanted to become a husband and a father. I always had this drive to be a dad and raise kids. Many folks I talked to couldn't understand this. Why was I so eager to give up my freedom? My dad for one, wondered why I didn't try to get with more women, I was so good looking after all. I just always had a sense being a dad was a part of my purpose. Thankfully I found a partner in someone who wanted nothing more than to raise of family together no matter what. Now with two kids, in the haze of coffee steam as I try to write my dissertation, I am struggling to remember what life was like before kids. It seems it was maybe all just a fantasy life? Parenthood is the most difficult thing I have ever done but also the most rewarding thus far. I have a 3-year-old girl and one-year old boy who keep me constantly on my toes. When my wife was pregnant with our first we exclaimed that we didn't want to know the sex of the child. This was partly because it would be such an awesome

surprise, and partly because of my own understanding of gender and not wanting to inflict this on our kids. Of course, our families somehow did not understand this wish. They struggled with not knowing what color of clothing to buy. Instead of a variety of colored clothing, they decided to wait until the day my daughter was born and sent a box of pink clothes with bows to our doorstep. I was constantly aware of gender with our first child. She was adorable which caused many folks to comment "better get your shotgun ready for when she's in high school." I was always shocked when I heard this response come up multiple times, but eventually was able to respond a simple "Why?" which always sent folks backpedaling realizing what they said. At one year old, folks were already trying to prepare me to protect my daughter with violence from presumably other men. I made sure to let my daughter play with whatever she wanted, still her favorite toy is a race car. This battle continues to get more difficult with the addition of day-care, preschool, teachers and other parents and kids. It seems it will be somewhat of a loss and helping her not to be overly conditioned into traditional gender roles by the time school comes around, but hopefully I can have an open relationship of communication to discuss issues.

I was able to see this all so clearly with my daughter. When my son was born, I fell into the traps of my own masculinity again. In only the last few months, I realized how differently I was treating my son. When he cries I am less likely to run immediately to him. I have no patience to rock him before bed when he's upset while I would rock my daughter for hours on end. I'm less likely to snuggle him, kiss him and simply love on him. My daughter is spoiled rotten in these regards. This isn't a matter of him being our

second kid, it's my own internal reactions to the fact the he's my son, and it took my wife to call me out on it and my own reflection to further uncover it. My reactions felt so internal and innate to reacting to him, yet I know this isn't simply a fact of biology that I would treat my son so differently. I now intentionally spend more time with him to snuggle him and love him. By intentionally doing this, it is finally coming more easily. Just a few weeks ago he was sick with the flu. He spent most of his time moaning in the middle of the night, so I decided two nights of sleeping with dad would do the trick. On the second night my wife said, "He will sleep fine if you just leave him." I let her know that it was more than me simply getting him to sleep, but it would be good bonding time for us. I didn't get much sleep those two nights, but it was well worth waking up with him holding my hand. Already we have a better connection and he even looks for me more than "momma." There is no greater feeling than walking in the door to two children screaming "DADDDY!!!".

Thirty years of socialization are at work here and the themes of masculinity are always recurring. Even 8 years since beginning to unlearn masculinity as a graduate student and spending intentional time reading and reflecting about masculinity and it's clear I still have more unlearning to do. I must be cognizant of the next socialized behavior that I conform to and need to reflect on and address for myself. For me to be the father and the husband I aspire to be, I need to continue to do challenge myself and be open to challenge from others. Much more of my own father is still left somewhere inside of me waiting to come to the surface. I still know I am quick to react in anger, and not open enough with my own emotions. I still have prejudice to unlearn, and traditional,

sometimes toxic, forms of masculinity to be disrupted. I have much work left to do, to become better, and provide the best husband and father my family needs, and the best professional to continue to work with college men.

Continuing Disruption

There are a dozen other stories I could write and additional themes that I could create. The themes of, Fear and Anger, Emotionality, Male Bonding, Performance, Jealousy and Vulnerability, Mentorship, and Recurrence all speak to the current space I occupy in reflecting on my own journey. If I were to write another reflection a year from now, the themes would likely change some based the current time and space. These themes are all central to my own unpacking of my identity. They all have played some sort of role in who I was and who I am today. They speak to my own journey and the way I have defined masculinity. All of these reflections, and a hundred more, are why I choose to do work on disrupting masculinity. These experiences in my own life, exist in the stories and journeys of thousands of other men. I know the disruption of masculinity and patriarchy in my own life have led me to an ever-growing identity of what it means to be me. I only hope that breaking the surface of stories like this can help others disrupt their own ways of coming to know the world. If they can do this, growth and change will come. The person I was as a sophomore in college, and even the person I was one year ago, have forever changed. Disruption is a never-ending journey, an unlearning of our own socialization. It takes reflection, and accountability to make change. I hope that my own vulnerability can help invite and opens space for others to do the same. In my work with groups of men, I use stories like these to help open the door to vulnerability and

create connection among the group. I hope that my work can foster spaces that create change and transformation among men. Transformation that leads to a better, more socially just world, filled with men who can go well beyond the confines of hyper masculinity. These are men who take the positive lessons from their fathers and grandfathers, mothers and grandmothers, and learn from the mistakes of their past. I see possibilities of transforming these experiences in the data from my interviews with the men who participated in the Men on the Mountain program. Keeping the themes from my own journey in mind, I analyze the data from the interviews I conducted in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V

STUDY FINDINGS

In this chapter, I remind the reader of the purpose of the study and research questions, introduce the participants of the study, and discuss the results of the interviews in relation to each of the research questions. I discuss the results by theme and research question, moving from men's experiences of masculine norms, through the effects of disruption, and into the potential for change and transformation.

The purpose of this research was to study how work with men to understand the social construction of their own identities can contribute to creating a more socially just society. I studied men who are engaged in work of learning about their male identity as part of disrupting patriarchy.

Three research questions guided the study:

1) How have college men experienced masculine and patriarchal norms?

2) What changes occur emotionally, interpersonally, and socially for men when they work to disrupt hyper-masculine and patriarchal norms

3) How do men make meaning of their experiences in a college masculinity program and how does this meaning making influence possibilities for transformation and social change?

I collected data through two 45-minute to one-hour-long interviews with 8 men designed to explore the participants journey to making sense of their masculinity and their

experience disrupting their knowledge through their participation in masculinity programming (Men on the Mountain) in the past.

<div align="center">**Participants**</div>

The participants in the study were college aged cisgender men, (18-26) years old who participated in the Men on the Mountain program in the previous three years. Six of the participants had graduated from Appalachian in the last year and started full time work or graduate school while two participants were still undergraduate students. The participants were a fairly homogeneous group (similar to the University they attended) with seven individuals identifying as white and seven individuals identifying as heterosexual. One individual identified as Latino and one individual identified as queer. Three of the men in the study participated in fraternity organizations while at the University. Below is a table summarizing some of the participant's social group identities. All the names are pseudonyms and all participants agreed that these representations were accurate.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Sexual Orientation	Race/Ethnicity	Socioeconomic Status	Involvement while student
Derek	24	Heterosexual	White	Upper Middle	Resident Assistant, Campus Ministry, Student Conduct Board
David	26	Heterosexual	White	Upper Middle	Fraternity, Leadership Educators, Club Council

George	24	Heterosexual	Latino	Middle	
Nate	19	Heterosexual	White	Upper Middle	Fraternity
Robert	24	Queer/Gay	White	Middle	Alternative Service Experiences
Pete	23	Heterosexual	White	Upper Middle	Fraternity
Chris	24	Heterosexual	White	Middle	Programming Board
Lou	25	Heterosexual	White	Middle	

College Men's Experiences of Masculine and Patriarchal Norms

The first research question aimed at eliciting the varied experiences of the men in the study with masculine and patriarchal norms. During the interviews, I asked the participants to describe their journey of masculinity, the norms they were taught, and their experience with these norms throughout their life. I asked the participants to share some of their earliest experiences of masculine norms and how these evolved over time. When I asked the participants to describe their journeys and their experiences with masculinity, they shared similar experiences of a general and gradual progression of pressure and expectation which began in early childhood, became enhanced in high school, before changing and morphing in a number of ways in college and afterward. The themes that I identified in their narratives are similar to those of many other studies on the identity development of men and the way in which they are socialized. I have broken down the results in chronological order, similar to my earlier literature review. In the final chapter I will further discuss specific themes that grew out of these chronological groupings.

Early Experiences

I asked the participants to describe some of their earliest memories of learning what it meant to be a man and how their journey through masculine identity has evolved over time. These questions initially elicited a lot of silence and seemingly deep thought, presumably as the participants sorted through examples to share. The men described a variety of pressures they felt from a young age both from peers and families. Often these pressures and expectations resulted from involvement in school or sports.

Unspoken pressure.

Throughout their early experiences each of the participants described a number of unspoken pressures they felt in regards to being and acting like a boy. They each had story or a memory that they could attribute to this pressure as they reflected on their early childhood experiences.

Derek described a lot of "unspoken pressure" as a young boy that existed in developing a strong relationship with his father. Derek described his childhood as "pretty unique [as compared] to most peoples." He was isolated as a kid since he was homeschooled and had seven siblings: one brother and six sisters. His father worked often, and when he was home on the weekend, looking back, Derek felt a lot of pressure to spend time with his father, and be just like his father. Derek described having a wonderful father, but knows that he was encouraged to do traditionally masculine activities, like sports and shooting guns. Since his father was gone much of the time, Derek felt these masculine pressures were further developed being homeschooled by his mom. Derek described an example of this:

I remember there was a time when I was always needing entertainment and stimulants to like… Just like activities. And I would always get on my sister's nerves and my mom's nerves because I was just restless all the time [chuckle]. One time, my mom came back from the store and she had a punching bag. And she put the punching bag outside on the basketball court, and she was like, "if you ever have just have too much energy, just punch that bag over there" [chuckle]. I was encouraged to let all of my pent-up energy out in the form of violence, which is weird because my parents, they didn't want me to be a violent person. But that was just like a normal thing, they were like, "Okay, he needs to express himself in this way."

Derek described that these pressures and expectations continued to develop throughout his childhood and into becoming involved with boy scouts and playing basketball.

Robert also described a "pressure to act a certain way" from a young age. He felt that his parents very much valued compassion and kindness, and let him express those traits, but the outside world didn't believe in those same traits for men. Robert described "being a very nice, young kid" which was sometimes met with cynicism and what he felt was "masculine policing."

George described the pressure at a young age as "trying to stay on a line I didn't want to step off of." He shared that it wasn't so much his parents that placed this pressure on him, but it was his siblings and peers. George said that he had been thinking of early childhood a lot more since he is new dad to a one-year old son. He wants to let him play with Barbie's if he chooses and not try to push his son toward stereotypical norms. George specifically remembered playing with dolls and doing other types of stereotypically feminine activities when he was as little as 5 or 6 years old. His siblings would reprimand him by saying, "No, don't do that. That's gay!" leaving George to wonder what "that's gay!" really even meant.

These unspoken pressures manifested themselves in different ways for each of the participants. For some, it was in the restrictive norms placed on them such as George's restriction from dolls. For others, it was the way in which others interacted with them or directed them towards specific outlets for energy or activities to be involved in. Often these activities led them to become involved somehow in sports.

Sports police.

A number of the participants described a more specific unspoken pressure that occurred around their involvement in sports at a young age. Many of them felt a push to attempt to engage in sports whether playing or talking about it with others.

Robert shared one story in particular in which he wanted to join soccer in middle school and not football, though he was a very tall child. He remembers the football coach of the school telling him that "soccer was a girl's sport, and he should man up and play football." Robert's parents were all for letting him do whatever he chose and he still played soccer, but he often felt that people questioned his decisions and pushed him toward adopting traditional masculine norms.

George shared that his older brother was really good at sports and he would always feel pressure from his father and other peers to be good at sports like his brother. He often felt jealous because he felt at times his father paid more attention to his brother because he was good at sports. Though sports weren't his thing, he still attempted to use sports to fit in.

Chris recalls knowing by about the age of ten that he wasn't totally like the other boys. He knew he "didn't like rough housing or playing tackle football and that kind of

stuff." He remembered feeling "I am not one of the boys" because of this difference. Yet, in middle school he still tried to compensate for this feeling through sports. Chris described the ways he tried to fit in to masculine norms:

> I bought a University of Georgia hoodie to wear around and talk about the bulldogs, and like I don't know anything about football. Looking back on it, I see that it was just the posturing was really strong at that time until I got more comfortable being myself into high school.

Chris knew he didn't like football, but the pressure to fit in and "be one of the boys" still resulted in his conforming, even in something as small as the clothing he wore. Though Chris knew he didn't quite fit in, he attempted to fit in through the use of sports. Sports seemed to be a clear outlet throughout the interviews for men to attempt to fit in with other peers and even older adults like their parents.

Fatherly advice.

Other participants had more direct influence or experience from their parents with advice on how to be and act like a man. Pete was able to recall the first advice he was given by his dad about "being a man" when he was only around 4 years old:

> I can still remember it was Mother's Day and I had thrown a big fit. I was three or four and my dad, I remember just, yeah, he held me. Not in a restrictive way at all just kind of got down to me and he said, "Listen, this is Mother's Day. This is an important holiday. This is part of being a man right here. You need to show your mom how much you appreciate her." And that was kind of my first real, you know, first thing I really remember about being a man. And that's something my dad has always taught me is, being a man is about taking care of your woman, or your partner, you know?

Pete shared that because of this advice, he always tries to take care of his girlfriends or someone he is dating and put them first.

David received similar fatherly advice, though in a much different situation. David's parents divorced when he was about six years old and he was very confused about what was going on. He recalled the first conversation he really had about what was happening with his parents:

> I think the first conversation I finally had about it… 'cause my sister was devastated when it happened, but when they first told us, it meant nothing to me. But once I started to realize what's happening, like, "oh my family is not together anymore, I have to live with...spend time with each of them separately." I remember talking to my dad about it and being upset and crying him just telling me. "This is just the way it is, and you just need to be a man about this, and we need to be strong for your mom and your sister, because this is really hard on them, but we need to be the shining examples." And I was seven, and I… at the time was like "I don't even know what that means"… Well, I'm seven, am I really the man of the family?

David recalled the confusion and sadness that surrounded the events of his parents' divorce, but remembered the constant advice of not crying and being strong. He also remembers being treated differently than his sister.

Similarly, Lou remembered the constant image of his father and other men in his life as the "breadwinner" and the "overseer" of the household. Lou described that he grew up in a very patriarchal household in the South. Most of his family and friends were small town southerners, who believed that men were the head of household. Though he couldn't think of specific memories, he always remembers this idea of men in power hanging over him. This was an idea that wouldn't change until college when he saw strong women professors who led his classes.

The head of the household idea from the participants was displayed through specific advice given to them, or simply through the images of fathers and other men around them. Men were clearly in charge, and need to "man up," to be the protector and overseer of the household, even if in the more seemingly more positive advice given by Pete's father to always "take care" of their partner.

Adolescence and High School

All of the men described that their need to fit in and become more masculine only heightened as they headed into middle school and high school. They recalled a number of times when they didn't quite fit in or didn't agree with the rest of group but were unsure what to do about it. The pressure to fit in manifested itself in different ways through adolescence and high school compared to early childhood. Additional peer pressure, changing of relationships with other men, posturing about women, and further involvement in sports where key areas the participants talked about in reflecting on their development as men.

Peer pressure.

Peer pressure for the participants during adolescence was a constant force in their lives. Peer pressure manifested itself in different ways for the participants. Some of them used it to become more hyper masculine and fit in, exerting their peer pressure on their classmates, while others retreated socially because of bullying related to not seeming masculine enough.

George recalled a constant peer pressure through middle school and high school. He shared that high school is when the party scenes kicked in. He was really into

drinking games and always trying to prove himself. He remembered at one party

someone said to him "You're not El Salvadorian if you can't do this beer bong." He then

chugged the whole thing to prove it.

Chris found that he tried to fit in through adolescence by joining in on making fun

of others because of peer pressure. In middle school and high Chris remembers "Just

being kind of mean to people because that's what the other boys did and everyone kind of

picks on each other. That's not something I wanted to do but it was establishing the

pecking order you know." When asked what he meant be being mean, Chris shared "you

know just kind of that like light bullying of like just knocking someone's book out of

their hand where it's like everyone is doing it to each other but it doesn't make it better. It

just makes me laugh now like 'Why would I do that?'"

Lou remembered a variety of experiences in which he was both on the receiving

end of peer pressure and himself became a bully towards others. Lou described these

experiences:

> There was some rough characters at my school, so a lot of the times it was things
> like weed and stuff, like, "You're a bitch if you don't smoke this." But I think it's a
> huge part of ... little things like that, that you grew up, your parents saying, "You
> can never do this," and then somebody comes along who hasn't had quite the same
> upbringing and they kind of ... They pretty much threaten you with femininity.
> Things like "you're a bitch if you can't do this."

Lou was also on the football team and very much described himself as hyper

masculine during his high school years. He fit in well and did many of things to continue

to uphold his place in the pecking order and fit in with his peers. Lou shared that although

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he wouldn't describe himself as a bully, he remembers making fun the weaker guys during football practice. In recalling the experience, Lou shared

> There was a guy, Jeff. He got picked on. Even though I would've sympathized for him in my heart, we might have ... Being in that gang mentality, you jump in on the picking fun, and then later on you have the regretful emotions, like I wouldn't have done that if it was just me and him one-on-one, but being that I was surrounded by hyper-masculinity and sweat and all that mess, you do things.

Many of the men engaged in a spectrum of peer policing and bullying during their adolescent years. Some were on the receiving end of jokes more than others as they postured themselves within the social pecking order of middle school and high school.

Changing relationships.

In the midst of the peer pressure and bullying, many of the men also described that they felt their relationships with others began to change. They became more isolated from other men and changed how they interacted with others. For example, looking back, George felt that his relationships with other men changed during adolescence and became shallower and revolved around making fun of each other. He recalled an experience in which he started distancing himself from a friend he had since elementary school:

> I had one friend growing up from elementary school up until high school. I would joke around with him, have my arm around him and everything. One time, I think I was in seventh grade, I had my arm around him again just cracking a joke, and he was like, "Dude, why do you put your arm around me? It's weird." That just completely through me off. I was like, "I don't know, man." I just didn't think about it. I thought it was a brotherly thing. Then he made me feel like I was out of line, or made me feel like I was gay or something for doing that. After that I kept my distance from everybody. That was in middle school, seventh grade. I was like, "Wow."

This one experience was something that pushed George to adhere to the masculine stereotype in order to fit in with his peers and distance himself physically and emotionally from others.

Chris also shared that he started to exhibit hypermasculine behavior less and less in high school as he realized he just didn't fit in with other boys. He recalled changing and that he no longer attempted to follow the peer pressure and fit in. He was in the outsider's ring, and instead was the one being bullied or teased about the clothes he was wearing or being a "wimp" at sports. This allowed him to find friend groups that were less masculine and most his friends in high school ended up being girls.

Robert was also on the receiving end of this "picking fun" as he didn't quite fit in with most of the other guys and struggled with how to find his place. He tried joining different sports to fit in like swimming and cross country, sports which weren't typically hyper masculine. He also joined boy scouts, which he enjoyed but found that in his teenage years, he just ended up avoiding a lot of male friends since he didn't fit in with them. One specific memory came to mind for him from an overnight wilderness trip:

> I just remember being bullied a lot at camp in different situations. And I remember there was this one instance, one summer, where I think I was just casually chatting with some guy after a merit badge class, and we had this overnight... It was a wilderness survival class where we had to build like a shelter. And these two guys just latched on to me in a way that they really didn't like me. And I had overheard them one day. I was walking behind them, they didn't realize I was there. I remember they just were like, "Oh, this guy is so annoying," and throwing crap at me for asking general questions. And I remember just the night we had to stay out in the woods, they just kept messing with me through different things. They had some guy in the woods throwing sticks and trying to scare me. And it was just one of those things that I remember in that instance, I was just so bullied for no reason by these guys. And I remember camp every year after that, I just really tried to keep to myself. I would make a few friends here or there, but I

was just really wary of other boys my age. So, I think for me, as much as I've always been a social person, I think how I've masked it, was that I just kept people at pretty much on arm's length, especially other boys. I just kind of avoided them if I could.

Similarly to Robert, Patrick also began to avoid other boys his age, and his relationship with other men began to change because of peer pressure and bullying.

Sports police 2.0.

A theme of specific peer pressure revolving around sports emerged from the interviews. The sports induced peer policing rose to a different level than it did in early childhood experiences. Involvement in sports took on new meanings, and came with different expectations and pressures as the boys reached middle and high school. Instead of just playing a sport or knowing about the latest game on television, the pressure to be involved in sports became more complicated.

Nate shared that in the beginning of high school he didn't quite fit in to the masculine stereotypes. He was "sort of the fat kid" and people would call him "soft" and pick on him for not being with any women. He remembered thinking "Man, all of my friends are with women and I'm not. It must be because of these other things." He was a member of marching band but decided that he needed to something that was a "real sport." His sophomore year he joined the wrestling team and found that he really liked the sport. He lost weight and became more masculine in his physical appearance. Nate shared that he "lost a bunch of weight, and because of that I kind of started coming out of my shell more socially because I was more comfortable in my own skin; like branching out, getting new friends, being better with women. And that was also a huge part, was

being better with women." This physical, masculine transformation for Nate helped him fit in and feel better about himself. He also adopted more traditional masculine behaviors as he became much more connected in sports, and talked about women frequently with his peers. The paradox exists clearly here of feeling more comfortable and "fitting in" by performing masculinity in a way to identify with his peers.

David found success fitting in through a feigning of a love for Panthers football during his adolescent years. The first time the Panthers went to the Super Bowl, it meant nothing to David. He hated sports and hated football, and the 1 hour of physical education at his school was plenty of sports time. Yet "Panther Mania" took over the city of Charlotte and he felt he needed to embrace it in order to fit in with his peers. David describes "Panther Mania" and his response in this way:

> Everywhere we went it was like people were having Super Bowl parties. That whole week in school, people were like... They let down the dress codes, people could wear their jerseys, and people were constantly talking about in the hall. And I remember doing research and going through old game programs, 'cause we have season tickets so we have... My parents sometimes saved the programs. And I remember going through and looking up players names and stuff like that so I could contribute to the conversation, [chuckle] and I'd be like, "Man, how many yards do you think Steve Smith's gonna have this week?" [laughter] And then when the game came along, I didn't even watch the game. I remember, I was watching TV in the other room or something like that. And then the next day people were, of course, talking about the game. They lost, but people were still talking about it. And I remember trying to fake stats, 'cause this was also, what, maybe 2004 that would have been 6th grade, actually. Anyway, I remember making up fake stats from the games, like, "Oh, yeah, when so-and-so had that 40-yard run, yeah," just to... 'Cause that's all people cared about was the sports thing. That really meant nothing to me.

Sports meant nothing to David at the time, but it became a useful tool to fit in with the other boys around him. Without it, he felt like he would have been an outsider. For Nate,

sports were interwoven into concerns about body image and fitting in as well. If you didn't fit in with those around you, sports became a potential outlet to claim some traditional forms of masculinity, which could, in turn, elevate your social status.

Posturing about women.

Posturing in relation to other men, including trying to impress them, was evident in the stories of the participants. They were constantly trying to "one up" each other in a variety of ways. One main way the men postures was through their conversations about women and interactions with women.

Throughout high school, Nate described that a main source of confidence and conversation was contact with women. He shared that this was often a time he would perform masculinity and exaggerate stories. Nate shared that when discussing his relationships with other men he would "never explicitly be like, "oh yeah, I did this," and I didn't, but I would leave it open to interpretation." Nate shared an example of this:

> This girl I dated… Again, it was like sophomore year into junior year, a little bit, but we never had sex or anything, but I would…People never knew that until I became more comfortable and I was like, "Yeah that never happened." They were like, "Really? I thought you did." But at the time, I was like, "Yeah, I was over at her place last night." And they were like, "Oh yeah, yeah," And I'm like, "Yeah, yeah." But no, nothing really actually happened.

Nate felt a pressure to fit in and continue to prove he was good with women, resulting in other examples of this kind of evasive bragging happening throughout high school.

Lou remembers a lot of posturing about women taking place in high school:

> Everybody was trying to out-do, out-posture other people. If you weren't flirting with a girl like 24/7, you might have been perceived as gay. Like, "Why aren't you talking to this girl?"

This posturing about women was another outlet for the participants to fit in with those around them, and establish themselves higher on the social pecking order. This posturing only continued as they moved further into college and beyond. As they continued to move further along their journey's to adulthood, the participants experienced more conflict in their identity due to a variety of experiences in college and elsewhere.

College and Beyond

During college many of the participants had more conflicting experiences with masculinity before having their identity disrupted in some type of way, either through programming such as Men on the Mountain or through a variety of academic and social experiences. It is worth reminding the reader here that the men I interviewed for this study are unique in that they have gone through a masculinity program where they reflected on the issues they discussed in our interviews. Because of this, there are perhaps unusually thoughtful about how their identity changed over time, as did their orientation toward masculine norms. While the men continued to experience heightened peer pressure through their college career, adherence to the norms was disrupted for them at some point along the way. Nonetheless, the norms of having sex with women and drinking lots of beer were prominent for several of the participants. Adherence to hypermasculine norms depended entirely on their self-selected social group. For those who were no longer involved with hypermasculine groups such as Robert or Chris, they feel pressure to uphold these traditional hyper masculine norms. Folks like David and

George were trying to find a way to fit in in college and found themselves interacting

with more hypermasculine groups and consequently adhering to more hypermasculine

norms.

Getting laid and drinking beer.

The men who continued to find ways to fit in socially in college attempted to fit in

through engaging in hypermasculine norms with their peers. Some were involved in

fraternities while others were engaging with a variety of other groups around them. As a

typical example, David became involved in a fraternity in an attempt to make friends and

be involved socially in college. Sex with women, drinking alcohol, and making fun of

others seemed to be mainstays in the norms of masculinity. David described that he

would feel a tug to not want to be involved in specific things, but in the end peer pressure

would win out. In describing this experience David shared

> There were times where I'm like, "I don't wanna go to this event and get
> hammered." And they're arguing, "You're gonna sleep with... "So many times,
> some guys would come up, be like, "Alright, I'm getting laid tonight," or, "Hey,
> we're gonna get you laid tonight," and it's like, "What if I don't wanna do that
> right now?" [chuckle] And people would say all the stereotypes [of fraternity
> guys], people are like, "What, are you gay?" and like, "Oh, don't be a faggot
> man." Stuff like that was so common.

David further described a chapter meeting in the group in which someone would always

become a butt of the jokes:

> Purely, you were judged based on how much you can drink, no getting around it.
> And I just remember thinking... I don't know why, but I could drink [chuckle]
> enough to get by, but I remember observing people. One of my friends, Jordan,
> He's 100 pounds, he's tiny, he's a really small guy. And three beers in he'd be
> down for the count or at least couldn't drink anymore, and people would make fun

of him all the time, the next morning... We would do something at Chapter where it was like... I don't even remember what it stood for, but basically it was supposed to be like here's something positive that happened this week, or here's something we're gonna work on. And everybody goes around at the end of chapter and says something. And some people would just say nothing, but that would be the time where people would make fun of him. They'd be like, "Hey, y'all remember when Jordan puked all over himself? What a bitch!" And that's what it turned into. And I remember always thinking, "God, I have to not eff up ever around these guys, because if I screw up around one guy it's gonna be told to the entire chapter the next morning, or the next Monday night or whatever." And I always felt bad when that happened.

In describing his complacency in these masculine norms of bullying others, David also described the incredible bond this created with other brothers in his fraternity. David shared that though they made fun of each other, he knew that just about any of the fifty men in the fraternity would answer the phone if his car broke down or if he needed help.

Pete had similar experiences as a fraternity member in college and described that the entirety of his freshman and sophomore year were about "getting drunk and getting laid, that's what really mattered." Doing those things meant you were a man. In describing his reasoning to join a fraternity Pete shared, "That's a part of being masculine right? Joining a fraternity. You got to, or you're not a man, you know? It was a prominent, suburban white boy thing to do." The mentality started to change as he realized he had to grow up, take care of himself, and get a job after graduation.

Both Derek and George described experiences with women (or attempting to have experiences) as being a central part of their masculine identity in college. Derek described his entire four years of college as a "gradual identity crisis." In this identity crisis he struggled with his inability to be successful with women. He described this identity crisis:

So, I had never really dated anyone. And just around my friends, I started to feel really different. Because I'd never had experiences with women. And that was like an... It wasn't really a spoken thing, but it was like, you're successful if you're with... If you get with a lot of women. And I'd never even been with one woman. So I was like, "Oh, fuck." I'm like... [chuckle], the loser I guess. I started to feel like that more consistently throughout college. It's like well, I'm almost through with college, this has never happened to me. And what's wrong with me? And a lot of that was through friends. Just feeling that pressure, but a lot of it was just everywhere you look like tv, movies, everything, it's all successful men are good with women. And I just wasn't very good with women. But yeah, that was sort of... That was probably a big part of my masculine identity in college specifically, was just feeling like I was kind of a loser because I didn't date around, I didn't sleep around, I didn't do any of that stuff.

George described that he left a controlling relationship after coming to college, and immediately after his sole focus seemed to be on "getting women." He would constantly think that every girl he spoke to was into him. He wasn't talking to women just for the conversation, but in hopes that it might lead to something else later. His main goals in the beginning of college were to party and hook up with someone. George shared that he just felt a pressure to do this, but couldn't place where it was from. He didn't stop this "get women" mentality until one day Lou (his friend and fellow participant in the study) called him out on it, and disrupted his identity. This caused him to start thinking more deeply about his behavior and start making some changes.

"You wanna shotgun some beers?" or "You wanna go to the library?"

Many of the men continued to adhere to the strict masculine norms and peer pressure while in college. Whether they did so or not depended entirely on the friend groups with which the men were associated. Some participants like Robert, Lou and Chris found themselves disrupting their masculine identities in college through their social involvement with different organizations and clubs. They already knew they didn't

fit in with a hypermasculine group, so were looking for other social groups to be members of. As others like David, Nate, Derek, George and Pete attempted to develop new relationships in college, they experienced greater peer pressure to fit in with their new groups. They also experienced conflict with the norms of masculinity from other men who didn't quite adhere to the group norms. As one of the participants shared, it was someone inviting you to the library vs inviting you to shotgun a few beers.

Chris shared that he "stopped caring" about his masculinity in college. He just didn't hang out with a lot of masculine people and stuck to the art and music scene that he was into. Similarly, Robert always felt like he wasn't masculine enough. He remembered performing masculinity strongly in his first year of college just to fit in. He shared this about freshman year:

> That whole period. I think I was masking sexual identity, and gender performance was the way to do that. Adding in on jokes, pretending to enjoy parts of conversations or laugh at things. I think, especially teenage years, high school, I think, so much of that gender performance, was to mask sexuality. And even as a kid, when I wasn't sure about it, like I wasn't certain, I was very much in denial of sexual attractions. I think I still naturally just went into the masculine gender performance to fit in.

As Robert became more comfortable with his sexual identity through college he also started to challenge his own views of masculinity more.

On the more hypermasculine side, David decided to join a fraternity in his first year of college to make new friends. Once he joined the fraternity, he saw a clear divide between continued hypermasculinity and those who didn't adhere to the norms. In describing these different experiences David shared:

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Some of the older guys, some were great, but some of them still were this "bro" type. And I remember when I was a pledge... one of the guys was like, "Hey, why don't you get involved in Club Council and Leadership Educators and diversify your experience." But then there was other guys, like our president. And I remember, since there was only three of us in my pledge class, they paid a lot of attention to each of us, 'cause usually there's 15 of us. So I got a lot of one-on-one time with a lot of the seniors at the time and I remember a specific group of guys they would invite me over and they'd have lots of girls there and they'd be like, "Alrighty, here's what you're gonna do, you're gonna go sit next to this girl and talk to her." "Hey, we're all gonna go shotgun four beers off the balcony and throw them at the cars down below, at these guys we don't like." Just...They were like, "This is what you do in a fraternity," or, "This how it's cool to be a bro, or be a man." And it was just funny to hear such conflicting things. And then I'd go hang out with someone, and he'd be like, "You wanna go the library with me?" Instead of, "Hey, you wanna go to the parkway and get hammered?" And it was just... [chuckle] it was very much conflicting.

This conflict was experienced by several of the men who were engaging in more hypermasculine behavior in college. Whether it was someone telling them to simply stop, as Lou shared with George to stop trying to hook with women constantly, or Pete seeing role models and older guys try to get their lives together and graduate, they began to see this conflict of masculinity and find ways to transition their masculine identities.

Changes through Disruption

For most of the men, college was a pivotal moment for coming to understand and take ownership over their masculine identities. Their previously held beliefs were disrupted in some way and this disruption resulted in them making changes moving forward. Many of these disruptions took place through one and one interactions with others or through their involvement in programs like Men on the Mountain. These disruptions created changes emotionally, socially, and interpersonally.

Emotional, Interpersonal, and Social Awareness

The men gained new emotional, interpersonal, and social awareness through disruption of their identities and masculine norms. This was evident in emotional changes which occurred, such as greater vulnerability with others, interpersonal changes like deeper bonds formed with other men, and through social changes like actively preventing their own objectification of women.

Social awareness.

Much of the men's social awareness was gained in the area of understanding the objectification of women, including how they participated in this without realizing it. As described in earlier analysis, seeking women and bragging about sex were predominant hypermasculine norms for many of the men. As their identities were disrupted, they began to move away from this thinking. They realized they were objectifying women and moved away from a "get women" mentality.

George found that he was obsessed with finding women and getting with women during his first years of college. George left his "get women" mentality after this experience with his friend Lou:

> Honestly when I got to college, like Lou, he was a pretty big help. I roomed with him, hung out with him and everything, we talked about a lot of things. We were very open to each other about our feelings. When I came to college I had a girlfriend. It was a controlling relationship. It was tough. We ended things. Then I met Lou. I was like, "Yo, man, this one girl, she was totally into me..." Lou was like, "Dude, why don't you settle down? Not every girl you talk to is trying to hit on you." It just dawned on me, I don't have to hit on girls now that I'm single. I can just be myself. I don't have to be after girls. That was a huge change for me. Lou, he's a straight up guy. He just told me like it was. I don't know. My mindset flopped right away after he told me that. I just started talking to people and having conversations. I think my mind was in the wrong place.

This challenging conversation was enough for George to change his behavior and refocus his goals.

Nate shared that his involvement in Men on the Mountain gave him a lot of self-realization about things he didn't normally think about, including objectifying women. Nate shared that he realized

> Wow, actually, I do that a lot," and trying to catch myself. I think one of the huge things that... Or I guess it's not that it's huge, but one that now I really don't do anymore, and I'll even call people on it, is when people refer to women as bitches, they're like, "Oh, dude, I was chilling with these bitches." And I'm like, "Dude, just call 'em women. You don't have to refer to them as bitches." That's one thing that kinda gets me at this point.

He shared that he now holds others around him accountable for behavior like this because he sees that there is no reason for it, and that it reproduces and reinforces problematic hyper masculine norms.

Pete shared similarly that he realized that the way he was talking about and treating women needed to change, specifically his use of language like "slut" or "whore." He used these terms regularly and freely without any thought to their impact on others or their real meaning. He shared that he prided himself on respecting women, and he realized his use of terms like this went totally against this value of his.

Lou shared that he "just started thinking more about his gender and others gender" once he got to college. He shared that "seeing strong female professors" was something that got him to start to think differently. He was never exposed to women in positions of power prior to attending college. Once he started hearing about the gender wage gap, among other discriminatory practices, it irritated him and made him feel like

he needed to do something. He shared that his "exposure to a lot of information" helped disrupt his previous understanding of masculine identity.

Experiences such as these made the men more socially aware in understanding what masculinity meant for themselves and others. They began to challenge their traditional understanding of gender roles.

Interpersonal relationships.

Many of the men described new relationships they were able to form with other men and deeper relationships they developed throughout college. They were able to move past surface level relationships, to relationships with more meaning and intimacy. Their experiences in Men on the Mountain contributed to this growth.

George described that he was lucky to have several "deep relationships" with other male friends that helped him to think more about his life. They challenged him to think differently and figure out who he was. In describing this group of friends George shared:

> They were really comfortable with each other. That turned me off at first. I had this one friend, and he would always give me hugs. At first, I was like, "Whoa, man." I had some other friends tell me, "He's really comfortable with his masculinity." I was like, "I've never heard that before. That's interesting." Yeah, it was like, "Huh." Turns out that's how the whole group was. Everyone's just themselves. It was cool. It was different. Coming from a different background, having to look strong ... we had this one group picture with this group of friends, and one of the guys was over me like that touching me, just being goofy. I came back home and my brother-in-law saw that. He's like, "Man that was weird." I was like, "Why is that weird?" He was like, "I don't know. It just looks weird."

George found a new level of intimacy with others around him, one he had not previously experienced. From physical to touch to more expansive conversation topics, George was engaging on a deeper level with other men.

Derek shared that his gradual "identity crisis" in college really started to change when he became involved in Men on the Mountain. His involvement in the program and relationship with me as the facilitator allowed him to "actively think about how the world around him has influenced his masculine identity." Derek was able to develop new and deeper relationships with others. In describing this experience Derek shared:

> It really started with my friendship and my relationship with you, just because I saw you as someone that was different in a good way, you were incredibly thoughtful, and so I've wanted to dive in to the topics that we would talk about, because I remember we would sit around and we would just talk about our week and we would just start talking about masculinity and stuff like that, and I would be like, "I'm actually really interested in where these conversations would go." So, then I started going to the meetings and talking with other men that were completely different from me, and that was a big thing that kept bringing me back because there were these other guys that I wasn't exactly friends with, but their stories and their opinions were things that I had never thought of myself. It really made me actively think about things in my everyday life, conversations I would have with people and I would be like, "Why did that person just reinforce gender norms right then when they were making fun of something?"

The disruption in Derek's masculine identity was gradual and took time as he realized that the men around him were also "struggling with their masculine identity." He became more invested in his interpersonal relationships.

Robert also found he was more intentional with his interpersonal relationships. He found himself being more vulnerable with others and being more intentional in developing friendships with others. He expected deeper relationship with others and if the

relationship was surface level, he would choose not to invest any further time in that relationship.

Emotional awareness.

Several men also experienced deeper emotional awareness and vulnerability as an outgrowth of their college experiences, including their participation in Men on the Mountain. For example, they realized that the hypermasculine norms of not crying were not necessarily healthy, and that they too had a full range of emotions to be expressed.

Lou shared an experience of emotional vulnerability that occurred through his involvement in Men on the Mountain. He described an intimate experience he had with some of the participants in the group:

> One day I was talking to two guys that were in Men on the Mountain and I had ... I was having a really rough time. I was very depressed, and I just broke down. I just started crying as hard as I could and venting and telling them about it. Then having their reaction be so ... They were very nurturing. I guess that's when I noticed that not everybody's an asshole and it's okay to be emotional and show the way that you feel. After talking to them for like two minutes and having them be so nice and listening, I just ... The waterfall came. I just broke down and started telling them about everything that was going on and how I was stressed out.

This experience helped Lou acknowledge and experience his own emotional vulnerability and share it with others. He more actively noticed his own emotions and intervened in other situations involving emotions. If he saw someone struggling, he encouraged them to let it out, as he would be a listening ear.

Pete shared that through his involvement in Men on the Mountain he realized he was a much more emotional person than he'd originally thought. He shared that "crying is not usually my alleyway, but I'm an emotional person." His previously held belief that

men shouldn't cry was challenged and he realized that he experiences a range of emotions. He knows that he is quick to anger and needs to keep working on his short temper. He described his involvement in Men on the Mountain meetings and better understanding his emotions:

> I mean I kind of see now why they have AA meetings with everything. Just kind of hear everybody's side of the story and it's good to let loose and just say some stuff to people. It's a lot ... even though they may not be listening, you feel like they're listening. It felt good. It felt like part of me was kind of opening up to the world a little bit instead of just being closed and being in the back of my head.

Pete was able to share more openly and better understand his own emotions in relationship to his masculine identity.

Chris shared that involvement in Men on the Mountain helped him to "identify patterns of masculinity at large but also our own relationship with masculinity among ourselves and others." Identifying patterns and naming some of his struggles with masculinity allowed him to address some of his own insecurities such as the kind of clothing he would wear or if he was displaying feminine tendencies. These had always been things that gave him a lot of anxiety around others, but he was now better able to identify this anxiety and where it was coming from, and work to disrupt it in his everyday actions.

Overall, the men were able to experience and notice a fuller range of emotions through their involvement in Men on the Mountain and other groups. They noticed when they were not feeling right emotionally and were able to pinpoint the feeling instead of letting it manifest itself in unhealthy ways. The variety of social, interpersonal and

emotional changes that occurred for the men through these experiences led them to create new meaning and transform their identities.

Meaning and Transformation

The participants shared several stories in which they applied their new disrupted knowledge of masculinity to real world events. They also made meaning of their experiences through new definitions of masculine identity and developing new ways of interacting with others around them. Some realized they still have a long way to go in their own development and even wished they had a group to continue to help hold them accountable.

Accountability and Challenging Others

The men shared that accountability was a major component in creating meaning in masculinity and transforming their previous held believes. Many men found success, especially in college, in holding themselves and other accountable for hypermasculine behavior. This was particularly true when they were surrounded by other men doing this work. As the men have left dedicated spaces such as Men on the Mountain, they have struggled to continue to hold themselves and others accountable for behavior, instead falling back into a tribe mentality and to sometimes unconsciously reproducing hypermasculine norms.

Success in accountability.

Nate, still an undergraduate student, shared that he has started interacting with the new pledge class in his fraternity differently since becoming aware of his former views of masculinity and working to continue to disrupt them. He holds individuals more

accountable for language use when they are around him. Nate discussed the ways he

holds folks accountable:

> People can't even argue it that much because, well, then you're gonna be like, "Oh, don't be so respectful." That's not like... [chuckle] They're just like, "Okay, yeah, yeah." 'Cause that's definitely within the fraternity, one of our main pillars is being a gentleman. I remember a specific incident, especially this guy that I rushed who actually, they just got initiated really recently. So he's now a brother, but rushed at the beginning of the semester, I was rushing him 'cause I was like I wanted him to come out. And then he would say something about, "Oh, there are gonna be like hella bitches at this party." I was like, "Alright, just don't say that." I was like, "Just for future reference, don't refer to... That's such a terrible look on your part." Not trying to be a dick about it to him, but I'm like, "Hey, just so you know, it's a bad look if you roll up to this rush party now like, introducing yourself and start throwing around the word bitch, all that. It's just not a good look, especially 'cause that's one of the four things we stand on." A huge thing is accountability.

Nate felt it was important to hold his fraternity brothers accountable and remind them of

the values they share with each other.

David shared that he has found success in addressing issues of masculinity with

his own father but has had further difficulty talking with others or new folks he meets

about issues of masculinity. David shared that his father makes a lot of random comments

in an attempt to be funny, and he politely redirects him. For instance, his dad helped him

move into his new apartment and as they were moving furniture his dad would say things

like "moving furniture is man's work." On a recent family trip to the United Kingdom,

David shared that his dad was making a lot of similar comments and he attempted to

"politely call him out" by saying things like, "Hey times are changing," or, "Hey this is

not just for men," or "This is not just for women." David has seen a change in his dad but

wonders if this is because he has actually learned, or if he is just censoring himself when they are together.

Though David found success in talking with his father, he has had a more difficult time continuing conversations about masculinity with friends or holding himself accountable for his own hyper masculine behavior. He shared that he still finds himself engaging in hypermasculine behaviors with others where its talking about his sex life with other men, or simply not going beyond a surface level conversation with other around him.

Derek, in his first job out of college, shared that he has found his voice in giving his opinion in situations involving issues of masculinity and patriarchy. Before the learning that took place in college, he wasn't very confident at all in discussing issues or challenging others when he didn't agree. Over time, he has developed more confidence alongside his growing understanding of the problems of hypermasculinity and patriarchy. He shared an example of addressing a situation with someone at work:

> I just actively voice my opinion more readily than I did beforehand. Actually, I can remember a conversation, not too long ago. One of my friends was talking about how there are less women in the tech industry and how he thought it was just because women are just not as good at tech and they're more just built for other more nurturing professions. And I was like, "Hold on a second, [chuckle] let's think about what you're saying here." It wasn't like, "You're wrong, you're an idiot for thinking that." I was just like, "Well why do you think... Do you think that women are actually bad at tech, or do you think they're just told that they shouldn't be good at tech?" It was one of those conversations where I just challenged him on it. I think that that's a big part of the way that you tried to teach the course is that you weren't trying to shoot people down, you were trying to see where people were coming from and challenge them on their thoughts. And I think that was a pretty big influencer on me in how I talk to people about those topics.

Derek can hold folks accountable for language and behavior regarding masculinity even outside of the collegiate setting. He feels he has the tools need to appropriately address situations.

George also shared that he is constantly trying to find balance in holding people accountable. He tries to pick and choose which situations to intervene and which situations to save as conversations for later. He has learned that pouncing on every situation he feels he needs to address isn't always the best idea. George has a new son who he is trying to raise differently regarding masculinity, but this is an often-uphill battle with his family, especially with his brother and brother-in-law. He shared a recent exchange that took place with his brother in law about his son:

> My brother-in-law and sister will just talk about things like, "Oh, if you wouldn't do this too much or do that too much, he might grow up and become like a queer." I thought it was like the silliest thing I heard. Now, it's like, "No. I'm not worried about that." Yeah. I mean, I guess it isn't the easiest thing in society to be gay. But at the same time, I think it's worse to completely deny somebody their identity. That's who they are. But I just, I don't know, it's like he can play with this. He can play with that. It's not a big deal. I was talking about it. I'm like, "Man, my son is really into this. He'll probably do gymnastics, play some soccer, do that, do this." And my brother in law was really quick to comment on the gymnastic part. It's like, "You know, Derek's son, his mom put him in gymnastics and now he just doesn't know how to play with boys anymore. And he makes a lot of weird postures and stuff." And it's like, he's just being who he is.

George shared that since he is addressing more issues like this, he feels that his family is "coming along" and better understanding where George is coming from. He believes the progress is slow, but he has seen change over time.

Lou found that it was easier for him to hold himself and others accountable for behaviors when in college versus out of college. During his time in college he recalled a

specific interaction of accountability with a friend from elementary school who had just

left the military at came to the same university. He recalled this interaction:

> A friend that I went to middle ... elementary, middle, and high school, he left the Navy and came to the university to start studying. You have me, who's been in getting a liberal sensitivity of the world. You have him, who's been in the Navy for four years and who's become even more hyper-masculine because of his surroundings. He might say something that just ... casual little slights toward women. He has a very conservative and ... his thinking is his parents' thinking, so it's very Old South, and so it's nothing to hear him just say, "That bitch is no good because she didn't say, 'Yeah, I want to fuck you,'" or something like that.. Being where I was at the time, I would challenge him. When a girl says "hey" to this person, he believes at that point, like, "I'm entitled to a date." He hasn't said that explicitly, but if you have been around him long enough, he thinks that way, like, "I just said 'hey' to this girl at a party and then another guy hooked up with her, so now I want to fight that guy." And I would just tell him, like, "You're not entitled to anything. No one owes you anything. She could've walked into your room with her shirt off and then said 'Yeah, I'm going to leave,' and you still have no ground to say that she was in the wrong." Part of it would sound pretty close to that when I was talking to him, and he didn't like that very much.

As Lou continued to challenge him over time, he and this former friend just stopped

interacting and lost touch. While many of the men found success in holding themselves

and others accountable, some still struggled with this outside of college.

Tribe mentality.

Many of the men found success with specific groups of people in holding them

accountable for behavior. Close friends or certain family members were often individuals

the men had no problem addressing or confronting. As they moved into other groups,

more hypermasculine groups, or with more hypermasculine men, many of them failed to

act in the same way. Some men chose to avoid hypermasculine groups all together, while

others remained silent in these groups, resulting in a tribe mentality, by which I mean,

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they would go along with familiar, socially constructed patterns of hyper masculinity and forms of problematic male bonding.

George shared that he has found the most difficulty in working with his brother to address hypermasculine tendencies. His brother recently left the military and often displays a lot of hyper masculine behavior. George shared that in the last year or so since he has been home, he has found that his conversations have become less surface level and more intimate. He shared he is now trying to work on getting his brother to be more vulnerable and to hold others accountable as well. He shared an example of a scary situation that took place at a party recently in which he was trying to coach his brother on how to intervene:

> I was at a get together with my brother and one of our friends, Joseph. And him and his fiancé got back together. And I think he just had a little too much to drink. And out of nowhere he just started getting really pumped up and started like yelling at her and got in her face and everything. It was a really rough situation. No one was really stepping up. I mean, that's when I had to step in and say like, "Dude, you're being way too aggressive. You need to settle down." He's like, "I'm not being aggressive." And he was just ... I was like, "You had too much. You just need to ... you're good. You're good." You know? But he just kept yelling at her and hitting things. And it was just awful. And I mean, he's closer to my brother than he is to me. And at the end of the night, he calmed down eventually, but it wasn't until he broke down. And I just told him like, "You're okay. You're fine. You're fired up and stuff."

George felt he needed to intervene in this situation as it was clear that no one else was going to do so. Even though this individual was someone he wasn't that close with, he felt it was important that someone diffuse the situation. The next day he received a text from the friend thanking him for intervening. George tried to get his brother to text him since they are best friends and talk to him about what was going on but he refused. His

brother still doesn't feel comfortable going against the norm and stepping outside the box. George didn't feel like it was his place to continue to follow up with his brother's friend but felt like there was a lot to unpack and support that Joseph needed. He shared that he is continuing to work on supporting his brother and helping him to unpack his masculinity to try and get him to a different place but it is often an uphill battle.

David shared that he still struggles holding himself accountable especially in situations with former fraternity brothers or other more hypermasculine friends. He discussed this struggle of "slipping back"

> I'm definitely not the person I was like senior year of college, but I think you occasionally slip back, especially depending on the atmosphere you're in. And, I think it's just something I haven't done but something I should do is keep that conversation going with more people and still be thinking about it and then also just some self-reflection, too. I've never been really one to journal or anything like that, but I think that could be, even if it was just once a month, reflection on how have I improved? Where do I still need to work? And how can I... What have I seen from others? What have I seen for myself? Just continue to think about it 'cause I think it can be easy to get in the routine and then let yourself slip or you get around the wrong people, and it's easy to... Depending on the fraternity brothers that were there the other weekend, it would have been easy to slip back into that if it was a lot less mature people.

David has ideas for how to hold himself accountable, but still struggles to act and move forward without something pushing him, or without a supportive group similar to Men on the Mountain.

Lou now works on a farm in North Carolina. He has found it difficult to address others or continue to have the same conversations about masculinity that he had with his group as he finds no easy space where people are open and work to hold each other accountable. In talking about the men he works with on the farm Lou said

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I mean, I work with a few older guys that have just grown up all being hyper-masculine, like nothing has ever been any other way. Their wives stay at home and tend to the house. They go out and do the work and come home. For instance, this old man named Joe I work with. He's a great guy. He has some old views and he has the breadwinner mentality. His wife has always been at home. But at the same time, I've never heard him say anything negative about women, as opposed to some guys who have the same living situation but they'll say, like, "Women are so stupid. They can't do anything," stuff like that. But then, you know, there's guys my age that went to like NC State, and so they were in a farming community there because that's like the major thing there. They, just through association, keep those thoughts, but they still somewhat evolve just because they are on a college campus, but they keep a lot of the old views. I don't really ever say anything to these guys at work just because it just makes the workday go by fast and not as ... sounds like forfeit, but a lot of these guys, they're never going to change their thinking. It's pretty much like beating a dead horse. But then at the same time, there's a man I work with who's in his forties. His wife is a professor at NC State, and he stays at home until soil sampling season comes along. He works three days out of the week for the whole soil sampling season. Other than that, he's at home and taking care of the house and stuff like that. He has some old views, but at the same time, obviously he doesn't believe in the breadwinner dynamic and he's married to a professor who is a ... I think is pretty often an image of a strong woman.

In a space filled with hypermasculinity such as his work place, Lou fails to address behavior and comments he previously would talk about with his close friends. He finds that there is no easy space to hold himself accountable or others. Since it doesn't seem to be easy, Lou chooses to go through the motions of the work day instead of opening up conversations about hyper masculinity and the damages it does, or sharing some of the information he earned about gender stereotyping and violence.

Other men such as Chris and Robert have chosen to avoid hypermasculine groups altogether. They have self-selected into groups of friends who hold similar mind sets and avoid interacting with folks outside of those parameters. If they encounter individuals in a hypermasculine mind frame they often attempt to disengage. Robert finds that he is "not

running into" folks who are traditionally masculine. Because of this he feels less "out of place" then he once did but worries that he may be opting out of situations where he could actually help to educate other men.

The men have found some success in holding themselves and others accountable even though they are no longer in a dedicated program to discuss issues related to gender, patriarchy, and toxic masculinity. When conversations get more difficult, or relationships are on the line, many of the men resort to old habits and become complacent in a more hypermasculine mentality. Several men mentioned the need for more strategies for continuing to work on themselves now that they are no longer in college, or in a dedicated program.

Self-Discovery in Masculinity

All the men discussed self-discovery about their own masculine identity that resulted from their involvement in men on the mountain. They shared that their previous understanding of their own identity was disrupted from many of the conversations and interactions they had. This led them to discover new things about themselves, or new ways in which they made meaning of their own lives. It also helped many of the men become more in touch with their own emotions. Concurrently, they became more critical about the ways in which they viewed the world. They described this discovery as "ongoing" and continual as they acknowledge they still have a lot of work to do.

David was able to put into words the entirety of his self-discovery and understanding that took place throughout his college journey. David shared that it really wasn't until his junior and senior year of college that he really started to think differently

about his identity and masculinity. He was involved in the fraternity and only had cursory

experiences with social justice and other identity issues, perhaps touching on them in

some of his classes, but not engaging them in any systematic way. He described this

transformation of understanding masculinity in this way

> Before Men on the Mountain and late college I was like "Okay, I'm accepting and
> open-minded," and then now I'm like, "Okay, it's about a lot more than being
> accepting and open-minded. It's understanding what patriarchy is and
> understanding how I'm still perpetrating hypermasculinity and toxic masculinity,
> and just patriarchy issues in a lot of ways, not really realizing that I was doing
> that. I was thinking I was such a great person and such an informed citizen two
> years ago, and now realizing how much work I still have to do.

This transformation in understanding has taken place over the course of several years for

David and continues.

George shared that he is much more self-aware of his insecurities and

hypermasculine tendencies. He shared he is more critical about his decisions, responses

and actions and tries to figure why he might be reacting in a certain way to situations, and

if it has to do with his masculinity. He shares he is continually trying to "let go of the

past" in terms of his understanding of masculinity. He shared a story from his first job out

of college which illustrates an example of "letting go":

> It was at my new job when I first started. I found out my boss, he's gay. The other
> manager that my department worked with, he's also gay. In the beginning I was
> wondering about it. I was like, "Why am I so concerned about it?" I'm at work,
> and one thing that threw me off was the closeness that they had to me. They were
> really quick to get in my space, put their hand on my shoulder. When I'm showing
> them something on a computer like, "This is what I came up with" they'll hover
> over me like that. You look at the screen. It's just how they are. It's their
> personality, and it doesn't mean anything at all. I think it was more of they're
> comfortable. I don't know. I thought it was so strange. It was like, "Why am I

having this sort of reaction? I'm not that kind of guy." It caught me off guard for a second. I wasn't going to be like, "Hey, get your hands off me" or anything. I was like, "Cool, I guess I'm in?" I just felt so dumb afterwards. Now it's whatever. I don't mind them if they come over and I show them something on the computer screen. Every now and then I might do the same thing when I'm trying to point, "Move it over here." It's supposed to be a comfortable environment. That's just what I've come to learn. I like that. It's great. I'm just more aware. I will catch myself every now and then, "Why do I feel alert? I shouldn't feel this way." Just reassuring myself, or just reminding myself, "No, it doesn't have to be this way." I guess letting go of the past.

In this scenario George was aware of his homophobic reaction to touch from his gay boss. He recognized his reaction, reflected on it, and made a different choice in how he would move forward. George shared that this awareness and reflection is a continual process for him that he tries to maintain every day.

Chris shared that he does a lot of self-reflection around his own masculinity. He shared that he is hyperaware of issues of masculinity and how he might be displaying himself as a man, especially in regard to understanding his own feelings. He still finds that he tends to downplay the emotions of others, even his partner. Chris shared that in his relationship with his partner, he still has an internal struggle with emotions often thinking "I'm right and I'm the clear-headed one here," and thoughts of "Well, she shouldn't just let her feelings dictate so much." Chris shared that when this happens, he does a lot of internal reflection to adjust his response and open himself up emotionally. Chris shared that in doing this sort of self-reflection, he often finds himself needing to accept being uncomfortable. He shared "accepting you're wrong sometimes is not easy" but he has reflected on issues of emotionality by "recognizing what my feelings are, where they're coming from and how they're being perceived, and what they might be

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based upon." From this place he tries to express himself emotionally and better understand their root causes. He shared that recently he has struggled with feelings of jealousy, which he felt were related to masculinity. The emotion of jealously was displaying itself because of his own insecurities in his masculinity and posturing against other men. He shared how he unpacked his emotions of jealousy:

> It kinda comes from a need for control, or a need for... I guess it's kind of that alpha male tendency. It comes through as anger, in a way. And, I guess, like spite for the person that's causing it. I try to kind of break it down and try to find the root of it. I'll just have a passing thought of my girlfriend having taken trips with previous boyfriends. And then just being like, "Oh, I hate that guy." And then it manifests into like, "Well, maybe she had more fun on that trip with him," or like, this or that, or whatever. And it's like, "Well, that doesn't matter." And obviously, She went on a trip with me 'cause she wants to, and all of that. So that's tied into my own anxiety as well.

Chris is a deep introspective thinker and has found himself unpacking more and more emotions on his path to self-discovery and towards creating a more healthy masculine identity. He can pin point root causes of his reactions and attempt to address them or redirect them. He has learned that what comes out as anger is often actually a deeper insecurity in his relationship and jealousy manifesting itself in a masculine way as he postures himself against other men. Chris shared that this also has been a continual process of self-reflection and self-discovery in his own identity.

Lou shared that he realized he enjoys a lot of traditionally feminine activities. For instance, he discovered he loves flowers. He shared that in coming to this realization "I guess I just started to see that enjoying the things that I like is a lot better than acting like I didn't." He has found that "none of his decision making is based on what's going to

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make me look manly." He just finds what he might be interested in and gives it a try.

Like other participants, Lou has also found that he is much more in touch with a full range of emotions. If he needs to cry he will cry, if he is excited about a flower he gets excited about that flower and allows himself to be more vulnerable. Lou also shared that "if anybody ever came to me and wanted to talk about these things or if anybody was ever ... if I could sense that they were struggling, I would definitely open up and I would provide the same safe space that I was in, and try and maybe use some of the things that I learned in the group to push them along and help them into thinking freely." Lou shared that he feels he hasn't had many opportunities to use these skills just yet, but perhaps he just hasn't made the opportunities happen.

Robert and David both had new formulations and definitions of "what it means to be a man" for themselves. In describing his self-discovery in masculine identity Robert shared

> I guess the big thing for me is finding out what masculine identity and performance means to me and what fits for me, 'cause I think for a couple of years it was like, "Oh, I'm not fitting to this mold." I think over the recent years, I've just learned that there isn't a real mold. There's just a way that I need to choose how to perform and practice masculinity. I think being comfortable in choosing my own path is definitely something that's changed over the years.

Similar to being comfortable in choosing his own path, David has found he doesn't think he can give a definition any longer because it is too fluid. He shared

> If someone asked me, "What does it mean to be a man?" I don't have an answer to that question. And I think before I might have said somebody in the man box... Even two years ago, I might have said, "Being a provider, or being a support system, or... " It wouldn't have been as bad as I would have said six years ago, but

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> I still would have said a lot of those things that are that stereotypical, "What is a man?" and now it's just made me turn it on its head and realize that I have no idea, really, what it means to be a man.

David's eyes have been opened to a new understanding, but he is still struggling with how to move forward and continue his growth. However, the fact that he has troubled the idea that there is only one way to perform male identity is a good start to opening up alternative possibilities.

All the older men who took part in this study were able to describe a journey of self-discovery for them in which they were able to further unpack their emotions and find the root of the reactions to different situations. The only individual who didn't was Nate, the second-year student. His responses focused on accountability and awareness versus, transformation and discovery. They were able to think more critically about the world around them and use that thinking to transform how they made meaning of the world and what actions they took to change behavior. Though related to emotionality and self-discovery several of the men mentioned the need and importance of vulnerability in understanding their masculinity.

Vulnerability – "It's Okay Not To Be The Strongest Guy In The Room"

All of the men in the study mentioned that the biggest thing that stood out to them about their participation in the Men on the Mountain and involvement in thinking about masculinity was the ways in which they were encouraged, supported, and able to be vulnerable in the space. They were amazed at what people were able to share in the space, and the fact that they did not feel judged for anything they shared. Several mentioned that they wished they could continue to find this space of shared vulnerability

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outside of a group like Men on the Mountain, but only one individual has been able to replicate this vulnerability by his own doing. As mentioned in the literature, vulnerability is a key component in education men on masculinity, and this became clear throughout my interviews with the men.

Derek places significant importance on vulnerability for the learning that took place during his involvement in Men on the Mountain. When thinking back to his involvement, he shared that the space of Men on the Mountain was completely different than any other he had been a part and I asked him to expound on that. Derek shared

> Honestly because you and the other people that you brought in, you guys started off with being vulnerable, and I think that was what was different about it. Because a lot of times when you go to places like that, people don't want to lead you into something, I guess. I don't know. It seems like a lot of times, the teachers or the professors, or whoever is leading whatever, isn't necessarily as vulnerable, they're more just teaching, you know. And what's different with you guys is you guys were actually vulnerable, in a genuine way that all of us guys could see. I think that was what was different in my opinion.

Similar to other participants, Derek wished he could replicate this space in some way now that he is out of college but is not quite sure what that might look like. David also shared that he struggles to find spaces where he feels comfortable being vulnerable with other individuals, especially other men. He still struggles to open up to more than a select two or three individuals about what he really might be struggling with in his life. David shared that he has a few close friends he can talk to, but still really struggles with developing relationships past a surface level with other men. He shared this struggle with bonding and developing more vulnerable relationships with others:

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> The bonding experience can be the surface level and then it doesn't get deeper. With some of my really close friends, we get more vulnerable but it's still hard, I think, for a lot of people to talk about. It would be hard for me to say, "Oh, I'm super anxious about not finding a job." Or another friend being like, "I've been struggling with anxiety recently." Those really deep personal things, I think, are still hard for people to talk about except for with one or two, maybe, super close friends. It's like, "Wow, a lot of us are feeling these things and it's okay because a lot of us are in the same boat." And I think even just having that entry level like Men on the Mountain, those types of conversations, it's okay to not be the strongest guy in the room or it's okay to not... It's okay to have these issues even just entry level stuff like that, I think, could really go a long way because I think... I'm sure you know, even the older you get, even still it's hard for a guy to talk to other guys. No one in that fraternity setting the other weekend would have been like, "So, what's new with you, Hunter?" "Oh, well, my anxiety's been really bad. My family relationship's really terrible." Nobody is revealing these personal details because they think they'll be looked upon as weak.

David is struggling to use his new knowledge to create spaces of vulnerability on his own and act on his ideas and awareness around vulnerability and his own identity.

Unlike other participants, George has found more success in creating a space where he can truly open up to others. George shared that he used his new knowledge of masculinity to force himself to be more vulnerable. He decided it was important for him to connect with people in whatever way possible. George shared that he has found the most success by being more vulnerable in casual conversations. He is more intentional about being open with others and asking questions to build a relationship with folks around him. He shared a recent example of how his vulnerability has helped others through this conversation with his cousin:

> My cousin, he lives in High Point now. He's been having a hard time with relationship stuff with his wife. He would just tell me how his wife would just ... because she's like 100% Mexican culture status. So her ideas, their culture is just so patriarchal. And so she would just tell him these things like, "You need to be the man here. And you need to do this. You need to do that." And it really messed

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with him. And he'd call me, and I would tell him like, "That's silly talk, dude. That's like ..." I would tell him its "ok". And I could tell he got excited when he heard me say something like that. I think he was a little lost. He didn't know how to take it. And I told him like, "She shouldn't talk to you that way, man. You're allowed to express your feelings." Because he was talking to her and she was like, "Wow. I didn't know you were so sensitive." You don't really have that opportunity come to you often, I mean, where someone just comes to you and opens up that way. And so right away, I just started laying it down. I was just like, "It's okay, man. You should be allowed to just let it out." And I feel like we really bonded. And he would call me back the next day and we'd just talk some more. And I would tell him like, "Dude, don't be afraid to let her know you. And they really did find a good common ground. They're good. I mean, I just called him randomly just to check up on him and see how he was doing. That's something I do with a few people. I don't know too many people who do that, just call and checkup. But it's just something I do. And I guess I was calling at the right time. And I was like, "You good, man? I mean, is everything going okay?" And he's like, "No, dude." So it's all in the timing.

George shared that after his experiences in college it was important for him to invest in relationships like this and be more open and honest with others. He found that he tried to model the vulnerability shown to him through Men on the Mountain with other men in his life.

Similarly, Robert has found he does the same thing in his relationships. He is much more open and upfront with new friends. He shared that not getting past the surface with other people can just be a waste of time. Similarly, through their self-discovery, David and Chris have realized they still have a long way to go in being fully present and vulnerable with others. They find it difficult to really open up and be honest with those around them about how they are really feeling and if they need help.

The impact and importance of vulnerability was clear in a powerful exchange George and I had to end our final interview. He opened up about what his personal

transformation has really looked like for him in the way he has changed as a father and become more vulnerable and sensitive with his son.

> *George*: I should tell you before I forget. I've noticed I'm a very sensitive dad. During Christmas, my parents made him a book. It was a picture book with him in it. I was reading it and I just broke down and started crying. They just started looking at me like I was so strange, like "Why are you crying?" It's like, "You got to read it. I can't read it. It's just too much for me." I'm so attached to my emotions now. I noticed my brother-in-law DJ, and my brother were just like, "What the heck?" "I was like, "No, I'm okay, my heart just grew 10 times."
>
> *James*: Very cool. That's really cool. Somehow kids do that to you.
>
> *George*: I wouldn't have done that if it wasn't for me meeting you and this whole group and everything. I feel like there is a huge change. I'm a lot more open with my emotions. I don't know why I didn't say that earlier.
>
> *James:* It's okay. That's really awesome. It won't go away. It'll get worse, I guess, but it will be good at the same time.
>
> *George*: Yeah, I wish we started off this way.

What he meant by his last comment is that George wished all men could start off in this more vulnerable and open place. He felt he had transformed in some way and found a new way to "be a man." His exchange made me realize the importance of my own vulnerability and ability to model this for those around me. We may never know how this vulnerability has impacted those around us. For example, I would have never known how George had changed and how he was navigating his own identity had I not interviewed him.

Summary

The 8 participants in the study each explored their journeys as men and understanding of masculinity during their two interviews. They described ways in which

they have experienced masculine and patriarchal norms, changes that occurred for them when these norms were disrupted and the meaning making and transformation that has occurred as a result of disruption.

The men's experiences of masculine and patriarchal norms emerged in phases of development, from early experiences, to adolescence and high school, and finally college and beyond. In their early years the men experienced unspoken pressure to fit in with masculine norms, a policing of their involvement in sports and a variety of advice from father figures which helped shape their experiences of masculinity. In adolescence the men experiences heightened peer pressure to fit in with masculine norms, a change in their relationships with other men to become less intimate, and continued pressure to be involved with sports. They shared experiences of posturing about women, and the emphasis they had on being with women sexually. In College and beyond the men experiences a conflict in norms between performing more hyper masculine norms such as chugging beers and having lots of sex, versus choosing to go to the library and study, or decide to go against the more hyper masculine norms of masculinity.

The men also experienced a variety changes in their emotional, interpersonal, and social awareness through their disruption of masculine and patriarchal norms. The men gained new social awareness in understanding issues such as objectification of women and its larger connection to sexism. They developed new, more intimate interpersonal relationships with those around them, and gained a greater emotional awareness of how they were feeling and why they were reacting to different situation in certain ways.

Finally, the men also described the ways in which they made meaning of their disruption of masculine and patriarchal norms. They provided examples of how they have transformed their own understanding of masculinity. This included themes of the need for accountability and challenging others in order to continue to disrupt norms. They found success in accountability with others but also fell back into a tribe mentality and performed more traditional masculine norms to again fit in when accountability wasn't easy. They made new meaning of their own masculinity and realized that they need to be more vulnerable with themselves and others as they continued their transformation of masculine identity.

These key themes connected to my own experiences of masculinity from my auto ethnographic reflection. I too struggled and became aware of my own emotionality and struggled to fit in and performed hyper masculine norms through my involvement in sports and relationships with women. I realized the importance of my own reflection and vulnerability to hold both myself and others accountable. In the final chapter I will weave together both my own reflection and the experiences of the participants shared with me through the interviews.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND THE FUTURE

In this chapter, I discuss the findings of this research in relation to the research questions which framed the study. In this section, I directly answer my three research questions, bringing my findings into conversation with the literature. I then discuss the implications of my research for student affairs practice, particularly related to the education of men. I also make suggestions for both practice and future research. I will conclude with an examination of the strengths and limitations of the study and provide some final reflections.

Discussion of Findings

I discuss my findings in connection with answering each of the research questions that I used to guide my study. As a reminder, the purpose of this research was to study how work with men to understand the social construction of their own identities can contribute to creating a more socially just society. The research was also conducted with a critical, pro-feminist lens, paying specific attention to how men addressed and contributed to relations of power. This lens is also embedded in the structure of the Men on the Mountain group which the participants were members of. Three research questions guided the study:

1) How have college men experienced masculine and patriarchal norms?

2) What changes occur emotionally, interpersonally, and socially for men when

they work to disrupt hyper-masculine and patriarchal norms

3) How do men make meaning of their experiences in a college masculinity

program and how does this meaning making influence possibilities for

transformation and social change?

To begin I will review the findings of the study in relation to each of the research

questions.

Research Question One: Experiences of Masculine and Patriarchal Norms

The experiences related to masculinity and the development of masculine identity

within a patriarchal culture shared by the participants in the study were consistent with

much of the research I described in my review of the literature. Similarly, my own

experiences also are reflected in the research. From pre-kindergarten, through

adolescence, to college and beyond, men experience pressures to conform to narrow

gender roles and patriarchal norms. Mine and their stories mirror those of the men who

participated in the research by Chu & Gilligan (2014), Pollack (2000), Kimmel (2008)

and Harris III and Edwards (2010). Their stories of their experiences throughout their

lives were so interesting to me that I found it difficult to not focus solely on just learning

about and understanding their experiences throughout their youth, adolescence, and early

adulthood. In fact, I could have done an entire study devoted to just their experiences of

masculine and patriarchal norms and how they reflect on them. The two key ways in

which my participants experienced masculine and patriarchal norms were through gender

role socialization and conflict and performance. I chose these terms as sub-categories to

connect them back to the literature on masculinity. Gender role socialization includes the ways in which the men experienced the narrowed view of masculinity in their socialization from a young age. Conflict and performance included experiences in which the men realized they had some sort of conflict with the norms of masculinity, and then chose a specific performance of gender norms. I have linked the two together (conflict and performance) because invariably a gender role conflict of some kind led to a specific performance.

Gender role socialization.

From a young age, the men shared examples of narrow gender role socialization that occurred in their lives. Pollack (2000) describes this socialization as "gender straightjacketing" and argues that it begins to occur at a young age. All of my participants discussed experiences of gender role socialization. Derek and others, described this socialization as an "unspoken pressure" to fit in, while George described the pressure as "trying to stay on a line I didn't want to step off of." This pressure also came in the form of direct advice from their fathers or father figures, just as in my own life. Whether that fatherly advice was to "be the man of the house" as it was for David, or "Don't become half a fag." as it was in my own life, we learned that to be men, we need to behave in certain ways. In my own story, I experienced this pressure and socialization in a variety of ways that let to internal conflict and eventual some sort of performance of the norms, even though I only really understand my own gendered performances upon reflection. The biggest example of this for me was in my transition to becoming "one of the cool kids." This transformation involved me transitioning my identity from more of nerd to

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trying to fit in with others. Many of the participants also experienced this gender role conflict (Pollack, 2006). This internal conflict was evidenced in the experiences of the men and much of this conflict occurred through unspoken (and sometimes spoken) peer pressure.

Conflict and performance.

 As the men progressed in age, gender pressures and socialization took on different forms and the men eventually started feeling more conflicted in how they were supposed to be and act around their peers and around women. The men were able to express this feeling of conflict throughout the interviews, and also were able to explain the path of performance that they chose. Pollack (2006) addresses this increasing conflict as boys get older as he showed that this conflict increases over time. Edwards and Jones (2009) referenced this conflict in their college aged participants as "putting their man face on." The participants in Edwards and Jones' research consciously chose a specific performance or man face in many social situations, choosing to adopt expected performances and traditional gender roles. The men in my study did the same, often not realizing they were performing their masculinity until college, and especially until participating in Men on the Mountain and discussing issues of gender socialization and performance with a small group of peers.

David remembered the confusion and sadness that surrounded the events of his parent's divorce at a young age, but also remembers the constant advice to not cry and be strong. In adolescence and high school, the pressure and associated internal conflict to be strong and act manly took on more advanced forms. The men experienced a variety of

forms of bullying and situations where they felt peer pressure. Moreover, they were sometimes the instigators of the bullying and pressure. Chris recalled being mean to people and picking on others just to fit in. Lou recalled picking on someone on the football team yet "knowing in his heart" that he felt bad for that person and didn't like who he was when he engaged in that behavior. I performed masculinity in the same way to fit in in high school, or to fit in with my own father and family. I realize that I too chose to enjoy specific activities in order to fit in and become a part of groups. One of the more fascinating themes that emerged from the interviews was the connection between sports and gender performance. We learn to be men, we must be good at sports, or at least good at conversing about sports, and that it is through sports that we can often best prove our strength and worth, which are invariably tied up in certain performances of masculinity.

Edwards and Harris III (2010) briefly discuss that in their studies of college-aged men, many of them highlighted experiences in youth sports as shaping their hyper masculinity and performance. I was struck by this thread existing through the experiences of the eight participants in my study, as well as in my own reflections. All of them had some experience with sports and fitting in to masculine and patriarchal norms in their lives. From feeling pressure to play a specific sport, to even feigning a love for Panthers football, the men felt like sports were tied to becoming worthy men. Some of the men eventually ended up loving sports, while others knew that they hated them, but performed anyway. Chris' recollection of wearing a Georgia football hoodie just to fit in but really hating football is evidence of this. In my own life, sports was an issue throughout my

reflections of my childhood and adolescence. Sports are were my understanding of masculinity began in tee ball, and how bonds and relationships were formed with my brother and father. Watching football on Sundays was an important way we developed relationships, but also an important way the norms of masculinity were engrained in me. Often for the men I interviewed as part of this study, sports were a way that they engaged in relationship with other men. Whether on a sports team, or watching it on television, the participants were able to join groups, teams, and fit in with their peers around them when they bonded over sports. It made them feel connection, yet this bonding instilled in them the sometimes-hyper-masculine norms associated with athletic culture. In this regard, I was struck with the paradox presented in the experiences of masculine performance and sports that emerged in the research. This performance and involvement with sports was both a negative norming of hyper masculine behavior but also something that could create connection with others, and thus the potential for community.

Another more negative thread of performance of masculine norms that existed was posturing about women or as one participant put it "getting laid and drinking beer." This masculine performance has also been discussed in previous studies on men's experiences (Way, 1997; Kindlon & Thompson, 1999; Kimmel & Mahler, 2003; Korobov, 2005; Klein, 2006; Oransky & Marecek, 2009; Marcell, Sonenstein, Eftim & Pleck, 2011; Steinfeldt, Vaughan, LaFollette, & Steinfeldt, 2012; Birkett & Espelage, 2015; Reigeluth & Addis, 2016). Many of the hegemonic masculine norms (high risk drinking behaviors, pursuit of women, lack of emotionality, interest in sports and

competition) described in these studies were also evident in the experiences of the 8 participants in this study.

The norms experienced by the men were nothing new or extraordinary, particularly as they were consistent with findings in the literature. The data here continues to contribute to the large body of work addressing men's experiences of hyper masculinity. These consistent findings continue to point to the need for program which address these experiences. We know that most men are having these experiences both before and during their college experience as research as my study continue to point to the need to address the experiences in a critical, pro feminist way. Though the experiences men shared were similar to previous studies, there was a difference I noticed how the men reflected upon and talked about these experiences in both the Men on the Mountain sessions that I conducted, and as part of the interviews for this research. When the men talked about their experiences, they could critically think about them, and address what they might have done differently, or simply recognize that the norms that they were taught and experienced did not have to exist in the same in the same way. When the men discussed these experiences and disrupted the norms, changes occurred for them emotionally, interpersonally and socially.

Research Question Two: Emotional, Interpersonal, and Social Changes

Both intentional (through participation in Men on the Mountain) and unplanned disruption (through coursework and organic relationships they developed over time) occurred for the men who participated in this study, most often in the college setting as they were transitioning into adulthood and learning to take more responsibilities for their

actions, thoughts, behaviors, and identity. In college, many of them were able to engage in experiences that disrupted their learned hyper masculine and patriarchal norms. The bulk of the changes that seemed to occur for the men were in terms of their awareness of behavior and norms. In some, but not all cases, the men could point to incidents when they were able to act on their newfound awareness, even though they articulated this action as challenging. At times the men were able to think more critically about the world around them but failed to act on this critical awareness. The social, interpersonal, and emotional changes the men experienced, and that I too have experienced in my own journey to adulthood, mirror those talked about in the literature.

Social change.

Most social change for the men took place in their understanding of treatment of women, and in recognizing and working to disrupt their own objectification of women. Several of the participants addressed personal issues in which they realized they were objectifying women through a "get together with as many women as possible" mentality or simply through their language use, for example, calling all women "bitches." My participants shared several examples when they men on this new information and actively held themselves accountable for objectification or confronted others around them about their problematic behavior. The participants' discussions around this topic reminded me a lot of active bystander intervention training. I found it interesting that even though the program Men on the Mountain was not dedicated to sexual assault awareness, many of the men addressed the underlying issues of "rape culture." The men were addressing predatory type behavior in themselves or others and realized that this was an underlying

component of hyper masculinity. A common theme in the research and among the men in my study is that they often lied about prior history with women to prove that they were manlier or to fit in. The men connected this behavior to a social awareness about the treatment of women, and their own role in promoting sexism and objectification. The men were able to see that this behavior (lying about how far they made it sexually) was connected to their own objectification of women and thus a contribution to the patriarchal system. They connected their individual behaviors to the larger system at work.

While all the men in the study changed some because of their participation in Men on the Mountain, a clear difference existed between some of the participants as to how deep this critical reflection and awareness went. Pete and Nate both shared about their realization of language use and how they needed to address this, but it is unclear to me if they were simply censoring themselves yet still thinking in the same mind frame about objectification of women and "getting women." Other participants such as Lou and George were able to share examples of changes they made in their own lives to address sexist behavior on a deeper level, instead of at the surface with just language use. The latter examples of real change are contrary to much of the bystander intervention research which only suggests an increase in the confidence levels of men to address issues of violence (Labhardt, Holdssworth, Brown, & Howat, 2017). Much of the bystander intervention research does not show real examples of men intervening in situations, it simply suggests that men feel more confident to address future situations. The men in the study such at George, appear to be addressing appear ready to take action to address issues as evidenced in examples shared. The men in the study are also able to connect

and intervene on a wider range of actions instead of simply violent altercations at parties. They instead address everyday behavior which contributes to sexism and patriarchal culture. The men in the study were able to see the larger picture of the operation of patriarchy and masculinity and its effect on others socially, and they were able to thoughtfully discuss these effects in our interviews. A central aspect of male privilege is that men almost never think of themselves as gendered beings. The participants in my study have begun to address this issue through their involvement in Men on the Mountain and through other experiences they had in college that helped them to become more reflective about their gendered identity (Davis & Wagner, 2005).

Interpersonal change and emotional change.

Interpersonal change and emotional change appeared to be connected for many of the men. An increase in deeper and more interpersonal relationships with others often overlapped with emotional change, particularly in the ability to be more emotionally vulnerable around their peers and friends. The men were able to describe deeper, more intimate relationships that they were able to develop with other men. They found themselves able to be more vulnerable with others and this resulted in relationships which went past the surface level, which is where they realized many of their friendships with men were before.

The emotional regulation of men through masculine and patriarchal norms is illustrated in the research on men from a young age (Chu, 2014; Pollack, 2006). The men in my study also shared several experiences in which they dampened their emotions and isolated themselves from interpersonal relationships with other individuals, especially

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other boys and men. They also discussed emotional changes that occurred for them as a result of disrupting these previous norms. One of the most compelling examples of this was Lou's experience of emotional vulnerability that occurred after one of the Men on the Mountain meetings. He had not shared with anyone how deeply depressed and sad he was, but when given the space, Lou was able to share what was going on with other men in the group. Other men who had gone through this program were able to more readily identify their emotions and actively think about them, instead of simply suppressing these emotions or bottling them up. Much of my own personal story revolved around better understanding my own emotions, and being vulnerable with others. After my impactful college breakup, I realize I retreated and isolated myself from my emotions as to not be hurt again and to instead "man up." This isolation from emotions and others is still something I am working through today. I continue to work to disrupt these previous norms and allow myself to enter more vulnerable spaces and be more open with my own emotions with those around me. Emotional change allowed the men to disrupt masculine and patriarchal norms at a personal level, instead of only at the more surface levels, for example through language use.

Research Question Three: Meaning Making and Transformation

For my third research question, I was interested in how the men I interviewed reflected on their involvement in Men on the Mountain and the impact that it had on them and their personal growth and development over time. Overall, the men were able to disrupt their understandings of traditional forms of masculinity and found some success in creating transformational change in their own lives and the lives of others. The men

discussed how they started holding themselves and those around them accountable for sexist behavior or negative hyper masculine behavior. They also transformed their own identities and understanding of themselves through their involvement in Men on the Mountain program. A few of the men were able to share examples of how they have been able to use their transformed understanding of the world to help others or engage others in conversations surrounding problematic, sexist behavior.

In my interactions with them, I can see evidence that he men were taking ownership over their own identity and learning, taking Mezirow's (2006) definition of transformative learning to heart in learning "how to negotiate and act upon our own purposes, values, feelings and meaning rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others" (p. 8). The men were in the process of acting upon and negotiating their own values and feelings separate from their previously socialized understanding of masculinity and patriarchy. What became clear from the research was that men need to find spaces where they can open up and be vulnerable around other men.

The need for accountability, self-discovery, and vulnerability.

As I discussed in my findings chapter, the men found it easy to continue to self-reflect and hold both themselves and others accountable when they were in a space such as Men on the Mountain, but once they left that space, many of them reverted to a tribe mentality. They instead fell in line with other men around them, choosing to not speak up or interact with more hyper masculine men. This was also true in my own experience, especially as I entered the "cool" crowd and high school and considered becoming part of a fraternity in college. David called this "slipping back" to old behaviors and thoughts,

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while in my own story I called this "recurrence." It is a constant battle to critically think about the world and also act on these thoughts in ways that disrupt problematic forms of socialization. At any moment, old learned behaviors of hyper masculinity can come back into view, and we need someone or something, or at the very least, constant vigilance, to hold us accountable to address these behaviors. For me, for example, I needed my wife to call me out and say, "you are treating our son differently;" for others it may be a space for them to continue to talk about what they have learned and what they are feeling instead of just retreating to old ways of being.

Many of the men were struck by the importance of safe and open spaces where they could be honest and vulnerable in their transformation, and where they could witness other men acting in similar ways. They were struck by how this space existed in Men on the Mountain and felt this was rare to achieve with groups of other men. Most of the men seemed unable or unwilling to recreate this space on their own. George was the only individual who actively promoted vulnerability among those around him and attempted to create relationships with others that were beyond the surface level. Others discussed wanting this space but seemed unsure on how to reproduce it. It seems it is far easier to retreat away from accountability and vulnerability, instead of taking initiative and taking a lead on these areas. The need for self-reflection is important, as I found this helpful even in my own autoethnographic reflection. The stories I shared in this space are some I have never discussed with anyone, and never addressed in my own understanding of identity. Writing them out allowed me to share more fully my own experiences with masculinity and allowed me to process them emotionally. By sharing stories in a

narrative fashion, I was able to relive the moments a bit, often bringing myself to tears as I remembered some of the interactions. I was able to think about what it must feel like for someone like my own father to bottle up his emotions for over 70 years. This allowed me to better connect with the participants as I too was examining my journey just as they were. All the participants mentioned that the interviews helped them to get back into critically thinking about their own masculinity instead of just going through their daily motions. A few of the men suggested to me that we do a google hangout or web conference to get everyone who was involved in Men on the Mountain back together for some discussions. This suggestion makes me think about how valuable follow-up engagement with participants in social justice-oriented programs is to help sustain learning that disrupts the status quo.

The men were also able to describe their transformed understandings of themselves and the world around them. For example, several participants gave new definitions of "what it means to be a man" Most of them have realized there isn't a clear definition, and they need to piece together their understandings of themselves and their identity over time, building on all their previous learning and ongoing reflection. They have recognized that they are still in transformation and need to continue to work to improve and better themselves. After writing up my own experiences, and engaging in ongoing reflection about my own identity and masculinity, I am still in transformation and have a long way to go to better understanding myself and to create change in the world around me.

Implications for Student Affairs Work and Suggestions for Practice

By doing this study I have realized the value of a program such as Men on the Mountain. I intentionally created Men on the Mountain with a critical, pro feminist lens in its curriculum and the results have shown from the interviews of the men. The men who participated in the program have changed the way they view the world, and many are taking actual steps to create change for themselves and those around them. Programs such as Men on the Mountain have the potential to create last change in campus community, and in the lives of participants even after graduation. This study continues to contribute to a larger body of work which shows how men have experiences these masculine and patriarchal norms in their lives. It is clear that men are experiencing masculine and patriarchal norms in similar ways before college, during college, and after college. Student affairs practitioners are in a prime space to address these experiences, bring them to the surface, and create change for men and others on their campuses.

The implications for student affairs work are similar to the suggestions of previous research on college men and social justice. Davis and Wagner (2005) suggested that "Men's pain can be a vehicle for initiating awareness about, developing understanding for, and ultimately promoting action related to social justice" (p. 37). There was a clear overlap in this study between men's understanding of their own emotions and their ability to create change and further discuss other implication of hyper masculinity and patriarchy. For the knowledge to really transform the men, they had to confront their own history and reflect on their experiences in order to better understand themselves.

Harris III and Edwards (2010) call for universities to create space for critical reflection on gender. Men on the Mountain was that kind of space for my participants and it was clear that one of the most important tools to initiate transformation for these men was critical reflection. What I would add to the call for critical reflection is to create a space where participants can be open and vulnerable around others. For men to really be able to grapple with difficult concepts and confront their own histories, they needed to feel safe, supported, and trusted by the men around them. Vulnerability is an important component of critical reflection about social constructions of identity. The dialogue that was created in a group devoted to discussing and disrupting masculine and patriarchal norms helped the men to think more deeply about their own identities and to see possibilities for different kinds of everyday performances of gender. When they heard someone else's story or point of view, it helped them to further reflect on their own experiences. While I did not study Men on the Mountain directly in this dissertation, I nonetheless offered evidence that this type of program can make a significant difference in the lives of participants.

Harris III and Edwards (2010) also suggested mentorship as a possibility to create change. I also agree with this same idea, as it seems I became a mentor for many of the men without really realizing it at the time. I became someone they could talk to and continue to communicate with in a judgement free space to unpack questions and concerns.

What this study provides beyond what other research has been able to show is that a program on masculinity can create change. Specifically a program which balances the

need to acknowledge how men have been harmed by masculinity, but also addresses critical issues of systems of oppression and men's overall privilege in a patriarchal society. This group is not simply a men's leadership workshop to promote men to do better, it instead engages men in addressing hyper masculine patriarchal norms in their own journey of masculinity. My participants engaged in a 4-6 week curriculum devoted to helping them understand identity, patriarchy, and hyper masculinity. They were able to talk about gender, and work on creating less problematic gender performances, in part because of this program. Hopefully my study provides some inspiration for construction of similar kinds of programs on other campuses. There are many groups out there trying to create some sort of change, but not much published research on curricula, programs, or outcomes. I recommend that student affairs practitioners describe and share research on these programs and publish about promising outcomes.

As a student affairs practitioner, I hope that others who read this dissertation can learn from my story and the stories of the men in the study, perhaps seeing some resonances with their own experiences. I believe there is power in continuing to share the experiences of men with hyper masculinity to continue to contribute to and push back against those who don't believe a problem exists. I am sure that others who are leading groups or initiatives like Men on the Mountain will find the stories I share are similar to those of their own participants, and together we can create more resources and materials for ongoing study. We may also work to develop materials and options for students after they graduate and are no longer part of a supportive community. Disrupting masculinity and patriarchy entail a never-ending battle. It is continual, and takes the accountability of

those around us. I hope other leaders in this area will take their own time to self-reflect and hold themselves accountable.

This research may also be relevant to work outside of student affairs and even college campuses. After all, many of the men who participated in my study were no longer enrolled at the time of their interview. What would a support and education group look like that continued development outside of college? Perhaps there are opportunities as part of a spiritual organization, or to borrow from my research, a sports-orientated organization. What might it look like if men in fantasy football group didn't just talk about stats they don't actually care about, but talked about their lives instead. What might it look like if one person, like George, took this work and similar curriculum to a group that they were a part of, and created a similar open space to create change?

What remains unsolved for student affairs practitioners and for anyone who wants to engage in this kind of work, is how to get men to go show up to these events, and how specifically to get folks who identify as more hyper masculine to metaphorically join the club. I have found success in using a more positive masculinity approach as the research suggests, with the initial discussion being centered on "How to be a better man?", but this runs the risk of not being critical enough, particularly depending on the group and facilitator. This question of how to get folks involved remains for future research later. One of the major limitations of my study is that my 8 participants voluntarily joined Men on the Mountains and thus are likely to have been more disposed to want to do this kind of work. That is, they are not a representative sample of the

general population, and thus it is hard to say if other men would benefit as much from the kind of intervention that my participants went through.

Suggestions for Future Research

There are many areas ripe for further research on this topic. We need to better understand what draws men to a program such as Men on the Mountain and how we can encourage greater involvement in initiatives that help people think critically on their identities and privilege. Why do some men become involved? What might work to get more individuals involved? I also found in this research that there were many issues that they touch on I could have explored in much more depth. I could have studied more specifically men's objectification of women, or the stories they shared to prove their sexual conquests. I could have studied more specifically the issue of vulnerability or their own childhood stories and how they were shaped by them. There are a number of very specific paths this research can continue down. Additional research needs to build upon this work as well. We should do additional research on programs involving men disrupting masculinity to find what most resonates with them, what works over time, how to sustain progress, and how to encourage others. I also think it is worth researching programs like Men on the Mountain while they are in process, which was my initial goal with this research (and which I began as part of my pilot). What do these groups look like? What works and what doesn't when they are in formation? All of this would help future facilitators create groups that work to create disruption and transformation. The paths for future research are endless, and I hope I can continue to contribute to them.

Final Reflections

The men of the study have changed and transformed from their college experience in a program focused on disrupting masculine and patriarchal norms through a critical lens. They have created new meaning from their experiences and changed the way they interact with the world. What George shared with me about how he raises his son differently because of the impact of the Men on the Mountain group and my own mentoring, will forever stick with me. These men are not the same as they were four years ago, a bit by their own accord and a bit because of their involvement with Men on the Mountain. I am disappointed that many of the men do not fully act on their new knowledge, instead choosing an easier path. Some men have simply distanced themselves from hyper masculine group's altogether, while others claim to not be able to find spaces of accountability and vulnerability. It appears that many of the men have the tools to create this change but lack an impetus to act. My lofty goals to reach the most hyper masculine men on campus is still a challenge, and even if I do, creating lasting change is still time consuming and difficult. I remind myself that the men better understand themselves, the influence of masculinity and patriarchy on themselves and those around them, and even seem to recognize how to disrupt masculinity in others. Maybe my vision for the type of change the men can create is too big. Perhaps they don't need to be a part of some big group, actively confronting societal issues effected by hyper masculinity and patriarchy but instead can do this in their everyday lives. After all, several men had individual stories in which they confronted co-workers, or improved their everyday relationships with others.

The men are in continual transformation. Recognizing that this transformation wouldn't happen in one year or ten years, but is instead a constant transformation that takes time and effort. I know this is true for myself as well. I am a different person than I was in college ten years ago, and am a different person than before I began this dissertation journey. Every day comes with new challenges, and new recurrences of old ideas or habits of our learned masculinity. Taking action and confronting these recurrences takes the accountability of ourselves and those around us. From the research it seems clear that men engaged in disruption need some sort of community to continue this work within. Without it, it becomes much easier to fall back into a privileged way of knowing. What is clear is they cannot unlearn the disruption of masculine and patriarchal norms. The disruption sticks with them, and transforms them. They think more critically about the world around them. The next step of acting on this critical thinking, takes more than just themselves, I think it may take community. I am struck by the real need for a community of men confronting issues of hyper masculinity and patriarchy. This work continues operate in pockets of a few men here or there. After meeting with the men in the study I now see the value of having a community of men committed to disrupting masculinity and patriarchy and transforming themselves. Knowing this I will attempt to create more lasting community within groups such as Men on the Mountain. Perhaps a google hangout reunion is in order for this group. I know I will add more resources to keep the men connected after completion of the program and improve the tools needed to sustain change even after leaving the group.

I am also struck by the power of reflection and storytelling. My own auto ethnographic reflection was an excellent exercise in continuing to challenge my own norms of masculinity. I am drawn to continue to use this reflection both personally, and with the men of the groups I facilitate. Storytelling and reflection can help create community among the men, and bring about new perspectives and meaning from their own person journeys of masculinity.

This research has set ground work to build upon for future consideration of programming around masculinity in student affairs. Previous studies have been devoted to understand men's development in college, but not on actual disruption of their identities and understanding of the world. This research has provided insight into what might prove fruitful in creating programs for men around masculinity. Instead simply addressing one issue like violence against women, we can and should address the whole of hyper masculine and patriarchy which contribute to issues like violence against women. We need to address the socialization of masculinity at the root, and discuss men's experiences of masculinity and patriarchy alongside, male privilege and systems of oppression. What I am still missing is one of my initial goals of the study to observe the men in action during Men on the Mountain session. I believe much can be gained from observing men as they engage in discussions during the program. This information can help future facilitator best challenge and support their groups. Observation could create a better understanding of how the group forms, and how the men come to feel more comfortable being vulnerable and sharing openly within the group. Facilitation of groups

such as Men on the Mountain is difficult, just as any social justice program that challenges issues of power and privilege.

When I began this dissertation two years ago I was father to a 1-year-old daughter fully entrenched in making the world a better place for her and her future at least that is what I hoped. I now am also father to a young son, and this has brought even greater meaning to my work in this study. I have found it easier to fight the socialization around gender and expected gender norms with my daughter then with my son. No doubt some of this is in part to my own ingrained ideas of masculinity that had yet to reach the surface. I now hope I can continue this work, but know in today's world an even greater push back against disrupting masculinity and patriarchy exists. This work gave me renewed hope and energy to continue the fight.

This research left me with continued questions on the intersectionality of masculinity. Race, sexuality and religion were not identities that explored deeply in this study, but could be much bigger issues with a different population of students. George for instance, the only individual who identified as Latino in the study, had a specific cultural context to much of his responses and experiences throughout the study. This would only be enhanced by a different population of students. The intersections of religion and sexuality were also not explored throughout the study, as only one individual identified as queer and religious identity information was not gathered or introduced. Continued research on these intersection is also important as we determine how best to disrupt masculinity and create transformation.

Reflecting back on this study, I was surprised by the impact I had on the lives of some of my participants. My final exchange with George about how he has changed the way he interacts with his own son and is raising him differently moved me to tears. I have always hoped that this work to disrupt masculinity and patriarchy actually did something, and thanks to this small study, I believe I can say it does. Even if not in the grandest ways I could imagine, the men who took part in Men on the Mountain and who agreed to be part of this follow up study are actively reflecting on their gendered identities and often confronting sexism on a daily basis. These men have changed, and they are continuing to transform. I know this experience of working with them has transformed me as well. I only hope we can keep these stories of transformation going together, and reaching new men who have yet to realize the influence masculinity and patriarchy have had on themselves and the world around them. We need to build a community of individuals working to disrupt the norms of masculinity and patriarchy, being vulnerable with one another, and working together to transform their lives in the service to more equitable and just social relations.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Thanks for agreeing to participate in our interview today. As you know I am someone who has been actively engaged in masculinity and understanding men's identity for a number of years. My hope in this interview is for you to be able to share your story and journey of masculinity. I have some specific questions that I will be asking but the interview will remain conversational to allow your narrative to lead the way.

Program Based Questions

1. Think back to your involvement in Men on the Mountain. How would you describe your experience in the program?

2. What do you feel the purpose of the program was?

3. How might it have influenced or disrupted your own views of masculinity?

4. What did you find most beneficial about the program? What did you not like?

5. Now that you have been out of the program for a little while, is there anything you still go back to? Have you held yourself accountable for any of the things we learned in the program?

6. What do you think could get individuals more involved in a program like Men on the Mountain?

Identity based questions

7. Tell me about your journey of masculinity from boyhood to now?

8. What is your first memory of learning what it meant to be a man?

9. Tell me about a time you remember performing masculinity to fit in?

10. What ways throughout your life have the norms of masculinity been taught to you?

11. Who was a role model or mentor for you growing up? What did they teach your about masculinity?

12. What has happened when you went against these norms in the past?

13. How has your understanding of your own masculine identity changed throughout your life?

14. What do you believe changed your understanding of masculine identity?

15. What does it mean for you now to identify as a man?

16. Additional follow up questions as needed.