

---

Theses, Dissertations, and Projects

---

2014

## Heterosexual men in the United States of America : are the oppressors also oppressed?

Shanta P. Cortez-Greig  
*Smith College*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.smith.edu/theses>



Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Cortez-Greig, Shanta P., "Heterosexual men in the United States of America : are the oppressors also oppressed?" (2014). Masters Thesis, Smith College, Northampton, MA.  
<https://scholarworks.smith.edu/theses/757>

This Masters Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in Theses, Dissertations, and Projects by an authorized administrator of Smith ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@smith.edu](mailto:scholarworks@smith.edu).

Shanta P. Cortez-Greig  
Heterosexual Men in the United  
States of America: Are the  
Oppressors also Oppressed?

### **ABSTRACT**

This qualitative study examines the experiences of heterosexual men in the United States, exploring their disadvantages, in particular. The responses of the men studied showed that they did feel oppressed on some level, and/or that they perceived that heterosexual men they knew experienced oppression because of the social expectations for men. On their own accord, they also acknowledged their privileges and that it is great to be a man. The most salient forms of oppression discussed involved feelings of limitations in their authentic self-expression and disenfranchisement in unwed fathers. Research data were collected from a focus group of five men and an individual interview. A second individual interview was conducted with one of the members of the focus group who asked to speak more on men feeling limited in what they can say to a female, especially around other men. A female researcher conducted all interviews. Examining the ways in which the deemed oppressors feel limited, disadvantaged and disenfranchised, contributes to the Anti-Sexism movement as it helps redefine sexism from something that only victimizes women to something that victimizes everybody by fallaciously considering a person's sex to be relevant in a context in which it is not, thereby inviting wrongful discrimination. Implications include the sensitization of clinicians to the experiences of heterosexual males, and further exploration into birth control options for men. A larger scale mixed methods study on this topic is suggested for further research.

**HETEROSEXUAL MEN IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: ARE THE  
OPPRESSORS ALSO OPPRESSED?**

A project based on an independent investigation,  
qualitative in nature, submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of Master of  
Social Work.

Shanta P. Cortez-Greig

Smith College School for Social Work  
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063

2013

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This thesis could not have been accomplished without the assistance of many people, whose contributions are gratefully acknowledged.

I wish to thank all of the men who took the time to participate in this study; my friends and my family for your unwavering support, encouragement, and belief in me; my thesis advisor, Gael McCarthy for your time, wisdom, support and guidance.

To all—Thank you, and may communication between the sexes be bettered and may we, as humans continue to move towards a society in which all individuals feel free to express their most authentic selves...

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	iii
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION .....	1
II LITERATURE REVIEW.....	6
III METHODOLOGY .....	45
IV RESULTS.....	53
V DISCUSSION.....	86
REFERENCES .....	98
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: HSR Approval Letter.....	109
Appendix B: Recruitment Materials .....	111
Appendix C: Informed Consent Form .....	113
Appendix D: Interview Guide.....	116
Appendix E: Resources.....	118

## **CHAPTER I**

### **Introduction**

In casual conversations with many heterosexual men in the United States, I have heard statements and stories in regards to their experiences as a male that have led me to think to myself, “Well that seems unfair!” or “That seems unfairly restrictive and limiting!” One story that I have heard a couple of times goes something like this: A guy meets a girl and they find themselves wanting to have sex with each other. Before engaging in intercourse, he brings up birth control methods. She assures him that she is on the birth-control pill and that condoms are not needed. He is glad to know this because he is not particularly fond of prophylactics. They have sex and she gets pregnant. Perhaps she was not really taking pills, or perhaps she is part of the 0.1% for whom the birth control did not work. Perhaps she wanted a child and needed a free donor; perhaps she was hoping that by having a child he would commit to her. But in any case, she decides to not have an abortion. The guy tells her that he is not prepared to be a father – not only is he not emotionally prepared, but he does not have the money, the time or the desire to raise a child and that he would prefer finding a solid relationship with a woman before they decide to bring a child into the world. She says that she is going to have the child anyway. Perhaps she does not believe in abortions. Perhaps she has already had one and does not want to have another. Perhaps she just wants a child. But in any case, it is her body and her decision.

Since 1973, by way of *Roe v. Wade*, her choice to have an abortion is legally recognized. As Wade Mackey writes in *The American Father*, “The woman was given sole legal authority as to whether the pregnancy was carried to term. The biological (sperm) father (genitor) has no legal call on whether he will be a social father.” Thus, “If the woman decides that she wishes to be a parent, she simultaneously makes the same decision for the genitor.” (1996, p. 159).

So now this guy is going to be the father of her child and unlike the mother-to-be, he has no choice to abort his parental involvement. He may become distressed because 1. This is not how he idealized having a family – not through a short-lived affair with somebody he does not necessarily want to be with long-term. 2. He is now legally obligated to pay child-support and can be incarcerated, have his wages garnished and be denied a passport if he does not pay. 3. He must now negotiate a working relationship with the mother to be in this child’s life or be considered a dead-beat dad. 4. He will have fewer resources to follow his dreams should he have any. 5. He may bear guilt for not giving his progeny the life he wanted to give a child, and 6. Having a child has a slew of social implications for him. When I hear this story, I not only empathize with the child who may not have access to the loving attention of both the child’s parents, but I also empathize with the disenfranchised man who was essentially trapped.

To paint a more ubiquitous scenario of ways in which a heterosexual man may feel vulnerable, I am currently watching a T.V. show in which a guy keeps losing sports games to his girlfriend. After the up-teenth defeat at her hands, his friends call him a “wuss” and he is staged as wearing a dress. Fake breasts then grow to further emphasize how his losing to a girl made him a girl. Obviously, as feminists have historically pointed out, this is not only insulting towards femininity, but also illogical. Obviously, as shown by how his girlfriend continued to beat him, “losing at sports” does not equal “being a woman” because a woman in this case was

the victor. Furthermore, note that the girlfriend was not staged in a suit with short hair to make her resemble a man or a butch lesbian. If this were done, feminists (myself included) would throw their fists in the air, angry at the implication that a woman could not possibly win unless she was somehow exaggeratedly masculine. My point? Nobody complains about the direct messages that are sent to heterosexual men all over America. Nobody talks about the precarious nature of the masculine ideology and the vulnerability with which it may leave some men.

It is widely recognized, and I am not disputing it at all, that women have faced oppression for many, many, *many* years. Women of generations past have suffered because of the dominance of heterosexual males – earning less in the workforce, not being able to vote, and being held to rigid standards of sexual virtue. Even these days, women voice their frustrations with feeling societal pressure to look and act certain ways, and their frustrations with expectations to which they are held because they are female. We women have a history of revolutionary thought and literature from which to pull so that we can say, “Look at how we women have been oppressed.” From that substantiated platform, we can then rebel and push the boundaries, as we already have been doing. While women’s struggles continue, we have made significant progress in expanding the gender boundaries around us and in gaining legal equality. I think that something that has helped us do this on mass scale is that some women voiced how they were feeling and started bodies of literature that empowered future generations of women.

I have found it relatively difficult to find bodies of literature like this for men. From the two examples above, I think that some men may feel oppressed in the United States whether they are aware of it or not. Oppression has several dictionary meanings. They are as follows: 1) The exercise of authority or power in a burdensome, cruel, or unjust manner, 2) The act or instance of oppressing, 3) The state of being oppressed and 4) The feeling of being heavily burdened,



mentally or physically, by troubles, adverse conditions, anxiety, etc... Belland Griffin (1997), cited by Miller and Garran (2008), list five major features of social oppression. They are:

1. Pervasive. Oppression is ubiquitous and “fuses institutional and systemic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice in a complex web of relationships and structures that saturate most aspects of life in our society” (Griffin, 1997, p. 4)
2. Restricting. All forms of social oppression restrict opportunity, access to resources and privileges, and upward mobility.
3. Hierarchical. Groups that have privilege because of the status of their social identities have a hierarchical relationship with other, less privileged groups.
4. Complex, multiple, cross-cutting relationships. This characteristic corresponds with the points made in the previous chapter about the complexities of social identity; people have an intricate mix of privilege and of being targeted, which may confer privilege or barriers depending on the situational context.
5. Internalized oppression. As discussed, people are prone to internalize the oppressive worldviews, beliefs, values, and attitudes that stem from the durable inequalities encountered throughout society (Miller & Garran, 2008, pp. 136-37)

I wonder whether any of these definitions can be applied to either or both of the scenarios delineated above. If so, that would not necessarily mean that men are just as oppressed, or more oppressed, than women. But if we allow even one law to oppress one population in order to benefit another population, we are no better as a society than we were when we allowed any laws to oppress women in order to benefit men. We should give due diligence to the possible oppression of men, and the question of which sex suffers *more* discrimination is irrelevant to my point. We should be moving towards a justice system that does not sacrifice some social groups for others. If one is opposed to injustice or opposed to sexism, then it is the exploration of injustice and sexism that matters most, not the sex of the victim.

Moreover, it is not only the most severe forms of oppression that should be paid attention. All forms of oppression, big or little, merit critical investigation. Furthermore, as long as masculinity is considered the norm, it is difficult to be brought into question because a norm is that which other things are judged by; it is not judged itself. Therefore, investigating and

dismantling masculinity might be a productive step in dismantling the patriarchal structure in general because of how it is grounded on two (faulty) premises – 1) that masculinity is better than femininity and that 2) men are masculine and women are feminine. I wonder if it is possible for men, too, to feel limited by the inflexibility of the normative masculinity.

But it is not up to me to speak for anybody. I can only state my observations. Also, I do not want to assume, nor do I want to beg the question. That is why I think it would be helpful and valuable to ask some men about the pros and cons of being a heterosexual male in America in order to give them an opportunity to voice the ways in which they might feel pressured, limited, and socially or institutionally oppressed – or not.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **Literature Review**

It has not been an easy task to find literature on the subject of discrimination as it pertains to heterosexual men. As of this time, I have found no empirical studies directly on the matter of whether heterosexual men feel oppressed. It makes intuitive sense, given their dominant status in society, that they would have less of an impetus to think about their social group or status. Lucken and Simon (2005) “predicted and found that minority members were more cognitively preoccupied with their group membership and experienced less positive affect as a consequence of their group membership than majority members” (p. 396). In other words, part of the privilege heterosexual men experience is to not have to investigate their privilege. However, just because there aren’t any concerns that are voiced, does not mean that there are not any concerns that could be voiced. Just because they are “the oppressors,” it does not logically follow that men do not experience oppression or unjust discrimination based on their sex. If such experiences are had, an alternate explanation for men’s silence could be that they are afraid of being condemned as sexist if they postulated that they – the deemed oppressors – were oppressed. Staunch feminists could take this as an affront. Furthermore, if there were a masculine gender stereotype that men should be “stalwart,” to complain would be emasculating. Mackey (1996) writes,

iven that the Ramboesque, Clint Eastwood, John Wayne myth structure for U.S. men is still not only a role model but also a role reflection, for sizable proportions of men in the United States, strong, silent men will not gratuitously articulate their own frustration, vulnerabilities and anxieties. Their muteness can easily be equated with insensitivity or detachment. Nonetheless, an unvoiced disappointment can be just as vexing as a voiced one. One does not have to be garrulous to be annoyed. (pp. 169-170).

Another important distinction to make is that just because a heterosexual man is in the “oppressor” group, does not mean that he, as an individual, intends to oppress women. He is born into the same system that everybody else is born into, a system that everybody else, in some way, maintains to some degree or another, intentionally or unintentionally. I will elaborate on that point in a little bit. First, I want to briefly recap the literature on sexism, which has predominately been thought as something that victimizes women, though a broader understanding of sexism is developing.

### **The Second Sex: Oppression from the Feminist Perspective**

Over two hundred years of literature on feminist theory has been published to date. In 1792, British author Mary Wollstonecraft published her volume, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, which, despite its British origins, began the first wave of American feminism. In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir wrote her famous book, *The Second Sex*, which first discussed the alterity of women, who are seen as “other” and defined by reference to men. In addition to these two game-changing works, very much has been written throughout the decades about the ways in which women have faced societal and political oppression. Though there is probably still much to be said (and changed) about the ways in which women suffer and are vulnerable, there is no doubt that literature on sexism is invariably literature that examines the ways in which sexism is directed towards *females*. Strangely, there has not been a single, standard usage of the term, “sexism.” Sexism, and problematically so, has most commonly become somewhat synonymous

with something that men – and society at large – perpetrate against women and femininity.

**Hostile, benevolent, and ambivalent Sexism.** Following the initial outcries and subsequent socio-political reform by the feminist movement, scholars continue to examine the underpinnings of sexism, which continues to pervade our culture. A differentiation between hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS) was made wherein the former refers to outright antipathy and hostility towards women who challenge male power whether it be directly or indirectly (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The Hostile Sexism is presented either through direct derogation or indirectly (and self-absolution) through humor (Ford, Wentzel, & Lorian, 2011). However, HS, it was observed, is not enough for social control. Glick and Fiske (1996) argue that men's needs for sexual reproduction, paternity certainty, emotional intimacy and pair bonding are satisfied more readily when women do so willingly (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Thus, men use benevolent sexist attitudes with women that are "subjectively benevolent but patronizing, casting women as wonderful but fragile creatures who ought to be protected and provided for by men" (Glick et al., 2004, p.715) in order to get them to comply with their needs. Benevolent sexism, such as is evidenced in chivalry, implies that women are weaker and are best suited to roles that limit direct access to status, resources and power outside the sphere of close relationships (Glick et al., 2004), justifying, legitimizing and reinforcing hostile sexism, discrimination and stereotypes. To say that women "are more pure than men and should be protected and treated like a lady," the underlying message is those women *need* protecting and that men are heroic protectors and not oppressors. Moreover, as women internalize the sexist messages, placated by the lollipops in their mouths (promises of being protected and provided for), their personal ambitions and their resistance to inequality wither, keeping them unmotivated to change the status quo and thus, "in their place."

It was shown that hostile and benevolent sexism are positively correlated in U.S. samples, with the most benevolent sexists also being the most hostile sexists. The adoption of both HS and BS is dubbed Ambivalent Sexism (AS) and encompasses three basic belief systems – Paternalism, Gender Differentiation, and Heterosexuality (Glick & Fiske, 1996). It was shown that even women adopt sexist attitudes, seduced by the polite help carrying her bags and the pedestal that awaits her, even though it also patronizes her and undermines her competence. The role of these reciprocal perceptions and of ambivalent attitudes on the part of both men and women has been very important in maintaining men’s structural power and traditional gender relations. It would seem that men reward women who adopt traditional values, punishing those who do not, using Benevolent Sexism and Hostile Sexism, respectively. Thus, it can be natural for women to adopt benevolent (yet sexist) views of men as being stronger, more aggressive, better in math and science, paternalistic providers etc... in order to justify the power structure they collude with, increasing their dependence on men (Glick & Fiske, 1997). The joint endorsement of AS by men and BS by women has insidious effects on maintaining gender inequality.

It is hypothesized that women endorse BS to *temper* men’s HS. This is dubbed the “Protection Racket.” Where there are high levels of HS from men, resulting in very limited power for women, women seemed to embrace BS for its protective benefits (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Fischer corroborates this, showing a positive correlation between HS in men and BS in women, who adopt the belief that women should be cherished and protected by men because they are morally superior and are needed by men, hypothesizing that this may be their only option in maintaining a sense of self-esteem and safety (Fischer, 2006).

Benevolent sexism is mediated by Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA), high levels of which are associated with a motivation for social cohesion, collective security and the preservation of traditional values and mores. Low levels of RWA, on the other hand, are associated with independence and autonomy. RWA, as a motivational goal, is thought to stem from the belief that the world is a dangerous place in which “good, decent people’s values and way of life are threatened by bad people” (Duckitt, du Plessis, & Ilouize -Birum, 2002, p. 92). High levels of RWA, with respect to the endorsement of BS, are associated with the explicit belief that men and women fulfill different, complementary and unequal social roles within society. This belief system results in the motivation to create clear boundaries and prescriptive roles for men and women to play in society.

Men’s behavior with respect to Hostile Sexism, on the other hand, is explained through the Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) index, which is a drive for asserting dominance and superiority. Men were shown to have more SDO, reflecting support for unequal, hierarchical relationships between groups, based on the assumption that “the world is a ruthless and amoral struggle for resources and power in which might is right and winning is everything” (Duckitt et al., 2002, p. 92). Low levels of SDO, associated with goals of egalitarianism and altruistic social concern, were found associated with female identification.

**Attachment style predictors of hostile and ambivalent sexism.** Two studies corroborated the theory that attachment styles could account for the aforementioned attitudes in men – attachment avoidance predisposing men to endorse HS and reject BS; and anxious attachment styles predisposing men to AS. Furthermore, it is thought that adopting AS for men predisposes them to prefer physically attractive partners because this satisfies their desire for dominance based status. For women, adopting BS attitudes is associated with a greater

preference for high-resource partners to satisfy their desire for security and protection (Sibley & Overall, 2011; Ha, van den Berg, Engels, & Lichtwarck-Aschoff, 2012). Thus, again, there seems to be a reciprocal reinforcement of gender inequality. In effect, the traditional understanding of sexism as something men do to dominate women has been studied in more recent years as something that women collude with through a lack of motivation to seek their own resources because it is in their best interest to focus on looking pleasing and attracting a mate who will share his resources with her and her offspring. Thus men, it would seem, would be under the pressures of gender scripts of their own – Protective Paternalism (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Sarlet, Dumont, Delacollette & Dardenne, 2012).

**Discrimination variability in work versus romantic relationships.** Another note about Prescriptive Paternalism is that it seems to be seen as discrimination in work environments, yet appropriate in romantic relationships (Sarlet et al., 2012). Egalitarian beliefs, on the other hand, were negatively correlated with the belief that there should be differences in work or romantic contexts (Smiler & Kubotera, 2010). At work, the attitude that women need to be taken care of resulted in men getting more challenging tasks and more negative feedback than their female counterparts, despite both men and women expressing interest in challenging experiences (King, Botsford, Hebl, Kazama, Dawson & Perkins, 2012). Furthermore, King et al. (2012) wrote that because women did not get as many challenging tasks, they did not get the necessary developmental experiences, keeping them relatively incompetent and/or underrepresented in the highest levels of organizations. In another study, however, it seemed that women exposed to BS in the work area did not recognize it as sexism, while more men did (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005). Moreover, men seemed to prefer women to show instrumental traits (i.e., aggressiveness, dominance, competitiveness, self-confidence) in the work context (Smiler & Kubotera, 2010).



Women, on the on the other hand, neglected to develop their task-related characteristics (Rollero & Fedi, 2012). Whether women are passive victims or collude with the sexist beliefs that protect and/or benefit them, it would seem that sexist beliefs still affect the work environment, long after the social reforms that were gained in the last century. Though law prohibits discrimination, subversive and pervasive sexist attitudes affect both men and women in the workforce. In addition, with respect to men in the workforce, Allen and Smith (2011) showed that men had a decrease in motivation and a reduction in performance when working on a “feminine” task, a task that they perceive as being gender role incongruent. Basically, gender role expectations affect both men and women in a variety of ways in the workplace.

**Evolution and change in gender role expectations?** Personal romantic relationships have also been affected by the endorsement of BS and the gender role expectations BS creates. Cultural ideals of what men and women “should be” powerfully shape heterosexual romantic partner preferences, linking romance with inequality (Lee, Fiske, Glick & Chen, 2010). Young men seem to prefer women with expressive traits (i.e., being emotional, talkative, nurturing) in the romantic contexts. Also, as mentioned before, the common stereotype is that heterosexual men value physical attractiveness measured by a small hip to waist ratio (HWR) most in a mate (Singh & Singh, 2011) while heterosexual women most value men with status and resource potential (Mathes & Kozak, 2008). The premise underlying these preferences, a premise that Sing and Singh gave empirical evidence for, is that men are looking for fertile women (fecundity and health being associated with small HWR), while women are looking for mates who can provide resources for her and her offspring while she is pregnant and raising the child/ren. A more recent study on the subject revealed that contrary to these traditional stereotypes, (at least) contemporary men and women most prefer agreeableness (e.g., kindness, supportiveness) and

extraversion (e.g., a sense of humor and sense of fun) in a romantic relationship. Attractiveness (for its health indications) was rated as the next valuable trait, followed by material success (Felmlee, Orzechowicz & Fortes, 2010). Nevertheless, *both* women and men in the United States still place emphasis on being physically attractive and obtaining status and material wealth, respectively.

Perhaps the desire for agreeableness in a partner is a mark of evolution, with individuals looking for long term commitments for the benefit of their young and intuiting that the quality of the relationship is a big factor in its durability. Prescribed gender roles of BS can negatively affect relationship quality, communication in particular. Firstly, the more men endorse HS, the less open and the more hostile both partners are, resulting in less success with producing desired changes in the relationship. Men who endorsed more BS were more open with their partners resulting in more successful communication. (This relationship benefit illustrates why BS is an effective counterpart to HS). However, when women strongly endorse BS and their partners do not, said women are less open, behave with greater hostility and experience less success in producing desired changes in their relationships because the expected benefits of the BS are not realized (Overall, Sibley & Tan, 2011).

Furthermore, if the woman in a heterosexual partnership is outspoken and dis-inhibited – the result is what Angulo, Brooks and Swann (2011) call a “precarious couple.” It would seem that for these “precarious couples,” women take on a more demanding role in the relationship because they have a less advantaged position in the social structure, which they are motivated to improve. As the women are more outspoken, the men in these precarious couples withdraw from the conversation in an attempt to maintain the status quo, resisting the exertion of nonverbal power and control that his partner is exhibiting by being verbal (Angulo et al., 2011). His

motivation to do so may or may not come from personal sexist beliefs, but is nevertheless exacerbated by the adverse perceptions that said precarious couples endure, socially -- the man being seen as weak if he is coupled with an assertive woman.

**Division of labor in heterosexual relationships unequal?** A few more thoughts on heterosexual relationships: although men reported to desire and expect an egalitarian division of labor in the household chores, women projected that they actually engage in a disproportionate amount of the household labor and child-care. In other words, women expected inequity, despite the fact that men reported that they expected equality (Askari, Liss, Erchull, Staebell & Axelson, 2010). In the same vein, men who were more traditional in their masculinity ideology and who were partnered with females who earned more money than they did, reported to have poorer quality romantic relationships because they viewed the disparity in income as having importance. Masculinity ideology seems to mediate relationship satisfaction for men (Wade & Coughlin, 2012). This was especially true for men of higher socio-economic status, for whom the expectation of being the breadwinner is more pronounced. They exhibited poorer psychological (and physical) health as a consequence of being the secondary earner (Springer, 2010) than men with lower (or no) incomes, presumably because poorer couples' dependence on the money, no matter who earned it, outweighs gender role concerns. In general, however, upholding traditional masculinity ideology has been associated with lower quality romantic relationships (Wade & Donis, 2007). Conversely, when a man's masculinity is not constructed in relation to a male reference group, he is more likely to have non-traditional attitudes and have a better quality experience and more satisfaction in his romantic relationships (Wade & Coughlin, 2012).

**Men's versus women's predictors of sexism.** It would seem that when a man's construction of his masculinity is dependent on a male reference group, his attitude develops in

line with traditional ideologies. Men's BS was a function of the BS of the men in their environment. In turn, men's sexism predicts women's sexism. Women's views of what is normative are also a function of the men in their environment, presumably because if a dominant group espouses an ideology, it becomes normative. For example, if the local culture is for men to be chivalrous, men are more likely to be chivalrous and women are more likely to view this as normative and not feel that it is victimizing. This can be explained, according to Sibley, Overall, Duckitt, Perry, Milfont, Khan, Fischer, and Robertson (2009) by a need for the human mind to have cognitive consistency. They support the hypothesis that increasing BS attitudes in women make them more willing to accept hostile attitudes. Right Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) mediates this tendency in women. Miedzian (1992) writes, "The socio-cultural assumption, often unconscious, is that male behavior is the norm and constitutes a paradigm for human behavior, female behavior being viewed as deviant or defective. This assumption makes it considerably more difficult for men to question the masculine mystique than for women to question the feminine mystique" (p. xxvi). She argues that masculinity is a construction developed by the ways that we raise our sons. It follows that their learned masculine ideology and sexist attitudes then inform the women in the environment, who then raise their sons, *ad infinitum*... In sum, both men and women are born into a sexist structure in which they both participate. A better, more robust understanding of sexism will go a long way into dismantling the stereotypes of men and women and the structures that bind.

**Essentialist influences on sexism.** Sexist attitudes are based on beliefs – stereotypes - about the fundamental nature of men and women. Scholars, psychologists and authors reference Essentialism, the view that there are essential, natural differences between men and women, often. Many arguments are based on its premises – that women are naturally more nurturing

while men are naturally more aggressive; that women's psyches and unique strengths developed from the need to keep social ties and do the work of "gatherer," while men were hunters and protectors of the tribe; that women are seeking mates who will provide for their young, while men seek to impregnate as many women as possible because they can thus reproduce faster and want to get as many of their genes as possible into the next generation; that "men are from Mars and women are from Venus" (Gray, 1992). Biological theories, such as the Evolutionary Neuroandrogenic Theory (Ellis, 2011) explains that the presence of androgens in the male chemistry make them bored more easily, experience more fearlessness, have a higher pain tolerance and higher proneness to risk-taking -- and therefore have more accidental injuries and become more adventurous. The theory also proposes that men have brains programmed less towards emotionality, are less obedient and are more programmed towards anti-social behavior, disposing them towards higher rates of criminality. Male brains in this way create a rightward shift in neocortical functioning, making men more inclined to do right hemisphere work like math, science and engineering and are therefore more interested in occupations that suit their brains. Men are also alleged to appreciate humor better than women do, but are also noted to have higher rates of learning disabilities, autism, psychopathy, phobias, schizophrenia, depression and suicide. Androgens in men's brains are said to lead to increased competitiveness and interest in sports; to increase their use of drugs and alcohol (thereby increasing their addiction rates) because more they are more sub-optimally aroused; and to desire more sex/variety of sexual experiences/more partners relative to females. They are reportedly programmed to gather the resources (hunting/making money) because they note that females are attracted to mates who are competent provisioners. Women, ENA argues, have shaped men into being resource provisioners and men have more or less complied in both constructive and

destructive ways. Bus (2011) rebuts with the assertion that, though women are not passive pawns in men's games, "...the inference of blame, however, does not follow from the identification of women's participation in one aspect of the causal chain" (p. 308).

**Social constructionist influences on gender differences.** Others have argued that the observed differences between men and women are cognitions and behaviors learned through a strategic social construction. Furthermore, Smiler (2011) writes, the supposed biological differences between men and women are driven by a subset of men who vehemently ascribe to the masculine ideology, a social construct. Evolutionary Psychologists argue that human behavior cannot be genetically determined because the environment heavily influences psychological underpinnings. They argue that social and cultural influences outweigh possible genetic dispositions and that any psychological propensities do not necessitate manifest behavior (Buss & Schmitt, 2011). Ellis retorts that while the magnitude of the genetic and biological influence can be minimized, it cannot be ignored. He, with ENA, contends that there are essential differences between men and women because those differences have to do with a basically female brain being exposed to high amounts of androgens in men. These essentialist beliefs are found to have a positive correlation with sexism, increasing both men and women's acceptance of gender inequality. Feminists have worried that both evolutionary psychology and genetic theories would be used to justify patriarchy and offenses like sexual harassment saying, "boys will be boys!" but Smith and Konik (2011) argue that these theories and feminism do not have to be mutually exclusive. Eagly and Wood (2011) agree, proposing an integrative framework that recognizes both the nature and the nurture causes of female and male behavior. If this is true, there are natural psychological pre-dispositions in men and women (suggesting a natural "femininity" and a natural "masculinity") that can be changed by the environment.

In support of the social construction theory is the idea that no single definition of masculinity or femininity can really be delineated for oneself or for others (Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1999). If masculinity and femininity are measured in terms of instrumentality and expressiveness, they seem to be independent variables rather than opposite ends of a bipolar scale. Both instrumentality and expressiveness can be measured in degrees on a spectrum, and those spectrums can be independent of one another and not be mutually exclusive. In other words, individuals can have a variety of degrees of expressiveness and instrumentality; and if these traits are the essential definitions of gender, then individuals (both men and women) can have varying degrees of both genders' expressions. Individuals' gender appropriation is thought to be a function of what they think others think is appropriate for their sex.

Meta-stereotypes – individuals' predictions about how their group is viewed by an out-group, such as what men think women think about men – influences a man's self-concept, counter-intuitively, even more so if he is conscious of the stereotypes. While Klein and Azzi (2001) found that members of a social group are likely to tailor these meta-stereotypes strategically, depending on the stereotype and whether they are addressing other members of the in-group or if they are addressing members of an out-group, they still internalize the gender role prescription of those stereotypes. For example, a man might say, to other men, that women think men are controlling and domineering; but to women, a man would say that women see men as protective. Whichever way it may be spun, that man will internalize a self-concept of himself as a man whose masculinity is dependent on him taking control in situations with women. And however intensely this is expressed (whether as protective or as domineering), the association of "masculinity" with "taking control" is created in his psyche.

Stereotypes, Klein and Azzi (2001) write, are representations of social groups that fulfill a variety of functions related to group enhancement and group protection. One of these functions is differentiation. The stereotypes describe men and women and effectively give both men and women their own social spaces and functions. I wonder whether the negotiation of these social functions and the defending of oneself against the stereotypes and meta-stereotypes could explain the battle of the sexes. Through these struggles, we differentiate and appropriate concepts of ourselves while simultaneously trying to survive in our environment. (Consider the protective factor of women adopting BS attitudes or the benefit for men in protecting their status by punishing women who contest their power through HS and rewarding those who comply through BS). Klein and Azzi write, "...group members strategically manipulate aspects of their social identity, including stereotypes, when presenting them to an audience" (p. 290). Moreover, they write:

The influence of the meta-stereotype on the self may also depend on the relation between the target group and the group that is the source of the stereotype. For example, subordinate groups' meta-stereotypes about dominant groups may elicit feelings of guilt in the latter and the sense that their position is illegitimate [Crocker, Major & Steele, 1998]. However, if the meta-stereotype comes from a dominant group, the threat may concern acceptance by this group and access to resources controlled by it (p. 289).

In sum, perhaps essentialism is a set of pervasive and internalized stereotypes that are used to maintain homeostasis in a sexist system. These stereotypes, which do not necessarily have a logical, nor a significant biological basis, wrongfully justify people treating other people in certain ways because of their sex. Miller and Garran (2008) write, "One of the greatest risks of unacknowledged stereotypes is that rather than being reflected upon, they will be acted out, often in ways that are unconscious but having the potential to wound and harm others" (p.96).



I contend that sexism is best understood as wrongful discrimination based on a person's sex. Essentialism and the stereotypes that it breeds make sexism hard to see. Moreover, Essentialism may be successful in maintaining the status quo when invoked strategically to protect higher status groups when their status is threatened by change (Morton, Postmes, Haslam, & Hornsey, 2009). On the other hand, it may also oppress the higher status group -- in this case, heterosexual men -- who may be bound by masculine ideologies (ideologies more rigid than feminine ideologies). Bus and Schmitt (2011) write that mate preferences can inflict psychological damage on both men and women, whether it is a woman being treated as a "sex object" or a man being treated as a "success object."

Sociologist, Durkheim (1933) wrote that society predates people. That implies that both men and women are born into a sexist belief system and are socialized to become part of it. Harro (2002)'s Cycle of Socialization, depicted in Figure #1, illustrates how people are taught their social roles, which are then reinforced and which shape their identity, their beliefs, their attitudes and their behaviors.

"The reductionist view that sexism is a conspiracy by men to maintain a position of dominance over women in the patriarchal structure holds no water. Women and men, alike, are born into a sexist belief system and are socialized into it. The men of today did not create sexism -- it was already there" (Harro, 2002, p. 16). Along the same line of thought, Crane-Seeber and Crane (2010) write, "In our analysis, patriarchy shifts from being something men do to women and becomes a shared logic that we all respond to" (p. 219). That does not mean that men (and women) of today do not collude with the sexist structure and are not responsible for dismantling it. All this being said, I wonder how stereotypes and the ensuing socialized expectations and pressures associated with "being a man" in the patriarchal structure affect heterosexual men.



FIGURE 1: HARRO'S CYCLE OF SOCIALIZATION

### The Second Sexism: Oppression from the Masculinist Perspective

In the last three decades or so, sexism and concern with how it relates to men has started to become the subject of investigation, although not much literature exists relative to the mammoth feminist oeuvre. In 2010, Glick and Whitehead used the Ambivalence Towards Men Index (AMI) and looked at Hostile sexism towards men (HM) and Benevolent sexism towards men (BM). This may have been the first time when sexism was studied as something that could be directed towards men, considering that the indices specify “towards men.” It would seem that

before this point, sexism was somewhat synonymous with what feminists fought against rather than unfair, oppressive assumptions directed towards men as well (albeit to a different degree). Feminism has been around for a long time as the movement against sexism, as it is perpetrated against women. Masculinism is a new concept. But together, Feminism and Masculinism can fight sexism better.<sup>1</sup>

According to HM and BM attitudes, men are domineering, controlling, condescending, likely to harass, resistant to viewing women as equal and lionize men as protectors and providers who should be taken care of by their women at home (Glick & Whitehead, 2010). This is not to say that such attitudes place men in an innocent victim role, however. These HM attitudes suggest that men are designed to dominate, implying that men will continue to have greater hierarchical power than women going into the future. Glick and Whitehead discuss that HM perceives the stability of the oppressive gender hierarchy. It supports the idea that men have agency and competence at best, though they have excesses of selfish ambition at their worst (Glick et al., 2004). HM expands Eagly and Mladinic's (1994) maxim that "women are weak and wonderful" to including "and men are bad but bold." The consequences of these pervasive essentialist beliefs that have been infused into the culture for ages, denying men and women their human freedom because they are under the assumption that "they cannot help it" because it is in their nature, have been shown to have multiple macro level and micro level consequences.

**Mating strategies and sexist beliefs.** Sexist beliefs (HS, BS, HM, BM) have been shown to affect mating strategies. Men were considered to play a more active role than women when initiating heterosexual relationships (Clark, Shaver & Abrahams, 1999). Women, on the other hand, focused their mating strategies on being attractive in order to attract assertive courtships by

---

<sup>1</sup> Note: Masculinism is not in the dictionary, nor is it recognized by spell check.

men. Moreover, women with more sexist attitudes were more receptive to men who were more cavalier (Hall & Canterbury, 2011). Both men and women indicated a tendency to hold more traditional marriage preferences, expecting men to make the marriage proposals (Robnett & Leaper, 2013). At the same time, however, when women's sense of personal control is heightened, they are just as willing as men to initiate relationships, suggesting that the gender difference is socially constructed and more malleable than previously thought (MacGregor & Cavallo, 2011). Although the power that men have in proposal situations has been discussed, the power that women gain through obtaining pricey engagement rings has not been.

**Double standards of sexual morality.** In addition to problems in communication and to role expectations with respect to courtship, sexuality (men's sexuality in particular) is precarious. It is true that there are double standards and the costs of this double standard, especially as it relates to the experiences of women, has been discussed. Bertone and Camoletto (2009) discuss how the notions of masculinity and heterosexuality have been under-investigated. "These experiences are situated at the intersection of three different dimensions of invisibility: masculinity as the invisible side of the gender binary, male sexuality conceived as biologically driven, and heterosexuality as its natural form" (p. 369). In other words, male desire for sex with women is considered the foundation of masculinity and deviation from this norm results in a perceived loss of masculinity. There are several scripts for male sexuality that are connected with the constructions of hegemonic masculinities. Men are thought of as being biologically driven to have sex and to need to lose their virginity as soon as possible, "prey" on females and be skilled and knowledgeable about sex since they are thought of as actively *doing* something to a passive female sex partner. According to the Sexual Strategies Theory (SST), men want casual sex and will lower their standards in such short-term mating and while they do not necessarily seek to

impregnate these women, they certainly do not avoid sex with them. Women, according to SST, are expected to be the sexual gatekeepers and want lower numbers of sexual partners. Women who did take a proactive role in heterosexual sex were sometimes perceived as violating the man's role in the traditional gender scripts. Men thus rejected women who initiated sex (Fagen & Anderson, 2012). The negative consequences of these gender roles in sexuality include men preferring sexually inexperienced female partners, worrying that experienced females would undermine their sexual abilities. Calling sexually liberated and/or experienced and/or permissive girls "sluts" is a way of controlling women's sexualities in response to their own insecurities about their prowess (Hyde, Drennan, Howlett, & Brady, 2009). Thus, we get the slut/stud double standard for young men and women. As the stud matures, his sexuality script evolves into a relational one, in which their scripted sexuality is contingent upon being in a committed relationship with a woman. In other words, men are expected to sow their wild oats because they are biologically driven to do so and then settle down with a (virginal) wife and make babies, in order to confirm their potency (Bertone & Camoletto 2009).

A more recent study by Pedersen, Putcha-Bhagavatula and Miller (2011) supported the idea that there were relatively few evolved gender differences in mating strategies and preferences. England (2010)'s work corroborated this – that differences between the sexes are much smaller than the average person thinks. Rather, as Tate (2011) found, the difference was not that men wanted more sexual partners and that women wanted less, but that women's desired number of sex partners was more consistent with their actual number of sex partners than men. For men, there was inconsistency between how many sex partners they had and how many they wanted. This finding suggests that non-evolutionary variables, rather than the biological ones described in SST, drive men and women's expectations for the number of sex partners they have.

Furthermore, the only stable gender difference that Perrin, Heesacker, Tiegs, Swam, Lawrence, Smith, Carrillo, Cawood and Mejia-Millan (2010) found was that men reported feeling more supported and loved by their female partner than women reported feeling by their male partner. Gender-role identity significantly accounted for this difference. In other words, differences between the sexes with respect to sexuality and relationships are influenced more from socially constructed gender role expectations and than from any biological or evolutionary differences, as was previously thought.

Nevertheless, it is true that men have more privileges in the realm of sexuality than women do in contemporary society. That does not mean that they do not face vulnerabilities. With pressures to have sex at every opportunity, to be aggressive, and to be skillful, they experience uncertainty, fear and rejection (Hyde, Drennan, Howlett & Brady 2009). Also, it would seem that these beliefs about men's sexuality are not as different from women's sexuality as previously thought. While men did *report* a higher ideal frequency for sex than women did, men and women's ideal frequencies were not as dissimilar as they expected. Women overestimated how often they thought men would want to have sex (Simms & Byers, 2009). Moreover, contrary to the common stereotype that men are concerned with conquering females without concern for their feelings or their experience of the sex is at odds with the findings of the Hyde et al. (2009)'s study which showed that while gender prescriptions propelled men towards taking the lead and controlling the sexual encounter, their pleasure was, to a significant degree, derived in relation to the pleasure of their female partners. Men are apparently not as emotionally disconnected as hegemonic masculinity construed.

**Sexist beliefs impacting attitudes towards rape.** These sexist attitudes have also contributed to increases in instances of rape. Benevolent sexism towards men and acceptance of

interpersonal violence were found to be strong predictors of male rape myth acceptance for both men and women (Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2007; Chapleau, Oswald, & Russell, 2008). In other words, if men are naturally aggressive and sexual, then they cannot help it if they become sexually violent. For example, this myth is invoked as a rationale for requiring women to cover their bodies with full-length dress and head coverings in some countries. The men assert that they cannot help themselves if women *will* tempt them. Moreover, they cannot, themselves, be raped, without losing their sense of masculinity. This could result in an increase in rape instances victimizing women and the under-reporting of rape done unto men.

**Masculine attitudes towards homosexuality.** In the same vein, while trying to protect their precarious masculinity, men are shown to have more intolerant views towards homosexuals. Though no gender differences were revealed on attitudes towards the civil rights of homosexuals, homosexuality threatened men more affectively than it did women. When heterosexual men were primed with homosexual erotica (in contrast with heterosexual erotica), homophobia was positively related to the protective negative emotions feelings of anger and fear and negatively related to feelings of happiness and disgust. In other words, men felt angry and fearful, but not disgusted. Physical arousal was also documented despite homophobic attitudes (Zeichner & Reidy, 2009). In other words, homophobia in heterosexual men is not about their value system, but about a belief system regarding their male sexuality (Davies, 2004). Thompson (1995) that there masculinity is a system – a cluster of expectations that circumscribe how men should behave, resulting in various masculinities.

Hegemonic masculinity – the ultimate masculine ideology, the masculine ideal - is a repressive masculinity that subordinates other masculinities, most especially gay masculinities

and femininities, to sustain the ideology of male dominance in sexuality (Connell, 1995).

Hinojosa (2010) delineates some other forms of masculinity:

Subordinated masculinities are oppressed, exploited, and subject to overt control by more dominant forms. Gay and immigrant masculinities are examples. As subordinated masculinities, they tend to be barred from economic, social, and ideological power in Western society. Marginalized masculinities consist of constructions that are neither dominant nor subordinated, but relegated to being dominated by more powerful forms of masculinity even while they receive a greater share of the patriarchal dividends than subordinated masculinities. An example might be black or working-class masculinities; while working-class masculinity is marginalized when compared to the masculinities of the middle and upper classes [Pyke, 1996], as a collectivity it emphasizes physical toughness [Kimmel, 1996; Majors & Billson, 1992; McKay, Mikosza, & Hutchins, 2005; Messner, 1992], reifies men's association with musculature [McCreary, Saucier, & Courtenay, 2005; Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000], and is culturally lauded. And finally, complicit masculinities refer to configurations of gendered practice not constructed on the basis of dominance yet still receiving some social benefit because society privileges men [Connell, 1987; Johnson, 2005]. To illustrate complicit masculinities, we could think of working-class, Black, heterosexual, egalitarian, involved fathers who do not view themselves as traditional heads-of-household still receive some "patriarchal dividends" albeit "without the tensions or risks of being the frontline troops of patriarchy" [Connell, 1995, p. 79]. Further ways of conceptualizing masculinities, such as resistance masculinities, e.g., feminist men who actively work to deconstruct patriarchy [Kimmel & Mosmiller, 1992; Messner, 2000], or protest masculinities, (e.g., working-class men who challenge middle- and upper-class men's dominance by covertly or openly rejecting their authority [Walker, 2006]), make it clear that internal hegemony refers to how masculinities are structured hierarchically in opposition/comparison to other masculinities.

In sum, there is hegemonic variety within masculine forms and the most dominant masculinity is attributed to those men who have greater socio-economic status, who have more muscular bodies, who are the heads of their households and do not demonstrate any feminine qualities nor try and change the status quo. The more qualities a man has that are valued in the masculine ideology, the higher up the food chain he is privileged to sit.



## **Vulnerabilities and Limitations of Dominant Masculinity.**

*Men's Health Issues.* However, being a manly man does not necessarily lead to a happy and healthy life. It is true that no human being is invincible from physical or psychological harm. But since the culturally dominant (hegemonic) masculinity is characterized by emotional control, acknowledging physical or mental vulnerabilities is often difficult and threatening for men (Emslie, Ridge, Ziebland, & Hunt, 2006). The idea that "Boys Don't Cry," leads to self-stigma and resistance in men towards seeking help (Vogel, Heimerdinger-Edwards, Hammer, & Hubbard, 2011). Depression, as it is associated with powerlessness in the face of vulnerable and overwhelming emotions and thought of as a woman's health issue, is often under-reported in men. And when coupled men do become debilitatingly depressed, it seems that their female partners were ambivalent about the changes in gender roles. They adopted the traditionally masculine provider role and rejected the traditionally feminine nurturer role, prompting their male partners to take care of themselves; or they tried to hide their male partner's depression-induced deficits; or they were resentful of the mismatch of gender expectations and the relationship became dysfunctional (Oliffe, Kelly, Bottorff, Johnson, & Wong, 2011). These reactions perhaps make it harder for men to accept their depressions and seek help, risking a loss in esteem, in respect and in support both from society and from their partners. Shepherd and Rickard (2012) write about the concrete challenges and the stigmas associated with men having mental health problems or seeking help, especially when they feel insecure in their masculinity. Farrimond (2012) suggests re-conceptualizing help-seeking behaviors as an *action*, rather than an admittance of weakness, in order to create gender equality in terms of accessing health-care. Emslie et al. (2006) made a similar suggestion. The underlying message is that masculine ideology is an obstacle between men and health care - mental health care in particular.

*Pressures for conformity to physical ideals.* Men face unhealthy pressures to look certain ways, as well, albeit to a different degree than women. Much has been said and written over the objectification of women, and Swami and Voracek (2013) found that men's objectification of women was associated with their own drive for muscularity – the more men tried to be the male physical ideal, the more hostile and objectifying they were towards women. Studying popular magazines revealed that the ideal male body that has been marketed to men is more muscular than the ideal body marketed to women, sending the message that men should strive for muscularity (Frederick, Fessier, & Haselton, 2005). Perhaps men, like women, internalize gender norms with regards to physical ideals, since gender-role conflict is positively correlated with a drive for muscularity (Shepherd & Rickard, 2012). On the other hand, prenatal testosterone exposure was associated with an increased drive for muscularity (Smith, Hawkeswood & Joiner, 2010). In any case, men's propensity towards risky body changing behaviors was shown to be a direct influence of the internalization of the mesomorphic ideals in their social environment (Karazsia & Crowther, 2010). Modifying this idea, McFarland and Petrie (2012) postulated that it is not so much about body fat or muscles for men, but to have “an upper torso that is lean, muscular and V-shaped; legs that are strong and well-defined; and a face that is defined by nice looking hair and an attractive complexion” (p. 333). The head of hair and the clear complexion could be demarcations of health. The particular shape desired sounds like the shape of a super-hero figurine, which suggests that men's satisfaction with their bodies, like women's satisfaction with their bodies, is influenced by unrealistic portrayals in the media. Where a woman can have a Barbie-doll complex, a man may have a G.I Joe/Transformer/Super-Hero complex. Furthermore, some men are pre-occupied with the size of their penis evidenced by the market for penis enlarging tools and by humor about penis size. Note that, often, it is

women who remark on a man's penis size in a derogatory way or reject him because of the size of his penis. If a man were to laugh at a woman, or reject her because she had small breasts, this would be considered hostile sexism. In other words, it is possible for men to feel objectified – if a woman can be reduced to a “hole,” a man can be reduced to “a stick.”

Along the same lines, Liss, Erchull and Ramsey (2011) wrote that women who self-empower themselves through self-objectification reported negative eating attitudes, suggesting that their self-empowerment is comprised simply of internalized sexist beliefs and the endorsement of traditional gender norms and sexist beliefs. Perhaps this is true for some men, as well, as they focus on having transformer like bodies and penises, ready at any moment to act out their masculine scripts.

To recapitulate, and as cited by Thompson (1995), masculine ideology is experienced in a slew of stigmas and social scripts. The problem of the “real man trap” (Blake & Brown, 2004) or “the boy code” (Pollack, 1999) – the notion that young men are regulated and controlled toward displays of macho behavior – leave boys experiencing vulnerability in the process of becoming “a man.” The rigid norms attributed to maleness and masculinity, though they are not fixed (Hall & Gough, 2011) as was shown in study with monozygotic twins who were discordant for sexual orientation (Sanchez, Bocklandt & Vilain, 2013), have become stereotyped. Men are supposed to show emotional restriction (Bowl, 1985) in that not only are they not supposed to get emotional, but if they should feel emotional, only feelings like anger and aggression are acceptable; they have a reluctance to seek help (O'Brien, 1990); unlike women who are allowed more sexual fluidity, they are restricted from engaging in homosexual behavior to any degree (Tannen, 1992) A man is encouraged to be competitive and develop the need to “prove oneself” (Tolson, 1977); and is considered violent and aggressive (Miedzian, 1992). Men are documented to commit more

crime and be more delinquent (Hudson, 1988). Men are considered to be more oriented towards achieving status rather than connectedness, which would be the “woman’s domain” and thus a breach of their masculinity (Pascall, 1986). Men are expected to be tough (Morrison, 1990), which can exacerbate stress by disallowing self-expression and admittance of mistakes, precluding them from asking (or getting) help. In general, they are expected to be “not-feminine,” and oppress all that is female and feminine in them such as being caring and nurturing, resulting in perpetuating hostile sexism (Archer, 2010). In other words, HS is, at least in part, perpetuated by men’s experiencing particular gender role stress (Gallagher & Parrott, 2011), which not only hurts women, but is linked to bad faith (“I can’t help it, it’s my nature!”) and living an inauthentic existence, for men (Thompson, 1992). For example, feeling that they should be the things mentioned above may lead them to being fearful of situations that could place them out of control (Day, Stump & Carreon, 2003) or it may put pressure on them to be taking bigger risks than they may otherwise want to with sex (Bowleg, Teti, Massie, Patel, Malebranch & Tschann, 2011) or with drinking (Iwamoto, Cheng, Lee, Takamatsu & Gordon, 2011). Thompson (1995) writes: “...the traditional notions of masculinity are not only oppressive for women but also for men themselves, despite the power and other advantages bestowed upon them by sexism” (p. 460). Bowl (1985) argues that “There is much to be gained from loosening up the prevailing concept of masculinity: by opening up discussion about its nature and implications and by encouraging flexibility in gender roles and characteristics. Our existing conception operates as a straightjacket limiting communication between men, and between men and women, and limiting fulfilling experiences” (p. 30).

### **Systemic oppressions of men.**

*Conscription and Combat.* In addition to being limited through masculine ideology, there are many ways in which men are systemically oppressed, argues David Benatar in his book, *The Second Sexism*. The first male disadvantage that Benatar (2012) brings up is the issue of conscription and combat. It is true that that many men join the American military for the benefits that are important to hegemonic masculinity - the financial security offered in the steady and sizeable paychecks; the fit and able bodies and combat skills through rigorous training; and the sense of becoming “all they can be” through putting aside personal emotions and individuality by being in the service (Hinojosa, 2010). However, men - not women - have a long history of social and legal pressures toward conscription and combat. Miedzian (1991) writes, “To be deeply committed to negotiations, to be opposed to a particular war or military action, is not only considered unpatriotic, it also casts serious doubt on one’s manhood” (p. 21). She also writes, “In schools all over the world, little boys learn that their country is the greatest in the world, and the highest honor that could befall them would be to defend it heroically someday. The fact that empathy has traditionally been conditioned out of boys facilitates their obedience to leaders who order them to kill strangers” (1991, Chapter 3). Men, presumably because of gender/sex essentialism, have been legally bound to risk their lives, their bodily health and their psychological health. Not falling in line with such scripts can cost them shame, ostracism, imprisonment, physical assault, and in rare cases, execution. Many men have felt that their masculinity would be threatened if they avoided going to war when asked, or forced to do so. In those countries in which women have been conscripted, Benatar (2012) argues, they have been treated more leniently. Moreover, female soldiers are not forced into combat and are more easily allowed to work in safer jobs.

***Violence/physical assaults on men minimized.*** Combat is not the only way in which violence is disproportionately assumed of, and directed towards men. Benatar (2012) argues that sexual assault on men is grossly underestimated because of how such assaults would threaten their masculinity and because of how it is seemingly not taken as seriously. Through dozens of studies, spanning over four decades, Daniel O’Leary has documented that women initiate as much physical violence as often as men do in domestic relationships, also noting that women often do this within a dating relationship, fairly early on (O’Leary, Barling, Arias, Rosenbaum, Malone & Tyree, 1989; O’Leary, Malone & Tyree, 1994; Riggs, O’Leary, 1996). However, when a man is the victim of domestic abuses his masculinity and his victimhood (and manhood) is questioned. This is evidenced by how there are fewer resources available to aid abused men. Perhaps this differential attitude towards male and female victims of abuse has to do with the belief that all men are more violent than all women, or that women are meant to be protected and not necessarily men, or that since men are on average bigger and stronger than the average woman, that the violence he perpetrates is therefore worse. However, violence, despite the physical strength of the perpetrator, is disrespectful and harmful in many ways.

***Corporal punishment of males more severe/accepted.*** The theme that men’s bodies are less valuable than the bodies of women is also seen in how corporal punishment, though inflicted on both males and females, has been historically imposed more readily and severely on men than their female counterparts. It is common to hear, “He hit a girl!” or “I wouldn’t hit a girl,” with emphasis on the word “girl,” implying that it is worse to act violently towards women than towards men. Despite the fact that, historically, men had the “right” to discipline their wives with sticks not larger than their thumb, Benatar (2012) brings this double standard of

contemporary times, into question. It is discriminatory to inflict pain or injury on a man if pain on a woman in a comparable circumstance would not be countenanced.

*Sexual assaults on males minimized.* Sexual violence is also perpetrated against men, but again, it is taken much less seriously than sexual violence against women. Since the perpetrators of sexual violence are often male, there is an extra level of stigma when heterosexual men are sexually violated, evidenced by the under-reporting of such incidences, reduced health-service seeking behavior (Linos, 2009) and the paucity of resources available for aid. Moreover, having been penetrated by another man seems to bring into question a man's masculinity, for masculinity is associated with *doing unto*, not *being done unto*. Heterosexual men, especially, have reason to not report being sexually victimized. Firstly, they are less likely to be believed and secondly, there is the fear of being seen as less of a man should anybody find out they had been put into the submissive role.

Sexual assault on men by women is also an under-investigated subject. Benatar (2012) writes:

Historically, rape has been defined in such a way that only females can be the victims of rape and males the only perpetrators of it. In some places, there is no comparable crime of which males could be the victims. This is true in China (excluding Hong Kong), where Article 236 of the Penal Code prohibits rape of women and sexual intercourse with underage girls, but has no provisions to prohibit comparable acts against men. In other places, anal penetration of a man by a man is criminalized, but in many of those jurisdictions no distinction is drawn between consensual and non-consensual sodomy, which suggests that the law's concern is not with protecting males from rape but rather with prohibiting a certain kind of sexual activity, irrespective of whether the parties to it are consenting. (p. 39).

It was in the mid 1970s when America effected a change in policy, broadening the definition of rape to include the possibility that males can be raped. However, Benatar (2012) continues, reforms still fail to achieve full gender neutrality. In England, for example, a legal understanding of rape depends on penetration by penis. Laws do not recognize that females can be perpetrators,

and if they do arouse an unconscious or bound man and then have sex with his penis, the penalty is far less severe. According to Benatar (2012), penalties against women committing statutory rape against male minors are less severe than the reverse. In sum, the masculine ideologies around violence, aggression and sexuality have rendered men more vulnerable and less protected in the system from physical violations.

***Circumcision.*** Circumcision is another way in which Benatar (2012) thinks men are systemically discriminated against. Although he acknowledges that female circumcision is much more severe than male circumcision, he likens the two in that it involves the excision of a part of an individual's genitals without necessarily getting permission from said individual. He argues that just because one is less severe than the other does not make the less severe act all right. He discusses the pros and cons and evaluates whether or not male circumcision is *wrongful* discrimination, considering the health benefits that society assumes. I am not interested in outlining all these, however, and prefer to stick with the point that mutilation, without permission, or with the permission of one's parents, may be considered by some to be violating, whether performed on males or females.

The underlying message from the various disadvantages outlined above are that that men's bodies are less important than female bodies; that violence against men is less damaging than violence against men; that men are naturally badly behaved; that men can defend themselves more easily; and that men are the perpetrators, not the victims. Benatar (2012) also brings up how bodily privacy is taken less seriously for men, subjecting them to more unwanted invasions of their personal space, than are women. He discusses how in prison, more efforts are made to find female guards to cavity search women; but the same effort isn't made to find male guards to cavity search male prisoners. In general, more importance has been given to female



privacy than to male privacy. Consider public bathrooms – when there are only two bathrooms in a building that are needed to accommodate females, males, and transsexuals, it is invariably the female bathroom that is private and the male bathroom that is shared. Again, this refers back to the underlying assumptions about men’s sexuality and of masculine ideologies that are not necessarily logical and are therefore wrongful discrimination and disadvantage.

***Reduced life expectancies/quality of life.*** The various male disadvantages that do not protect male bodies as seriously, Benatar (2012) purports, lead to shorter life expectancies for men. This may be compounded by masculine ideologies that keep men from seeking health treatment. By being socialized to be more aggressive with limited forms of emotional expression like anger, and acting more violently (whether it is a chicken and egg situation), men become imprisoned at a much higher rate than females. Moreover, they are sentenced to capital punishment at a greater rate. Imprisonment coupled with less physical protection has resulted in jail rape that, in turn, has led to numerous HIV infections and other sexually transmitted infections. A couple more examples by Benatar (2012): “A young man on the Titanic who is denied a place in a lifeboat because of his sex is worse off than the young woman whose life is saved because of her sex. A young man conscripted and killed in battle is worse off than his sister who is not” (p. 200). Basically, the male disadvantages related to not taking the protection of male’s bodies as seriously, coupled with stigma towards seeking help, have resulted in more male deaths than female deaths in these circumstances, and shorter life spans in general.

***Paternity uncertainty.*** Questions of paternity are another way in which men are disadvantaged, Benatar (2012) argues. Where women can be sure that their baby is theirs, men cannot. They have to endure more uncertainty about whether or not they are the fathers of a child they know about, or whether or not they have fathered a child they do not know about. Now, a

disadvantage is not necessarily discrimination, but, as Benatar (2012) points out, there are legal ways in which the paternity of a father is kept less tenable and stable under U.S. laws. He brings up that if a child is born out of wedlock in the U.S., that child is a citizen if the mother is a citizen and the father is not. However, if the father is a citizen and the mother is not, the father has to jump through legal hoops to get his child citizenship. Benatar (2012) questions that asymmetry.

*Contraception asymmetries.* Another asymmetry is in the choices that men have to prevent pregnancy. Whereas women have many of options for birth control, men have two options other than abstinence, both of which are generally considered less than ideal – condoms or vasectomy. Grady, Klepinger, Billy and Cubbins (2010) suggest that the many birth control options that women have counteracts the imbalance of power that dating women experience, reporting that unmarried women have less power over a couple's birth control method choice than married women and that this power decreases as the couple becomes more involved. They write, "having relatively low commitment to the relationship or having more alternatives than their partners tends to increase their own decision-making power while at the same time reducing that of their male partners" (p.319). In contrast, Raine, Gard, Boyer, Haider, Brown, Hernandez and Harper (2010) found that there was a positive correlation between increased intimacy in a relationship and condom use.

Men have varying attitudes about contraception. Some men felt that contraception and pregnancy is a woman's responsibility and blamed the woman after an unplanned pregnancy. But most men felt that family planning was a joint responsibility (Grady et al., 2010). Tsui, Casterline, Singh, Bankole, Moore, Omideyi, Palomina, Sathar, Juarez and Shellenberg (2011) found that while men and women assumed joint responsibility, that they rarely weigh the

advantages and disadvantages of birth-control and abortion (and presumably, pregnancy) before engaging in sexual intercourse. Just as women reported ambivalent attitudes towards taking oral contraception, so men have ambivalent attitudes about wearing condoms (reporting several disadvantages) and sometimes employed a wide range of condom resistance tactics (Davis, Schraufnagel, Kajumulo, Gilmore, Norris, & George, 2013). Other men, however, reported always wearing a condom, despite not liking them, even if his partner says she is using birth control. These men, in addition to concerns about STIs, reported that they do not feel comfortable leaving all contraceptive control in the hands of their partners. An exploration of the use of contraception use by women in the United States (Moore, Singh, & Bankole, 2011) found that one in six women are not using birth control because: a.) They think they cannot get pregnant, b.) They do not think that they need to because they have infrequent intercourse, c.) They are dissatisfied with their birth control and do not believe a service provider is available to answer method-related questions and d.) They are in disagreement with their partner about fertility goals. Perhaps this last reason makes a good argument for why men should wear a condom no matter what – so that they can maintain control over their fertility goals. The asymmetry to note, however, is that men have fewer options than women for retaining control – abstinence, vasectomies and condoms. I wonder why there are not any oral contraceptive options for men available on the market and wonder if the masculine ideology of being virile may play into the lack of exploration on the subject.

***Pregnancy termination disenfranchisement.*** Should an unplanned pregnancy occur, ever since *Roe vs. Wade*, the choice to have an abortion is solely that of the woman, as it should be. However, when she makes this decision about becoming a parent, she is simultaneously making the decision for the man. Benatar (2012) writes:

To require that a woman obtain the consent of her partner for an abortion or to force an abortion on her if the partner does not want to become a father is to impose too great a burden on her. We have to recognize that the biological differences are relevant here. However, the law may sometimes be wrongfully discriminatory when it then imposes paternal responsibilities on men who explicitly do not want to become fathers or who do not even know that they have become fathers. In other words, it seems reasonable to say that whereas a woman has the right to choose whether or not to carry a fetus to term, this right should not always impose paternal duties on the genetic father. (p. 139).

That is not to say that men do not have any influence over whether the baby is brought to term or that he would not want to be a part of his progeny's life.

There seem to be various attitudes and levels of involvement from the men. With regards to choosing to have the baby, the experiences of men ranged from being excluded from the decision process, to feeling that it was a mutually reached decision, to claiming responsibility for deciding and taking it upon himself to — controversially -- aggressively persuading the pregnant woman to terminate her pregnancy (Reich & Brindis, 2006). Miller (2012)'s findings were different - that while most men in cohabitating partnerships wanted to have input in the decision about whether or not to abort an unplanned pregnancy, the majority of them were not actually involved in the decision. Many men have reported feeling disenfranchised.<sup>2</sup>

Reich (2008) explored the different reasons that men have reported for wanting to terminate (or not terminate) a pregnancy. These factors include a man's desire to reproduce, their desire to be a "good" father, their idea of what a "good father" is, and whether or not they could actualize this ideal in their particular situation. Many men felt that to be a good father, they would have to take on a provider role. Moreover, many felt that their ideal situation would be to be married (or with) the mother, and that this mother would be somebody that they thought would be a good mother to their child. This suggests that if they impregnated somebody whom

---

<sup>2</sup> The website, <http://www.menandabortion.net>, advocates for increased consideration of the role of men in abortion and is available for emotional support to men who regret their lost fatherhood.

they did not want to be with or have as the mother to their child, then they would advocate terminating the pregnancy. This was emphasized by data that suggested that men who were against abortion valued the relationship with the mother more than those who preferred to terminate the pregnancy. What sticks out from this study, other than the lack of control a man may feel in having a child with a woman of his choice other than not having intercourse with a woman he would not want to impregnate, is that idea that to be a “good father” he would have to take on a financial provider role.

Reich (2008) talked about masculinity and what that meant – having children, providing for those children and not being a “dead-beat” dad. An absent father is considered to less than “a man” and that a “man” is somebody who has children and provides for them. As a consequence, disadvantaged men tended to want *not* to have a child that they cannot provide for (Jackson, Karasz, & Gold, 2011), especially with a woman they do not want to be involved with. Reich (2008) writes, “In accounting for the decision to terminate the pregnancy, men consider their relative desire to reproduce themselves, their evaluation of self in relation to idealized fatherhood, and whether they feel ready to take on the role of the provider and head of household. Taken together, these narratives reveal the cultural dominance of narrowly defined expectations of fatherhood and how men articulate a desire for traditional family formation” (p. 3). The result is that when these ideals are not met, many men want to walk away. However, the law does not allow for their choice in the matter.

***Custody and child support inequities.*** Custody and child support laws are other salient ways in which men are systemically disadvantaged. Benatar (2012) points out how men’s involvement in the family is narrowly scripted. He discusses the custody advantages awarded to mothers in contemporary U.S. society. Not only is custody usually granted to a mother because

of the assumption that women are more nurturing, but if the mother does not honor a custody agreement, the government does not interject unless the father hires a lawyer and presses charges. Automatic penalties do not exist for a woman who does not honor a custody agreement. In contrast, child-support laws allow the government to garnish men's wages. Moreover, if he does not pay the child-support, he automatically faces numerous penalties including the loss of his license, the denial of a passport and imprisonment. Some men reported feeling tension regarding the payment of child support being an entitlement rather than a gift, resenting the economic dimensions of fathering identities (Natalier & Hewitt, 2010). Natalier (2012) writes, "for men who framed their stories in terms of loss, frustration and anger arose as they experienced child support as a means by which their ex-partners and the Child Support Agency reconfigure their relationships, fathering practices and obligations in disempowering ways (p.246). Mackey (1996) writes,

The concept of coercing parenthood onto the woman is unacceptable in the United States in the 1990's. Similarly, the concept of mandating and coercing an abortion (precluding parenthood) upon the woman is unacceptable. But, and this is a large but, the man can be forced to be a parent against any expressed choice on his part. If the woman becomes a parent, so does he. He has no option. He can, however, be assessed child support for 18 years as a result of the coerced parenthood. Others can decide just how close this scenario comes to taxation without representation. If the man were to propose marriage to the woman and she refused him, then the man is, again, without recourse. He cannot coerce marriage, nor will the government coerce the marriage. Here, too, he has no choice, no option. (p. 159).

Another very important piece to consider concerns effects on the children because happy and healthy children make happy and healthy adults, and happy and healthy societies. Vogel, Bradley, Raikes, Boiler, and Shears (2006) conclude that children who grow up with resident or involved non-resident biological fathers show "higher levels of self-regulation and lower levels of aggression than children with unstable father connections," (p. 189). This study also only

addresses biological fathers who are known to the child and does not address instances when a child and father have never met. Thus, I wonder if there are other factors involved. Could it be that economic and extended family support play a role in the adjustment of the child? Is it stability with a father in general versus knowing the biological father that makes the positive difference? If so – if it is stability over biology that makes the difference – there might be an argument not to force involvement (through child support) by the disenfranchised genitor who could very well only provide an unstable fatherly connection at best. The old adage, “you can bring a horse to water, but you can’t make it drink,” comes to mind.

Should a father very much want to be a part of his child’s life, there are two times when the system precludes fathers from having access to their children with no legal standing to impact the process– 1) single parent births and 2) no-fault divorces. Mackey (1996) lists out the effects of the latter scenario:

1. The wife files a petition at the local courthouse. This means the divorce will happen.
2. In the majority of cases – up to 90%- the court will award custody of the minor children to the wife (Sitarz, 1990; Sack, 1987).
3. She and she alone will then have the power to make decisions for the children until they are 18 years of age. The father may have the opportunity to consult, but he cannot make decisions.
4. A formula calculated by the government will determine child support payments that the father must make. The child support can be up to 50% of his disposable income. Any failure on his part to pay punctually may result in a fine or time spent in jail or both. Again, the father need not have done anything wrong to have those payments mandated.
5. Visitation times are controlled by the ex-wife.
6. The father is not provided entry to his children’s home (p. 17)

In the two scenarios presented, through no fault of his own, a man (genitor) can be denied access, or given limited access, to his offspring; his fatherhood being reduced to the roles of genitor and child support checks. Mackey (1996) writes, “The severe abrading of men from the father role via no-fault divorce and out-of-wedlock births separated men from children in large numbers and

high percentages. Both phenomena are immune to what men may want or prioritize. That is, both no-fault divorce and out-of-wedlock births may occur whether the man is agreeable to them or not. Legally, the man's wishes are totally irrelevant" (p. 122). Mackey (1996) continues with a discussion of child support payments. He writes:

1. Child support is not given to the children. Child support is given to the ex-wife. There is zero accountability by the courts on how child support money is actually spent. If child support money given by the father to his ex-wife is spent by the ex-wife only upon the ex-wife, then the enthusiasm for the father to continue making payments might understandably be muted.
2. Any monies or resources given directly to the child by the father count for zero in the eyes of the court in the accounting of the father's child support payments. Any food, clothing, medication, recreations, and the like which are given to the child by the father have no reality in relationship to the court's mandated child support payments.
3. If the child is spending the summer or a vacation with the father and the child's expenses are totally underwritten by the father, these expenses count for zero when the next month's child support payments are due. The ex-wife is to be paid the child support payments, in full, even though the child is living with the father for an extended period of time.
4. Child support payments have zero deductibility when tax season rolls around.
5. Visitation time and child support payments are totally separate. The court will... nab, cuff, and jail fathers who are not making payments at the court's bidding. Any thwarting of the visitation between father and child by the ex-wife has no parallel legal recourse by which the court will automatically pursue on behalf of the father. The father is on his own (p.133)

***Paternity/maternity leave asymmetry.*** One last way in which Benatar (2012) considers male disadvantage with respect to families has to do with paternity leave. Should a couple have a child and should the father want to stay at home with his baby, or if a father has sole custody of his newborn and wants take paternity leave, this option is rarely considered as seriously as maternity leave. Therefore, Benatar (2012) argues, these men are wrongfully discriminated against.



## Literature Review Summary

The review of the literature offered here shows that there is much empirically based literature on the oppression of women. While there are several theoretical works that have sporadically sprouted throughout the past thirty years that address the experiences of heterosexual men, I did not find any empirically based studies. Yet, men are clearly negatively affected, at least to some degree, by limiting masculine ideologies and systemic disadvantages. It seems that patriarchal social relations and systems are also oppressive to men, who are routinely being cast as the oppressors. The lack of literature on the subject, beyond my pure interest in the subject, is a perfect reason to do this study. As mentioned before, over two hundred years of discourse on the ways in which women have faced oppression exists, while only a tenth of that time has produced any literature on the ways in which men face social stigma and systemic oppression. This motivates me to conduct a formal study – qualitative in nature - that strives to give voice to the perceived (and personal) advantages and disadvantages of being a heterosexual man in the United States, if there those who live these gender roles experience any. I am interested in seeing whether any men *feel* a sense of injustice, restriction or oppression by virtue of being a heterosexual male. Simply stated, are there any ways in which the “oppressors” feel oppressed? If so, social workers must pay attention to this oppression as well - not to undercut the feminist movement, but to work with the feminist movement towards eradicating the binds of sexism.

## **CHAPTER III**

### **Methodology**

This study is a qualitative investigation of the experiences of a small group of heterosexual men in the northeastern United States. (The study received approval from the Smith College Human Subjects Review Committee; the Committee's approval letter is contained in Appendix A to this thesis report.) In order to explore their experiences, I advertised on CraigsList.org under the Western Massachusetts section, on social media sites like Facebook, and with flyers (Appendix B) around Northampton, Holyoke, South Hadley and Amherst, Massachusetts to find participants that I did not know personally. My goal was to get 12-15 participants for individual interviews. I planned to start with non-probability sampling through such social media, then use snowball sampling, asking participants to recommend other men who would be eligible for the study. Ideally, I would be able to study a large, national sample in a mixed-methods study in order to get a really good idea of how pervasive a feeling of masculine oppression is today, but time and other limitations precluded this. Nonetheless, I think using a small qualitative study (limited as it may be), is still important in giving voice to men and in illustrating the extent to which arguments presented by Masculinist theorists applied to them. It would be helpful to have quantitative data for the purposes of understanding trends, correlations and general attitudes and to get a more inter-subjective comprehension of the experiences of men

in the U.S and to then supplement quantitative data with qualitative data for well-rounded results. Perhaps this will be a future project of my own. But for this master's thesis, considering the limitations of time and resources I faced, I surrendered to a solely qualitative methodology.

I sought heterosexual men in the United States over the age of eighteen who were fluent in English. Much empirical research has been done on the oppression that women and homosexual men endure and the purpose of my study is to give voice to the ways in which the “oppressor” – the *heterosexual male* – may be or may feel oppressed – if indeed participants endorsed this sense for themselves. I initially wanted to limit the study to *white* heterosexual men to really narrow in on the most privileged group, but I forwent this as the race variable seemed as if it would complicate the project and distract from the topic of sexism. Thus, my study has been open to all heterosexual men over the age of eighteen, no matter their race. I ended up with five men who identified as “white” and one man who identified as “black.”

Recruitment was more difficult than I anticipated. I only got two responses to my advertisements and I wondered why this might be. Watts (2010) wrote that “Men are both agents and targets of masculinity (and)...tend to avoid confronting their active and passive roles as oppressors if they can, and investigators ought to carefully consider the influence of their own performances and ideology” (p. 210). Wondering if men would be unlikely to volunteer for a study they might feel suspicious of, I decided to offer a \$25 incentive. I also decided to change the interview procedure from 12-15 individual interviews to conducting a focus group. I imagined that perhaps discussing the topic amongst a group of men might allow for the participants to be more candid than they might feel comfortable being in a one-on-one interview with a female. The methodology change did entice more willing participants, though not many more. I was able to gather one focus group of five men. One man from Connecticut who was

interested in the study as not able to make the focus group date and time, and so I went to see him for an individual interview.

Prior to the interviews, I spoke with each participant about confidentiality and about the interview being video-taped for later analysis—though only by myself and my research advisor, both of us being bound by the ethics of confidentiality. I then received their signatures on the Informed Consent Forms prior to conducting the interviews (see Appendix C for a copy of the Informed Consent Form). The interview questions were presented to both the focus group members and to the participant in the individual interviews (interview questions are contained in Appendix D, but are presented here as well).

### **Interview Questions**

#### **Demographic Information:**

Name:

Age:

Address:

Ethnicity/Race:

Educational Level:

Income: (Pick One)

- <\$10,000 /yr
- \$10,000-20,000 /yr
- \$20,000 -\$30,000 /yr
- \$30,000-\$40,000 /yr
- \$40,000- \$50,000 /yr
- \$50,000 - \$75,000 /yr
- \$75,000 - \$100,000 /yr
- < \$100,000 /yr

## II: Primary Questions

- 1: What does it mean, to you, to be “a man”?
- 2: You have grown up a heterosexual male in the United States and you’ve come to understand that there are positive aspects to this. Can you give me some examples from your life where this advantage is illustrated?
- 3: I am particularly interested if perhaps being a heterosexual male has its disadvantages as well. If so, can you give me some examples from your life where those disadvantages are illustrated?
- 4: Have you ever felt pressure in any kind of way to do something you didn’t want to do, or not do something you wanted to do, because you are a heterosexual male? Can you describe circumstances that have made you feel this way?

## II. Sample Follow-Up Questions

1. Have you ever felt that you were treated unfairly in your home? Your community? Your school? Your work place? Your family? In a relationship? By the government? Due to any social policies? By societal expectations of you?
2. Have you ever felt pressures to do something that you did not want to do just because you are a heterosexual male?
3. Have you ever felt pressures to *not* do something that you wanted to do because you are a heterosexual male?
4. Have you ever felt misunderstood, stereotyped, judged, belittled and/or marginalized just because you are a heterosexual male? How about because of some expression of your masculinity?

5. Have you ever felt disenfranchised (deprived of power or choice) or oppressed because you are a heterosexual male?
6. Have you ever felt that any laws, social policies, rules, standards or traditions are particularly unfair towards men? How about towards heterosexual men?
7. Have you ever felt limited in your self-expression in fear of being judged as less than a man?
8. Also, as a follow-up, I would like to present a brief scenario (the vignette below) regarding an unwanted pregnancy and child support, and ask for your subjective feelings about it.

**Vignette**

*Linda met Mark. They got together that night. Before having sex, she told him that they did not need condoms because she was on birth control. They slept together. Mark was not interested in being in a relationship with Linda. A month later, Linda told Mark that she was pregnant with his child. Mark told Linda that he was not prepared for, nor interested in, being a father. Mark told Linda that he did not have the money to raise a child and did not feel that he was in a place in his life to take on such a big responsibility. Linda said that she would have an abortion, but a couple of weeks later she stated that if she had an abortion, she would regret it. She chose to keep the baby, despite what Mark had said he wanted. Linda was upset that Mark did not want to be with her and told him that she would never let the baby be in his care, alone. Mark expects that he will have a difficult relationship with Linda with regards to custody and visitation. Mark knows that, if paternity is established, the law holds him responsible for child-*

*support. Mark also knows that his wages will be garnished for said child-support. Mark expects that should Linda not honor a custody agreement he would have to undertake legal action to enforce it.*

While interviewing volunteers, I aimed to be careful not to use questions that might elicit biased statements. Also, I was careful not to pose the questions in ways that would communicate judgmental meta-messages. I did not want to suggest to the interviewees that they are being oppressed, but rather I wanted to let those feelings come out on their own if those feelings were really there. I also did not want to phrase questions in a way that might make any men feel that they had to “say the right thing,” so as not to be seen as “not a man.” Aware of the Social Desirability Response Set Phenomenon, I wanted a hypothetical man to be able to say how he felt on his own without fear of being blamed or labeled a sexist, especially considering that I am a female. I was conscious that my being a female might affect the responses and I considered asking another male to facilitate the interviews, although I could not find a willing participant. Instead, I decided to repeat to the participants that I was looking for “brutally honest and candid answers.” I was also careful with my body language – I kept both feet on the ground and my hands to my sides or in front of me as to present a neutral, open and non-defensive stance. Similarly, I tried to present the vignette with a neutral stance – using a calm tone of voice and being mindful of my body language. I wanted to communicate to the interviewees that a controversial opinion on their part would be accepted.

I was not sure how ready some men might be to acknowledge any societal pressures or burdens that they may face. It was my guess that unless approached the right way, especially given my being a woman, men might have had a hard time confessing what they really think – for example, an opinion some men have voiced that women have taken the baton for sexual

liberation and then run away with it. On the other hand, I figured that if I were clear with them about my goals – to *have brutally honest and candid answers* from them - they might open up.

When dressing for the interviews, I tried to wear neutral colors and androgynous outfits. Considering that people make judgments by appearances, I figured that wearing dresses and lipstick would widen the gender divide; wearing men's clothes make them think of me as a staunch feminist and suppose a wide ideological divide between us; and wearing dress clothes might make them more uptight in general. I decided to wear jeans, black t-shirts, my hair down, and a little makeup – neutral, unpretentious, invitingly tomboyish without seeming like a man-hating lesbian. (Unfortunately, some men make those kinds of judgments). One participant said to me, after the focus group, that he was not sure if the interview was going to be some kind of feminist trap, but that he could tell during the interview that it was not – that I was genuinely interested in the truth. This meant to me that my efforts in my presentation were well spent. He also remarked that though he thought the men would have said basically the same things, they would have said them differently if the interviewer had been a man. I will discuss that further in the Findings and Discussion chapters of this thesis report.

I was also careful to keep the volunteers' identifying information and participation in the study entirely confidential. Only my thesis adviser and myself viewed the videos. One digital copy of each will be kept for three years after the date of this study in a locked file. After that time, they will be completely destroyed. No other copies were made or ever will be made. Moreover, all the participants' identifying information is being kept in a secure location and will be destroyed upon the conclusion of this study. In addition to these measures to ensure confidentiality, I conducted the interviews at a time and place that allows them to keep their



involvement private. The focus group met in a private (yet public) space behind closed doors and without windows. The individual interview was held in a location of the participant's choice.

After the interviews, I gave each participant a list of resources should they feel any distress and want to find a social worker or a psychologist to speak with (Appendix E). I also gave them each \$25 in cash. I then uploaded the videotapes as digital files onto my computer and sent them to my thesis adviser. The original videotapes were immediately destroyed and the digital files were kept in a secure, password protected file folder. My thesis advisor and I both watched the videos, analyzing them for qualitative data, believing that using two raters would augment the validity of the observations.

## CHAPTER IV

### Results

This study was aimed at investigating the disadvantages of being a heterosexual male in contemporary United States society – the pressures, the expectations and any disenfranchisement that any men may feel. All of the participants seemed to be in agreement about “what it is to be a man” and about the disadvantages of being a male with respects to child-support and custody; with respects to violence issues; and with respects to non-emotional expressiveness expectations in men and how that inhibits their healing.

Six heterosexual men were interviewed (Speakers #1-6). These demographics are shown in the table, below:

Table 1: Participant Demographics

Participant	State of Residency	Age	Race	Education Level	Income	Married/Single	Occupation
S1	MA	34	W	Some college	\$10-20k	Single	Radio Station Manager
S2	MA	52	W	Some college	<\$10k	Single	Musician
S3	MA	33	W	BA, working on MA	\$20-30k	Girlfriend & Baby	Nutritionist/Coast Guard
S4	MA	35	B	Some college	\$30-40k	Married with Children	Unclear
S5	MA	38	W	Some college	\$10-20k	Single	Construction
S6	CT	51	W	Doctorate	\$75-100k	Married with Children	Lawyer (Family Law)

Speakers #1, #2 and #5 worked in artistic fields; speakers #3 and #4's careers were not clearly disclosed, though S3 mentioned experience as a nutritionist and as a member of the Coast Guard; and speaker #6 worked as a lawyer in family law litigation. All were articulate and thoughtful in their responses, presenting as individuals who cared about themselves and society at large. Perhaps it is fair to imagine that volunteers for a social study (for which it was relatively difficult to recruit willing participants) would have predispositions for being articulate and thoughtful about the topics.

All participants sat with confident and attentive body language – feet on the ground, deliberate and controlled body movements and open postures. Speaker #2 and #5 were more physically restless than the rest. They were also dressed with more artistic style, while the rest were wearing non-descript clothes.

Throughout the focus group interview, S1 was the most sarcastic and humorous, S2 was the most emotional and voluble, while S3, S4 and S5 did not appear emotionally affected, staying calm and apparently unemotional throughout the hour and a half session. S6, who was interviewed individually, was very controlled both in his posture and his manner of speaking. He chose his words carefully and articulated with intent.

### **What They Said in General**

In general, the men were acutely aware of societal expectations that *good* men make money as a testament of their personal success and to provide for a family; are strong in that they do not demonstrate much emotion; are independent (sometimes to the point of feeling emotionally isolated); and are physically protective over women and children.

When asked about the disadvantages of being a heterosexual male, the most salient themes had to do with fatherhood – not having much control over becoming a father, courts

favoring the mothers in custody battles, child support laws pushing them into fathers-as-paycheck roles, getting trapped into being a genitor, and not necessarily having access to children because of pervasive assumptions that children are better off with their mothers. Participants became particularly anxious while discussing the possibility of being trapped into parenthood. They fervently advocated using condoms as a protective measure, though there was ambivalence around using condoms. Still, they all agreed that condoms were their best measure of control over whether they became parents, also stating that the paucity of their birth control choices was a distinct disadvantage.

Another disadvantage that was salient to the participants had to do with prejudice in domestic violence cases. They felt that even if a woman attacked the first, they were more likely to be arrested. They also agreed that their male bodies were considered by society to be relatively disposable, though they did not express particular concern about this. Instead, they surrendered to being chivalrous protectors of women. Emotionally, however, they felt their invincibility was over-estimated. They spoke about the assumptions that men do not have feelings and/or can get over feelings fast; resulting in a lack of emotional support, particularly with regards to war. This, they said, had negative consequences on their mental health and their ability to heal. Also, they alluded to feeling limited in their authentic self-expression in fear of offending women or pursuing activities that are considered to be part of a woman's domain. The men also expressed concern about being viewed as "bad guys" because they are heterosexual males and/or because they have natural lustful desires.

One participant said outright that he felt oppressed. Another said that, personally, he has never suffered any disadvantages by virtue of being a heterosexual male, though he later endorsed much of the same sense of social oppression of men, as applied to other men, that the

other participants expressed. The others said that it depended on which arenas we were talking about. Participants all said that the system oppresses men, as well as women – that everybody is oppressed to some degree.

It was observed by this researcher that the men spoke in generalities, rarely from personal experience, even when prompted to do so. While they were aware of the stereotypes and expectations, they showed limited awareness of an ability to change their programming. There did seem to be a certain amount of psycho-education going on in the focus group, as some men learned about (or thought about) some phenomena for the first time, evidenced by their reactions.

Another general finding was that all the men said that they thought things were evolving – that men were gaining more leeway for more emotional expressiveness. Also, on their own, they were eager to share that they were aware of the myriad advantages and privileges they enjoy by being men and that they appreciate the extent to which women have suffered. At the same time, they thought a study such as this one could only help society, men and women, alike.

### **What They Said, Specifically**

#### **Q: What does it mean ‘to be a man?’**

*Provider & protector.* The immediate responses to this first questions were pretty much the same. In the focus group, the men all said, “provider,” “protector,” “to take care of yourself and your family,” and to “deal with come what may.” A similar answer came from S6, who immediately responded with “breadwinner...strong.” It seemed that to be a man, according to the participants, was to have material resources with which to take care of women and children.

*Be the leader & be strong.* “To be a (good) man” also included the idea of being in charge or a leader. “A strong man is some[one] that takes something by the neck and leads it down the way” (S6). They said that men are supposed to be “authoritarian, the decision maker, seeking

fixes, not seeking discussion about fixes” (S6) and “to be disciplined,” (S3) and “to follow through” (S4). S4 also said, “[As the man, you’re] the one that they look towards. As you take on the role of being a provider, you have to become a leader. Being a constant provider, the family looks to you for guidance.” S5 added, “Regardless if your [single] mom is the head of the household, if you’re the oldest [boy], you’re the man of the house. Nobody tells you that, nobody has to tell you that.” S2 alluded to how this expectation to lead was a strong one. “Everything is changing, but what isn’t changing is that it is good to be a leader. Everybody wants to be on top.” It seemed that there was a certain amount of pressure on the men to be in control of themselves and of situations, allowing others to depend on them while remaining independent, themselves. “You don’t cry and come running to somebody for help if you get bullied, but you bully back. You fight back.” S3 said, “Men don’t back down from dares” as demonstrated by S1 who related how in high school, he took a dare to become a cheerleader. There seemed to be ambivalent feelings around this – a desire to rise to the challenge/expectation along with a fear of failure. One said, “[being a man means] accepting that failure means death.” S6 said, “... because of the male ego and the male need to succeed. Because of the built in societal expectation of the male having to be the success, of the male having to bring home the bacon.... If a woman makes more than her mate, he is a failure. It is a disadvantage to be married to a woman who has a better paying, higher prestige job.”

***Be potent: Have a family & be a success.*** Connected to the idea of being a provider is the idea of having somebody to provide *for*. One participant said, “What occurs to me is that the male role is to have a family, to protect a family and to provide for a family.” Another participant, who did not have a family, responded with, “What is it like to be a man when they don’t have kids - you abandon any notion of being a provider or a protector. [You say] ‘I’m

going to be an artist. I'm going to be a performer. I'm going to be a writer. And it's a magnificent experience! You could say, 'That's selfish - you should have children and be a man.' But, what about me? How about I don't have children? How about being a musician? All of a sudden, the whole thing flips over." Another participant responded to that response with, "... as you grow older... [if] you never have kids, (you might have to think about your parents or maybe you don't), but then on the other side, you're always an individual who needs to accomplish, or feels the need to accomplish something. I think being a man is feeling a pressure to become something. To say, 'I've succeeded at whatever it is I set out to.' [He mimes counting on his fingers]. Maybe being a man is not accepting failure as the end. Pressure to succeed. Being a man is not accepting failure. You don't necessarily have to raise a family. But being a man is finding that something and succeeding at it, eventually." This quote seemed to articulate that "being a man" meant "potency," either in the form of children, or as an accomplished goal – to *do* something significant and to do it well. In this way, "being a good man" was redefined in the group. "Now, there is more leeway. You don't have to have a family to be a man, though you still get pressure from your grandparents. But you can still go the route of focusing on your career, whether it's personal or for your family. If you excel at your career, that is perfectly fine. [But] the expectation of a man is maybe to do both, juggling both." When asked what he thought of men being "success objects," he replied, "Women objectifying men as success objects? In society, yes, I think that rings true. Men are expected to be successful. A man who is not successful is not a worthy mate." In sum, the participants all agreed that, "being a *good* man," was associated with accumulating material wealth, to being in control and taking a leadership role.

*Be an island, accept being isolated.* Another participant expressed feelings of isolation. “Being a man, you definitely don’t, automatically, get help. You have to traditionally, I believe, deal with it. Deal with come what may. I’m sure that’s true for everybody, but it’s definitely true [for men] since time immemorial. [They have to] survive alone.”

*Yeah ... it is pressure & it's okay.* There were ambivalent feelings around these expectations. One said, “At some point, you become a man. Men who were raised by a single parent probably become a man younger.” “It’s not a good or a bad thing. It’s just a thing. It happens eventually. You can’t pick or choose the situation, at that age, anyways. And it is just kind of the way – is the pressure that men feel to be men good or bad? It’s not good or bad –it is just the way it is. It’s just the role that men play.”

**Q: Can you think of any things that you wanted to do but felt pressure not to do; or anything you did not want to do that you felt pressure to do, because you are a heterosexual man?**

*Don't be affectionate or intimate with men in public.* All of the responses to this question had to do with self-expressiveness. One said, “It goes beyond not being able to put your arm around a female or give her a hug– it’s hard to even give a man a hug. I mean, in some cultures - in Europe or in China- walking about hand in hand with someone of the same sex is accepted. Here in the U.S., I cannot walk down the streets hand in hand with someone of the same sex without being branded homosexual... As a heterosexual man, I cannot be physically intimate [with any male] in a social setting.” He also talked about not being allowed to be verbally affectionate with other men. “I can say to a woman that she looks hot in her outfit and she can say to me that to me, wearing a nice suit. But [saying that to a man?] it depends on whether they know me or not. If they know me, it’s okay to say you look really good in that suit. If they don’t know me, it could be taken as a come on. But I don’t know very many men who



would compliment another man that they didn't know very well. Women compliment each other all the time, but I can't [compliment men I don't know well].”

***In fact, don't do anything that is socially designated for women.*** Another told his story: “I was a cheerleader in high school - the only guy cheerleader. I was dared to do it and ended up having a lot of fun doing it. But I was constantly harassed - by the football team, by other guys in school. And, I didn't care... [laughs] I didn't care at all. I enjoyed it and stuck with it for a very long time... but that was... you know... that was kind of... that period of time was real... I got to see the worst in people... just because I was doing something I enjoyed that wasn't necessarily... that didn't necessarily fit in with what they thought guys would do.... I don't really remember getting harassed by women. The girls on the team were at first weird-ed out, but then they were really supportive. It was mostly the guys.” Career choices, in addition to hobbies, seemed to feel off limits to some, “If I wanted to pursue a career in dance or in the theater, I'd be questioned because that's not where heterosexual men go – that's not where you want to go because you'll be branded homosexual... and can I go into the world for fashion? Sure I can, but I'll be branded, or at least there is the possibility of being branded. I can't be ‘metro-sexual.’”

***Careful what you say around women, lust is bad.*** Other than worrying about being labeled as homosexual, men felt “ self expression is limited – your choice of words, how you phrase things, what you say. You don't want to come across as being a caveman... a brut... or coming down too hard because the other person is a woman. [We tailor our language for women] in many circumstances... I have to be careful what I say to a woman because if I say the wrong thing, the next thing I know, there's a sexual harassment being claimed. That's a distinct disadvantage –you can say a lot more to me than I could ever say to you... I have friends in the human resources world and they confirm for me that it is more difficult to have freedom of

expression for a man than it is for a woman in the workplace.” Also, “Men police each other,” S2 said, with respect to how men talk in front of women. They were suggesting that men have to be careful about what they say around both men and women, when women are around.

Feeling that he has to be particularly careful about what he says around women was brought up at length by another participant, as well. While talking in the focus group, this participant, S2, seemed to be filtering his speech, editing himself as he talked – at least at first. He was ingratiating towards me, a female, making body language movements in my direction while saying things like “women have more access to the truth,” “...the heroic efforts of single women,” “...nothing compared to what it must be like for a woman...” After the interview, he mentioned that he thought that the responses to the questions would have been different if the interviewer had been a man. I asked him how he imagined men would have talked if I had been a male and he I asked him about why he thought this was. After the interview, he called me back to say that he had been thinking and that “You would have to lower your standards ... you know, the lofty place where men hold women, you would have to lower your standards to get that kind of discussion going... to get underneath the surface of what it is to be oppressed...it’s a fine line between women-bashing and for someone to say what it was like to be oppressed. Usually when men are speaking among men about how they were hurt, oppressed, shorted or disadvantaged, it would be in the context of being hurt, wouldn’t it? So there would be negative language in there.”

He was tentative about saying the things that was thinking, feeling out whether it was safe to use the language he was talking about, presumably because he had the belief that men hold women in high esteem and put them on a pedestal. He tried to explain that men’s innate need for sex with women leaves them feeling vulnerable, resulting in “irresponsible ManSpeak.”

The experience of needing to be loved, and mothered, and held, and have sex and feel virile and to feel like you've still got it. It never ends till the day you die. It never ends with men. I don't know what it is for women, but you could be seventy-eight years old and you still feel it. You can hear old men speak about their need to be loved by women. And it's just as agonizing for a seventy-eight year old man as it is for a seventeen year old man, or a fifteen year old man, or a twelve year old man. It starts when you're [a child] and goes till you're dead. They are completely inauthentic around women. They are stumbling all over. We're like ants to you when it comes to something we need so desperately. Your approval, it's like the most powerful thing in the world. It's the fountain of youth. It can make an old man young -- a young man feel like a strong man. What women have that men need -- their approval, their love, their chemistry, anything, whatever it is -- is so needed by men that if they haven't got access to those things, to women, they become quite clumsy. And I think their clumsiness... well, they freeze up. It's like a self-oppression. Then, finally, they give up and become barnacle encrusted, disgusting men. A man who hasn't been with a woman in five or ten years becomes quite insipid and disgusting, unless they are like a monk or a Buddhist or something. They become a bit like a pariah. There is a self-oppression in that loneliness -- we are not self-sustaining. We need ... women. It's such a painful experience to be disqualified from being with women that men begin to speak irresponsibly about it amongst each other. But we could never say those words around women. ... Basically, among men, you're going to get a form of speaking that comes from a place of pain. There will be a lot of irresponsible speaking. And a lot of ManSpeak is defensive speaking -- pontificating. Machoism. It's to protect.... There are ways that men oppress themselves because they are afraid of being alone.

It seemed as if S2 had difficulty talking about men needing sex, using euphemisms like "approval" and "being loved by a woman" and "being afraid of being alone." When asked what he meant by "irresponsible speaking/ManSpeak," S2 reluctantly said,

OK, this is on tape? I'm going to use some of the language now, which is really forbidden to speak amongst women. This is like breaking the Skull and Bones Covenant right here, but for, like instance [pause]. I feel like I'm betraying something by using this language, but... uh... [long pause] Really?! I can say this?! I don't know... Really?! This must never leave this room. I'll use this form for your research, though... OK....

He talked in circles for a little while longer before revealing some language that men use to objectifying women and evaluating them as possible mates. He described how men see women and instantly classify them as RH+ (Ram-hole positive) or RH- (Ram-hole negative), indicating

whether he would have sex with her or not. “This kind of speaking is clearly irresponsible, yet it’s innate. I don’t see that’s going to go away.” I pointed out how nervous he seemed talking about how men objectify women and he replied with, “What a way to put it! It seems horrible to say it! Yet if you weren’t here, it would mean nothing....” He continued to talk about what he viewed as men’s vulnerability towards women due to what he viewed as their inherent lustiness, this time less reservation about his choice in words.

There are only 3-5 reasons a man would fuck a woman. And we’re aware that there are like two hundred reasons a woman might fuck a man and only two or three of those reasons are because she is attracted to him. Yet, we want you to have sex with us for that one reason -- because you are [said emphatically] *irresistibly* drawn to our magnetism. That’s why men want women to want them – because they want to feel like they are special and have this ability to attract women... that they are irresistibly sexy and have this animal magnetism. But it is rarely that reason that a woman wants to be with a man. It’s probably number seven on a list of ten. Maybe number twenty three or number one hundred and seventy. There are more other reasons why a woman wants a man – because he is good at what he does, because he has got money... I don’t know what the reasons you would give are. But it definitely has a lot to do with sex [for men], a lot to do with being accepted or rejected. There are millions of years of stuff of alpha being dominant all throughout our evolution.

S6 and S1 also spoke about being demonized for their innate lustiness. “I walk into a bar as a single heterosexual male, what’s my goal? To not walk out alone. But it’s not my decision whether I walk out alone – that decision always belongs to the woman...(I think) men want sex and women want relationships...being a heterosexual male, I don’t get to decide if I’m having sex that night, it’s the woman.” A third man described, “you’re at a bar and you look over at a couple girls... and [makes motions insinuating that the women would get creeped out].” When asked if they thought if men’s sex drive and lustiness were primarily due to nature or nurture, they all agreed that they thought men’s sex drive was mostly innate and unchangeable. They also seemed to agree that they felt “wrong” for it.

In the individual interview with S2, discussing how to finesse “The Truth” out of men, I ran a little experiment, asking S2 if he thought that men were objectified as “success objects,” like women were objectified as “sex objects.” I wanted to see if that would make him speak more freely, and it did.

So in order to get men to speak about what’s real, I was thinking about how you would disarm men.... And I think you answered my question by ‘What if I called out women in front of men?’ Thank you, that would do it. You answered my question – if you call out women, in front of men, it would work at getting them to express themselves naturally. That was it. You did it. Thank you. So that’s one thing. Also, with language, you could use words like ‘fuck-able.’ You see, there’s an angelic side and a devilish side in everyone and to get to the truth, you almost have to finesse the devilish side out of men with the use of bad language. That would probably be an effective tool because men certainly have no problem using that language in order to vent and to tell the truth. It takes them a while to get around to it. Usually there is a lot of crap on the surface...and all the men, as disgusting as we are, are beautiful, too. And maybe you don’t even have to go that far to get them to speak.

S2 was noticeably more forthcoming in the post focus group individual interview, perhaps because I had successfully gained his trust or perhaps because he was not around other men. “Men police each other,” he had said.

*Men have to buy women roses, drink beer & eat meat?!* With respect to the things that they felt pressure to do that they did not want to do, the first thing came up was prescriptions and expectations of men in romance. S1 immediately said, “I hate buying flowers.” S5 corroborated, “You have to give them a rose, that’s the only flower you can give to a girl that means that you really love them.” He continued, “Romance is great, but it’s not a contrived thing... it’s a conspiracy of Hallmark [card makers]. There is a specific expectation for guys to do stuff for their girlfriends and mothers... that’s one expectation - that you have to be chivalrous. Obviously, there are two sides to that chivalry. Maybe [women] don’t need somebody to walk around being protective, buying stuff for [them]. I can see how it affects women, what the other

side of chivalry is.” S1 agreed, “Guys are expected to buy roses for their ladies. Women now expect roses from their men. So they are taught, ‘You should get roses’ so they say, ‘You should buy me roses!’”

S5 went on to describe how advertisements marketed products to men, while at the same time shaping what “being a man” meant: “It’s like, [in] beer commercials – it’s by watching football with some big slob with a big plate of nachos? There are various expectations that are bought, sold and commoditized and specifically sold to men.” S1 agreed. “...meat, bacon...” S3 agreed and touched on the limiting effects of advertisements. “You can be more creative when you aren’t scheduled to do something and when advertisements don’t tell you what to do.” I asked the men how they would feel if their girlfriend or wife bought them a rose. S5 replied, “I would think it’s nice, but I would feel guilty, like I’m not buying enough roses.”

**Q: Are there any disadvantages associated with being a heterosexual male in the United States?**

*Disadvantages of the expectation for non-emotionality.* “One disadvantage is the expectation that men do not hurt much and that they heal easily and perhaps that is why they are subjected to the brunt of war while at the same time being afforded less opportunity to heal. But maybe that’s not possible,” S3 said. “Yes,” S5 agreed, “Wars are going to be fought by men... and it’s fucked them up.” When I asked S6 if he had ever served in the army, he said “No. But there I would have a problem. Part of my roots are in the state of Israel. There, everybody goes into the military at the age of eighteen, both men and women. But women have the option to opt out of actual service. They can go behind the scenes into community support and jobs like that. I think that is a disadvantage to the United States... to men that they have to be... that they’re the ones that will be drafted.” It seems that he thinks women should have a more equal role in the military. S3 said, “They think men can handle this because we’re men.”

S1 said, “Men in WWII? They were considered to have ‘Shell Shock.’ They were given a shot of whiskey, a pack of cigarettes and a couple slaps across the face....” “This is a disadvantage,” S2 said. “Men heal funny and get weird. Women (can) heal and become whole. Men break.” S4 saw it slightly differently, “Men just kind of snap, but as you get closer with your teammates, your best friends supports you ... same as when you go to war. Some fall to the wayside, but others support each other. They kind of heal together. Women do the same, but they have a bigger group that is always around. That is why they heal faster. We have a small group.” The participants seemed to acknowledge the therapeutic power of expressing one’s feelings, while at the same time acknowledging pressure to not engage in such expressive exercise, but to “be strong.”

When asked to qualify “being strong,” S6 said, “Part of it is in the emotional realm. The old Frankie Valley song, ‘Big Boys Don’t Cry.’ Men are expected – at least my perception from what I see and how I was raised, although it’s not me today, so much – is that a man is not the person who shows emotion.... Even here in 21<sup>st</sup> century United States, there is a strong push toward men being the emotion free type of people. [Men are] not engaged in the ‘I’m happy, I’m sad, I’m depressed’ [talk], although men get depressed just as easily, or more easily, than women get clinically depressed. Father doesn’t show emotion. Mother shows emotion. A man is a person who is there to be a support, but not an emotional support. They have to be strong to overcome the hurt that they may have in a situation and overcome it by pushing forward and being active and seeking solutions... as opposed to... let us say women are typically interactive.” “[As a man, if] you break up, you talk about everything but your ex-girlfriend. Girls talk immediately about the breakup.”

S5 said, “[Men] are expected not to process their feelings the same way. Guys are expected to have some drinks and play some cards or something. If they find someone they can count on, then they can talk. The rest of the time you have to ‘be an island.’” S3 spoke about “men’s reluctance to ask other guys about how they are feeling. You aren’t going to make the first move. They aren’t going to ask about a feeling. They expect... if it’s touchy, don’t bring it up. You don’t come in, showing your cards, you just wait.” S2 said, “It’s propped up by alcohol and rah rah rah. The disadvantage of being a male is isolation.” According to the participants, a man’s perceived strength is partly dependent on a lack of emotional display, and it seems that they felt this expectation had negative consequences for their ability to heal and feel connected to others.

*Disadvantages of being considered the more physically aggressive sex.* While the mental health disadvantages of the masculine ideology “to be strong” were recognized, there was more ambivalence about the physical disadvantages to having to “be strong” in a physical sense. “We’re expendable,” S2 said. S5 agreed. “Biologically, you plant the seed. And then you can go off and die. That’s the way it is in the animal kingdom.” Surprisingly, the men did not comment on this as a disadvantage. If they perceive one, they did not say so, though the disadvantage may have been implied. They talked about violent crime, but in the context of how men should not hit women. I asked if it was OK for men to be violent against other men. S2 replied, “Well, men can take it. Women can get away with playing the crazy card, but [men] shouldn’t use physical tactics on a woman.”

S5 expressed distaste for police brutality in general, but at the same time said, “That’s the rule I have in my head – you don’t hit a woman. I fucking step in on that shit.” As he said this, the rest of the focus group seemed to puff up, expressing through their body language that they



would protect a woman who was being hit, as well. Again I asked why it was worse to hit women than men. S2 replied, “It just doesn’t really hurt when a woman hits. If you get clocked by a woman, what’s the big deal? ... There is nothing demeaning about it.” S3 called men out, “It might be more of a pride thing....”

That is not to say that the participants did not cite a disadvantage for men in violent disputes between men and women. “With a woman, in a dispute, you put your hands in your pockets because if your hands aren’t in your pockets, you’re going to lose in court... . She could come to your house and if you let her in, you [are] already lost. Even if she means you no good – keys your car, puts sugar in your tank or breaks your window, or whatever. You’re going to jail. Once she is in your house, you can’t get her out without breaking the law. You have to just not let her in. You have to speak through the door.” [The other men laughed and mimed making mental notes of this tactic, implying that they concurred with the powerlessness in the face of discrimination that S2 felt in domestic disputes.] S5 said, “Yeah, I will get arrested. (Even) if I’m defending myself, I will get arrested.” S3 hypothesized that this phenomenon had to do with police officers being male and protecting the female. He added, “I’m a guy, I’m going to be chivalrous and guys are responsible 90% of the time but there’s that 10% of a time when it’s the woman’s fault.” S6 provided an anecdote of a couple he served. “Two kids – 19 years and 17 years old at the time – are in a relationship that produced a child. A couple years later, there [is a] second child. They get into an argument. Mom takes her cell phone wall charger and starts hitting him over the head with it. Yes, there was blood. Dad defends himself. They both got arrested. In [Connecticut], both get arrested. Mom’s charges were dismissed because she must have been defending herself. Dad had to do a program on anger management because the men are the aggressors.” He then highlighted the collateral consequences, “Current status? Dad has

not seen his kids in 5 months. So yes, in the domestic abuse world, there is a distinct disadvantage to being the male.” S3 hypothesized, “maybe there is some sort of cyclical thing. Maybe (for a) group of male police officers, influenced by group think, it’s their show of chivalry – ‘Well, you’re the man so you shouldn’t have played into this. It doesn’t matter what the story is...’ And they take him away, versus police officers doing what they should and investigating the situation.”

A more subtle disadvantage was articulated – the ability for women to express their thoughts and feelings more readily. S2 said, “You don’t start popping off at another man. Men can really hurt you... you can get seriously damaged for life. [But] women can get into some really awesome truth telling... You [women] get to be more truthful, you get to be that vicious. I’m kidding. But you [females] get to be more brutal, more real, more truthful... because a man... you could get killed being that truthful. Body language on the streets -- you could get killed.” It seems that to this participant, being able to be brutally honest and to have the profound experiences that go along with it, without fear of enduring long-lasting physical harm, was an advantage that women had and men did not. This participant spoke often about “The Truth” as something that women have more access to. Presumably, this accounted for a communication gap between men and women. S6 spoke about a perceived communication gap as well, “we have different brainwaves. ‘Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus.’ There is a different language that is spoken. It makes it difficult to speak the same language.” He then briefly described some arguments with his wife to illustrate. S2 seemed to embrace the struggle to bridge the gap. “We are here to grow. That is why it is so fantastically confounding, the communication gap.”

*Disadvantages for men in family life & fatherhood.* The most salient disadvantages that these men spoke about had to do with fatherhood. S5 said, “Divorce – moms always end up with the kids, whether they are the better parent or not.” S4 smiled and nodded his head emphatically. “In divorce, the mother will end up most likely having the child. But that doesn’t mean that the father doesn’t want to be part of that child’s life. In fact, there are quite a few single mothers out there who won’t see that the fathers are trying to do their best. That doesn’t mean the fathers aren’t trying to do their best or trying to provide even when they are out of the house. When there is divorce, there is a tendency of trying to make the father be just a bank...and most of them do not want that. They want to be involved. No matter what, no matter what stuff they have to go through to be part of their child’s life.” S5 piggy-backed off that comment, saying, “the system is stacked. Unless you really, really fight for it, you probably won’t get to be anything but a bankroll, a paycheck. That’s a lot of how the system actually is right now. It’s unfortunate that it is actually that way. It’s unfortunate for the fathers who want to be in their children’s lives. You have to fight to be more to your kids or you’ll get pushed aside.” S3 who has a new baby with his girlfriend said, “That scares me, too. Not that I’m particularly worried about splitting up, but it could happen. It is scary.” S6, who works in family law litigation, described what he observed:

Men seem to feel disadvantaged because they are not the mother. The impression is that the best person to raise the child through ages five and six is the mother. And the perception of men walking into a divorce with young children, or a custody battle with young children, is that they are going to lose – that they are not going to have their kid, that they are not going to be able to spend time with their kid. Why? Because it is the mother that the courts are always going to say are best... I think that is because historically, the mother has been the one that has been at home. The father has not been. The father goes off to work. He is the breadwinner. The mother is the one who is staying home raising the children... . And the belief that society has continued with that through this day is what affects most of these cases that I handle. I think it is a bad thing for us to be teaching people today because I think men have as much a role – I don’t say more – but as

much a role. But I think it is a sociological thing. We've been raised like that. And it has historically been like that.... It's funny because the women come in and say, 'I really want him to be more involved but he can't be, he's not *allowed* to be' and then it's actually educating the other side [men] that it's OK to be a parent, it's OK to be involved.

He then provided several anecdotes from clients he has served:

Case 1:

Custody case. Never married. Two children, ages four years and two years old. They separated. Mother filed an action seeking sole custody of the children and father having limited visitation rights. The client [father] said "I have a big problem with her having all the decision making and her having all the time with the kids, but that's what's going to happen, isn't it?" So people walking in the door have that feeling. This one particular person walked in the door saying, "I know I'm going to lose because mothers always win in court. The short ending of that story is that both parties have equal decision making now. Each party has significant amount of time with the kids and we put parameters in place for joint decision-making.

Case 2:

Stay at home dad. Mother left him, filed for divorce. She wanted custody, and that she makes all decisions. [She wants that] Dad, although he, for four years, was the stay at home mom, gets [only] visitation. So even when it's Mr. Mom, there are still those disadvantages in the court system. He left his job and stayed home. If the shoe were on the other foot, he would be paying child support, he would be paying alimony and he would be visiting his kids. They are not necessarily seeking child support or alimony; we have to see how the financials work out. But we are seeking that since he has been the primary caretaker that he continues to be that, which can be interpreted as, "he gets child support."

Case 3:

Husband and wife – I represented wife. Husband and wife married a number of years. Two children. Father becomes unemployed. Mother goes out and finds a job while father looks for a job at a level he wants to be at. He wants that manager job in a corporate setting, again. Husband files for divorce. The children seem to be more comfortable being with dad. The *Guardian ad Litem* who is appointed for the children states that the reason they would prefer to be with dad is because mom, by going to work, estranged herself from the children. Does that make sense to you? She had to go to work; somebody had to bring home the paycheck.

Also, if it were dad, wouldn't the kids be estranged from dad? Isn't that the historical model that we've always lived with? Yet, the children aren't estranged from dad [when he goes off to work]; but in this case, by the mom going off to work, she is not being there for them... . It is because the expectation is that children are supposed to with be with their mom.

**Q: Responses to the vignette:**

*Men can get trapped!* Upon reading the vignette to the focus group that tells the story of Mark and Linda (see Chapter III or Appendix C), the immediate response across the board was that this was a situation that happened often. S2 said "That's a tame version. You should watch the Maury show. It is the same story, night after night, show after show. I really have to hand it to men here... ." S6 smiled knowingly upon hearing the vignette. He gave another anecdote:

Case 4:

So, I have a client whose first name initial is K. She met a person who was a coach of a college sports team. They hit it off really quickly and that same night, they had a motel room. Nine months later, K gave birth to a little boy. And, of course, dad had no expectations whatsoever that this one night stand would result in a child and had no desire to have a child at that point. But dad said, "So long as I'm going to be held responsible and accountable for supporting this child (financially), I'm going to be responsible for raising this child as well." And he fought in the courts for about two years to have a shared type of plan where he had his son about half the time each week. The reason this took two years is because my client was the one who said, 'No, he was only a one night stand. He really didn't want a kid. I'm not giving him my kid to raise.' He found out that she was pregnant and having a baby about two months after. It was not a joint decision to keep the child. It is always the woman's decision, ultimately... . He understood he was rolling the dice. Was she on birth control? Was she not? He had no idea. He had no way of knowing. Did he provide birth control? No. Were his feelings hurt? Did he feel shafted? Yeah.

I asked S6 what he thought of the vignette and what he thought about the vignette and about his anecdote. Specifically, about the women in these stories having the option to choose to be a parent, simultaneously making that choice for the man. "I think the word you're struggling with saying is, 'trapped,'" he said. "He has no choice but to pay child support if the child is not going

to be primarily with him. But then he does have a choice on whether he wants access to that child. I do have clients who say [they] want nothing to do with the child. [They'll] pay [their] child support and in 18 years, [they'll] be done...I think it is a distinct disadvantage that heterosexual men have is that we don't have the ability to take a pill." S5 said, "It just seems wrong... birth control is 98% effective in preventing birth? So... obviously... in this case [the vignette], she tricked him into it. If the baby doesn't have birth defects from her being on the pill and it [is] being born anyways, then she wasn't really on the pill. If she is really on the pill that just doesn't happen. So, in this case, it's a case of entrapment. Was the guy not smart for not protecting himself against that possibility? Maybe he wasn't smart for not doing that, but it's clearly a case of entrapment." Considering S5's marked misconceptions about the possible effects of the birth control pill, psychoeducation for men on women's birth control methods may be very helpful.

*Condoms suck, but don't trust her – Just wear it.* When I read the part that Linda was taking birth control, S6 laughed. S2 said, "Yeah, no. Wear the condom." "But she said she was on birth control," I re-iterated. Everybody in the group shook their heads. "Yeah, no. Wear it." Everybody laughed and started talking over each other.

"That's a trap. Let's see your bill of health!" (S5)

"I'm still going to wear it because I don't trust you!" (S1)

"I don't care how beautiful she is. Just wear a condom and the whole fear thing isn't there." (S2)

("But condoms could break!" (S4)

"There's no need to break a condom. Go easy. It's better that way!" (S2)

"I've been there, too, not too long ago. 90% of the time, I use a condom, but she just seemed really, really nice. Like, she was on the same level – honest...." (S5)

The men seemed to be in agreement that a man should always wear a condom, no matter how beautiful she looked or how nice she seemed or how much they liked her. The discussion was heated and there was a noticeable rise in tension and anxiety in the room as they talked quickly and over each other. S4 said, "... you've got to protect yourself first, at all times. She says she's on the pill? I'm still going to wear a condom, period. It is not negotiable ... part of being a man sometimes is the conquest, but you have control over your future. If you make a mistake and mess with the wrong woman, she can mess with your life... ."

"...Forever!" S2 interjected.

"...for a quarter of a century!" (S4)

"That's it?" (S2)

"Ok. Forever. She can change your life. It might be beautiful. Lucky you." (S4)

"Forever." (S1)

"It's hard, really hard." (S4)

"Men's discipline has to come in the form of discipline and it has to be proactive. And it's probably unfortunate. Maybe it's not fair. But, it's the reality... Pony up, man up. That's what it is to be a man, for better or for worse." (S3)

"I've met some girls who are very eager to not [use condoms]" (S1)

"Yeah, you don't want to wear a condom." (S2)

"Yeah, it feels a lot better [without a condom]." (S5)

S4 nods his head in agreement with what is going on around him. "Yeah... "

"Who wants to take a shower with a raincoat on? It's just that they're gross. They're demeaning.

Condoms, they demean a man." (S2)

I asked about vasectomies. Everybody laughed. "Yeah, that's not going to happen!" [All]

“It’s demeaning to wear a condom, but it is way better [than the other options]” (S2)

In short, it seems that though the men were in agreement that they did not like condoms – the way they felt physically and emotionally – that it was their best option in having any control over whether they would be a parent on their own terms. At the same time, it seemed that it was not always easy to make the choice to use a condom since sometimes women are eager to not use them and/or seem really trustworthy.

*Disenfranchised Donors, Dismissed.* S4 said, when I hear that story [the vignette], it’s interesting. The female has a choice on when she can be a mother or not; but not so, the father. Well, the guy. If she decides to keep the baby, she becomes a mother. If she decides to terminate... even in a relationship where you want her to have the kid, she can say no. She has the option.” S5 related a story, “I know people who that has happened to and they don’t have the option to be in the kid’s life at all. Basically [the girl] found a guy and used him as a sperm donor. And he doesn’t have to pay child support, but he knows that his son or daughter is walking around this earth. He’s never heard from this woman again but he knows roughly where she lives and he has to walk around with this for the rest of his life.” S2, exclaimed, “That’s so much power! ... It’s like being God! ... It suddenly occurred to me, that poor son of a bitch. We [men] get entrapped. We walk into a bar and our life is gone. At least you [men] get a child out of it. That’s a magnificent gift and yet, this guy doesn’t even get to go see the child. You know like, ‘Oh My God!’ [Uses his hands to mime his head exploding]. It just gets surreal!” S4 added, “...And I know this one worker. He told me that has three kids by three women. And he pays child support for two of them. And he doesn’t ever have any money, but he works hard -- all the time, every day. This is the trap in how the system is designed. When you’re the father and all you do is give out money. And one of the things I’ve learned recently is that in Massachusetts, if



you don't pay child support or if you are behind on your child support, they cut off your license... so your opportunity to make money drops. So where does that leave you? Find jobs near where you live? Without a car? Most companies aren't around where you live... it's a trap... like how do you make the money?" S2 added, seemingly anxious. "It seems like a life strategy for some women in NoHo [Northampton] -- go to the bar... get a guy. get the state [to compel support]... . It's pretty scary for us men to think that women have a life strategy to enslave you... and remove any possibility of you, as men, to be creative... . An equivalent question would be 'Would you still love the child if you have been raped?' Of course I'm going to love the child. These are questions you can't ask hypothetically. No, it's not fair. I have friends who will never have a dime in their pocket again because every dime is for [child support]... because New York state laws are very serious. If she's got you, you're done." S1 seemed more trusting of women than S2. "The more I think about it, there really must only be a few girls out there who are like 'I'm going to go out there and get state funding and all this stuff.' It just doesn't make sense. There are plenty of people who are like: 'I wish I didn't have a kid so I wasn't stuck on state assistance.'" S4 suggested being more discriminate about whom one has sex with. S2 agreed, advocating becoming friends and finding love first, but S1 laughed at this: "Well, you've got to go through a lot of bad ones first to find the good ones!" S5 felt similarly, "That doesn't happen." In short, the group expressed a general distrust of women (of varying degrees) and motivation to take responsibility for sex and reproductions into their own hands.

**Q: Are heterosexual men, in any way, oppressed? Do you, as a heterosexual man, feel, in any way, oppressed? ‘**

When I asked this question, it was requested of me to repeat it. The men took some time registering what I was asking. ("Wait, what? Come again?"). One by one, they responded.

S5 thought that while men were not oppressed to the same extent as other social groups, that there were ways in which they were oppressed that were relatively invisible. He did not say he, himself, felt particularly oppressed, but that he would be interested in being part of a forum that made those oppressive power structures more visible. He said,

I think, yes. [Men are oppressed] by women and are also oppressed by men. Women are oppressed by men. Men, on some level., well, there's not much of a visible power structure in place that oppresses men, but the system itself oppresses men, just as it oppresses women. And if you want to divvy these things up by life experience -- race, class, education etc... -- it really comes down to a lot more. [There is] home life, where you're getting the crap beaten out of you as a kid... all this stuff... we're all individuals. And we like to think we're all individuals. I'm not unwilling to look at the statistics that most of the violence against women comes from men. I'm not saying that's not the case. But there should be a way... a forum... a way to sort of ... bring out the visibility of this power structure -- the advantages and the disadvantages [for men]. I would definitely like to participate in that. But I don't feel particularly oppressed as being a heterosexual male versus heterosexual woman who are unquestionably oppressed. Gay women? Unquestionably oppressed. Gay men? Unquestionably oppressed. But yeah, there are things that aren't as visible [for heterosexual men]. And I think that there we can accept that there's a way to disavow -- to call people out here when we need to -- and support something that doesn't buy into the entire system... . I'm not talking about rejecting society entirely, I'm talking about figuring out what the points are and how can we help. How can we help ourselves? How can we change our world? How can we help women? How can they help us? You know?

S4 said that he thought that it depended – in the workplace he does not feel oppressed because men created the system and it works to their advantage. However, in family life he does feel oppressed because the system is weighted against fathers having access to their children and when a father does not have his children, he is looked down upon. He said,

I look at it slightly differently. The way I view it is: Do heterosexual men get oppressed? It depends. Let me give you an example. Most of the system -- the government, work, etc.... the guys, we create that system. And it promotes us being more competitive with each other and we have to rise up the ladder to be top dog. Are we being oppressed? Not as much. Not in the work place or school or this stuff. But, [we] may feel the pressure in the family. I don't know how many of you are a father here, but being a father, you feel the pressure. It's not a

lot of pressure, but it is pressure to be placed as a bad guy. If you're a father and the kids are not with you, that's where you are just being shitted on.

S3 had already left the interview at this point and was never asked this question. S2 said that he felt oppressed, and demonstrated as such by being hesitant about expressing this feeling. The dialogue went as such:

S2 said, "I could give the right answer to your question... ."

**Q: ...What's "the right answer?"**

S2 explained, "The right answer is no, that men are not oppressed. That would be the right answer. That would be the intellectual, take the evidence, look at society and history and the laws and everything and come up with 'No, we are not being oppressed, we are the oppressor.' But actually my feeling in the matter -- the wrong answer, the taboo answer, the answer that would not be safe to give outside of this room -- would be 'You're damn right we're oppressed! We're definitely oppressed!' We are completely isolated. We are the bad guys. I'm definitely seen in that light by all groups. [I'm a] 6'2" white guy from the richest country in the world. Every group gets to look at me and say I'm the bad guy! Yeah, definitely. I feel it. I feel it and that's the wrong answer. I'm not even allowed to say that."

"No, that's not the wrong answer..." (S4).

"That's not the wrong answer" (S5).

"That's my feeling, anyway" (S2)

After saying how he really felt, S2 seemed vulnerable. S4 said, as he often said during the interview, that one must dutifully do what one must do.

"I feel the same way. As being a man, I'm viewed as a bad guy, period. There's nothing wrong with that, understand that. But then I have to overcome that and do what needs to be done." (S4).

S2 verbally followed suit and said, “Yeah, you can’t whine about it.” He continued to seem insecure for the rest of the conversation.

S1 responded to the question. He said, “I have a hard time saying that I’m oppressed, you know. It’s very difficult to say. I mean, are there things, like you’re viewed as a bad guy... But are we so oppressed that it’s so terrible being a heterosexual male?!”

“[I] hate to admit it, but I feel that way. You can’t whine about it. It’s taboo!” S2 interrupted.

**Q: If you feel it a little bit, I’m interesting in knowing.**

S2 whispered, “Yes!” [He put his hands over his mouth. Then he spread his arms wide as if to say, “a lot!” ]

S1 continued his thought and said, “I guess if I really searched for a reason to be oppressed, I could find one... .”

S4 amended his answer. “No, not really. I don’t feel it. There’s a lot of pressure, but a lot of things we can overcome.”

S6 [in his individual interview] was asked, not if he felt oppressed, but if he experienced any disadvantages on a personal level. He replied with, “Am I an exception to the rule? Because I don’t feel like there has been anything in which I’ve been disadvantaged because I’m a heterosexual male. I don’t think I’ve suffered any disadvantage because of it.”

In sum, none of the participants felt that they were more oppressed than other social groups; S2 felt oppressed and vulnerable in giving what he considered the taboo answer. S1, S4 and S5 reported not personally feeling oppressed, though they thought that there were some disadvantages that heterosexual men endured. S6 reported to not have experienced any disadvantages, personally, though he outlined many disadvantages throughout the interview that some heterosexual men have suffered. S1 presented as being unaffected by them. S5 presented

as being unaffected, but interested in making them visible and dismantling them. S4 was motivated to not be affected by them and to overcome them. S6 reported to have overcome them with the help of how he was raised and because of his outlook (see his quote below).

**Q: Is there anything else that anybody would like to say?**

On their own, the men brought up the advantages of being a man, albeit with humor. S1 made a joke, “The world is our urinal! We will never have to go trekking anywhere for a bathroom!” On a more serious note, S2 said, “It is awesome to be a man. I want to say you should try it some time. It’s amazing and terrifying and wonderful. It is the best way I think, in some ways, to experience the weird part of being a human being. Maybe it isn’t the deepest, but right now, in 2013, it is great to be a man.” S4 greed, “To be a man, you can be care-free and care-less much easier. For example, I’m out to see my friends. We’re at a bar. I get my whiskey sour. I put it on the table. I don’t even worry about it. But my female friend, she covers hers. I realize after a while that she is worried that somebody will put a roofie in it. I’m becoming more aware of it now, and more protective.” S1 also agreed about the fearlessness men are privileged to feel. “I could get up right now, put on my sneakers and just start walking across the country by myself. I could go to strange places and have an amazing time. A woman would have to worry about all kinds of different things.” S4 chimed in, “Us guys, it’s not just about being physically strong, but there is this understanding that you aren’t just going to get attacked. But a female, [she could get attacked without provocation].” S2 said, “It’s definitely harder to be a woman.” S6 also pointed out freedom that men have in the work place. “Doors have always been open to me because I’m a male. Law schools are welcoming towards men. If I wanted to pursue business, I could slide right in, as opposed to women where we hear constantly about a glass

ceiling or jobs that aren't available to them. It's a lot easier, from a professional standpoint, to advance as a male."

As a very last note – again, unprompted – two men wanted to say that they thought that exposing the disadvantages of men was a productive endeavor for the betterment of society, men and women, alike.

S5 volunteered:

We didn't touch as much on the advantages. I'm fully aware of my station in life and where I'm at right now, my education, my race, my sex... and all the advantages that are actually inherent and the disadvantages. Maybe it's because I'm educated, maybe it's just because I have some life experience. But I'm class conscious. I consider myself to be a feminist ...and a humanist, primarily. And the way the system is set up, yeah, there could definitely be some changes made to make our society better for men and women and maybe our interactions in everyday conversation. I'm not talking about censoring anyone, but being conscious of how language and other things actually program and reinforce the ways we think. What level is [one's] collusion in a system that provides these benefits and in what ways does that inherently harm all of us? And how can we do things to change that? I would like to find out about that.

S6 said:

Last thought: I think that it is important that these distinctions and disadvantages be exposed and be done away with. I could not find any research on this topic. None, whatsoever. And I think that is because no one views there as being disadvantages of being mainstream male. I personally haven't experienced that much of a disadvantage – I haven't been in the military. And I've fortunately been raised in an understanding family. So I haven't had those kinds of problems. And my outlook doesn't allow for those types of problems. But I think it is important that it be known. I think that it is important that it be delved into and brought to the surface so that people understand that just because you are heterosexual male doesn't mean that you have all the clout, all the power and no problems. The inference of being a female is that you have all the problems -- many problems, many more problems than men – should be done away with. It is an injustice towards society to have those types of outlooks.

### **What They Didn't Say**

The most pervasive unspoken theme amongst the men – both with the focus group and with S6 – was that they spoke in generalities. Their language was “what men experience,” versus

“what I experienced.” Only after I prompted the focus group more than once to tell me how these things affected them, personally, S4 said, “Yes, it does affect you personally, but part of being a man is that you handle all of that.” When they did bring up personal experiences, these experiences were not met with any display of sympathy, as a group of women might offer. For example, when S3 brought up in passing that his dog died in the context that men don’t talk about what hurts, the group members did not say anything like “What?! Your dog just died? Oh man, I’m sorry!” I did not even get the impression that S3 would have mentioned that his dog had just died very recently, if he was not trying to explain how men are. A case in point, supporting the notion that the men spoke impersonally: S2 called this out by saying, “We’re speaking in generalities, this whole interview!” And he noted this, despite expressing the most trouble expressing himself fully.

As another example: when S5 talked about his friend who was basically used as a sperm donor and who has never been able to meet the spawn of his loins, he quickly said, “But it’s not a big deal.” It seemed that, though the men acknowledged the therapeutic, and connective, benefits of expressing vulnerability, they were not comfortable doing so. There seemed to be a limited amount of self-efficacy for this small group, at least, in changing the way things are for men.

When asked how much of the non-emotionality of men was nature, S6 responded with, “very little. I think there are differences, but a lot of it is reinforced by nurture, not by nature.” The focus group agreed. I asked if women were wired differently or socialized differently and everybody nodded their heads. S2 said, “both” and every head nodded in agreement. S3 said, “Things play into each other. Expectations, the stereotypes and the marketing play into those emotions that are more readily going to happen. S5 acknowledged a biological basis for the (non)-emotionality of men, though he, too, insinuated that he thought most of it is socially

constructed, “Women’s hormones are different which allows them to experience different things. It doesn’t make [male] violence OK, but it’s in addition the social constructs. It reinforces itself... . Maybe since a lot of men [today] are being raised by single moms, they are learning to express their feelings.” S4 agreed with the impression that men were becoming more emotionally expressive. He said, “What I’ve been noticing is, based on what I know and how kids are being brought up now, that there’s slightly more leeway. [Men] can be more expressive than in the past, where in the past you had to be more rigid and much more physical. Not as much now. All that will effect the next generation of men who will become part of society... and they will be much more open and more communicative about their feelings... and hopefully that will make things much easier to communicate with us, being a man, and relate to a female. That is how I see things changing.” S2 also said, “Everything is turning over. Everything is changing.”

Despite the acknowledgment of the malleability of what are perhaps natural propensities, and despite a hopeful outlook on men learning able to express their feelings in the future, the discourse in these interviews were not highly emotional. There were some demonstrations of emotion, however. S3 said, “I feel scared.” S2 demonstrated emotionality throughout the interview, especially in response to discussion about men being expected to be providers and have families [he makes less than \$10,000 and does not have a partner nor any children] and after S5 told the story of the guy who had never met his resultant offspring from a one night stand. Note that these displays of emotion revolved around issues with being a *good* father and around not having access to one’s progeny.

Another way in which one man did demonstrate self-efficacy was through pushing boundaries. S1 said, after telling the story of how he was a cheerleader in high school, despite



being teased, “It taught me a lesson about not letting people tell you what to do. If you enjoy it, do it, no matter the expectations.” S3 said something similar as he continued to redefine “being a man” throughout the interview: “[It’s about] coming to terms with who you are. The themes for men are more prevalent, but at some point you have to just say, ‘It doesn’t matter what I am, what I do. I have to rationalize and justify it to myself and accept it. I’m ok with it.’ That’s being a man to some extent.” To me, these statements seemed like part of growing into oneself, no matter whether one is male or female – suggesting that self-efficacy is a gender-neutral skill. This skill seemed present to some degrees in each individual.

It also seemed to be lacking, to some degree. I did not get the sense that these men felt they could escape expectations to be successful, virile, chivalrous, protective over women, unaffected and invulnerable. Both S2 and S6 gave me the sense that they felt they were in a minefield when it came to being authentic around women.

S2 said,

In the [Connecticut River] valley, you have one of the most powerfully intense attempts to create an almost self-castration. I don’t want to say castration – but at all costs to remove women bashing. At all costs remove irresponsible speaking from your language. You want to honor women. And in honoring women, we almost feel like we have done too good of a job because now all of a sudden it feels like revenge is being waged on us. OK, now we’ve given [women] the baton and they run with it. And in Northampton, there are so many women who are fucking pissed off at men. There have had serious issues, and rightly so – thousands of years of oppression and cruelty -- that we’re catching the brunt of women’s frustration. Having created a space for women to vent, suddenly it’s in a hurricane of venting around here.

S6 said,

The law thankfully does not discriminate between men and women – it says that men and women are created equal. But because of the centuries of men being dominant, or on top, there are the correcting types of laws that are put in place. In terms of sex, [the corrective laws] are enforced more against men. [The premise behind these laws is that] men are the culprits and women are the victims. But I

can go into my office and pull out case after case where men were charged with discriminatory practices when in reality there may not have been any at all, but for the fact that there is a woman on the other side.

Unspoken themes in the interviews were that men mostly spoke in generalities rather than personal testimonials, despite a sense that they were affected by the stereotypes and expectations that they discussed. They demonstrated limited skills in self-efficacy – championing change while still presenting a sense of limitation - either internal limitation, exemplified by the ways they behaved in concordance with the expectations; or external limitations due to the meta-stereotypes (i.e., being the culprits, the aggressors, the oppressors, the non-emotional non-nurturers, the protectors and the breadwinners) and how that may affect attitudes towards them in the community and litigation in the courts.

In the following Discussion chapter, I will offer my own sense of what this study's findings may mean, what its limitations are, what its implications may be for social work as a profession, as well as what directions for future research I foresee as useful.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

I was interested in knowing whether it is hard to be an *authentic* individual human being for some men because they are limited by what it means to be “a man,” even though they come from a privileged place in many ways. As the definition of oppression in the *Chapter 1* stated, being oppressed relies on a population’s *feeling* burdened. I interviewed a sample of heterosexual men in the United States because I was interested in giving voice to those experiences that have been difficult and challenging for men by virtue of being in that privileged place. I got the sense that the men who did participate felt personally oppressed by the social expectations with which they have been brought up, as one participant said explicitly and emphatically. The others may have felt this, but may have been reluctant to say so outright -- perhaps they are in a double bind -- a function of their masculine socialization in a patriarchal society. In addition, all the men acknowledged on their own, without prompting, that it is “great to be a man” and showed awareness of the many ways in which they are privileged.

### Thoughts & Implications

Myriam Miedzian (1991) writes about the depth of resistance to exploring the socialization of man. “As long as male behavior is taken to be the norm, there can be no serious questioning of male traits and behavior. A norm is by definition a standard for judging; it is not

itself subject to judgment” (p. 3). I interpret this to mean that the expectations placed on a man are more rigid than those placed upon a woman, making his authentic self-expression, if not in line with the masculine ideology, more dangerous to the patriarchal structure and therefore more limiting and restricting on the ways in which he can feel and behave in our society. To be a man means to be X, Y & Z, and only X, Y & Z; while being a woman could mean the whole alphabet if she so desired. Being that she is allowed emotional expression and vulnerability, she can explore her inner landscape (if she is inclined towards self-reflection) without worrying that she will be less of a woman. This does not mean that homosexual women, heterosexual women, homosexual men, FTM or MTF transgender persons, hermaphrodites, bisexuals, fetishists and the entire rainbow of sexes, genders, sexualities and sexual proclivities do not face marginalization, stigma and oppression -- they do. Everybody does, to some extent, as the heterosexual men in this study readily admitted. Heterosexual men’s sexualities are considered the norm and are catered to the most in pornography. Heterosexuality with particular value placed on the phallus’s *doing* is the pervasive theme in literature; the essence of the hierarchical and imperialistic government; the sexual fantasy that many women internalize and play into as they go through fad diets and hundreds of dollars on fake breasts, long eyelashes to bat coyly at potential mates, and over-priced Victoria Secret under-garments so that they can be frail Angels, diminished in size as to allow men their bigness; diminishing their minds as to allow men to be smartest; diminishing their capabilities to allow men to feel capable; diminishing their independence to allow men to feel independent. I wonder if everybody, on some level, senses the fragility of the heterosexual male’s ego because it is a precarious ego, indeed. This is how heterosexual men feel limited, stuck in the masculine ideology, which by definition denies them access to the tools to dismantle it. Armistead (1975) suggested that men’s tendency to “resist

sensitive exploration of each other's experience and feelings," (p.6) hindered their ability to raise their conscious awareness of, and sensitization towards, issues of discrimination, oppression, injustices and inequalities. They are not allowed to feel vulnerable enough to warrant even seeking change. Their thoughts and feelings about it are given limited space to be vented in fear of seeming weak or in fear of seeming that they are woman bashing. Instead, they stand with each other in a stalemate, nobody asking and nobody telling. Like an archipelago, a group of men are isolated around each other behind the football rants, the grilled meats and the cans of cheap beer designed for quantity. I watch as they drink, their sense of confidence rising with their blood alcohol level. Sober, many of them are vulnerable without the words to describe that sense of discomfort. They can't even begin to search for those words – a man does not seek discussion about fixes. A man cannot analyze the why's behind the feelings, just the "what now's," and they cannot gain from the wisdom that develops in that process – the self-discovery of oneself as an individual human being rather than a *male* human being.

The natural maleness of a person is part of the story and the socially nurtured masculinity of a person is another part of the story. The inherent humaneness of a person is perhaps the most relevant story. Moreover, it is a story for each individual person to discover and tell on one's own. It seems that this has been very difficult for heterosexual men throughout the ages who, in desperate need for women, have found ways to control and dominate them to the point of some women self-subjugating themselves. And now, they sit in this patriarchal structure that gives them little room to evolve into their most authentic selves. "Masculinity is a social construction which establishes a set of gender specific role expectations... It is a self-perpetuating process in so far as one of the characteristics of masculinity is a resistance to self-analysis and the heightened level of self-awareness necessary to deconstruct patriarchal social relations. This is

one of the barriers that the anti-sexist movement must strive to dismantle if genuine progress is to continue and accelerate” (Thompson, 1995, pp. 461-462).

Surely, I am speaking in gross generalization, which is hypocritical of me since this is the very danger that I am warning against – not all men (nor women) are as I’ve described above. As one of my participants attested, some men feel comfortable enough to go be cheerleaders, despite stigmatization. Some feel empowered to redefine what it is to be a man as being that they are men, and yet they feel such and such. These men feel that their freedom comes from within and feel good about their choices. Other men follow their desires, such as choosing to be a musician and not have a family, but feel ambivalent about those choices as if somewhere inside they are stigmatizing themselves. Internalized sexism is just as possible as internalized racism.

Anderson (2009) discussed that while the feminist man was viewed the most positively and as being lower in stereotypically masculine characteristics, such evaluations brought with them low ratings in perceived potency and attractiveness. In other words, a feminist man’s masculinity (as potency) was questioned, which lowered his desirability and became a possible hindrance to his wanting to be labeled a feminist. Again, the masculine ideology thwarts progress in changing the status quo. McDermott and Schwartz (2013) studied men’s evolving attitudes and categorized them into Non Questioning/Accepting of Traditional Gender Roles (NQ/ATGR); Pro-Feminist Activists (PFA); Questioning with Strong Ambivalence (QWSA); and, Questioning with Weak Ambivalence (QWWA). PFA’s – the men most comfortable with dismantling sexism – generally had graduate level degrees and were in long term committed relationships. This suggests that (through the process of getting an education) they had questioned their experiences enough to cut through and discard the pretenses that prevented them from truly connecting and communicating with another human being, two qualities that are vital to a long

lasting committed relationship. An implication of this study is that psychoeducation about this matter can result in better relationships between men and women. I suppose it is a truism that education can bring with it power and freedom. It is also a truism that human beings want connection. Bowl (1985) writes, “There is much to be gained from loosening up the prevailing concept of masculinity: by opening up discussion about its nature and its implications and by encouraging flexibility in gender roles and characteristics. Our existing conception operates as a straight jacket limiting communication between men, and between men and women, and limiting fulfilling experiences” (p.30). In order to ameliorate communication between men and men and between men and women, perhaps it is possible to bring some more awareness to the masses, to even those people who cannot afford to attain (or are uninterested in) formal higher educations.

This is another reason why I think this study was a useful endeavor – adding information (water) to the body of literature on the subject (the lake of knowledge), even if it is just in the libraries of esteemed colleges (top of the mountain), will eventually cause that lake to overflow and the water will spill out and flow down in rivers to the bottom. It would be new for a lot of people to think that any heterosexual men feel oppressed, disenfranchised or marginalized. Feminism started amongst the learned, but is now colloquial. I hope to add to the Masculinist Movement because understanding masculinity more deeply can make significant advances in Feminist Theory. I believe Masculinism – along with Feminism – is part of a larger, more important movement, The Anti-Sexism Movement.

Anti-sexism is against sexism in general, not necessarily how it negatively affects men or women. I have heard people use the term “reverse-sexism” to refer to sexism against men and I want to stress that sexism is not something that victimizes only women. Therefore, “reverse-sexism” is an invalid concept. Richards (1994) wrote that sexism exists when a person’s sex is

considered to be relevant in contexts in which it is not. Warren (1985) wrote that sexism is wrongful discrimination based on a person's sex, defining "wrongful discrimination" as harmful discrimination that is based on false or invidious beliefs about a given person. Benatar (2012) also makes a distinction between disadvantage and discrimination. For there to be discrimination the disadvantage must be at least partly the product of agency -- or, in some views -- of social structures or practices. Thus, an individual, an institution or a state might discriminate against people of one sex. He also makes a second distinction, "namely between discrimination and unfair or wrongful discrimination." He writes, "Sex is not always an inappropriate basis on which to discriminate between people. Whereas discrimination per se can be morally acceptable, wrongful discrimination is, by definition, morally problematic." (p. 3) --isms are arbitrary, differential treatments. Sexism, at its most essential form, is wrongful discrimination on the basis of somebody's sex. Furthermore, "There is a further problem with stipulating that only disempowered, subordinate or oppressed groups can be the victims of sexism" (Benatar, 2012. p. 9).

With respect to the feminist movement, discrimination against females cannot be fully addressed without attending to both forms of sexism. "...the first and second sexism are closely, albeit contingently, related to one another. Opposing discrimination against one sex is similarly related to confronting discrimination against the other sex" (Benatar, 2012, p. 201). Even though women clearly bear the brunt of sexism, there are significant costs to gender stereotyping for men, too. In other words, patriarchy has negative consequences for men as well, even though it is natural for the patriarch to resist its demise. Thompson (1995) writes, "First we need to grasp the significance of traditional notions of masculinity in the development and maintenance of gender oppression. Secondly, we need to appreciate the potential for alternative



conceptions of masculinity to contribute to challenging and undermining such oppression. That is, masculinity can be seen to be an issue in terms of both sexism and anti-sexism – part of the problem, but also part of the solution” (p. 460).

True power is spectral and not binary – it is not the case that one either has power or does not. Personal power comes from knowing oneself and knowing that one has the power to change oneself. Thompson (1992) coined the concept Bad Faith, the idea that people tell themselves, “I can’t help it, it’s my nature, I was born like that” (p.10). He argues that it is a debilitating mindset that allows us to avoid responsibility for our own actions, lazily or fearfully preferring to have a prescribed personality or essence. Bad Faith, he argues, leads to self-estrangement and unnecessary restrictions on our human potential. It manifests as illusion on an individual level and oppression on a social level. Educating and unburdening men will allow them to be more powerful, genuine human beings. Moreover, giving men more power does not necessarily take away from the power of women. Rather, it is my belief that nurturing the personal power in one group nurtures the personal power in the other group. Freire (1972) writes about the “restoration of the humanity” of both the oppressed and the oppressors. He writes, “dehumanization, although a concrete historical fact, is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order that engenders violence in the oppressor, which in turn dehumanizes the oppressed” (p 21). Thompson (1995) adds, “The oppressors also experience a degree of oppression and dehumanization -- oppression is a dehumanizing process for all concerned” (p.469). For all of us human beings to be more liberated and authentic, we have to dismantle the sexist structures, which perhaps we all participate in to some degree and which affect everybody, including heterosexual men, negatively. By changing mass society’s narrative from “women and minorities are the ones that are oppressed” to “everybody, including white, heterosexual men experience oppression, at least

to some degree,” we can start a more honest and thorough movement towards universal equality and individual respect in our country. A conflict-resolution conversation about sexism should include the full disclosure and full consideration of both parties involved – whether between two individuals or two social groups. Freedom is inter-dependent. My liberation, as a woman, depends upon the liberation of men and vice versa.

That is the loftiest implication of this study, I think. On the more practical side, clinicians can be more aware of some of the transference, counter-transference and enactments that occur in therapeutic sessions with their male clients. This research has sensitized me, and hopefully may sensitize other future clinicians in the field, to a part of the male experience that some men may not have words for (or confidence to express), at least as yet. It is my hope that we will be able to approach them with an *emptier*-cup of consciousness or a *blanker* slate mind, so that we can hold a deeper understanding of their experiences, allowing for quicker rapport, strong therapeutic alliances and greater therapeutic effectiveness. Mohr, Chopp and Wong (2013) studied the stereotypes some therapists had of bisexual men, heterosexual men and homosexual men and found that they attributed open-mindedness (for bisexual men), traditional gender role attributes (for heterosexuals) and intelligence (for homosexuals) to them, respectively. It needn't be explained how stereotypes like these could alienate an intelligent and open-minded heterosexual male who is trying to understand his depression, a depression that might come from feeling stuck in the masculine ideology. Meyer, Ouellette, Haile and McFarlane (2011) discuss how stigma deprives individuals of a sense of wellbeing, deprives them of access to opportunities and deprives them of feelings of safety and acceptance. As social workers, this is the last thing we want to inflict on any clients.

One of the most salient disadvantages that heterosexual men in particular face in their societies is being stereotyped as aggressive and violent, while women are the caring and gentle ones -- those qualities being reinforced in boys and girls through various socialization mechanisms. The empathy, gentleness and caring-ness is socialized out of men while the aggressiveness and self-sufficiency is socialized out of women, widening the distance between them till they sit at opposite ends of the spectrum and cannot hear each other. This has led men into battle a disproportionate amount and it left men with diminished access, or a sense of responsibility, to their children. Encouraging men to develop their empathic, caring and nurturing sides could increase their functioning as responsible reproducers and parents, which hurts nobody and helps the children.

Disconnecting masculinity from potency or potency from the penis could allow for medical research in the field of birth control for men; it could allow for men being willing to even consider taking birth control. If they had these options, they could take more control over when they become parents. Though the participants in this study all said that they advocated using condoms, one did say that he had at least one experience where he did not because his partner said she was on birth control; another said that some women are adamantly against them. From my experience as a sexually active woman of thirty plus years, most men I have encountered have not brought up using condoms unless I did first. And how about the men who are allergic to the prophylactics available? How about the men whose penises are smaller than average and for whom wearing a condom (or buying condoms) is very embarrassing? How about the fact that condoms tend to be expensive? I have gotten birth control for free or for even as little as \$5/month. That means I can have protected sex every day for a month for \$5. In contrast, while I have seen condoms for free at free clinics (though in limited, standard sizes),

condoms can be \$2 for one, which would add up to about \$60 for a month of daily protected sex. That is, if they did not break. To many, condoms seem cumbersome, impractical and expensive; vasectomies seem permanent and abstinence seems out of the question. If it did not feel threatening to a man's masculinity to tame his potency, he might be willing to take birth control. A survey with regards to men's desire for, and willingness to take, such a medication would be useful. Not only for medical researchers, but also as a strategy for (indirect) psychoeducation on the vulnerability of men getting trapped and their ability to pro-actively protect themselves.

Disconnecting masculinity from being male would also help in disconnecting femininity from being female. We could then investigate the devaluation of femininity, separate from the investigations regarding the devaluation of women. What if the qualities of femininity were given a new over-arching concept? Some eastern philosophies call it *Yin*. Masculine energies are *Yang*. What if we thought about these complementary qualities in with neutral language such as Yin and Yang, language that didn't have similar roots to the words Female and Male? It would be easier for people to conceptualize men not being masculine and women not being feminine. It would be easier to divorce gender expression from biological sex. We could then have an easier time imagining women with both Yin and Yang energies and men with both Yin and Yang energies without that saying anything about how adequate they are as women or men. I use these terms merely to make an example, not to assert any specific calls for change. I only wonder if language is one hurdle that could be tackled while confronting sexism. Other strategies towards confronting sexism should be explored -- psycho-education and continued research being two of the obvious.

## **Strengths and Limitations of the Current Study**

This exploratory study was meant to give voice and a little empirical substantiation to the few theoretical works of the past thirty years. The interviews provided much rich and illustrative material. Also, it seemed that the exercise of thinking about this subject made several of the men think about themselves and these issues more deeply, perhaps even learning something new. The study did have its limitations, however. First, it was difficult getting volunteers. Offering a payment made a significant difference. This follows some research suggesting that men have been less socialized than women to volunteer for studies. Other studies have shown that men are less motivated to confront sexism (Gervais, Hillard & Vescio, 2010; Becker & Swim, 2011). More men see their beliefs as normative rather than sexist (Martinez & Paterna-Bleda, 2013), explaining why they may have chosen not to participate. I heard that from a couple of men who turned down the study outright – “I don’t know what I have to contribute, I understand that there is sexism, but it is getting better. I’m not a sexist.” Others just politely said “No, thank you” or ignored the advertisements all together. It was not until I offered some money that there was a rise in interest. One participant, after the focus group was done, admitted to me that he thought that it was going to be a feminist trap. I asked him why he had been interested in participating and he said that he needed the money. Considering all of this, and my time constraints, my sample size was relatively small. Also, my sample came mostly from Western Massachusetts and Eastern Connecticut. While my sample does suffer from the same lack of external validity (generalizability) of all small qualitative studies, it does offer actual, lived experiences of the participants, as opposed to quantitative studies that might only provide statistics and could well dilute the power of hearing from individual men.

## **Directions for Future Research**

For the future, it would be helpful to run a larger scale mixed methods study that might provide both what this qualitative study offered and some sense of how far the experiences of my participants are representative of a larger group of men.

Moreover, I think it would be interesting to have a measure for Ambivalent Sexism and to be able to correlate that with a range of demographics and with responses to a survey designed to tease out what the men in the United States think about what it means to “be a man” and how they feel about it. I also think it would be interesting to run separate research on fathers with regards to child support policies and child custody policies. Moreover, gathering data on men and their thoughts about birth control designed for men would be very useful. Not only will running these kinds of studies gather more invaluable information, but also by being run, they will relay some of that information to the masses, to the people who do not necessarily have access to the literature. A public health concern is whether men have an understanding of their vulnerability to exploitation, particularly with respect to reproduction. A greater awareness and understanding would enable us to discuss ways to educate, empower and enable them to make more responsible choices, not only for their sake, but for the sake of their (unborn)/children, for the sake women and for the sake of society at large.

## References

- Allen, J. & Smith, J.L. (2011). The influence of sexuality stereotypes on men's experience of gender-role incongruence. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, Vol. 12*(1), 77-96.
- Anderson, V. N. (2009). What's in a label? Judgments of feminist men and feminist women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, Vol. 33*(2), 206-215.
- Andres, D. (1983). Selected psychosocial characteristics of males: Their relationship to contraceptive use and abortion. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, Vol. 9*(3), 387-396.
- Angulo, S., Brooks, M., & Swann, W.B. (2011). Swimming serenely in a sea of words: Sexism, communication, and precarious couples. *Personal Relationships, Vol. 18* (4), 604-616.
- Archer, J. (2010). Derivation and assessment of a hypermasculine values questionnaire. *British Journal of Social Psychology, Vol. 49*(3), 525-551.
- Armistead, N. (1975). Men's liberation and men against sexism. In *The Pig's Last Grunt*, Spring.
- Askari, S. F., Liss, M., Erchull, M.J., Staebell, S.E., & Axelson, S. J. (2010). Men want equality, but women don't expect it: Young adults' expectations for participation in household and child care chores. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, Vol. 34*(2), 243-252.
- Barreto, M., & Ellemers, N. (2005). The burden of benevolent sexism: How it contributes to the maintenance of gender inequalities. *European Journal of Social Psychology, Vol. 35*, 633-642.
- de Beauvoir, S. (1949) *The second sex*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Benatar, D. (2012). *The second sexism: Discrimination against men and boys*. United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Berger, L. M. & Langton, C. E. (2011). Young disadvantaged men: Fathers. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Vol. 635* (1), 56-75.

- Bertone, C. & Camoletto, R.F. (2009) Beyond the sex machine?: Sexual practices and masculinity in adult men's heterosexual accounts. *Journal of Gender Studies, Vol. 18(4)*, 369-386.
- Biernat, M., & Kobrynowicz, D. (1999). A shifting standards perspective on the complexity of gender stereotypes and gender stereotyping. In: Swann, W.B., Jr., Langlois, J.H., Gilbert, L.A. (Eds). *Sexism and stereotypes in modern society: The gender science of Janet Taylor Spence* (75-106). Washington, DC, US: American Psychological Association.
- Blake, S. & Brown, R. (2004). *Boys own: Supporting self-esteem and emotional development in boys and young men*. London: FPA.
- Bowl, R. (1985) *Changing the Nature of Masculinity: A Task for Social Work?* University of East Anglia Social Work Monographs.
- Bowleg, L., Teti, M., Massie, J. S., Patel, A., Malebranche, D.J., & Tschann J. M. (2011). 'What does it take to be a man? What is a real man?': Ideologies of masculinity and HIV sexual risk among black heterosexual men. *Culture, Health & Sexuality, Vol. 13(5)*, 545-559.
- Buss, D. M. & Schmitt, D. P. (2011). Evolutionary psychology and feminism. Special issue: Feminism and evolutionary psychology: Allies, adversaries, or both? *Sex Roles, Vol. 64(9-10)*, 768-787.
- Chapleau, K. M. Oswald, D. L. & Russell, B. L. (2007). How ambivalent sexism toward women and men supports rape myth acceptance. *Sex Roles, Vol. 57(1-2)*, 131-136.
- Chapleau, K.M., Oswald, D. L., & Russell, B. L. (2008). Male rape myths: The role of gender, violence, and sexism. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, Vol. 23(5)*, 600-615.
- Clark, C. L., Shaver, P.R., & Abrahams, M.F. (1999). Strategic behaviors in romantic relationship initiation. *Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 25(6)*, 707-720.
- Connell, R., (1995). *Masculinities*. Cambridge, Polity Press; Sydney, Allen & Unwin; Berkeley University of California Press. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition, 2005.
- Connelly, K. & Heesacker, M. (2012). Why is benevolent sexism appealing? Associations with system justification and life satisfaction. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, Vol. 36(4)*, 432-443.
- Crane-Seeber, J. & Crane, B. (2010). Contesting essentialist theories of patriarchal relations: Evolutionary psychology and the denial of history. *The Journal of Men's Studies, Vol. 18(3)*, pp. 218-237.
- Crocker, J. & Major, B. (1989). Social stigma and self-esteem: The self-protective properties of stigma. *Psychological Review, Vol. 96*, 608-630.



- Davies, M. (2004). Correlates of negative attitudes toward gay men: Sexism, male role norms, and male sexuality. *Journal of Sex Research*, Vol. 41(3), 259-266.
- Davis, K. C., Schraufnagel, T. J., Kajumulo, K. F., Gilmore, A.K., Norris, J. & George, W. H. (2013). A qualitative examination of men's condom use attitudes and resistance: "It's just part of the game." *Archives of Sexual Behavior*.
- Day, K., Stump, C. & D. Carreon, D. (2003). Confrontation and loss of control: Masculinity and men's fear in public space. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, Vol. 23, 311-322.
- Duckitt, J. W., Plessis, C., & Ilouize Birum, I. (2002). The psychological bases of ideology and prejudice: Testing a dual process model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 83(1), 75-93.
- Durkheim, E. (1933). *The division of labour in society*. New York: Macmillan.
- Eagly, A. H. & Mladinic, A. (1994). Are people prejudiced against women? Some answers from research on attitudes, gender stereotypes, and judgments of competence. *European Review of Social Psychology*, Vol. 5, 1-35.
- Eagly, A.H. & Wood, W. (2011). Feminism and the evolution of sex differences and similarities. Special issue: Feminism and evolutionary psychology: Allies, adversaries, or both? *Sex Roles*, Vol. 64(9-10), 758-767.
- Ellis, L. (2011). Evolutionary neuroandrogenic theory and universal gender differences in cognition and behavior. Special issue: Feminism and evolutionary psychology: Allies, adversaries, or both? *Sex Roles*, Vol. 64(9-10), 707-722.
- Emslie, C., Ridge, D., Ziebland, S., & Hunt, K. (2006). Men's accounts of depression: Reconstructing or resisting hegemonic masculinity? *Social Science & Medicine*, Vol. 62(9), 246-257.
- England, P. (2010). The gender revolution: Uneven and stalled. *Gender & Society*, Vol. 24(2), 149-166.
- Fagen, J.L. & Anderson, P. B. (2012). Constructing masculinity in response to women's sexual advances. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol. 41(1), 261-270.
- Farrimond, H. (2012). Beyond the caveman: Rethinking masculinity in relation to men's help-seeking. *Health: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Social Study of Health, Illness and Medicine*, Vol. 16(2), 208-225.
- Felmlee, D., Orzechowicz, D. & Fortes, C. (2010). Fairy tales: Attraction and stereotypes in same-gender relationships. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 62(3-4), 226-240.

- Fischer, A. R., (2006). Women's benevolent sexism as reaction to hostility. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol. 30(4), 410-416.
- Ford, T. E. Wentzel, E. R. & Lorion, J. (2001). Effects of exposure to sexist humor on perceptions of normative tolerance of sexism. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 31(6), 677-691.
- Frederick, D. A., Fessler, D.M.T. & Haselton, M.G. (2005). Do representations of male muscularity differ in men's and women's magazines? *Body Image*, Vol. 2(1), 81–86.
- Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Gallagher, K. E. & Parrott, D.J. (2011). What accounts for men's hostile attitudes toward women? The influence of hegemonic male role norms and masculine gender role stress. *Violence Against Women*, Vol. 17(5), 568-583.
- Gervais, S. J., Hillard, A. L. & Vescio, T. K. (2010). Confronting sexism: The role of relationship orientation and gender. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 63(7-8), 463-474.
- Glick, P. & Fiske, S. T. (1997). Hostile and benevolent sexism: Measuring ambivalent sexist attitudes toward women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol. 21(1), 119-135.
- Glick, P. & Fiske, S.T. (2001). An ambivalent alliance: Hostile and benevolent sexism as complementary justifications for gender inequality. *American Psychologist*, Vol. 56(2), 109-118.
- Glick, P. & Whitehead, J. (2010). Hostility toward men and the perceived stability of male dominance. Special issue: Malleability of Intergroup Stereotypes and Attitudes, *Social Psychology*, Vol. 41(3), 177-185.
- Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (1996). The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory: Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 70(3), 491-512.
- Glick, P., Lameiras, M., Fiske, S. T., Eckes, T., Masser, B., Volpato, C., Manganelli, A.M., Pek, J. C., X. Huang, L.L, Sakalli-Uğurlu, N., Rodriguez Castro, Y., Pereira, M.L., Willemsen, T.M., Brunner, A., Six-Materna, I., & Wells, R. (2004). Bad but bold: Ambivalent attitudes toward men predict gender inequality in 16 nations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 86(5), 713-728.
- Grady, W.R., Klepinger, D.H., Billy, J. O.G. & Cubbins, L. A. (2010). The role of relationship power in couple decisions about contraception in the US. *Journal of Biosocial Science*, Vol. 42(3), 307-323.
- Gray, J. (1992). *Men are from Mars, women are from Venus*. New York, NY: Harper Collins

- Greenwood, D. & Isbell, L. M. (2002). Ambivalent sexism and the dumb blonde: Men's and women's reactions to sexist jokes. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol. 26(4), 341-350.
- Ha, T., van den Berg, J.E. M., Engels R. C. M. E. & Lichtwarck-Aschoff, A. (2012). Effects of attractiveness and status in dating desire in homosexual and heterosexual men and women. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, Vol. 41(3), 673-682.
- Hall, J.A. & Canterbury, M., (2011). Sexism and assertive courtship strategies. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 65(11-12), 840-853.
- Hall, M. & Gough, B. (2011). Magazine and reader constructions of 'metrosexuality' and masculinity: A membership categorisation analysis. *Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 20(1), 67-86.
- Harro, B. (2000). The cycle of socialization. In M. Adams, W.J. Blumenfeld, R. Casteneda, H.W. Hackman, M.L. Peters & X. Zuniga (Eds.), *Readings for diversity and social justice: An anthology on racism, anti-Semitism, sexism, heterosexism, ableism, and classism* (pp.15-21). New York: Routledge.
- Hart, J., Hung, J.A., Glick, P., & Dinero, R. E. (2012). He loves her, he loves her not: Attachment style as a personality antecedent to men's ambivalent sexism. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 38(11), 1495-1505.
- Hinojosa, R. (2010). Doing hegemony: Military, men, and constructing a hegemonic masculinity. *The Journal of Men's Studies*, Vol. 18(2), 179-194.
- Hudson, A. (1988). Boys will be boys: Masculinism and the juvenile justice system. *Critical Social Policy*, Vol. 21, 30-48.
- Hyde, A., Drennan, J., Howlett, E., & Brady, D. (2009). Young men's vulnerability in constituting hegemonic masculinity in sexual relations. *American Journal of Men's Health*, Vol. 3(3), 238-251.
- Iwamoto, D.K., Cheng, A., Lee, C. S., Takamatsu, S. & Gordon, D., (2011). 'Man-ing' up and getting drunk: The role of masculine norms, alcohol intoxication and alcohol-related problems among college men. *Addictive Behaviors*, Vol. 36(9), 906-911.
- Jackson, E., Karasz, A. & Gold, M. (2011). Family formation in the inner city: Low-income men's perception of their role in unplanned conception and pregnancy prevention. *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, Vol. 22(1), 71-82.
- Karaszia, B.T. & Crowther, J. H. (2010). Sociocultural and psychological links to men's engagement in risky body change behaviors. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 63(9-10), 747-756.

- King, E. B., Botsford, W., Hebl, M., R., Kazama, S., Dawson, J. F. & Perkins, A. (2012). Benevolent sexism at work: Gender differences in the distribution of challenging developmental experiences. *Journal of Management*, Vol. 38(6), 1835-1866.
- Klein, O. & Azzi, A.E. (2001). The strategic confirmation of meta-stereotypes: How group members attempt to tailor an out-group's representation of themselves. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 40(2), 279-293.
- Lee, T.L., Fiske, S.T., Glick, P. & Chen, Z. (2010). Ambivalent sexism in close relationships: (Hostile) power and (benevolent) romance shape relationship ideals. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 62(7-8), 583-601.
- Linos, N., (2009). Rethinking gender-based violence during war: Is violence against civilian men a problem worth addressing? *Social Science & Medicine*, Vol. 68(8), 1548-1551.
- Liss, M., Erchull, M. J. & Ramsey, L. R. (2011). Empowering or oppressing? Development and exploration of the Enjoyment of Sexualization Scale. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 37(1), 55-68.
- Logue, J.F. (2012). Gender matters—Transference, countertransference, and men: A psychodynamic/psychoanalytic perspective. In: Sweet, H.B. (Ed.), *Gender in the therapy hour: Voices of female clinicians working with men* (Vol. 12, 43-66). New York, NY, US: Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Lohan, A., Cruise, M., O'Halloran, S., Alderdice, P. & Hyde, F. (2011). Adolescent men's attitudes and decision-making in relation to an unplanned pregnancy: Responses to an interactive video drama. *Social Science & Medicine*, Vol. 72(9), 1507-1514.
- Lücken, M. & Simon, B. (2005). Cognitive and affective experiences of minority and majority members: The role of group size, status, and power. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, Vol. 41(4), 396-413.
- MacGregor, J. C. D. & Cavallo, J.V. (2011). Breaking the rules: Personal control increases women's direct relationship initiation. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*. Vol. 28(6), 848-867.
- Mackey, W.C. (1996). *The American father: Biocultural and developmental aspects*. New York, NY, United States: Plenum Press.
- Martínez, C. & Paterna-Bleda, C. (2013). Masculinity ideology and gender equality: Considering neosexism. *Anales de Psicología*, Vol. 29(2), 558-564.
- Mathes, E. W. & Kozak, G.,(2008). The exchange of physical attractiveness for resource potential and commitment. *Journal of Evolutionary Psychology*, Vol. 6(1), 43-56.

- McDermott, R.C. & Schwartz, J.P. (2013). Toward a better understanding of emerging adult men's gender role journeys: Differences in age, education, race, relationship status, and sexual orientation. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, Vol.14 (2), 202-210.
- McFarland, M.B. & Petrie, T.A. (2012). Male body satisfaction: Factorial and construct validity of the Body Parts Satisfaction Scale for men. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, Vol. 59(2), 329-337.
- Meyer, I.H., Ouellette, S. C., Haile, R., & McFarlane, T. A., (2011). "We'd be free": Narratives of life without homophobia, racism, or sexism. *Sexuality Research & Social Policy: A Journal of the NSRC*, Vol. 8(3), 204-214.
- Miedzian, M. (1991). *Boys will be boys: Breaking the link between masculinity and violence*, London: Virago.
- Miller & Garran. (2008). *Racism in the United States: Implications for the helping professions*. Belmont, CA: Thomson Brooks/Cole.
- Miller, A.J. (2012). Cohabiting men's preferences for and roles in determining the outcomes of unexpected pregnancies. *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 27(3), 708-731.
- Mohr, J.J., Chopp, R. M. & Wong, S. J. (2013). Psychotherapists' stereotypes of heterosexual, gay, and bisexual men. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services: The Quarterly Journal of Community & Clinical Practice*, Vol. 25(1), 37-55.
- Moore, A.M., Singh, S. & Bankole, A. (2011). Do women and men consider abortion as an alternative to contraception in the United States? An exploratory study. *Global Public Health: An International Journal for Research, Policy and Practice*, Vol. 6 (Suppl. 1), S25-S37.
- Morrison, T. (1990). The emotional effects of child protection work on the worker. *Practice*, Vol. 4(4), 253-71.
- Morton, T. A., Postmes, T., Haslam, S. A., & Hornsey, M.J. (2009). Theorizing gender in the face of social change: Is there anything essential about essentialism? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 96(3), 653-664.
- Natalier, K. A & Hewitt, B. (2010). 'It's not just about the money': Non-resident fathers' perspectives on paying child support. *Sociology*, Vol. 44(3), 489-505.
- Natalier, K. A. (2012). Descriptions of loss and resilience among fathers paying child support. Special issue: Fatherhood in the early 21st century. *Journal of Family Studies*, Vol. 18(2-3), 246-255.
- O'Brien, M., (1990). The place of men in a gender-sensitive therapy. In: Perelberg, R.J. and Miller, A.C. (Eds.) *Gender and Power in Families*, 195-208.

- O'Leary, D., Barling, J., Arias, I., Rosenbaum, A., Malone, J. & Tyree A. (1989). Prevalence and stability of physical aggression between spouses: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 57 (2), 263.
- O'Leary, D., Malone, J. & Tyree, A. (1994). Physical aggression in early marriage: Pre-relationship and relationship effects. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 62 (3), 594.
- O'Leary, D., Riggs, D.S. (1996). Aggression between heterosexual dating partners: An examination of a causal model of courtship aggression. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Vol. 11(4), 519-540.
- Oliffe, J.L., Kelly, M.T., Bottorff, J. L., Johnson, J.L., & Wong, S. T. (2011). 'He's more typically female because he's not afraid to cry': Connecting heterosexual gender relations and men's depression. *Social Science & Medicine*, Vol. 73(5), 775-782.
- Overall, N. C., Sibley, C. G., & Tan, R., (2011). The costs and benefits of sexism: Resistance to influence during relationship conflict. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 101(2), 271-290.
- Parrott, D. J., Peterson, J.L., Bakeman, R. (2011). Determinants of aggression toward sexual minorities in a community sample. *Psychology of Violence*, Vol. 1(1), 41-52.
- Pascall, G. (1986). *Social policy: A feminist analysis*, London: Tavistock.
- Pedersen, W. C., Putcha-Bhagavatula, A. & Miller, L.C. (2011). Are men and women really that different? Examining some of Sexual Strategies Theory (SST)'s key assumptions about sex-distinct mating mechanisms. Special issue: Feminism and evolutionary psychology: Allies, adversaries, or both? *Sex Roles*, Vol. 64(9-10), 629-643.
- Perrin, P. B., Heesacker, M., Tiegs, T. J., Swan, L.K., Lawrence, Alvin W. Jr., Smith, M.B., Carrillo, R. J., Cawood, R. L., & Mejia-Millan, C.M. (2011). Aligning Mars and Venus: The social construction and instability of gender differences in romantic relationships. Special issue: Feminism and evolutionary psychology: Allies, adversaries, or both? *Sex Roles*, Vol. 64(9-10), 613-628.
- Pollack, W. (1999). *Real boys*. New York: Henry Holt.
- Richards, R J. (1994). *The sceptical feminist*. London: Penguin Books.
- Raine, T.R., Gard, J. C., Boyer, C.B., Haider, S., Brown, B. A., Hernandez, F.A.R. & Harper, C. C. (2010). Contraceptive decision-making in sexual relationships: Young men's experiences, attitudes and values. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, Vol. 12(4), 373-386.
- Reich, J.A. (2008). Not ready to fill his father's shoes: A masculinist discourse of abortion. *Men and Masculinities*, Vol. 11(1), 3-21.

- Reich, J.A. & Brindis, C. D. (2006). Conceiving risk and responsibility: A qualitative examination of men's experiences of unintended pregnancy and abortion. *International Journal of Men's Health*, Vol. 5(2), 133-152.
- Robnett, R. D. & Leaper, C. (2013). "Girls don't propose! Ew.": A mixed-methods examination of marriage tradition preferences and benevolent sexism in emerging adults. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, Vol. 28(1), 96-121.
- Rollero, C. & Fedi, A. (2012). Ambivalent attitudes toward women and men: Recognizability of stereotypes and effects on self-perception. *Psicología Política*, No. 44, 69-86.
- Sánchez, F.J., Bocklandt, S. & Vilain, E. (2013). The relationship between help-seeking attitudes and masculine norms among monozygotic male twins discordant for sexual orientation. Special issue: Men's Health: Masculinity and Other Influences on Male Health Behaviors. *Health Psychology*, Vol. 32(1), 52-56.
- Sarlet, M.D., Dumont, M., Delacollette, N. & Dardenne, B. (2012). Prescription of protective paternalism for men in romantic and work contexts. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol. 36(4), 444-457.
- Shepherd, C.B. & Rickard, K. M. (2012). Drive for muscularity and help-seeking: The mediational role of gender role conflict, self-stigma, and attitudes. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, Vol. 13(4), 379-392.
- Sibley, C. G., Overall, N. C., Duckitt, J., Perry, R., Milfont, T. L., Khan, S.S., Fischer, R., & Robertson, A. (2009). Your sexism predicts my sexism: Perceptions of men's (but not women's) sexism affects one's own sexism over time. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 60(9-10), 682-693.
- Sibley, C. G. & Overall, N. C.,(2011). A dual process motivational model of ambivalent sexism and gender differences in romantic partner preferences. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, Vol. 35(2), 303-317.
- Sibley, C. G., Wilson, M. S. & Duckitt, J. (2007). Antecedents of men's hostile and benevolent sexism: The dual roles of social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Vol. 33(2), 160-172.
- Simms, D.C. & Byers, E. S. (2009). Interpersonal perceptions of desired frequency of sexual behaviours. *Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality*, Vol. 18(1-2), 15-25.
- Singh, D. & Singh, D. (2011). Shape and significance of feminine beauty: An evolutionary perspective. Special issue: Feminism and evolutionary psychology: Allies, adversaries, or both? *Sex Roles*, Vol. 64(9-10), 723-731.

- Smiler, A.P. (2011). Sexual strategies theory: Built for the short term or the long term? Special issue: Feminism and evolutionary psychology: Allies, adversaries, or both? *Sex Roles*, Vol. 64(9-10), 603-612.
- Smiler, A. P. & Kubotera, N. (2010). Instrumental or expressive?: Heterosexual men's expectations of women in two contexts. *Men and Masculinities*, Vol. 12(5), 565-574.
- Smith, A. R., Hawkeswood, S. E. & Joiner, T. E., (2010). The measure of a man: Associations between digit ratio and disordered eating in males. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, Vol. 43(6), 543-548.
- Smith, C.A. & Konik, J. (2011). Feminism and evolutionary psychology: Allies, adversaries, or both? An introduction to a special issue. Special issue: Feminism and evolutionary psychology: Allies, adversaries, or both? *Sex Roles*, Vol. 64(9-10), 595-602.
- Springer, K.W. (2010). Economic dependence in marriage and husbands' midlife health: Testing three possible mechanisms. *Gender & Society*, Vol. 24(3), 378-401.
- Spruijt, E., de Goede, M. & Vandervalk, I. (2004). Frequency of contact with nonresident fathers and adolescent well-being: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Divorce & Remarriage*, Vol. 40(3-4), 77-90.
- Swami, V. & Voracek, M. (2013). Associations among men's sexist attitudes, objectification of women, and their own drive for muscularity. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, Vol. 14(2), 168-174.
- Tannen, D. (1992). *You just don't understand: Women and men in conversation*. London:Virago.
- Tate, C. (2011). The "problem of number" revisited: The relative contributions of psychosocial, experiential, and evolutionary factors to the desired number of sexual partners. Special issue: Feminism and evolutionary psychology: Allies, adversaries, or both? *Sex Roles*, Vol. 64(9-10), 644-657.
- Thompson, N. (1992). *Existentialism and social work*. Aldershot: Avebury.
- Thompson, N. (1995). Men and anti-sexism. *British Journal of Social Work*, Vol. 25(4), 459-475.
- Tolson, A. (1977) *The limits of masculinity*. London: Tavistock.
- Travaglia, L. K., Overall, N. C., & Sibley, C.G. (2009). Benevolent and hostile sexism and preferences for romantic partners. *Personality and Individual Differences*, Vol. 47(6), 599-604.



- Tsui, A.O., Casterline, J., Singh, S., Bankole, A., Moore, A.M., Omideyi, A. K., Palomino, N., Sathar, Z., Juarez, F. & Shellenberg, K. M. (2011). Managing unplanned pregnancies in five countries: Perspectives on contraception and abortion decisions. *Global Public Health: An International Journal for Research, Policy and Practice*, Vol. 6 (Suppl 1), S1-S24.
- Vogel, C. A., Bradley, R. H., Raikes, H. H., Boliler, K., & Shears, J. K. (2006). Relation between father connectedness and child outcomes. *Parenting: Science and Practice*, Vol. 6(2-3), pp. 189-209.
- Vogel, D. L., Heimerdinger-Edwards, S. R., Hammer, J. H. & Hubbard, A. (2011). "Boys don't cry": Examination of the links between endorsement of masculine norms, self-stigma, and help-seeking attitudes for men from diverse backgrounds. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, Vol. 58(3), 368-382.
- Wade, J.C. & Coughlin, P. (2012). Male reference group identity dependence, masculinity ideology, and relationship satisfaction in men's heterosexual romantic relationships. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, Vol. 13(4), 325-339.
- Wade, J.C. & Donis, E. (2007). Masculinity ideology, male identity, and romantic relationship quality among heterosexual and gay men. *Sex Roles*, Vol. 57(9-10), 775-786.
- Warren, M.A. (1985) *Gendercide*. Totowa, NJ: Rowman & Allanheld.
- Watts, R. J. (2010). Advancing a community psychology of men. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 45(1-2), 201-211.
- Wollstonecraft, M.A. (1792). *Vindication of the rights of women: With strictures on political and moral subjects*. Boston: Peter Edes.
- Zeichner, A. & Reidy, D.E. (2009). Are homophobic men attracted to or repulsed by homosexual men? Effects of gay male erotica on anger, fear, happiness, and disgust. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, Vol. 10(3), 231-236.

**APPENDIX A**  
**HSR Approval Letter**



School for Social Work  
Smith College  
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063  
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

October 2, 2013

Shanta Cortez-Greig

Dear Shanta,

Thank you for making all the requested revisions to your application. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

*Please note the following requirements:*

**Consent Forms:** All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

**Maintaining Data:** You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

*In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:*

**Amendments:** If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

**Renewal:** You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

**Completion:** You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished).

Best of luck with your very interesting project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elaine Kersten / hws".

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.  
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Gael McCarthy, Research Advisor

**APPENDIX A CONTD.**

**HSR Amendment Approval Letter**



---

School for Social Work  
Smith College  
Northampton, Massachusetts 01063  
T (413) 585-7950 F (413) 585-7994

November 12, 2013

Shanta Cortez-Greig  
197 Linden St.  
Apt. 3A  
Holyoke, MA 01040

Dear Shanta,

I have reviewed your amendment and it looks fine. This amendment to your study is therefore approved. Thank you and best of luck with your project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Elaine Kersten'.

Elaine Kersten, Ed.D.  
Co-Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Gael McCarthy, Research Advisor

## APPENDIX B

### Recruitment Materials

ARE YOU AN ENGLISH SPEAKING  
AMERICAN HETEROSEXUAL  
MALE OVER THE AGE OF 18 YRS  
OLD?

DO YOU WANT TO  
PARTICIPATE IN A  
RESEARCH STUDY  
THAT MAY BE THE  
FIRST ONE EVER  
OF ITS KIND?

EMAIL:  
HeterosexualMenStudy  
@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.Com

**APPENDIX B CONTD.**

Dear Prospective Participant:

Are you an English speaking American heterosexual male over the age of eighteen years old? Would you like to participate in a study that will be the first of its kind? If so, email [HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.com](mailto:HeterosexualMenStudy@Gmail.com) for further information.

Thank you!

**APPENDIX C**

**Informed Consent**



**SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL WORK**

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study  
Smith College SSW • Northampton, MA**

.....

**Title of Study: Heterosexual Men’s Views of Their Socialization in U.S. Society**

**Investigator(s):** (Shanta Cortez-Greig, Smith College School for Social Work, 646-388-2520)

.....

**Introduction**

- You are being asked to be in a research study of the male heterosexual socialization experiences of men currently living in the United States
- You were selected as a possible participant because you have responded to a recruitment announcement and have identified yourself as a heterosexual male over 18 years old living in the United States.
- I ask that you read this form and ask any questions that you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

**Purpose of Study**

- The purpose of the study is to learn from males who identify as heterosexual men in the United States - both the positive and the negative parts of their experiences as they were raised in our society: what advantages and disadvantages, if any of either, did such men experience?
- This study is being conducted as a thesis requirement for my master’s in social work degree.
- Ultimately, this research may be published or presented at professional conferences.

**Description of the Study Procedures**

- If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to participate in a one time interview, lasting usually up to an hour.

- Interviews will be done in person.
- Interviews will be conducted as a focus group, with a small group of other men. If you prefer to not be in a focus group, you can be interviewed one-on-one.
- Interviews will be videotaped.

### **Risks/Discomforts of Being in this Study**

- The reasonably foreseeable (or expected) risks of participating are discomfort associated with describing experiences that may have been emotionally distressing. You might feel distressed after talking about experiences that caused you pain or made you feel upset in the past, or may have made you feel some discomfort if your experiences seemed to you especially good when those of other men or women were not good.

### **Benefits of Being in the Study**

- The benefit of participation is that you will have an opportunity to talk about experiences and issues important to you as an American heterosexual male.
- You will be part of one of the very few studies, if not the only study to date, on this subject, and thereby may have an opportunity to give voice to experiences of heterosexual men that are often not publicly discussed.

### **Confidentiality**

- The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records, including recordings, transcriptions, analyses and consent/assent documents will be stored in a secure location for three years according to federal regulations. They will be kept in a locked file, and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password-protected file. In the event that materials are needed beyond this period, they will be kept secured until no longer needed, and then destroyed. Only I will have access to audio and video tape recordings. I will not include any information in any report I may publish that would make it possible to identify you. Also, please maintain strict confidentiality of all members of the focus group and of what is discussed. Please sign the confidentiality agreement below.

### **Payments**

- You will be awarded \$25 in compensation for your participation.

### **Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

- The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* without affecting your relationship with me as the researcher of this study or Smith College. Your decision to refuse will not result in any loss of benefits (including access to services) to which you are otherwise entitled. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely at any point during the study. If you choose to withdraw, I will not use any of your information collected for this study. You must notify me of your decision to withdraw by email or phone within 72 hours after the interview. After that time, your information will become part of the thesis report.

### **Right to Ask Questions and Report Concerns**

- You have the right to ask questions about this research study and to have those questions answered by me before, during or after the research. If you have any further questions about the study, at any time feel free to contact me, Shanta Cortez-Greig at [scortezg@smith.edu](mailto:scortezg@smith.edu) or by telephone at 646-388-2520. If you like, a summary of the results of the study will be sent to you. If you have any other concerns about your rights as a research participant, or if you have any problems as a result of your

participation, you may contact the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Committee at (413) 585-7974.

**Consent**

- Your signature below indicates that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant for this study, and that you have read and understood the information provided above. You will be given a signed and dated copy of this form to keep, along with any other printed materials deemed necessary by the study researcher.

.....

Name of Participant (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

.....

**[if using audio or video recording, use next section for signatures:]**

**1. I agree to be [audio or video] taped for this interview:**

Name of Participant (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**2. I agree to be interviewed, but I do not want the interview to be taped:**

Name of Participant (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

.....

As a member of the focus group, I commit to full confidentiality of all discussions that occur within the group meeting, and will not disclose/discuss anything or identify any member outside of the group.

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX D

### Interview Questions

#### Demographic Information:

Name:

Age:

Address:

Ethnicity/Race:

Educational Level:

Income: (Pick One)

- <\$10,000 /yr
- \$10,000-20,000 /yr
- \$20,000 - \$30,000 /yr
- \$30,000-\$40,000 /yr
- \$40,000- \$50,000 /yr
- \$50,000 - \$75,000 /yr
- \$75,000 - \$100,000 /yr
- < \$100,000 /yr

Question 1: What does it mean, to you, to be “a man”?

Question 2: You have grown up a heterosexual white male in the United States and you’ve come to understand that there are positive aspects to this. Can you give me some examples from your life where this advantage is illustrated?

Question 3: I am particularly interested if perhaps being a heterosexual white male has its disadvantages as well. If so, can you give me some examples from your life where those disadvantages are illustrated?

Question 4: Have you ever felt pressure in any kind of way to do something you didn’t want to do, or not do something you wanted to do, because you are a heterosexual male? Can you describe circumstances that have made you feel this way?

*I will then follow up with a variety of questions. Below are the questions I will pick from, depending on the flow of the conversation:*

#### II. SAMPLE FOLLOW UP QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever felt that you were treated unfairly in your home? Your community? Your school? Your work place? You family? In a relationship? By the government? Due to any social policies? By societal expectations of you?

2. Have you ever felt pressures to do something that you did not want to do just because you are a heterosexual male?
3. Have you ever felt pressures to *not* do something that you wanted to do because you are a male?
4. Have you ever felt misunderstood, stereotyped, judged, belittled and/or marginalized just because you are a male? How about because of some expression of your masculinity?
5. Have you ever felt disenfranchised (deprived of power or choice) or oppressed because you are a male?
6. Have you ever felt that any laws, social policies, rules, standards or traditions are particularly unfair towards men? How about towards white men? How about towards heterosexual men?
7. Have you ever felt limited in your self-expression in fear of being judged as less than a man?
9. Also, as a follow-up, I would like to present the scenario regarding an unwanted pregnancy (vignette below) and ask for their subjective feelings about it.

Vignette:

*Linda met Mark. They got together that night. Before having sex, she told him that they didn't need condoms because she was on birth control. They slept together. Mark was not interested in being in a relationship with Linda. A month later, Linda told Mark that she was pregnant with his child. Mark told Linda that he was not prepared nor interested in being father. Mark told Linda that he did not have the money to raise a child and did not feel like he was in a place in his life to take on such a big responsibility. Linda said that she would have an abortion, but a couple weeks later, she stated that if she had an abortion, she would regret it. She chose to keep the baby. Linda was upset that Mark did not want to be with her and told him that she would never let the baby be in his care, alone. Mark expects that he will have a difficult relationship with Linda with regards to custody and visitation. Mark knows that, if paternity is established, the law holds him responsible for child-support for up to 50% of his disposable income. Mark also knows that his wages will be garnished for said child-support. Mark also knows that should Linda not honor a custody agreement he would have to find a lawyer enforce it.*

## APPENDIX E

### Resources

If you would like to speak with somebody after the interview, clinicians are listed on these websites:

1. <http://www.apa.org/>
  - Click on “Find A Psychologist” on the left side of the home-page.
  - Enter your zip code to find a psychologist near you.
  
2. <http://www.naswdc.org/>
  - Under the “Resources” Tab, scroll down to “Find A Clinical Social Worker”
  - Or, go to this direct link: <http://www.helpstartshere.org/find-a-social-worker>
  - Several directories are listed there to jump start your search.