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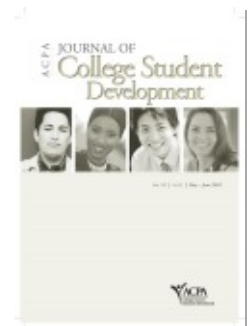
College Men's Meanings of Masculinities and Contextual Influences: Toward a Conceptual Model

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# College Men's Meanings of Masculinities and Contextual Influences: Toward a Conceptual Model

Frank Harris III

*Based on a grounded theory study involving 68 male undergraduates, a conceptual model of the meanings college men ascribe to masculinities is proposed in this article. The participants equated masculinities with "being respected," "being confident and self-assured," "assuming responsibility," and "embodying physical prowess." Contextual factors that influenced these meanings are also reflected in the model. Using the model as a guiding framework, recommendations for supporting the gender identity development of college men and implications for future studies of masculinities in college contexts are offered.*

Recent behavioral trends involving male students on college campuses have led to increased scholarly attention to masculinities in higher education. For example, recent inquiries have concluded that college men comprise the majority of students who are cited for nonacademic violations of campus judicial policies (Harper, Harris, & Mmeje, 2005) and more than 90 percent of students who are accused of sexual assault, relationship violence, and sexual harassment on college campuses (Foubert, Newberry, & Tatum, 2007; Hong, 2000). Others report academic underachievement (Kellom, 2004; Sax, 2008), disengagement in campus programs and activities (Davis & Laker, 2004), alcohol and substance abuse (Capraro, 2000; Courtenay, 1998; Kuh & Arnold, 1993), homophobia (Harris, 2008; Rhoads, 1995), depression (Good & Mintz, 1990), and poor coping (Good & Wood, 1995) among college men.

Similarly, Sax's longitudinal quantitative study revealed that, in comparison to women, men reportedly spent more time watching television, playing video games, consuming alcohol, and partying while in college.

The widening gender gap in college student enrollment has also been an area of focus in much of the recent scholarly discourse concerning college men. In 2003–2004, men comprised 42 percent of the total undergraduate enrollment in the United States (King, 2006). The college enrollment gap widens when these data are disaggregated by race/ethnicity where the largest percentage gaps are among African American, Native American, and Hispanic students where men accounted for 36 percent, 39 percent, and 41 percent of 2004 undergraduate enrollees, respectively (KewalRamani, Gilbertson, Fox, & Provasnik, 2007).

Despite this recent scholarly attention, college educators still know little about the gender identity development process for college men. Consequently, educators who aim to implement theoretically based interventions to facilitate college men's healthy and productive gender identity development must rely on frameworks that were not created for this purpose. Theories and frameworks have been proposed to explain the identity development of women (Josselson, 1987); persons who are lesbian, gay, and bisexual (D'Augelli, 1994); African Americans (Cross, 1995; Taylor & Howard-Hamilton, 1995); Asian Americans (Kim, 2001); Latinos (Torres,

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2003), multiracial persons (Renn, 2003); and students with learning disabilities (Troiano, 2003); to name a few. Yet, models that seek to explain college men's gender identity development are largely absent in the published college student development research. Even recent studies that aim to understand men as gendered beings (e.g., Davis, 2002; Harris, 2008; Hong, 2000; Martin & Harris, 2006) focus primarily on describing gender-related conflicts and challenges among college men rather than a process of masculine identity development in college. Classic theories of identity and psychosocial development (e.g., Chickering, 1969; Erikson 1968; Marcia, 1980) were based largely on the experiences of men (Evans, Forney & Guido-DiBrito, 1998). However, the construct of gender was not purposefully explored in the research used to develop and validate these theories (Davis; Davis & Laker, 2004; Evans et al.). Thus, the extent to which these theories, in and of themselves, provide insight into the gender identity development of college men is questionable.

Harper et al. (2005) was one of the first studies in which a model describing the interactions between masculinities and college environments was proposed. Yet, despite the model's utility in understanding the developmental experiences of men on college campuses, it is limited in two respects. First, it focuses exclusively on male judicial offenders. Therefore, the extent to which the model accounts for the experiences of college men who are not cited for violations of campus judicial policies is unknown. Second, the model was developed theoretically and has yet to be empirically validated.

Edwards and Jones (2009) offered much-needed insight into the experiences of college men by proposing an empirically derived model of men's gender identity development. Based on multiple interviews with a diverse

sample of 10 undergraduate men, Edwards and Jones used grounded theory to explore "the process by which the participants came to understand themselves as men" (p. 214) and proposed a three-phase model that described the participants' gender identity development. Edwards and Jones described masculine identity development as an interactive process involving men's awareness of society's expectations of performing masculinities, challenges men experience in meeting societal expectations, and men's efforts to transcend societal expectations by redefining what it means to be a man and performing masculinities according to their own beliefs and values. Given that Edwards and Jones's study was situated at one large public university on the East Coast one question that emerged was: How might these findings transfer to other institutional contexts, such as a large private university or a campus in another region of the country? In addition, Edwards and Jones called for more studies of masculinities involving a larger group of men "representing other social group identities and college experiences" (p. 226).

In response to the aforementioned knowledge gaps in the published research on college men and masculinities, I conducted a qualitative study to: (a) examine shared masculine conceptualizations among college men who represented a range of identities and experiences, (b) understand how contextual factors (e.g., socialization, campus culture, peer group interactions) shape and reinforce college men's gender identity development and gender performance, and (c) propose a conceptual model of the meanings college men make of masculinities. The primary research question that guided this study was, "What are the shared meanings of masculinities among men who represent diverse backgrounds, experiences, and identities?" Additional questions that informed this study were: (a) How do these meanings influence college men's gender-

related attitudes and behaviors? and (b) From the participants' perspectives, what are the dominant and negotiable boundaries of masculinities on a university campus?

The purpose of this article is to present the conceptual model that emerged from this study. Before presenting the findings and the conceptual model, I briefly discuss the study's theoretical underpinnings and research methodology. Please note that although this article focuses exclusively on the social construction of masculinities, I use the terms "male" and "man" interchangeably. Therefore, it's important to acknowledge that the term "male" applies specifically to a biological sex role whereas "man" is a socially constructed concept that encompasses the social and cultural meanings that are associated with the male sex role.

## THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

I approached this study from a constructionist epistemological perspective. Constructionist epistemology is fundamentally concerned with the meanings individuals derive from their lived experiences and social interactions (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002). Constructionist researchers also challenge the objectivist assumption that a "knowable, singular reality" exists independent of human experiences and can be captured empirically (Broido & Manning, 2002, p. 435). As such, a major theoretical assumption of constructionist epistemology is that empirical knowledge is produced in partnership between researchers and participants through their collective involvement in the inquiry process (Arminio & Hultgren).

Consistent with constructionist epistemology, an interdisciplinary conceptual framework comprising theories and perspectives regarding the social construction of masculinities and the identity development of college students

informed the design and execution of this study. Key assumptions of the two theories that were most influential in guiding this study are discussed in the sections that follow.

## The Social Construction of Masculinities

The social construction of masculinities—a perspective that was proposed by pro-feminist men's studies scholars (e.g., Connell, 1995; Kimmel & Messner, 2007; Levant, 1996; Pleck, 1981)—emphasizes the influence of social interactions, social structures, and social contexts in producing and reinforcing so-called normative expectations of masculine behavior. This perspective challenged the earlier research on men, which assumed that biological differences between men and women were explanatory factors for men's aggressiveness, toughness, competitiveness, and other stereotypically masculine behaviors.

Scholars who examine masculinities from a social constructionist perspective view gender as a performed social identity and are fundamentally concerned with the consequences of traditional patterns of male gender socialization and of performing masculinities according to prevailing societal norms. Another key assumption of this perspective is that no one dominant masculine form persists across all social settings but rather *multiple masculinities* that are situated in sociocultural contexts. In addition, although acknowledging that men occupy a privileged space in society, this perspective also recognizes that some masculinities (e.g., White, heterosexual, able-bodied) are prioritized and situated as dominant above others (e.g., gay, feminine, racial/ethnic minority, physically disabled, working class). Lastly, as Kimmel and Messner (2007) noted in their discussion, because gender is a performed social identity, one can assume that the ways in which individuals conceptualize and express masculinities will

change as they “grow and mature” throughout their lives (p. xxii).

## Multiple Dimensions of Identity

The social construction of masculinities perspective described in the previous section recognizes the existence of multiple masculinities among men. Issues of race/ethnicity, class, religion, and sexual orientation interact and influence the development of these multiple masculinities—some of which challenge dominant and traditional social constructions. A framework that has proven useful in making sense of the intersection of identities is Jones and McEwen’s (2000) multiple dimensions of identity (MDI) model. The main components of the MDI model are: (a) the core sense of self, (b) identity dimensions, and (c) contextual influences.

At the center of the model is the core sense of self, which is derived from an individual’s personal attributes, characteristics, and personal identity. The core comprises a person’s “inner identity” and internal qualities, such as intelligence, kindness, loyalty, compassion, and independence (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Surrounding the core are intersecting dimensions that contribute to an individual’s overall identity. These include: sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, culture, gender, class, religion, and other socially constructed dimensions. The concept of “salience” is used in the model to describe the proximity of an identity dimension to the core. Identity dimensions that are positioned closest to the core are deemed to be more salient or important to the individual at a particular time. Jones and McEwen noted, “the salience of identity dimensions [is] rooted in internal awareness and external scrutiny” (p. 410). In other words, individuals are typically more internally aware of their marginalized identities, such as being a woman in a male-dominated setting or a racial/ethnic minority.

Thus, these identity dimensions are usually more salient than are those that are often privileged in society. Contextual influences make up the third component of the MDI model. Because individuals interact in a larger social context, the model accounts for factors such as family background, significant life experiences, and the sociocultural conditions that influence identity development and expression.

In sum the social construction of masculinities perspective and the MDI model recognize the fluidity of gender identity, highlight the ways in which gender intersects other identity dimensions, and emphasize the influence of social contexts on identity development and gender performance. Collectively, these theories provided a heuristic conceptual framework for examining masculinities in college environments from a social constructionist perspective.

## METHODOLOGY

Given the study’s research questions, stated purposes, and that the gender identity development of college men is a phenomenon that has not been fully explored, I used grounded theory as the methodological approach. Originally developed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, grounded theory offers a set of analytic guidelines for building theories through successive levels of data analysis and conceptual development (Charmaz, 2006). To this end, researchers develop increasingly abstract ideas about research participants’ meanings, actions, and worlds and seek specific data to refine and check emerging conceptual categories (Charmaz). The grounded theory approach has undergone several modifications in recent years, most notably by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) and Charmaz. Charmaz’s approach, “constructivist grounded theory,” provides space for researchers to situate

themselves in the research process by being reflexive and transparent about the biases and assumptions they bring to the inquiry—a sharp contrast from Glaser and Strauss’s approach that calls for strict objectivity on the part of researchers.

Grounded theory has been employed successfully in previous studies that have examined the identity development of college students (e.g., Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Edwards & Jones, 2009; Jones & McEwen, 2000; Renn 2000; Renn & Bilodeau, 2005; Torres, 2003; Troiano, 2003). In fact, Brown, Stevens, Troiano, and Schneider (2002) argued that grounded theory is particularly useful for inquiries seeking to explore the experiences of college students when little is known about the phenomenon being studied.

### Research Setting and Context

The research site for the study was Wallbrook University (a pseudonym), a large, selective private research institution. Wallbrook is an urban institution situated in the western region of the United States. When the data were collected for this study, men comprised nearly half (49%) of the undergraduates at Wallbrook. Among undergraduate men, White students were most represented (49%), followed by Asian American/Pacific Islanders (21%), Latinos (12%), African Americans (5%), and Native Americans (less than 1%). International students comprised nearly 10% of Wallbrook’s undergraduate men. The race/ethnicity was “unknown” for nearly 3% of Wallbrook’s undergraduate men. Sixty-one percent of all undergraduates at Wallbrook were 21 years old or younger.

Wallbrook offered a rich context for examining college masculinities. It has a diverse male student population, a culture of “big-time” NCAA Division I athletics, and a highly visible fraternity system. The published literature on college men and masculinities

suggest that these factors may have observable effects on male behavioral norms and the ways in which college men perform masculinities (Harris & Struve, 2009; Martin & Harris, 2006; Messner, 2001; Whitson, 1990).

A total of 68 undergraduate men participated in this study. The men were selected according to the theoretical assumptions of the social construction of masculinities and the MDI model, notably that men are not a homogenous group and that gender is intersected by other salient identity dimensions (e.g., race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, [dis]ability, and socioeconomic status). Thus, the participants were selected purposefully to capture a participant pool comprising information-rich cases (Brown et al., 2002; Jones, 2002; Patton, 2002). To recruit the participants, I asked campus administrators in student affairs, religious life, and athletics at Wallbrook to nominate men with whom they worked to participate in this study. I contacted each nominated student to describe the goals and purposes of the study, confirm his willingness to participate, and to address any questions or concerns. Students were informed that they were recommended for participation by a campus administrator, but their participation in the study was strictly voluntary.

The participant pool for this study included 22 seniors, 14 juniors, 12 sophomores, and 20 first-year students. Twenty-two of the participants were African American, 21 were White, 11 were Latino, 7 were Asian/Pacific Islander, and 7 identified as biracial/multiethnic. Thirteen of the 68 men in the study identified as nonheterosexual (gay or bisexual). Fifteen of the participants were involved in varsity athletics at Wallbrook. Fifteen also held membership in a Wallbrook fraternity. Fifty-three of the 68 participants were raised in “two parent” (mother and father) homes. A majority of the participants (40 of the 68) described their



socioeconomic backgrounds as “middle-class.” Of the remaining participants, 18 identified as “affluent” whereas 8 came from “low-income” backgrounds. Two participants did not disclose their socioeconomic backgrounds.

## Data Collection

I collected data for this study in two phases. In phase one I conducted face-to-face, semi-structured individual interviews with 12 of the 68 participants—each representing one of nine identity groups (described later in this section). The duration of the interviews ranged from 60 to 90 minutes. During the interviews I asked the participants to reflect on and discuss experiences and interactions that had significant influences on their conceptualizations of masculinities and the way they viewed themselves as men. For example, some of the questions I asked during the interviews were: “What defining characteristics would you use to describe what it means to be a man?” “How did you come to learn what it means to be a man?” and “What were some messages about masculinities that were communicated and reinforced by your parents?” I also asked the participants to share stories and details about their interactions with male peers in college.

Each interview was audio taped, fully transcribed, and analyzed using the Atlas.Ti qualitative data analysis program. My analysis of the data from the interviews allowed me to identify a set of preliminary concepts and categories relating to the participants’ masculine conceptualizations and gender-related experiences. I used these concepts and categories to develop a protocol that guided my inquiry in phase two of the data collection.

During phase two of the data collection, nine focus groups with a total of 56 participants who represented the following male student subgroups were convened: (a) members of predominantly White fraternities, (b) members

of historically Black fraternities, (c) Asian American students, (d) Latino men, (e) first-year students, (f) openly gay and bisexual students, (g) Jewish men, (h) White student-athletes, and (i) African American student-athletes. These groups were selected because they are largely reflective of the diversity of undergraduate male student populations at Wallbrook. Recognizing the interconnectedness and fluidity of the dimensions that make up an individual’s identity, I contextualized the questions in ways that allowed the participants to reflect on and speak to the salience of a particular identity dimension (e.g., “During your interactions with your Latino male peers . . .”). This strategy proved useful in scaffolding the reflection of participants who represented multiple identities (e.g., African American men who were also openly gay or bisexual). The focus groups lasted 45 to 60 minutes. All nine focus groups were audio taped, fully transcribed, and analyzed using the Atlas.Ti qualitative data analysis program.

## Data Analysis

Data analysis for this study followed the techniques and procedures proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Charmaz (2006) for developing grounded theory. Specifically, I used open, axial, and selective coding to deconstruct, interpret, and reassemble the data in ways that provided insight into the participants’ meanings of masculinities. During the open-coding phase, I took my first look at the transcripts, identified significant concepts and incidents that emerged, and assigned a word or phrase to capture my initial interpretations of the data. I recorded in writing the thoughts and reflections that came to mind as I read through and made sense of the data.

After all of the transcripts were initially coded, I used axial coding to group the coded incidents and concepts into categories based

on their shared properties and relationships to the participants' masculine conceptualizations. This process began as I reread the fully coded transcripts along with the initial codes and analytic reflections that I had applied during the open coding phase. Concepts and incidents that appeared to be related to the same phenomenon were grouped together and given a code that captured the essence of this phenomenon. For example, the concepts, "getting drunk," "playing video games," "watching sports," and "locker room talk" were grouped under the category "male bonding"

(which was eventually renamed "activities that facilitate male bonding"). Likewise, "parental influences," "peer interactions," and "sports participation" were concepts that comprised the category "precollege gender socialization." All categories and concepts were considered "emerging" until I compared them across all of the interview and focus group transcripts.

Finally, I used selective coding to understand the relationships between the categories that emerged during the axial coding phase. Charmaz (2006) emphasized three guiding questions in making sense of the relationships

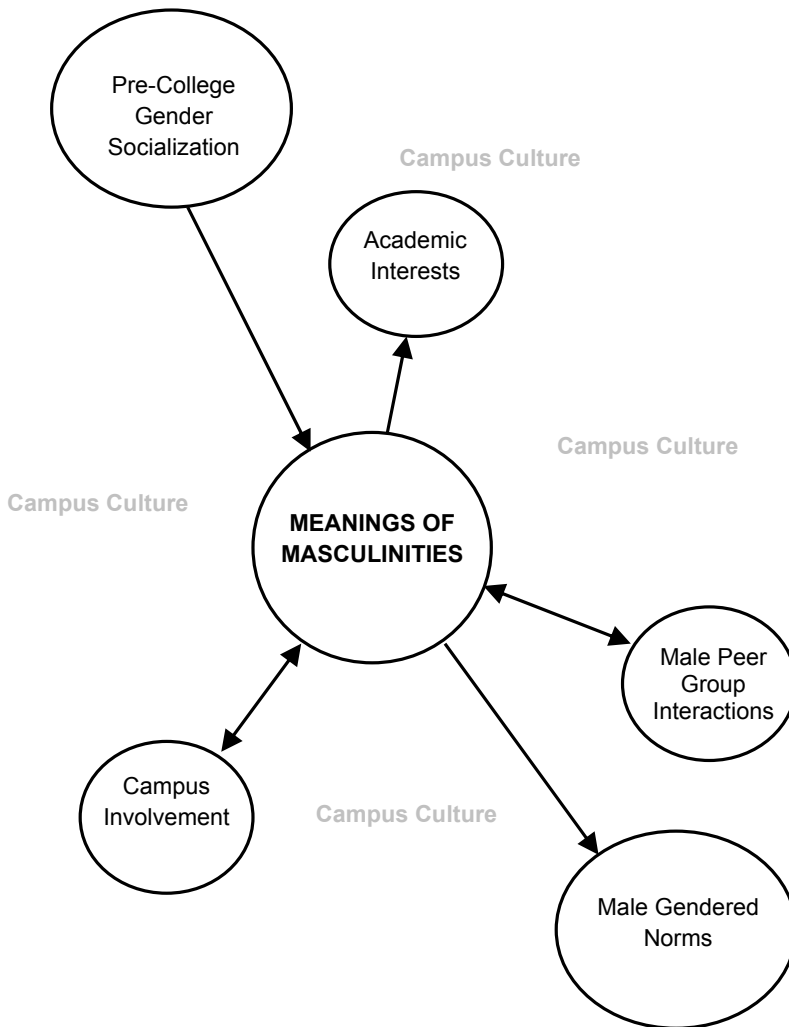


FIGURE 1. A Conceptual Model of the Meanings College Men Make of Masculinities



between categories: (a) What are the conditions or circumstances under which the phenomenon takes place? (b) What actions or strategies are employed by the participants in response to the phenomenon? and (c) What were the consequences or outcomes of the strategies or actions taken? In applying these questions to the current study, I sought insight into the participants' conceptualizations of masculinities, the contextual and environmental factors that influenced the participants' conceptualizations, and the behavioral norms and expectations that emerged as a result of the interactions between these variables. Again, I compared these relationships across the data to ensure saturation. The aforementioned analyses and interpretations of the data allowed me to develop a conceptual model (see Figure 1) that captured the participants' meanings of masculinities and the contextual factors that influenced these meanings.

### Trustworthiness and Quality Assurance

Several strategies prescribed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were used to establish trustworthiness in this study. First, I relied on a peer debriefing team, comprising informed colleagues with expertise in qualitative research, college student development, and masculinities with whom I shared the process I used for data collection and analysis. I also furnished a complete write-up of the findings, which reflected my interpretations of the students' experiences. The roles of peer debriefers were to scrutinize the methods that were used to conduct the study and to both challenge and confirm my interpretations of the data. When questions were raised by a debriefer, I returned to the data to ensure that my interpretations were grounded in the data.

I also used member checking to establish trustworthiness in this study. In so doing, I held a feedback session where I presented the

conceptual model to men who participated in the study. During the feedback session, I asked the participants to comment on the degree to which the model accurately captured their perspectives on masculinities and the gender-related experiences they shared. Overall, the participants confirmed that the model reflected their experiences and perspectives.

In addition, the criteria proposed by Strauss and Corbin (1998) provided a framework for evaluating the trustworthiness of this research. The conceptual model meets Strauss and Corbin's (1998) criteria in that: (a) Its concepts and categories were generated systematically and are grounded in the data; (b) there are clear conceptual linkages between the central phenomenon, concepts, and categories of the model; (c) the model describes the central phenomenon as a process that operates under a set of conditions with variation; and (d) new insights about masculinities emerging from the research are reflected in the model.

Lastly, as advised by Torres and Baxter Magolda (2002) and Charmaz (2006) in their discussions of constructivist research studies, I routinely reflected on my own salient identities as a college-educated heterosexual African American man while conducting this study. Doing so allowed me to recognize how these identity dimensions informed my beliefs and assumptions about college men and masculinities and shaped my interactions with the participants. Being reflexive also helped to ensure that my gender identity and experiences did not lead to hasty or shallow interpretations of the data.

### Findings

From the data analysis emerged a conceptual model that represented the participants' meanings of masculinities and the corresponding contextual influences (see Figure 1). The key variables of the model are: (a) meanings of masculinities, which reflected the

participants' gender-related attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions; (b) contextual influences that shaped, reinforced, and challenged the participants' meanings; and (c) male gendered norms that represent the outcomes of the interactions between the aforementioned variables of the model. In this section of the article, each variable of the model is discussed and supported with representative quotes and reflections from the interviews and focus groups.

### Meanings of Masculinities

The "meanings of masculinities" variable represents the core category or central phenomenon of the model. The core category captures the essence of the findings and summarizes "in a few words what the research is all about" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 146). As displayed in Figure 1, the core category is situated in the center of the model and is surrounded by three smaller circles and a series of arrows indicating interactions with the other variables of the model. Several concepts emerged from the data as meanings the participants ascribed to masculinities. These included: "being respected," "being confident and self-assured," "assuming responsibility," and "embodying physical prowess." According to the participants, these were some "defining characteristics" of men and reflected the attitudes and behaviors about masculinities that they learned and were reinforced before they enrolled in college.

"Being respected," according to the participants, entailed "being willing to stand up for yourself" as well as earning the deference and admiration of other men. For instance, a Latino focus group participant asserted, "I think as long as you stand up for yourself [and] for what you believe in and not being ashamed when someone challenges you, then that defines masculinity." A first-year student interviewee offered a similar perspective: "You

[have to] stand up for what you believe in. You [have to] be strong-willed and [not] let people push you around and that kind of stuff." The participants also shared examples of men on campus who were respected by male peers for their "hard work." Specifically, guys who were "well-rounded" and able to successfully balance the demands of academics, campus involvement (which includes participation in athletics), and an active social life are examples of the type of men who were respected at Wallbrook. This was a recurring theme among the men in the study as they offered numerous examples of men who were well-respected for their abilities to manage multiple demands successfully.

"Being confident and self-assured" was another concept the participants associated with masculinities. The men in the study spoke of rejecting masculine stereotypes and making conscious decisions to perform masculinities based on what they themselves deemed appropriate, rather than simply conforming to popular notions or others' expectations. They also reported that self-assured men are able to engage in activities and exhibit behaviors that may be perceived as contradictory to masculine norms without being concerned about raising suspicions about their sexual orientations. Interestingly, some of the men recalled arriving at these decisions prior to matriculating to college. For example, during a discussion about factors that influenced their beliefs and ideas about masculinities a participant in the focus group with openly gay and bisexual men shared that he developed his own ideas about "what a male should be" as early as age 16 and since that time decided he was going to express his gender in ways that were consistent with these ideas. He noted:

I was just so much more comfortable just being who I was rather than trying to pretend to have a deeper voice all the time, dress a certain way, walk a certain

way. Like you just come to be a lot more comfortable with yourself and you just accept yourself for who you are and you don't feel like you have to fit into a certain type of mold. So I came into Wallbrook with that notion already. I was going to come [to Wallbrook] and I was still going to be who I was, regardless of what the notions of masculinity were here.

Similarly, a student-athlete spoke of participating in the band in middle school, which required him to forgo some of his time playing sports with male friends at lunch time. "I did something that was considered uncool [by male peers], but I didn't mind it because it wasn't about that. It was about what I wanted to do."

The men also associated masculinities with "assuming responsibility." This meaning seemed to relate primarily to men who "took care of their families" by successfully fulfilling "breadwinner" roles and expectations in their homes. The participants often referenced their fathers and other adult male role models in discussing the nexus between responsibility and masculinities. One of the first-year participants shared how he learned to equate masculinities with responsibility from a group of older, "blue-collar" men he observed during a summer job in his hometown:

I worked this summer at a rock yard. [The men I worked with were] blue-collar workers, they chew tobacco and they spit and they cuss and they only drive American trucks, stuff like that. [I] definitely learned a lot about being a man. I was working about three-fourths of the day as a lot of the guys. They worked seven days a week, nine hours a day, and they do it because they have families and wives to support. I think that's a big thing, is just being responsible and doing what it takes.

The concept of responsibility also underscored the participants' reflections on their lead-

ership experiences. The participants assumed that men were "groomed" or socialized to assume positions of leadership and authority. For example, one participant made the following connection between masculinities, responsibility, and leadership: "[Leadership] is really being in the forefront [which] goes back to how we view men personally. Women play the background and men are more in the forefront. So I think that goes along with traditional views of masculinity." The participants also recognized that leadership involves "making tough decisions"—a behavior they also associated with masculinities.

Finally, the participants confirmed that men's bodies factored into their meanings of masculinities, primarily as they relate to men's physical statures and the extent to which they engaged in heterosexual sex with women. Simply stated, the participants assumed that men who had large, muscular builds; displayed physical prowess (by way of sports, weight lifting, etc.); and captured the attention and attraction of women were "more masculine" than were men who were less competitive in these regards. Reflecting on the nexus between physical prowess and masculinities, a Jewish participant exclaimed: "Look at [name], a middle linebacker on the [Wallbrook] football team. The guy has to be 6'6", 250, looks like a brick wall walking. The guy's fucking gigantic and nobody would ever question that guy's masculinity." The following exchange that took place during the focus group with Asian American students illustrates the ways in which the participants viewed women and objects of expressing masculinities:

If I could define masculinity in any one way, I think the most . . . the strongest thing would be towards appealing to women because the idea of getting a girlfriend or hooking up or whatever it is you're interested in, getting that would make you more masculine than not having it.

Right, exactly, for instance, if I was interested in hooking up and I was unable to, I would not consider myself as masculine as I would if I had when I woke up the next morning after hooking up with a girl.

Interestingly, many of the participants declared that these meanings of masculinities were not nearly as important as the aforementioned concepts of respect, self-assurance, and responsibility. The following reflection that was offered by a student-athlete focus group participant provides an example of the ways in which the men sought to make these distinctions: “Not to say that my masculinity isn’t defined by women—it is. But it’s so low on the list of overall things in my definition of what masculinity means compared to respect, responsibility, and things like that.”

## Contextual Influences

Several interactive sociocultural factors emerged as contextual influences on both the meanings the participants ascribed to masculinities as well as the ways in which they expressed masculinities in the campus context: precollege gender socialization, the campus culture, campus involvement, academic interests, and male peer group interactions. These variables of the model capture the experiences and interactions that: (a) reinforced previously learned lessons about masculinities or (b) challenged the participants to acknowledge other ideas and expressions of masculinities and reconsider their own beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions about masculinities. Each of these contextual influences and interactions with the core category are discussed throughout this section.

*Precollege Gender Socialization.* The participants’ precollege gender socialization emerged as a contextual factor that influenced the ways in which they conceptualized and expressed masculinities in college. This variable

is situated at the very top of the model. The unidirectional arrow that points to the core category denotes that this variable led to the development of the participants’ meanings of masculinities. Three factors were consistently identified by the participants as having significant influences on the beliefs and attitudes about masculinities they learned prior to their matriculation to college: (a) parental influences, (b) male peer interactions, and (c) participating in sports and other “masculinizing” activities.

Parents, especially fathers, socialized the participants to behave and interact in ways that were deemed acceptable by traditional expectations of masculinities. Avoiding feminine behaviors and attitudes as well as expressing masculinities through physicality and toughness were notable in this regard. One student shared that, unlike his mother, his father was very purposeful in ensuring that he expressed his gender in ways that were deemed socially acceptable for young boys:

There were times when I was younger where maybe I was playing with my sister or putting on makeup or something. . . . and usually the person that would . . . not really reprimand, but correct that would be my father . . . because my mother, she’d play along, “Oh, that’s cute,” and all that sort of stuff, but my dad always tried to make sure . . . like he’d toughen me up and prepare . . . kind of condition me to have that mentality as being masculine and trying to be strong and doing manly things, you know.

The messages about masculinities that were communicated by the participants’ mothers differed somewhat from those that were reinforced by their fathers. Mothers reportedly encouraged relational, sensitive, and well-rounded masculinities. “My mom always taught me how to be sensitive and express my feelings,” noted one of the participants.

Another recalled: “She really wanted to instill fairness and make sure that I respected other people and treated them the way I would want to be treated.”

There was one notable exception to this finding regarding messages that were reinforced by mothers. One of the focus group participants, who happened to be raised in a single-parent family that was headed by his mother, shared that “crying” and other behaviors that were not considered masculine were not accepted in his home: “My mother was always like, ‘You should be a man about it.’ [She had] a ‘take-it-like-a-man’ kind of [mentality].”

The participants also reported that, much like their fathers, their middle and high school male peers reinforced stereotypically masculine behavioral norms. For example, an Asian American interviewee shared some of the lessons and behaviors that were reinforced as early as elementary school by his male peers:

During elementary school there was a group of peers that I looked to for any sense of what a boy is supposed to be and do . . . You’re supposed to play tackle football, not touch, that kind of a thing, and cursing a lot as well. I learned predominantly through them that you’re going to play football, you’re going to curse, and that’s what all the other guys are doing, you should be doing that too.

As they reflected on the experiences and interactions with male peers that influenced their conceptualizations of masculinities, the participants recalled many instances in which they felt compelled to engage in behaviors they would have otherwise avoided. Getting into the physical fights, vandalizing property, lying about having sex with their girlfriends, consuming alcohol, and using profanity were offered as examples of the behaviors in which they engaged in order to assert and affirm their masculinities with male peers. Likewise,

some participants reportedly downplayed their academic success and hid their involvement in activities that were not considered masculine by peers, such as playing tennis, piano, and singing in the choir. Again, the participants’ desires to be accepted by male peers and to not be perceived as feminine were the primary reasons why they performed gender in these ways.

Youth sports and other traditionally masculine activities, such as martial arts and boy scouts, also provided a context in which traditional notions of masculinities were infused and reinforced during the participants’ precollege gender socialization. Expressing masculinities through toughness, physical aggression, and by not showing weakness were some of the key lessons about masculinities the participants recalled learning by way of their involvement in these activities. For example, one of the gay participants in the study shared that his youth football coach reinforced a very rigid definition of masculinities and did not allow members of the team to express behaviors that were socially constructed as feminine:

Well, I was in football, and our coach had a very, very strict definition of what masculinity was, and he very much tried to press that view on all of us, mostly because he believed that it was important and part of his job to make sure that we all turned out to be men, as opposed to boys, I guess, and so it was very important that we not be feminine, not exhibit any feminine traits at all.

An African American participant who also grew up playing football reflected on the ways in which his involvement in sports informed his ideas about masculinities. Through sports, he learned that “men were supposed to be kind of rough and tumble, be out there on the field hitting people and stuff and acting crazy and running around.” This same participant further declared that this rough and tumble



image of masculinity has remained “embedded in [his] mind.”

Sports and similar activities in which the gender socialization of boys was prioritized were also key contexts in which the participants had meaningful interactions with their fathers. A critical mass of the participants, even those who were not student–athletes at Wallbrook, shared that their fathers encouraged, and at times demanded, their participation in these activities. Some participants felt that their fathers pushed too far in this regard, which resulted in strained and conflicted relationships between them and their fathers.

*Campus Culture.* The campus culture variable of the model represents the “context” or the “location of events and incidents that influence the central category or related phenomena” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96). This variable is situated in the background of the model and surrounds the other variables of the model. The positioning of the campus culture variable of the model suggests that the interactions between variables that are depicted in the model are situated in the Wallbrook campus context. The participants described the campus culture in three meaningful ways and discussed the corresponding effects on the expression of masculinities: “diverse,” “patriarchal,” and “competitive.”

The diversity described by the participants provided space for a wide range of masculine expressions, particularly among men who did not express masculinities according to traditional expectations. The diversity among men at Wallbrook not only allowed for the expression of a wide range of masculinities but, according to the participants, it also afforded them opportunities for sustained contact and crosscultural interaction with men who represented diverse backgrounds and experiences. As a result, the participants reported gaining richer and more complex ideas about masculinities that challenged some of the con-

ceptualizations that were infused during their gender socialization prior to college.

Despite having a very diverse campus culture that provided a context for a range of masculinities, the participants also described Wallbrook as “patriarchal.” This characterization stemmed from the assumption that men who embodied traditional masculinities, notably fraternity members and male student–athletes, were privileged and maintained a higher social status than did the other men on campus who did not hold membership in these groups. They noted that because of their visibility and popularity among men at Wallbrook, fraternity members and student–athletes had substantial influences on the ways in which other men were judged. Being in good physical shape, being competitive, and “hooking up with lots of women”—characteristics of masculinities that were associated with fraternity members and male student–athletes—were prioritized among men at Wallbrook.

Lastly, the participants described the campus culture as competitive in that they felt constant pressure to compete with other men for status, attention, and popularity. Perhaps not surprisingly, much of the competition the participants described was centered on traditionally masculine pursuits and activities like consuming alcohol, playing video games, working out in the gym, participating in sports, and having sex with women. However, the participants also acknowledged that competition among men was not restricted to the traditional masculine activities that were described earlier. They indicated that the competition to outperform each other academically by having the most rigorous course loads or the toughest majors was almost as intense as the competition around drinking, hooking up, and similar pursuits. As one participant explained, “There is a level of competition in terms of who is taking the hardest course load or who’s got the highest



GPA.” Later in the interview, this same participant recalled some of the conversations he and some of his male peers often have when discussing their academic workload and shared, “Sometimes there is sort of the idea of trying to outdo the other person, like, ‘I had this really hard 20 page paper that I had to [write]’ ‘Well, mine was 30 pages. It was harder.’” (See Harris & Struve, 2009, for an expanded discussion of the campus culture variable of the model).

*Academic Interests.* The participants’ academic interests are represented as a contextual influence in the model. Note that the interaction between this variable and the core category is depicted with a uni-directional arrow because evidence of the participants’ academic interests influencing their meanings of masculinities did not emerge from the data. I inquired purposefully into the participants’ perceptions of academic success and connections to their conceptualizations of masculinities. For example, I asked the participants to what extent was academic success valued and celebrated among their male peers and if it was possible for men to be perceived as both smart and masculine at Wallbrook. There was widespread agreement across the subgroups that men indeed could achieve academic success and still be perceived as masculine at Wallbrook. A student–athlete in the sample shared: “[Academic success] is never negative. I’ve never had anybody look at me negatively for being smart. If anything, it’s been like, ‘Man, I wish I could do that.’” Similarly, a Jewish focus group participant offered the following response: “Yeah, it’s like, ‘Wow! This guy’s buff, he has a bunch of girls, he’s at [Wallbrook] now but next semester, he’s going to community college because he’s flunking out.’ That’s not success.” However, what was especially interesting is that these perceptions were qualified with the caveat that men who achieved academic success had

to be “well-rounded,” which was defined by the participants as displaying competence in multiple domains (including academics) such as physical prowess, leadership, and popularity.

Another finding that emerged regarding the participants’ academic interests was the extent to which their chosen fields of study were informed by their conceptualizations of masculinities. Many of the men in the study indicated a desire to pursue careers in traditionally-masculine fields (e.g., law, medicine, real estate, engineering) after graduating from college, which influenced their choices of classes and majors. These participants assumed that these fields would lead to high paying jobs and allow them to fulfill traditional “breadwinner” roles that are culturally defined as masculine in American families. As such, many of the participants believed men had to be purposeful in choosing a major or a career path because making the wrong choice could limit their earning potential thereby making it more difficult to fulfill the breadwinner role. They also assumed that women did not face these same pressures because, despite earning a college degree, most would settle down, get married, and stay at home to raise their children. To this point, one participant declared,

The game steps up a lot in college and serious things like providing for a family become a man’s issue. You don’t really hear women say, “I need to go get a business degree so I can provide for my family.” I’ll ask them, “What do you want to do after college?” They don’t say, “I need to provide for my family.” You talk to most guys, “I want to make some money so I can provide for a family.” That’s a genuine issue for a lot of guys and I think that’s just society’s impact on everyone. It’s just a natural progression, men provide for a family.

Most of the participants confirmed that having

access to financial resources, being successful in respected and well-paying careers, and taking care of their families were central to how they viewed masculinities and would define themselves as men later in life. There was agreement among the men in the study that taking care of a family and achieving some financial security were important indicators of masculinities. For example, in the focus group with fraternity members, one student exclaimed:

I'm a political science major, like, I'm going to law school, I'm going to become a lawyer and that's just what's going to happen, and I do well in school because I want to go to a good law school so that I can get rich. It's not a secret to anybody that I want to be rich. I mean, when my kid turns 16, I want to buy him a BMW and I just want to have a ridiculous amount of money.

*Campus Involvement.* The participants' campus involvement was another contextual factor that interacted with their conceptualizations of masculinities. The participants reported being involved in a range of campus activities—some of which were traditionally masculine (e.g., sports teams, student government, fraternities) whereas others were gender neutral (e.g. political science undergraduate association, residence hall council, ethnic student organizations). Many of the students held leadership positions in their respective organizations and made connections between these roles and their beliefs about masculinities. When I asked a group of African American focus group participants if there was a connection between their masculinities and their pursuit of campus leadership, one student affirmed,

[Yes], men should be leaders, heads of organizations. There's nothing wrong with having a cute vice president or a cute secretary, or a cute treasurer, but . . . don't laugh, I'm real serious . . . men tend

to believe . . . like we are supposed to be leaders, so when you go into organizations, you expect to see a male president. . . . There shouldn't be a vacant slot because no man wants to step up.

Although some participants focused on the ways in which their leadership and involvement allowed them to perform traditional expectations of masculinities, others discussed how their involvement provided opportunities for meaningful interactions with male peers from different backgrounds and encouraged them to be more accepting of masculinities that were different from their own. Serving on student organizational boards and committees and attending campus retreats with men who represented different backgrounds provided these cross-cultural engagement opportunities. What was most compelling about this finding was that the men confirmed that had it not been for their involvement in activities outside of class, it was unlikely that they would have had these opportunities to get to know men who were different from themselves in some meaningful way.

*Male Peer Group Interactions.* The data provided evidence of interaction between the participants' involvement in exclusively male subgroups and the meanings they ascribed to masculinities. The men in the study spoke of the interactions and conversations that often took place within their respective male peer groups and made very clear connections regarding the ways in which these interactions influenced their behavioral expressions of masculinities. One of the most illustrative examples of the connections the participants made between their masculinities and their interactions with male peers was offered by one of the fraternity men in the study who proudly proclaimed:

I really give in to the male stereotypes by being in a fraternity. I curse, I drink a lot,

I smoke cigars. Like we do the things that men are supposed to do. We entertain women, we drink a lot, and for me, that's what it is and I act that same way.

Other participants reported that their masculine expression with close male peers is noticeably different than it is in mixed-gender groups. For instance, talking sexually about women was a popular pastime among the majority of the heterosexual men who participated in the study. These men noted that the ways in which they talked about women in the presence of another woman was far more respectful and less sexual than what could be observed during their discussions about women when only men were around. Interestingly, some of the participants confirmed that, at times, they did not approve of the way they and their male peers talked about women. Yet, they partook in these discussions anyhow as to not disrupt the dynamics of the group and to maintain their status and acceptance within the group.

### Male Gendered Norms

The last variable of the model, "male gendered norms," represents the "consequences" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) or the outcomes of the interactions between the participants' meanings of masculinities and the contextual influences that were discussed in previous sections of this article (precollege gender socialization, campus culture, academic interests, campus involvement, and male peer group interactions). Here I discuss three shared gendered norms that resonated across the groups of men in the study: (a) having "work hard-play hard mentalities, (b) hypermasculine performance, and (c) male bonding.

*Work Hard-Play Hard.* The "work hard-play hard" concept describes the ongoing challenge men faced of having a visible and fulfilling social life while privately balancing intense academic expectations and out-of-class responsibilities. This gendered norm is perhaps

best described by one of the first-year students who offered the following perspective during a discussion about the challenges of being a male student at Wallbrook: "Being cool enough to stay up all night playing poker with them [other male peers] and still turn in your paper by eight o'clock [the next morning]."

The participants felt that college would be their last opportunity to take advantage of the wide range of freedom without the demanding responsibilities of managing their careers and taking care of their families. One of the African American students offered his perspective on the importance of balancing work and play in college:

I know there's a lot expected of me after I leave here [Wallbrook] . . . I mean, the opportunities for the pleasurable stuff and whatever might not be as abundant once I go out into the real world and have to pay bills and all that stuff. So it's like . . . you have to make the memories now so that once you work hard, get to a certain level, then you're [not] going to look back and be like, "Damn, I missed out on everything." So you kind of got to [balance] doing your work and your pleasure, but they should both be very strong, in my opinion.

Participants also attributed this shared work hard-play hard mentality among men to the campus culture and suggested that Wallbrook offered "the best of both worlds," given its thriving academic and social cultures for students. The participants also acknowledged some of the consequences of not maintaining an appropriate balance between work and play, especially when the latter becomes the priority. "Missing assignments" and "pulling all-nighters to get the work done" were offered as consequences.

*Hypermasculine Performance.* The participants' hypermasculine performance, or the behaviors they employed strategically to express themselves as men in ways that were consistent

with stereotypical expectations, was also a shared gendered norm among the men in the study. Several of the behaviors that have been discussed in detail throughout this article—notably their abuse of alcohol, objectification of women, and pursuit of exclusively sexual relationships—characterize the participants' hypermasculine performance. In addition, there was generalized fear of femininity among the heterosexual participants, which was manifested most strongly during discussions about their interactions with openly gay men. These participants admitted that they would find it difficult to embrace a gay friend, teammate, or fraternity brother out of fear that others would assume they were also gay if they were seen interacting publically with these men. They also expressed anxiety and discomfort about being the object of a gay peer's affection, which can also be linked to their fear of femininity and hypemasculine performance.

*Male Bonding.* Finally, despite the stereotypical norms and expectations that governed the expression of masculinities at Wallbrook, cultivating bonding relationships with male peers, particularly those who held similar interests and perspectives, was a shared norm among the men. The participants spoke of the importance of having “a group of close male friends to share memorable experiences in college” and to rely on for support during challenging times. Most of the men described their bonding relationships with other men as “healthy” and “necessary” to have a fulfilled college experience. For instance, a participant from the Latino focus group shared, “For me, the aspect of masculinity comes from as a guy, you could act however you want, but you need a strong group of guy friends with you because it's important to have them there to share the experience.” Likewise, a participant from the focus group with gay and bisexual students asserted, “I think it's a healthy thing to do, to

socialize, psychologically and just getting away from being alone, by yourself, and to be with friends and have friends to socialize with. It's a healthy thing.”

Participants also believed these relationships with a core group of male friends were necessary given the intensity and competitiveness of the Wallbrook campus culture for men. Regarding life challenges, several of the participants shared personal crises they have faced while in college, such as parental divorces and the death of family members. These men believed they would not have made it through these difficult times had it not been for the support of their closest male friends. “When my mom passed away, my friends were the ones there for me, so it was like, ‘I gotta open up to these people,’ and it was never a problem and I'm really, really happy that I did it,” noted one of the men in the study.

## LIMITATIONS

Despite the aforementioned steps I took to establish trustworthiness in this study, several limitations are worth noting. First, given the study's qualitative design, the findings should not be generalized beyond the site and the men who participated. Second, the purpose of this study was to identify meanings of masculinities that were salient across the 68 men in the study. Thus, group-specific meanings and comparisons were not considered in the analysis on which this article is based. This is a potentially rich area for future analyses of the data that were collected for this study. Lastly, the overrepresentation of African American, White, and heterosexual men among the participants in this study is also important to note. These limitations notwithstanding, the conceptual model presented herein offers much-needed insight into the gender identity development and related experiences of college men. This study may also inform future

inquires on college men, masculinities, and college student development.

## DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study confirms that men are arriving on college campuses having been socialized to embrace traditional notions of masculinities. Many of the meanings the participants reportedly ascribed to masculinities serve to privilege men who perform masculinities according to culturally dominant expectations. Therefore, the findings of this study call for institutional efforts that help men to: (a) see the range of healthy options that are available to them in expressing their masculinities and (b) recognize how developing less-conflicted gender identities leads to a host of productive outcomes that will serve them well throughout their lives. For example, student affairs educators working on campuses like Wallbrook may find the conceptual model useful in designing programs and services to support men in their transition from high school to college, in academic advisement with college men, and in supporting men in their career development. Myers-Briggs, StrengthsQuests, and other assessments can be used to help college men make better-informed choices about their career paths and majors. Likewise, data that are collected using the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ), and the National College Health Assessment (NCHA) should be routinely disaggregated and analyzed using gender frameworks to recognize and make sense of gendered trends that may exist and warrant further examination (see Sax, 2008, for example).

The study's findings support Jones and McEwen's (2000) assertions regarding the salience of identity dimensions. The participants in the study who were not student-athletes or members of a fraternity believed they did

not have as much status as their peers who belonged to these groups. In relation to the larger male student population at Wallbrook, student-athletes represented a small minority of men on the campus; yet the participants agreed that these men were the most popular men at Wallbrook. Likewise, fraternity members did not constitute a quantitative majority of Wallbrook's undergraduate men. However, these subgroups were highly visible and occupied a privileged space among men at Wallbrook, which made the differences between these men and those who were not privileged in these regards more obvious and transparent. These findings are also consistent with claims by Connell (1995), Kimmel and Messner (2007), and other scholars who argued that within a given context, there will be a hierarchy of masculinities in which some will have more privilege than others. Therefore, campus administrators may be well-served by recognizing men who exhibit excellence in areas other than fraternity involvement and athletics.

With respect to campus culture, perhaps the most insightful finding from this study was the ways in which campus diversity influenced the participants' meanings of masculinities. Sax (2008) found that experiences with diversity are "liberalizing, motivating, and eye opening" for college men (p. 234). This study's findings support Sax's conclusion. Meaningful and sustained cross-cultural interaction among men who represent diverse backgrounds, identities, and experiences challenged prevailing assumptions about masculinities and motivated the participants to consider new meanings. The connections the participants made between these interactions and their involvement outside of the classroom are also significant and confirm what scholars have consistently concluded regarding the impact of campus environments on college student identity development. Therefore, educators should be mindful of the extent to



which campus services, programs, and activities facilitate cross-cultural engagement among the men on their campuses. If these opportunities are not readily available, educators should consider collaborating with male student leaders to identify innovative strategies to facilitate this type of engagement for the men on their campuses. For example, collaboration between predominantly White, historically Black, and multicultural fraternities may offer opportunities for cross-cultural engagement given the roles fraternities play in bringing men from their respective communities together.

The overwhelming majority of the published research on college men and masculinities focuses on problematic trends, issues, and conflicts involving college men. These issues are important and warrant ongoing attention. Nevertheless, the key findings from this study suggest that these issues do not fully capture the developmental experiences of college men. Men in this study showed some evidence, albeit modest, of productive identity development. For instance, meanings of masculinities that encouraged the men to develop their competencies in multiple domains, like leadership and academics, may offer some potentially promising starting points for educators to encourage men to engage in campus service activities and pursue nonhierarchical leadership opportunities.

The participants' reliance on other men for emotional support during challenging times is also an interesting and somewhat surprising finding given the multiple published reports that confirm that college men invest significant efforts toward hiding their vulnerabilities from other men. In fact, most of what is known about the expression of emotions other than anger among college men revolves around the difficulties they face in doing so because this behavior is socially constructed as feminine. The factors that facilitate the level of trust and rapport-building necessary for men to feel

safe opening up to each other warrant further empirical consideration.

Several key themes from Edwards and Jones' (2009) study of college men's gender identity are reflected in the conceptual model that emerged from this study. The participants in both studies embraced similar conceptualizations of men: being confident and self-assured, being respected, and being tough. They also relied heavily on hypermasculine performance to express themselves as men. The participants in both studies also reported ongoing fear and anxiety of being perceived as gay or feminine by their peers, which exacerbated their hypermasculine performance. These consistencies in the findings are especially notable considering the differences in the institutional contexts and data collection strategies that were employed in the two studies. Interestingly, unlike the present study, academic interests, campus involvement, and campus culture did not emerge as significant influences on gender performance among the men in Edwards and Jones' study.

The hypermasculine performance variable of the conceptual model also supports O'Neil's (1981) male gender role conflict model, which identifies "fear of femininity" as an explanatory factor for homophobia, sexism, restrictive emotionality, competitiveness, and other unhealthy behaviors that are commonly observed among college men. Fear of femininity also emerged as a central theme in Davis's (2002) study of college men and masculinities.

The findings of this study raise several questions that can be explored in future studies of college men and masculinities. The conceptual model presented herein represents a snapshot or moment in time in the participants' gender identity development. Thus, the extent to which the meanings the participants ascribed to masculinities changed between the time the study was conducted and



their departure from Wallbrook is unknown, which raises the question, “How do meanings of masculinities change and develop between men’s initial enrollment and graduation from the institution?” Engaging in longitudinal studies similar to those conducted by Josselson (1987), Baxter Magolda (2001), and Torres (1999) may help to capture the long-term effects attending college may have on men’s gender identity development.

Meanings the participants learned to associate with masculinities during their precollege gender socialization were also revealed in this study. It would be interesting to know what meanings of masculinities that are learned and reinforced in college persist beyond their departure from the institution. A related question is: “How do life experiences, like becoming a parent, being engaged in a marriage or life partnership, or committing to a career influence the meanings men ascribe to masculinities?” If one accepts Kimmel and Messner’s (2007) assertion that the ways in which men perform masculinities will change as they grow and mature throughout their lives, one can reasonably assume that meanings of masculinities will be shaped by these experiences.

Given that campus culture was a contextual influence in this study, one can expect that men who are enrolled at institutions with cultures that differ from Wallbrook’s will express masculinities in different ways. Replicating this study in an institutional setting that is less competitive, has a more homogenous male student population, and does not prioritize men’s sports and fraternities would likely yield new insights about masculinities. Some

questions to consider are: “What meanings do men who are enrolled at small liberal arts institutions, community colleges, religiously affiliated institutions, or historically Black institutions ascribe to masculinities?” and “What factors that are situated in these campus contexts influence the meanings and gender identity development of college men?”

As noted previously in this article, the purpose of this study was to identify meanings that were salient across the subgroups that were represented in this study. A goal of future studies should be to identify group-specific meanings that are situated within male subgroups. Because gender is intersected and influenced by other identity dimensions, it is very likely that some meanings can be linked to men’s race/ethnicities, sexual orientations, spirituality, [dis]ability, and other salient aspects of their identities.

Lastly, postsecondary educators should not allow their efforts to support the gender identities of college men to detract attention and resources away from supporting the women on their campuses. Campus safety, academic segregation, disordered eating, and depression are but a few examples of the critical issues that challenge the psychosocial development and achievement of successful outcomes for college women. These issues demand the ongoing attention and support of all college and university educators.

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