POSITIVE OPPOSITION:

NARRATIVES OF ANTI-HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY PERFORMANCE

by

Sacha Médiné

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APPROVED BY

Colin James Sander, Ph.D., R.C.C., Thesis Supervisor, Masters of Counselling Faculty
Vikki Reynolds, Ph.D., R.C.C., Faculty Reader, Masters of Counselling Faculty

Division of Arts and Sciences

Abstract

We are in a cultural moment that features significant conversations about the meaning of, problems with, and possibilities for, modern masculinity performance. Among researchers and theorists approaching this conversation from feminist perspectives, there is substantial agreement about the importance of supporting men in resisting patriarchal models of hegemonic masculinity, but limited articulation of what alternative models of masculinity performance might be. In this paper, I seek to explore positive characteristics of anti-hegemonic masculinity as they are already being performed, while attempting to maintain a strong grounding in feminist values and analysis. Utilizing the principles of narrative inquiry, I engage in semi-structured interviews with two men, who identify as pro-feminist or feminist-aligned, about their performances of masculinity. Based on these interviews, I present a retelling of our shared journey of masculinity, identifying and exploring four principle values which emerge from and guide our gender performances (awareness, acceptance, transgressing boundaries, and leadership). I hope that by contributing to the literature on positive characteristics of anti-hegemonic masculinity performance from feminist or feminist-aligned positions, this inquiry will provide useful support and inspiration both to counsellors engaging with male clients, and for men seeking to resist the influence of patriarchy and who are interested in developing more just and fulfilling ways of being.

Keywords: masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, gender performance, pro-feminism, narrative inquiry

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Dedication

To my mother, for sharing with me the strength and curiosity to seek to understand the truth of the world as it is, and as it might be.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

We do not have to go far to hear about the crisis in manhood in popular culture. A quick glance of the headlines is the first hint. Evidence of the challenges and importance of understanding the meaning and lived experience of masculinity in our current society are all around us. Questions about masculinity are present in myriad locations: from examinations of the persistence of rape culture (Walsh, 2015), to the Bill Cosby, Jian Ghomeshi, and campus rape scandals (Boesveld, 2014; Corprew & Mitchell, 2014); and the fear that boys are increasingly falling behind academically (Morris, 2012), to concerns about the impacts of systematic police violence on black men (McGinley, 2015). From my location as a black heterosexual cisgender man,[1] these questions are of more than simply intellectual interest: they are very urgent and personal.

While I am ultimately skeptical of the framing of this moment as a *crisis* in masculinity (a crisis suggests the challenges are somehow new), I do see the attention paid broadly to the state of manhood as an indication that we are in an important moment of contested masculinity. For the sake of my current exploration, I see perspectives on the state of manhood falling largely within three broadly defined camps, each with a competing idea of the meaning of masculinity and its current place within our society.

The first group I refer to as Men's Rights Activists (MRAs). Often closely tied to conservative politics and advocacy for the rights of fathers in family law disputes, these groups see masculinity as under attack by feminist and progressive political forces (Allain, 2015; Coston & Kimmel, 2013). The success of the feminist movement is perceived as having led to

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[1] Cisgender is a term used to describe a person whose personal gender identity is consistent with the sex they were assigned at birth (McGeeney & Harvey, 2015).

discrimination against men, as well as the imposition on these men of an increasingly feminized masculinity. Also sharing a similar anti-feminist (and to my mind misogynistic) perspective on the state of masculinity, are members of pickup artist communities. Most notably represented by the bestselling volume, *The Game* (Strauss, 2006), these are groups focused on the successful seduction of women through attempted psychological manipulation. These groups seek to correct what they perceive as the diminishment and emasculation of many men within modern society, and target men who feel sexually disempowered (Almog & Kaplan, 2015). Pickup artist communities share ties with other branches of the MRA movement, are often aggressively misogynistic, and have been connected to several high profile instances of gender violence (Goldwag, 2012; Jürgens, 2012; Rodriguez, 2010). In this context, the crisis of masculinity is a reference to harm being done to men by progressive political forces, which would be redressed by pushing back against feminism and reasserting a more aggressive "traditional" masculinity.

The second group I would describe as consisting of non-political or health conscious men. Those falling into this group are often largely agnostic towards feminism, and tend towards the apolitical. They are concerned mostly with problems in functioning among men. This could take the form of concern about academic/professional functioning, such as the so-called "achievement gap" for boys in school (Brown, 2015; Fortin, Oreopoulos, & Phipps, 2013). It could also take the form of a concern about physical health, such as diseases perceived as disproportionately impacting men and reluctance among men to seek out treatment (MacMillan & Goldenberg, 2011; Oster, McGuiness, Duncan, & Turnbull, 2015). It might also manifest as a focus on emotional well-being, for example men's struggles with emotional intimacy (Cleary, 2012; Lynch & Kilmartin, 2013).

This second group also includes those interested in ideas about masculinity as a fundamental biological, evolutionary, or spiritual state. Ideas of conflict along gender lines are connected to misunderstandings or complications with society's treatment of this essentialist masculinity. Here I am thinking mostly of Robert Bly's (1990) mythopoetic movement, some problematic aspects of which are well examined by Ferber (2000), as well as popular volumes of work following the tradition of the blockbuster from the 1990s, *Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus* (Gray, 2009).

The third group is grounded in feminist analysis, and is most concerned with what they see as the negative impacts of a particular form of manhood valued by the dominant culture. More often associated with broader progressive politics, those inhabiting this perspective are focused largely on the connections they identify between masculinity and systemic male violence and domination. The primary point of entry for this examination of masculinity is often its connection to intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and the male domination of power structures (Brackenridge, 2002; Eves, 2010; Hearn, 2011, 2012). While there is a robust literature of analysis from this perspective, the work of radical black feminist educator and social activist bell hooks (2004), and feminist theorist and academic Judith Kegan Gardiner (2002) have been particularly instructive for me as I engage in my inquiry.

It is within this third group that I seek to place myself and my exploration of the meaning of masculinity. I am interested in deepening my understanding of how different performances of masculinity might help to subvert destructive patriarchal structures in our society, and perhaps ameliorate some of its negative impacts.

I see this moment of such broad focus on masculinity as an opportunity. There is a real possibility within this questioning about the nature and meaning of masculinity, for the elevation

of masculinities which are in line with the creation of a more just world. In this paper I seek to undertake an exploration of the narratives of masculinity as it is performed and experienced by men who identify as pro-feminist or feminist-aligned. My belief is that, in order to make significant social change, at a personal, interpersonal, or systemic level, we must be able to imagine alternative ways forward. My hope is that the stories presented here will broaden our understanding and view of what masculinity performances are possible, particularly in service of anti-patriarchal and justice-seeking ends.

Masculinity Studies

My own study of masculinity from an academic perspective is happening within a particular history and context. Men have been the subject of academic study for as long as the academic system has existed, though this has been masked as a study of the universal human experience. In their review of the history of masculinity studies, Connell (2014) draws attention to this dynamic by highlighting the use of the term "mankind" as a descriptor of the subject of study. The study of masculinity as a distinct and important area for academic exploration has a much shorter history. As described by Connell, the field emerged as a fully articulated area of study in the 1970s and 1980s. While the study of the meaning and impacts of gender has been present throughout the history of the social sciences, it was ultimately in response to the decentering critiques of some feminists (Hare-Mustin, 1978; Komarovsky, 1976) and from other social movements (the Manifesto Group of the Gay Liberation Front, 1979) that masculinity studies began taking a distinct form.

Feminism and the gay liberation movements presented critiques that contextualized masculinity as a set of practices in relationship to systems of patriarchal power, rather than almost unseen default ways of being. This created space for the study of masculinities as

complex systems of behaviors, expectations, and hierarchies. Mankowski and Maton (2010) describe this process as moving from exploring men as generic to gendered beings, a transition which has allowed for the examination of a variety of phenomena in society in terms of the definition and practices of masculinity.

While the academic study of masculinities owed a huge debt to feminist theory, over the decades academics working in this space increasingly adopted diverging relationships with feminism. For some theorists and researchers, the study of masculinity was a field that should have grown from its feminist-inspired roots to a broad study of the lived experience of men. For others, a concerted effort was made to stay close to feminist analytical roots and engage with the study of masculinity as an explicitly anti-patriarchal enterprise. Brooks and Levant (1999) described this historical divergence as it related to the development of a division for masculinity studies within the American Psychological Association in the 1970s and 1980s. McCarry (2007) and Beasley (2015) outline the nature and impacts of the separation in a more modern context, describing what they see as a stream of masculinity studies which actively does harm as a result of having drifted so far from feminist principles. In the interest of situating my current inquiry, it is within the second, explicitly pro-feminist tradition that I intend to explore performances of masculinity.

Relevance to Counselling

Masculinity studies as a field has mostly existed within the realm of sociology. At first glance, counselling might seem an odd place to engage in the exploration of masculinity in general, and anti-patriarchal masculinity in particular. It is perhaps not obvious how gender identity relates to the work of individual psychological healing. Resisting the oppressive structure of patriarchy might seem a task best left to activists and academics in other fields.

Certainly, the field of counselling has a history of fetishizing objectivity and imagining therapeutic work as being defined by strict boundaries, existing outside the political realm. This present work is anything but neutral, and is more concerned with the explicitly political project of imagining a more just world through the elevation of anti-patriarchal masculinity.

In recent years, a growing range of practitioners have rejected the framework of objectivity, and have moved towards embracing social change as a crucial element of therapeutic work. These practitioners have argued that social justice (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Ratts, 2009), human rights (McDowell, Libal, & Brown, 2012), and feminism (Evans, Kincade, & Seem, 2010), should in fact be a part of the ethical orientation of all those engaging in therapeutic work. It is within these traditions that I seek to situate my own exploration and work. Their shared central thesis is that individual suffering is influenced by, situated within, and often created by, oppressive systems. I see this idea as creating a space in counselling for politics, activism, and social justice.

The relationship between therapeutic and political analysis is perhaps nowhere better articulated than in the oft-repeated feminist phrase: "the personal is political" (Hanisch, 1970). In the article that gave name to the phrase, Hanisch defended women's liberation groups she was organizing against accusations that they were merely therapeutic, rather than political in nature. I believe it is equally effective in describing why political action is therapeutic. "One of the first things we discover in these groups is that personal problems are political problems. There are no personal solutions at this time. There is only collective action for a collective solution" (Hanisch, 1970, p. 76). I see my current work fitting within this feminist-aligned tradition. As Hanisch describes, I see the hand of patriarchy in much individual suffering. To my view, understanding the functioning of masculinity is crucial, because it allows for a richer understanding of the

individual struggles that will bring people into contact with those working in therapeutic or

counselling settings. It is also useful because individual work will never be enough. Counsellors

working in resistance to patriarchy, as well as other interrelated forces of power and oppression,

must also develop an understanding of how this individual work can be political.

I believe that on a fundamental level, the strictures and limited possibilities for acceptable

performances of masculinity allowed by hegemonic masculinity, cause suffering. I argue that

they are directly related to many of the struggles that bring men into therapeutic spaces.

Certainly this is easiest to see in the oft-repeated narrative of emotionally impoverished men.

hooks (2004) argues that this patriarchal system hinders the emotional development of men,

interfering with their ability to fully understand, express, or experience their full selves. Viewed

in these terms, counselling can be well situated to be a part of an anti-hegemonic, anti-patriarchal

project (Nylund & Nylund, 2003).

Counselling can be a useful site for healing the personal, interpersonal, and systemic

wounds of patriarchy through supporting men in resisting hegemonic masculinity. Beyond this

resistance, the field is well suited to help imagine and support another path forward. I see my

inquiry fitting into this space. The success of strength-based therapeutic modalities has helped

demonstrate how powerful positive visions are in helping support change. Beyond attempting to

resist the strictures of hegemonic masculinity, it is important to understand what other kinds of

masculinities are possible in its place, so that something positive can be built on. In terms of

where to look for examples of the possibilities, what better place to begin than with some of the

men who are already trying to imagine and enact these masculinities?

In seeking to explore some of these possibilities for masculinity, I will be engaging in a

narrative inquiry with two men who self identify as pro-feminist or feminist-aligned. Narrative

inquiry as a form of research is concerned with centrality of story and narrative, in our lived experience of our world (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Stories, as they are written, told, or remembered, are inherently generative and creative, which is why I am seeking them out as a form for discovering new or expanded possibilities.

Within both academic and popular circles, there are a limited (though growing) number of explorations on the possibilities for what truly anti-patriarchal masculinities might look like, beyond a list of negative characteristics rejected. It is my hope that this paper will help expand on this literature in ways that might serve as a useful model, support, or inspiration for counsellors seeking useful ways to engage with the impacts of hegemonic masculinity.

Personal

The fields of counselling and academic research have long traditions of expecting objectivity and detached removal from their practitioners. More recently though, those approaching both research and therapeutic practice from the perspective of feminism and other critical, justice oriented, or postmodern methodologies, have pushed back against this framework, arguing the importance of leaving behind the illusion of objectivity and detachment. This move towards acknowledging and embracing the personal ties that draw researchers and counsellors into and through their work, resonates deeply with me. Clandinin (2013) suggests that one of the most important questions to be answered prior to even starting a research project within the narrative inquiry framework is "who am I in this narrative inquiry?" (p. 81). I have tried to embrace that question, and will seek to speak to it here.

The History of my Masculinity

My relationship to masculinity, particularly the version presented as the ideal within dominant North American culture, has always been uncomfortable and conflicted. I spent my

childhood living in significant poverty in isolated, overwhelmingly white rural communities as a black homeschooled only child of a sole parent. In the narrative I have constructed, I attribute a general sense of being an outsider to this combination of experiences. I experienced the social world as a strange and confusing place where I could never truly belong. It was a place made up of rules of social behavior that never made sense to me. Though I could not have articulated it at the time, I recognize now how my class and racial identity accentuated this sense of never quite belonging. Nowhere was this sense of confused not-belonging stronger than in male spaces where I was called on to perform masculinity.

Male environments, particularly all-male sports teams and other locations heavily informed by the rules of hegemonic masculinity never made sense to me. Even decades before I would encounter the theory that would give name to this dynamic, I understood that a particular performance of masculinity was called for in these spaces, and I couldn't ever seem to get it quite right. In the event I wasn't sure how I was doing, other boys and men would make clear to me that I wasn't doing this masculinity thing correctly. This wasn't for lack of trying: I desperately wanted to get the performance right in order to be accepted in these spaces, even as I was simultaneously repulsed by cruel aspects, particularly the toxic misogyny.

My world as the child of a socially conscious single mother was populated predominantly by women. I was much more comfortable among women. All my close relationships up until my 20s were with women -- women who I would routinely see harmed by various manifestations of patriarchal violence, which I understood as intrinsically linked to the masculinity I wanted to be accepted into. I remember a particular incident during high school. A close female friend had sex with one of the star male athletes in the school, while both were intoxicated at a party I was certainly not popular enough to be invited to. Afterwards, the boy bragged about his conquest

while my friend was discarded and publically shamed. I remember being horrified and offended by the way my friend was being treated under this patriarchal double standard, while also feeling jealous and resentful. A part of me wanted the social status I imagined gaining if I was given the opportunity to sleep with and treat my friend in a similar disposable manner, and I felt anger at her for denying it to me by choosing someone else. These simultaneous complicated, and contradictory responses were powerful and confusing and felt as though they demanded resolution. In this way, I developed a relationship with masculinity, and an interest in its functioning, marked by a powerful and simultaneous attraction and revulsion.

As I entered adulthood, this dual dynamic would only grow stronger. Encountering feminist theory was a crucial part of my intellectual awakening, and led to the further deepening of my antipathy towards dominant patriarchal models of masculinity. At the same time, I began to realize that, while some aspects of my personality, as well as racial and class identity, meant I would never be able to participate fully in idealized masculinity, I was still invited into many of the seductive privileges of manhood, particularly given my heterosexual and cisgender identities. The models of appropriate masculinity performances might still not be something I truly understood, but I began to see that I had access to far more of its ill-gained privilege than I had previously thought.

Prior to this realization, masculinity was always something I could dismiss and condemn as something outside of myself. Now though, I was increasingly recognizing my own participation. My interests in more fully understanding masculinities internally and externally became increasingly linked. Destructive patriarchal masculinities had to be understood and resisted both because of their negative impacts on the world at large, but also in order to allow me to resist their corrosive influence on my own personal behavior and lived experience as a

man. Alternative masculinities needed to be discovered, not only because they suggested

possible solutions to systemic problems of gender injustice, but because they represented new

possibilities for how I might enact my own personal masculinity in a way I could be more at

peace with.

It is from within this complex relationship with various masculinities, rather than as an

objective observer, that I enter into my current inquiry. In keeping with Clandinin's (2013)

framework, I have personal, practical, and social motivation for undertaking this exploration. I

have a personal interest in the discovery, generation, and sharing of alternative counter-

hegemonic masculinities, because their proliferation allows me personal access to expanded

possibilities. On a practical level, I see this inquiry as a resource for therapeutic work with

anyone negatively impacted by hegemonic masculinity. Finally, on a social level, I view each

sharing and strengthening of these masculinities through story construction as an act of political

resistance.

In the following chapter I will present a brief definition of the key terms and concepts I

will utilize throughout this inquiry. I will also review recent relevant literature exploring

masculinity narratives from a variety of perspectives.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

My intent is for this inquiry to be firmly grounded in an intersectional feminist analysis, and to be heavily informed by seminal studies of gender and masculinity from Butler (1990), Connell (1987), and others. In doing so, it is important to outline some of the analytical framework behind the very specific use of language and terminology.

Definitions

Gender / Gender Performativity.

Even when not explicitly referenced, the exploration being undertaken here has at its foundation a particular analysis of the meaning and implementation of gender. Based on ideas from Queer Theory, and specifically the extensive writings of Butler (1990, 1993, 2004), gender is understood as socially constructed rather than as a biological or evolutionary structure. Traditionally, gender in our dominant western culture has been understood as tied to physiology and assigned sex. Under this framework, infants at birth are identified as belonging to a gender based on their genitalia — as either male or female — and are expected to behave in certain ways, to take on certain roles, and hold certain kinds of power based on this assignment. Gender and biological sex are seen as interchangeable and the actions associated with each gender are seen as largely being a result of biological or evolutionary imperatives. Butler (1990) argues that this assignment is fundamentally artificial.

Gender, as seen by Butler (1990), is an accumulation of iterative socially determined performances. Through these iterations, our culture defines certain performances as acceptably male, and others as acceptably female. As the accumulated practices are labelled as either male or female, they become the expected or normative version of these concepts, and the boundaries are then socially enforced. This enforcement generally takes place through punishing any non-

normative performance of gender. For example, if a woman doesn't wear makeup, she is labelled as ugly, if a boy wears pink he is called a sissy. This punishment can be social, but it often escalates to physical violence, as demonstrated by the rate at which abuse and murder are visited on members of the queer, trans, and gender nonconforming communities (Ahmed & Jindasurat, 2015; Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2015; Grant, Mottet, & Tanis, 2011).

The idea of gender as performative rather than biologically determined also means it can be fluid, changing, and experienced in unique ways by different people at different times. To my mind this understanding of gender creates of host of possibilities for the study of masculinities. If gender is defined through a particular performance, it stands to reason that it can be redefined through a different performance. The possibilities are endless.

Masculinities

The idea of gender as performative also suggests a particular understanding of masculinity, or more accurately, masculinities. The definition I will use here borrows heavily from Connell's (2014) description of the idea that there are multiple masculinities, and that these masculinities are not synonymous with "maleness" as biologically defined. This definition of masculinity stands in opposition to what Connell (2014) describes as "the strong tendency in the mass media and popular culture to treat "men" as a homogenous group and 'masculinity' as a fixed ahistorical entity — often assumed to be based on 'male hormones' or a 'male brain'" (p. 7).

While drawing much from feminist theory including a critique of patriarchy, the idea of multiple masculinities grew in large part from the perspectives offered by men with more diverse backgrounds than those initially considered by mainstream feminist scholars. The experiences of these men demonstrated the necessity of incorporating more nuanced and complex frameworks

for understanding systems of power and oppression than those initially presented within feminist

analysis (Connell, 2014). When initially described by feminist theorists, masculinity was largely

thought of as framework for providing men with direct uniform access to a system of patriarchal

power. Subsequent examinations of masculinity in the contexts of race, class, and sexuality,

demonstrated some of the ways in which marginalized men of colour, gay men, trans men, or

poor men, for example, have significantly different access to this power. These different

relationships with patriarchal power suggest that the idea of multiple masculinities might be

more useful than a unitary concept. In this framework, there are numerous masculinities

experienced by, available to, and performed by, a variety of men depending on their personal

lived experience and intersectional identity.

      Hegemonic masculinity. Among myriad masculinities, hegemonic masculinity is

Connell's (1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005) term for describing the particular dominant

form of masculinity which promotes a system of male domination over women and people with

other gender identities. First introduced by Gramsci in their 1926 *Prison Notebooks* (1971),

hegemony is a term primarily used in sociology to describe the system of cultural domination of

one group or class of people over society. Hegemonic masculinity then is the set of practices and

performances that establish and maintain a patriarchal power structure.

      In addition to the role it has in maintaining the overall system of male control, hegemonic

masculinity is so named in part for its position of domination over other masculinities. It is the

idealized version of manhood. Performances of masculinity that do not meet the standard set out

are punished or marginalized. Enforcement is primarily social and cultural, but no less powerful

or oppressive for it.

The particular set of practices that make up hegemonic masculinity, are more subtle and difficult to define than the term itself. While there is some discussion on the topic, I subscribe to Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) idea that that hegemonic masculinity itself is somewhat fluid. While certain practices (being "tough" in the face of physical pain and sexual conquest for example) are common to many descriptions over time, others might or might not be present depending on geography, social location, or time. The version I am referring to here is still deeply tied into other systems of domination and oppression such as white supremacy, heteronormativity, colonialism, and class privilege.

In order to maintain its position of power, hegemonic masculinity need not be widespread. As Connell (2014) points out, it is not necessary that many (or in fact any) men embody all the current practices. The power of hegemonic masculinity exists in its position as an aspirational ideal and the cultural dominance that requires other masculinities to exist in relation to it.

Patriarchy

Though the definition has expanded, patriarchy, as strictly defined, describes a social structure where fathers, or older men are vested with familial power (Edström, Das, & Dolan, 2014). There remains significant disagreement about various aspects of the meaning of patriarchy (Ritzer & Ryan, 2010). The version I will use it here is based on the definition offered by black feminist theorist bell hooks (2004), who describes the concept as a:

> Political-social system that insists that males are inherently dominating, superior to everything and everyone deemed weak, especially females, and endowed with the right to dominate and rule over the weak and to maintain that dominance through various forms of psychological terrorism and violence. (p. 18)

The definition put forward by hooks (2004) differentiates itself from other approaches in a number of ways that I find to be compelling and useful. First, hooks (2004) situates patriarchy as interacting with, and ultimately working in support of, other systems of oppression, describing an "imperialist white-supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (p. 17) in a manner that is in keeping with the descriptions earlier of hegemonic masculinity. Second, hooks insists on a definition that understands patriarchy as a system that, while it is in service of male power, can be implemented and supported by people of all genders. This is in contrast to earlier feminist analysis that posits patriarchy as enacted exclusively by men (Ritzer & Ryan, 2010). Finally, patriarchy is fundamentally socially defined (rather than reflecting some biological or evolutionary imperative), and constrains not only the behavior of men, but of people of all genders.

Feminist / Male Feminism / Pro-feminism / Feminist-aligned

It would be easy to fill hundreds of pages with discussion of the meaning of feminism, and the place for male-identified people such as myself within the movement. Flax (1990) explores the roots of some of these discussions, and hooks (1981, 1984; 2000), takes on different aspects of the conversation in several volumes. In particular, there is an ongoing discussion of how men who see themselves as informed by feminist analysis, and who are in support of feminist goals, should identify themselves in relation to feminism (Digby, 1998; Holmgren & Hearn, 2009; Linder & Johnson, 2015). This particular dialogue is happening within academic literatures, as well as within online and more informal feminist communities (Bowling, 2015; Funk, 1997; Solnit, 2014; Stoeffel, 2014). While I will not fully explore or ultimately take a position in relation to these conversations and debates, there are two questions raised through this conversation that help form the definitions and positioning I will use for this inquiry. First is the broad question of what men's role within the feminist movement should and can be. The

second is how men who are working in support of feminist goals should be identified, whether as feminist, pro-feminist, feminist allies, or any one of a number of other particular framings.

While I seek to have this inquiry be fundamentally linked to feminist analysis and objectives, I recognize the complexity of taking a position on identification questions by claiming the label of feminism either for myself or this paper. As such, I will identify, not as feminist, or pro-feminist, but as attempting to be feminist-aligned, with the hope that this speaks to the deep analytical debt I owe to feminist thought and goals, while recognizing the complexity in my attempting to claim the mantel for myself or my work.

Literature Review

As discussed previously, a significant element of my interest in this current inquiry is what I see as the relative rarity of generative feminist-aligned anti-patriarchal explorations of masculinity, in both academic and popular spheres. Within this moment of contested masculinity, narratives and analyses of masculinity abound, but few take up a true anti-patriarchal perspective, while also presenting positive possibilities for masculinity performance. Many of the popular and academic work examining masculinities either eschew or drift from feminist-alignment, or focus their description of possible masculinities on the rejected characteristics of patriarchal hegemonic masculinity, rather than on positive descriptions of masculinity performance.

Non-Feminist Explorations

The non-feminist narratives and examinations of masculinity often come from the first two groups described in the previous chapter as involved in the contestation of masculinity, namely the men's rights activists, and the non-political or health conscious. Leaving aside the men's rights movement whose association with misogyny and hate are well established

(Dragiewicz, 2008, 2011), some of these explorations of masculinity have aspects I find

interesting, even as they remain fundamentally different than what I am searching for in this

inquiry.

Many of the accounts of masculinity within the mythopoetic movement of the 1980s and

1990s, such as those of Bly (1990) and Moore (1990), do offer concrete positive possibilities for

how masculinity might be performed, often drawing on pseudo-spiritual ideas of gender.

Unfortunately, I believe a lack of a political analysis, gender essentialism (Gremillion, 2011),

problematic racial undertones (Ferber, 2000), and the appropriation of indigenous cultural

traditions (Bonnett, 1996), severely limit their usefulness. In their examination of the some of

these men's movements, White (1992) lays out a long list of negative consequences associated

with mythopoetic and pseudo-spiritual men's groups. In response to the problems of these

groups, White (1992) proposes the exploration of "alternative ways of being for men" (p. 43)

consistent with the values of social justice. This is similar in some ways to what I am

undertaking here, as I seek to be aligned with feminist values as I explore masculinities standing

in explicit opposition to hegemonic masculinity.

Critiques of Hegemonic Masculinity

Moving to those within the third group identified within my introduction, those who

share an anti-patriarchal perspective, there is a wealth of examinations and narratives relating to

the realities and challenges of attempting to enact an anti-hegemonic masculinity. These works

contain trenchant critiques of the destructive power of hegemonic masculinity and express

excitement about the possibilities of a different way forward. Ultimately though, many stop at

the stage of arguing for a different masculinity and do not move into explorations of what the

positive characteristics of those masculinities might be.

Many of these narratives and explorations involve those within therapeutic communities engaging with men in support of non-violence and gender equity (Edin & Nilsson, 2014; Ezzell, 2012; Mintz & Tager, 2012; Ratele, 2015). These accounts discuss the personal and social benefits of men learning to perform their masculinity in ways that reject some of the most destructive aspects of hegemonic masculinity, such as endorsement of male violence and misogyny.

In their account of masculinity as performed in the context of sport talk radio, Nylund (2012) provides an anti-hegemonic perspective I find particularly compelling as a conflicted sports fan myself. Nylund offers fascinating accounts of places within sports radio where masculinity is performed in a way that is clearly in resistance to the patriarchal. Nylund describes talk radio as a place mostly deeply supportive of hegemonic masculinity, but also one containing unique outcomes and exceptions, and potentially a place "for men to engage in relationship building and to reinvent masculine ideals" (p. 107). Again, the focus is mostly on the existence of these exceptions and possibilities, and less on what might rise up into these spaces.

Within the explicitly non-academic space of his autobiography, Kevin Powell (2015) offers a clear call for an alternative anti-patriarchal and explicitly feminist-aligned performance of masculinity. This is a full narrative of a black man's journey from a performance of masculinity in full endorsement of the hegemonic standard to one in firm resistance to it. The alternative masculinity Powell advocates for is again defined in terms of the aspects of hegemony he has rejected. The resulting account is one that I find moving, but that again stops short of the place I am truly interested in exploring.

To be clear, identifying the positioning of these anti-patriarchal narratives as primarily concerned with how to resist hegemonic masculinity in negative terms, is not to my mind a

critique of their value. I do not view these aspects as shortcomings. These narratives are

important both in expressing the "why" and "how" of resistance to hegemonic masculinity.

These are crucial elements in the process of working towards healing the individual and

structural damage caused by patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. The importance of these

elements is well described in work on feminist or feminist-inspired therapy with men

(McDowell, 2015; Mintz & Tager, 2012). My intent is to build on these narratives and explore

what might take the place of hegemonic models of masculinity.

Positive Anti-Patriarchal Narratives

While limited in number, I have encountered a handful of recent explorations of

masculinity which strike me as engaging with the same questions as I am in this inquiry. Most of

these projects are also similar to mine in that they are quite limited in their scope. They seek to

tell the story of alternative anti-hegemonic masculinity within a very specific set of men, rather

than attempting to tell a grand narrative or discover universally applicable characteristics.

The exception to this is the article by Elliott (2015), who theorizes a framework of caring

masculinities. The framework proposed is based on feminist theoretical concepts and is partially

defined by its rejection of corrosive aspects of hegemonic masculinity such as narratives of

domination, but is ultimately focused on characteristics of a positive alternative. Elliott (2015)

identifies values such as interdependence, competence, and respect, which define this

masculinity, in order to construct a framework where "caring masculinities can provide more

nourishing and satisfying models of masculinity for men than hegemonic masculinity" (p. 14).

In their attempted examination of masculinity narratives among young men in Ecuador

working towards gender equity, Goicolea, Coe, and Ohman (2014) found that identifying ways

forward beyond an opposition to hegemonic masculinity was quite challenging. They used

grounded theory in an attempt to uncover narratives of masculinity. The title of their article: "Easy to Oppose, Difficult to Propose," is perhaps is the most succinct summary of what they encountered. They found that the young men could quite easily identify the aspects of hegemonic masculinity they were seeking to leave behind, understood in this context as behaviours associated with the culture of machismo, but struggled to articulate what they were seeking to move towards.

Buschmeyer (2013) engages with a similar attempt to uncover already existing alternative performances of masculinity in opposition to patriarchy in their study of male kindergarten teachers in Germany. In speaking with the men involved in this field, which is predominantly female, Buschmeyer encounters examples of masculinity that value a particular kind of intimacy and care. Both Buschmeyer and the male teachers speak to a shortage of examples of this alternative masculinity. The teachers describe a lack of practical role models for male care, while Buschmeyer identifies the same limited literature I have encountered.

Perhaps the inquiry closest to the one I am presently undertaking is offered by White and Peretz (2010). They engaged in deep conversations with two African American men involved in anti-patriarchal activism, focusing on stories of anti-hegemonic masculinity. While not framing their examination as a narrative inquiry, White and Peretz articulate the value of narrative construction in helping to both describe and create the desired reality in a way that is very much in keeping with the framework I am implementing here. The men telling their stories describe a specific process for developing a masculinity performance that values emotional work and involves first "becoming aware" then "becoming active." In this construction, social action and activism against patriarchy are core positive elements of an alternative masculinity. This focus on activism as an important element of personal development and identity is interesting to me in

part because of the resonance it has with social justice counselling, which describes this kind of activism as a crucial step in developing the kind of health sought by those engaging with the counselling process (Kiselica & Robinson, 2001; Ratts, 2009).

Though still somewhat limited in number, I find these recent examinations and narratives of masculinity rich and useful. They provide examples of the shapes, possibilities, and challenges of alternative anti-hegemonic masculinities that I believe are useful for counsellors who, by virtue of working within environments suffused by patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity, will inevitably encounter those harmed by oppressive frameworks. Many more such narratives are required. Each of the inquiries explored tells only a few stories within one particular geographic, cultural, and social context. I intend for this current inquiry to expand the range of narratives by presenting more stories of positively constructed masculinities in this particular place within this particular context.

In the following chapter I will present the narrative inquiry framework which guides this project. I will briefly review the structure and theoretical underpinning of this methodology, describe my rationale for its utilization, and outline the manner in which it will be implemented.

Chapter 3: Method

What is Narrative Inquiry?

For the purposes of this project, I will be employing a modified narrative inquiry to explore and discover possible performances of masculinity already being enacted by male participants. Narrative inquiry is a form of qualitative research used initially in education research, but which has since spread to a number of academic fields including psychology. Clandinin (2013) is a principal originator of the current form of narrative inquiry, and my research will draw heavily on the framework they, along with several collaborators, have laid out in numerous articles and books (Caine, Estefan, & Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

Though often described as difficult to precisely define, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) start their articulation of narrative inquiry by framing it as an approach taken by a researcher who understands the world in terms of story or narrative. "We might say that if we understand the world narratively, as we do, then it makes sense to study the world narratively" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 17). Narrative inquiry can be seen as a framework for research, based on the idea that we each continuously shape and reshape our experience through the stories or narratives we tell about it. By entering into collaboration with participants to co-create a narrative of their experience, researchers can gain a rich understanding that might be inaccessible by other means (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The framework is described as not only a research methodology, but a way of understanding the world and human experience that will inform research.

Experience

Drilling down slightly, Clandinin (2013) describes experience not as something that has some static objective truth to it, but as intrinsically linked to the narratives that are constructed to

describe it. These stories in turn are seen as fundamentally relational, continuous, and social. Experience at one point in time is fundamentally tied to the past experiences that helped spawn it, and the future experiences that will spring from it. These narratives are also seen as fundamentally social, influenced and framed by interpersonal, structural, and political frameworks. This attention to socio-political factors, and belief in the narrative creation of experience, strike me as particularly well suited to my exploration of gender performance within the context of structural forces such as patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, Pitre, Kushner, Raine, and Hegadoren (2013) discuss narrative inquiry as particularly useful in undertaking explicitly feminist research.

Elements of Narrative Inquiry

The mechanics of narrative inquiry, as described in Clandinin and Connelly (2000) and Clandinin (2013), can be divided roughly into three stages: entering the field, collecting field texts, and constructive research texts. Within other research frameworks, these stages would correspond roughly to research design, data collection, and data analysis.

In preparing to enter the field, narrative inquirers are asked to consider what their "research puzzle" (Clandinin, 2013, p. 42) will be for their project. Rather than a precise research question, this puzzle is meant to represent a broad area of curiosity for the research, which springs from the personal and social project of interest to the researcher. In order to construct this puzzle and prepare to enter the field, researchers engaging in narrative inquiry begin with an autobiographical narrative inquiry, which serves to articulate their personal justification for the project and contextualize their relationship to it.

When researchers enter the field and into connection with the research participants, it is not as detached observers, but as full people, deeply connected to the topic, as described by (Clandinin, 2013):

> As narrative inquirers, we become part of participants' lives and they part of ours. Therefore, our lives, and who we are and are becoming on our and participants' landscapes, are also under study. We are not objective inquirers. We are relational inquirers, attentive to the intersubjective, relational, embedded spaces in which lives are lived out. (p. 24)

The duration of these relationships will vary greatly, with some researchers spending years embedded with and living alongside participants, and others simply engaging in conversation. It is these intimate connections that are a core element of narrative inquiry.

Once in the field, the next stage of narrative inquiry involves the collection of field notes. These notes might take many forms depending on the particular project. The researcher might draw from interview transcripts, conversations, researcher or participant journals, autobiographical writing, personal experience, letters, photographs, or other archival material. Anything can be utilized that may be useful in allowing the researcher and participant to co-construct participant stories and narratives.

Connelly and Clandinin (2000) suggest that through this stage it is important for researchers to keep in mind the "three-dimensional narrative inquiry space" (p. 50). These three dimensions involve attentiveness to the interactive, continuous, and situational nature of experience and narrative. They also argue that this is the stage where researchers should do their best to immerse themselves in the environments they are participating in and be aware of their

own acts of interpretation as they collect the texts, resisting the impulse to understand them as "data" acting as objective representations of reality.

The final stage of a narrative inquiry is the construction of research texts, the part of the process corresponding to the interpretation of data in other studies. This is a particularly challenging stage for narrative inquiry. Researchers engaging in narrative inquiry will use categorization methods shared broadly among qualitative researchers such as using manual and electronic reviews of texts to code for and identify recurring themes (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The invocations of these methods are identified as potentially compromising the focus on the stories and narratives central to this kind of inquiry (Clandinin & Huber, 2010).

In order to maintain the integrity of the narrative inquiry during this final stage of the project, researchers can employ three central strategies. The first of these is what Clandinin and Connelly (2000) describe as refocusing on the initial purpose of the study, saying that "as we make the transition from field text to research texts, questions (such as Who cares? and So what?) reemerge" (p. 120). This means refocusing on the personal, practical, and social purpose which served to inspire the inquiry in the first place. The second strategy is simply an intention on the part of the researcher to keep in mind their commitment to the power of story, of the power in their telling, but also of their mutable nature. This means understanding that the stories told in the research are recreated with each version of the research text, and are never completed or final even when the project itself ceases (Clandinin, 2013). Finally, the creation of research texts in narrative inquiry is generally iterative. Interim texts are created and reviewed with participants in order to create new versions. This allows both for the recentering of participant stories within the research, and cements the "final product" of the research as co-creation of the researcher and participants.

Why Narrative Inquiry?

Researchers who have described and popularized narrative inquiry acknowledge that the approach does not focus on the idea of research validity in its explorations of human experience (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Critics of the approach, such as Loh (2013), describe this as a major shortcoming in the methodology and question the relative lack of attention given to this within the narrative inquiry literature. In the context of my current inquiry, I see this less as a limitation, than as something to recommend the approach.

I see my current inquiry into pro-feminist masculinities less as an attempt to identify objective truths about our world, and more as an exploration into what might be possible for men attempting to engage in resistance to patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity, either in service of personal development or political action. The focus within narrative inquiry on stories as sources of understanding strikes me as particularly well suited to this project.

The format is also well suited to my personal history and perspective on the topic. I do not enter into this exploration of masculinity as an objective observer. I have a very particular personal history and perspective on the lived experience of masculinity, which I believe fits well with the interest in narrative inquiry on the researcher's autobiographical connections to the subject being studied. The question of "who am I in this research?" as described by Clandinin (2013, p. 81) is one that is at the very core of my project. Attempting to separate this somehow from the act of engaging in research, as might be suggested within other approaches, strikes me as unnecessary and counterproductive.

Narrative inquiry also recommends itself to me in this project because of the space it provides for research as serving a broader social goal. I am interested not in conducting neutral research, but in exploring and discovering stories that might be used to impact social change.

This question of the social purpose of research is at the core of narrative inquiry (Caine et al., 2013), and makes it particularly well suited to research projects seeking broadly to advance feminist goals (Pitre et al., 2013). It is ideal that this should be the methodology and framework I use to explore these anti-patriarchal stories.

Implementation

The narrative inquiry I am engaging in for this thesis is a significantly modified version of the narrative inquiry method. While the orientation and method for understanding experience narratively will be maintained, the process of collecting field texts and developing research texts will be slimmed down from the versions recommended by leading scholars (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This more limited implementation of the method is being undertaken because a more comprehensive version of narrative inquiry is beyond the scope of this paper.

Participant Selection.

I will be engaging with two men born in the 1970s or 1980s, currently living in the lower mainland of British Columbia, who identify as pro-feminist or feminist-aligned and as being engaged in activism in support of progressive social change. All of these are characteristics I also share. The purpose of narrowing the population in this manner is to make use of commonalities between my lived experience and that of the participants to help support the intimacy required for effective narrative inquiry, given the reduced scale of my project. My hope is that this shared perspective between myself as a researcher, and both participants, will also increase the likelihood that shared themes and story elements might be identified within the narrative.

Participants were recruited through postings and emails distributed to electronic and interpersonal networks which I am connected to as a researcher. Some basic information about the inquiry was provided, and interested men who identified as pro-feminist or feminist-aligned

were invited to respond. From the interested respondents, two participants were selected, not chosen because they are experts in their professional field, nor any other, but rather because they indicated they were attempting to perform some version of anti-patriarchal masculinity.

Men's experience of masculinity performance, particularly in relation to hegemonic masculinity, is shaped significantly by their other intersectional identities, such as class, race, and gender identity (hooks, 2004; McDowell & Fang, 2007; Zrenchik & McDowell, 2012). In terms of participant selection, this acted simultaneously as motivation to narrow the population of potential participants (to increase the possibility of common experiences among participants), and to ensure there was some diversity among the men selected (to increase the likelihood of interesting and unique findings). In the end, I selected two participants of diversity in terms of race and class background, and relative homogeneity in terms of gender, sexuality, or current class status.

Both men selected pseudonyms, which I will use throughout my paper. Eli is 37 years old, has recently started working in the public sector, and identifies himself as a white Jewish man. Leonard is 36, works in the nonprofit sector, and identifies himself as a Chinese man. Both men also identify as heterosexual and cisgender, hold at least one advanced university degree, and cohabitate with their female partners.

Field Texts

The mains field texts used in this inquiry will be the transcripts from hour-long interviews I conducted with each participant. In addition to the interview transcripts, my personal journals, and audio recordings of the conversations will also be used as field texts informing the creation of research texts.

The interviews are based on research questions identified prior to beginning the inquiry and approved the Institutional Review Board ethical review protocol. The approved questions are as follows:

What does masculinity mean to you?

How do you engage with patriarchy and the dark and light sides of masculinity?

What are some ways in which you resist or transcend the ways you are told to be as a man?

The need for specific questions in place of a truly open ended conversation, is due to the strictures of the ethics approval process, and is a challenge identified by Clandinin and Connelly (2000) as common to many narrative inquiries moving through research and ethics review systems not well suited to the method. From these initial questions, I made a concerted effort to expand the scope of the interview to allow for a fuller open-ended conversation, making room for the emergence of a true narrative. The focus of the interviews is on creating a space for participants to tell stories of their performance of masculinity, with a focus on the positive elements. This is a key place where I hoped that the social location, shared by myself and the participants, would assist in developing the intimacy required for effective use of interviewing as a method of collecting field texts for narrative inquiry.

While the initial social purpose of this research (discovering generative aspects of anti-patriarchal masculinities), should be present throughout these interviews, I hoped to hold firm the intention of immersing myself in the stories I was told regardless of how they fit my research goals. Clandinin (2013) identifies this stance as crucial for this stage of immersion in the field and particularly important given my social proximity to the interview subjects.

Research Texts

The development of research texts will be achieved by identifying themes and narrative elements in the interview transcripts, audio recording, and researcher journal field texts. As described by Clandinin (2013), this is the stage where the story is built by identifying the elements of character, theme, and plot. This is also where the political and social purpose of the initial research are reintroduced: "as we make this transition, we ask questions of meaning, social significance, and purpose" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 120).

Researchers engaging in narrative inquiry are often tasked with sifting through reams of field texts in order to build their research stories. My inquiry is quite humble in comparison, but choosing and constructing a specific story and meaning from the interview transcripts, recordings, and personal reflections, remains a complicated project. The guiding intention in building the story is to address the question of what positive performances of masculinity might exist in this particular location, in resistance to the patriarchal hegemonic framework. As suggested by Clandinin and Connelly (2000), I am also attempting to keep in mind the intended audience for these stories and research. Story elements will be prioritized which might be anticipated as having generative effects for other men, or those engaging with men in counselling relationships.

In order to maintain the collaborative nature of this story-building, I will also return to the interview transcripts and researcher journals regularly throughout the process of creating the research text. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) identify this process of continually referring back to the field texts as useful for maintaining the fidelity of the time in the field with the participants. I see this as particularly important given the relatively isolated nature of this stage of the research process.

Ethics and Limitations

Beyond institutional ethics boards, Clandinin (2013) speaks of ethics within narrative inquiry as an endeavor undertaken throughout the research process. A major element of enacting my ethics within this project is being public about the framework, purpose, and limitations of the inquiry, while also maintaining an open-minded stance within those confines during the research. Maintaining this open-mindedness even within the context of the researcher's agenda is a key element of how Clandinin suggests ethics be implemented.

The principle anticipated limitation of this inquiry is, as discussed earlier, less a shortcoming than a feature of the system. This inquiry is not presented as representative in any manner. The stories presented here are not suggested as representing a communal experience of masculinity performance among any population of men. In fact, these stories do not even represent the true story of the masculinity being performed by the men who have participated in the inquiry. Rather they represent one co-created story springing forth from a particular series of interactions between myself as a researcher and the two men as participants, at one specific point in time. Results are not meant to be comprehensive, representative, or replicable. My hope instead is that they are useful to the reader in some manner.

In addition to the conceptual aspects of ethics, the stories were also built to allow participants anonymity and to reduce the possibility of coercion. Both participants were previously known to me through our shared participation in similar progressive networks. Because of this, extra attention was paid to ensuring they understood that they were free to withdraw from participation at any point, and that this would not negatively impact my ability to complete my research. In order to support confidentiality, identifying details not directly relevant to the inquiry will not be included. Despite these precautions, I recognize that there is a

possibility that someone might identify one or both of the participants based on biographical details contained in this inquiry. Both participants were reminded of this prior, during, and after the research interviews.

      In the following chapter, I will present the results of my inquiry, specifically a recounting of the shared narrative of masculinity, which emerged from my research interviews, and the shared values of masculinity performance I was able to identify through the inquiry process.

Chapter 4: Results

In this chapter, I will present the results of my inquiry: my account of the stories told during my conversations with the two participants, my personal reflections on engaging in the process, and the themes that emerged from these stories. I will begin with some scene setting by introducing the two participants and laying out the questions and setting for our conversations. The second section of the chapter will be a retelling of the story of masculinity performance among the men (myself and the two participants), and how the story emerged through the process of this inquiry. In the final section of the chapter, I will present the four themes that I identified within this story of masculinity. These themes represent values that seem to have helped shape the journey of masculinity performance presented in the previous section, and which emerged through its telling: the story and the meaning of the story.

While the guiding principles of narrative inquiry are all present in different ways throughout the inquiry, particular elements of this methodology provided more guidance than others. In conducting the interviews and recounting the shared narrative, I was focused on staying within a three dimensional narrative space (being attentive to temporal, social, and geographic aspects of story), while allowing myself to become immersed in the stories being told by being "in the midst" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In describing the shared themes and values in the final section of the chapter, my primary focus shifted to considering the purpose of the inquiry, seeking to ensure that the themes selected take into account what Clandinin and Connelly describe as the responsibility of the inquirer to produce research to their social purpose.

Background

I discussed my inquiry process in detail in my methods chapter. Prior to presenting the shared narrative and values though, I think it useful to quickly review who the participants are

and how they were selected, as well as some of the principles which I attempted to have guide

my exploration.

The Participants

I will refer to the two participants selected for this inquiry as Eli and Leonard,

pseudonyms they were invited to select for themselves. The men have been active in local social

justice movements and responded to my call for participants, which was disseminated through

local networks of progressive activists in Vancouver, British Columbia. I chose the men because

they self identified as having already spent time reflecting on their experience of masculinity and

identification with feminist values. Neither presented themselves as exemplars of appropriate

masculinity, nor did I ask for any of objective demonstration of their commitment to performing

pro-feminist masculinity. My intention was to engage in conversation with men who were

committed to bringing their masculinity in line with their pro-feminist values, but who (much

like myself) were likely still muddling through this process. In their responses to my call for

participants, both men confirmed their commitment to feminist values, but questioned whether

they were informed enough or evolved enough in their masculinity to be ideal participants. This

was precisely the orientation I was seeking.

Eli and Leonard share a number of demographic similarities: both are cisgender

heterosexual men in their mid-30s, with advanced university degrees, are in committed

relationships with live-in female partners, and have no children. Leonard identifies as Chinese-

Canadian, while Eli is white. Given the overall homogeneity in terms of identity and experience,

I recognize that Eli and Leonard (and myself) can represent only a tiny subsection of experiences

of masculinity. As such, the stories and values that emerge from our conversation are best taken

as a snapshot rather than being in anyway representative of the multiplicity of experiences of

masculinity. I explore the potential limitations of this reality in the next chapter.

The interviews with both men were conducted in their respective homes while their

partners were out of the house. I knew both men previously through shared progressive network,

but was initially quite nervous to engage them in a conversation under the particular

circumstances of this project. In both instances, this shifted as the interview continued and we

became more engaged in the conversation.

The Process

During my time with Eli and Leonard, I worked to allow our conversations to unfold as

organically as possible, rather than as rigidly structured interviews. I had three specific interview

questions set out prior to our conversations (What does your masculinity mean to you? How do

you engage with patriarchy and the dark or light sides of masculinity? What are some ways in

which you resist or transcend the ways your are told to be as a man?), as well as a number of

potential follow up questions (Where has your version of masculinity come from? How has your

masculinity developed over time? How does your masculinity impact those around you?).

Ultimately, I tried whenever possible to allow the stories being told by Eli and Leonard to guide

the conversation, allowing them to touch on the subjects of my questions in a variety of often

indirect ways.

The Shared Narrative

The narrative presented in the first section of this chapter represents my attempt to enact

Clandinin's (2013) suggestion that researchers engaging in narrative inquiry spend time

immersing themselves in the research environment with an eye to understanding the stories being

told rather than directly seeking answers to their specific research puzzles. During my

interviews, I invited both men to tell the story of their experiences with masculinity. I asked

questions directly relating to my research puzzle, but also attempted to provide space for both

men to tell the stories they wanted to tell while allowing myself to be drawn fully into the

conversation. During this process, I was struck not only by the elements common to both men's

stories, but also the commonalities with my own experience. These shared story elements fed my

curiosity and guided our ongoing conversation. I will present a story of the development of

masculinity as defined by the shared central elements of all three of our experiences.

As mentioned earlier I have attempted to be guided by the principles of three-dimensional

narrative space, as described by Clandinin and Connelly (2000). I have attempted to pay

attention to the temporal aspect in particular by tracing the story of our masculinity from identity

questions in childhood to participation in sports during adolescence, from learning about

feminism and sexuality in young adulthood to pondering next steps. This attention to the

development of masculinity performances over time gives shape to the narrative, while I attempt

to attend to the social aspects throughout.

Childhood: Who am I?

Eli and Leonard described events of their childhood, which heavily influenced their

current understandings of masculinity. While the circumstances of their early lives were quite

different from each other and from my own, I was struck by the presence in their stories of the

question "who or what am I?" When I asked both men about the early part of their life and the

start of their journey with masculinity, they each described struggling significantly as a young

people with the fundamental question of existence and identity. Each man struggled with a

version of this question informed by the particular circumstances of their youth, and I saw

elements of each question showing up throughout their stories. This particular struggle also felt quite familiar to my experience during similar periods of my life.

"What am I Going to be?"   Eli identified his first encounter with masculinity coming in the form of his father's anger. Eli spoke about his visceral response to the anger and how he struggled to figure out what it meant for the kind of person he should be. *"Seeing my dad's aggression and being like*, I'm not going to be like that! *And I think that was kind of an essential...being like, okay, then what am I going to be?"* This question: "what am I going to be?" particularly in the context of aggression and anger, would return throughout Eli's account of his masculinity over time. He describes how this would lead him to work for most of his life to suppress and fear his own anger. I noticed elements of continuing to ask, grappling with, or seeking answers to this question in the descriptions of his anti-violence work, participation in sports, and later exploration of his sexuality. This was one of the elements of Eli's story that resonated the most with me. I asked several questions throughout the interview about the connections between the particular scenarios he was describing, and his early exposure to male anger. I worried at times that I was imposing my own narrative onto his experience, but he indicated at each time that the connections I was drawing fit with his experience.

While I grew up in a household without any male figures in it at all, I felt a resonance when Eli described first becoming aware of masculinity through revulsion at its association with anger and aggression. Eli's account of this dynamic brought to mind one of my own early memories of encountering the threat of male anger in the form of a large male landlord screaming at, and looming over, my much smaller mother in a dispute over repairs. I understood that I never wanted to grow into this kind of man and developed a clear sense of masculinity through what I didn't want to be, with a large question left behind about what I might be instead.

When hearing Eli's description of encountering his own anger, I also recognized within myself an impulse to suppress aggression, and confusion about where and how it might be expressed in a healthy manner.

"Who am I?" Perhaps, because of our shared experience as children of non-white immigrants, Leonard's description of his early confusion about identity also felt strikingly familiar to me. When describing his experience with his masculinity in early life, Leonard focused as much on the questions of cultural, racial, and class identity that he struggled with, as on questions of gender. He spoke about his feeling of being stuck between different categories, and struggling significantly with the question "who am I?" He spoke about seeking answers from his father: "*I remember having conversation with my dad, in particular about, am I Chinese or am I Canadian? So less of a gendered piece, but certainly, you know, I remember being curious about identity fairly early on.*" He describes this confusion as something that caused him significant pain as a child.

Leonard went on to tell a story about how attending day care on a university campus led to questions about class identity. As the son of professionals among the children of graduate students among a mostly working-class community, he was identified by peers as wealthy, even while the much more significant affluence of his own extended family left him feeling poor. He remembers asking his father again whether they were rich or poor, and getting what he felt at the time was an unsatisfying answer about true riches coming in the form of family. Leonard spoke about these parts of his early experience in response to my questions about the development of his masculinity, and I experienced some anxiety as he did so. I was worried about the stories told not being sufficiently relevant to the theme of masculinity performance and my research puzzle. I worked to let go of the impulse to direct the story being told, and tried to allow myself to be

immersed in the field in a manner I imagined Clandinin and other narrative inquiry theorists

would suggest. I believe allowing this space made the inquiry richer. In looking back on the

conversation later in the process, I was able to see how relevant Leonard's struggles with

questions of identity, and how they influenced the development of his masculinity, were to the

purpose of the inquiry.

Though my economic circumstances as a child were dramatically different than

Leonard's, the dynamic of questioning the meaning of class and ethnic identity, and feeling

distress at the confusion, felt like it very much mirrored my early life. As a young child, I

wondered what it meant about me that my family was on welfare and struggled in ways my

peers' families did not. These questions preceded questions of gender identity, and I believe laid

the groundwork for such questions. Childhood is also the period during which Leonard first

described noticing ways in which his experience of gender was mediated by his racial identity,

something which also felt consistent with my experience as a young person of colour.

Questions from Leonard and Eli about who or what they were, or could be, in many ways

seems to have set the stage for many aspects of later development of their masculinity. Later in

this chapter I will explore the shared qualities or values which emerged from our shared narrative

of masculinity. I see many of these values as the continuation of an attempt to answer difficult

questions of identity first discovered in childhood. "Who am I?" in relation to masculinity, and

other identity categories, first emerged at similar times in early life for all three of us involved in

this inquiry. The question, and other fundamental questions of identity like it, have continued to

shape our performances of masculinity throughout our lives.

Adolescence: Sports as a way in, and an Outlet

Perhaps the element I found most surprising in my conversations with Eli and Leonard was the significance of sports in all of our stories of masculinity. I did not set out to ask any questions relating to sports, but both men brought the subject into the conversation in ways that mirrored elements of my own experience, and drew attention to the significance of their successful participation in sports from an early age. Both Eli and Leonard first mentioned sports in response to my asking about the history of their masculinity. I do not think I would have reflected on this particular influence without them both having independently underlined its importance.

In keeping with his exploration of aggression, Eli spoke about sport as somewhere he was able to express feelings of anger. "*The one place that I felt okay to express that aggressive side that has felt really good has mainly been sports. And so, that's been a part of my life since [I was] very young.*" Sport as a place where violent urges could be accepted and expressed felt immediately familiar to me. Later in our conversation when I was asking Eli about his evolving relationship with aggression, he spoke almost joyfully about the satisfaction of setting a "*hard screen*" while playing basketball, words which evoked a thrill of recognition in me. I remembered the satisfaction I experienced after successfully making an aggressive tackle while playing soccer, and a conversation with a friend who, after watching me play for the first time, expressed surprise at seeing me express such atypical anger and aggression. Sports had, for both Eli and I, represented an early location for acceptance of this complicated element of our masculinity.

Leonard spoke in very clear terms about how participating in (and being good at!) sports also allowed him entrance into the club of masculinity. As a young person who would have

likely been excluded from hegemonic masculinity because of his ethnic identity and status as

"late bloomer," sports meant belonging. He spoke about the safety that provided:

> *I was the fastest kid in high school [and] elementary school. You know, I played football*
>
> *at lunch with all the other boys and excelled in an athletic sense, and that — I think —*
>
> *allowed me not to have ... anyone else to challenge my masculinity.*

This idea of sports as a ticket into masculinity again felt exceptionally familiar. It brought

to mind my feelings of not fitting in among other boys, because of a sense that I wasn't

performing masculinity properly. I was too sensitive, too earnest, and just didn't understand well

enough how I was supposed to act to be accepted as a boy. Sports represented a relief because

that was a place where masculinity carried the trappings of meritocracy. If I was able to perform

well enough on the field or in the gym, my poor gender performance could be overlooked. It was

a foothold.

What struck me as particularly rich within Leonard's description was his suggestion that

participation in sports might provide a breathing space within dominant masculinity. At one

point late in our conversation, I asked him how his performance of masculinity was different

when he was in all-male spaces. It was in response to this question that he spoke about how

being skilled at sports allowed acceptance into the club of dominant masculinity, and this

acceptance could then be exploited to undermine the very framework of hegemonic masculinity

from the inside. Eli described a similar sense that skill at sport was a defining characteristic in his

successful performance of masculinity. Both men spoke about how this acceptance, particularly

in male-dominated environments, could provide opportunities to put forward alternative possible

performances of masculinity, or at the very least offer an opportunity to ridicule some of the

rules of hegemonic masculinity. Locker rooms were a particularly rich space to enact the values of boundary transgression and leadership.

Young Adulthood: Learning from Women and Sexuality

During early adulthood, the journey of masculinity development that occurred for each man was marked by the significant learning and realization that came about in the context of intimate romantic relationships with women and shifting attitudes towards sexuality. Early committed romantic relationships with women were where both Eli and Leonard described their analysis of gender inequity truly developing. This was also an important period for all three of us in making sense of masculinity in the context of the objectification and attempted sexual conquest of women.

Committed relationships. Both Eli and Leonard describe their first significant intimate romantic relationships with women as the true beginning of their awareness of gender issues, as well as their own masculinity. Both men describe finding an intellectual understanding of the issues of oppressive masculinity prior to these relationships -- Leonard describes how he had "*already forged an identity as a progressive person*" when he entered this pivotal relationship, while Eli spoke about his mother's feminism and of studying sociology as an undergraduate student. However, they both credit the start of their real awareness of these gender dynamics to their female partners.

One of the areas I was curious to explore prior to my conversations with Eli and Leonard was how their relationships had been a site of gender development. In both cases, the topic was raised without my needing to introduce it. Both men responded to questions about the development of their masculinity over time by independently identifying early romantic relationships as crucial points in their developing a feminist-aligned masculinity. Both men

named their female partners as important teachers. In describing how he learned about feminism and masculinity as a young adult in university Eli said:

> *I was in one of my first long-term relationships with somebody who very strongly identified with feminism and who worked to support women who experienced violence - survivors of violence. And so a lot of that learning happened earlier on in my conversations with women.*

Leonard spoke about how his early awareness of identity largely neglected gender and was mostly concerned with race, culture, and class until he entered into significant romantic relationships: "*I remember being curious about identity fairly early on. I don't think for me the gender piece actually came together until I was in a serious relationship.*" Perhaps appropriately given the subject matter of the moment, we were interrupted by an important phone call from Leonard's current partner. When we returned to our conversation, Leonard spoke about how his first experience of struggling with and resisting gender roles while living with a female partner in his mid-twenties really solidified his awareness of the power of masculinity.

I experienced both Eli and Leonard as being quite grateful for the opportunity to learn about their masculinity from their relationships with intimate partners. Both laughed in similar rueful ways as they described the partners who had taught them. This was one area where my own experience was somewhat different than that of the other two men. I also attribute much of my learning and analysis of feminism, gender, and masculinity as a young adult to the women in my personal life, and to some extent female romantic partners. In my experience, though, the women I learned from were more often close friends. The general sense of owing a debt to women we were in close to intimate relationship with is similar throughout all of our experiences, and as such strikes me as an important feature in this shared narrative.

Sexuality and sexualization. In telling the story of their masculinity in young adulthood, Eli and Leonard spoke often of various aspects of their sexuality as it impacted their interactions with women. They both described a complicated relationship with a tendency to sexualize and objectify women, as well as the desire for sexual conquest. Both Eli and Leonard described how, as young adults, the idea of sexual conquest was crucial to their self worth and identity as men. This expectation as laid out by hegemonic masculinity was something both men described feeling trapped by. They spoke of a sense of pride, relief and freedom at feeling they had mostly moved beyond this over time. Eli describes the first time he was able to resist this mindless impulse for sexual conquest:

> *That was big moment for me, when I first turned down sex. And was like, actually, 'this is how far I want to go with you.' That was a major moment for me that was a break in everything I had been taught about masculine...like my own masculinity, is that you have to want to go all the way. Whatever 'all the way' even means. It's stupid.*

For Leonard, the desire for sexual conquest was also interwoven with his racial identity and the ideas of the desexualized Asian man. For him, sexual performance and conquest were methods for shoring up an insecure masculinity. Moving beyond this insecurity was about feeling more comfortable in his masculinity, but also resisting the internalized white supremacy that had previously left him, "*desperately seeking approval of pretty white girls.*" This particular interaction of race and heterosexual masculinity felt very familiar to me as a fellow man of colour. Part of me wanted to explore this dynamic further with Leonard. The nexus of white supremacy, heteronormativity, and patriarchy working together to create the archetype of the beautiful blonde woman as the height of desirability and successful hegemonic masculinity

performance was fascinating to me, but I recognized even during our conversation, that it was far beyond the scope of this particular inquiry.

Leonard was also quick to question and problematize the significance of his own progression away from needing to prove his masculinity through sex. He wondered aloud about the extent to which personal growth had been responsible for diminishing his need for sexual conquest, and how much it was simply due to having had enough sexual partners and experience to satisfy the expectation of his masculinity. This kind of skepticism about the extent of their progress when it came to sexual pursuit and objectification of women came up in both Eli and Leonard's stories. Both described their ongoing struggles to stop inappropriately objectifying and sexualizing women, while also trying to make sense of how much of this tendency might or might not be a result of biology.

The subject of sexualization and objectification as both a social and biological imperative was one that hit home quite hard for me, and I noticed my own discomfort as both men spoke. I experience similar confusion and guilt about my own persistent objectification of women and history of seeking sex out of insecurity. Considering the potential role of biology feels particularly uncomfortable and dangerous because of my own awareness of how male biological imperatives are often used to excuse a variety of harmful aspects of hegemonic masculinity, up to and including sexual assault, with the argument that men simply can't control their desires.

I noticed a tentativeness in both Leonard and Eli when they raised the subject that I suspect may be related to this same discomfort. Leonard raised the subject of sexualization and objectification at the very end of our interview when I asked if I had missed any important elements of the story of his masculinity.

I don't know how I want to get into this, but I do feel like one the areas where I still

struggle with...one of the things I still struggle with is the degree of objectification and

sexualization of women and the role of sexuality and beauty, both as a construct but also

as a piece ... Yeah, just something that I think is both learned and a result of a

patriarchal society, but also feels on some level more base than that.

Eli spoke early on in our conversation about how challenging he finds it to tease out the

role biology, and testosterone in particular, might play in aggression and sexual desire, before

returning again to the topic of attraction and sexualization near the end of our conversation. In

speaking about how he seeks to continue progressing in his enactment of masculinity, he

identified accepting attraction while rejecting objectification as a challenge he felt he had made

significant progress on, but wanted to continue working on.

Next Steps

Towards the end of our conversations, I asked both Leonard and Eli about how they

imagined the journey of their masculinity continuing forward from where it is at present. What

did the last chapter of this current story have to say about where their journeys with masculinity

might go from here? The next steps they described were clear continuations of their journeys

with their masculinity to date and also helped me understand and frame the themes and values I

drew from our conversations.

Eli spoke about trying to move towards a point where he experiences less guilt and shame

related to the enacting of his masculinity. About guilt he said, "*I guess I want to feel less guilt*

because I would be doing less things that don't align with my values." About shame he said, "*I*

don't feel a lot of shame around my masculinity right now, but there's definitely some - definitely

still. There's definitely still some, and I would like to get to a place where there isn't any or is

less." When I asked Leonard about how he saw his masculinity developing, he said, "*I hope it keeps growing and developing. I like...I feel like I'm transitioning into a period of leadership in some ways and modeling.*"

These next steps identified by Eli and Leonard resonate with my current experience in my performance of masculinity. Like Eli, I continue to seek out ways of experiencing less guilt and shame in. Like Leonard, I am also contemplating something of a transition towards embracing the value of leadership, in no way more obvious than by undertaking this particular inquiry.

The next steps also evoke and lead nicely into the common values, which will be described in the next section. Eli's description of seeking to leave behind guilt and shame ties into the values of awareness and acceptance. Leonard's discussion of moving into a leadership role clearly evokes leadership as a value, but also touches on the value of transgressing boundaries with a different kind of leadership.

Common Values

The themes presented in the second part of this chapter are the result of a return to the research puzzle of identifying qualities and values of pro-feminist or feminist-aligned masculinity. It is, as Clandinin (2013) describes, a return to the social purpose of the study. The themes emerge from the telling and recounting of story itself, rather than from the answers to any individual questions asked in the interview. I identified four such themes in this section: awareness, transgressing boundaries, acceptance, and leadership. Each of these themes is in effect a value helping to guide the alternative masculinity performance attempted by all three men participating in this inquiry, and is represented in the shared story which emerged from the research conversations.

The four themes or values that that emerged from hearing and engaging with Eli and Leonard's stories are by no means exhaustive. They do not represent an attempt at summarizing the qualities of pro-feminist or feminist-aligned performances of masculinity in general, nor are they an attempt at describing the full scope of masculinity as it is performed by Leonard and Eli. These themes represent the values involved in the shared narrative of our performances of masculinity, themes that struck me most deeply as I reflected on the process from the perspective of the research puzzle. Each value initially seemed to appear most prominently in one of the men's narrative, but once seen and identified there, I could recognize it clearly in both men's narrative as well as in my own. Beyond simple recognition, each of these values helped knit together important elements of each man's story and allowed for a deeper understanding of the performances of masculinity that I saw being enacted.

Awareness

The quality of awareness I first recognized in Eli's story is the process and value of developing, maintaining, and growing a consciousness about the different ways we as individual men are participating in, and having our thoughts and actions shaped by, hegemonic masculinity. This value is about having open eyes and being able to actively reflect on, and be accountable to, our performances of masculinity.

In Eli's telling of the story of his masculinity, his relative level of awareness at different stages of his development are crucial markers of positive progression. The more aware he is, the more satisfaction he seems to allow himself. He started by describing the absence of this awareness, examples of his obliviousness to feminism and his own privilege as young man, with what struck me as some chagrin. Eli spoke about having arguments with his feminist mother as a teenager, "*I didn't identify as a feminist necessarily as a teenager. And would like debate my*

mom or my parents about women in sports and stuff. My mom talked about being horrified at my

views as a teenager." He then spoke about how powerful it was when he first started to become

aware of aspects of his male privilege,

> *I remember learning about the ideas of taking up lots of space, which is something that I*
>
> *do and had completely - like the thought that I shouldn't - had never crossed my mind*
>
> *basically. So my whole high school career, I had just been like talking whenever I felt like*
>
> *it, with zero conscientiousness.*

This particular anecdote about being aware of taking space as a man is one that resonated

deeply with me and I shared this with Eli. We each exchanged some experiences of fighting to

maintain and act on this awareness in groups. Leonard also spoke about how important

awareness of this kind was to his performance of masculinity, and described his frustration when

encountering other men, he mentioned other white men of privilege in particular, who were often

oblivious to this dynamic and had no awareness of their domination. This experience also fit with

mine.

Awareness as I encountered it within Leonard and Eli's stories was also a quality of

recognizing shortcomings: the ways in which we as men continued to participate or collude with

patriarchy and elements of hegemonic masculinity. Both men spoke often about the various ways

they knew they were falling short of their values in terms of how they were performing their

masculinity. They spoke about how they valued the relationships in their life that challenged

them to maintain an awareness of when they fell short. Both men identified their current partners

as particularly involved in this process. Eli also described with gratitude his friendships with

other men who share his perspective on masculinity and how they use humour to help keep each

other aware of moments when they slip into participating in problematic masculinity.

Perhaps flowing from both men's recognition of their own imperfections, there was also a forward-looking quality to awareness as it came up in the stories. This was not a simple flipping of a switch or drawing back of the veil that, once done, need not be further examined. Both men described a desire to better know themselves on an ongoing basis, and particularly to understand ever more subtle complexities of their performance of masculinity. Leonard spoke about this in the context of imagining himself as a father, particularly to a girl, wondering how his continued participation in problematic masculinity might negatively impact his parenting. Eli, meanwhile, described his desire to experience less guilt without burying his head in the sand. He spoke with appreciation about moments when those around him shared how they were impacted by aspects of his performance of masculinity that he hadn't previously been aware of.

Transgressing Boundaries

The quality and value of transgressing boundaries as I recognize it within these stories, is concerned with the ability and desire to break free of expected behavior. It is the ability and desire to resist conformist pressure and to act in surprising ways. This quality feels particularly relevant in the context of masculinities, because of the power and ubiquity of hegemonic masculinity in shaping expected and accepted performances of being a man. Enacting an alternative performance to a particular framework is easier, if the act of breaking free of categories in general is practiced and valued.

This quality came up most clearly and often in Leonard's narrative of his own intersectional experience of masculinity. The roots of this transgression can be seen within Leonard's questions about identity in childhood. He speaks of how his identity, particularly as a man of colour, meant that he was often breaking boundaries simply by showing up and not

fitting neatly within the expectations of any particular identity category. Leonard indicated that

this forced him to become more skilled at moving between categories and environments:

> *I think that is an expression of, or a result of that...of not fitting in - in a kind of*
>
> *conventional way anywhere and kind of becoming a bit of [a] chameleon in a sense. And*
>
> *that didn't really become clear to me how that was a unique thing until I was able to*
>
> *travel around and kind of live in different cultures and be even more of an outsider and*
>
> *be even more of a stereotype buster.*

Leonard would return several times to this idea of himself as a "chameleon," and it was a

metaphor that felt exceptionally familiar and struck me to the core. I remember the experience of

never feeling I quite belonged as a poor black child of immigrants, and developing a similar

ability to make myself blend in with a variety of social environments. While our class

circumstances were different, and the nature of stereotypes we would encounter as Asian and

black men might be different, I also see how the narrowness of the expectations created by these

stereotypes forced us to transgress boundaries, often simply by showing up as a full person. I

also recognize and value the space this provides for new possibilities. As Leonard said, "*As soon*

as that initial disconnect happens between a stereotypical behavior and the way that I show up,

both on race and gender lines, it creates a space for that new identity to be forged."

Though Leonard identified necessity as the source of the quality of transgressing

boundaries, both Leonard and Eli also described this as a quality they toke joy in and embraced

as inherently valuable. They identified this as an important part of their gender performance in

particular. Leonard spoke about how he employed graphic transgressive humour in environments

such as sports locker rooms to shock and expose the absurdity of expressions of misogyny and

homophobia which were very much in keeping with hegemonic masculinity. This brought me

back to the idea of acceptance in sports providing a foothold for transgressing the boundaries of expected masculinity. Eli spoke about how he uses the fact that he is often seen as fitting neatly within the mold of dominant masculinity to increase the impact when he subverts it and breaks through its boundaries, *"I think that maybe part of the fact that I kind of embody dominant norms around masculinity and then challenge them, creates space for a lot of other people to challenge them."*

Combined with an awareness of one's participation in hegemonic or patriarchal forms of masculinity, this quality of transgressing boundaries, also seemed to act as a motivating factor. Leonard described with pride the aspects of his romantic relationships that violated the expectations of traditional gender roles: relationships where his partner earned more money and he did most of the cooking. On the other hand, he described feeling frustrated by aspects of his relationships where conflict was arising in part because of his enacting expectations of hegemonic masculinity, for example not carrying his load of household cleaning. He spoke of feeling in those moments as though he was having a stereotypical kind of argument a couple would have had in the 1950s, and expressed a strong desire to do better. It seemed to me that finding himself stuck back within the boundaries was unacceptable because of the destructive nature of hegemonic masculinity, but also because of a desire to be enacting the value of transgressing boundaries on an ongoing basis.

Acceptance

The acceptance described here is an inwardly directed self-acceptance, but not the unconditional version, which might come most immediately to mind. The version being proposed in relation to masculinity emerged in particular from Eli's descriptions, and is rooted in the idea of accepting complicated parts of the self by first bringing actions into line with one's

ethics and values. I see a pro-feminist or feminist-aligned performance of masculinity based in this value, as starting with an awareness of the particular ways that we as individual men are participating in destructive masculinity, and seeking to shift our behaviors in those places. This acts as a prerequisite and hopefully makes space for an acceptance of otherwise rejected parts of ourselves.

The pursuit and valuing of this kind of acceptance was most obvious to me in Eli's discussion of his desire to reduce his experience of guilt and shame. He hopes the reduction of guilt will come through continuing to address his problematic actions, something which in his telling will allow him to continue the process of reducing his shame. The process of reducing guilt through more appropriate behavior was present throughout Eli's narrative, while the element of acceptance connected to a reduction in shame could be seen in his recent exploration of aggression.

Tracing back to his experience of recognizing elements of his father's rejected anger within himself, Eli described struggling for some time with how to process and make sense of his aggression. He also identifies aggression as something tied quite closely to his masculinity. He describes addressing his aggression for most of his life by pushing it down and suppressing it everywhere except while playing sports, recognizing that there are not many places where it was acceptable to express. Recently though, Eli has begun to explore violence and aggression as part of consensual, mutually-satisfying sexual play with his partner. He describes this experience as quite profound and emotional, as it has allowed him to accept a part of himself he had previously been ashamed of. He says:

> *I've made space even for that part. And there's something that feels healthy about going*
>
> *far with it…to the depth. It feels emotional, like I've ended up almost crying afterwards,*

but in a good way. Because it's this kind of being in touch with these parts of myself that

need — for good reason — have been tucked away very deep. But that it feels very good

to accept and allow in very specific context.

This part of the conversation felt almost dangerous to me as it was happening. I remembered my own aggression, my shame around it, and my intense reluctance to express it in any context given how proximate it felt to various kinds of destructive male violence. It felt like a transgressive conversation to be having, particularly in the context of an academic research project. When I asked him about the experience of sharing this part of his story, Eli described feeling satisfied that he had been able to share some of the thoughts. I felt both the power and extreme complexity inherent in accepting even those exceptionally complicated elements of ourselves that make up some of our performance of masculinity. What also struck me was that it seemed that Eli was describing a scenario where he would not have been able to explore this kind of acceptance without having first having spent time bringing his behavior into line with his ethics. The time spent suppressing his aggression, understanding and teaching the impacts of male violence, and moving past the need for sexual conquest, seemed to me directly related to his current exploration of aggression. They, along with a partner interested in similar exploration, were crucial parts of making this "*very specific context*" he spoke about.

While Eli's exploration of aggression was the most striking, this dynamic of attempting to accept complex elements of masculinity, elements of masculinity deeply tied up in destructive aspects of patriarchy, by first finding ways of expressing those elements in ethical ways, also emerged elsewhere in both stories. Leonard spoke about his desire to reach a place in his experience of masculinity where he was able to accept and enjoy the process of being attracted to different people, even in the context of a monogamous relationship, something he described as

"*healthy crushes.*" Leonard suggested that, for him, this kind of connection became possible only as he continued to move past problematic elements of objectification and the desire for sexual conquest that had been driven in the past by insecurities around his masculinity.

The value of acceptance in some ways strikes me as the most complicated of the four identified here. Certainly it was the theme that, when touched on, I felt elicited the most tension from myself, as well as both Leonard and Eli. I suspect that this may be due to fears that, if not enough attention is given to the first step of undertaking ethical behavior, acceptance of these complicated elements of masculinity might result in the justification of destructive behavior, undermining our shared efforts to become more aligned with feminist values. It seems too important not to be included though, and I was grateful to both men for sharing elements of their experience of it as they told their stories.

Leadership

As with the idea of acceptance, the value of Leadership that emerged for me in Leonard and Eli's stories, and which I seek to describe here, is somewhat multifaceted. I see this as having three interrelated elements: first is a desire to take on a leadership role in a manner that does not replicate traditional models consistent with hegemonic masculinity, second is a desire to act as a role model through alternative performances of masculinity, and third is accepting leadership of a non-traditional nature, particularly from women. This last element struck me in many ways as the most subtle element of the version of leadership that came out of hearing Leonard and Eli's stories, but in many ways I think it might be the most powerful.

A different kind of leader. It was in Leonard's story that the word leadership came up the most often and was explored the most explicitly. He made reference to the idea throughout our conversation. When I asked him how he would like to see his masculinity develop going

forward, he described wanting to move into a phase where he could be an advocate for "*the embracing of emotional intelligence and emotional caring as a part of strong leadership*." This struck me as a beautiful and succinct definition of a model for an anti-hegemonic leadership that I also feel a desire to take on. Leonard contrasted this version of leadership with what he describes as more traditional male, patriarchy models, and described how fortunate he felt to be able to grow into a more caring form of leadership. He attributed finding the space to perform this style of leadership in part to his racial identity (people not expecting a typical performance of hegemonic masculinity from an Asian man), and also to having worked in female dominated environments where more traditional patriarchal forms of leadership weren't as much the norm.

Taking on the task of a role model. The second element of leadership, trying to be a model for alternative performances of masculinity, is something both men raised in their stories. Leonard again identified it explicitly as something he anticipated taking on during the next stage of his life, imagining an increased role as a mentor to young men. Eli, who has worked with young people addressing masculinity for a number of years, opened our conversation by speaking about some of his experience in this role. In the midst of the interview, I experienced a moment of impatience, wanting to hear him reflect on his own personal experience of masculinity rather than the concepts he shared in his work with young men. In reflecting on the conversation later, I was clearly able to see how this was an important aspect of Eli's performance of masculinity and was exceptionally useful in identifying and understanding the common qualities and values of our masculinity.

Though it was not connected explicitly during our conversations, I was struck by the importance of the value of awareness as both men spoke about presenting themselves as potential role models. The humility suggested by a proactive awareness of their continued imperfection in

resisting hegemonic masculinity was crucial to the alternative leadership they described trying to enact, and allowed them to avoid presenting themselves as somehow uniquely enlightened. Certainly this is what resonates for me as I struggle with the sense that I do have a responsibility to work amongst other men to help present alternatives to hegemonic masculinity, while also struggling with the idea of suggesting (explicitly or implicitly) that I am to be congratulated for what remains an exceptionally imperfect performance of alternative masculinity.

Leadership through following. Receiving leadership as an element of masculinity performance, particularly from women and in non-traditional forms (i.e., not in keeping with frameworks structured by hegemonic masculinity), was something that came up first in Leonard's story. In answer to one of my questions about times when he had felt optimistic about the development of his masculinity, this is what he said:

> *I think I've been really lucky to have experienced very strong female leadership and very inspiring female leadership in a kind of day-to-day, but also in the kind of bigger picture movement sense. And, I am inspired and I have felt definitely uplifted in those moments, which happen fairly frequently.*

I was not initially sure what to make of this response, seeing it as a comment about Leonard's female supervisors rather than a reflection on himself or his masculinity. Through the process of reviewing the story, I began to understand this, along with Leonard's other positive references to the female leaders he has worked with, as a reflection of the value he placed on being able to receive leadership.

In part, I think I struggled to understand this characteristic because receptiveness as an active characteristic seems counterintuitive at first. In reality, though, receiving and welcoming leadership, particularly from women, represents a significant departure from expectations of

patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity, which devalue female wisdom. Leonard and Eli both described this aspect of leadership in speaking about how their intimate relationships with women had been such a crucial part of the development of their masculinity. Their growth in their masculinity was in many ways made possible precisely because they had been able to accept and take in leadership from the women in their personal and professional lives.

It was the value that Leonard placed on receiving female leadership, which allowed him to understand and develop this model for caring and emotionally intelligent leadership that he seeks now to enact. It is also part of what all three of us might hope to model for other young men as they take on that aspect of leading.

Many scholars writing about the process of narrative inquiry speak of the difficulty in choosing just one narrative or set of themes from countless possible options (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Gergen & Gergen, 2011; Trahar, 2009). This is certainly something I experienced in presenting both the shared narrative, and common themes and values of masculinity performance in this chapter. My hope is that the common values of an attempted pro-feminist masculinity presented here are both useful, and fairly represent the stories shared as part of my inquiry. I will explore this question in greater depth in my discussion. Ultimately though, I recognize that there are many other narratives and meanings which could have emerged from conversations with these particular men, to say nothing of what might come from the stories of others engaging with and performing their own versions of anti-hegemonic masculinity.

In the following chapter I will provide concluding comments on this inquiry. I will start with a brief exploration of some ways in which the project evolved over the course of the inquiry

process, followed by an analysis of the implications of the inquiry. Finally I will touch on a few

limitations of my inquiry and suggest directions for future inquiry.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter, I will present my final reflections on the process, results, and implications of engaging in this particular inquiry into positive elements of masculinity performance among men who identify as pro-feminist or feminist-aligned. I will begin with a review of the inquiry process, and particularly how it evolved over the course of the project to become a recounting of a shared narrative of masculinity performance, which includes a more significant element of my own experience and voice than I initially imagined. I will then briefly summarize the themes identified in the previous chapter and evaluate the results of the inquiry in relation to what I set out to achieve according to my initial research puzzle and motivations. Following this, I will contrast the findings of this inquiry with those of other research projects previously identified as interested in similar questions of positive performances of anti-hegemonic masculinity. Finally, I will identify some of the limitations of my inquiry, and outline possibilities for future inquiry.

Evolving Inquiry

When I began this inquiry, I imagined presenting two separate narratives emerging from having two individual men (who identified as pro-feminist or feminist-aligned) retell the story of their specific performances of masculinity. After recounting these two stories, I thought I would then identify themes common to both. I imagined that my voice would be present throughout the inquiry, but from the somewhat removed position of a researcher, rather than as a central part of the story itself. As the process of conducting this inquiry progressed, this is not what happened. While engaging with the two participants, Eli and Leonard, I was drawn to the striking shared story elements among our journeys of masculinity performance. The commonalities not only stood out in Eli and Leonard's stories, but were also evocative of my own story of masculinity

performance. In seeking to follow this narrative thread, my inquiry evolved to recount something

of a shared story of masculinity performance common to all three of us.

My interest in the story of the commonalities between our experiences came up first

during the interviews. As the conversations unfolded, I attempted to let them take a somewhat

natural course, immersing myself in the stories while allowing my interest in directly addressing

my research questions to temporarily recede. In doing this, I was seeking to strike the balance

between specific research interests and allowing the narratives to set the direction of the

exploration, in keeping with the principles of narrative inquiry (Clandinin, 2013). While in this

space, it was the frequent points of resonance between my own experience and the story being

recounted, that evoked the most curiosity in me. Many of my questions and reflections emerged

from this curiosity, and the shared elements of our individual journeys became richer and more

prominent.

As I moved into creating research documents from field notes (interview recordings,

transcripts, and my personal reflections), I struggled to recount each man's separate narrative. I

was instead drawn again to our shared story elements and arcs, which included early encounters

with male anger, the important role of participation in sports, and the crucial awakening in young

adulthood through intimate relationships with women. Moved and inspired by the familiarity

among all three of our experiences, I shifted my inquiry slightly, to recount a story of our shared

journey of developing an understanding and performance of masculinity. I discovered that after

this shift, the narrative came together more easily, and identifying shared themes and values from

within the stories also became easier, though still complicated.

Identifying and describing a finite set of themes or values created significant discomfort

in me, as it involved working on behalf of collaborators not present at this stage of the process.

Clandinin (2013) speaks about the challenge faced by researchers at this stage of narrative inquiry as they work to individually identify and present what they hope are co-created stories. I certainly felt an acute sense of obligation to fairly represent the implications and values of a narrative in which I was but one of three participants. Ultimately, I was able to take comfort from Clandinin (2013) who also said, "there is no final telling, no final story, and no one singular story we can tell" (p. 205). What I was dealing with here was but one recounting of a shared story which could be retold countless times and be reborn with each telling. There was no expectation that I should, or even could, describe a definitive set of themes and values fully representative of my collaborators' experience of their masculinity.

Implications

In order to effectively explore the implications and potential efficacy of this inquiry, I think it is useful to return to the initial impetus for conducting this inquiry. This inquiry was conducted based on a particular research puzzle, driven by a particular set of personal, practical, and social motivations. Before reflecting on how these motivations and puzzle have been addressed, I will start by quickly reviewing the themes or values taken from the shared story of masculinity performances presented here.

Summary of Themes / Values

The four themes, or values, of masculinity performance identified within this inquiry are multifaceted and interconnected. Each builds on and supports the others in a manner I find particularly interesting. The first theme of awareness is a reflective and ongoing value that proposes for each of the men who take it up, a performance of masculinity that aspires to constantly grow a sense of awareness of how they are individually participating in hegemonic masculinity, in large and small ways. In a sense it is the value not only opening one's eyes and

keeping one's eyes open, but of becoming ever more observant. In many ways, I see this as the

foundation for the other values identified within the shared narrative of the three attempted

performances of alternative masculinity.

Transgressing boundaries, the second shared value as it appears within the narrative,

represents the drive to break through the constraints of expected performances in general. Most

important in this context is the drive to transgress the boundaries hegemonic masculinity

establishes on performances of masculinity. Breaking these particular boundaries requires an

ongoing awareness of how they operate within the individual. While it was not my initial

intention, I believe that the language and substance of this particular value is evocative of, and

owes a great debt to, critical trans theorists and their exploration of the disruption and subversion

of traditional gender expectations (Karaian, 2013; Stryker, 2006). The third value is acceptance

of one's self, which again relies on a certain level of awareness and includes both inward and

outward looking elements. In the context of this particular narrative of masculinity performance,

acceptance is sought partly through shifting behavior so it is more consistent with closely held

values, not by accepting destructive behaviors or patriarchal performances of masculinity.

Acceptance is also the process of seeking to forgive and integrate complicated parts of the self.

Leadership is the final value presented here and is also somewhat multifaceted,

incorporating elements of being receptive to anti-hegemonic forms of leadership (particularly

from women), enacting alternative version of leadership, and taking on the responsibility of

being an example of possible performances of masculinity that seek to be anti-hegemonic.

Research puzzle

In undertaking this inquiry, I sought to address a research puzzle about possible positive

performances of anti-hegemonic masculinity, by exploring the narratives of masculinity

performance from men who identify themselves as pro-feminist or feminist-aligned. In undertaking this particular puzzle, I sought to maintain a connection to a justice-seeking framework in general, and to a feminist perspective in particular. In seeking now to examine how this research puzzle was addressed, it is useful to examine how these intentions were reflected throughout the inquiry, and particularly in the results.

Connection to theory. My intention in undertaking this inquiry was to acknowledge and continue to engage with the feminist theory, analysis, and purpose that I am so indebted to. This is not to suggest that I would at any point have claimed to be producing a piece of feminist, or even feminist-aligned scholarship. I have aspired to be aligned with feminism throughout the inquiry, and engage with participants who identified as pro-feminist or feminist-aligned. I make no claims as to how, or if, the performances of masculinity described in the narratives or the finished inquiry itself succeed in achieving these goals.

In truth, the extent to which this inquiry has approached my goal of feminist-alignment is not ultimately for me, as a man and the author, to determine. Certainly I have hoped to avoid the concerns raised by O'Neill (2014), about the risks of masculinity studies straying too far from feminist principles, but assessing how successful that attempt has been is more complicated. The three problematic practices identified by McCarry (2007), within the work of male masculinity researchers, can serve as a useful reference point for initial reflection. The practices presented by McCarry are that men are presented as the true victims of hegemonic masculinity, that masculinity becomes the problem rather than the actions of particular men, and that researchers fail to engage in self-reflection. Each of these practices represents problematic behavior I have explicitly sought to avoid or address within this inquiry, and my own reflection on the four

themes and values of masculinity presented is that they also represent attempts to avoid these traps. The final assessment though, is not for me to conduct.

Positive characteristics. One of my central intentions when embarking on this inquiry was to explore "positive" characteristics of pro-feminist or feminist-aligned masculinity. Positive not in terms of value judgment, but rather as the word is used in a scientific context to refer to the presence rather than the absence of a particular trait. The intention was to help identify and explore qualities of a kind of masculinity that could be moved towards, rather than focusing on what should be moved away from. Part of the rationale for focusing on these positive traits is their utility within strengths-based therapeutic modalities. I believe the four values that emerged for me through the inquiry satisfy this intention, though perhaps not all in exactly the manner I imagined or anticipated prior to engaging with the project. While perhaps not fully aware of it at the time, I initially imagined these potential characteristics would be somewhat active and outward looking, where elements of a performance of masculinity were not only positive, but also easily noticed.

What I found instead was that several of the themes that emerged were inward looking and receptive. I found this quality made it harder to recognize the manner in which these qualities remained positive in the way I was seeking. The value of awareness and acceptance in particular are tied to personal insights and processes. The value of leadership meanwhile included an important element of being receptive to a particular kind of leadership.

The positive nature of transgressing boundaries was also not obvious to me at first glance. Was this not just a description of how rules of hegemonic masculinity were being rejected? It was actually remembering the smile on Leonard's face when he described breaking rules that allowed me to understand transgression as a positive value. I was struck by the

archetype of the trickster common to many cultural traditions and was able to understand the

transgression of boundaries in a different manner. It was able to see the desire this break

boundaries as a positive value undermining, though also independent from, hegemonic

masculinity.

Ultimately, I do believe that the values identified were positive in the manner initially

sought by the research puzzle. Each theme represents a value or personal goal for performances

of masculinity that can be sought out by individual men. The hope for the initial puzzle was to

explore characteristics of anti-hegemonic masculinity that could be moved towards in place of

only seeking to move away from elements of patriarchal masculinity. I believe that at the very

least, the themes identified within the narratives presented here are a small example of that.

Levels of Motivation

Engaging in narrative inquiry is never a neutral process. As Clandinin (2013) posits,

researchers attempting to engage in this kind of inquiry should be driven by a set of personal,

practical, and social motivations. I laid out the motivations that inspired and shaped this inquiry

in the Methods chapter. In seeking to contextualize the project, it strikes me as useful to return to

these motivations and reflect on how they were reflected within the end product.

Personal. My personal motivation for this inquiry was to gain access to expanded

possibilities for counter-hegemonic masculinity performances that might inspire or support my

own attempts at alternative performances. The personal nature of this objective makes it the

easiest to assess, and I certainly feel it was achieved. The themes of acceptance and leadership in

particular felt as though they represented important new learnings. I would not have recognized

these values as important elements of my performance of masculinity prior to engaging in this

inquiry, and both feel immediately useful to me. The other values, awareness and transgressing

boundaries, felt more familiar and less revelatory to me. Having them emerge in the context of this inquiry served to reaffirm and expand on important intentions for my performance of masculinity.

In addition to the particular themes identified, the process of engaging in the inquiry (both the initial conversations and the later construction of the narrative), also served my personal motivation. Both Eli and Leonard spoke wistfully about how rarely they have the opportunity to reflect on their masculinity with other men. I had similar feelings throughout the inquiry. Simply being able to immerse myself in these stories of attempted anti-hegemonic masculinity performances was inspiring and energizing on a personal level and very much served the initial motivation by supporting my own attempted alternative performances.

Practical. My practical motivation for this exploration was a desire to provide a resource for men seeking to engage in anti-hegemonic performances of masculinity, as well as for counsellors and others seeking to support similar performances in others. While I cannot know for sure whether this is achieved until the inquiry is completed and shared, I believe the narratives presented here, and the values identified within them, have the potential to meet this intention.

While the themes presented are hardly revelatory, the limited existence of similar inquiries into the positive characteristics of anti-hegemonic masculinity performances means they enter a relatively sparse landscape. Even for men who are already attempting to perform their masculinity in a manner that resonates with the values presented here, my hope is that the narratives might provide a sense of solidarity and support. Both men involved in this inquiry mentioned how rarely they discussed their performances of masculinity with other men. This is certainly consistent with my experience, and is related to my personal motivation for undertaking

this inquiry. My hope is that for men experiencing similar isolation in their attempts at something along the lines of a feminist-aligned performance of masculinity, the stories recounted here might confirm the presence of others with shared experiences and intentions.

In terms of its utility for counsellors seeking to support anti-hegemonic performances in others, I am hopeful that the stories and themes presented here will make it easier to recognize already existing resistance. In keeping with the goals of modalities such as narrative (Madigan, 2011) and solution focused therapies (Ratner, George, & Iveson, 2012), my hope is that the narratives and themes highlighted within this inquiry aid in allowing counsellors to see communalities and identify particular exceptions to the expectations of hegemonic masculinity within their clients' performances of masculinity.

Social. While I make no claims of achieving true pro-feminism either in my own performance of masculinity or within this inquiry, my primary social motivation is to provide support and encouragement for anti-hegemonic performances of masculinity. While the full extent to which this purpose has been served by the narratives and themes presented here is open to interpretation and analysis, I believe that simply engaging in and presenting this kind of inquiry represents movement in support of anti-hegemonic masculinities.

At its most basic, this inquiry has provided a space for three men (myself and both participants) to explore and share the stories related to our attempts at performing a feminist-aligned masculinity. As Nylund and Nylund (2003) discuss, in addition to being personally meaningful, the recounting of these sorts of narratives is an anti-hegemonic act, and therefore a political practice in itself. The process of telling, hearing, and sharing the stories of alternative masculinity performance supports and encourages similar future performances. The recounting of even small acts of resistance to hegemonic masculinity amplifies their impact.

Comparison with other Inquiries

As mentioned earlier, there is limited scholarship seeking to explore positive constructions of men's anti-hegemonic performances of masculinity in a manner which centres feminist analysis. Among those studies, there are several points of resonance with this inquiry.

The challenge of identifying positive characteristics was perhaps the most obvious link between this inquiry and other similar explorations. I definitely experienced similar challenges as Buschmeyer (2013) and Goicolea (2014), in identifying aspects of these anti-hegemonic masculinity performances beyond the elements of hegemonic masculinity they were seeking to resist performing. While I feel the four values identified from within the narratives are ultimately positive, it took some effort to recognize and describe them.

In terms of my actual findings, I recognize a broad resonance between the "caring masculinities" identified by Elliott (2015), and the narratives presented here. While caring is not named explicitly as a theme in this inquiry, the overall movement towards incorporating nurturance into performances of masculinity is present throughout the stories I recount. This is most obvious within the theme of leadership, particularly as it relates to enacting a kind of leadership which incorporates emotional intelligence and caring.

The process that White and Peretz (2010) identify among the men whose stories they explore, first becoming aware then becoming active, seems at first to line up with elements of the themes presented here. Ultimately though, the awareness identified by the male young pro-feminist activists in White and Peretz's inquiry is related but distinct from awareness as presented here. White and Peretz describe awareness mostly in terms of acknowledging systemically the existence and full implications of patriarchy. Awareness as it emerged in my inquiry, is a value related more to understanding and acknowledging personal participation in

hegemonic masculinity. The framework being engaged with is similar but the attention is primarily reflective and inwardly focused.

The values of acceptance and transgressing boundaries were not noticeably reflected in any of the other explorations of anti-patriarchal masculinities I identified, though neither theme is inconsistent with the narratives laid out in these studies. It is my sense that as the number of explorations of alternative performances of masculinity grows, these themes and others may continue to emerge in one form or another, further expanding the imagined possibilities of how masculinity might be performed.

Limitations

As set out earlier, the intention of this project is not to reveal or present in any way a comprehensive or definitive account of pro-feminist or feminist-aligned masculinity. In keeping with the principles of narrative inquiry, what I am presenting here is simply one retelling of a particular narrative. I expect that another inquiry with different participants, or even with the same participants in a different time or place, would yield different narratives, and likely different themes than those identified here. As Clandinin (2013), suggests when laying out the principles of narrative inquiry, each story is created as it is told within a particular context at a particular time, and so no story remains the same from one telling to another. Within this framework for understanding narrative, I seek less to present potential problems, and more to explore some of the limitations of this particular inquiry, and suggest some potentially useful avenues for future inquiry.

Lack of Intersectional Analysis

I have undertaken this inquiry primarily by attempting to utilize a feminist theoretical lens. As proposed in the introduction, I see this as a particularly important element of exploring

anti-hegemonic masculinities, and so in the interest of maintaining focus, other analytical

frameworks have for the most part been set aside. In general, I am inclined towards an

intersectional analytical lens similar to that laid out by McDowell (2015), which also

incorporates significant elements of other justice oriented critical theoretical frameworks such as

critical race theory, Marxist class analysis, critical disability studies, and queer theory. I found

putting aside some of these frameworks exceptionally difficult. It was particularly difficult given

my belief that hegemonic masculinity operates at the axis of various systems of privilege and

oppression (white supremacy, heteronormativity, etc.) and these critical frameworks are useful in

helping understand these systems. While this analysis was beyond the scope of this inquiry, I

recognize that any attempt to explore anti-hegemonic practices that does not thoroughly

incorporate these elements will be necessarily limited.

Gender Binary

In their critique of masculinity studies, Beasley (2015) draws attention to the tendency to

focus on men and masculinity as binary categories, reflecting a particular kind of harmful gender

essentialism. This would definitely be a legitimate critique to level against my inquiry. By

focusing on the experiences of three cisgender men, I did not challenge or explore the limitations

of gender as a binary, nor the idea that masculinity is predominantly performed by men. I believe

this limited scope of inquiry facilitated the recounting of the shared narrative presented here, but

as such represents no less significant a limitation or potential problem with this project.

Limited consultation

My time in the field was limited to one set of interviews with each of the two participant

collaborators. In describing their suggested method for engaging in narrative inquiry, Clandinin

and Connelly (2000) speak of the benefits of spending more extensive time engaging with the

participants, or of returning to participants for consultation several times with different versions of the reconstructed narrative. That form of consultation was beyond the scope of my inquiry and it is difficult to measure how this may have impacted the findings.

Future Inquiry

While I am hopeful that this inquiry highlights qualities of a positive masculinity performance, ultimately it is quite limited in scope. I believe that much more study and inquiry are needed to develop a richer understanding of anti-hegemonic performances of masculinity, both as they currently exist, and how they might exist in the future. In particular, I see a need for inquiries into the perspectives of a more varied population of men, the inclusion of the voices of people of other genders, and explorations utilizing more varied modes of inquiry.

Increased Diversity of Male Participants.

All three men involved in this inquiry, (myself and the two participants) are heterosexual cisgender men in our 30s with advanced degrees who are in committed relationships with female partners and with no children. Some of these demographic similarities were part of the research design, and reflected an intention to explore feminist-aligned performances of masculinity within a particular context, while others emerged over the course of this inquiry. I explicitly selected for men of a similar age cohort, living in the same geographical area, and who shared a similar identification as pro-feminist or feminist-aligned. The similarities between the two participants (and myself) in terms of gender identity and sexuality in particular, were not selected for, but emerged quickly through the course of the inquiry. Given the extent to which the themes and values identified here emerged from lived experience, I would expect that including the voices of men of more varied backgrounds would result in the emergence of new and unexpected themes and values.

The range of men whose pro-feminist or feminist-aligned masculinity might be explored is virtually endless. I would propose that future inquiries include men with a range of identities in terms of as gender, sexuality, ability, age, and migration status. Even within a specific geographic context, hegemonic masculinity acts in a variety of different ways to marginalize and exclude the experiences of queer and trans men, men living with disability, as well as indigenous and migrant men. I believe much could be learned through inquiries seeking to explore feminist-aligned performances of masculinity from among these men's narratives. More still could be learned by engaging with men from different parts of this country or world, with a wide range of class, education, or ethnic backgrounds.

Gender Diverse Perspectives

This inquiry has focused on exploring men's experiences of performing masculinity. All of the participants including myself are cisgender men. I believe it would be extremely useful to explore the stories of masculinity performance that might be told by people with other gender identities. All of the men involved in this inquiry identified specific women in their lives who had been important teachers in helping to develop their particular performance of masculinity. This suggests to me that exploring women's ideas, lived experience, and encounters with feminist-aligned masculinity, would likely provide useful insights. While I tried to ensure my inquiry was grounded primarily in feminist analysis, the inclusion of queer theory suggests to me that it might also be particularly useful to explore narratives of masculinity from people who identify broadly as transgender or otherwise gender nonconforming. One of the implications of gender as performative, is that it can be performed by anyone. In seeking to broaden the possibilities for feminist-aligned masculinities then, it makes sense that we should seek out narratives of masculinity performance from a variety of genders, rather than just men.

Different Modes of Inquiry

One of the central characteristics of narrative inquiry as a research methodology is its broad understanding of what constitutes "research data" and an understanding that different stories will emerge depending on what kinds of "data" are collected (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Schrock and Schwalbe (2009) meanwhile, speak about the fundamentally social nature of masculinity. To me these insights suggest that the structure of my inquiry (two men sitting together and having a semi-structured interview about their masculinity performance), did much to help shape the story that was told. I recognize this dynamic and limitation, and would be interested in finding out what might emerge from conducting future inquiries using a broader range of methods to collect field texts. Perhaps this might take the form of group conversations on masculinity, inviting participants to create art inspired by the research puzzle, or even observing performances of masculinity within interpersonal environments such as workplaces. While these kinds of exploration might require significantly more resources than were available for this particular inquiry, I believe future researchers would be well served by undertaking some of these methods of exploration.

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Appendix A: IRB Review Response Form

CityUniversity
of Seattle

Institutional Review Board
Review Response Form

Project Title: Searching for an Anti-Patriarchal Masculinity: Profeminist Men's Narratives of their Gender

Researcher's name: Sacha Medine

Advisor's name: Collin Sanders

Date of response: 12/04/15

Determination of risk: Meets criteria for minimal risk

Decision:

☐ **Approve**

XApprove with minor revision(s) as noted below   *(Thesis or project advisor takes responsibility that changes have been made; resubmission not required).*

· You must use your City University email address for all research-related correspondence (delete references to your gmail address).
· Number 16. You mention "participants will be offered personal counselling services". Provide more detail - what is the referral source?
Reviewer Feedback:

☐ **Resubmission required, with attention to the following issues:**

Reviewer Feedback:

Reviewer(s): Ellen K. Carruth, PhD, IRB Member
              Brian Guthrie Ph D, Chair IRB