Matriculating Masculinity: Understanding Undergraduate Men's Precollege Gender Socialization

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Abstract. Social scientists, educational researchers, postsecondary educators (including student affairs professionals), and others have attempted to understand problematic behavioral trends and developmental outcomes among undergraduate men. Little attention has been devoted to examining the masculine identities and ideals about manhood that these students bring to college contexts, hence the purpose of this study. The sample comprised 68 undergraduate men representing a range of backgrounds and subgroups. Findings indicate that parental influences, interactions with same-sex peers, and involvement in youth sports were socializing factors informing ideas about masculinity that students brought with them to college. Recommendations for supporting the college transitions and gender identity development of undergraduate men are offered.

Educators and administrators have become increasingly concerned about undergraduate men's development and behaviors in college. Sexual assault cases, increased incidents of fraternity hazing, homophobic hate crimes, and alcohol-related deaths are among the issues that have sparked recent attention. In addition, postsecondary educators report widespread disengagement, misbehavior, and underachievement among undergraduate men (Davis & Laker, 2004; Edwards & Jones, 2009; Harris, 2008, 2010; Harris & Edwards, 2010; Laker & Davis, 2011; Ludeman, 2004). According to Harper and Harris (2010), these students have been routinely characterized as "drunken, promiscuous, academically disengaged lovers of pornography, sports, and video games who rape women, physically assault each other, vandalize buildings on campus, and dangerously risk their lives pledging sexist, racially exclusive, homophobic fraternities" (p. 10). Social scientists, educational researchers, and others have attempted to understand why college men behave so badly. Missing from the literature are examinations of the masculine identities and ideals these students bring with them to college.

Research on childhood gender identity formation suggests that socializing practices are deeply influential (Ferguson, 2007; Pollack, 2000). These encompass interactions with adults who communicate messages about gender-appropriate behaviors and attitudes. Ferguson (2007), Pollack (2000), and Adams and Coltrane (2005) contend that socializing practices are the primary means by which young boys learn and internalize societal expectations of masculine performances. According to MacNaughton (2006), children are socialized to behave in gender-appropriate ways by observing, imitating, and modeling key agents in their environments. For boys, physical and mental toughness, sexual aggressiveness, homophobia, and athletic superiority are some behaviors and attitudes they often learn to associate with masculinities[1] (Whitson, 1990). Might this socialization follow young men into higher education and shape their behaviors on college and university campuses?

Researchers consistently link troubled masculinities to undergraduate men's poor help-seeking behaviors (e.g., Edwards & Jones, 2009; Good & Wood, 1995; Harper & Harris, 2010), academic underachievement (e.g., Davis & Laker, 2004), disengagement (Harper, 2004), and acts that violate campus judicial policies (e.g., Ludeman, 2004). "Most students who become involved in campus discipline difficulties are men, and most often they are younger, usually in their freshman and sophomore year" (Dannells, 1997, p. 25). Harper, Harris, and Mmeje (2005) constructed a theoretical model to explain why college men are more likely than women to engage in behaviors that lead to judicial sanctions. The authors contend that interactions between six interrelated variables were the underlying drivers of men's aggression and misbehavior. Precollege socialization (what and how young men are taught about socially acceptable performances of their masculinities) was one variable in the theoretical model. The authors noted that in secondary school experiences and home environments, vandalism, raucousness, and playing with violent toys and video games, are deemed typical of boys, and, therefore, excusable. In fact, Harper et al. (2005) asserted that these behaviors are often met with a passive "boys will be boys" response from K-12 teachers and parents. However, little is known about how this shapes the masculinities men bring with them in their transitions from high school to postsecondary education, hence the purpose of this study. Specifically, the influence that precollege socialization has on undergraduate men's ideas about and performances of masculinities is considered.

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[1] Both the terms of masculinity and masculinities are used in this manuscript. While both capture the gendered meanings, norms, and assumptions socially constructed and hegemonically linked to boys and men, the latter recognizes the multiple forms of masculinity that exist and challenges the assumption of a single, stable, or dominant form of masculinity.

Method

This article is based on a larger grounded theory study in which undergraduate men's conceptions of masculinities and contextual influences on behaviors, outcomes, and gendered campus norms were considered. The context for the study is Anderson University (a pseudonym for an actual institution), a private research institution in the western region of the United States. This site was selected primarily due to the diversity that characterizes its male student population. In addition, Anderson has thriving athletic and fraternity cultures, which, according to the literature on men and masculinities, can have profound effects on gendered campus norms (Harper et al., 2005). Male students comprised nearly half (49.4%) of undergraduates at Anderson. Among undergraduate men at the University, White students were most represented (41%), followed by Asian American/Pacific Islanders (19%), Latinos (9%), and African Americans (4%). Most of Anderson's undergraduates were of traditional college age, with nearly 96% being 25 years or younger.

Sampling

Discovery is the primary aim of a grounded theory study, hence participants are typically selected based on the likelihood that they will generate concepts related to the phenomenon under study (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Theoretical concepts that emerge throughout the research process drive the selection of participants in a grounded theory study. Strauss and Corbin (1998) emphasized that participant selection should be planned prior to engaging in data collection, yet they encouraged researchers to maintain some degree of flexibility as rigidity in sampling hinders theory generation. Two techniques—open and discriminate sampling—guide the selection of participants in a grounded theory study.

Open sampling was used to select participants during the early stages of data collection. In open sampling, researchers accept any willing participant who qualifies for inclusion and satisfies the study's sampling needs (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). One way of conducting open sampling in a grounded theory study is to proceed systematically by interviewing a list of persons or groups. The list is generated based on the researcher's reasoning that certain sites, organizations, and populations "will provide the greatest opportunities for discovery" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 206). In open sampling, the researcher must maintain balance between systematically gathering data and making discoveries. Discriminate sampling was used in the latter stages of the study, when a viable set of concepts and categories had been generated. In discriminate sampling, the researcher selects participants for verifying, clarifying,

and filling in theoretical categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Follow-up interviews with previously sampled participants may also occur in discriminate sampling, which was the case in the present study.

Participants

A total of 68 students were interviewed for this study. Participants represented a wide range of racial and ethnic groups, clubs and student organizations, and academic majors. The sample included 20 first-year students, 12 sophomores, 14 juniors, and 22 seniors. Twenty-two participants were African American, 21 were White, 11 were Latino, seven were Asian American/Pacific Islander, and seven were biracial or multiethnic. Thirteen of the 68 men in our study were openly gay or bisexual. Fifteen participants were involved in varsity athletics at Anderson, and the same number held membership in a social fraternity on campus. The majority of participants ($n = 53$) reported being raised in two-parent homes. Participants' self-reported undergraduate grade point averages (GPAs) ranged from 1.94 to 3.92. The mean GPA for the sample was 3.06.

Data Collection

Consistent with techniques prescribed by Strauss and Corbin (1998), constant comparative methods were used in this study. This technique allows data collection and analysis to occur simultaneously throughout the research process. In so doing, the researcher collects data, conducts preliminary analyses, identifies emerging concepts and categories, and returns to the field to collect additional data until the emerging categories are theoretically saturated, or no new or relevant data emerge. Data collection occurred in two phases. First, face-to-face, semistructured individual interviews with 12 undergraduate men from diverse identity groups at Anderson University were conducted. Following the individual interviews, nine focus groups were convened with a total of 56 undergraduates on the same campus. Men representing the following subgroups participated in focus groups: (a) members of predominantly White fraternity chapters, (b) members of historically Black fraternity chapters, (c) Asian American students, (d) Latino students, (e) men who resided in a residential hall for first-year African American students, (f) openly gay and bisexual students, (g) Jewish students, (h) White student-athletes, and (i) African American student-athletes. All individual interviews and focus groups were audiotaped and professionally transcribed. Questions posed in the nine focus groups are listed in Appendix A.

Data Analysis

Each transcript was coded and analyzed using the Atlas.ti Qualitative Data Analysis software. Three coding techniques (i.e., open coding, axial coding, and selective coding), as prescribed by Strauss and Corbin (1998), were used in this study. Open coding was used to determine initial concepts and categories that related to participants' conceptions of masculinities. Axial coding followed, in which categories that emerged during the open coding phase were further developed. The axial coding process focused on identifying properties of each category that emerged during open coding. Properties include the causal conditions, intervening conditions, and consequences of the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Causal conditions interact to influence the occurrence of the phenomenon. Intervening conditions are the circumstances that facilitate or constrain action in response to the phenomenon. Furthermore, consequences are the outcomes that accompany the action or interaction strategies taken in response to the phenomenon. Finally, selective coding was used to refine the relationships among categories. The central phenomenon and a set of theoretical propositions emerged from this process, one of which was related to participants' precollege socialization. Precollege socialization coding categories included (a) parental influences, (b) peer interactions, and (c) sports participation. Each is presented below in the Findings section.

Trustworthiness and Methods of Verification

Several steps recommended by Lincoln and Guba (1986) were used to ensure trustworthiness in this study. Member checks entail verifying the findings of a qualitative study with the individuals from whom data were collected. Each student was given an opportunity to review the transcript from his individual interview or focus group. A peer debriefing team comprised of professional colleagues who were able to challenge interpretations of the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) was also used to enhance the credibility of this study. The team comprised seven colleagues: (a) a professor of higher education who has published extensively on college men's issues and has expertise in qualitative methods, (b) a senior athletics administrator working at a Division I institution, (c) a senior student affairs officer with extensive professional experiences at three large research universities, (d) the director of a campus gender resource center, (e) an experienced K-12 teacher, (f) a student affairs professional working closely with male undergraduates in multiple capacities, and (g) an advanced doctoral student in higher education with an emerging expertise in qualitative methods. Debriefing team members offered feedback on interview protocols, posed critical questions about assumptions imbedded in the research design and data

interpretation, and reflected on the theoretical model and findings. Lastly, all 68 participants were invited to a public session where the emergent research findings were presented. Participants who attended this session were asked to comment on the degree to which the findings reflected their gender-related beliefs, behaviors, and experiences. Theoretical constructs were revised based on participants' input.

Limitations

In spite of the aforementioned steps taken to establish trustworthiness, at least three methodological limitations are worth noting. First, this was not an explicit study of first-year students. Sophomores, juniors, and seniors made up 70.1% of the sample; their comments were retrospective reflections on the shaping of their masculinities prior to entering college. It is plausible that men in their first college year may have more accurate, real-time understandings of their precollege gender socialization than did the majority of participants in our sample. Second, findings from this study are context bound, given that data were collected at a single site. Therefore, findings cannot be generalized to other institutions. Moreover, it is possible that men attending other types of institutions (e.g., men's colleges, minority-serving institutions, religiously affiliated institutions, public universities) would have reported different experiences than did men in this study. Third, the purpose of this study was to identify common conceptions, behaviors, and experiences that were salient across the 68 men in the sample. Therefore, group-specific conceptions, behaviors, experiences, and comparisons were not explored.

Findings

Participants recalled significant experiences relating to the development of their gender identities that occurred prior to their matriculation to Anderson. Based on stories students shared about their precollege experiences, three primary socializing forces emerged from the data as having significant influences on the development and performance of their masculinities: (a) parental influences, (b) peer interactions, and (c) sports participation.

Precollege Parental Influences

Parents, notably fathers, played significant roles in shaping participants' concepts of masculinities during their precollege years. Men in the study shared many lessons they learned from their fathers about the interests and attitudes that constituted appropriate male behavior. "Being tough and rough," "standing up for women when they entered the room," and "being a hard worker" are examples of messages fathers communicated to participants about being men. Some spoke of their fathers' positive

influence on their gender identities. For example, one student noted that his father encouraged, rather than restricted, his masculine identity development:

> I think my dad is just very … he's very liberal and very understanding. I never had any pressure from him. He always encouraged me to do whatever I wanted to do. Like whenever I was in baseball and stuff … when I decided that that wasn't what I really liked to do, he encouraged me to do the arts. He encouraged me to do those things. So I never thought that he was trying to push any sort of masculinity on me, and I think that was great.

Observing their fathers' behaviors and interactions at home was one key source of information about masculinities for many participants. One student shared that he came from a "traditional" Latino family with a strong masculine culture. Thus, his father assumed the roles of "breadwinner" and "protector" of the family. This was reinforced by the fact that his mother took care of the domestic duties in their home, such as "cooking, cleaning, and caring for the kids." Another student offered the following reflection about his father's masculine influence:

> I learned a lot from my dad in the 'how-to-be-a-man' talks, also just him leading by example, the way he interacts with my mom, the way he interacts with other people. He taught me to be and there's a way of being a man and being a gentleman … I think my dad has shown how to be a gentleman.

Another participant shared that during most of his adolescence his father worked away from the home a great deal, which left little time for meaningful interaction between the two of them. When asked about how his father's absence affected his ideas about masculinities, he responded, "Basically, I learned that a man is supposed to be responsible for his household, you know, regardless of what's going on."

Men in this study recalled times in which their fathers sought to actively shape their masculinities in traditional ways. For instance, one student described his father's reaction to his decision to get his ear pierced. "My dad was like, 'Oh, you're gay. Guys don't wear earrings.'" Demanding that participants dress and play in manners that were consistent with the more stereotypical masculinities are two ways in which fathers exerted their influence in this regard. As such, a student discussed how his father monitored his play as a child:

> There were times when I was younger where maybe I was playing with my sister or putting on makeup or something … and usually the person that would … not really reprimand, but correct that would be my father because my mother, she'd play along, 'Oh, that's cute,' and all that sort of stuff, but my

dad always tried to make sure … like he'd toughen me up and prepare … kind of condition me to have that mentality as being masculine and trying to be strong and doing manly things.

When this same participant was asked why he believed it was important to his father that he behaved in a stereotypically masculine manner, he shared, "It was important for him to make sure I wasn't doing stuff to maybe have the potential to be gay or something. Plus you don't want to see your kids get ridiculed or made fun of at school."

Mothers also played a role in shaping participants' ideals about masculinity. However, the gender-related messages these women communicated differed somewhat from the aforementioned versions of masculinity the fathers reinforced. Oftentimes, mothers emphasized relational, sensitive, and well-rounded concepts of masculinity. "Going to church every Sunday," "treating women with respect," and "staying connected to the family" are indicative of some messages participants' received from their mothers. "My mom always taught me how to be sensitive and express my feelings and whatnot," one participant noted. Another recalled lessons his mother reinforced: "She really wanted to instill fairness and make sure that I respected other people and treated them the way I would want to be treated." Based on the experiences and perspectives participants shared, parents were instrumental in shaping their gender identities.

Precollege Peer Interactions

The 68 men routinely spoke about the role of peers in influencing their conceptions of masculinities and gendered behaviors. As illustrated in the following claim, a quest for social acceptance underscored many participants' conformity to peer pressure during their precollege years:

During elementary school there was a group of friends that I looked to for any sense of what a boy is supposed to be doing, like playing football on like the rocks during lunch. You're supposed to play that and wanting to play tackle football, not touch, that kind of a thing; and cursing a lot as well. I think I've learned predominantly through them that if you're going to play football, you're going to curse and that's what all the other guys are doing, you should be doing that too.

Reportedly, male peers often reinforced narrow concepts of masculinities. Boys who were unable to express their masculinities in traditional ways (namely through sports and other physical activities) were subject to ridicule from other boys. One

participant shared examples of some of the mockery he endured for being a well-behaved teenager: "You probably wouldn't want to hang out with us tonight, or, you probably wouldn't want to go do these things, like set off firecrackers or something because you're too good of a kid." Consequently, he and several other participants said they sometimes engaged in activities that they were uncomfortable with in order to fit in.

One student shared that he previously downplayed his academic success when interacting with other guys in high school. When asked why he felt compelled to do so, he asserted that while academic success was not frowned upon, displaying expertise in traditionally masculine pursuits, like "sports, rapping, and being popular with the ladies" increased the likelihood of gaining the respect of his male peers. Another student's experience illustrates how gender-neutral acts, such as wearing a certain type of underclothing, can be constructed by peers as an expression of one's masculinity:

> I actually always wore an undershirt ... for sweating or whatever, and I always wore this in elementary school until somebody saw it and pointed it out and ... thought it was a bra and so they asked me, 'Why are you wearing a bra?' And so I never wore one since then.

In response to pressures to conform to socially constructed masculinities, several men in our study spoke of surrounding themselves with like-minded peers who shared their beliefs about the behaviors and attitudes that constituted appropriate, less problematic male behaviors. A focus group participant noted,

> In our high school, we had football stars and other icons of masculinity, but I was never really part of the mainstream I guess. So my own friends' views of masculinity, we were more just comfortable with ourselves, and so we didn't really have the ... having to put on the tough face and things like that. We were just friends with each other I guess, so we had standards, but they were ... I guess, more accepting.

Lastly, another student asserted that he and his close friends in high school shared interests in the "daily pleasures of life," such as music, movies, and fashion. Likewise, participants' involvement in youth sports, which is considered in the next session, also played a role in shaping their masculine identities.

Youth Sports Participation

One precollege experience that was common among most men in our study was their participation in youth sports. For some, involvement in sports served a more central role in their adolescent and teenage years than for others. Yet, regardless of the degree to which they were involved, many students recalled lessons they learned about masculinity from their participation in youth sports. One focus group participant posited that involvement in sports "shapes people's confidence." For several others, youth sports provided opportunities for meaningful interactions with peers, which perceivably elevated their statuses within their respective peer groups. Specifically, participation in sports protected many of them from bullying and social alienation. One participant shared his high school experiences and views on the relationship between sports and masculinity:

> In high school, I was athletic, so I think masculinity and athletics and the ability to perform all athletics, especially the sports that are considered more masculine, football, more aggressive sports, more physical sports, especially in high school, seemed to be pretty closely tied to the image of masculinity. Whether or not you played, the ability to participate in those kind of things was important.

Participants reported that "locker-room talk" was prevalent in their interactions with teammates. Accordingly, conversations in which they shared details about romantic pursuits and sexual experiences were commonplace. Interestingly, participants also reported that young men who chose not to partake in these discussions or who did not have a "story" to tell were often "punished" by having their sexual orientations called into question. These men were frequently branded with labels, such as "queer," "pussy," and "homo." Thus, there was intense pressure from peers to engage in sexualized, hypermasculine storytelling even if a young man preferred not to do so or had no real stories to tell.

By and large, participants' fathers were responsible for getting them involved in youth sports. In some cases, fathers coached their teams. In an individual interview, one participant shared the following reflection about his involvement on a team his father coached and the effects it had on his masculine identity:

> I was always into sports when I was a youngster and everything, and my dad was a football coach. He was my little league football coach or whatever and through that, I always kind of thought that men were supposed to be kind

of the rough and tumble guy, be out there on the field hitting people and stuff and acting crazy and running around. So that image of masculinity has always been embedded in my mind.

For some students, their fathers' involvement in their youth sports was a source of conflict. These participants said they were fearful of disapproval, negative criticism, or being perceived as "quitters" and "soft" by their fathers. For example, an Anderson student-athlete reflected on a time in which his father "pushed him too far" by making him play multiple sports throughout the year. He and his dad had many quarrels that were often sparked by his attempts to quit playing baseball and focus exclusively on water polo. "My dad's biggest argument was 'don't be a quitter' … we got into many arguments when I told him, 'I'm getting burned out,' but I just think it was the pressure not to be considered a quitter."

Participants' reflections suggest that parents, peers, and involvement in sports are influential to the meanings they ascribe to masculinities. While some parents modeled and reinforced traditional and stereotypical masculine conceptions, others allowed their sons to express a wider range of gendered behaviors and attitudes. The influence of fathers was especially notable. Some participants incorporated lessons learned from their fathers into their own portfolios of masculine expressions. Peer interactions also weighed heavily into the meanings participants made of masculinities during high school. Peers modeled and validated expressions and behaviors that were consistent with traditional (and arguably narrow) notions of masculinity. Finally, involvement in sports served as a primary precollege gender socializing activity. Several students spoke of lessons learned through sports, including confidence, toughness, and perseverance.

Discussion and Implications

These findings suggest that many male students arrive to college having learned to prioritize traditional, and in some cases patriarchal, conceptualizations and expressions of masculinity. The findings support claims by Pollack (2000), Kimmel and Messner (2012), and other scholars who assert that normative social structures, such as schools, families, and peer groups have the most significant influences on the gender identity development of boys. Reports that students in the present study offered are consistent with findings from these and other researchers (e.g., Ferguson, 2007), particularly as they relate to the role various social agents play in the shaping the gender identities of boys.

Participants' experiences in youth sports support Messner and Sabo's (1990) assertions regarding the role and functions of athletics in the social construction of masculinities. These scholars contend that sports reinforce societal expectations of male behavior because they allow for meaningful interactions between fathers and sons and confine boys to the rigid boundaries of gender performance. Griffin (1998), along with Anderson and McCormack (2014), found that sports provided contexts for male bonding and intimacy while also prioritizing heterosexuality. Men in our study linked their participation in sports during the precollege years with the development of self-confidence, expressing physicality and aggressiveness, and gaining popularity among peers. As in previous research, fathers were cited by men in this study as most responsible for getting them involved in sports and having major influences on their athletic interests.

Fathers were especially influential in shaping participants' meanings of masculinities. Many reported their fathers expected them to express attitudes and exhibit behaviors that were consistent with traditional masculinities. They received positive feedback from their fathers when they engaged in rough and competitive play, while acting and dressing in ways that were typically associated with girls were met with criticism. These findings are consistent with Harper's (2004) assertion that "no father wants his son to grow up being a 'pussy,' 'sissy,' 'punk,' or 'softy'—terms commonly associated with boys who fail to live up to the traditional standards of masculinities in America" (p. 43). In addition, some fathers modeled productive masculine conceptions, such as responsibility, integrity, and respect for women. Another interesting discussion point that emerged from the study was the mixed and conflicting gender-related messages participants received from mothers and fathers. While mothers emphasized seemingly productive masculine conceptions, the majority of fathers expected their sons to engage in patriarchal versions of masculine performativity (e.g., real men are breadwinners for their families).

Findings in this study make clear that not all men come to college having been socialized in problematic ways that lead to misbehavior on campus. Productive gender-related messages they receive from parents, their peers prior to entering college, and youth sports have gone unacknowledged in the published research on college men and their masculinities. As such Harper and Harris (2010) recommended, "Identifying the good in them and seeking to replicate those traits in their same-sex peers should be the center of gender programming and educational interventions designed to reverse problematic outcomes among male undergraduates" (p. 12). It is important for postsecondary educators, especially those who work with first-year students, to first understand how men have been socialized to think broadly about gender and about their masculinities in particular; what about that socialization is

potentially problematic, sexist, misogynistic, and, therefore, in need of developmental challenge; and what about the masculinities with which they enter college is good. These understandings could lead to more effective advising and programming aimed at undergraduate men in the first year of college and beyond.

At the conclusion of the interviews and focus groups, nearly all participants expressed appreciation for the opportunity to engage in a purposeful discussion about masculinities. For most, it was their first time participating in a structured exercise involving thinking critically and reflecting on how gender socialization shaped their behaviors, attitudes, and interactions. This outcome is not surprising, given Davis' (2002) finding that undergraduate men in his study were "unreflective about what being a guy means" (p. 516). Having had this opportunity for reflection, participants may be more cognizant of their gendered behaviors and, consequently, choose to engage in ongoing dialogue with peers regarding productive ways to express their masculinities. Opportunities for reflection about how one was socialized to think about manhood should be offered in new student orientation programs, in residence hall and broader campus programming, and in judicial sanctioning conversations.

Poor help-seeking, social isolation, and a range of destructive acts among undergraduate men (e.g., sexual assault and relationship abuse) are traceable back to problematic ways in which they were socialized prior to entering college (Davis & Laker, 2004; Edwards & Jones, 2009; Harper et al., 2005). Given this, it is important to include sessions and distribute consciousness-raising resources at parent and family orientation events and on websites for families. It is plausible that some parents, especially fathers, are unaware of how particular versions of precollege gender socialization show up in destructive ways during college. It is important for families—as well as college men themselves—to know that male students binge drink more often, fight and vandalize property at higher rates, experiment more often with hard drugs, have unprotected sex at higher rates, and commit suicide four times more often than do their female peers on college campuses (Harper & Harris, 2010). Orientations for parents, families, and new students are ideal spaces in which to engage in conversations about the explanatory undercurrents of these trends.

Fraternity houses, men's intercollegiate sports teams, residence hall floors where men live, and other spaces where men are (e.g., men's centers, campus recreation facilities, LGBT centers, student organizations for college men of color) are additional sites where consciousness can be raised among male undergraduates. Film screenings, a series of semistructured conversations on the shaping and performances of manhood, writing exercises that invite undergraduate men to be reflective about their present and future selves as men, and retreats for male students that focus explicitly on gender performativity would be useful, especially during men's first-year transitions

to college. Harris and Harper (2014) found that fraternity men responded favorably to peers in their chapters who consistently raised their consciousness about sexist, racist, and homophobic acts and speech. In light of this finding, it seems important to engage what Harris and Harper called "good guys" as workshop peer facilitators at new student orientation and other venues.

Although the present study provides new and much-needed insights into college men and shared meanings of masculinities, it represents a time- and context-bound snapshot of participants' perspectives. A longitudinal study of masculine conceptions will further enhance understanding of masculinities and men's development during and after college. Examining the gender identities of male students when they enter college through graduation is one example of a potentially insightful study. This longitudinal approach would lead to new knowledge about how college environments affect male students' gender identity development.

The aim of this study was to identify conceptions of masculinities that were consistent across diverse subgroups of male students. One goal of future inquiries should be to identify masculine conceptions that are salient within specific male subgroups. For instance, some researchers may consider limiting their samples to Latinos, student-athletes, or fraternity men. While the findings of the present study are evidence that some meanings transcend race or ethnicity, group affiliation, and other factors, it is possible that masculine conceptions are also bound by these demographics. Finally, participants shared stories about their experiences and interactions with male peers. It would be interesting to confirm these accounts empirically. Researchers may find it useful to conduct ethnographic observations of men's interactions within their respective subgroups, similar to Rhoads' (1995) study of men in a college fraternity house.

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