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The Socialization Process of Masculinity, and Its Manifestation at DePauw University: How Race, Media, and Gender Contribute to the Malleability of Masculinity

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The Socialization Process of Masculinity, and Its Manifestation at DePauw University:

How Race, Media, and Gender Contribute to the Malleability of Masculinity

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DePauw University Honor Scholar Program

Class of 2019

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Table of Contents

Page

Acknowledgments.....	5
Abstract.....	7
Introduction.....	6
Literature Review.....	9
1. Evolution and Masculinity.....	12
2. Sociologists and the Male Body.....	14
3. Sociobiology.....	15
4. The Social Construction of Masculinity.....	16
5. Race and Masculinity.....	19
a. White Masculinity.....	19
b. Black Masculinity.....	23
c. Latino Masculinity.....	27
6. Media and Masculinity.....	29
a. Masculinity and Pornography.....	31
Methodology.....	34
Table of Demographics.....	36
Interview Data	
1. Sports.....	37
2. Body Parts.....	39
3. Greek Life.....	41
4. Brotherhood.....	44
5. Knowledge is Power.....	46
6. The Location of DePauw.....	52
7. Leadership Roles and Dominance.....	53
Discussion.....	56
Conclusion.....	57
Limitations.....	58
Future Direction.....	59

Bibliography.....61
Appendix.....67

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Abstract

One may think that masculinity is defined by being a male, but existing literature shows that there is much more to gender identity than the biological aspects of maleness. One's gender may be identified as masculine, feminine, non-binary, or gender non-conforming. Historically, there has been an ascription of sex onto our understandings of gender, which has created rigid gender binaries of male and female. Such binaries limit the ways society allows individuals to perform their gender. Regardless of gender identity, one's experiences of masculinity is constructed based upon these gender norms and binaries, which are notions that create narratives of how one should act. Similarly, ideas regarding evolution, race, media, and numerous other cultural constructions shape such narratives as well. Using data from 10 self-identified cisgender men at DePauw University, this thesis will focus on cultural constructions that contribute to the malleability of masculinity.

While much research has been done to examine the scope of masculinity, many scholars agree that being a man is affected by categories such as race, media, class, education, and the family. The men I interviewed addressed these same categories, discussing their masculinity in terms of what they learned from their family and the media, as well as an understanding of how their time and education at DePauw has affected their manhood.

Although there are connections between my data and the existing literature on masculinity, there are a myriad of other ways men construct their masculinity. Thus, while I recognize the similarities between my data and existing scholarship, I think there is more to be said about the social construction of masculinity. Likewise, the fact that my participants came from varying

backgrounds, but repeated similar notions connected to masculinity, shows the environment at DePauw impacts masculinity.

I find that existing literature on masculinity is useful in explaining how men have constructed their masculinity. However, in analyzing both the existing scholarship on masculinity and the data from these interviews, I find that masculinity is complex and dynamic. So complex and dynamic that the only way to appropriately describe it would be in terms of it being a *malleable process* that changes and occurs throughout one's entire life.

Introduction

Considerable research has examined and studied the concept of masculinity, particularly from scholars who are interested in gender and/or sociology. The story of masculinity has, and continues to be, a long one. In the past, masculinity studies focused primarily on gender inequality, emphasizing the practices of gender norms and roles that men and women play (Ferguson, 2000). Scholars are now moving to include more gender identities, and to include more complex ways to perform masculinity in their research. Recent scholars build on merely categorizing and cataloguing men to examine how men's practices have created inequality between men and women (Schrock and Schwalbe, 2009, 286). Such a shift in research has led to media, textual, and historical analyses of masculinity and the flexible ways in which men express this attribute over time. It is increasingly important when considering what masculinity is and how it is or is not related to sex (conflating male to masculine) to identify the processes and practices that influence individual, collective, and societal perceptions.

I argue those who identify as men should not be bound by rigid stereotypes that define what it means to be a man. Furthermore, I argue that the strict narratives of gender binaries and

associated policing of bodies has historically, and continues, to limit the ways people express themselves and their gender identities. The potential to allow individuals to express their gender with more fluidity may open a space for men (both cisgender and transgender) to express a more complex, fluid, and multifaceted form of masculinity.

This research examines the stories of masculinity, its shifting and changing structure, and the perception of it as a space that men feel compelled to perform in. Through an analysis of relevant literature placed in conversation with self-identified cis-men (n=10), I begin to extrapolate the various ways in which men on a small liberal arts campus perform their own masculinity. Through this analysis is an intentional consideration of how performances by cisgender men perpetuate ideas of male-dominance and gender inequality. In the conclusion and future directions section, I examine what should be done in future scholarship.

Literature Review

Despite the ample research regarding masculinity, my literature will specifically focus on the socialization of masculinity, and consider how it is a social construct. The ensuing literature will first regard how evolution and biology have shaped masculinity, and the remainder of my literature review will examine masculinity from a social constructionist perspective. Within the literature surrounding masculinity as a social construct, I will consider how race, media, and pornography shape how men perform their manhood. Overall, I use the social constructionist theory to analyze masculinity and examine how men construct their manhood. Social constructionism sees the person as a “fluid, fractured, and changeable assemblage, distributed across and produced through social interactions and relationships” (Burr, 2018).

Thus, social constructionism is useful in viewing masculinity as a social process that changes depending on a man's interactions and cultural environment. Social constructionists look past biological differences and reproductive anatomy, and instead consider how men are social beings that use symbols and practices to establish themselves as members of a group. Further, social constructionists consider people's interactions and the social world to shape their identity (Andrews, 2012). In terms of gender, we produce our gender through repeatedly acting "feminine" or "masculine" creating categories that society has deemed to belong to one gender or the other (Pascoe, 2012).

Social constructionism provides the overarching theory for this project; yet, other theoretical frames contribute to my analysis of masculinity, such as post-structuralism and sociobiology. Post-structuralism overall sees all meanings, interactions, macro, and micro phenomena as created with no universal theories applying to our understanding of reality (Malešević, 2004). Specifically, from a post-structuralist perspective, there are no universally accepted criteria or defining principles of manhood; rather, there is a multiplicity to masculinity that makes it complex and dependent upon historical discourses, as well as constructed by everyday practices (2004). Therefore, masculinity is dynamic and changes according to time, space, and place, and is so malleable because of its dependence on everyday, routine practices.

While this thesis research is not focused as much on sociobiology, it is still an important theoretical framework to use in analyzing masculinity, as it merges both biological and sociological perspectives. Sociobiology considers that there is a biological basis of all social behavior, determined by evolutionary strategies that are shaped by natural selection and biological factors (Malešević, 2004). Thus, sociobiology is in conversation with masculinity in

terms of male behavior, and in consideration of how both biological social processes affect masculinity. Indeed, some of the interviewees in this research expressed views that align with this approach.

Despite the above concepts, I contend that masculinity is organized and asserted through social practices. Its malleability comes from such diverse practices, where masculinity and femininity are just configurations of gender performances (Connell, 2005, 289). Gender practices or projects can include anything from the assumption that boys will play sports, to the interest in black male pornography from a controlling, white male standpoint (Dines). Instead of only seeing masculinities as practices, sociologist R.W. Connell offers a three-fold model of the structure of gender: power relations, production relations, and cathexis, or emotional attachment. In other words, Connell contends we must review the social and historical construction of men encouraging them to take charge and express dominance. Further, we should consider the implications of different societal expectations that lead to different types of masculinity. Masculinity and positions within gender practices are always contestable, and always changing (Connell, 2005, 292).

Perhaps instead of using Connell's three-fold model to structure gender, we can structure gender around masculine discourses that consider language, history, cultural context, and sociocultural norms. For discursive psychologists, or any scholar who takes a discursive approach, it is critical to define masculinity as sets of practices that are developed and negotiated in relation to other forms of identity (Wetherall & Edley, 2014, 355). This definition is key to my analysis of masculinity as a socialization process that is dependent on culture and interactions. Conceptualizing masculinity in this way recognizes the multiple and complex ways one can be a

man. It also demonstrates the ways power is embedded within masculinity, and considers the perpetuation of power and social struggles for normativity and dominance (2014). Furthermore, by examining discourses that define masculinity, focus can grow from questioning what is masculinity, to analyzing how does masculinity work differently across time and culture. This includes considering the social constructionist approach, that this thesis primarily focuses on, as well as biological and evolutionary explanations.

Given the nature and nurture debate¹, it is worth examining the appeal of both. Within the review of literature, I begin with a brief conversation that examines the biological, “nature,” argument relevant to masculinity, and then I move to a discussion of the cultural, “nurture,” argument central to the construction of masculinity. I acknowledge that masculinity and gender as a whole are complex structures, and that one cannot fully explain it through one perspective. However, this thesis is centrally concerned with the ways in which masculinity is socially constructed, and I center the review and this thesis around this sociological argument.

Evolution and Masculinity

One aspect of evolutionist theories on masculinity is male behavior and aggression. Scholars such as Buss and Shackelford argue that men are inherently more aggressive, and it is not solely a result of the social world, like Western culture’s violent TV shows and crime (Buss & Schakelford, 1997, 606). Rather, men are more physically aggressive because evolution has allowed them to adapt to their current environments. Because, in this worldview, all behaviors

¹ Discussing heredity and the environment has “transcended the ‘versus,’ passed beyond the ‘which,’ and the only lightly more useful ‘how much,’ to the mature question of ‘how’ (Konner, 2002, 70). Thus, there is no need to have the versus in the middle of nature and nurture anymore; rather, it is more useful to assess the impact of how each affect life differently.

are linked to evolution, all require a mechanism and an output. Thus, aggression is just another adaptive evolutionary tactic which men use to solve problems, defend themselves, and negotiate (1997).

While some scientists focus on aggressive masculinity as an adapted behavior, other scientists contend testosterone levels are a mechanism for behavior. For example, scientists such as Eric Steiner link gender difference to biological aspects, like the testosterone levels in men leading to more physical aggression, risk taking, and reduced fear responses (Steiner, 2016, 1). Testosterone levels are sometimes used to explain mental illness as well, and regarding men, such mental illnesses can often be linked to aggressive behaviors (Sisek et. al, 2014, 103). In testing crime and violent behavior for male prison inmates, inmates with higher testosterone levels had committed more personal crimes of sex and violence, as well as violated more rules in prison (Dabbs et. al, 1994, 627).

According to some early evolutionists, gender roles have come about for women because women are made to reproduce. In this earliest, and simplistic, essentialist view, women are simply ovaries and wombs, and passive beings that fulfill the mother role (Hrdy, 1999). However, these biological stereotypes stem from very early male physicians and doctors who degraded and oppressed women. As early as the mid 1600s, men were pathologizing women to control their bodies. By pathologizing them and claiming a woman was suffering from “hysteria,” a male physician could exert his power over this woman by curing her. The cure for hysteria? Genital massage that resulted in orgasm (Maines, 1999, 2). This crisis of illness not only gave men the power over women’s bodies, but it gave doctors the job that no one else

wanted because of the disease attached. Thus, because of male physicians exerting their power over women, female masturbation and womanhood was pathologized.

Hrdy is a more recent evolutionist who critiques these old notions of evolutionary theory, expanding upon it with an analysis of motherhood, and an emphasis on how humans today represent past ancestors who can change their environment to suit their needs (Hrdy, 1999). In Hrdy's view, biological tendencies and environmental situations can be reconciled to view social behavior. In this view, male behavior comes from both biological parts of the body and brain, and from a man's social environment.

Sociologists and the Male Body

Male bodies are socialized by what we consider masculine or representative of manhood by biology. Per Connell, "true masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies" (Connell, 2005, 45). Likewise, most men in Loe's study of the "male machine" agreed that if the penis was in trouble, so was the man (Loe, 2004, 296). Such an emphasis on men's bodies, specifically on the penis and how the male body works, constructs masculinity. If a man can't have sex, then he is less of a man, therefore both his sexuality and his penis is central to his masculine identity (Loe, 2004). In terms of sexuality, men are supposed to perform a certain way, that is penetrating with their penis. Furthermore, their bodies, specifically their penises, are supposed to look or measure up a certain way, or they risk being negatively judged by sexual partners or societal norms. According to Scott Poulson-Bryant, men shame and judge themselves based on the size of their penis because of societal stereotypes surrounding male bodies and what they should look like (Poulson-Bryant, 2005, 268).

Considering the term “male” as identifying a sex, for many the penis is seen as central for what it means to be a ‘successful male’. This ascription of sex onto cisgender masculinity centers the penis. However, considering the term “gender” as an identity, one can view manhood beyond the male body. While it is important to acknowledge the historical weight society has placed on the penis, it also necessary to consider the masculine identity as much more than a biological body part. In 2015, a study on trans-male students found that trans men in college are feeling increasingly pressured to alter their body in accordance with what male bodies typically look like. These students link not being “trans enough”, or male enough, to biomedical transition choices, and characterize those who use testosterone and hormones as being the most authentic men (Catalano, 2015). This linkage of body parts to what it means to be a man “reinforces a bi-gendered cultural system where one must look convincingly like their self-identified gender” (Catalano, 412, 2015).

Sociobiology

Analyzing masculinity through a sociobiological lens attempts to reconcile the two viewpoints of culture and evolution. Sociobiology is the extension of biology and evolution to social behavior and organization (Wilson, 1975, x). Thus, culture is linked to memes, which are instructions for behaviors passed on through humans imitating each other (Malešević, 2004, 81). While memes and genes work together to strengthen each other, sociobiologists see memes as working with the environment, explaining processes such as gender roles and norms, family, conflicts, and social divisions (2004). In this viewpoint, behaviors evolve over time to accommodate one’s population. In terms of masculinity, masculine behaviors and the specific ways men behave have adapted over time to accommodate men and preserve manhood. For

example, the way fathers in heterosexual relationships have been adapted over time to become the protector and breadwinner of the family shows the imitation of behavior for men over time to perform these roles. To further connect the impact of both biology and culture on gender, feminist scientists are now integrating biosocial science to explain that many “biological processes are fluid responses to features of the social and physical environment humans inhabit” (Shattuck-Heidorn & Richardson, 2019). Thus, the social experiences a person has in their life may change their body and their biological responses.

These examples follow perspectives that regard the male body as central to manhood, which considers the genetic makeup of men to have greater effects on their behavior than cultural constructs and society. While important in regards to masculinity, there is a major sociological component that affects masculinity, *specifically the practices and procedures based on cultural contexts that form the process of masculinity.*

The Social Construction of Masculinity

How is masculinity a “social construct”? What does a social construct mean? To analyze how masculinity is a socially constructed process, we must first recognize the concept of hegemonic masculinity as this concept encapsulates how men have come to process their masculinity within different power hierarchies. R. W. Connell’s definition of masculinity explains hegemonic masculinity as a pattern of practice and ascendancy through culture, institutions, and persuasion that allow men’s dominance over women to continue and permeate society (Connell, 2005, 832). It is important to consider masculinity as a social process so we can see both how men have historically maintained dominance over women, and understand how hegemonic masculinity continues to affect certain facets of our society.

For example, hegemonic masculinity can make sense of problems in our society, such as in understanding patterns of bullying, crime trends, men's health, and professional practices. According to Connell, "All data reflect that men and boys perpetrate more of the conventional crimes," and men can grow to be more aggressive and perhaps partake in criminal behavior because of their interest in pursuing hegemony (Connell, 2005, 833). Essentially, Connell is fleshing out the ways in which the concept of hegemonic masculinity can be used to explain male aggression and what is commonly seen as typical male behavior. However, Connell also offers critiques that counteract these negative depictions of masculinity.

Overall, the critiques stem from scholars who see the concept of masculinity as blurred, and as essentializing the character of men, or imposing false realities on ideas of manhood. Critiques also stem from the recognition of masculinity as not being a fixed identity, but rather being embedded in a series of social practices and social actions that continue to grow and change over time. One of these scholars, Collier (2005), criticized hegemonic masculinity for these fixed identity notions. Collier also added to Connell's work the notion of the circular argument that is often used to describe men; that men's behavior is both explained and excused in a circular fashion. For example, stereotypes that perpetuate macho masculinity are used to explain why a man may act a certain way, but are also used to excuse his aggressively macho behavior. The media repeatedly presents this argument, especially with cases of sexual assault committed by men who were perhaps drunk and "just being boys."

What is especially important is the consideration of the circular argument of men's behavior that somehow excuses the negative actions of men, but explains the positive ones as being natural to masculinity. This idea of the "natural" is based upon biological processes that I

described above, such as evolutionary psychologists definitions of behavior and the many studies done on testosterone to explain male behavior. This circular argument is so critical because it explains how the social process of masculinity has served men to benefit them, while oppressing women.

According to Brian Sweeney, the socialization process of masculinity and femininity is a multi-dimensional process that works at various levels to privilege men and oppress women. The individual, interactional, and institutional levels all work together to lead men to develop masculine identities (Sweeney, 2013). At the individual level, “sexist behavior may be the result of socialization experiences,” and at the interaction level, sexist behavior results from men “doing gender” and linking sexual performance to objectifying women. Furthermore, institutions regulate gender practices, such as sexism, that institutionalize normative masculinity and heterosexuality. In turn, these three levels work together to produce gender differences and inequality (2013), further perpetuating hegemonic masculine structures by objectifying women.

Additionally, hegemonic masculinity illustrates the role of cultures, institutional practices, symbols, and the “interplay of gender dynamics with race, class, and region” (Connell, 2005, 839). These social dynamics demonstrate the role institutions play in constructing masculinity, specifically as a complex process that happens depending on social contexts and practices. Furthermore, such social dynamics that construct masculinity are what post-structuralists use to explain masculine identities. According to post-structuralists on masculinity, gender is organized based on symbolic practices, so masculinity is organized based on cultural constructions such as symbols, the media, the family, location, etc. (2005).

If masculinity is consistently changing depending on cultures and institutions, then masculinity is indeed changing in historical contexts as well. Connell's examination of masculinity as hegemonic provides a framework that considers social structures and hierarchal processes that give men the power in our Western society. Within this power there is the recognition of historical processes as being key to how men have gained their hegemonic masculinity, as the *process* of masculinity has occurred over many years of changing stereotypes, definitions, and ideas of masculinity. In regards to gender being defined by historical processes, gender can be further conceptualized as a performance that is both individually and socially meaningful (Ferguson, 2000). According to Ann Ferguson, "We signal our gender identification through an ongoing performance...drawing on well-worked-over, sociohistorical scripts and easily recognizable scenarios" (Ferguson, 2000, 80). Such sociohistorical scripts are pertinent to the shaping of masculinity, and to illustrating how a man should act in accordance with societal norms.

Race and Masculinity

While hegemonic masculinity and social scripts serve as a broad link between the overall practices of masculinity, it must be reformulated in terms of the *process* of masculinity. Here, I mean analyzing the many ways in which men perform their masculinity. These could vary from playing sports, to wrestling and fighting with friends, to being the breadwinner of a household. I am considering any social and cultural norm that men specifically adhere to be a practice of masculinity, and involved in the process of becoming a man. Here, I am most interested in the process of how hegemonic masculinity is thus a process of obtaining power for men, and how a man's race complicates ideas of power and how to be a man.

White Masculinity

In Brian Sweeney's research on college men and party cultures, he specifically regards how this process of obtaining power through a masculine identity is perhaps peaking at the collegiate level. That is, men come to adhere to their latent power, or not, depending on the culture of their college, and different constructions of race and class at their college. Thus, Sweeney addresses the implications of social class and race on performing and conveying masculinity. In his article, "Party animals or responsible men: social class, race, and masculinity on campus," he conducted 24 interviews with fraternity men at a large state university, as well as 16 mixed-gender focus groups (Sweeney, 2014, 810). These focus groups consisted of groups that were already existing on campus, such as sororities or religious organizations.

His results from the interviews and focus groups found that college men construct their masculinity along normative definitions of maleness, such as letting loose, indulging in adventurous exploits, having sexual relationships with women, and ostensibly being responsible and respectful towards women (Sweeney, 2014, 811). Ultimately, these conventions of masculinity align with the framework of hegemonic masculinity, because privileged (white and heterosexual) fraternity men do not face the same consequences as men of color.

Essentially, Sweeney found that men will use these behaviors and processes to ensure a dominate gender position on campus (Sweeney, 2014, 805). However, there is a limit to who can involve themselves in these masculine practices. The fourteen heterosexual, white, and "significantly more class privileged" men were able to actively engage in the party culture and "construct themselves as adventurous, fun-loving, heterosexual men" (Sweeney, 2014, 812). These notions of masculinity comply with hegemonic masculinity ideals that privilege the

dominant positions (white, heterosexual, and upper-class) and allow these men to act in whatever ways they want. This upward mobility of such privileged men allows them to construct their masculinity in ways they choose, while the less privileged men of this state university have to be more careful when constructing their masculinity.

The less privileged fraternity men have more doubt about partying, and express more disapproval of the ways that the privileged men construct their masculinities. While his sample of race and class-subordinate men is small and not representative, Sweeney draws the conclusion that it is worth noting how differently less privileged men construct their masculinity in contrast to the other privileged men. For example, the African American and Latino men in fraternities had more doubts about the party culture of their college, and believed that white fraternity men acted more childish and immature. Additionally, these men feel as though they have to be especially careful in their self-presentations, considering such negative stereotypes of people of color that exist already in society (2014).

Sweeney concludes that being in college and in a fraternity for some men justifies an indulgence in hedonism and the party culture scene, where both indulgences establish masculine identities. However, being able to indulge in these comes at a cost, a cost which only white, heterosexual, upper-class men can afford because of their upward mobility and privileges in college (2014). African American and Latino men cannot afford such luxuries because of societal stereotypes that hinder their ability to participate in hegemonic masculinity, and because they are more interested in achieving academic success. Inevitably, the “collegiate party culture provides these [white] men with ample resources for constructing masculine identities” (Sweeney, 2014, 817).

Not only do some white men indulge in such hedonistic behavior to assert their masculinity, some also use men of color to construct their masculinity. According to Hughey (2016), studying white men from two distinct groups, one an antiracist group and one a white nationalist, can provide us answers about how white men frame black men and manhood. Interviewing and listening in on a white nationalist group and a white antiracist group, Hughey identified 3 discursive frameworks that situate white male opinions on black masculinity. These three frames: black male dysfunctionality, paternalistic surveillance of black masculinity, and patriarchal protection of femininity from black masculinity all propose that white masculinity is inherently superior to black masculinity. White men in his research truly believed that their masculinity was better than a black man's, citing that slavery made the black man either "spoiled or savage" (Hughey, 2016, 104). This idea illuminates how concerned white men are with African American men. There has been a long history of white Americans pathologizing black men as hypersexual, hypermasculine, and aggressive brutes that only want to attack white women (2016).

In Hughey's work, the white men in the antiracist group acknowledge their privileged masculinity, but still degrade black men and assume that they need help because of their longstanding oppression. One says, "Black men today are an effect of years of oppression...the legacy of such degradations has allowed black men to not become men" (Hughey, 2016, 106). In this frame of white supremacy, black men are seen as dysfunctional, deficient, inferior, and violent. While these are only two groups with limited opinions from only white men, situating black masculinity in this framework demonstrates the process of pathologizing black men and thus making their masculinity seem less important and inferior. The framing of white supremacy

that these white men use affects what we see in the media today, specifically the narratives of dangerous black men.

Furthermore, this white supremacist rhetoric is reflected in pornographic content as well. In porn, white men watch black men on the screen being sexual with women, thus confirming existing stereotypes that white men have of black men being sexual savages. By watching black men on the screen, primarily watching black male penises penetrating white women, white men can become as sexually skilled as the black man, but remain separate from them off the screen (Dines, 2015). In addition to being as skilled as these black men, white men construct their masculinity through racialized images, using the portrayal of the sexual black male as validation that their white masculinity is the idealized form of masculinity.

Dines's work allows scholars to understand the importance of racist remarks and constructions in media as a way to reproduce idealized forms of masculinity. White masculinity, reproduced and preached by white men, rests on white guilt, and is a vulnerable whiteness that must be protected from black male violence, and the threat of black men hurting white women (i.e. the pornographic content that Dines examines, which I attend to later in the review). White women make an appearance in terms of white masculinity, needing to be saved from dangerous, sexual black men. Again, we see historical roots in this racist argument that began centuries ago. Black men were framed as antagonizing white womanhood, and thus were killed or lynched on behalf of white men saving these women (Hughey, 108, 2016). In any case, white men using this lynch logic in 2016 to degrade and criminalize black men proves problematic because it allows for white men to define black manhood.

Black Masculinity

In regards to hegemonic masculinity, there is a link between one's masculinity process and their social power in society, and social power is inherently linked to race. With this in mind, it is no coincidence that those who hold more privilege in society exercise their masculinity more freely than those who do not. For example, heterosexual, white, upper-class men hold arguably the most social power in American society. Thus, such men have more agency in how they demonstrate their masculinity and how they portray their manhood. In the book, *We Real Cool*, bell hooks articulates how it is different for black men to express their masculinity in regards to the "narrow life-scripts" that are attributed to black men (hooks, 86). These narrow life-scripts are put onto black men by the socially-imbedded, patriarchal structure that shows itself through mass media, and demonstrates how boys should not show emotions and must be tough.

Both these narrow life-scripts and early childhood factors of black men affect how they form their masculinity. According to hooks, such childhood factors include the need to act tough, the tendency of mass media to only show black men failing, and the relationship between being male and having dominance (hooks, 2003, 88). Hooks believes that young African American men try to construct a self on a "shaky foundation" that is unstable because of the shame that these young men have from a young age. This shame comes from being trapped by the media and by learning from childhood the rhetoric that black men are worthless and not valued (hooks, 91).

Thus, the process of masculinity for young, black men is inevitably affected if the foundation is shaky and unstable to begin with. Young black boys try to construct a self in a society that criticizes them from birth, and this criticizing contributes to the shakiness of the

foundation they try to build themselves up from. As a result of such instability, young black boys must navigate their masculinity in different ways up against such odds.

Ed Guerrero, a scholar who studies black cinema, and black culture and discourse, agrees that there is an issue with mass media, and sees a crisis in the way black men are represented in the media, calling it an “empty space in representation.” This empty space in representation fails to represent black men in the dynamic and complex ways of life, instead putting them into disparate categories of either the spectacle of black male athletes, movie stars, pop artists, or the “real-time devastation and slaughter of faceless black males” (Guerrero, 1995, 396). These incompatible representations challenge the process of masculinity for black men, because they restrict men to inaccurate stereotypes. Those who engage in such mass media representations of African American men are bound to apply the representations they see in the media to the black men they know and don’t know. Thus, there is a trickle-down effect of how others view black men, and then how black men start to view themselves. Mass media is one of the components of the shaky foundation which black men grow up on, such media that limits black men on the screen and off by representing them in stereotypical ways.

Mass media is a socially constructed institution because it can be manipulated and interpreted differently based on the media type, and those who engage with it. Masculinity as a social process is similarly socially constructed based on a man and his race, class, age, gender identity, and so on. A tangible example of the effects of race on masculinity can be seen with Barack Obama. In an article titled, “Our First Unisex President?” Cooper (2008) analyzes claims that Obama was full of feminine virtues, and assesses what it means to be a masculine or feminine leader. As Cooper sees it, Obama was considered feminine because he was a black man

who had to act “feminine” as to not trigger other negative stereotypes being aimed at him. Like Guerrero’s notion of the lack of complexity in the ways media represents black men, Cooper notes that black men are either represented as the Good Black Man, or the Bad Black Man. Therefore, Obama had to counter the stereotype of being the Bad Black Man by being extremely calm and non-threatening (Cooper, 2008, 139). Obama had to act this way and put on this façade because of the many stereotypes that are commonly attributed to black men such as lazy, uneducated, aggressive, etc. To resist stereotypes and to act calm, he was seen as feminine, because calmness and passivity is attributed to women. In this way, he had to act feminine, or less dominant, to succeed as a president. Thus, he had to sacrifice some of his identity to appeal to the supposedly racist people in this country who don’t want to see black men be overtly masculine or dominant.

Usually, hegemonic masculinity rewards those who are masculine and strong. But, because of deep rooted racism that permeates in American society, black men cannot perform such strong and dominant hegemonic masculinity for fear that they will be seen as too aggressive or dangerous. In other words, “there is a tension in masculinity whereby masculinity is both something people expect you to demonstrate and something some people might want to escape” (Cooper, 2008, 146). Unfortunately, this is primarily a tension for black men, who want to have independence in performing and determining their identity, but are not granted such ease with being able to perform their masculinity by a society that stereotypes them and hinders them based on said stereotypes.

Despite this tension for black men, Obama held autonomy in his ability to shape his masculinity in a way that he chose, even if it was in accordance with societal expectations of

gender and race. While much of the aforementioned literature conceptualizes black masculinity as pathologized in the Western culture according to the media and white supremacy, it is important to note that there is existing literature that explains black masculinity in various and more complex ways. However, I chose to include the above literature to extrapolate the racist framework that African American men have to shape their masculinity within.

There is much research and rhetoric about race and masculinity framed around African American men because black men in the United States are so often stereotyped in the media. Thus, these racist discourses may affect black men, impacting perceptions of the self and others. Still, in an American context there are many other intersections between race and masculinity that affect the ways in which male-identifying individuals can perform their manhood. For example, Latino men in the US face a great deal of racism, and such racism affects how men can express their manhood and masculine traits. Here, Latino men are men who are of Latin America descent, which primarily includes Mexico, Puerto Rico, most of Central and South America, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti.

Latino Masculinity

Considering the social process of masculinity, one boy will come to be masculine in a different process than another, and something that pushes these differences in the social process is race. For Latino men, this process of masculinity is riddled with stereotypes and assumptions that non-Latino Americans project onto Latino men. Primarily, there is the common and overused “machismo” stereotype that implies the inherent hyper masculinity that is exerted within every Latino man, referring to being overtly aggressive, sexual, and tough. Identifying with one’s heritage can affect hyper masculinity, that is the more one identifies with their

ethnicity, and is involved with activities that relate to their ethnic group, the more one will behave in traditional and hyper masculine ways. This finding is consistent with research from both Abreu et. al (2000) and Saez et. al (2009), where both research teams found hyper masculinity and ethnicity associated with Latino men. Abreu et. al found that ethnic belonging, or the tendency to identify with one's ethnic group, was the best predictor of traditional masculinity where Latino men exhibited the highest level of traditional male gender roles (Abreu et. al, 2000, 75). A possible reason that Latino men exert more ethnic belonging and thus more traditional masculinity is using ethnic belonging as a mechanism to avoid negative effects of stereotypes that are attributed to men of color in the US. Without white privilege, it is better then to strongly identify with your group than in having no group at all. Thus, there is a connection between ethnicity, traditional masculinity, and hyper masculinity, whereas traditional masculinity often includes hyper masculine attitudes and roles.

These results are consistent with more recent research by Saez et. al who found that Latino men who strongly identify with their heritage exhibit more hyper masculinity. Hyper masculinity here is again synonymous with traditional masculinity, including aggressiveness, risk taking, sexism, and toughness. While both studies assess hyper masculinity and Latino men adhering to their heritage, both also address positive and negative qualities associated with the machismo character. The negative qualities are listed above, and are those that are also included with being hyper masculine. However, researchers also propose the opposite of machismo, "caballerismo," which refers to nurturance, family-centeredness, and being chivalrous (Saez et. al, 2009, 118). Furthermore, exhibiting these qualities commonly referred to as caballerismo

results in greater social support and greater satisfaction with one's overall life (Estrada & Arciniega, 2015, 191).

The pressure for Latino men to act under either the machismo or caballerismo tropes implies there is much to be considered for Latino men in the US who perform their masculinity in certain ways to reap different rewards. Part of why I am so interested in the social process of masculinity is because it is performed so differently depending on race, class, gender, age, socioeconomic background, family and family roles, etc. This plethora of complex social constructs affects each self-identifying man in a way that makes him act within some form of masculinity.

Similar to white and black men, Latino men and their masculinity is wrapped up in dynamic social structures that shape the way all men perform. Such structures contribute to the malleability of masculinity, which is why race is so relevant to shaping the way men act. Thus, while many of the men I interviewed didn't address the direct connection between their race and masculinity, existing literature does point to the many ways race does in fact shape manhood.

Media and Masculinity

Imbedded in the construction of masculinity is culture. Culture is a broad term that consists of every facet of society that makes one a part of a larger group. Inevitably, the media is tied up in this, as the media spreads ideas to people and constructs what we know as normal, how we are supposed to act, etc. Popular culture affects who and what gets on the cultural map in the first place, offering ways to think and feel about something (Gamson, 2016, 394). We should thus consider who is on the cultural map for masculinity, and the people who do not or cannot exist in the media.

Men's lifestyle magazines can be important sites for studying masculinities and formations of masculine practices (Tan et. al, 2013, 238). American media emphasizes idealized masculinity, a masculinity that is clean, and focuses on hygiene and personal care. This brand of masculinity is rooted in insecurities and self-doubt, and is generated by corporations to get men to buy products they think they need to enhance their appearance. Such capitalistic ideas in the media and advertisement exist for women too, but for men they also enhance strength and capability, emphasizing the masculinity most desired in a society.

Specifically relating to the process of masculinity, it is important to consider that everything we do, watch, buy, read, and generally interact with affects the construction of ourselves. Research from Tan et. al analyzed advertisements from the US, China, and Taiwan in men's lifestyle magazines, finding that the US has the most commercialized masculine culture; however, all three cultures showed the successful, preppy, smart looking man as the most prevalent representation of masculinity (2013). This study and past researchers on media analysis and masculinity show how individuals adhere to consumerism, and that we are the products we like and buy (Tan et. al, 2013, 241).

Media advertisements catered towards men prove to be useful sites to analyze masculinity and assess how they are constructed. Western advertisements have recently been trying to create more of a dialogue for openness in men's styles, particularly in regards to men wearing makeup. Similarly to the research mentioned above, we see a trend in consumerism and masculinity that emphasizes hygiene and taking care of oneself (Tan et. al, 2013). By pushing men to take better care of themselves in advertisements, mass media encourages men to be consumers of what is considered feminine (Harrison, 2008, 55), as Western cultures typically

conflate makeup and personal skincare and hygiene with femininity. While femininity is related to these things, traditional masculinity in the US is typically socially constructed around self-sufficiency, activity, mastery, courage, toughness, autonomy, emotional detachment, and competitiveness (Harrison, 2008, 55). These traits provide a general framework for analyzing advertisements about masculinity, but they also place men into disparate categories. By putting men in more fluid categories, masculinity and manhood becomes a space for diversity and doesn't exclude certain races, gender identities, ages, or classes.

It is worth noting that Harrison wrote this article in 2008, so images of masculinity in mass media outlets have changed a little. Still, Western media has a way to go. Consider the commercial for "Alpha Male Protein," in which a man was yelling through the TV about a protein powder that could make men stronger, more manly, and help them to get through the current crisis of masculinity we are in today. This commercial preached hyper masculinity and toxic masculinity, as it aggressively stated that men need to gain more muscle strength in order to be real, masculine men. Conversely, there is the Gillette ad that recently came out, which was quite the opposite of the Alpha Male Protein ad. The Gillette ad conflates being a caring and nurturing person with positive masculinity, encouraging fathers and men to be kind and giving instead of adhering to toxic masculine dominance and strength. Overall, the commodification and commercialization of advertisements catered to men demonstrate the need to assess how these media forms affect masculinity.

Masculinity and Pornography

There are an enormous number of media outlets regarding masculinity and the shaping of men, thus it is critical to consider various media outlets and how each may affect men

differently. For example, masculinity is shaped by advertisements that are catered to men depicting strength and physical capabilities that all men should have (Tan et. al, 2013). On the other hand, there is the porn industry that constructs masculinity based on the male body and privileging penetration (Dines, 2015). Thus, it is increasingly important for researchers on masculinity to look at the construction of manhood in pornographic film and photography, as feminists argue that porn is pleasurable because it sexualizes the inequality between men and women, and degrades women for the male viewer (Dines, 2015, 366).

While this industry has been growing since the 60s, there is little reliable information about pornographic content and relationships depicted in such content (Escoffier, 2003, 139). Because of the lack of information accessible to the general public about porn, it is important to consider that although we may not talk about it as much, it still constructs manhood and demonstrates masculinity. In her research on straight men seeking other straight men to watch pornographic content with, Jane Ward assesses the hyper masculinity that men must assert in order to do such an act (Ward, 2004, 29). Men will assert this hyper masculinity by mentioning stereotypical male things, such as drinking beer while watching together, or degrading women in their search for other men. Such actions and interests by those who identify as heterosexual show the complex relationship between one's sexual identity and interests, demonstrating how heterosexuality and queerness are not innate aspects. Rather, both are complex and defined by the people who label themselves, or the cultural and historical framework of the ways we label and stigmatize people (2004).

In terms of masculinity, Dines argues that porn produces masculinity as a category of material existence, elevating men and degrading women. In terms of race and masculinity as

sites of pornography, Dines considers centuries of white masculinity debasing black men as sexual and aggressive savages, comparing this to hegemonic masculinity today where men's dominance over women was allowed to continue (Connell, 2005, 832). Despite this debasing of black men, white men are fascinated with both interracial porn and "Gonzo porn," which involves manipulation and violence against women's bodies.

Both media and pornography are relevant to constructing masculinity, and are relevant to my study of DePauw men, because so many college-aged men are engaging with porn. Last year, 26% of Pornhub's visitors were 18-24 years old², and outside of Pornhub, 79% of 18-30 year old American men watch internet pornography at least once a month.³ So, although none of my participants mentioned porn specifically, it is still important to consider in terms of what constructs masculinity, and in terms of asking questions about intersections of race and masculinity. Why is it that white men celebrate and love watching the black male body in porn (Dines, 2015), but control and stereotype this body in real life? Perhaps because of the concept of a fetishization—the interest in and disgust with something at the same time. From a social psychoanalytic perspective, individuals show an inherent interest and opposition to those who are ethnically different than us (in this case "us" is the white male), because we want to attain what they have, but never can because we don't belong to this other ethnic group. Thus, we are both obsessed with and disgusted by what the Other has, because we can never grasp it (Malešević, 2004, 150). We see this imbedded in race and masculinity, where white men socially control black men, but are still fascinated by them and their manhood (2015). Black masculinity

² <https://www.pornhub.com/insights/2018-year-in-review>

³ <https://fightthenewdrug.org/by-the-numbers-see-how-many-people-are-watching-porn-today/>

is therefore affected by white male control and dominance, and is hindered according to hegemonic masculine controls and practices.

In summary, the above literature demonstrates the construction of masculinity from different conceptual, ideological, and institutional approaches – evolutionary studies and explanations, social constructionist perspectives, sociobiology, race, media, and pornography. Each of these sites contributes to how men overall construct their masculinity, and can contribute to analyzing how the men at DePauw University view and shape their own performance of masculinity. Although not every man I interviewed discussed what each of the scholars did in the above literature, I can still gain insights about the workings of masculinity from those scholars. The above literature has given me a framework to analyze and interview 10 self-identified male students and faculty/staff at DePauw.

There are unlimited ways to view masculinity and manhood, and just as many ways that researchers have already done so. The question I therefore now pose is: how does masculinity change when looked at through the lens of a private, liberal arts university in rural Indiana?

Methodology: DePauw University

DePauw University has 2,109 students as of the 2018-2019 Spring semester. Forty-eight percent of these students are male, according to DePauw's enrollment statistics⁴, but this doesn't account for the various gender identities that one may prefer to identify as. Nevertheless, due to time constraints and feasibility, I can only interview a small number of this population. Thus, I chose to only interview those who I knew self-identified as men, and who I thought would feel comfortable enough with me to tell me their stories. That being said, all of the men I interviewed

⁴ <https://sites.google.com/a/depauw.edu/ir/current-enrollment-summary>

were cis-gender men, and all but two were heterosexual. I completed 10 interviews total, six students and four faculty/staff, two of which were professors, and two of which were staff. The men I interviewed differed in racial, socioeconomic, age, and demographic backgrounds. The age of participants varied, as I tried interviewing from a diverse group of ages, ranging from students to faculty. Thus, I had students from the age of 21, to a staff/faculty members in their 50s. As my interviews took place, I realized how critical it would be to center my research and thesis to explain the men I interviewed. I tried to interview men coming from diverse racial and ethnic identities, but it is still important to understand that most of the men on this campus are white, 67.5% to be exact. Five of the men I interviewed identified as white, one as Native American/white, one as Puerto Rican, one as Afro-Latino, and the other two identified as black/African American.

To maintain anonymity, I changed the names of my participants, renaming them to be able to explain their stories in depth. While I can't generalize ideas from this small group of participants to all men, I can analyze what they say in relation to the literature. The participants address topics within masculinity that scholars also highlight. Thus, these 10 interviews are worth investigating because they provide instructive lenses into important issues surrounding how men practice masculinity at DePauw, and they can be in conversation with existing scholars who assess masculinity.

I first asked my interviewees a series of demographic questions, to which they only shared with me what they felt comfortable saying. Most mentioned their racial identity, where they grew up, sexual orientation, and how old they were. Additionally, I asked specific questions about life at DePauw, such as what they are involved in on campus, (if they are students) what

their major is, and what sort of classes at this university have they taken thus far. The next part of the interview was semi-structured, where I asked broad questions about masculinity, then asked follow-up questions if I was especially interested in something. For example, I asked my participants, “What does it mean to be a man?” and, “How do you show your masculinity at DePauw?” I also asked questions about family and growing up, such as, “How were you taught to act masculine growing up?”

The methodological theory I employed for analyzing my interview data is grounded theory. Grounded theory centers what participants say, and focuses on a process or an action that has distinct steps that occur over time (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By making connections from what my interviewees say to what existing scholars have already said, I use a bottom-up process that informs my findings. Thus, grounded theory allows me to consider masculinity, and what my interviewees say about their manhood as a social process occurring over time. I also kept the social constructionist framework in mind when analyzing these interviews, considering how each man answered differently based on their specific social situation and interactions. Overall, the respondents generally characterized their ideas of masculinity in terms of sports, body parts, Greek life, brotherhood, education, location of DePauw, and leadership roles/dominance.

Demographic Information of my Participants

Chuck	Student, 22, Caucasian, Heterosexual
Bob	Student, 22, Native American/Caucasian, Gay/Queer
Jon	Faculty/Staff, Puerto Rican, Heterosexual
Eli	Faculty/Staff, Caucasian, Heterosexual
Nathan	Faculty/Staff, Black, Gay/Queer

Matt	Faculty/Staff, Caucasian, Heterosexual
Cody	Student, 22, Afro Latino, Heterosexual
Tim	Student, 21, Caucasian, Heterosexual
Dan	Student, 22, Caucasian, Heterosexual
Harry	Student, 22, African American, Heterosexual

Sports

“My dad’s expectations were for me to play sports, be in boy scouts...there was an expectation for me to be soldier-like and athletic, that’s what was expected of me...I played sports to appease him, but I didn’t really enjoy it.” -Jon, faculty/staff

One of the main themes that emerged from my data was the concept of sports. Every participant besides one mentioned sports and physical capability as being masculine, saying that they were encouraged from a young age to play them as if it was expected. Above, Jon mentioned that he played sports in his youth to meet his father’s expectations, and Bob reiterated this notion of being expected to play sports as a young boy:

“I guess the stereotypical American guy plays sports, drinks beer... in my head that’s what it means to be a man.” -Bob/student

Similar to Bob, Eli understood men as people who engage in strength building activities. When asked about how he shows his masculinity, Eli said:

“Sports...I think of that as a way of showing it, I lift weights, I work out, to me that seems connected with manliness or something.” -Eli/faculty/staff

While Eli didn't mention the idea of playing sports as a tough-guy façade, this idea of playing sports and acting tough for reputational reasons is fascinating, considering each of my interviewees brought up sports as way to act masculine. Chuck brought up similar ideas of linking reputation and performance with playing sports and engaging in physically laborious activity:

“Mainly just in the way I present myself...sort of in the things I'm involved with...things I'm interested in and spend my time doing, being interested in sports...” -Chuck, student

The learning process involved in socialization often involves engaging in gender-specific activities that reinforce binaries of masculinity or femininity. Gender-segregated play, such as boys' tendencies to play sports — violent ones in particular — are ways for boys to signify their masculine selves (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009, 282). Play is a part of the process of growing up, so no matter which way a kid may play, it is a part of the way they are socialized to act as a human. Thus, my interviewees demonstrated how their masculinity was a social process that was dependent on sports and physical activity, which aligns with supposed toughness and showing less emotions than those who don't play sports. As such, Nathan said:

“A lot of messages I received growing up from my family were about an interest in things like sports. My dad was very involved in sports, as growing up he was a coach...that was his form of connecting with us, and so being involved with masculine sports like football and basketball [was important]...acting like a man [meant] not being weak.” -Nathan, faculty/staff

This relationship between playing sports and not being weak is a critical role in the *socialization process* of becoming a man, as it demonstrates that being physically active and

strong means being mentally strong, which are both things men should be. Additionally, when young men are inclined to play or watch violent sports, it can lead to aggression and violence in them in the future (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009, 282). From an evolutionary perspective, playing sports may be an expression of an innate male tendency to act violently, or at least perform in a more physically active way. According to both evolutionists and some of the men I interviewed, the tendency to play sports and show physical strength can be explained by higher levels of testosterone, or such behavior can be explained by socialization processes that expect men to behave these ways.

Body Parts

“What does it mean to be a man?” “To have a penis.” -Chuck, student

When asked what does it mean to be a man, every one of the subjects hesitated, and verbally paused to consider this question. They truly seemed concerned by their answers, because their faces looked nervous and the length of their verbal pause showed apprehension. When asked, Chuck said: “You have a penis.” Then he laughed nervously. His nervous laughter hints that he could have been joking, or perhaps could have felt uncomfortable equating a penis with masculinity. Either way, Chuck is the only participant who mentioned the penis as the primary definition of being a man, yet we see this in existing literature on masculinity; the penis of central importance, representing power in terms of masculinity. For example, there is the ability of the penis to be able to penetrate, placing it at the center of sexuality, privileging heterosexual and male-centered sex (Loe, 2004). The relationship between the male body and how it biologically functions remains pertinent to masculinity, and was emphasized in my discussion with Eli:

“I think that men have certain tendencies to be bad...I read this line in a book that said, “the leading cause of violence is maleness.” I think there are some biological factors...nature and nurture are both definitely there.” -Eli, faculty/staff

While not addressing body parts or the penis specifically, Eli here is getting at the “nature” part of masculinity. In connecting male behavior to evolutionary aspects, he aligns with the results of Dabbs and other evolutionary psychologists who find that testosterone can be a measure of how violently a man will behave (Dabbs, 1994).

Penis-centered stereotypes are at the core of being a man, and are important to consider in regards to my interviewees who all self-identified as men, and connected their gender identity with their assigned sex at birth. Because my participant pool was all cisgender men, they all were able to explain their masculine identity in terms of how they were raised, including how their fathers and/or mass media taught them. Thus, it is important to consider how trans*masculine students’ identities are different from cisgender men, especially because the literature thus far primarily addresses information about heterosexual, white, cisgender men (Jourian, 2017, 248).

When considering trans*masculine⁵ men, we learn that masculine practices occur at many different sites in many different ways. For example, in both my research and Jourian’s research, most self-identifying men mentioned their fathers as being conveyors of dominant masculinities, and these men were able to either go against their fathers’ masculine

⁵ The asterisk after trans* is meant to signify trans* as an umbrella concept; thus including transgender men, non-binary, and non-conforming folks, among other self-identifying terms one may choose to use. However, there is a debate surrounding the asterisk, as some say that the asterisk denotes a footnote, and trans people are not footnotes. Thus, I have only chosen to include an asterisk when an author uses an asterisk in their work.

performances, or imitate their fathers' masculinity within themselves (Jourian, 2017, 252). Men like Tim don't mind adhering to the stereotypical masculine rhetoric taught to them:

"I guess personally, my dad always told me to be a gentleman, and while that has its own connotations, the honest principle behind that I try to uphold." -Tim, student

Tim didn't elaborate on the "connotations" behind being a gentleman, but what I think he meant are the negative connotations that are sometimes associated with chivalry from a feminist viewpoint, where women want to be granted freedom and independence and don't need this from a man. In any case, we see another participant mentioning the role their father had on their traditional masculine ideals.

While identifying the effect of their fathers on their masculinity, there are still differences in the access to privilege for cisgender men. Dan articulates this, saying:

"The trans community, and them being masculine isn't considered a privilege...it's only a privilege to a certain group of men." -Dan, student

Thus, one must not only perform how men typically perform, but one must also look like what men are supposed to look like to access male privilege. Therefore, it is necessary we consider who society allows to be a man, and how these definitions are wrapped up in stereotypical ideas of what men look like defined by rigid gender binaries set by societal norms.

Greek Life

"Living there was some of the best times of my college experience, but also the worst." -Bob, student

Greek life inevitably came up, as there is a large population of men involved in fraternity culture at DePauw University. When asked questions about their fraternity, men would often

discuss emotions, or lack thereof. Bob, who said it was the worst and best experience of his collegiate life, also said:

“I feel like I couldn’t talk about what was going on in my private life...it’s all bottled up. There were never tears, no emotions...we had a sharing circle where people would share secrets, but they would do it with a dead face. Other would say they were your bros...but there was a disconnect from emotions. There was a support system there, not an emotional one, but it was somewhere [to go] and people to hang out with.” -Bob, student

Bob conceptualizes his time in the fraternity as good and bad, because he had a physical space to go, but no emotional space to turn to. Similarly, Jon mentioned that when he was in college, he joined a fraternity for the emotional connections. He witnessed such deep emotions when one of his family members died, and all of that person’s fraternity brothers showed up and were very emotional. Yet when he joined his own fraternity at his university, he said it was quite different:

“I wanted to join for the brotherhood I saw at the funeral, but when I joined my organization, it was the opposite...there was hazing, there was degrading people, it was demeaning... people who were your friends at first treated you insignificant for that new member program...and it was harmful to your psyche. I think there was a lot of emotional stuff that men can project onto other men for power...after I was initiated I wouldn’t hang out with [those] people.” -Jon, faculty/staff

In terms of being surrounded by a bunch of cisgender men who all chose to be in a fraternity most for an interest in the brotherhood, it seems possible to create an environment that is open to

discussing emotions and feelings, but that is not the case in Bob's house. However, some men disagree with this, like Cody:

“My Greek house has always had a low number...there was never anyone testing my masculinity...so I've been able to explore my emotional side, and just allow me to be vulnerable with my fraternity brothers.” -Cody, student

For these three men, there is a correlation between the size of the fraternity they were in and the effects those men had on being able to be emotional in that setting. Both the men involved in IFC fraternities, who have larger numbers of members on DePauw's campus report not being able to reflect on and discuss their feelings. Cody is involved in a smaller Greek organization of fraternities, NPHC, which are historically African American and have lower numbers of members on DePauw's campus.

For my participants, it seems the bigger the organization, the less accessibility men have to being able to discuss feelings and emotions, but with the more men present one would think there would be more opportunity to discuss such feelings. Still, the current literature on traditional masculinity and the social constructs involved point to toughness, dominance, stoicism, and emotional detachment (Harrison, 2008). Such a rigid view of masculinity and the ways men have been socialized to act are seeping into the fraternity culture and giving men no outlets to express emotions, encouraging them to be quiet about their issues. By conflating stoicism with strength, men aren't granted access to discuss their personal feelings and issues, which further perpetuates gender norms that men can't be emotional, while ostracizing men who do choose to show emotion (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Harrison, 2008).

Sweeney (2014) analyzed the hedonistic and risky behaviors men would frequently partake in if a part of Greek life, but acknowledged that these were primarily privileged, upper-class, white men. However, my participants involved in Greek life didn't address such hedonistic behaviors, instead choosing to discuss how their fraternity has provided them with positive brotherhood experiences. Chuck says that being in a fraternity is how he acts masculine, among other things:

“I act masculine in the way I present myself...being in a fraternity, things I spend my time doing, being interested in sports, being involved in STEM [Science, technology, engineering, mathematics]...” -Chuck, student

Then, when asked if the fraternity has affected his masculinity, Chuck said:

“It's helpful, it's helped me figure things out, figure out what I want to do, and open my mind to new perspectives...it's a good network for guys to keep you in check. -Chuck, student.” -Chuck, student

Considering that Chuck is a white, upper-class fraternity man, what he believes contradicts what Sweeney's participants said. However, it is worth noting that at DePauw, some fraternities and the men that are members of them have a bad reputation, one that stems from sexual assault cases, hazing issues, and other problematic behavior coming from members of those chapters. One fraternity on campus recently was punished because of their reckless behavior that resulted in a serious injury for one of their first-year members. That being said, I imagine that the men I interviewed would not want to reveal any hedonistic, unsafe acts they partake in, perhaps for fear of either being judged or even punished (even though this information is confidential).

Brotherhood

Brotherhood also seems to be an important factor for men involved in Greek organizations. While Jon mentioned he joined for a sense of brotherhood that would connect him emotionally to his brothers in the house, Tim said:

“The reasons you join in the first place, for a lot of these guys, is for brotherhood, which treats everyone fairly with respect. The main focus of brotherhood is to be positive, but I think it can get misconstrued to mean protective...when something extremely bad has happened, like Title IX, it’s like you gotta protect the brotherhood, or gotta protect your brothers, when that shouldn’t be the case.” -Tim, student

The idea of brotherhood is important to consider when men report joining for that reason, but don’t experience close connections while in the fraternity. As Tim said, the notion of brotherhood is a positive one that should encourage men to be better and be there for each other, but sometimes this could mean protecting your friends when they’ve done something wrong.

Whether discussing the lack of emotions, the brotherhood, or the protection provided by the fraternity, there is a sense of privilege in the homogenous lifestyle of fraternity men. Fraternities are so homogenous because of the overwhelming amount of upper-class, cisgender, heterosexual, and white men that exist in the fraternities at DePauw University, at least at the level of IFC, where most of my interviewees were involved in. This privilege of the homogeneity comes from being in a space of only cisgender men, as is privileged and normalized in our society to identify with the sex you were assigned at birth. Furthermore, there are links to heterosexuality and masculinity in the fraternity, as men in these houses construct their identities based upon being fun and sexually involved with women, and the idea of being a “real man” is

constructed based upon working hard, being a leader, and having a heterosexual relationship (Sweeney, 2014; Dines, 2015). Thus, this creates a homophobic and exclusionary environment to trans*men, and/or queer men.

Despite this exclusionary environment, the general lack of emotions wasn't only discussed in terms of being involved in Greek life. One of the students, Tim, said that the idea of what people think it means to be a man is in terms of being strong and stoic, and another student, Cody, answered that to be a man means to never show emotions. There was an understanding about the lack of emotion from both students and faculty/staff. A professor, Eli, said that he showed his masculinity through being tough and "not being a wimp," and Nathan said that growing up:

There was no crying, and never any validating emotion...when it comes to masculinity, there's all these ways they've been socialized, and to be in touch with emotions is not usually a positive thing. -Nathan, faculty/staff

Knowledge is Power: DePauw Faculty/Staff vs. Students

"I've always been hyperaware of how I'm presenting in spaces...it's often on my mind." -

Nathan, faculty/staff

One important element of only interviewing men at DePauw is being able to draw conclusions about how the environment of a small liberal arts college affects the men that teach or go here. I asked each man how DePauw's environment specifically affects their masculinity, or if it did at all, and the answers were different between the faculty/staff and students. The faculty and staff that I interviewed were more inclined to assess their masculinity and the effects of it, while being self-reflective of those effects and how masculinities may vary across different

men. Matt, one of the professors I interviewed, believed that DePauw and his peers here challenged the way he reflects on masculinity and the issues with gender norms. Furthermore, when I asked about DePauw's impact on his masculinity, he replied:

“DePauw colleagues try to instill gender norms differently. I have never heard a DePauw colleague say something to a kid like, ‘You’re acting like a pussy.’ My peers reinforce conscious attempts to recognize gender norms and behavior.” -Matt, faculty/staff

Here, Matt poses that his male colleagues positively affect his ability to be able to recognize gender norms and go against those by reflecting on how problematic masculinity can be. He also emphasized how working at DePauw and being a professor has made him “critical of gender norms” and for his line of work and for what he teaches, he said he was self-reflective of masculinity and what it means to be a man.

Similarly, Nathan, a member of DePauw's faculty that I interviewed explained how he is self-reflective and critical of his masculinity:

“I think about things from a sociological perspective...[not all] are what I particularly ascribe to...I've always been hyperaware of how I'm presenting in spaces...it's often on my mind, because when it comes to masculinity there's all these ways in which they've been socialized. Being here as a staff person...when it comes to being in spaces where I'm one of the few men, I try to be very mindful of my privilege and not trying to over speak or cut off or undermine any of my women identifying colleagues.” -Nathan, faculty/staff

As Nathan gets at the idea of masculinity being a social process, he is able to then be

critical of the various ways men act masculine, and reflect on those as either harmful or helpful to the spaces he plays a role in. Thus, Nathan understands the flexibility of masculinity, which is what the literature I have focused on adheres to. Masculinity and femininity are social processes starting from birth, as society classifies and groups people based upon calling them a boy or girl, and then linking their behavior with gender-approved toys and props (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009). Our culture also tends to link certain biological traits and facets of appearances to one's gender, such as the characterizing of men's bodies based on social expectations of having strength, muscles, and being fit (Tan et. al, 2013). However, by linking physical capabilities to being a man, we leave out communities such as people with disabilities. Furthermore, it emphasizes the expectations that we look and act like our self-identified gender (Catalano, 2015).

When considering men must look a certain way based on mass media and the many other ways we've been socialized, trans-male students are pushed towards hormonal and surgical changes to feel more visible in their gender identities to look like "real men" (Catalano, 2015). In any case, when conflating sex and gender, or the biological makeup and one's identity, it limits male-identifying individuals in the ways they would want to perform their identities.

The faculty/staff that I interviewed understood the malleability of masculinity because of their reflection on this topic more so than the students. While Nathan and Matt use sociological perspectives and gender norms to explain the process of performing masculinity, Jon gave a lengthy definition for what it means to be a man:

"It's about relationships...being caring, being respectable, being loving...are some of the things I attribute to being a good person, but also [to being] a man. I think I act

differently at times when I'm socializing with men...it's a weird thing to juggle with sometimes, it's not healthy." -Jon, faculty/staff

Jon went on to say that depending on the friend group he is around, he may talk about or be interested in certain things depending on those relationships with different people. He mentioned that this wasn't healthy, which implies that he realizes it is problematic to have to perform certain ways around certain groups or around individual men. Being self-reflective and aware of how they do or don't act masculine is helpful for these faculty/staff members in considering how some forms of acting masculine are detrimental. For example, some performances of masculinity can result in gender differences and inequality. Sweeney contends that sexist behavior is the result of socialization experiences that develop men to "do gender," linking sexual performance to the objectification of women (2013). Thus, Nathan and Jon are conceptualizing such gender behavior that privileges them, while oppressing women.

While it was the faculty and staff at DePauw that were especially aware of how they presented and challenged masculinity, there was one student, Cody, who was reflective of how he acts masculine:

"Coming to college, my masculinity was my privilege. I was able to get around a lot of racial discrimination...and I'm able to walk across campus and not fear for my life, or hear any slurs yelled at me. I didn't become aware of my masculinity until I came to DePauw's campus...it sucks, but it's a privilege for me." -Cody, student

Here, Cody says he noticed his male privilege when he got to college at DePauw University. He noticed what Jourian noticed in his study of trans students on another college campus; that institutions portrayed dominant and privileged masculinities through rape culture,

athletics, Greek life, and whiteness, while pathologizing and not working to serve women of color, trans students, and non-binary students. Thus, both Cody and Jourian notice male privilege through the actions that some men take, such as hollering at and degrading women, and through the inaction men and universities take, such as refusing to consider gender-neutral bathrooms.

The way that the four faculty and staff I interviewed were able to conceptualize masculinity and be critical of it relates to Foucault's notion that knowledge is power. Knowledge is an exercise of power, and power is a function of knowledge. Likewise, power isn't necessarily a negative term, instead, it produces reality and provides knowledge and truths to the individual (Foucault, 1979, 194). According to the idea that knowledge is power, these men who openly learn about and go on to discuss the social construction of masculinity can readily critique the rigid ways we have constructed how men should act, and thus be more open for understanding various interpretations of being a man.

While the knowledge my participants had because of their age or time working at the university were important in considering their understanding of masculinity, the involvement in different spheres of education and the knowledge provided by that are worth noting as well. For example, Chuck says he presents himself as masculine by being involved in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics):

“There's a decent amount of girls in my courses, but they are predominantly male...I'd say surprisingly I've had more females in my Computer Science classes.” -Chuck, student

As Chuck reiterates the stereotype that women aren't typically involved in science and

mathematics, he uses this stereotype to evaluate his masculinity and the ways he acts like a man on campus. Chuck is also the one who equates being a man with having a penis. On the other hand, Cody explains his major as something that helped him understand masculinity.

“[For my major] I’ve taken a masculinity course and I became aware of my own masculinity.” -Cody, student

Furthermore, while not addressing his major directly, Dan says:

“In some of my classes, we’ve talked about race, identity, and gender, so I would say being at DePauw I’ve learned a lot more about masculinity and [being here] definitely makes you think about it.” -Dan, student

Additionally, Tim mentioned that he takes classes outside STEM courses, and for example has taken a women’s studies class. With this in mind, he was able to trace the ways fraternities on DePauw’s campus can have “traits of heteronormativity and toxic masculinity.” The access to such terms typically come from courses in the Social Sciences, such as women’s studies.

Cody, Tim, and Dan are involved in majors in the social sciences, while Chuck is involved in the Science and Math department. These three show a general understanding of how their masculinity affects them, while Chuck doesn’t reflect much on masculinity besides his genitalia. Thus, there is a correlation between knowing more about masculinity and being involved in social science classes. This correlation could be useful for DePauw to consider when trying to teach more students about the processes of masculinity, thus having students consider privilege and power imbedded into masculinity.

In regards to one’s major affecting one’s view on masculinity, Harry said:

“I feel like I made a bad decision because of my major...I’m gonna be making less money because of my major, and I know my computer science friends will be making like \$100,000 and I’ll be making \$50,000.” -Harry, student

Harry mentions the importance of making less money, because he said earlier that he thought to be a man means to be the caretaker, the head of the family, and to provide for the family and take responsibility. Thus, according to Harry, he is less of a man because he won’t be making as much money as he needs to provide for his family because of his major and education at DePauw. This is critical in terms of considering the different ways that different majors and education paths affect men and their opinions of their manhood.

The Location of DePauw

“This community, not just DePauw, has a particular way of viewing masculinity.” -Jon, faculty/staff

Besides what these men said about their knowledge and education regarding masculinity, the location of DePauw University was important for some of the men I interviewed. For example, Jon recalls a story about a gas station in the town of Greencastle, where DePauw is located:

“Recently I went to a gas station [in Greencastle] and somebody flat out asked me ‘Are you gay?’ and I had never interacted with this person...their perception of what is masculine is somebody who drives a pick up truck or is involved in agriculture...somebody from the city maybe doesn’t match their perception of what a man is. This community, not just DePauw, has a particular way of viewing masculinity.” -Jon, faculty/staff

Considering the location of DePauw University, what Jon says is critical to the construction of masculinity, in both the outer community and at DePauw. Jon's ideas of how the location can construct masculinity is similar to what discursive psychology says about masculinity; that masculinity includes sets of variables and practices that are developed and negotiated in relation to cultural contexts (Wetherall & Edley, 2014). Jon goes on to say that at DePauw specifically, we have a particular way of viewing masculinity because we have so many student athletes, and that influences the behavior of some men. Thus, Jon conceptualizes DePauw's masculinity as being imbedded within stereotypes surrounding being able to play sports, similar to what Schrock and Schwalbe say about gender-segregated play and the assumption that men will play sports to assert their masculinity (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009).

Both Jon and Harry cite the ways that DePauw has affected their masculinity. While Jon says it is about what the people are involved in, like sports, Harry says his masculinity is more shaped by the fact that he is constantly engaging with different perspectives of various masculine identities. In this way, Harry is getting at the post-structuralist idea of identity formation, that identities are multiple and shifting based on their interactions and intersections in everyday life (Connell, 2005). Thus, both Harry and Jon demonstrate post-structuralism by citing the interactions of identities as shaping their own, and as shaping structural formations of masculinity.

Leadership Roles and Dominance

“I tend to think the man should step forward” -Eli, faculty/staff

Not surprisingly, another theme that emerged was that of dominance and power that is automatically granted to men in our Western society. Many participants mentioned some sort of

gender norm that they saw and understood, and most acknowledged there was power and privilege imbedded in such norms and roles. For instance, while Cody described being a man as, “Never showing emotions and being the breadwinner” he was also critical of this:

“For me, to be a man, honestly would be the very stereotypical images; don’t cry, never show emotions, strong, ya know, bringing home the bacon...that’s what I see in the media. I’ve only had a mother in my life, so I was raised to be a man from a woman...I understand both sides, like how to be a man without being toxic.” -Cody, student

While other participants didn’t mention “bringing home the bacon” exactly, others mentioned how men in the familial role are supposed to be leaders and breadwinners, like Chuck who said:

“Typically in media, they’re shown as powerful...like leaders in a traditional household.”
-Chuck, student

Similarly, Eli mentions a man’s role in the household as well:

“Some of the ideas I have are traditional or old-fashioned...if there is a dangerous situation, I tend to think the man should step forward. My wife and I have kids, and it seems like when it comes to discipline, my role is to be the bad cop, or the enforcer of the rules. My parents actions were pointing towards traditional roles...my mom would never say, “here let’s do these chores that I do,” but my dad would make me help him with [things like] the car, or mowing the lawn.” -Eli, faculty/staff

Both Eli and Chuck understand parts of their masculinity coming from traditional or old-fashioned ways men are expected to act in the household, which don’t include domestic chores but include doing things like being the leader, disciplining children, or helping with the more physically challenging chores such as mowing the lawn or helping with cars. Thus, men are

leaders because of their leading of the house, which is connected to physical strength and making money. American media has a tendency to categorize masculinity based on physical strength, prioritizing physicality over cultural attainment (Tan et. al, 2013). Historically, manhood and being a leader have been defined by size. Because of an economy based on production, the bigger the man, the better the worker (2013).

However, being a leader can be more than physical. Harry conceptualizes his leadership as being involved on campus:

“I feel like men typically or traditionally are supposed to have leadership roles...just being a leader on campus, going to events and what not, actively showing face.” -Harry, student

While Jon assesses stereotypes surrounding leaders:

“Sometimes leadership is seen as you need to be really aggressive, and being soft or caring is not helpful... I feel like being caring is equally as powerful, but sometimes it’s seen as weak.” -Jon, faculty/staff

What Jon is addressing here is that while men are traditionally expected to be leaders, they are also expected to be aggressive, and if they show a more caring, “soft” side in their leadership roles, they will be seen as a bad leader and less of a man. Not only is leadership connected to masculinity, but it is correlated with being tough, and not showing weakness. Thus, leadership and masculinity are both gender configuring practices that are expectations placed onto men because of societal standards defined by the media, the family, and other institutions that construct how we are supposed to act (Connell, 2005).

Most of the men I interviewed addressed at some point that they thought men are, or are supposed to be, leaders based on stereotypical ideas of masculinity. Some of these stereotypes comes from the ways their families raised them, while other ideas come from the media and how popular culture represents ideas of masculinity. The many ways that these men have learned to be a leader and to be a man demonstrates the social construction of manhood, and the social process imbedded in shaping our identities, and specifically shaping masculinity.

If there are so many different ways masculinity can be shaped, it is important to consider perhaps the biggest shaper of identities; mass media. Many of the interviewees mentions something about the media. For instance, Harry says:

“I feel like there is a controversy over what it means to be a man...you have to be very strong, and not show emotions, but I feel like that comes from the media, and how people portray men in the media.” -Harry, student

Thus, the media is another way of constructing masculinity, as it reinforces social expectations based on shared meanings of gender. Such expectations create rigid ways for men to act, limiting their ability to be themselves. We must consider then how film, television, pornography, and other mass media outlets contribute to masculinity, adding to the ways in which masculinity is a social process that is quite flexible based on the media that men primarily utilize.

Discussion

Overall, I found that men can construct their masculinity in many different ways, but still adhere to the same stereotypes about masculinity and use such stereotypes to shape their own self. Considering most of the men I interviewed mentioned sports, Greek life, education, and

leadership roles, they construct their masculinity in accordance with each other and many similar facets of social life. However, each of these men come from different backgrounds of families, socioeconomic status, locations, religions, etc. The fact that they come from so many different walks of life, yet adhere to similar notions of masculinity, demonstrates how masculinity is loaded with rigid stereotypes that define men and limit the ways they can perform their masculinity.

On the other hand, I found differences in the men I interviewed as well. While a couple discuss body parts as shaping manhood, others point to how their peers in their fraternity shape how they express emotions. The differences in some answers, and similarities within others, points to how masculinity is a complex and *malleable social process* that cannot be bound by rigid binaries or strict gender norms.

Conclusion

In the beginning stages of this research, I understood masculinity and femininity as separate spheres that existed in the social world, dependent upon environmental aspects of everyday life. During the process of research, I discovered that while there was an abundance of scholarship dedicated to studying masculinity from a sociological perspective, I wanted to expand on that from the lens of men at DePauw University. DePauw University's environment influences what a specific view of what masculinity can look like, considering the small size of this university, coupled with the high concentration of Greek life.

Both the existing scholarship and the interview data from my participants paints a narrative of a broader, more complex view of masculinity. By putting both in conversation together, the story that it creates demonstrates how dynamic masculinity is. Media can affect a

man by showing him that all men must be dominant, physically strong leaders. Where physical strength can often be a marker of leadership, so can the race of a man. According to some scholars, a man's race often affects how limited he is in the ability to act traditionally masculine. For example, Obama had to navigate his blackness and his masculinity to be considered a good leader (Cooper, 2008). However, none of my participants mentioned race as a signifier of how they act masculine. Again, the differences in literature and interview responses shows the sheer complexity imbedded in masculinity. Perhaps these differences are a matter of micro versus macro, and that the individual wasn't granted enough time to explain macro and structural racism in regards to masculinity.

Limitations

Considering the constraint of time, there were other limitations in this research as well. Despite the limited time to conduct interviews and collect data, the number of men I interviewed limited my ability to be able to generalize across populations and explore other races and gender identities. For example, there is a substantial international student population on DePauw's campus, where many of those international students come from countries in Asia. I did not speak to any of these men, and therefore could not give attention to Asian males at DePauw or include existing literature about Asian masculinity. Thus, the scope of my participants were limited in their race and country of origin. Further, they are mostly heterosexual, and all are cisgender. There is also the matter that all of my participants are able-bodied men who do not present any signs of physical disability. Nor was mental disability discussed in the interviews.

As a result of personally knowing all of the men I interviewed, there was a potential for social desirability bias. Social desirability bias is the idea that subjects may answer researchers a

certain way that is more socially acceptable and permissible. I expect this because of recent incidents involving fraternities on our campus, and the fear of being judged. I also believe that they know what they and their members are doing wrong; so they wouldn't want to reveal such secrets to a female student interviewing them about masculinity. My study is therefore limited in this way, because the social desirability bias in some of the answers perhaps got in the way of the full truth, truth that could have helped me further analyze masculinity on this campus.

Future Directions

I consider this thesis and the research to be a building block which myself and future scholars can build on and add to. As I mentioned before my interview data, these men give valuable information about their perception of masculinity at DePauw, highlighting certain issues that come from aspects of their own and others' manhood. For instance, some address that they don't feel comfortable sharing their emotions around their male peers. Others discuss the privilege in being a man as feeling safe, as one man mentioned he is able to walk across campus and not fear for his life. These issues, such as refusing to share emotions, privilege, and safety, illuminate the future work myself and scholars have to do to address gender inequality and safety on college campuses.

Furthermore, the limitations of my research illuminate how I could continue this study in the future. As I only interviewed able-bodied men, future research should include men with disabilities. Such research would be more inclusive in recognizing how all bodies function in different ways, which may affect masculinity. Additionally, it is imperative for future research to include trans men, gender non-conforming, and non-binary individuals as well. After interviewing many more men representative of various gender identities, my work would be

more generalizable. My future research would then be able to embody various types of manhood, demonstrating other ways to perform masculinity.

Future research would also be more representative of other races, as time constraints and the size of DePauw University limited my ability to properly sample an abundance of different racial identities. In accordance with the literature, race affects men and how they perform their masculinity. Thus, sampling various and multiple racial identities in future research is necessary to depict more representations of manhood.

While this research had its limitations, the strength of this work is the demonstration of how flexible masculinity can be. The men interviewed demonstrated that they can have similar opinions on what shapes masculinity, yet can come from different social backgrounds. These men also show that every individual has something to say, and what they have to say is relevant to how they shape their masculinity, and indicative of how gender is socially constructed. Like so, they illustrate the importance of viewing masculinity as a social process that continues to change, and is not bound by rigid binaries or stereotypes. Rather, masculinity is a complex process that is dependent upon our social world, and should therefore be explored from as many viewpoints as possible.

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Appendix

The following questions were included in each of my interviews:

Demographic Questions:

- 1) If you feel comfortable answering, what year are you/ how old are you?
- 2) Where are you from?
- 3) If you feel comfortable answering, what is your racial identity/ethnicity?
- 4) If you feel comfortable answering, what is your sexual orientation?
- 5) What is your major/what was your major in school?
- 6) (for students only) Are you involved in Greek life?
 - a. Do you play a sport at the collegiate level?
- 7) What classes are you taking/do you teach?
- 8) What else are you involved in on campus?

Interview Questions:

- 1) What does it mean “to be a man?”
- 2) How do you act masculine/show your masculinity?
- 3) How were you taught to act masculine growing up?
- 4) How do you show your manhood at DePauw?
 - a. Does DePauw’s environment affect your manhood?