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ITALIAN FORMS OF MASCULINITY BETWEEN FAMILISM AND SOCIAL CHANGE

ABSTRACT This article summarizes historical and emergent factors in the contemporary pluralization of Italian gender identities, specifically the current penetration of alternative models of masculinity more adaptive to contemporary social change. Highlighted is the tension between progressive social forces and familism. Familism encompasses a cultural value system involving strong attachment and loyalty to one’s family. This includes a strong reliance on family for material and emotional support. The article concludes with a discussion of good practices concerning men, as well as a brief reflection on the future of Italian gender studies.

KEYWORDS ITALY, MASCULINITY, FAMILISM, SOCIAL CHANGE, EDUCATION

Aim of this article is to examine some aspects of the still largely unexplored tension between socio-economic change, familism, and masculinity in Italy. In the first two sections I will look at the current situation in Italy regarding the social construction of masculinity in relation to notions of the family, state, fluid modernity. In a subsequent section I offer a digest of selected research and educational programs seeking to enhance richer, more flexible forms of masculinity adaptive to the sketched processes of social change.

GENDER AND FAMILISM: TRADITION AND CHANGE

The Italian context for gender studies is marked by certain distinctive features. Family values play an enduringly crucial role in social life; as Livi Bacci (2001) argues, Italy is characterized by “too much family.” First of all, demographic behaviors are still somewhat “traditional” as compared to other European contexts, evidenced by an emphasis on the quality of intra-family care. Moreover, a welfare model is constructed, more than elsewhere, on the rigidity of the gender system; on the moral duty of familial sponsorship (according

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to which the family, encompassing an extended network of relatives, is always obliged to protect its weaker members); on the indefinite prolonging of financial ties between generations; and on the role of women’s intergenerational networks as mainly associated with care work. Italy is also characterized by a considerable presence of small-, medium-, and even large-sized family businesses. Italian family firms comprise 80% of all business enterprises across all economic sectors. Their main distinctive feature is the founder’s will to transfer ownership and management positions to heirs so that family traditions are transmitted together with corporate values. Finally, we should mention Italy’s strong territorial dualism coinciding with a polycentric character: the Italian territorial backbone is formed by a system of medium-sized cities well established in the northern and central regions but less so in the weak-performing southern regions (the so-called Mezzogiorno).

The survival of this cultural and economic infrastructure heavily depends on “traditional” gender relations. Familism requires and encourages a specific two-gender model, where the gender categories “man” and “woman” carry with them specific expectations about how to act, what to do, who to love, and so on. A specific interdependency also emerges: the idea of “feminine” behavior says as much about how men are not supposed to act as it does about how women are supposed to act. This transcultural antithesis is well described by Michael Kimmel (1995, 1996): hegemonic masculinity exists in contrast with that which is feminine. Masculinity is not just based on contrast with femininity, it is a complete renunciation of everything feminine.

Demands for change and challenges to traditional ways have multiplied even in familistic contexts like Italy and today constitute an eventful horizon for the “traditional” division of life courses, roles, desires between genders—polarized between the concentration on male adults for financial responsibilities and on women for family duties and reproduction—and thus for the hegemonic, patriarchal, unidirectional male model. In particular the changes in female identities increasingly and inevitably tend to involve male partners, workers and fathers. Women, who (especially in the years of the economic boom) had been concerned with the management of the home and care have become increasingly less willing to deal exclusively with family matters. This motivational decline is due to women’s new competences associated with growing schooling rates and presence on the employment market. The latest generations of women are well aware of the need for cultural training to achieve a satisfactory life. Their school careers proceed more smoothly and they consider study more and more important; at the same time, they have high expectations regarding their entry to the labor market.

It is therefore becoming necessary to prepare new generations of men for their encounter with the “new” women and “new” models of masculinity. This is a multi-faceted project of enabling children, young boys and men to broaden the scope of their emotional and communicative skills. That is, to show that there are a number of ways of being a man, enabling them to engage with gender in diverse and pluralistic ways. This entails, first and foremost, processes of reflection on, and prevention of, the darker sides of masculinity (Connell, 1995; Hearn, 1998; Kimmel, 1995, 1996): anti-femininity, gender violence; ho-
mophobia; limits imposed by gender stereotypes on “other” forms of masculinity; the difficult, at times absent dialogue men have with their own bodies.

Remodeling of the historical rupture between male and female, through dialogue and mutual understanding, may bring with it bilaterally positive effects. For women, it means deconstructing the processes of financial dependence on male income; increasing presence on the labor market; rebalancing time schedules to facilitate the conciliation between life and work demands and, at the same time, health improvement. For men, the positive effects include the challenge of reappropriating historically denied parts of their gender identity: we mean the tasks of nurturing, care, and socialization. The overcoming of the dark sides of “familism,” in other words, cannot be achieved without the shared involvement of both women and men.

The current Italian situation appears suspended between tradition and fluid modernity. Although the Italians have modified their demographic behaviors, they have done so without losing any of the features which traditionally differentiate them from the wider European context, namely a still marked preference for institutionalized bonds, low frequency of marital break-ups, and limited spread of reconstructed families. Despite the progressive postponement of first marriages and the decision to have children seen across Europe, behavior patterns rooted in “traditional” Italian culture are still quite strong: marriage as a primary form of union, coincidence of leaving the parental home with couple formation, birth of children almost exclusively within marriage (Dalla Zuanna, 2004; Rosina, 2007). This all is accompanied by late entry into adult sexual life (as compared with both other Europeans of the same age and co-nationals of the preceding generation) as well as by traditional patterns of birth control (Cazzola, 1999).

In Italy, transitioning to adulthood takes on a particular shape. There is a great difference between Italian culture and that of the rest of developed Western countries, not just in the particularly high number of unemployed young persons, especially in the South, but also in the extremely high percentage of young adults, especially men, who continue to live with their parents. The tie binding parents and children is a peculiarity in the Italian model. This relates to high importance attributed to children and intense support given to them—continuing even after they have married—in terms of emotional support, closeness, and time-spending. In Italy, young adults of both sexes live with their parents until they get married and are maintained by them as long as they stay within the family—even in families with a single breadwinner—and regardless whether the young person has a separate income. In other words, there is a lengthening of the time span over which people reside in their family of origin. This phenomenon has come to be known as the famiglia lunga or “long family” (Scabini & Donati, 1988).

We should emphasize the quality of intra-family care. This is seen in the “dramatization” of the investment of personal resources in family life, in the hostility towards outsourcing of caring activities, and in the difficulties of adopting strategies to redistribute these duties between men and women (Mingione, 2001). While the attribution of domestic responsibilities to men is fairly
limited even in young couples, the consideration of care tasks as a wife’s/maternal/sororal priority remains strong. The large efforts made to ameliorate concomitant tensions are exemplified in the ubiquity of domestic services—the care of the elderly and sick, assistance in bringing up the children—supplied by foreign women (and men) in Italian families.

Despite these factors, forms of cohabitation and family planning are changing in Italy. From the mid-1960 onward a growing disaffection is evidenced towards the “traditional” family model as based on marriage and numerous offspring. Despite marked geographic differences (in the North tendencies towards social change are more evident and incisive), there is a movement toward more diversified biographies that are less organized around a standard marital nucleus with children. There is an increase in the number of childless families and single-parent households. The number of divorces and separations is also increasing. Lastly, foreign and mixed-heritage families are appearing on the scene.

These trends are closely linked to changes in gender identities (especially in women’s life courses) and, consequently, in the relations between women and men. As we have already underlined, we are at an historical juncture at which boundaries are being redrawn. While the divisions between “male” and “female” which marked past history still remain, these divisions must at the same time deal with the radical changes affecting life courses. We may think of the changes in gender identity and in life courses, particularly those of women; radical changes on the labor market (unemployment; irregular, temporary, low-income employment); globalization and secularization; (enforced) encounters with new cultures and new forms of masculinity (migrants, non-heterosexuals, transgender and transsexual people); difficult confrontations with male genealogies (Deriu, 2005) and an unwieldy, misogynous, virile past; and the challenges posed by the complication of paternal roles. Female identities have arguably undergone the most intense transformations: in women’s increasing investment in education; their growing aspirations for self-fulfillment in work (female financial autonomy is today inalienable); greater involvement in working life; reproductive choice-making; free expression of their sexuality.

How are men reacting to these major demands being made on them? Are they adapting to the changes in women’s identities and needs?

Some have accepted the challenges, however often accompanied by second thoughts, doubts and perplexities; others have rejected them, reacting with fear and aggressiveness. These different reactions vary according to the different characteristics of the men involved, in terms of age and generation, level of education, ethnic group, social class, and so on. A key element that seems to sustain our view is that some interesting changes may be observed among the younger male generations.

First, we cannot fail to recognize the growing assumption of responsibilities by younger fathers after the birth of their children. Younger men are also beginning to claim a greater share in bringing up their children, although in the father-child relation, playing dominates other dimensions (Zajczyk & Ruspini, 2008). The desire to discover (or rediscover) the terms and values of one’s specific masculinity also seems to be growing, to challenge the conditionings im-
posed by the static, one-dimensional model of masculinity. While the growing involvement of husbands, partners and fathers in family life is undeniable—as a recent survey on fatherhood (Rosina & Sabbadini, 2006) shows, the average time devoted to care by fathers in the last fifteen years (1988-2003) increased by 18 minutes per day—it must however be said that commitment to caring activities increases with the rise in the father’s level of education and still concerns a limited number of men, in particular the segment of younger, urban and single-parent fathers, and—more generally—those who have taken over a model of masculinity which no longer clearly divides the public from the private.

Tension emerges, furthermore, between the virility model and the need to look after one’s image and health. While models of subjectivity historically constructed by men are based on the repression of the body, on emancipation from it, from its bonds and its signals, biological imperatives and changing conditions and styles of life demand a different attitude to one’s body, which is increasingly implicated in notions of care, for instance in terms of “remaining young” and/or “ageing well.” Men are thus beginning to borrow from women attitudes previously considered as exclusively feminine. Men’s use of products for facial and body care and recourse to diets, masseurs, plastic surgery is strongly increasing (Ghigi, 2008; Ruspini, 2009).

The number of men willing to question the stereotyped model of masculinity is also growing, as well as that of men desirous of exploring a part of themselves which for a long time had been kept silent, in care functions and socialization. For example, Fiorenzo Brescia, President of the Italian Association of House-husbands (Associazione Italiana Uomini Casalinghi or ASUC) writes:

Cooking, cleaning the house, the ability to take care of all those details which seem insignificant but make the art of home-dwelling an art have enthralled me more and more and made me reflect on how much “gender prejudices and a culture rigidly linked to the stereotypes of a macho, virile male, had penalized us men, depriving us of the ability to take care of the persons living with us and the chance to enjoy the pleasures of home.¹

Men’s rights groups are of course a many-sided phenomenon. In some cases they are an outright counterattack on the goals of feminist movements,² in other cases attempts are made to regain equilibrium in gender relations. It is, however, a very active movement in organizing structures for legal and psychological assistance for men in cases of divorce, abuse, etc., and in promoting a new male image. We should also refer to those groups aimed at re-conquering the paternal role in the right to custody of children after marital separation and—in some cases—proposing a reformed image of fatherhood compared

¹ See ASUC’s homepage: http://www.peacelink.it/webgate/pcknews/msg02855.html
² Examples include Uomini 3000 onlus, a male ethics association (http://www.uomini3000.it00_commento.htm), and Pari diritti per gli uomini (http://uomini.cjb.net). For reflection on the contents of these sites, see Pieroni (2002).
with the “traditional” model. These associations meet often, join in demonstrations such as the Armata dei Padri (Daddy’s Army), and organize appeals, marches, and campaigns.

ITALIAN MASCULINITIES

Notwithstanding these changes, there has been, and continues to be (not only in Italy) a lack of adequate reflection leading to a real overcoming of gender stereotypes. Gender is one of the most interesting dimensions of social change, but it is also more controversial and underanalyzed in many European contexts. A blanket of silence continues to shroud thought on transformations in gender identities and on the effects caused by changes in relationships between men and women, their forms of cohabitation, and experiences of fatherhood and motherhood. This silence is caught up with the unaddressed question of the relation between sex and gender identity, given that it is thought no conflict exists between the latter and personal autonomy: boys will “naturally” become men, and girls women (“biology is destiny”). Gender identity is considered a stable characteristic, unchanging over time: the relationship between sexual characteristics and gender has historically been schematized as natural, permanent and compulsory, thus defining life destinies. Fatherhood and motherhood are correspondingly outlined, sustained, and ossified by many commonplaces: “Fathers are not very suited to caring activities;” “Children must stay with their mother;” “Women are made to be wives and mothers;” “Women are fulfilled when they become mothers, men in supporting their family.”

We may also speak of a lack of male self-awareness: an ability to observe oneself, to understand changes in oneself and others, and consequently to adapt to the new relational needs along lines of gender and generation. Masculinity and men’s powers and practices were for a long time largely taken for granted (see, among others, Connell, 1995; Hearn, 1998; Kimmel, 1995, 1996; Pieroni, 2002) Among men, there is a lack of awareness of the full range of cultural, political, and symbolic effects brought about by the feminist and homosexual movements, and of their potential impact on the redefinition of male identity. In Italy, this delay may be seen in the light of the historical reconstruction of the “male” movement. Bellassai writes:

The rise and fall of male awareness collectives—definitely another phenomenon worth devoting a series of historical reconstruction to—was extremely brief in Italy. Their overall ephemeral life was certainly also due to the misunderstandings and actual head-on clashes between the neo-feminist movement and the male militants of the “New Left”; but perhaps

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3 They include the Associazione Padri Separati in Bologna, the Associazione Papà Separati based in Milan; the Associazione Padri Presenti and the Associazione Padri e Madri, both in Verona; the Padri ad ore, Assopapà, Padri Negati, Gesef-Genitori separati dai figli, all in Rome; the Padri Italiani Uniti and Papà Separati based in Turin; and the Associazione Figli Negati (Deriu, 2007).
the fragility and internal contradictions in that experience also played against them. (2005, pp. 133-134)

He goes on to cite Paolo Jedlowski—one of the most well-known Italian sociologists—reminiscing many years later:

[…] I remember that with a few others who had early on left the experiments with the small ultra-left parties, I started up groups of male self-awareness, on the model of women’s groups. We never thought we might be ridiculous. But these groups were quickly shipwrecked. Unlike those of the women and homosexuals, they weren’t supported by a movement, and anyway the question of gender identity was not very urgent for us. We moved on from those groups to psychotherapies or theatre (here, not unlike women and homosexuals); or simply, some people just gave up. (Jedlowski, 1997, p. 92 quoted by Bellassai)

Gender stereotypes have been for a long time maintained and supported by the institutional sphere. For example, the social construction of paternity in Italy is the story of an absence. Or perhaps, rather more than an absence, we may speak of a partial, incomplete paternity, which has pivoted the father figure around concepts such as “virility,” “authority,” “parental authority,” “maintenance,” and “transmission of social and moral norms” (Ruspini, 2006). This builds on strong cultural convictions that masculinity is the “natural” expression of “tradition” and “social order.” We are only to remind of the construction of masculinity in the Fascist period, inspired by the need to reconstruct an unequivocally “virile” identity and to strengthen the boundaries between male and female. The Fascist regime implemented carefully controlled propaganda that was to deliver a New Italian, a New Italy (Gori, 1999). Institutional measures were devised by the Fascist state to maximize infiltration of fascist ideology with its stakes in normatively masculine ways of life. Fascist constructions of masculinity colonized the life course. According to a mentality of manliness, nationalism and imperialism, investing in children meant investing is the nation’s assets. For example, in 1943 preschool (Scuola Materna) guidelines, we read:

The Scuola Materna must care for, protect and facilitate the free expression of the child’s personality, at the same time impressing on its mind and life habits of order and joyous, conscious discipline. These are habits which, by informing the childish conscience of the first sense of duty, will also instill the first sense of sociality.4

4 This and the following quote are taken from the volume Programmi didattici delle scuole infantili e delle scuole per educatori d’infanzia dal 1924 al 1958, Brescia, Centro Didattico Nazionale per la Scuola Materna, 1962 (translation by Elisabetta Ruspini with supervision by Mary Rubick).
Political education sought to socialize specific symbols:

The figure of the Duce, resembling the integration in a broader world of goodness, justice and protection that parents represent in the child’s eyes in the family setting. The symbols of Fascism (Black Shirts, the Fasces, etc.) shown for their ethical and epic significance, so as to spontaneously arouse veneration for them in the child. Hierarchy, discipline, and obedience. Love for the Fatherland and for the men who govern it.

Pronatalism was an important aspect of the regime’s ideology (De Grazia, 1993, p. 105). Proving virility required numerous offspring, clearly highlighting the tension between family duties and manly agonism. Male sexuality, like female eroticism, was to be exorcised and normalized to remove any danger of homosexuality and any emancipatory impulse: women were encaged in the public cult of motherhood (destined to become healthy, buxom mothers and wives) and men as heads of family, committed to sowing their seed. The close link between virility and offspring is clearly expressed in the tax on egoism of 1926, repudiating the “onanist” by condemning infertile men:

Today’s society despises deserters, ruffians, homosexuals, and thieves. Those who can but do not do their duty to the nation should be placed in the same category. We must despise them. We must shame bachelors and those who do not bring children into the world. We must bend them and make them bite the dust. (Carlo Scorza, quoted in De Grazia, 1993, pp. 105-106)

This affected the sphere of legislation, which has been on the whole unoccupied with paternity and support to fathers’ care tasks. We may think, for example, of maternity leave Law no. 1204 of 30 December 1971 protecting working mothers. But making no reference to paternity or to any kind of exemption from work for fathers. They had to wait several decades to see significant change (see next paragraph for details).

The school system, likewise, was never exempt from gender stereotypes. If schooling rests on gender “neutral” definitions of pedagogy, it definitely distinguishes between “masculine” and “feminine” aptitudes and skills. In line with the models characterizing other socialization agencies, the institutional training system today still demands of young women demonstrations of “femininity” and compliancy while offering young men a strong training, oriented to autonomy and development of technical, logical, and rational skills. The prevalent forms of learning in school educational and professional training systems are still essentially constructed to highlight values and behaviors linked to “traditional” masculine and feminine roles (see also Boffo et al., 2003; Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 1997).

More specifically, education toward social change, sexuality, plurality in sexual desire, and the acceptance of “other” gender identities than the heterosexual model are still lacking in Italy (among other European countries), both in primary socialization contexts and in educational and school curricula.
question of sexuality continues to be a definite taboo subject in Italian families. Intergenerational dialogue on subjects such as love and sex is a precarious undertaking. Adults often feel more embarrassment than their children in dealing with issues concerning sexual relations or contraception. Modesty and the need to maintain their privacy force boys and girls to seek remedies for their doubts and curiosities outside the family. People outside the family (often friends) in fact seem to be the main vehicles of information on sexuality, which however is often inexact, distorted, or in any case insufficient. Italy has no state legislation regulating sexuality education in schools. Young people are therefore often unprepared and ill-informed when discovering their sexuality, and find themselves having to handle the crucial knots of their life courses unaided. Together with the many prejudices and stereotypes on sexuality and sex practices, this lack of information offers fertile ground for a range of attested risks that especially concern young people and men: bullying, sexual harassment, homophobia, and transphobia. For gay adolescents who, according to the World Health Organization, account for 5% of young people, the problem of handling sex education becomes even more complex. Rigidity of male and female stereotypes, lack of preparation in the school environment, social stigma, and lack of sympathetic listeners contribute to strong unease, at times even (attempted) suicides. The family and the school system, arguably the most important spheres of socialization, are seemingly unable to guarantee training matching the needs arising from changes in gender identities. In the former, it often proves itself an “absent” institution, or, when present, in strong continuity with traditional conceptions of gender relations. In the latter sphere, education concerning gender differences and sexual desire is too little developed to make a difference.

Media may play a significant role. While for a long time mass media have been considered a powerful factor in the transmission of stereotypes, commonplaces and obsolete gender images, they may just as well become co-protagonists in the redefinition of gender identity and relationships. The media landscape today is a potent socializing environment, effectively competing with traditional agencies (Besozzi, 1998; Capecchi & Ferrari, 1998; Grossi & Ruspini, 2007; Meyrowitz, 1985; Morcellini, 1999). Meaningful, attractive languages deployed by the media constitute symbolic universes that contextualize the formation of subjectivities, both in terms of disseminating knowledge (through processes of self-training) and regarding constructions of gender identity. Media accommodate multiple types of masculinity, from models con-

5 A sex education project, with the involvement of families and teachers, conducted by the Institute “O. Romero” in Rivoli, Turin (Giommi & Perrotta, 1998), shows that parents, despite declaring themselves in favor of sex education in schools, expressed discomfort at being interviewed (41%), and an even lower number (23%) answered questions relating to the discussion of sexual problems with their children. Fifty percent did not know of the existence of family planning clinics and advisory centers for adolescents, 56% occasionally buy books and magazines dealing with sexual subjects from the medical point of view. In short, interest in sex education is limited to subjects which help to protect children from unwanted pregnancies and STDs.
Considered “hegemonic” (white, heterosexual, assertive) and those emerging from marginality (have succeeded in gaining full legitimacy at the level of representations), to the “minority masculinities” that in pre-media times would have been largely “invisible” (immigrants, gays, etc.). While the traditional differences between male and female, between men and women have been indexed—at least in part—by access to information (Goffman, 1959), it is reasonable to suppose that electronic media, especially television, have helped to bring male and female elements closer (Meyrowitz). Firstly, women “see” things completely new to them, and above all have easy access to realistic and de-mystified characterizations of the masculine world. In the same way, men are starting to get to know better some aspects of the feminine sphere which they did not have direct access to before. Meyrowitz claims this entails a move “toward more career-orientated women and more family-orientated men, toward more work-orientated homes and more family-orientated workplaces” (p. 48). Male and female roles are blending by way of media discourse. Men today have access to other ways of “being male,” to forms of and approaches to masculinity which they had never had to come to terms with, and of which they are now aware (Boni, 2004, 2007). Italian fashion has also contributed to innovating masculinity models less rigidly regulated by indisputable codes. It is a man interested in caring for his appearance, playing with it, and with his body (Mora, 2007). The rhetoric of the New Man is tied to the expansion of consumer society and the manufacture of new consumer identities.

Good Practices: A Selection

Below are presented selected legislative, educational, and research initiatives in Italy aimed at a reconsideration of masculinity traditionally defined, at deconstructing the violent symbolism still affecting the process of male socialization, and lastly at forging new models of masculinity. These efforts, some of them ongoing, show both similarities and differences. We stress their heterogeneity both in scale (national/local) and officiality. Surely, gender balancing requires many closely inter-linked components: from removal of stereotypes to setting up new, more suitable education frameworks for new generations covering preparation for parental and care tasks, the reimagining of relationships between gender and social change, and nurturing of gender plurality.

Legislative Reform of Fatherhood and Paternal Custody

Law 53 of 8 March 2000 (“Provisions for the support of maternity and paternity, for the right to care and training, and for the coordination of times in the cities”) proposed important innovations regarding, in particular, incentives to fathers taking care of their children and the extension of the possibility to stay at home up till the child’s eighth year of life. Both parents were guaranteed the right to make use of periods of abstention from work—up to a maximum of six months each and ten months together—to take care of their children during the first eight years of the child’s life (entitled to an allowance of 30% of salary up to the child’s third year of life). Fathers making use of leave for a period of at least
three months (even if not consecutive) were entitled to a “bonus” of one extra month. Thus they could take up to 11 months of leave altogether. According to a Consolidation Act, the father had the right to paternity leave in cases of the mother not making use (or partial use) of maternity leave.

A more recent law (58 of February 8 2006) was vigorously demanded by various associations of separated fathers embattling “inequality of treatment in lawsuits for separation and custody of minors.” It modified existing legislation (Art. 155 and 708 of the Civil Code) regarding custody of children in cases of separation or divorce, where sole custody was rule and joint custody exceptional. Shared custody⁶ has therefore become the main solution in cases of separation or divorce. With the new law, the judge normally entrusts the children to both parents without having to choose between them. For questions of ordinary administration, parental power would then appear as a shared right, with a number of duties to be attributed to both parents according to the areas of competence linked to their past experience, their aptitudes and to indications made by the children.

Italian Participation in the “The European Research Network on Men in Europe: The Social Problem and Societal Problematisation of Men and Masculinities” (http://www.cromenet.org)

This brings together the work of the European Research Network on Men in Europe (operative since March 2000) within the EU Framework 5. The Network’s titular reference to “social problem” relates to the problems both created and experienced by men. The notion of societal problematization refers to the various ways in which the “topic” of men and masculinities has become and is becoming noticed and problematized in society—in the media, in politics, in policy debates, and so on. This focus is set within a general problematic: that changing and improving gender relations and reducing gender inequity involves changing men as well as changing the position of women. The final report (Hearn et al., 2004) provides information on the other Network outputs, including the European Data Base and Documentation Centre on Men’s Practices and relevant publications of Network members, arising from the Network’s activities.

Pariteia—Promoting Gender Equality in Active European Citizenship (http://www.pariteia.org)

Pariteia is funded by the Fifth Community Action Program “Towards a Community Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005)” of the European Union,

⁶ Shared custody must not be confused with joint custody, enforced since 1975. In joint custody, decisions are taken singly by the parents: it therefore presupposes the utmost spirit of cooperation between two parents, and must thus be denied when conflicts remain between them. Perhaps this is why it was rarely applied. In the case of shared custody, on the other hand, a shared decision is not always necessary since each parent has his or her field of competence.
and aimed at establishing a European citizenship based on the active participation of women and men in all social, political and professional activities. Five territorial contexts were involved: Italy, Latvia, the Netherlands, Poland and Spain. The final report (ter Woerds, Stavenuiter, & Duyvendak, 2007) offers an analysis of the in-depth interviews which the project partners carried out in their own countries with a group of married and lone working fathers.

Anti-Homophobia Initiatives

One worthwhile example is the “Triangle-Transfer of Information to Combat Discrimination against Gays and Lesbians in Europe” (http://triangle-info.de), a transnational framework for exchanging information and good practice within the framework of the “Community Action program to Combat Discrimination” of the EU. Its teenage guidance manual—developed by the a project team made up of representatives from five countries: Austria, France; Germany, Italy, The Netherlands—addresses teachers, psycho-social operators, students and young people. It condenses know-how and experiences of many specialists in the field and aims for more in-depth understanding of the fundamental dimensions implied in the fear of “others.” We should also mention the 2000 Agreement Protocol between the Ministry for Public Education, Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri (Department for Equal Opportunities), and Agedo (Association of Parents of Homosexuals) facilitating collaboration between the various organs to promote diversity-focused research, education, and support.

Polite Project (Pari Opportunità nei Libri di TEsto [Equal Opportunities in Textbooks]; http://www.abside.net/corsi/accesso/polite.htm)

Initiated in 1998-99, Polite is a European self-regulation project for textbook publishing set up to promote cultural, didactic and publishing proposals to rethink textbooks to ensure that those women and men who have led the way in culture, history, politics and science are represented in textbooks with no discrimination based on sex.

“How many women you can become. New models for young girls and boys in Turin schools” (http://www.comune.torino.it/quantedonne)

Financed by the Piedmont Region and developed in collaboration with Turin civic libraries, this project aims to work out a reading code of the main gender stereotypes in illustrated works for childhood. It started out with the aim of helping authors and illustrators of children’s texts, teachers, librarians and parents to decode the symbolic images proposed by school programs, enabling the proposition of stereotype-free cultural models. Achievements include a guide to de-ciphering, a survey of texts in bookshops and civic libraries in Turin, and several seminar-meetings with teachers, librarians, booksellers, and students of design schools.
Lastly, I should mention several interesting collective projects part of a network of critical thought on dominating models of masculinity set up by men choosing to speak up about violence, gender relations, and patriarchic cultures and language use, starting from their identity and sexed experience (Vedovati, 2007). These projects promote dialogue and critical thinking on the complexity, richness, and contradictory aspects which mark male gender identities. Groups like MaschilePlurale (in Rome and Bologna), Uomini in Cammino (Pinerolo), Il Cerchio degli uomini (Turin), the Gruppo Uomini (Verona, Viareggio, and Turin) have made a critical re-examination of the historical experience of male identity, in which gender-comparative work and dialogue with the vista of feminism has been a decisive element (Ciccone, 2005). The movement gives particular attention to problems regarding male sexual violence. An internet-based appeal launched in 2006 (re-launched in 2009) against violence by Italian men bears the signatures of men from various political, cultural, religious, and sexual spheres condemning acts of violence against women highlighted by media attention.

**PROSPECTS**

The above-reported observations reveal, within the extended Italian/Mediterranean-familist context, the existence of diverse masculinities and the emergence of “new” types of masculinity that are more egalitarian and oriented to sharing, thus negotiating the traditional, stereotyped expectations that feed the cultural gap separating the “traditional” ideal of a virile man from the man who has decided to reveal (and converse with) the feminine part of himself. This element of fluidity offers fertile ground for the multiplication of educational schemes—concrete possibilities for children and young people to understand and change aggressive or homophobic behaviors.

Italy’s familist heritage—which appears to contrast sharply with the increasingly acute changes in cohabitation patterns—complicates, hinders, but certainly calls for, educational courses preparing new generations of men for the encounter with the multiple facets of social change. This is evident given growing male interests in constructing relationships with their children that may prove more authentic, intimate, and profound than those experienced with their own fathers (Zajczyk & Ruspini, 2008). Also evident is the importance of men’s participation in the redistribution of family responsibilities and in the process of their children’s socialization (including all care tasks, not just play), both in terms of positive effects on the wellbeing of children and in terms of greater gender equality and, therefore, of an improvement in the relations between men and women. We also underline the urgent need for Italian boys and girls to learn to deal with the tension separating tradition and a more fluid modernity, and to critically engage in the transitional challenges between present and future: on the one hand, the need to express a freer and more spontaneous sexuality; on the other hand, the need to overcome the “familistic” heritage of the past in terms of fears, prejudices, and ignorance.

To further the re-equilibrium of the historical imbalance between the male and female gender, sensitization initiatives should be supported by all the so-
cialization agencies, and necessarily address both sexes. In our view, there cannot be gender equality—in rights, in access to resources and public facilities and decision-making processes, while respectful of diversity and difference—without the participation of men, that is, without a change in the way of feeling and thinking of men themselves.

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The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, and all of the former Soviet republics and satellite states have since declared their independence. Travel restrictions and visa requirements typical of the Soviet era have been lifted, opening up new destinations and new opportunities for study. Despite the historic change in the political climate, very little social science research has appeared in Western journals from any of the former Soviet republics. Especially remarkable is an absence of any quantitative empirical research investigating the male role in Ukraine. Research in this region and on this population can provide a number of benefits. First, it enhances cross-cultural understanding of the variable nature of the male role in general. Second, it may stimulate further research in a set of attitudes and beliefs about the male role which likely has a significant impact on the social and emotional health of Ukrainian men, during an era of historic transition.

**MASCULINITY IN POST-SOVIET UKRAINE**

**AN EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS**

**ABSTRACT** This study represents a collaboration between Western and Ukrainian researchers interested in generating a structural model of masculinity in Ukrainian culture. Using the Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale (Doss & Hopkins, 1998) and exploratory factor analysis, we explored the factor structure of a sample of Ukrainian men \(N = 187\). Data was obtained from four public universities in two large cities in Ukraine. Principle components analysis with oblique rotation revealed four components: Sexuality/Prosperity, Stoic Protector, Competitive Perseverance, and Reserved Sexuality. Sexuality/Prosperity and Reserved Sexuality resembled components found in Russia, with the former demonstrating the most favorable psychometric properties. Stoic Protector and Competitive Perseverance appeared to be unique, though with weaker evidence of validity and reliability. Implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research are discussed.

**KEYWORDS** Masculinity ideology, gender roles, post-Soviet Ukraine, factor analysis

The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, and all of the former Soviet republics and satellite states have since declared their independence. Travel restrictions and visa requirements typical of the Soviet era have been lifted, opening up new destinations and new opportunities for study. Despite the historic change in the political climate, very little social science research has appeared in Western journals from any of the former Soviet republics. Especially remarkable is an absence of any quantitative empirical research investigating the male role in Ukraine. Research in this region and on this population can provide a number of benefits. First, it enhances cross-cultural understanding of the variable nature of the male role in general. Second, it may stimulate further research in a set of attitudes and beliefs about the male role which likely has a significant impact on the social and emotional health of Ukrainian men, during an era of historic transition.

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After the collapse of communism, an unprecedented decline in population began in Ukraine. Between 1989 and 2001, there was a precipitous drop from 52 million to 49.3 million. This trend has not significantly slowed and as of 2009, the population is currently estimated at 45.6 (State Statistics Committee of Ukraine, n.d.) due to a wide variety of health concerns. Chief among them are HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis (see Feshbach & Galvin, 2005). This is a net loss of 6.4 million people since 1989, which is roughly two and a half times the population of Ukraine’s largest city, Kiev. Population decline however is a complex phenomenon with various links to public health. Jarosewich (1997) suggests that in an unstable economy, couples may be unable to support more than one child. Contributing factors may include an ill spouse or aging parents. Men’s health problems seem particularly relevant. For example, fertility rates among men are lower than previous generations, and may be indicators of the enduring legacy of Chernobyl (Jarosewich). Lifestyle choices may also be problematic since 20% of men in Ukraine abuse alcohol (Nordstrom, 2007). Furthermore, male deaths exceed female deaths by 6:1 because of a post-communist rise in violent death (i.e., drowning, murder, and accident) and stress related diseases such as stroke, heart attack, high blood pressure (Jarosewich; McKee & Shkolnikov, 2001). Suicide among men in the military is the leading cause of death (Nordstrom, 2007). In the general population, male suicides outnumber female suicides by approximately five to one (Kryzhanovskaya & Pilyagina, 1999). According to Nordstrom (2007) the Ministry of Public Health has responded by making the mental health of Ukrainian citizens a top priority and establishing a graduate program in public health in Kiev. Issues of reproductive and sexual health in Ukraine are also on the United Nation agenda. Population Fund (2006) cites specific concerns that Ukrainian men avoid dealing with issues of sexual and reproductive health. This places them and their partners at risk for unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. To support mentioned political initiatives, efforts will be needed to understand men and how they are responding to the demands of post-Soviet era in a country that is trying to separate itself from its Soviet past, and redefine its identity.

The Study of Men/Masculinity and Gender Roles in Ukraine

Research in the field of men and masculinity has grown dramatically in Western nations, resulting in many refinements in clinical practice (for an overview, see Brooks & Good, 2001). These refinements include treatment of special sub-populations (Robertson & Newton, 2001) assessment procedures (Cochran, 2005) and treatment of specific problems evidently common to men in North America and in Ukraine, such as substance abuse (Landrine, Bardwell, & Dean, 1988), depression (Pollack, 1998), and interpersonal violence (Lisak, 2001).

Much of the cited clinical literature is built upon early theoretical models, which were operationalized into assessment scales (Brannon & Juni, 1984; Levant, 1992; Thompson & Pleck, 1986). These scales verify or refine conceptual
models describing what is normally expected of men (that is, the socially constructed belief systems for the male role) in North American culture by assessing individuals’ agreement with or endorsement of those belief systems. Assessing individuals’ internalization or acceptance of a socially constructed belief system about the male role is the study of masculinity ideology. The definition of this term cited most frequently by western researchers is “…endorsement and internalization of cultural belief systems about masculinity and male gender, rooted in the structural relationship between the two sexes” (Pleck, Sonenstien, & Ku, 1993, p. 88). Endorsement of the socially constructed belief system is associated with traditional attitudes towards male roles. Implied is the assumption that male social roles will vary in a way that will meet the needs of a particular culture during a particular era (Kimmel & Messner, 1989). A classic example of a model of the male role is Brannon’s “Blueprint for Manhood” (1976) which postulates four themes: “No Sissy Stuff” (avoidance of appearing feminine), “The Big Wheel” (seeking status or power), “Sturdy Oak” (invulnerability to external threats), and “Give ’Em Hell” (threat of violence or seeking dangerous adventure).

At present, there is no theoretical or empirically derived model of the social role for men in Ukraine which might serve as a starting place for researchers interested in this field. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to take this initial step and shed light on the male role among men in Ukraine. Contemporary gender roles in Ukraine are influenced by a number of factors including Soviet ideology, Ukrainian history, the fall of communism, and dramatic changes in the Ukrainian economy. These elements interact within a larger context of a society that is in the process of establishing a national identity and distancing itself from a totalitarian past.

The resurrection of traditional gender roles, in which men were responsible for providing for the family, and women were confined to domestic duties (childcare, cooking, cleaning, etc.), seems integral to this process. During the Soviet era, gender equality in the workplace was a well-known organizing principle of the communist state, and the prototypical Soviet worker was considered sexless (Kerig, Alyoshina, & Volovich, 1993). Ashwin (2000) contends that political expediency was the primary motivation for this policy rather than concern for women’s rights. The true objective of Marxist gender equity was to undermine the patriarchal social structure of rural peasant culture. This was accomplished by offering women education and employment while freeing them of childcare duties via state sponsored nurseries (Ashwin). Meanwhile men were recruited for the task of nation building, and their individual identity was “defined by his position in relation to the state” (Meshcherkina, 2000, p. 106). In effect, this positioned the state as the universal patriarch relative to husband and wife, leaving men feeling redundant and on the periphery of family life (Ashwin).

Despite official policy, most top level jobs and government positions were filled by men during this era (Shireav, 1999) and women were still left responsible for most domestic duties (Bodrova, 1997). Also problematic was the decline in birthrates in the European republics (including Ukraine) which was blamed on women’s involvement in the workplace. This prompted a contra-
diction of the official gender policy given overt education in stereotypical gender roles ("sex upbringing" or polovoe vospitanie) in school curricula (Attwood, 1996).

The end of communism caused a backlash against many previously held beliefs about consumerism, capitalism, private ownership of businesses, and Soviet ideas about gender equity. It is thus not surprising that conceptions of feminism imported from the West were viewed by the public with suspicion, and equated with the failed policies of the past (Bilaniuk, 2003; Pavlychko, 1996). As feminism was apparently being rejected, capitalism was embraced. Powerful images unique to Ukrainian culture appeared in marketing strategies and in popular consciousness. This is exemplified by the use of Cossacks in advertising. Cossacks were a people from southern Ukraine and European Russia known for both their independence and military prowess. They are routinely depicted as having exaggerated masculine and feminine traits (Bureychak, 2007). In terms of public consciousness, debate continues on the meaning and contemporary salience for women of ancient Ukrainian images such as the Goddess Berehyntia (Kis, 2003; Pavlychko, 1996). This combination of forces essentially idealizes and nationalizes pre-communist gender roles by associating them with Ukrainian imagery. It also drove men out into the business world (Meshcherkina, 2000; Yurchak, 2002) and encouraged women to concentrate on the roles of wife and mother (Pavlycho, 1996). Recent research confirms this trend. Findings from Shapiro et al., (2003) and Yakushko (2005) indicate Ukrainian men and women seem to strongly endorse pre-communist gender roles for both sexes.

**Masculinity Ideology and Cross-Cultural Research**

Much has been learned about etic (by which we mean: applicable to many cultures) and emic (here: specific to one particular culture) components of masculinity in western society (Brannon, 1976; Levant et al., 1992) and various sub-populations (Fischer & Good, 1998). The same cannot be said about Ukrainian society either before or after separation from the Soviet Union. Though evidence indicates there are more “traditional” scores on measures of gender in Ukraine (Shapiro et al., 2003; Yakushko, 2005), there is no structural model of the male role which could describe what those differences might be.

The notion of masculinity ideology, as defined above, is based on the social constructionist perspective on the male role which assumes gender roles are social constructions that vary in meaningful ways across societies and historical eras (Kimmel & Messner, 1989). Research testing this variability has proceeded on two fronts. One approach has used exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis procedures to investigate possible differing structures of masculinity ideology. Samples investigated include men in America (Doss & Hopkins, 1998; Fischer, Tokar, Good, & Snell, 1998), African Americans and Chileans (Doss & Hopkins, 1998), men in South Korea (Janey & Lee, 2002), and Russia (Janey et al., 2006). With the exception of the last mentioned, few studies have been conducted that investigate potentially differing structural aspects of masculinity ideology in any of the former Soviet Republics.
A second line of approaches attempts to place cultures on a continuum between traditional and non-traditional beliefs using instruments presumed to tap into etic components of the male role in patriarchal societies (Levant, Wu, & Fischer, 1996). This approach has been used with African Americans (Levant & Majors, 1997), dwellers of northern American regions and the American south (Levant, Majors, & Kelly, 1998), men and women in China (Levant et al., 1996), and men and women in Russia (Levant et al., 2003). There is credible evidence suggesting a convergence of masculine ideals among male dominated societies supporting this etic approach (Gilmore, 1990). However, Gibbons, Hamby, and Dennis (1997) suggest this procedure is less than ideal since it risks the artificial imposition of etic components that might not have any meaning in the culture under investigation. Perhaps more problematic would be the omission of emic components which are presumed to exist (Kimmel & Messner, 1989).

It seems that a viable alternative course of action would be utilizing instruments validated with the population for which they were designed. Given that no such assessment tool exists relevant for Ukrainian culture, we propose a compromise of employing an instrument that has been shown to be a valid and reliable measure of masculinity ideology and demonstrates the capacity to reveal unique emic components of masculinity ideology across several different cultures. The Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale (MMIS: Doss & Hopkins, 1998) seems to meet both criteria.

Previous use of the MMIS suggests an etic component of Achievement among Americans of European heritage, African Americans, Chileans (Doss & Hopkins, 1998), Koreans (Janey & Lee, 2002), and Russians (Janey et al., 2006). Emic components from these samples show substantial variety, and include Sensitivity, Pose (a facade of invulnerability and objectivity), Responsibility, Sexual Responsibility, Toughness (Doss & Hopkins, 1998) as well as Dedicated Provider, Emotional Stability/Availability, and Composed Sexuality among Russians (Janey et al.).

The primary purpose of the current study is to take a first step toward the construction of a thematic model describing male role expectations from the perspective of Ukrainian men, using the MMIS and exploratory factor analysis procedures. A secondary objective is to test the reliability and validity of the MMIS using a sample of Ukrainian men. To these ends, this study was guided by the following hypotheses:

1. Analysis will reveal components resembling achievement and sexuality, which have been common threads across all previous studies using the MMIS, including Russia.
2. In addition and because of commonalities in political and economic factors, we hypothesize an etic component similar to the component of Dedicated Provider revealed in Russia in previous research (Janey et al, 2006).
3. Next, since Ukraine is in the process of forging a new national identity separate from its Soviet past, emic components unique to Ukrainian men will emerge.
4. Finally, components will demonstrate favorable psychometric properties indicating construct validity of the derived components.
METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Data was collected from four Ukrainian universities, three of which are located in Odessa \((n = 87)\) and one in Kirovohrad \((n = 102)\). Both cities are far south of Kiev, reasonably isolated from the social and political influence of the capital, and home to a largely ethnic Ukrainian population.

The sample was composed of 191 male undergraduate and graduate students. All participants were volunteers and completed the questionnaire either as part of course research participation requirements or for extra course credit. The age of the participants ranged from 15 to 44 \((M = 19.47, SD = 4.94)\). Responses on the MMIS from all four university samples were compared; since no significant differences were found, the data was combined. Additional data describing the sample are shown in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
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<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
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<td>Muslim</td>
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<td>20</td>
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<td>5000 (\leq)</td>
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**Measures**

**Male Role Norms Scale.** The Male Role Norms Scale (MRNS; Thompson & Pleck, 1986) is a 26-item measure used to assess endorsement of masculinity related norms. The MRNS was derived from the Brannon Masculinity Scale (Brannon & Juni, 1984), which was in turn based on Brannon’s Blueprint for Manhood (Brannon, 1976). The MRNS is scored on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree.” Higher scores indicate higher levels of endorsement of traditional masculinity. Principal component factor analysis indicated three sub-constructs: Toughness, Anti-Femininity, and Status (Thompson & Pleck, 1986). Internal reliability estimates ranged from .74 to .81 (Thompson & Pleck).

**Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale.** The Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale (MMIS; Doss & Hopkins, 1998) is a 35-item measure devised to assess masculinity similarly to the MRNS. Items were developed based on a review of the empirical and non-empirical masculinity literature, which included non-Anglo sources (Doss & Hopkins). The MMIS is scored on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (5) “strongly agree,” with higher scores indicating higher levels of masculinity.

Doss and Hopkins (1998) used a principal-component analysis including samples from Chilean, African-American and Anglo-American populations. Two common etic components were revealed: Hypermasculine Posturing and Achievement. Alpha coefficients were .81 and .72, respectively. Emic components for the Chilean sample were Toughness (.59), Pose (.58), and Responsibility (.48). The only emic components in the African-American and Anglo-American samples were Sexual Responsibility (.43) and Sensitivity (.70) (Doss & Hopkins). More recent research with a Russian sample (Janey et al., 2006) identified four components: Achievement Pose, Aggressive Sexuality, Dedicated Provider, and Emotional Availability/Stability. Internal consistency estimates of these factors in the Russian study were .77, .47, .41, and .51, respectively.

**Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale.** The 13-item short form of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale (SDS; Crowne & Marlowe, 1960) was used to test for cultural differences in social desirability and to examine discriminant validity of the MMIS. Items are rated as either “true” or “false,” and high scores indicate the tendency to respond in a manner understood as viewed favorably by others. The 13-item short form was developed following a principal factor analysis, and it has been found to have acceptable reliability estimates (.76) and a strong correlation with the 33-item Marlowe-Crowne SDS (r = .93, p < .001). While the original study (Doss & Hopkins, 1998) used the 6-item short form, alpha coefficients seemed low (α = .39 - .47). As such, it was decided a more thorough test of this variable would be desirable (i.e., 13-item short form). Internal reliability for this sample was .87.
DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE. A demographic questionnaire was devised to assess age, religion, marital status, year in college, college major, and family of origin monthly income.

TRANSLATION. Russian is no longer considered the national language of Ukraine, but it is still taught in schools and considered lingua franca in post-Soviet regions such as Ukraine (Bilaniuk, 2003). All measures were translated into Russian by a Russian graduate student in a graduate-level English language program. Back translation (Brislin, 1970) was performed by linguists fluent in both Russian and English. Difficult to translate items were translated with input from the principal investigators. The majority of items (72%) were either word-for-word translations or had only slight differences in sentence structure. Twenty-five percent of items were judged to have subtle differences, yet retained the same general meaning. Two items proved problematic, lacking identical meaning in Russian. For example, “tough” in item 12 from the MMIS translated as “durable and stoic” in Russian. “When the going gets tough, the tough get going” in item 11 of the MRNS is an English expression that lacks a direct Russian equivalent. It was translated as “only the strongest can succeed and prevail.” It should be noted that in 1989, the Ukrainian legislature (Verkhovna Rada) adopted Ukrainian as the official state language. However, Russian and Ukrainian are linguistically similar, and Russian is still widely spoken, written, and understood by the sample, and in general in Ukraine (Bilaniuk).

RESULTS

An initial sample of 191 men was obtained. Data was screened for outliers and cases with missing data. Three were deleted with Mahalanobis distance, which exceeded $p < .001$ with degrees of freedom equal to the number of variables ($\chi^2(35) = 66.58$). One case was deleted because of incomplete responses on the MMIS, and three other cases had isolated missing values in less than 10% of the total number of items included in the questionnaire. These missing values were replaced with means. This left a remaining sample of 187 for further analysis. According to Kass and Tinsley (1979), a sample size of 5-10 participants per variable is appropriate to conduct factor analysis. Since the Multicultural Masculinity Ideology Scale (MMIS) contains 35 variables, a sample of 175 to 350 would be indicated. Thus, a final sample of 187 was sufficient with a 5.34 participants-to-variables ratio.

PRINCIPAL COMPONENTS ANALYSIS

To estimate the number of components to retain for the MMIS, a principal components analysis was performed. This is consistent with previous analyses using the MMIS, and principal components analysis is preferred over other exploratory factor analysis procedures when the objective is an empirical summary of data (Tabachnik & Fidell, 2007), as was the case with this study. The number of components to be retained for rotation was determined according to four criteria: (a) eigenvalues greater than 1.0, (b) percentage of total variance
explained by each component, (c) Cattell’s (1966) scree test, and (d) interpretability of the solution. Scree plots indicated the presence of 13 components with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, with a marked discontinuity occurring after four. Therefore, solutions that were investigated ranged from 2 to 11.

Correlations between components for the MMIS were large enough ($r$ (187) = .05 to .28) to exceed the recommendations of Tabachnik and Fidell (2007) for orthogonal rotation. Thus, oblique rotation was utilized for further extractions, making the variance explained by each component an approximation. Components were retained if they were interpretable as a masculinity construct and had four or more items loading at $|$.40$ or higher. Solutions from 5 to 11 resulted in components with three or fewer items loading at the specified limit. A three component solution resulted in a reproduced correlation matrix with more than half (52%) of residuals with absolute values > .05, suggesting the presence of another component. A four-component solution appeared to be more interpretable and accounted for 33.1% of the variance. It included 25 of the 35 MMIS items with loadings of ≤ .40 with no cross loadings ≥ .40. Thus, all 25 items were included for interpretation. Table 2 presents the MMIS items and the component matrix for the four-component solution following oblique rotation.

Component 1 was composed of nine items, which accounted for 14.2% of the variance. This component appeared to represent the nexus between prosperity and potential for provision of material wealth and sexuality. Highest loading items were 31 (“A guy should have sexual intercourse as early as he can in life”), 11 (“In a relationship guys should have sexual intercourse as often as possible”), and 21 (“Even if a guy is not rich, he should try to look that way”). This component was labeled Prosperity/Sexuality.

The second component accounted for 7.5% of the variance and contained six items. Items generally suggested a stoic, emotionally reserved and confident attitude toward life (Items 10, 12, 7, and 9). The second highest loading item was 24 (“A man should not always have to protect his family”; reverse scored). Therefore, this component was labeled Stoic Protector.

The third component contained five items and accounted for 6.2% of the variance. This component was labeled Competitive Perseverance because it contained items concerning attitudes that could be viewed as common among men in a wide variety of competitive situations, such as sports or competitive arenas such as business. The following items are included in the third component: 30 (“Being athletic or good at a sport should be important for a guy”), 26 (“Guys should be competitive”), 16 (“A guy should put his best effort into every part of his life”), and 17 (“Courage should not be a necessary part of being a guy”; reverse scored).

The six items of the forth component accounted for 5.0% of the variance. Four of the six items were highly suggestive of sexuality: 34 (“For a guy, sexual intercourse should not be the goal of making out”), 18 (“Being a virgin should not be an embarrassment to a guy”), 4 (“A guy should prove his masculinity by having sex with a lot of people”), and 27 (“A guy should have sexual intercourse only in emotionally committed relationships”). Two other items loading on this component were 5 (“Guys should not try to solve problems by..."
Table 2  
**MMIS Items and Component Matrix Loadings for Four-Component Solution with Orthogonal Rotation**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component One: Sexual Prosperity ($\alpha = .72$)</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>31. A guy should have sexual intercourse as early as he can in his life.</td>
<td><strong>.61</strong></td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. In a relationship, guys should have sexual intercourse as often as possible.</td>
<td><strong>.56</strong></td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Even if a guy is not rich, he should try to look that way.</td>
<td><strong>.52</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. In a relationship, guys should have sexual intercourse before having oral sex.</td>
<td><strong>.52</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. The best way a man can care for his family is to get the highest paying job he can.</td>
<td><strong>.52</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-.30</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Providing for his family should be a man’s main goal in life.</td>
<td><strong>.51</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-.39</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. A guy should always have a woman he is dating.</td>
<td><strong>.49</strong></td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Showing emotion is not a sign of weakness in a guy. (R)</td>
<td><strong>.49</strong></td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33. A guy should take risks to reach his goals.</td>
<td><strong>.41</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component Two: Stoic Protector ($\alpha = .60$)</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. A guy should be confident in everything he does.</td>
<td>*</td>
<td><strong>.62</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. A man should not always have to protect his family. (R)</td>
<td>*</td>
<td><strong>.54</strong></td>
<td>.24</td>
<td>-.13</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. A guy should not have male friends that are homosexual.</td>
<td>*</td>
<td><strong>.49</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Male friends should not show affection to each other. (R)</td>
<td>.24</td>
<td><strong>.49</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. To be a guy, you’ve got to be tough.</td>
<td>*</td>
<td><strong>.44</strong></td>
<td>-.21</td>
<td>-.25</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Guys should have a positive attitude towards life and not let things get them down.</td>
<td>-.29</td>
<td><strong>.43</strong></td>
<td>*</td>
<td>*</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table continued on next page*
Table 2, continued from previous page

Component Three: Competitive Perseverance (α = .38)

30. Being athletic or good at a sport should be important for a guy. * * .62 * 3.67 .93
26. Guys should be competitive. .35 -.11 .60 * 3.23 1.04
16. A guy should put his best effort into every part of his life. .35 * .52 * 2.82 1.06
17. Courage should not be a necessary part of being a guy. (R) * * .46 * 3.53 1.0

Component Four: Reserved Sexuality (α = .56)

34. For a guy, sexual intercourse should not be the goal of making out. .08 -.17 -.13 .62 3.53 .94
18. Being a virgin should not be an embarrassment to a guy. * .19 .15 .58 3.22 1.01
5. Guys should not try to solve problems by fighting. (R) * * -.16 .51 2.69 1.07
4. A guy should prove his masculinity by having sex with a lot of people. -.12 .18 .16 .50 3.38 1.08
27. A guy should have sexual intercourse only in emotionally committed relationships. * -.13 -.35 .51 2.94 1.09
29. A guy should not look for danger just for the thrill of it. * * * .41 3.4 .92

(R) indicates reverse scoring. * Indicates item loaded at less than |.10|.

In the present study, alphas for the MRNS were somewhat lower than results from previous research: .67 (Status), .55 (Toughness), and .49 (Anti-Femininity). Internal consistency estimates for the MMIS were .72, .60, .38, and .56 for Sexuality/Prosperity, Stoic Protector, Competitive Perseverance, and Reserved Sexuality, respectively. Construct validity of the MMIS was tested using the Male Role Norms Scale (MRNS; Thompson & Pleck, 1986). Correlations of all variables are presented in Table 3.

As expected, Sexuality/Prosperity demonstrated significant correlations with all three components of the MRNS, with values ranging from \( r(187) = .49 \)
for Anti-femininity to $r = .46$ for Toughness. Correlations for other components with the MRAS were significant, though somewhat lower (Stoic Protector $r = .23$ to .35 and Competitive Perseverance $r = .28$ to .32). Correlations with Reserved Sexuality were not significant ($r = -.06$ to -.04.). One caveat is the Cronbach alphas of the MRNS obtained in this sample, which suggest lower overall reliability than findings from previous research using this scale.

Divergent validity was established using the 13-item short form of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale. Correlations with all four components ($r = -.01$ to -.12) were not significant. Thus, none of the components appear affected by tendencies to respond in ways that would be viewed as favorable by others.

**DISCUSSION**

**LIMITATIONS**

Before interpreting the results of this exploratory factor analysis, it is necessary to discuss several limitations. First, it would be premature to offer any firm conclusions about masculinity ideology in Ukraine using the MMIS. As with any quantitative research design, results are constricted by the assessments used and the questions they contain. Had other masculinity scales been used, analysis could have revealed male role components in Ukrainian populations differing substantially from those reported here.

In addition, this sample cannot be considered representative. Therefore, results cannot be generalized beyond Ukrainian men attending universities in urban areas of Southwestern Ukraine. This is of particular relevance for two reasons. First, there are likely salient cultural differences between eastern regions (oblasts) and those in the west, with eastern areas being more Russian in cultural orientation, and western areas identifying more strongly with Europe (Fedynsky, 2008). Second, unique distinctions pertinent to gender role socialization have been drawn between rural and city dwellers in Post-Soviet society (Kerig et al., 1993).
Lastly, as indicated, all instruments were back translated in Russian with due care; however, there were some items that did not translate directly. It is not known how the use of a Russian translation may have influenced the interpretations and responses of the participants.

**CONCLUSIONS**

With these limitations in mind, it is possible to suggest some tentative conclusions about masculinity ideology among men in Ukrainian society. The first and second hypotheses stated that analyses would reveal components characteristic of achievement and sexuality, as well as a component suggestive of Dedicated Provider found in Russia (Janey et al., 2006) These hypotheses was partially supported with Sexuality/Prosperity, and Reserved Sexuality.

Sexuality/Prosperity is similar to the Dedicated Provider (kormilets) component suggested in previous research conducted in neighboring Russia (e.g. Janey et al., 2006). It is also a plausible emic component, in that results from all previous use of the MMIS (including Russia) lacked a similar connection between achievement and female companionship. This lends partial support to the third hypothesis projecting the existence of unique emic components in Ukraine. This result suggests that Ukrainian men perceive a link between prosperity (presumably based on career achievement) and their value as potential mates. Such a connection may carry further significance considering the unpredictability of what Yurchak (2002) described as a “man’s economy” in the former Soviet Union, and how failure could undermine men’s status at home (Kiblitskaya, 2000). Pilkington (1996) was more explicit, suggesting that a man’s inability to earn a wage in the supposed new land of opportunity could threaten his masculinity, especially given the “…general context of a society in which the cultural stereotype of girls evaluating men by the size of their wallet is omniscient” (p. 257).

The first hypothesis was more clearly supported by the second component, Reserved Sexuality. The overall set of items is reminiscent of Composed Sexuality found among Russian men, as it shares three of the highest loading items (Janey, et al., 2006). It may also be roughly consistent with the puritanical and ambivalent attitudes surrounding sex and sexuality transmitted by a parental cohort that came of age during the Soviet era (Omelchenko, 2000).

The appearance of this component may represent the proverbial “tip of the iceberg.” It underscores a topic of grave concern in Ukraine and all of the former Soviet republics, given rising rates of sexual activity among post-Soviet youth (Kon, 2009) combined with growing rates of HIV/AIDS infection, a lack of information about birth control, and the use of abortion as a primary method of contraception in Ukraine (Jarosewich, 1997). Ukraine may be in a more flexible position than Russia to respond to this situation, with public discourses of sex education less obviously tinged with what Kon describes as a “growing wave of nationalism, xenophobia and militarism” disguised as a “moral renaissance” in Russia. Considering what is at stake in terms of public health, future research on the mediating influence of masculinity ideology and
receptiveness to sex education programs seems to be an investment that could pay substantial dividends.

The appearance of Competitive Perseverance and Stoic Protector components support the third hypothesis since they appear to be specific to men in Ukraine. The latter component is similar to the Protector theme first described by Gilmore (1990). It revealed attitudes recognizing a responsibility to protect family combined with the emotional demeanor necessary for that function. An intriguing feature is item #3, pertaining to having male friends that are homosexual. The loading of this item is unambiguous, and it suggests that part of the protector theme includes protection from what men in this sample viewed as sexual deviance. This would be consistent with lingering homophobia in public consciousness of former Soviet republics (Omelchenko, 2002).

Competitive Perseverance demonstrated the weakest psychometric properties, thus interpretation must be cautious and highly speculative. Yet because of the exploratory nature of this study, further comment seems warranted. It could be viewed in two ways. First, this generation of post-Soviet men may be endorsing the attitudes and skills needed in market economies that rewards risk-taking in a competitive entrepreneurial society. If so, this is a notable shift in terms of era and national identity in two ways. Kerig et al. (1993) suggest during the Soviet era male tendencies such as initiative were discouraged in favor of passivity. Furthermore, older Russian men from Moscow viewed careers in business as more feminine than careers in engineering or science, because of the negotiation that business sometimes requires (Shevchenko, 2002).

A second interpretation requires less inference: It may be that organized sports are a unique emic feature of masculine ideals among young men in Ukraine. The relationship between sports and the male role has been central in Western literature (Robertson & Newton, 2001), and much of professional sports marketing in Europe and North America targets men. Considering the weaker evidence of validity and lower internal consistency, this speculation requires confirmation in future research.

Recommendations for future research are relevant in a discussion of the last hypothesis, which projected that derived components would demonstrate favorable psychometric properties indicating construct validity of the MMIS. This hypothesis was clearly supported for Sexuality/Prosperity, since it correlated significantly with the MRNS, and had an acceptably high level of internal consistency. For the other three components, indices of construct validity were lower.

Overall, the results reported here are most applicable to the construction of a Ukrainian Masculinity Ideology scale. A substantial contribution of the MMIS might be the use of Sexuality/Prosperity as a sub-scale. Because of low internal reliability and validity measures, the utility of the other three components as theoretical constructs would be limited, which could guide the generation of similar related items. This process of generating more items for testing can be accomplished via interviews with men, or perhaps using open ended questions in questionnaires. It might also be advisable to include items generated from a comprehensive survey of relevant Ukrainian literature that pertains to the male role. Whorley and Addis (2006) have further suggested soliciting the
input of women, who are a generally neglected resource in designing masculinity ideology scales.

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Since the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Mexican government has ratified all UN international instruments regarding violence against women and thus committed itself to fulfill women’s rights, end inequality, and eradicate gender-based violence. The struggle of the Mexican feminist movement to eliminate violence against women can also be traced back to the 1980s, when the first center to provide psychological and legal support to victims of sexual violence was

**ABSTRACT** This article discusses qualitative research conducted with a group of Mexican men working against their violence toward their female partners. Using a Foucauldian analysis based on concepts of subjectivation and ethics of self, I argue that in this psycho-educational intervention a new subject is produced through these men’s embodiment of the technical language of the discourse of violence against women: the violent man. In the program, adopting such an identity is regarded as the necessary condition for stopping violent behavior. From that starting point a whole technology of self is implemented in order to work with men’s emotions and bodies. Pain is regarded as the true substance and antidote against all other undesirable emotions, including anger.

**KEYWORDS** Masculinity, violence, subjectivation, men’s groups, Mexico

Since the 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Mexican government has ratified all UN international instruments regarding violence against women and thus committed itself to fulfill women’s rights, end inequality, and eradicate gender-based violence. The struggle of the Mexican feminist movement to eliminate violence against women can also be traced back to the 1980s, when the first center to provide psychological and legal support to victims of sexual violence was

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1 This includes the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Sanction, and Eradicate Violence Against Women, and the Beijing Conference Platform for Action, among others.

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opened under the supervision of women’s organizations (Bedregal, 1991). Recently, the Mexican Congress passed the General Law for Women’s Access to a Life without Violence (Ley General de Acceso de las Mujeres a una Vida sin Violencia, Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2007) in an effort to give weight to these international commitments, as information campaigns and treatment programs for victims and perpetrators have been launched.3

Although initially both government and civil society groups focused on providing attention to victims—especially victims of sexual violence4—other recent programs target partner violence by acting upon “perpetrators” or “generators” who are mostly men. Such was the case of the Colectivo de Hombres por Relaciones Igualitarias [Coriac] (Men’s Collective for Egalitarian Relationships), an NGO that worked with men who were violent to their partners in Mexico City. This paper analyzes a series of interviews conducted at Coriac, by using a Foucauldian framework based on concepts of subjectivation and ethics of self (Foucault, 1988a, 1991, 1999a, 1999b). Analysis suggests that these men ambivalently try to give up a form of power through the construction of another power relationship with the group. The result is not the elimination of power, but a new process of subjectivation, of subjection to a normative discourse which feeds on feminist understandings of gender inequality. This way, the technical language of violence against women provides the basis for an educational intervention in which recognizing oneself as a violent subject—and consequentially taking up such an identity—is considered a necessary condition for stopping violent behavior. From that starting point, a whole technology of self (Foucault, 1991) is deployed in order to work with one’s body and emotions, where emotional pain is seen as the antidote against undesirable emotions, especially against anger.

**DISCOURSES OF VIOLENCE: DICHOTOMY, SUBJECTS AND POWER**

As part of the institutionalization of responses to violence against women, Mexican society has been increasingly exposed to government campaigns and interventions intended to raise consciousness through conveying images of men and women involved in the problem. Often, however, such images do not reflect the complexity of the relationship between structural conditions, such as gender inequality, and individual behaviors, creating a sort of “caricature of gender-based violence” projecting two opposite characters:

On one side a man, almost always poorly educated, low-income and/or unemployed, who with or without any provocation charges psychologi-

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2 Although initially feminist groups focused on rape and sexual violence, their agenda gradually included all forms of violence against women.
3 These efforts, however, have not been sufficient to address impunity and women’s rights violations, even within families (Amnesty International, 2008).
4 This is the case of the creation of the Special Agencies of Sexual Crimes, created by the General Attorney’s Office in 1988.
cally or physically against a woman. On the other side, the victim, a woman, who is an almost passive receiver of violence. (Castro & Riquer, 2003, p. 137)

This juxtaposition can be readily observed in an article available through the website of the Federal Government’s National Women’s Institute (Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres), posted along with other articles, documents and even self-applied tests for women and men to determine whether or not they are involved in violence:

Abusers are immature, dependent and insecure, they are emotionally unstable, impatient and impulsive. The abuser tends to be an isolated person and he is jealous even of his own shadow, he has low self-esteem, which causes frustration, and frustration brings violence. Besides, he has rigid expectations regarding his sexual role as a man. He is the typical macho, and machismo is covering an inferiority complex. (Inmujeres, 2009)

This brief text may exemplify the discursive emergence of what could be a new subject of social intervention in Mexico: the violent man, which serves as the basis for the reeducation model analyzed in this article. Foucault has argued that discourse is not simply a means through which power struggles take place, but itself a place and object of conflict (Foucault, 1988a). Violence against women constitutes such a field of power and social practice extending from government policies to behavioral—and even emotional—norms for relationships. As argued, despite the complexity of the problem, a simplistic approach to partner violence as a clear-cut dichotomy between victim and perpetrator seems to dominate in Mexico. The success of this representational solution appears to lie in its ability to resonate with preexisting cultural and social patterns associated with stereotyped interpretations of gender (Rothenberg, 2002). The link between “the woman” and “the man” would be between passivity and activity, so much so that only the man would be expected to perpetrate violence.

Not only the characters are stereotyped, but also violence is depicted as separated from the larger contours of everyday life. Ramírez states that an “episodic perspective” of violence dominates most studies in Mexico, because they address violence as “consummated acts and consider events as fixed photographs” (2005, p. 91). This way, violence is isolated from the flow of rela-

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5 “Perfil del hombre maltratador,” http://www.e-mujeres.gob.mx/wb2/eMex/eMex_Perfil_del_hombre_maltratador?page=1
6 Article 6 of the Law against violence against women defined emotions such as “lack of affection and indifference” as psychological violence. Such phrasing was later eliminated.
7 For example, the mentioned Law refers repeatedly to victim and aggressor (Article 5, Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2007). Beyond the fact that these nouns in Spanish match linguistic genders—la victima, el aggressor—in the legal text the victim is assumed to be female.
tionships and presented as an exception, as a discrete act and a pause from
everyday life. Within this logic, to solve the problem would entail identification
and removal of violence from otherwise harmonic relations. However, as
Ramírez states, violence is not only present in the “video of the episode—the
punch, insult, or belittlement, always of the man against his partner” (p. 91)—
but in conversations, desires, everyday chores, and even love stories.

Walker’s work on the “battered woman syndrome” (1979) has become the
most authoritative scientific argument in Mexico, and has fed a large number
of current strategies focusing on women’s identities as victims of conjugal
abuse. Similarly to what happened in the United States,

For those who were otherwise skeptical of feminist claims, the suffering
battered women experienced could still evoke sympathy. In multiple vic‐
timization arguments[10], there was a place for feminist discourse that sug‐
gested the need for greater change on the community and societal levels
while simultaneously recognizing the implications for individual women.
(Rothenberg, 2003, p. 776)

Juxtaposed to this image of battered women, the violent man lies in wait in
every man just because of his gender, manifesting himself in those who are
flawed, either because of idiosyncratic personality or exaggerated obedience
to dominant prescriptions of masculinity.

Maybe a difference has to be made between the way this has to be ad‐
dressed in research and intervention. To acknowledge violence as structural
does not automatically allow individual action against it, so discursive strate‐
gies using gender images have been important in rendering partner violence
visible and revealing its connections to gender inequality in public policy and
educational strategies. These stereotypes, however, produce analytic rigidity in
research because they construct types of subjects instead of looking at processes
and relationships.

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8 The battered woman syndrome is a manifestation of learned defenselessness which ac‐
counts for the inability of victims to protect themselves from domestic violence. It is
characterized by feelings of low self-esteem, inhibition, isolation, fatalism, depression,
and a sense of helplessness and impotence. The author herself later used the term “cycle
of violence” (Walker, 1984), in order to explain why, in her opinion, women remained
in violent relationships.

9 Among others, Gondolf and Fisher (1988) criticized this approach by arguing that
women in violent relationships are “active survivors” instead of passive victims, be‐
cause they display a number of strategies not sufficiently acknowledged in this model,
including efforts to leave their partners.

10 Multiple victimization arguments claim that battered women were not only individ‐
ually trapped by their partners, but also by a patriarchal social system that denied them
adequate access to income, employment, social security and resources in general
(Rothenberg, 2003).
The possible implications of thinking violence as embedded in relationships for intervention strategies and treatment programs with aggressors remains, then, an open agenda. Within this perspective, law enforcement and criminal justice are not enough to alleviate victims, but aggressors’ reeducation is also necessary.

Men should be involved. No policy or law which aspires to improve the safety and condition of women has possibility of success without the active participation of both men and women. (ONU, 2003)

In Mexico initial response to this call emerged from civil society organizations (primarily the Colectivo de Hombres por Relaciones Igualitarias and Salud y Género whose work was pioneering) which were able to establish a dialogue with national and local governments regarding work with men who act out violently. These organizations mirrored models developed in countries of the North such as the Duluth model (Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs, 2009), a psychoeducational strategy that locates “the root causes of intimate partner violence in our fundamental patriarchal societal and institutional structures that tacitly or overtly reward the continued domination of males over females and that justify any means (including physical aggression) enabling men to occupy positions of power” (Eckhardt, Murphy, Black & Suhr, 2006, p. 376).

Approaches akin to this consider abuse not only to be the product of a psychological syndrome, but also learned behavior seeking coherence with “cultural prescriptions valued in western society” (Dobash & Dobash, 1979). Treatment should accordingly focus on “psychoeducational programming, whereby the patriarchal ideologies and philosophy of male privilege among perpetrators are exposed, power and control tactics discouraged, and more gender-egalitarian strategies encouraged” (Eckhardt et al., 2006, p. 376)

Interventions based on feminist approaches to power and subordination consider violence a socio-political problem, based on an intentional behavior endorsed by structural gender inequality. The corresponding reeducation strategy requires that men assume their responsibility for violent behaviors in order to personally and collectively confront those gender constructions that cause them.11 The present analysis focuses on Coriac, an NGO operating in Mexico City from 1993 to 200612, especially on institutional manuals and autobio-

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11 See Bonino (2005) for a critical review of the platforms and results of different programs for men who exert violence.

12 In 2007 some of the former members of Coriac formed Hombres por la Equidad. Centro de Intervención con Hombres e Investigación sobre Género y Masculinidades. Their mission is “to promote, conduct research and design public policy from a gender perspective in order to encourage people’s citizenship in the public and private spheres, by contributing to eliminate gender-based violence and making a critique of traditional notions of masculinity.” In this new organization they continue to offer the “Men Giving Up Their Violence” program discussed here. See http://www.hombresporlaequidad.org.mx
graphical interviews conducted with participants from men’s groups. The Facilitator’s Manual of the program Men Giving up their Violence specifies that

Coriac is a Mexican civil organization created by men who work to change traditional forms of masculinity that impoverish our lives and are oppressive to women. Our mission is to research, promote, and carry out actions of personal, institutional, and social change tending toward the generation of constructive, creative and affective forms of being men, at the same time contributing to develop and strengthen a culture based on equity and respect in the public and private spheres. (Coriac, 2002a, p. 20)

Coriac worked primarily with middle-class, middle-age men from urban settings (especially from Mexico City) who voluntarily joined the program. Unlike many programs in other countries that operate as a result of court orders13 most of the men at Coriac came out of their own will, often because of their partner’s insistence or after listening to broadcasts where Coriac members spoke of their experience. Men who showed interest were included in all-men groups attending weekly sessions facilitated by a senior member having completed the program himself. According to Roberto Guadarrama, a former Coriac member, only one in ten contacting Coriac by telephone went on to visit the group. Out of them, only few stayed till the introductory lecture, fewer entered the program and fewer still finished it (CDHDF, 2004). Ortiz and De Keijzer (1996) calculated that dropout was up to 80% during the first level of the program.

The organization’s objectives further envisioned involvement in placing partner violence and reeducation programs for perpetrators on the public policy agenda. They worked closely with the Mexico City Human Rights Commission and trained psychologists, social workers and policemen at the Office of the Mexico City General Attorney,14 and conducted awareness raising activities with other NGO’s, especially with feminist groups. The program’s main goal was that participants committed themselves to non-exertion of violence in their relationships with partners and children, and to taking responsibility for their behavior and its consequences. According to the manual, they would do so through a process of challenging beliefs of gender superiority and through recognizing and expressing their emotional experience, while at the same time learning to negotiate conflicts with their partners on a basis of respect and equality (Coriac, 2002a).

13 Some men were sent to Coriac by the Office for Crime Victims and Community Services of the Mexico City District Attorney (Subdirección de Atención a Víctimas del Delito y Servicios a la Comunidad, Procuraduría General de Justicia del Distrito Federal), since the Law for Women’s Access to a Life without Violence mandates the Federation and the states to “include sentences that include aggressor’s obligation to participate in integral, specialized and free reeducation services” (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2007, p. 3).
14 For general information regarding these services, see http://www.pjgdf.gob.mx/atencionvictimas/civa.asp
Inspired by the work of the San Francisco Training Center to Eradicate Male Family Violence, Coriac’s was a reeducation model consisting of three levels which took an average of three years to complete. The first level was comprised of 16 sessions with carefully planned activities, guided by the organization’s founders or third-level participants trained as facilitators. The interviews analyzed here took place with seven men who at the time of the research had reached the third level, and one man who had recently passed to the second. The main goal was that men acknowledged their violence as something they had learned, and committed themselves to stop it. They would do so through recognizing that they behaved violently, assuming their responsibility, and identifying the “dimensions” of the problem. They were trained to recognize “fatal risk,” a set of mental, emotional and physical “signs” considered to be the prelude of violence. Also, they learned and rehearsed “withdrawal,” a specific technique which helped them walk away from situations in which they sensed they could be violent, in order to stop and reflect on their emotions.

In the second level participants explored “their emotional experience in order to understand their violence.” The manual states that men who passed the first level know they should not be violent and learn to withdraw, but often ask themselves, “what do I do with this pain?” For Coriac, to explore personal histories is the basis for change. Moments of violence are related “to personal stories during childhood, youth or even adulthood, where the same pain, the same sadness or the same fear surfaced” (Coriac, 2002b). The ability to work through emotional pain was thus presented as a major leverage for stopping men’s violence. Finally, in the third level men worked on their inability to solve conflicts with their partners by learning to negotiate peacefully and to deal with their emotions.

Participants evaluated their progress periodically through questionnaires. Self-evaluation was taken as a powerful tool not only to measure the group’s progress, but also to encourage men to self-reflect. While first level participants often felt “angry,” “upset” or “sad” when they acknowledged their violence, men in the second level expressed their “confusion” or “frustration” after discovering they “still exert violence despite being committed not to do it” (Garda 1999, p. 284). Finally, third level participants spoke of “joy” and “satisfaction” in complying with the groups’ goals.

I established contact with Coriac members since 1998, after which they were invited to participate in this research. Eight participants agreed to tell their stories in three consecutive interviews. We carried out autobiographical narrative interviews (Lindón, 1999) where men were invited to talk freely about

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15 http://www.cecevim.org
16 Self-evaluation questions, were responded ‘always’; ‘many times’, ‘few times’ or ‘never’. Some examples are: “I identify my physical violence,” “I identify my verbal violence,” “I identify my sexual violence,” “I identify my emotional violence.” “I recognize my violence against my sons and daughters,” I accept that I did harm them,” “I identify the signs of risk,” “I decide to withdraw.”
different aspects of their lives: family history, relationships, sexuality, health, fatherhood, and their experience in men’s groups. All interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed using conceptual codes that emerged mainly from Foucault’s work on subjectivation, ethics and power.

**THE DISCOVERY OF SELF AS A VIOLENT MAN**

Below I trace the coordinates of an experience produced with Coriac’s participants, the construction of themselves as violent men. If we understand subjectivity as “the way in which the subject experiences himself in a game of truth where he relates to himself” (Maurice Florence pseud. Foucault, 1991, p. 21), said experience would imply the exercise of “techniques of self,” of procedures suggested or prescribed to individuals in order to fix, keep or transform their identity according to certain ends, and all that thanks to a relationship of control over oneself, or knowledge over oneself. In short … what to do about oneself?, what work to do upon oneself?, how to ‘rule’ by acting in a way that oneself is the object of such actions, the field where they apply, the instrument they have used and the subject that acts? (Foucault, 1999a, p. 255, trans. A.A.)

Coriac’s approach to partner violence maintained that “men are inscribed in systems of social power that grant them privileges by the very fact of being men” (2002a, p. 18) and to that end it offered certain techniques to men to transform themselves according to an ethics of gender equality and non-violence, and to a critique of dominant masculinities as a fundamental cause.

When working with men we should work simultaneously with personal change … while at the same time challenging the structures of power and subordination within society. (Coriac, 2002a, p. 17)

In the groups, men learn to declare their behaviors, feelings, and ideas regarding their partners as products of mistakes personally and socially founded in a sort of blindness produced by gender. Change is described as a process of awareness of the ways in which gender acted through them. They are “games of truth” in which the subject constructs himself as an object and “is induced to observe, analyze, decipher, and recognize himself as a possible domain of knowledge” (Florence pseud. Foucault, 1991, p. 21). In this spirit, Moisés (age 54, shopkeeper) critiques his exercise of power:

> I was in love when I got married, but it was so difficult for me to understand the relationship, that I ruined it without being aware of it, how I produced … reproduced that *machismo* that said to women: ‘you stay at home’. I lived by that terrible ignorance, right?

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17 Garda (2004), one of the founders of Coriac, has also used Foucault’s concepts of power, but his analysis is different from mine in that he intends to understand men’s violence itself, while I analyze the groups’ notions and practices.

18 All names are pseudonyms.
As portrayed in manuals and narratives, the intervention seems to be an issue of “governmentality” (Foucault, 1988b, 1999a) in the sense that participants are invited to regulate themselves through the strategic use of a language which would help them to see themselves as violent men. As Fox puts it, governmentality invites “citizens [to] treat themselves as ‘subjects’ to be examined and reformed” (1999, p. 88).

In men’s narratives the process frequently resembles the discovery of a new truth of self, of a supposed nature which remained hidden until the group unveiled it:

The truth is, I did not think I was violent, I didn’t even imagine … it was a very hard experience to be aware of my violence, perhaps because I had better self-esteem or a better concept of myself and I thought it was going to be simpler. But in the first questionnaire all of that fell apart because I could be deceiving myself, I soon realized that my violence was very large, … and that she [wife] had a lot of reasons to be deeply hurt. (José Carlos, age 39, art teacher)

The construction of a new identity, then, does not happen without setbacks: participants come to Coriac seeking relief from the unease produced by their conflicts with partners and families, but do not anticipate that they must take responsibility for their violence. They describe many moments of ambivalence, in which they both want to “change, transform, be better” and so on, and resist the implication of this subjectivation process. A paradox is thereby installed: in order to cease being a violent man he must acknowledge that he is so. Leandro (driver, age 40) tells about his experience as facilitator of first-level groups:

Those who come to my group for the first time say: ‘I’m not coming because of my violence … I’m coming because of my partner’s violence against me,’ they arrive blaming their partner without looking at themselves.

This self-definition seems to have both liberating and subjectifying effects. Identifying and naming certain behaviors as violent becomes a fundamental strategy to construct a new subject. This practice will serve as a fundamental tool of self-vigilance according to the expectations of the Program. Hernán (age 38, sales representative) ventilates his disappointment over his performance, as well as his intention to keep a watch on himself:

Being at Coriac has meant gradually discovering myself, right? Each Coriac session I’m discovering something new, good or bad, each workshop goes a little deeper, and I half-serious and half-joking tell them I need to spend another thirty years in Coriac in order to reorganize a lot of things.

But some resistance is also expressed, in this case by Alfonso, who is critical against such demand:

I have this label that says that I am in Coriac, and therefore that I identify my mistakes. So all the time I am watching myself, I have to be perfect, I
cannot make a mistake, I cannot. I can’t get angry, and that’s very heavy for me, it’s like I don’t allow myself to experience any other thing, to express myself, especially to get angry, I am very afraid of getting angry, so I have to learn to take it easy on myself. (Alfonso, age 37, street artist)

Between the Program’s instructions and his experience, Alfonso defends a space of possibilities and not of strict determination. It is as if the learning experience in Coriac expected total coherence from him.

The group allows men to look at certain painful and chaotic experiences and frame them within a narrative that grants men legitimacy because they participate in the struggle against violence toward women. There is an ethical dimension in this self-discovery, because accepting their own violence could be seen an expression of their ability to give up power. But then another dilemma could be envisioned in that participants are expected to give up a power that is structurally granted to them, that is, a power they might not be able to fully “give up.”

Furthermore, social structures do not remain external to them, but are seen as embedded in their subjectivities, so they are invited to reflect how, by virtue of this structural inequality, they are always at risk of behaving violently just because they are men. From then on, these men will face the threat of their own emotions and violence as impulses linked to dominant understandings of masculinity. Such impulses would disturb the fragile balance achieved by the techniques learned. Thus, Coriac struggles to produce a different way of being men by promoting a corrective pedagogy of emotions and bodies that would help participants to eliminate any expression of what is understood as violence. Such change would come from accepting that masculinity has its own discontents:

The program considers that masculinity, besides being linked to experiences of power, is also related to discomfort and pain … A critical and effective reflection on power and control mechanisms used by men [toward women] can only happen if male feelings are acknowledged. (Coriac, 2002a, p. 14)

In his study about masculine identity among members of Alcoholic Anonymous in Mexico, Brandes found that they construct an alternative by “maintaining a redefinition of masculinity that excludes alcohol consumption” (2002, p. 12). In a similar way, Coriac members struggle to find new meanings for masculinity that should exclude violence.

BOUNDARIES: THE VIOLENT BODY AND REFLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS

The group encourages participants to construct a series of boundaries in order to stop violent behaviors. They are first invited to establish a relation with themselves through a dichotomy between consciousness and emotions: the techniques seek to place a boundary between the subject and his body and between himself and his emotions in order to make a distinguish between a responsible and conscious observer and an irrational and uncontrolled emo-
tional body. Through a carefully planned technology,¹⁹ the groups build a boundary—founded on self-knowledge and ethical notions of gender equality—between emotions and acts. Feelings and sensations foretell an action that must be anticipated by a reflective subject.

An exercise called “identifying signals of fatal risk,” allows men to detect a sensory, emotional and intellectual experience that would announce a violent act, facilitating intervention.

Some men first identify the signals from the body (stomach pain, burning hands, etc.), others identify signals from the head (‘she is a fool,’ ‘she wants to hurt me,’ etc.). It does not matter which is first, the important element is to make them visible. Sometimes it is painful to do, because we “see” feelings we believed we did not have. Give yourself time, and little by little you will learn to know yourself better. (Coriac, 2003, p. 20)

For Coriac, fatal risk indicates that “you’re getting angry and may exert violence” (Coriac, 2003, p. 19), consisting of “sensations and/or thoughts which emerge in men when their partner refuses to recognize the supposed ‘authority’ men think they have just because they are men” (p. 20). Here violent behavior is seen as an experience that imposes itself upon the subject, an experience shaped by personal biography but supported by gender. Men are thereby encouraged to recognize themselves as bearers of a social history of inequality which could and should be transformed through the transformation of their subjectivity.

The technique does not end with mere registration of the signals, but appeals to a subject considered ignorant of the truth about himself, hence willing to seek an understanding of what is behind the signals. Thus, these are at best useful lies that would open the path toward the truth, through the interpretation of the language of body and emotions. Anger and rage would always be subject to suspicion, and therefore de-legitimized, because they would be a warning of violence that emerges from power granted to men by virtue of gender inequality. The User Manuals include short comic-strip stories which illustrate the notions and techniques that the Program intends to instill in participants (see Figure 1). In these stories, the possibility of men protesting any of their partner’s behavior they feel being unfair or offensive is questioned,

¹⁹ I use the term technology following Foucault’s concept of “technologies of self”:

Those techniques that allow individuals to effect a number of operations upon their own bodies, souls, thoughts, behaviours, as to transform themselves, to modify themselves, in order to achieve a certain state of perfection, happiness, purity, supernatural power, etc. (Foucault, 1991, p. 35, trans. A.A.)

For practical purposes, I will use technology to refer to a supposedly coherent set of techniques designed to achieve something. In this case, technology would include, among other elements, the structure of Coriac’s sessions and the suggested techniques of self (identification of fatal risk, withdrawal, revelation, etc.) in order to avoid behaving violently.
Figure 1. Armando’s Story.
Reproduced with kind permission and copyright by Coriac. First frame: My wife was in the hospital and I wanted to see her. / Armando: It’s hot! / On my way there the heat and the people made me feel uncomfortable. Second frame: When I got there, she was angry at me. / Wife: Why haven’t you come before? Not even when I’m sick can you be close to me! / And then she turned her back on me. Third frame: Armando: To think that I came such a long way for nothing! Stupid Patricia! Fourth frame: Nurse: What’s going on? / Armando: I was going to yell at her but I stopped myself. Fifth frame: I identified my anger and my shame for what had happened. / Armando: Look, Pati, I don’t feel so good. I’m going to go for a while. / She didn’t pay any attention to me. Sixth frame: I left the room. / Armando (thinking): My stomach hurts. I feel insecure when she’s angry at me. / I decided to stop the violence.
given that such protest could easily derive in violence. Rage in the comics is disregarded as a veil that hides the truth of pain. Pain would therefore be the only true emotion at the basis of subjectivity—along with the tenderness that should follow—which participants must unearth with tenacious self-observation supported by the group:

Now I understand why those violent men who come for the first time seem so cool, right? Because Coriac is an environment where the rules and agreements make up for an adequate atmosphere for men who are in a lot of pain, right? Here they can cry, they can scream, no one is going to say ‘you’re bad’ or ‘men don’t cry.’ Simply put, all of our beliefs are being challenged. Here it’s a matter of ‘we’ll see how soon he cries’ and soon it happens. But there are others who get stuck because they still haven’t identified what’s hurting them, but the first thing we learn here is to identify what hurts and where it hurts. Man, it’s extraordinary! (Mario, age 44, journalist)

Technique and technology are therefore “archaeological” — a digging up from the depths of subjectivity — and the Manuales are a set of procedures to chart the process of discovering a subjective subsoil where the truth of the subject lies: in pain and tenderness.

In this sense, the act of identifying, experiencing, and expressing pain is constructed as men’s main political action in order to resist gender power. The intention is that participants personify the feminist motto “the personal is political,” in this case performed by those who exert power. The goal is to know that which has been concealed, not only by individual biography, but also by the effects of power relations naturalized by gender. Gender would therefore be both a field of power in relationships with women, and of simulation in men’s relationship to themselves. If the personal is political, the latter would allow to discover the truly personal, that which is hidden.

There is therefore a certain shift from a therapeutic to a political conception of men’s violence. In fact, the therapeutic as a political process allows for the emergence of what is considered a deeper, more real, and more consistent nature, which is found behind masculinity as it was learned. In this sense, the personal does not fully become political, but actually ends up being extremely personal. The process begins with the personal — partner violence — then travels through the political — gender relations — and ends in pain, that is, again in the personal. Mario eloquently describes his expectations of this progress that goes from himself to the discourses learned in the group and then back to himself by making his the group’s guidelines for that new subjectivity.

For example, while in the first level the goal is to recognize themselves as violent men and to control their actions, the following levels intend that participants understand the sources of their behavior in their own personal history and in their process of social learning of masculinity, often plagued by violence itself.
As you go on, depending on how hard you work, you get closer to another world, to another way of being, but if you don’t work you continue to destroy yourself. I can tell when I get stuck, I don’t understand anything, and from there you go backwards again, then it becomes an individual task, you leave that session and you have a week to think about how you got stuck. The next session we come in and talk about what happened to us, if we had a violent act, right? Then we already know how to identify different acts of violence, emotional, economic, physical, verbal, sexual. With this technique you can identify … in the beginning a lot of us say ‘damn! I thought this wasn’t violence.’ (Mario)

The specification of each behavior, the precise taxonomy of one’s own actions, become sources of meaning and interpretation of the body, thought and emotion, all to attain an end—as goal and culmination—the end of violence. The transformation appears linear and fluid, so that to lose one’s way is understood as each man’s failure. Hernán is ambivalent toward this expectation, wavering between questioning the aim of completely eliminating all trace of violence from himself and confessing his weariness over achieving it:

Like they say, I have been more “popish than the Pope,” trying to have zero violence, zero abuse, but then you come back to reality that it is not so easy. Accidents of violence have happened between us [he and his partner] but, unlike before, now they are not pleasant for me, it’s very painful … the accident of violence, later you react and talk about it and say ‘you know what? I don’t like it. That is the only answer I have so far. (Hernán)

In this way, there is a permanent movement between the personal and the political, and between the duty to make a clean start and the impossibility to do so. In any case, success would rely on the ability to perform certain body orthopedics—gestures, voice, and movements—because it would show the transformation of the masculinity they embody and which is seen as the problem itself. Mario recounts his fascination with one man’s bodily performance when he first came to the group.

There’s a whole technique to stop your violence and together with the environment of Coriac you get inspired, just by breathing this air, right? You see the facilitator, his fine and soft manners, and you say, how nice, right? I want to be like him, for me that’s a man, a true one. (Mario)

**Withdrawal: The Boundary Between the Violent Man and Others**

The construction of boundaries within the subject himself, which provides for the identification of fatal risk, is the basis for techniques intended to trace another fundamental boundary, now between the violent man and his partner. In both manuals and stories, there is a notion that it is only possible to be violent to the extent that the other is not recognized as a subject in her/his own right, particularly the partner. This is expressed in the idea that men expect “authorities and services” from their partners just because they are men. These are
requests that we as men have learned to make and ‘automatically’ ask to be fulfilled” (Coriac, 2003, p. 32). Fatal risk strikes when expectations linked to such supposedly natural right are frustrated when partner responses do not match.

The fundamental technique to construct one of such boundaries consists of “withdrawal,” considered “a retraction which allows a moment of intimacy with oneself, in which we reflect on our own feelings and on the reasons for the withdrawal itself” (Coriac, 2002a, p. 65) (see Figure 2). It involves physically leaving the scene, the person and the place of the interaction, as a necessary condition for the emotional work needed to stop violent impulses.

The purpose of withdrawal is to pause for introspection so that the man can examine his feelings and thoughts, and confirm, once and again, that they are based on notions of masculinity. It is a pause where discourses learned in the group have a maximum resonance; a distance between the body and the subject where the rehearsed techniques become voluntary acts and allow a suspension of the inexorable violence:

I began to work with my body signals, where it hurts. Usually my stomach got hard, adrenaline went to my head, then I blew up and there was no way to stop me anymore. Here they taught me to stop. When I have such an adrenaline rush I know that a violent act is coming, and then I have to do certain things. What they first recommended to me, was to identify how it hurts, my hands would get tight, I started to sweat, my head hurt, that is a signal. I immediately withdraw. If I am with my partner I tell her ‘OK, I am going to withdraw’, and I leave, I cool down. … (Mario)

This way, the body sends a loud warning which the subject must learn to interpret as a prodrome of violence. Body sensations constitute the raw data for a trained interpretation of the emotions thus linked to them, especially of the anger which precedes the violent act and for which pain is the antidote. This technology is therefore aimed at identifying pain, at unveiling it hidden behind rage, and in any case, at producing pain through any means possible, given that vulnerability would itself dissolve violence. When pain is not spontaneously felt, exercises help men to get in touch with it. Alfonso recounts an experience that illustrates this procedure of emotional work.

One man would stand in the middle of the room and all of us would choose whatever we least liked about ourselves and we had to give it to him, and each of us took our turn to hurl at him what we didn’t like, he was left almost crawling. We saw that he was … I saw he was almost destroyed, crushed, crying, ‘please don’t throw anything else at me,’ and by the time the last of us had his turn, several of us would be crying. Later we would recover and everything was fine, but for me it was a very strong feeling of the need for someone to hug me, and the next exercise was precisely ‘whoever is next to you give him a hug.’ (Alfonso)
Figure 2. Poncho’s Story.
Reproduced with kind permission and copyright by Coriac. **First frame:** Verónica was laughing and laughing with my mother and her sisters when we finished dinner. **Second frame:** I got up to do the dishes / Poncho (thinking): Why doesn’t she help me? Does she think I’m her stupid servant? / She kept talking. **Third frame:** I came back for more dishes. / Verónica to Poncho (snapping her fingers and joking): Hurry up, I’m in a hurry! **Fourth frame:** I felt how my body heat was rising. I felt my face red from anger / Poncho (thinking): She’s going to pay for this. / I felt manipulated and ashamed; **Fifth frame:** I sat by her side and I saw my hand was shaking and I was very close to smack her. / Verónica to Poncho: Don’t be angry, honey, I’m just teasing you. **Sixth frame:** I realized I was very angry, I didn’t like those jokes. / Poncho: I’m going out for a while. I’m angry at you. Don’t worry. **Seventh frame:** Poncho: Why am I so solemn? I’d like to laugh more. / I didn’t exert violence.
Coriac sessions include an exercise called *revelation*, in which participants are requested to tell if they experienced a violent event that week, with the purpose to teach them to identify fatal risk and to implement withdrawal: “The facilitator indicates to the group ‘We are going to begin mini-revelations. One by one will comment as briefly as possible your violent event and I will guide you to carry out withdrawal’” (Coriac, 2002, p. 52). Questions are then posed to help participants identify fatal risk (“When did you begin to feel uncomfortable?”): the signals from the head (“What thoughts did you have about her when she said that?”), from the body (“What did you feel in your body when she said that to you?, where in your body did you feel the anger, the sadness?”), and from the heart (“What feelings did you have when she said or did that?”). Once participants answer these questions, they are asked to make a commitment to other members of the group that they will identify the signals and carry out withdrawal in their daily life. From that moment on, group mates are authorized to demand from each other to comply to such commitments, thus formalizing an internal and interactional mechanism of control. “Revelation is the main opportunity we have found in order to ‘deactivate’ violence, while at the same time respecting men’s emotions and feelings” (Garda, 1999, p. 285).

*Revelation* can be seen as confession—the subject is lead to talk about acts, feelings and thoughts which infringe moral norms with an expert who will interpret them within the frame of a certain construction of truth (Alcoff & Gray, 1993). Through this incitement of speech a “policing of statements” occurs (p. 272) where the expert looks for signs of sin, pathology or failure, in order to transform, punish or forgive the speaker.

The confessional is always implicated in (both constituting of and constituted by) an unequal, nonreciprocal relation of power. And the explicit goal of the process of confession is always the normalization of the speaking subject and thus the elimination of any transgressive potential which might exist. (p. 272)

The group’s intent is to put those internal processes and behaviors into discourse so that, just by being spoken, they can be interpreted as expressions of the abuse of male privilege in gender relations.

Right from the start in the first level ... there is revelation, right? You take your turn to reveal. You sit on a chair, next to you is the facilitator, and he begins asking questions, you gradually meet certain requirements, talking about that experience, and then you get into the issue and experience of the violent moment, how it was, and you begin to reflect on what it is you must do. And the men begin to get into the story and most of them go inside themselves and work with this, and they move toward crying. There is no way they can avoid going through this unless something’s wrong with them. By the second level you commit yourself to reveal over and over again, and when you begin to leave the violence behind, you under-
stand what the social construction is like, how you learned it, how you ex-
perienced it with your father, who your role-models were. (Mario)

In Coriac the role of expert is played by participants who have passed pre-
vious levels and who are trained to work as facilitators: their authority comes
from their success in domesticating their violent impulses through Coriac tech-
nology. The knowledge that sustains said technology, however, is not that of
everyday life, but of psychoeducation applied to transforming gender identi-
ties and to the treatment of violence against women.

The program at Coriac is very clear, very precise, and if one works hon-
estly it can be done, because one works through everything ... emotions
ranging from how we talk and what tone of voice we use and what is be-
hind it all, right? (Leandro)

This could be seen as the will of normalization that is intrinsic to confession
in psychotherapy, as the intention of transforming the speaker through the act
of confession itself, realigning his emotions and thoughts toward goodness,
transforming external law into internal truth and transforming the subjectivity
of the speaker from bad to good (Alcoff & Gray, 1993).

**CONCLUSION**

Effectiveness evaluation is currently an important issue in the literature
about intervention with batterers (Gondolf, 2002, 2004). Most evaluation strate-
gies are focused on measuring recidivism rates and (Eckhardt, Murphy, Black
& Suhr, 2006), but few analyze the cultural assumptions that programs rest
upon through participants’ narratives and experiences (one of the few exam-
ple is Fox, 1999). The purpose of this text was not to evaluate Coriac’s effec-
tiveness in stopping men’s violence, but to contribute to further conceptual and
political debate, where Coriac has been a pioneer. Their aim, as said before, is
not only to produce changes in the lives of particular men and women, but to
further a general social transformation. This, however, seems to bring a ten-
sion between two sides of a continuum that can be felt in men’s narratives: bat-
terers’ individual behavior and structural gender inequality. Castro and Riquer
(2003) consider that approaches to gender-based violence often reduce “patri-
archy as a social structure” to individual characteristics—like aggressors’ age,
social class, education, income, etc.—in such a way that “mediations between
phenomena considered to be structural, such as patriarchy and its expression
in individual behavior” are not included in the analysis (2003, p. 137). It may
well be that in the program such mediations are not easy to address, so that
men may end up feeling responsible for transforming a whole social order in
their own personal relationships. In its attempt to transform both, Coriac seems
to have reached a “cultural compromise” (Rothenberg, 2003): by producing a
subject—the violent man—the group has sought to involve individual men in the
struggle against partner violence and gender imbalance. However, the effect of
this may be that individual men feel they bear the entire weight of social trans-
formation. Here is an implicit interface between a sociological analysis of mas-
culinity and men’s emotionality and experience, without clarification of the complex mediations between structure and individual behavior.

However, although social transformation would imply the critique of subjectivation processes linked to dominant constructions of gender, it cannot result in freedom from all forms of subjectivity. This is probably why at Coriac the struggle against violence has promoted alternative processes of subjectivation and power. In this article I have discussed the contents and procedures through which subjectivation in relation to violence against women is expressed in Coriac’s programs. While the men’s relationships to the Program take different shapes, the institutional discourse appears as a solid moral code which they are encouraged to follow in order to achieve new, nonviolent subjectivities.

However, although most participants follow the prescription of working upon themselves in order to fit the model, many testimonies show their ambivalence toward assuming violent man identities. Some of the men at Coriac explicitly critique group procedures and objectives. Alfonso addresses this critical issue of authenticity:

I was with a first-level guy and he and his partner were telling me about their problems, and it was like they were waiting for me to say something, to offer something to them, because she said ‘you are a mediator’ … and that moves me, because that same day I was angry with my partner and I said to myself ‘how can I be here talking to them if I still haven’t solved my own problems?’ I felt so phony, I felt so fake … that has another name we used in Coriac: the feminist corrector (laughs).

This “feminist corrector” is a degraded version of a character which all Coriac members are invited to perform: the nonviolent man. He is a feminist man, compact and clear-cut, committed to an emotional and body orthopedics which compels him to keep a permanent watch over himself in order not to abuse his gender privileges. This character, which is arduously carved in these men’s emotions and bodies, is simply The Violent Man.

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Do clothes really make the man? What about the gay man? Or the gay athlete? Stemming from questions such as these, this qualitative study examines the perceptions toward clothing among elite level gay male athletes from the United States, Canada, and Australia. In particular, we focus upon the relation between clothing, body image, and these men’s social identities as gay, male, and athletic.

**ABSTRACT** This qualitative study investigated the relationship between body image and clothing, as expressed by 16 elite level gay male athletes from the United States, Canada, and Australia. The athletes suggested that within gay social settings, clothes serve as a means to gauge other men’s personalities and relative wealth, and as a means to display one’s body. Clothes were viewed as being a functional accessory to assist sporting performance, regardless of the appearance of that attire. However, within aesthetic sports, the function of clothing may be to look good, so as to earn high marks from judges. Finally, the athletes suggested that cultural expectations of masculinity may negate the need for stylish clothing, and that masculinity often requires men to wear muted clothing styles. These findings indicate that clothing should be considered as a factor that influences body image, and that not all sub-groups of gay men may consider clothing or body image in an identical manner. Future implications for body image and sexualities research are discussed.

**KEYWORDS** BODY IMAGE, CLOTHING, GAY MEN, ATHLETES, MASCULINITY

Do clothes really make the man? What about the gay man? Or the gay athlete? Stemming from questions such as these, this qualitative study examines the perceptions toward clothing among elite level gay male athletes from the United States, Australia, and Canada. In particular, we focus upon the relation between clothing, body image, and these men’s social identities as gay, male, and athletic.

**BODY IMAGE AND THE HEGEMONIC AESTHETIC**

Body image is conceptualised as one’s internal representation of one’s own body and a person’s perception of his or her physique (Grogan, 2007). A person may be contented with his or her body image, a state known as “body image satisfaction.” Likewise, one can be unhappy with one’s body image, which is clinically termed “body image dissatisfaction” (Grogan). Body image dissatis-
faction has been linked with a host of medical, psychological, and social negatives, including eating disorders (Gordon, 2000), low self esteem (Thompson, Heinberg, Altabe, & Tantleff-Dunn, 1999), and even suicidal ideation (Brausch & Muehlenkamp, 2007).

Although one may be happy or unhappy with one’s total physique, a person’s body image can also be considered by separate body domains. For example, a man may be satisfied with his body image as regards his level of abdominal definition, but unhappy with his level of body hair. Numerous studies have been conducted regarding body image of individual body parts or domains, including studies of penis size (Filiault & Drummond, 2007), women’s breast size (Koff & Benavage, 1998), and men’s body hair (Boroughs, Cafri, & Thompson, 2005). Thus, consideration of individual body domains is well established in the psychological literature as a method of examining body image.

Social norms and archetypes often contribute to people’s sense of body image satisfaction or dissatisfaction. That is to say that people may compare themselves to a body that is socially deemed “ideal” for a person of that gender, age, nationality, and ethnicity. Within contemporary Western culture, men are typically expected to be toned and muscular (Pope, Phillips, & Olivardia, 2000; Thompson & Cafri, 2007). Filiault and Drummond (2007) have coined this toned, muscular ideal as being the “hegemonic aesthetic” within contemporary culture. This extension of Gramsci’s (1993) hegemony theory and Connell’s (2005) notion of hegemonic masculinity suggests that within any historical moment, a particular body type is accorded hegemonic power and dominance. Consistent with hegemony theory, Filiault and Drummond argue that the hegemonic dominance afforded to the toned, muscular male has been facilitated by references to nature. That is, a muscular, toned male body is viewed culturally as being “naturally” superior to all other physiques, and is therefore placed in a position of prestige and dominance. Body image dissatisfaction, then, occurs when an individual is unable to approximate the hegemonic aesthetic, and this failure causes individual distress and anxiety. Gay men may be especially prone to body image problems. Achievement of the idealised body may be especially important for acceptance within the gay social world (Bergling, 2007; Drummond, 2005a; Signorile, 1997), and gay men who fail to achieve that ideal may face ostracism or social exclusion (Atkins, 1997). It is therefore not surprising that many gay men express body image dissatisfaction, often moreso than their straight counterparts (e.g., Connor, Johnson, & Grogan, 2004; Martins, Tiggemann, & Kirkbride, 2007; Yelland & Tiggemann, 2003).

Although there is a growing literature about gay men’s body image, this canon has been faulted for its simplicity in it analysis of Western gay male culture. In particular, it has been noted that much of the literature considers gay men to be a homogenous social group and fails to take into account other social identities gay men may have beyond being gay, and the impact of those identities upon body image (Filiault & Drummond 2008, 2009). As noted by Rudd (1996), gay “culture” may actually be a conglomeration of many distinct “subcultures,” though the cultural aspects of White, urban, upper-class gay men may have a strong influence upon the other gay sub-cultural groups.
Despite this overall flaw of the gay male body image literature, some studies have begun to consider body image among sub-groups of gay men. For example, Drummond (2005b) has investigated body image among young Asian gay men living in Australia, and Halkitis (2001; Halkitis, Green, & Wilton, 2004) has interviewed gay men with HIV. Of relevance to the present study, Filiault and Drummond (2008) interviewed openly gay Australian tennis players with regard to body image perceptions. Those men placed value on what was termed the “natural body,” which was said to be a body that has not been consciously altered for appearance purposes. This natural body was contrasted with the gay body, which the athletes felt was often modified so as to be more attractive. The gay body was thus deemed unnatural, and therefore undesirable, to these gay athletes. Interviews with Canadian runners (Bridel & Rail, 2007) demonstrated similar attitudes and themes. Findings such as those demonstrated the need for future research on gay men’s body image to consider sub-populations of gay men, so as to better understand nuances in body image perceptions within that broad population. However, Filiault and Drummond’s (2008) findings were based on a small sample from one Australian city; likewise, Bridel and Rail’s (2007) sample was limited to one Canadian metropolis and one sport. These limitations suggest the need for future research about gay athletes to consider the opinions of a larger, more diverse group of men.

CLOTHING AND BODY IMAGE

Although individual body domains, such as muscularity, may contribute to a person’s body image, non-physical features of a person may also contribute to their body image and their ability to achieve the hegemonic aesthetic. One such non-physical feature is clothing. Clothing provides individuals with a chance to modify their appearance so as to appear in accord with social archetypes of the ideal body. Clothes can be used to cover up undesirable features while serving to accentuate features that are in line with the hegemonic aesthetic. To those ends, clothing is a means by which individuals can access status and dominance (Rudd, 1996), such as that which is accorded to the hegemonic aesthetic.

Beyond the ability of clothes to alter the appearance of the body, clothes could be a separate area of satisfaction or dissatisfaction, based upon one’s sense of clothing style, and one’s ability to approximate socially idealised fashion trends and modes of dress. An individual could thus be body image dissatisfied with their clothing if he or she had a poor sense of style or failed to dress in a socially desirable manner. For example, Drummond noted that often the men he interviewed “reflected on the clothes [they wear] as a part of [their] body identity” (2005a, p. 284).

Despite the ability of clothes to influence body image, and display or hide one’s body, little research has been done linking clothing, body image, and men. Of the available literature, it appears as though clothing is important to young gay men’s sense of body image, as it provides the ability to alter appearance in the manner described above (Drummond, 2005a). However, in the sense that clothing alters appearance, it was deemed part of an unnatural/gay
body by the gay tennis players interviewed by Filiault and Drummond (2008). These findings are limited, and suggest the need for further body-image oriented research on gay men and clothing that is mindful of the observations regarding homogeneity in gay male body image research (Filiault & Drummond, 2009).

**Clothing and Gay Identity**

Although literature considering clothing and body image among gay men is limited, there is a large body of work which analyses the manner in which clothing can facilitate identity expression. Clothing is a non-verbal means by which a person can communicate “who” they are (Freitas et al., 1997; Kates, 2000). It is also a way individuals can hide their identities, by dressing dis-concordantly with their own identity. To that end, clothes are a means of “passing” (Butler, 1990) as another identity (Holliday, 2001). Historically, clothing may have been especially important to advertising a gay identity (Cole, 2000).

Because of the ability of clothes to advertise identity, gay men may choose different clothing styles based upon their setting. Drummond (2005a) suggests gay men may have three sets of clothing: clothes for home, clothes for the straight/mainstream world, and clothes for the gay world. These findings are corroborated by other research that demonstrates gay men may dress differently at work so as to fit in with what is perceived to be a straight, heteronormative atmosphere (Skidmore, 1999). The ability of clothing to demarcate gay and straight identities may be diminished in recent years, due to the emergence of the “metrosexual” look (Clarke & Turner, 2007) and the growing congruence between what would be gay and straight hegemonic aesthetics (Filiault & Drummond, 2007).

**Clothing and Sport**

Although the body is often considered the limiting factor in sporting success (Connell, 1991), clothing, as “attached” to the body, may also serve to help or hinder sporting performance. The qualitative study of openly gay tennis players suggested a functional view toward sporting apparel, by which clothes were considered to be meaningful only in that they did not hinder performance. Style and colour were unimportant compared to functionality (Filiault & Drummond, 2008).

While it may appear that clothes are just another piece of sports equipment, other studies of clothing and athletes nuance those findings. For example, an interview with a male competitive snowboarder revealed a dislike of pink snowboarding equipment, as pink would be inconsistent with a masculinity identity (Anderson, 2001). Additionally, female in-line skaters may consider fashion and feminine appearance when purchasing clothes for their sport (Dickson & Pollack, 2000). Thus, even within competitive sport, doing well may be important, but athletes want to look good in the process, and communicate an acceptable identity.
Given the ability of clothes to alter body image, alter identity, and alter sporting appearance, gay male athletes’ perception of clothing is of interest. As gay men, clothes may, indeed, “maketh the man” (Drummond, 2005a) for this group of athletes. However, as previous research (Filiault & Drummond, 2008) has demonstrated, gay athletes may not regard body image in a manner consistent with the previous research on gay body image. Additionally, as athletes, gay male athletes may view clothing as being utilitarian in nature, rather than as an aesthetic device. But, as demonstrated by Anderson (2001) and Dickson and Pollack (2000), even within sport, looks may matter. Hence, it can be asked how a larger, more diverse group of gay male athletes thinks about clothes and the body.

Research of this theme may serve to enhance the scope of the body image research field by investigating the perceptions of an under-researched appearance domain. This knowledge may be useful in extending appearance related research and clinical work beyond the context of the physical body, to body adornment. Additionally, this research serves to further specify the literature about gay men’s bodies by investigating a sub-group of gay men (i.e. gay athletes). Such a line of enquiry not only provides greater depth of knowledge about gay men’s body image, but also serves to highlight the need for greater awareness of intra-group diversity within the psychological and health sciences literatures about both sexuality and body image.

**METHODOLOGICAL BACKGROUND**

According to Filiault and Drummond (2009), qualitative research on gay men’s body image must make explicit its methodological underpinnings. The present qualitative study is informed by phenomenology. In general, phenomenology tries to understand the manner in which people make sense of their lives and of the world (Patton, 2002). Of particular importance to phenomenology is the notion of perception. What is essential in phenomenology is not objective reality, but the way in which an individual perceives his or her own world and life, since “individuals choose reality by assigning meaning to the objective world” (Muhhall, 1994, p. 6.) This emphasis on individual perceptions makes phenomenology a powerful tool in qualitative research about body image. Given that body image is concerned with an individual’s perception of his or her appearance (Grogan, 2007), within qualitative research, phenomenology is ideally suited to query a person as to his or her perceptions regarding the body. It is because of this link between body image and phenomenology that the methodology has been used in various previous studies of gay men’s body image (Drummond 2005a,b, 2006; Drummond & Filiault 2007; Filiault & Drummond 2008, in press).

The variant of phenomenology used in this research was “queer phenomenology” (Ahmed, 2006, 2007). Queer phenomenologists consider important an individual’s orientations within a particular socio-historical moment, and the manner in which those orientations come to shape the person’s perceptions of the world. A person’s orientations refer to how an individual is positioned relative to other individuals and institutions. It could be thought of as a per-
son’s identity, and the manner in which identities come to influence perceptions. Thus, for this study, the participants’ orientations were being gay, male, and athletic within contemporary Western culture.

METHODS

PARTICIPANTS

Participants were 16 elite level, White male athletes who are openly gay and whose first language is English. Ages ranged from 18 to 52 years. In total, 15 sports were represented.

The individual participants are described in table 1. For more detail consult Filiault and Drummond (in press).

RECRUITMENT

Participants were from seven major cities; three from Australia, two from the United States, and two from Canada. The participants from these targeted cities were recruited using convenience and snowball sampling. Initial e-mail contacts were made with gay sporting groups in the targeted locations, and members of those groups were encouraged to contact the researcher if they were interested in participating. Finally, a news article regarding the study was included on www.outsports.com, which is a website targeted to gay athletes.

Table 1
Participant Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code name</th>
<th>Sports</th>
<th>Highest Accomplishment</th>
<th>Interview Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alex</td>
<td>Gymnastics</td>
<td>Olympic medalist</td>
<td>Australia 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bryan</td>
<td>Figure skating</td>
<td>National champion</td>
<td>Australia 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corey</td>
<td>Snowboarding</td>
<td>World Cup Top 25</td>
<td>USA 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damien</td>
<td>Flag football</td>
<td>National champion</td>
<td>USA 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddy</td>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>No championships to date</td>
<td>USA 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>Ultra distance biking</td>
<td>Tournament winner</td>
<td>USA 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geoff</td>
<td>Telemark Skiing</td>
<td>Tournament winner</td>
<td>USA 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hank</td>
<td>Volleyball</td>
<td>National champion</td>
<td>USA 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ian</td>
<td>Soccer</td>
<td>State finalist</td>
<td>USA 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jake</td>
<td>Golf</td>
<td>State runner-up</td>
<td>USA 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyle</td>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>World champion</td>
<td>Australia 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke</td>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>World champion</td>
<td>Australia 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>Rugby</td>
<td>World champion</td>
<td>Australia 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nathan</td>
<td>Surf lifesaving</td>
<td>Tournament winner</td>
<td>Australia 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oliver</td>
<td>Water polo</td>
<td>Gay Games champion</td>
<td>Australia 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pete</td>
<td>Ballroom dancing</td>
<td>National performances</td>
<td>Canada 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quintin</td>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td>State finalist</td>
<td>Canada 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Individuals interested in participating were sent an information sheet describing the study. Those willing to participate were contacted via e-mail or an instant messaging ("IM") system to ask initial screening questions, including a brief sporting history, racial identification, sexual orientation, and persons to whom the participant is “out.”

PROCEDURES AND ANALYSIS

This study utilized both individual phenomenological interviews and online questionnaires. The study was approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the first author’s home institution.

INTERVIEWS. After giving informed consent, each participant engaged in an individual, semi-structured interview with the first author. The interviews lasted 50 to 90 minutes, and covered topics related to body image, sports, homosexuality, and masculinity. The interview schedule was shaped based upon the authors’ expert knowledge of these issues, as well as the salient themes as developed in the pilot study (Filiault & Drummond, 2008). Interviews were transcribed verbatim by the first author.

QUESTIONNAIRES. Following the interview, participants were given a de-briefing form, and a page listing a pseudonym (to ensure confidentiality) with a URL for an online questionnaire. Participants were instructed to complete the questionnaire two weeks after the interviews, and label their questionnaire with the pseudonym. The online component included a range of questions considering topics similar to those raised in the interview.

ANALYSIS. The interviews and questionnaires were analysed inductively, using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). For more detail regarding methods of analysis, please refer to Filiault and Drummond (in press).

THEMES

The athletes suggested that clothing can serve multiple purposes based on the setting. Clothes can help the men look good, perform well, or assert a masculine identity. Each of those themes, and several associated sub-themes, are elucidated below.

LOOKING GOOD

One function of clothing is to assist individuals in appearing more attractive. This ability of clothing is facilitated in one of two ways: either by wearing stylish (often expensive) clothes, or by showing off the body beneath.

LABELLING THE MAN. According to the athletes, the types of clothes a man wears serve an important purpose in shaping the degree to which others per-
ceive him as being attractive. For example, in describing his apparel for a date, Alex said:

If I’m going out to dinner or something, I’m fairly particular about what I’m wearing, or what looks good, or what feels good, or what is in at the moment, all those sorts of things. … I’m certainly not going to turn up in daggy shoes, daggy pants, ripped pants or anything like that.

Corey concurred with that assessment in stating:

You wouldn’t walk into a five star restaurant that was black tie in shorts and a t-shirt.

For these men, the clothes a man wears are of importance. In general, they voice an expectation that, in social situations, (gay) men should attempt to look their best by wearing clothes that look good and imply a certain element of status. T-shirts and ripped pants are not viewed in the same light as a black tie. Although that observation may seem obvious, the semiotics that underpin this statement are indicative that that clothes act as a proxy, by which the viewer may perceive personality and other attributes of the wearer. Alex suggests that:

If you care about yourself, and what you think about yourself, you’re going to project that in any way possible. Even the way you walk, the way you sit, the way you talk, the way you dress yourself, you know, those sorts of things, definitely, I believe, is a projection on your self worthiness.

Viewpoints such as that suggest, through clothing, the viewer perceives an image of self-esteem in the wearer. Whether or not that assessment is accurate is irrelevant; the illusion of self-esteem is what is important. A man with self-esteem is thought to want to project that state by any means possible. Clothing is one such means.

Beyond personality, clothing can allude to demographics, particularly socio-economic status. According to the participants, the better a man dresses, the higher his perceived actual capital, which, in turn, raises his social capital in many gay social circles. Thus, clothing is a means by which a gay man can gain status and prestige in the gay world by suggesting his degree of wealth within the broader world. Kyle explains this relationship when he describes clothes as capable of projecting:

An image of cleanliness, affluence. There of lot of it on the scene, particularly among certain groups, you know. They value celebrity, wealth, all that sort of stuff, status. I’m not so much like that.

Certain clothes do a better job of denoting wealth and desirability than do others. Sometimes, a shirt is not just a shirt. The label matters. For instance, Quintin says his preferred clothing brands are:

Guess, H&M, a bit of Abercrombie. I have some stuff from Club Monaco. So, like, brands are a big thing for me. … I think it has largely been influenced by society, and what is accepted as kind of cool, or attractive. So, I think that plays into a lot of decisions about my clothing.
Social perception of clothing is therefore important in shaping clothing decisions. Some brands fit into a social archetype of being “cool or attractive,” and therefore denote desirability. Individuals possessing those attributes are therefore, in turn, believed to be, themselves, cool or attractive. Hence, achieving a certain look, by wearing the right brands, is important in creating an image of desirability. Clothes provide a means by which a gay man can distinguish himself from the crowd.

Moreover, the designer of an article of clothing serves as a means to stratify gay men based on the perception of wealth associated with the designer. Geoff illustrates the phenomenon by saying: “I think it has something to do with social status. It is like ‘Oh, you can afford Gucci versus Target’.”

Therefore, while clothes themselves have labels, the purpose of clothes is to label the wearer. Based on a gay man’s sense of style, the viewer is thought to be able to discern such personality traits as “self worthiness” and “cleanliness.” Moreover, clothes stratify men, not only into being “cool” and “attractive,” but also into groups of affluence based on the brands they are able to afford. The clothes a gay man wears can therefore provide power or prestige, or serve as the basis for marginalisation. However, it is not just the clothes themselves that are of importance. The interviews suggest that the body over which the clothes are worn is of importance, and the job of clothing is to highlight that body.

**SMALL AND SMALLER.** While one purpose of clothing is to allude to certain traits which in themselves are not immediately obvious visually (i.e., self esteem, wealth), another purpose of clothes is to highlight what is visually obvious (that is, the body). Clothes should make the wearer appear “sexy.” This attribute of clothing is described by Mike:

R: What would you decide to wear if you were going to a gay club?
MIKE: I would probably wear, um … I’ve got a pair of, like, black faded jeans, and just a kind of, like, singlet top.
R: Pair of jeans, singlet top.
MIKE: Yeah.
R: And what are the reasons for deciding to wear those things instead of others?
MIKE: Because it makes me feel sexy.
R: What is it about them that makes you feel sexy?
MIKE: Because it makes me kind of—I know that kind of outfit makes me look good, so I feel confident, and I feel sexy in it. … I’m pretty confident, full stop, but that kind of outfit really makes me go POW!

Clothing, then, can not only give the perception of personality characteristics, but can also change our personalities and projection of ourselves. One manner by which this change is facilitated is that clothing can make the wearer both feel and appear sexy. Clothes, therefore, can facilitate a person’s ability to navigate the hegemonic aesthetic, and the confidence, power, and prestige associated with the aesthetic.
According to most of the men, the best way to show off the body, and appear “sexy,” is to wear tight clothing. Geoff says he likes to wear clothes that are:

GEOFF: Tight around the ass, yet still have the cargo kind of laid back look as well. And tight t-shirts, of course.
R: Do you think tight clothing is kind of big?
GEOFF: I think it is pretty big now.
R: And why do you think that might be?
GEOFF: To show off the body.

Tight clothing is essential to showing off the body, and to looking good in gay settings. Kyle agrees with that assessment when he says he wears clothing that is:

KYLE: As tight as I could go without looking ridiculous.
R: Why tight?
KYLE: I don’t know. I think because it shows confidence, and, I feel, that the audience appreciates somebody who wears tight clothes.

The above interview segment touches upon three important points. Beyond re-emphasising the importance of tight clothing, it also supports Mike’s earlier assessment that clothes build confidence. Moreover, Kyle’s use of the word “audience” is telling. Clothes are not just for the wearer; rather, clothes are equally used to draw attention to the wearer. Kyle knows that clothes are monitored and used as a means of judging the qualities of the wearer: clothes, in any setting, are worn before an “audience.” Those spectators are ready to jeer or cheer the clothing selections of the wearer, based on the quality of those clothes and the body those clothes are revealing.

Finally, Kyle suggests that while tightness is important to looking good, there is a threshold at which clothes may become so tight as to become “ridiculous.” Therefore, the gay man should not rush to the shop to buy the extra-small shirt. The men suggest that individual discretion should be used so as to wear clothes that reveal the body without coming un-flattering. Fred elaborates on that point when he describes his concept of “age-appropriate dress.” He says that, for him, at 38 years old, age appropriate dress is:

FRED: Something that’s … not too tight.
R: So, really, tight clothes are for the younger guys?
FRED: I think really tight clothes don’t look good on really anybody. But, the younger guys can be excused. You have to be incredibly fit if you’re gonna wear really tight clothes; or, really, you probably should just wear something that’s not really tight.
R: Right.
FRED: And, it’s like, if you’re 38 years old, I’m not saying you have to wear a potato sack. … I’m in good shape, so I can wear tight t-shirts if I want to. So I’m like ‘what’s too tight?’ … If I wear something too tight there’s a few things that are going to happen. A: There’s always going to be someone at the bar who is bigger or more muscular than
me, so all I’m really showing off is that I’m, like, skinny. B: I’m not sure why that’s a way to differentiate myself, because everybody’s dressed like that.

While tightness is important, the men believe it is equally important not to become too tight, and to accept body changes that come with age. The participants say that while clothing is a means by which to judge the man, clothing interacts with other attributes in making that assessment. Therefore, the fashion trends described are not overarching dictates, but, rather, the stylistic archetypes applied to younger gay men. This emphasis on young gay men within dominant gay culture is, however, to be expected, given the dominance of youth within the gay scene more generally (e.g., Drummond, 2006a; Jones & Pugh, 2005).

Beyond the discussion of age, Fred reiterates the point that clothing is a means by which gay men are judged and become stratified, by comparing himself to the hypothetical muscle man. Clothes are a manner by which gay men may receive their relative worth on the social ladder. Yet, there is a certain irony to this stratification. Clothing is the means by which gay men are supposed to differentiate themselves and garner attention from an imagined “audience.” Yet, as Fred says, “everybody’s dressed the same.” It is, paradoxically, an individuality achieved through homogeneity.

**PLAYING WELL**

In addition to describing the clothes worn in social situations, the athletes also described what they often wear in certain sporting situations. The underlying logic of sport clothing was that it could facilitate sporting success. However, in certain sporting situations, the logic behind achieving may be altered. The sub-themes below describe two different thought processes behind sport clothing.

“I WEAR WHAT’S CLEAN.” It appears as though a great deal of thought must go into deciding one’s outfit for social situations—what personality characteristics clothing portrays, wearing the right brands, choosing tightness relative to age. The decision making process behind what to wear to sport thus stands in stark contrast to the above logic. This simplicity is summarised by Kyle in describing how he picks out what to wear to rugby practice.

Whatever’s clean. I certainly don’t think “oh, I look fat in this.” I never think that. I generally wear the same thing, which is a pair of shorts and a t-shirt.

Thus, in some sporting situations, the level of thought devoted to clothing choice is limited, and may be reduced to what is appropriate to the sport. This is not to say that all clothing decisions in sport are without thought. However, the factors in making that decision are notably different than those factors that are considered in social settings. On the night before a long cycling race, Fred describes the clothes he will wear:
It’s really about the function. … For instance, I would ideally race tomorrow in a slightly baggier jersey. … But, I know I’m going to be racing without a camel back, which means racing with waterbottles tomorrow, which means I’ve got one in the cage and one of them is gonna have to be in my pockets in my jersey. When you’re mountain biking, the only way for that to work is if you’ve got a really tight jersey because it compresses the bottle against your back. So, when you go over stuff, otherwise the bottle will come off and slam into your back. It doesn’t look good, but I don’t care, because that’s what’s required to win.

Doing well is the primary factor in decision making about sport clothing, according to the athletes. That said, some sports clothing may share elements with “sexy” clothes. For example, cycling jerseys may be tight; however, Fred’s choice of a tight shirt is not based on a desire to show off his body, but to keep his water bottle handy. If the same could be achieved with a “slightly baggier jersey,” presumably, he would opt to do so. Quintin expresses a similar attitude when he says he likes his swimsuits:

A bit tighter, smaller, size for when I was, like, competing … but it wasn’t really a sexual thing … [swimsuits] don’t make a big difference, but I think they can make a slight difference in your time. … It’s always like, you want, you want to do as much as you can do to, you know, swim as fast as you can.

Again, the purpose of the tight swimsuit is not to appear sexy, but to give Quintin a “slight” edge. It seems that appearing “sexual” is an afterthought to optimal performance. Thus, while clothes between sport and gay social events may seem similar—tight and revealing—the thought processes and functional intentions are different. Within the gay scene, tight clothes are used to differentiate one’s self from the crowd and please the “audience.” Within some sports, tight clothes are used to win.

**Functional Aesthetics.** Although athletes may wear sexy looking clothes not out of a desire to look sexy, but to win, sometimes those two goals may overlap. That is, in some sports, doing well means looking good. This applies to aesthetic sports, such as gymnastics, where athletes are rated subjectively. Alex explains this trend:

ALEX: Everything needs to be sort of tight. … My coach needs to be able to see my body, my body form, and I also need freedom of movement. So, that comes into play. … There’s nothing worse than jumping in a pair of board shorts, or a t-shirt. I can’t stand jumping in a t-shirt, so I do probably tend to dress a bit more styling, or figure-hugging, or conforming, but I do that purely for my coach’s benefit.

R: You’re not necessarily trying to show off?

ALEX: I don’t do it for that reason. … I do worry about what’s going on when I’m performing, or what I look like when I’m performing. You need to look strong, you need to look clean, you need to look good, rather than frumpy or heavy. Also matching. I’m not going to
wear colours that don’t match, I’m not going to wear colours that don’t help my performance get better scores.

Gymnasts are not alone in experiencing this notion of aesthetics as functional within sport. Geoff describes the phenomenon within telemark skiing:

You want to be seen. You’re on a palate of snow, with rocks, and you have judges at the bottom. So, those judges need to be able to see. If you wear something that’s, you know, bright and nice and styling, that’s always a factor at the bottom, that you want to look good. So, you know, I usually have a nice coat, my coat’s red right now. … They’re looking through binoculars, and they have to be able to see you, for sure. So the brighter the outfit is good. … Current designers in the ski industry are definitely designing clothes that are funky and unique and can be seen.

Alex wears form fitting, stylish, colour coordinated leotards. This effort to look good is not an end in itself, but a means to “get better scores.” Similarly, Geoff wears a bright red, stylish coat, so judges can see his skiing. Aesthetics, in this case, become functional, since to look good is to do well and draw the attention from judges. If, in the case of the gay club, good clothes and good designers help the gay man earn the label of “desirable,” in sport, good clothes can help the gay man earn the label of “champion.”

Pumped Up Fashion. In addition to describing their social clothes and sporting clothes, the athletes described what they usually wear to the gym or health club. Some of the responses varied little from the simple attitude toward clothes revealed earlier by Kyle. For example, Geoff said his gym attire consists of: “Athletic shorts and muscle shirts.” Likewise, Mike wears: “What I got on [cotton shorts and a t-shirt]. Old shit. I can’t stand it when you see people at the gym that are dressed up.”

Thus, for some gay athletes, the gym is just another sporting venue, and the purpose of gym clothes is simply not to get in the way; it is a very functional attitude toward clothing. Accordingly, little thought is put into what to wear at the gym, and little value placed on gym attire. Gym clothes are “shit.”

Other participants disagreed with the above sentiments. These men presented a more nuanced view toward gym clothing, balanced function with aesthetics. For example, Hank says: “At the gym I try not to wear my nice clothes, just cuz it’s sweaty. But, I don’t wear, like, my really nasty clothes. Like, I definitely think about people seeing me.” Thus, Hank’s gym apparel choices are partially dictated by function—to be sweat in—but also by a consciousness of being seen. As one’s performance in the gym is (usually) not the basis of competition and not judged, those who are viewing gym apparel are closer, conceptually, to being Kyle’s gay club “audience” than Geoff’s skiing judges. For some gay men, the gym is a venue to look good so as to impress and garner esteem from other gay men.

Indeed, elements from the gay club are brought into the gym. For example, there is a certain element of brand consciousness. Kyle elaborates upon brands at the gym when he says he wears:
A pair of Billabong shorts is what I’ll usually wear, and just any old t-shirt that looks like—You don’t have to look like you’re wearing a flash new label t-shirt, sometimes you feel even sexier when you’re wearing something that’s, you know, old and tattered.

While Kyle expresses that he doesn’t feel the need to wear a designer t-shirt, his denial of labels at the gym is made ironic by his explicit mentioning of Billabong (a moderately expensive Australian surf brand) shorts. Perhaps this ironic avowal/disavowal of brands is emblematic of the overall role of clothes at the gym for some gay men. That is, one needs to take care to look good while, at the same time, trying to seem as though one is not actually trying to look good. This mixture can be achieved, for example, by wearing a tattered top with brand label shorts, as in the case of Kyle. Still, even in this mixture, there is an element of forethought and planning mindful of an “audience” that is in stark contrast to Mike’s attitude toward his gym clothes.

The gym is a site of irony. While for some gay men it is a venue where it is acceptable to wear “shit,” for others it is a site to look good and “show off your body.” However, one must be careful as to not be deliberately attempting to show off one’s body. For the gay man attempting to look good at the gym, he must balance function with aesthetics so as to please the “audience.” Or, as Luke said of his gym clothes: “I would pick what would look good on me but be practical, too.”

Somehow, the two must coincide, without looking like there was much forethought. For these men, the irony of the gym is trying to appear attractive while also appearing as though one did not put effort into being attractive. In different venues, different labels are applied to the gay athletes. In the club and at the gym, he must be labelled as good looking, while on the field he must be labelled as well performing. Yet, beyond the labels of “attractive” and “champion,” there is one other label of concern to gay male athletes: that of “masculine.”

**Wearing the Man**

As described above, the gay male athletes in this study suggested that clothes can facilitate success in the gay club and in some sporting venues. Those attitudes toward clothing oppose the manner in which the men described the relationship between clothing and masculinity. Quite simply, masculine men should be concerned neither about their appearance nor their clothing. Hank’s description of this relationship is emblematic of this attitude:

R: How should a masculine guy dress?
HANK: Well, not good. Not—I can say how not to dress. I don’t know, like, how to dress.
R: How should he not dress, in that case?
HANK: I don’t know, like tight shirts or mid-drift shirts or tight jeans, faded jeans. I don’t know, those kind of, like, stylish clothes, I guess. I don’t know.
Kyle concurs with the above assessment in saying:

Masculinity is just acting like a man, not a man who is running around worrying about his hair or worrying too much about what he’s wearing or anything like that.

Statements such as those give the impression that masculinity is achieved by not doing certain things. In this case, the participants suggest that masculine men should not worry about their clothes, and certainly should not wear “tight,” “stylish” clothes.

According to Mike, part of the reason why masculine men should not wear stylish clothing is that such clothes draw attention away from the man, and on to the clothes. He says masculine men wear:

Just usually understated stuff. The way he wears those clothes, he wears the clothes, the clothes don’t wear him. … We’ve got a word, a phrase in our circle of friends: ‘That’s eating itself’, meaning the clothes are so, you know, in your face, and the hair’s so coiffed that sort of stuff that’s drawing attention away form the person. So, I just like it when the guy can wear something, and the clothes just hang on him. And, it’s usually just something which is very understated.

Based on that viewpoint, masculine men are defined by who they are as people, not by the clothes they are wearing. Clothing, therefore, is not a tool of impression management for masculine men, but, rather, just a covering that hangs off the man. Superficially, this impression of clothing stands in opposition to the purpose of clothing in gay and some sporting settings. In those places, clothes were used to get attention, and to create a positive impression of the wearer. However, that use of clothing may not be masculine, according to the men interviewed for this study. Rather, a masculine man does not require clothes to assert his personality; presumably, he is able to do so himself without the assistance of apparel. Flashy clothing may therefore be an unnecessary addition to the wardrobe for the masculine man.

There is however an inverse, but still important, relationship between clothing choice and the assertion of masculinity. A masculine man must still wear the right clothes, lest he be perceived as un-masculine. Just as the gay man must wear “tight” clothing to give the impression of “sexy” in the gay club, and some athletes need to wear attractive or functional clothing to facilitate performance, men must select muted clothing to assert masculinity. Clothing choice still matters, even if the logic behind that clothing choice is to mute the visual impact of one’s attire.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

To the gay male athletes interviewed for this study, clothes have meaning. For these gay men, the attire one wears can modify the manner in which a body appears performances. As such, clothes can be used as a means by which to portray certain personal characteristics, highlight the body, or facilitate sporting performance. In each case, though, clothing is a vehicle by which a gay man
can try to create a positive impression of himself, and garner prestige and respect from the “audience” that is viewing the apparel.

Clothes, then, are a means by which a person can earn power and prestige in various settings. Wearing the right types of clothes in the gay club makes one appear attractive and desirable, and access the stature associated with aesthetic appeal in gay social settings (e.g., Atkins, 1998; Bergling, 2007; Signorile, 1997). Wearing the proper attire in sport can help an athlete win, which is, presumably, the highest level of prestige accorded to an athlete. Finally, clothes can help men appear masculine, and access the power related to masculinity in contemporary Western society.

There are, therefore, hegemonic aesthetics related to clothing, based upon the setting, be it gay, sporting, or mainstream. That is to say that there is a socially expected archetype of clothing appearance in those settings. One’s ability to dress in accord with those archetypes either provides an opportunity to gain status, or an occasion to be marginalised.

These attitudes suggest that clothes are intended to create a positive impression upon the “audience.” This function of clothes is similar to the attitudes expressed by gay men with regards to other parts of the body. For example, the importance of “six pack abs” to gay men is that they are used to impress other gay men in an attempt to attract sexual partners (Bergling, 2007; Signorile, 1997). On their own, the visual qualities of abdominals have little meaning to the individual. Meaning is only gained when there is an audience present to view and judge those abdominals. Just as body aesthetics have an important place in gaining stature in gay social settings, clothing does as well. Therefore, conceptually, clothes can impact a person’s body image, since failure to display the right style will lead to social denigration, which can, in turn, impact individual esteem and like of the self. Individual attitudes toward one’s self are at the core of body image research. We suggest that future analyses of body image should not only take into account immediately somatic attributes like musculature and thinness, but also clothing. A muscular body may be desirable, but loses status if it is dressed in the “wrong” clothing. Future studies should consider that interrelationship.

The finding of this study nuance previous research findings about gay men, body image, and clothes. With regard to identities and clothes, past research on gay men and clothing has found that particular forms of attire were used to assert one’s identity, particularly one’s gay identity (Holliday, 2001; Kates, 2000). This notion of identity assertion was notably absent in the present study. While the athletes did suggest there was a desirable mode of dress in gay settings (tight, designer clothes), they did not say that this style of clothing was used to advertise a gay identity. Instead, the participants said these clothes made them look “sexy” or showed off their bodies. Likewise, discussions of passing were absent in the present study. Other research demonstrated some gay men may try to appear “straight” so as to avoid homophobia within mainstream settings (e.g., Skidmore, 1999). While the gay male athletes in this study did mention that clothing can be indicative of masculinity, they did not say that they felt the need to dress in a masculine fashion when they were outside of gay venues. This trend may be indicative of what Anderson (2005)
termed “masculine capital.” That is, this group of highly successful athletes may be perceived as extremely masculine due to their outstanding success in sport. Therefore, they do not always feel the need to use clothes to assert their masculinity, since their sporting success secures their masculinity identity. These conclusions, however, are tentative, and future research may find it fruitful to investigate gay male athletes, clothing, and masculinity using a theoretical lens of masculine capital. In any case, the manner in which these gay male athletes view clothing is notably different than suggested for previous samples of gay men. This finding emphasises the importance of considering subgroups of gay men when doing body image research, as not all sub-populations of gay men may view the body similarly. Body image research that homogenises gay men into one broad social group loses this depth and complexity of understanding.

Finally, these findings place into greater context Filiault and Drummond’s (2008) study on gay tennis players, which served as the pilot for this study. The gay tennis players placed emphasis on what was termed the natural, unaltered body. With regard to clothing, the gay male athletes in the present study never mentioned nor suggested “nature,” nor any cognate concept. Thus, while “nature” may be important to some gay athletes, or may be of importance to discussions of certain aspects of body image, it may not be of importance to all gay athletes, or to all areas of body image. This finding is indicative of the need for future research to be conducted on body image in gay male athletes so as to develop a more robust theoretical basis by which researchers and clinicians can come to understand this phenomenon.

The findings and conclusions presented above need to be qualified. Qualitative research makes no claim to generalisability (Patton, 2002); therefore, these findings may not be applicable to other gay male athletes. However, given the diversity of athletes represented, including a wide range of ages, a diversity of sports, and three nationalities, we believe the attitudes expressed in this study may be representative of those held by many gay male athletes. Additionally, only White men were interviewed. Future research is needed regarding body image in non-White men, as we have previously argued (Filiault & Drummond, 2009). Finally, these results only reflect the attitudes and experiences of openly gay men. Closeted gay men, bisexual men, and heterosexually-identified men-who-have-sex-with-men may have different attitudes toward their bodies.

In spite of those limitations, the present study represents one of the first multi-national, phenomenological investigations of body image in gay men, and of gay male athletes. It is hoped that these findings not only generate future research on sub-populations of gay men, but serve to generate future research about clothing that is mindful of body image as a psychological construct.

REFERENCES


In 1987, propelled by anti-Semitism in its various Soviet and post-Soviet guises, Maxim D. Shrayer and his parents left the muddled Moscow of the early perestroika years for Providence, Rhode Island. At the end of this journey, portrayed in Shrayer’s memoir1 Waiting for America: A Story of Emigration (2007), the author and his family settle in the United States. Contrary to the conventions of immigrant literature, the primary focus of the memoir is neither on the

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1 In an astute nod to the on-going theoretical discussion of the position of autobiographies and memoirs between “fact” and “fiction,” Maxim D. Shrayer, Professor of Russian and English at Boston College, writes in a preface to his memoir, Waiting for America: A Story of Emigration is a creative product of memory and imagination … Fictionalization and poetization, I believe, are not—and should not be regarded as—the opposites of narrative truth-telling; rather documentary home-brew is aged, purified, and given as an artistic vintage by the writer’s conscious use of language, style, and narrative structure. Trying to discern where precisely the
family’s hardship in its country of origin nor on the rigors of adaptation to its new home. Instead, Shrayer’s account centers on his and his family’s sojourn in the Italian town of Ladispoli, where emigrants from the former Soviet Union awaited admission into the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, that is, on the interval between Russia and Rhode Island, between being an ostracized minority in their country of origin and becoming U. S. citizens.

The delayed narrative gratification reflects the memoir’s representations of gender and sexuality. It is in the geographical and legal grey zone of Ladispoli that the text allows “the implosive force of mobile sexuality” (Patton & Sánchez-Eppler, 2000, p. 13) to flourish. Queer—in the sense that it departs from normative Western gender and sexual inscriptions—Jewish maleness shares the memoir’s transitional space with outspoken women, who unsettle patriarchal familiar structures. In the context of Waiting for America, Ladispoli is a romanticized location, which, precisely for this reason, functions as a queer space, or stage, upon which the complex identitarian experiences of late-twentieth-century migrant subjects unfold. Though not exactly a carnivalesque, Shakespearean greenwood, Ladispoli is a queer place because it is governed by the force of desire: for America, for intellectual and cultural experience, for sexual and romantic encounters. My abundant use of theatrical references is not accidental. Ladispoli is also queer because it affords its wondering inhabitants, Russian-Jewish émigrés, a certain freedom of constructing, performing, or “staging,” as Martin Manalansan (2005, p. 154) puts it, their gender and sexual identities, and of voicing or reclaiming desires that had hitherto been silenced, even if, admittedly, the emerging non-normative voices are often tentative.

Most pertinently to the present discussion, however, Ladispoli is queer because it cannot be identified as either a diaspora or a homeland. The nation/diaspora duality is unable to contain or sustain this space; it may provisionally be called a “diaspora within diaspora.” The very dichotomy of diaspora/home-land deployed in the contemporary scholarship at the intersection of Diaspora and Queer Studies may be in need of collapsing, or queering. In the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, immigrant relocations have followed a trajectory that is more complicated than “a national home-to-diaspora” one. It is now possible to have more than one homeland, or none at all, and to belong to several diasporic communities at once. Shrayer’s memoir portrays a group of emigrants, whose unique historical, legal, and cultural circumstances present an opportunity to unsettle such a duality. At stake in my reading of Waiting for America is a complication, through the formulation of a “diaspora within

writer has strayed from the double phantom of verity and authenticity strikes me as a losing proposition. (p. xi)

I discern in the author’s words a license to treat this memoir as a work of fiction—and not just a straightforwardly “factual” look back—which I intend to do throughout. Likewise, for the purposes of my analysis, “Maxim,” or “the narrator,” is a fictional persona/character, and not the author, though the former may have characteristics or experiences in common with the latter.
diaspora,” of the idea that queer/sexually transgressive diaspora and the gender-conforming, heteronormative nation are mutually constitutive only through a stark opposition.

**A Diaspora Within Diaspora**

Daniel Boyarin’s (1997) pioneering study of Jewish diasporic masculinity, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*, draws connections between the politics of nationalism and normative heterosexual masculinity and, conversely, between diaspora and what he terms “gentler” (p. 157) or “femminized” (p. 151) Jewish masculinity. Boyarin’s work seeks to “understand what happened to Jewish culture as the regime of heterosexuality increasingly impinged on it in the nineteenth century. Much of [his] argument turns upon the claim that psychoanalysis and Zionism were two specifically Jewish cultural answers to the rise of heterosexuality at the fin de siècle” (p. 28). As a nationalist ideology, Zionism “is truly the most profound form of assimilationism, one in which Jews become like all nations, that is like Aryans …, but remain Jews in name (and complexion): Bar Kochba, warrior Moses, and Maccabee: not Trancred … or Siegfried …” (Boyarin, 1997, p. 276).

Freud believed that nationalism would cure his fellow European Jews of “effeminate degeneracy” (Boyarin, 1997, p. 276). The notion of “effeminate degeneracy” does not take into account a specific kind of diasporic European Jewish masculinity that “furnish[ed] European culture with the possibility of a male who is sexually and procreationally functioning but otherwise gendered as if ‘female’ within the European economy of gender” (p. 26). The patriarchal sex/gender system adopted by the (primarily secular, middle-class) Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century was misogynistic, as well as homophobic: “The bourgeois ideology … disenfranchised women … by insisting that their only functions were to be decorative and reproductive, while earlier, more traditional Jewish cultures stipulated a wide range of important public, economic activity for women” (p. 321). Conversely, to Boyarin, the less assimilated Eastern European Jewish communities that embraced both matriarchate and gentle (or feminized) masculinity, whether heterosexual or queer, represent an alternative to the gender fictions of the European middle class. He makes a crucial link between these fiction and the ideologies of nation and, conversely, between the Ashkenazi Jewish diaspora and queer sexuality and non-normative gender. His essay “Outing Freud’s Zionism” (2000) contains an even crisper distinction: “Diaspora is … queer and the end of Diaspora would be the equivalent of becoming straight …” (pp. 78-79).

From the late 1990s onward, Boyarin’s innovative analysis has inspired a number of essay collections and monographs[2] that have radically critiqued the stability of national identities and sexual norms on an international scale and

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insisted that “sexuality scholarship closely attend to the dynamics of past and contemporary immigration, and that immigration scholarship attend to the dynamics of past and contemporary immigration” (Luibhéid & Cantú Jr., 2005, p. xxxv). As Meg Wesling (2008) points out, various studies of sexuality, diasporas, migration, and national (dis)identifications generally “… posit an analogy between queerness as that which subverts gender normativity, and diaspora as that which troubles geographic and national stability” (p. 31), thereby agreeing with Boyarin’s original thesis.

In particular, in her seminal book, Impossible desires: queer diasporas and South Asian public cultures, Gayatri Gopinath (2005) puts forth an argument similar to Boyarin’s:

A consideration of queerness, in other words, becomes a way to challenge nationalist ideologies by restoring the impure, inauthentic, non-reproductive potential of the notion of Diaspora. Indeed, the urgent need to trouble and denaturalize the close relationship between nationalism and heterosexuality is precisely what makes the notion of queer Diaspora so compelling. A queer diasporic framework productively exploits the analogous relation between nation and diaspora on the one hand, and between heterosexuality and queerness on the other: in other words, queerness is to heterosexuality as the diaspora is to the nation. (p. 11)

Gopinath’s and Boyarin’s paradigms are fundamentally important to my analysis of Waiting for America, but the terms in which the memoir defines both nation and diaspora do not coincide with theirs. The dichotomous model that they propose has been subject to modifications. Martin Manalansan (2000 and 2003) abandons the binary by suggesting that the identity of Filipino gay men is unstable both in their homeland and in diaspora, though, in each case they have to mask various components of their identity (for example, queer sexuality in the Philippines, and an immigration status in the U.S.). In her materialist analysis of globalized economies, Meg Wesling (2008) (echoing, in a different context, Ray Chow’s [2003] and Suparna Bhaskaran’s [2004] earlier discussions of the privileged position of the diasporic intellectual residing in the West in relation to her homeland) astutely contests the “framework[s] [that] unite queer with the diasporic in a privileged relation to transgressivity” (p. 33) and asks “whether or not the material changes that attend the conditions of globaliza
tion, mobility, and diaspora engender the new notions of the normative and the queer … and new articulations of desire, identity, and sexuality” (p. 45).

While Wesling seeks new models of sexual and gender conformity and transgression, my analysis goes back to Boyarin’s original cultural context, finds a geopolitical location that troubles the diaspora/homeland binary—which in my view, does not obtain in the case of the Russian Jews depicted in Shrayer’s memoir—and questions the very plausibility of the notion of a homeland in their case. By the same token, my reading suggests that, in the context of Shrayer’s narrative, the opposition between queer genders and sexualities and the heteronormative patriarchal family cannot be superimposed easily upon the opposition between dispersion and home. Instead, queer sexuality
and non-normative gender constructions are queer and non-normative precisely because they always exist beyond this binary, in the space that is neither a diaspora nor a home.

The idea of the country of origin as a national home, spiritual or physical, on which Diaspora Studies relies, is problematic in the case of the community portrayed in *Waiting for America*. The Shrayers have no strong ethnic or cultural roots in either country of which they have been citizens (the former Soviet Union and the United States); they gravitate, simultaneously, and as a result of complex—and shifting—political, ethical, and aesthetic choices, to Russian literature, art, and everyday familial and communal habits, and to many political and cultural aspects of American society.

Moreover, as Rhacel Parreños and Lok C. D. Siu (2007) remind us, “... [R]acism and xenophobia are ... marginalizing forces that impede the full belonging of diasporic groups not only in their place of settlement but also in their place of origin” (p. 13). Members of an oppressed minority in the former Soviet Union, the Shrayers lack a national and cultural home that is fully identified with, fondly imagined (after all, in Benedict Anderson’s (1991) classic formulation, all national communities are “imagined”), and, for better or worse, always missed and imitated in diaspora.3 Likewise, while they admire their future home, the United States, they know little about it. Their connection to America is, as the title of the memoir suggests, is largely one of imagination, longing, and waiting: “... [E]verything we knew about it was from movies, from reading, from what we had heard from others” (Shrayer, 2007, p. 120).

Thus, the former Soviet Union as a home, and the United States as a diaspora is not a workable paradigm in the case of the Shrayer family. The diaspora/Israel opposition that is central to Boyarin’s argument is not entirely appropriate for the predicament of the Russian-Jewish émigrés either. With the exception of his Israeli relatives, Shrayer’s characters never leave the confines of the diaspora, insofar as it is defined through this opposition. Rather, they circulate between its various parts—Russia, Italy, or America—thereby making

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3I do not mean to suggest here that all Russian-speaking Jewish immigrants experience a similar affinity or lack thereof towards either the former Soviet Union or contemporary Russia. Their responses range from loyalty and nostalgia to rejection, from a proud adherence to the mark of the cosmopolitan wandering Jew, to the unquestioning assumption of the ideas of Russian nationalism and the valorization of those over a secular or religious Jewish identity, to the taking up of a religious and/or Israeli national identity and the marginalization of various cultural and emotional affiliations with Russia. In *Building a Diaspora: Russian Jews in Israel, Germany, and the USA* (particularly in chapter 18), Ben-Rafael et al. (2006) argue that, while they are torn between their identity as Jews, “Russians,” and depending on their place of residence, as Israelis, Americans, or Germans, Russian Jews often remain attached to Russian culture. That said, the experience of the Shrayer family, as portrayed in the memoir, points rather clearly to their affinity with the West, rather than their country of origin, or the Middle East. They have no homeland and live in various diasporic communities. Due to its in-between status, Ladispoli, the backdrop of the memoir, is, in effect, a diaspora within diaspora.
their movement somewhat more illustrative of the Jewish notions of diaspora and exile \((\text{galut})\), than of the theoretical diaspora/homeland dichotomy. Howard Wettstein’s (2002) definitions are particularly helpful here:

‘Diaspora’ is a political notion; it suggests geopolitical dispersion. It may further suggest ... involuntary dispersion from a center, typically a homeland. With changes in circumstances ..., a diasporic population may come to see virtue in diasporic life. And so ‘Diaspora’ — as opposed to \(\text{galut}\) — may acquire a positive charge, as today it has for some ... \(\text{Galut}\) is, by contrast, a religious, or almost religious notion ... One of its important resonances is a concomitant of involuntary removal from homeland: dislocation, a sense of being uprooted, being somehow in the wrong place. To view one group as in \(\text{galut}\) is to suppose that ... the proper order has been interrupted. Perhaps the dispersed group has been punished ... (p. 47)

However, the Shrayers’ and their emigrant cohort’s, unique situation is too complex to be resolved by the Diaspora/\(\text{galut}\) distinction for a number of reasons. Strangers to messianic, organized religion, they do not see their world wonderings as the state of \(\text{galut}\), brought on by a historical or theological catastrophe, or by a punishment for a transgression, and they have a rather tenuous connection with Israel. The “positive charge” of Diaspora is applicable to their condition, inasmuch as a number of Shrayer’s characters, most notably the narrator’s mother, enjoy their status as citizens of the world, which, according to their definition, means being affiliated with Western (especially European) culture. But while, culturally, Shrayer’s emigrants do “see virtue in diasporic life,” the issue of the lack of consent to the diasporic state that is fundamental to Wettstein’s definition (to him, diaspora is a condition of “involuntary dispersion from a center”) is complex and multivalent in their case.

In the 1980s, the Russian Jews’ journey westward was, due to both state-sponsored anti-Semitism and the convoluted and rigid emigration procedures that involved the confiscation of the Soviet citizenship, a combination of forced exile (albeit of a non-religious nature) and voluntary escape fueled by a desire to live on the other side of the Berlin Wall. After all, the Shrayers leave Moscow after many years as \(\text{refuseniks}\), who had been denied the permission to emigrate. This combination of circumstances collapses the Diaspora/\(\text{galut}\) dichotomy that is important to both Boyarin and Wettstein, albeit for different reasons, and, ultimately, leaves us in need of a new paradigm.

Unlike earlier theoretical paradigms, my reading of \textit{Waiting for America} does not take the term “diaspora” to mean a generally fluid, transgressive cultural and geographical identity that exists in contradistinction to a firm, well-defined, normative national identity, acquired through birth and maintained through subsequent affective and cultural—if not necessarily legal—affiliations. In a sense, Shrayer’s emigrants, wherever they are, always only have the former. The distinction that I make is, rather, between the (also diasporic) territory of documented citizenship (identified here with places as disparate as the Soviet Union, Israel, and the United States) and the attendant normative configurations of gender, sexuality, and marriage, and that of a passport-less, temporary grey area, a “diaspora within diaspora” represented by a place such
as Ladispoli, with its relatively unproblematic accommodation of non-normative genders and queer sexualities.

**Gender Inscriptions**

In the course of his stay in Ladispoli, the young narrator enters into a passionate affair with a young Italian woman, Rafaella, whose appearance and appeal, in hindsight, seem to the narrator to be “stylized and overwrought” (Shrayer, 2007, p. 106). The couple “played a waiting love game, whose main suspension of reality consisted in pretending we were lovers in a small American coastal town …” (p. 120). Simultaneously, the young man rekindles the relationship with an old flame from Moscow, Lana, with whom he lives out “a modern refugee story set in Italy” (p. 116). There is certainly nothing particularly transgressive or illicit about these youthful liaisons, but the narrator describes his adventures with Rafaella as a “secret tryst” (p. 120).

Shrayer’s text achieves the effect of transgression by underscoring subtly the performative, artificial, stylized, meta-fictional, and thus, in a sense, de-naturalized, or queer, characteristics if the sexual and emotional boundary-crossings that go on in Ladispoli. In the romanticized setting of Rome and its suburbs, departures from the putatively natural, traditional constructions of gender and sexuality take place: a bespectacled intellectual from Western Ukraine becomes a “gigolo” (p. 103), who carries on an affair with an Austrian hostel owner; men assume traditionally feminine social roles, while women form an assertive matriarchy; queer male subjectivities emerge from the state of oblivion and erasure.

While Boyarin’s (1997) definitions of diaspora and homeland are removed from the Shrayers’ predicament, his discussion of Jewish diasporic maleness remains indispensable. In *Waiting for America*, several male characters illustrate a model of normative heterosexual masculinity that is coterminous with a nationalist project: one that emphasizes sexual prowess, aggression, and power, instead of gentleness and submission. Tellingly, and certainly consistently with Boyarin’s analysis, all these characters are either Israeli citizens, or those who hold up mainstream Israeli masculinity as a model for all Jewish men.

Pinya, the narrator’s Israeli paternal great-uncle, visits the Shrayer family in Ladispoli. When Uncle Pinya arrives in Italy, he is no longer young, but is still “single and still hungry to live” (Shrayer, 2007, p. 191), a polite Russian euphemism for aggressively insatiable sexual desire, particularly given the sexual connotation of the verb “to live” in Russian.4 His very appearance communicates masculinity of a Biblical cast:

> He was about five-seven, with a lion’s main of hair. Very dry but still very animate—like a mountain river in the summer that still remembers itself turbulent and full of spring torrents. The oval of his face and his distin-

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4 Particularly in a medical context, but in other contexts as well, “to live/live with” is a euphemism for being sexually active and/or having sexual relations with someone.
guished, raven nose were shaped much like those of our male cousins …

However, Uncle Pinya’s skin had acquired the permanent cinnamon stain of the desert. (p. 191)

Here Shrayer strategically defamiliarizes Pinya’s masculinity. He looks somewhat like his Russian relatives (“his […] face and […] nose were shaped much like those of our male cousins”). Even in a description of such decidedly gender-non-specific features as the shape of a face or a nose, the narrator underscores the Uncle’s likeness to his “male cousins,” thereby stressing his manliness. The simile that likens Pinya’s energy to a river functions to establish a contrast between the Uncle’s “natural” (or normative) libidinous manliness and his cousins’ citified, feminized one. The “permanent cinnamon stain of the desert” denotes nature but connotes culture and ideology. It marks Pinya as an Israeli and makes his overall appearance redolent of precisely the kind of Biblical heroes who, to Boyarin, symbolize the paradox of nationalism as assimilation. The lion-like, animated Uncle epitomizes normative, gentile, power-driven masculinities, “Siegfrieds” and “Maccabees” all at once. However, in the narrative logic of the memoir, the Shrayer men never join Uncle Pinya in his ideological pursuits, nor do they emulate his masculinity.

What I see as the narrative’s indirect rejection of, or at least ambivalence about, Israel’s national narrative is reflected in the protagonists’ choice to disregard the Israeli visas that had been their ticket out of the Soviet Union in the first place, and to immigrate to the U. S. instead. The Shrayer family is divided on the issue along the gender lines, but ultimately, puts the mother in charge of the decision where to emigrate, which also keeps the family in the non-normative, in-between space of Ladispoli longer, both literally and symbolically. Literally, had the Shrayers decided to emigrate to Israel, they would have been allowed to leave Italy much sooner. Figuratively, Ladispoli is a space that legitimizes and protracts the state of matriarchy, and the accompanying “feminized” (Boyarin, 1997, p. 157) masculinity, marginalized in the space of documented citizenship/nationalism.

Maxim’s mother, an English professor, whom the memoir depicts as a big-city woman, and who “abhorred in advance the prospect of living in the provinces” (p. 148), is determined to live in a large American urban area. Conversely, Maxim’s father, the doctor and writer David Shrayer, is torn between his desire to get to America, thereby fulfilling his longtime dream as a refusenik, and to pay tribute to his Jewish identity. In Vienna, the Shrayers undergo an interview with the representatives of the Israeli Ministry of Immigrant Absorption, who attempt to persuade the ex-Soviet Jews to immigrate to Israel. Maxim’s mother considers such an interview “arm-twisting” and “turn(s) chalk-white” with fear (p. 14), while his father experiences guilt:

They were pressuring me. Shaming me. ‘A Jewish writer and a sufferer like you belongs in Israel.’ And what’s worse, a part of me agreed with what they said. Both of them came from Russia as young men in the early 1970s. They served in the army. One of them, the one with the scar, was wounded in 1973. It was hard to look them in the eye. (p. 15)
Not only is the father momentarily drawn to the nationalist narrative, but he is also in awe of the normative model of masculinity (similar to Uncle Pinya’s), which the two Ministry of Absorption functionaries represent, that of military discipline and war scars. However, in the Shrayer family, the mother’s desire to stay in Ladispoli and move to America ultimately prevails. As both the father and the son follow the mother’s decision — thereby rendering themselves subordinate by the normative patriarchal standards — the trajectory of the Shrayer family becomes mother-identified.

Overall, the memoir admires and endorses (as does Boyarin) the matriarchal nature of the transitory Ladispoli community, exemplified, in particular, by the narrator’s mother’s casual friend Alina Soloveitchik. Gopinath (2005) decries both “the nationalist overvaluation of the heterosexual female body” (p. 19) and the erasure of queer femininity from the male-dominated discussions of queer diasporic sexuality and gender (pp. 77-78). In the absence of the strict nation/diaspora dichotomy, however, Ladispoli, represents a space in which the female body is not co-opted by either discourse and, though not queer according to Gopinath’s definition, is allowed to transgress by controlling the gaze. Alina’s appearance is striking: she is “tall” and “hefty,” with “unsparingly perceptive chocolate-brown eyes” (p. 208). The contrast between Alina’s “larger-than-life personality” (p. 209) and the quiet, submissive demeanor of her husband, Lyonya, or Leonid, is ostensibly stereotypical, verging on a cliché; yet it is also vividly illustrative of Boyarin’s definition of gender relations in the diasporic Ashkenazi culture: “Alina Soloveitchik did most of the talking in her family, leaving to her quiet husband Leonid the multiple tasks of carrying their belongings, supervising the children, and also being a silent witness to what she called ‘telling it like it is’” (p. 208).

Alina forms a friendship with Maxim’s equally charismatic mother: “My mother … used to dominate over her Moscow female friends in an understated, trendsetting fashion. But she was so emotionally drained … that at the beach she let Alina take charge of her spirits … A couple of times [the narrator’s father and Leonid] went fishing off the jetty, but the bond was really between the women, the mothers” (p. 209). The word choice — “used to dominate,” “take charge” — clearly indicates the women’s strength, and the men’s relative marginality.

To David Shrayer’s consternation, his wife receives “an inappropriate compliment” (p. 162) from a fellow-emigrant named Anatoly Shteynfeld, while Alina is vocal about, and proud of, her sexuality, which at once disturbs and enthralls everyone from her timid husband, to her powerful Ukrainian ex-lover, to the casual onlookers on the Ladispoli beach: “‘Alinochka, hold the towel. They’re staring!’ The usually phlegmatic Lyonya loses his nerve. ‘What’s the big deal? Let them stare all they want. You should be glad your wife still has something to offer to the world’” (p. 214). Alina is no property of her husband’s, or any other man’s; she belongs and offers herself to the world. Prior to emigrating from Russia, she had had an extramarital affair with a Communist functionary, a “classic Brezhnevite golden boy from the provinces … He’s now sort of trapped as second secretary of the regional party committee” (p. 213).
Upon discovering the liaison, Alina’s husband “got down on his knees and begged me. Begged me for hours, to stay with him. For the children’s sake, he said. And so here we are, going to Cleveland” (p. 213). In a move that obviously reverses the patriarchal family structure, the narrative empowers and liberates female sexuality, and gives the male character the unenviable—and stereotypically female—task of keeping the family intact, despite infidelity. In Ladispoli, the flaunting of the flesh at a public beach for all the world to see is Alina’s inalienable right as a matriarch.

Alina epitomizes the tormented state of divided ethnic and geographic loyalties characteristic of a diasporic subject; she is in a permanent state of nostalgic longing and transition, looking back and forward at once. Alina is half—Jewish and half-UKranian. While she is ambivalent about her Jewish heritage, and, as the narrator puts it, “self-hating” (p. 214), she nonetheless constantly underscores the similarity of her last name to that of Joseph Soloveitchik, the prominent American rabbi and scholar, though there is no family connection between the two. She is devoted to her father, an UKranian air-force colonel:

Having had an UKranian, non-Jewish father gave Alina a feeling of superiority. Torn between UKranians and Jews, she was of two minds about emigrating, even after two years as a refusenik … Alina was also the first Jew from Ukraine I’d met who was so ardently pro-UKranian and so anti-Russian. (p. 211)

Alina has no homeland to speak of. As a Soviet subject, she is implicated, and imbricated, in the politics of suppressed UKranian nationalism, anti-Semitism, and her own wavering desire to emigrate to the West. In effect, by way of complicating Boyarin’s and Gopinath’s dichotomies, she is torn between several diasporas at once, rather than between a homeland and a diaspora. Her sexuality disrupts the boundaries of the patriarchal family, to which she is compelled to return. Admittedly, her husband’s abject begging is an unusual way of maintaining patriarchy; nonetheless, the result is the same: both in the Ukraine and in the U. S., the spaces of citizenship, the traditional family needs to remain intact. In Ladispoli, however, which is a permissive space, a diaspora within diaspora, Alina can keep her husband in submission and show her body to the world.

Heterosexuality, though central to the narrator’s and most other characters’ experiences, is frequently disrupted by queer desire, the appearances of which are brief but rendered significant by their very brevity. The introduction of two queer male characters, Evgeny and Alexandr, in Ladispoli, illustrates the disruptive force of sexuality in a diaspora within diaspora, a place that gives legitimacy to desires and identities that are, at worst, illegal, or, at best, marginal in the (also diasporic) space of documented citizenship, from and toward which the narrative moves. The Shrayers’ stay in Rome begins with a purportedly factual account of the narrator’s aunt’s smuggling of her friend Evgeny Katz, the “first violin” (p. 48) of an unmentioned symphony orchestra, from Moscow to the West in a suitcase. The musician emerges from the narrator’s aunt’s trunk while the family is moving into their modest Roman hotel:
And what I saw after that was perfectly phantasmagoric. A plaid throw that used to cover the old divan in my aunt and grandmother’s living room in Moscow began to quiver, and then a human hand jutted itself out of the corner of the trunk. We saw a short man, with a Checkovian goatee sitting up in the trunk, apparently adjusting his eyes to sunlight. (p. 47)

Though a bearer of a “Checkovian goatee,” the character who is literally about to emerge is Chagallian much more than he is Checkovian: a diasporic Eastern European Jew, a violinist, a semi-fantastical “fiddler in the trunk.” On leaving the trunk, Katz declares, “I’m going to ask for political asylum in Rome” (p. 48).

Katz, then, is not particularly concerned about reestablishing his Jewish identity, either in America or in Israel. Unlike the hundreds of emigrants who long to abandon the geographical and legal limbo that is Rome/Ladispoli, Evgeny Katz specifically desires to reside in Italy. Eventually, we grow to understand Katz’s reasons for leaving Russia—and for remaining in such a limbo—a little better, though the text gives us these reasons casually, almost as an afterthought:

The story of the man from the Manchurian trunk has a happy ending. To this day I haven’t found out the reason behind my aunt’s risky enterprise. They weren’t, my aunt insisted, lovers, and I’m inclined to believe her ... The violinist was granted a political asylum and stayed in Italy … He changed his Jewish feline last name to a Russian aquiline name—a long one ending in “off” and hinting at refinement and nobility. Evgeny lives with his boyfriend, a former La Scala tenor. He runs his own music school in Rome, near Piazza Navona. He recently recorded the complete Brahms violin sonatas. (p. 49)

Despite the passing reference to Evgeny’s sexuality, the narrator also suggests that the musician, who “had left a wife and two children in Russia” (p. 49), and Maxim’s aunt may or may not have been lovers. Most likely, they were not; however, behind this unusual rescue story is a species of queer, non-procreative relationship between a heterosexual woman and a gay man that, as Eve Sedgwick taught us,5 supersedes and replaces a heterosexual procreative bond that Evgeny leaves behind.

While presumably leaving partly because he was persecuted as a Jew, Evgeny forges an identity that is consistent with his status as a non-heterosexual dweller of a diaspora within a diaspora. He leaves a normative family behind, and, instead of preserving his Jewish identity, goes back and chooses a Westernized, pseudo-Russian last name ending with the characteristic “off.” He is neither a Jew nor a Russian; he is a queer father and a permanent exile happily suspended in the diasporic grey zone of Rome. In some ways, his professional identity is the only stable one for him, and, if anything, his choice of

Italy stems from the association of this country with the best in the musical world.

What comes out of the Manchurian trunk is not a baby but a violin: “Evgeny Katz picked the bundle up, untied the twine, and unwrapped it, freeing a black violin case from the bosom warmth of a kid’s pink blanket” (p. 47). The image at once reproduces and reverses conventional birth and, consequently, the very concept procreative heterosexuality. The Manchurian trunk lined with “Scottish plaid” (p. 47), oddly reminiscent of the bag containing a baby, left in the Victorian station by the absent-minded Miss Prism of Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest*, symbolizes the suspension of identity in a space beyond nationality and compulsory heterosexuality simultaneously. In *Waiting for America*, Ladispoli and Rome are, then, the geographical equivalent of the well-traveled trunk: a space beyond dichotomized geopolitical certainty and sexual normativity.

The figure of a non-heterosexual male Jewish musician is the focal point of transgression in Ladispoli. While getting a haircut from a Russian-speaking barber, the narrator enters into a conversation with such a musician’s grandfather, a menacing- and old-fashioned looking Mountain Jew who, before emigrating, had lived in Baku, the capital of the former Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan. The old man discusses his family, particularly his grandsons, with the narrator: “My grandson’s a sissy. I have two other grandsons—in the Israeli army. My older son went there in the seventies. They are warriors, like real men in our family …” Earlier on, the old man mentions his roots and connection to the Caucuses, “We are from the lost tribes of Israel, you see. We’d been in the Caucasus a long, long time. Long before the Azeris and various others. We were all warriors and winegrowers in our family, and I was the last one” (pp. 92-93). The elderly man’s derision of his gay grandson, who is also a musician, is simultaneous with his glorification of the “real” manhood of “warriors and winegrowers,” whether Israeli or Azeri. Normative manhood (embodied here, and in the case of the Ministry of Immigrant Absorption representatives, by military service) is linked to two narratives of secular nationalism: his grandsons’ self-identification as Israelis (illustrated by their early emigration in the 1970s, as well as by their service in the IDF), and his family’s mythical narrative of belonging to the Caucasus Mountains (“We are from the lost tribes of Israel … We’d been in the Caucasus a long, long time”).

The “sissy” grandson, Aleksandr Abramov, does not fit the mold of militarized masculinity. He has a hand that is “small like a child’s” (p. 93) and “limp” (p. 95), and feels close only to the female part of his family: “I only love my mother and little sister … and … and,” he paused” (p. 94). “The love that dare not speak its name” emerges both from the silence of the ellipsis, the in-

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6 The appellation “Mountain Jews,” or “Tat,” refers to the Jews who have resided in the Caucasus Mountains, particularly in Dagestan and Azerbaijan. A number of Mountain Jews have emigrated to, and settled, in Israel.
evitable stereotypes of a small hand and a mother attachment. Seeking a common ground during their “sole lengthy conversation,” the two young men discuss what it was like “growing up Jewish” in the Soviet Union. While Maxim describes his life as a Jew as “tough,” Aleksandr paints a seemingly idyllic picture:

We were like a family—Azeris, Armenians, Russians, Ukrainians, European Jews, Mountain Jews, you name it. Oh, you have no idea. It was such a happy life. I didn’t want to leave, you know. I had everything there. I went to a special school for musically gifted children. At our Baku conservatory I had the best teachers. Oh, it was wonderful there. When we were leaving my whole neighborhood came to say goodbye. We all walked to the cabs, like brothers, arm in arm. I will never forget that, you see, never. And he was there, too … To my fanatical grandfather he was a Muslim dog. But he was Adonis to me, you understand, Adonis. (pp. 94-95)

The young musician may be deluded about the alleged lack of anti-Semitism in the region, but what is more striking is the consistency of the connection between queer sexuality and an in-between identity that refuses to attach itself to an ethnicity, religion, or nationality. Aleksandr (whose very name may be indicative of the “Greek love”) reminisces not only about the diverse ethnic mix of his neighborhood but also about an imaginary band of brothers, walking “arm in arm,” with his lover in their midst. His sexuality is coached in Greek terms that go beyond either man’s cultural affiliation.

Queer identity locates both in music as a cosmopolitan art (as it does in the case of Evgeny Katz) and, banally and inevitably, and yet unusually for the context of this memoir, in classical antiquity. Aleksandr’s Jewish identity, Soviet citizenship, and his upcoming immigration to America, are all obscured by a Hellenist reference to an object of desire. Aleksandr is not at home in the Soviet Union, and, unlike the narrator, he is not “waiting for America”: his diaspora within diaspora is Ancient Greece, and the place where he can express his longing for Greece and its acceptance of same-sex desire is Ladispoli.

Though the narrator himself is heterosexual, he assumes, for the duration of his stay in Ladispoli and Rome, an identity that is structurally feminized, or at least somewhat removed from the mainstream Western constructions of masculinity. For example, he spends much of his time shopping for food and window-shopping for clothes. Curiously, he inherits the conventionally female penchant for shopping from his father:

7 Small hands and a limp handshake have a long history as both stereotypes and subversive gestures: “Indeed one of the things that most repelled the Victorian journalist Frank Harris upon meeting Oscar Wilde was that ‘he shook hands in a limp way that I disliked’—presumably owning to his ‘effeminacy.’ The very handshake of the ideal male Jew encoded him as feminized in the eyes of European heterosexual culture, but that handshake constituted as well a mode of resistance to the models of manliness of the dominant fiction” (Boyarin, 1997, p. 151).
This is my father’s influence, no doubt, as my chic and metropolitan mother never cared for the experience of dealing with farmers in their stalls, of checking out the wares and negotiating prices. My father, however … taught me the lexicon and grammar of shopping and bargaining at Russian farmers’ markets, and I put it to good use in Rome. (p. 97)

The narrator recalls “turning into a Roman housewife and heading for Piazza Vittoria” (p. 96). When not shopping at the “Round Market” in Piazza Vittoria, he “ogled at the clothing stores and at the fashionable people” on Via Nationale. The cultural construct of a shopping man is not at all unusual in the diasporic, Russian-Jewish context, but that is precisely the point. Both in Russia, among the non-Jews, and in America, the country to which the narrator is about to move, shopping is the province of a woman, and in the brief time between national identities, the young narrator unabashedly assumes the role of a housewife. He inherits the conventionally feminine roles that are, nonetheless, culturally specific to European Jewish maleness.

The young man’s apparently final incorporation into normative masculinity happens right before his departure for America. The memoir concludes with the young narrator’s conversation with his mother on the eve of their departure for the United States. As they attempt to picture their new home, the narrator says, somewhat suddenly, “I think American girls are very sexy,” while his mother adds, “I think it would be wonderful. And especially your American wife. I can almost picture her” (p. 225). Both the young man and his mother strain their imaginative capacities in an effort to understand what America is, and what their lives will be like. One aspect of their future existence is clear: it is bound up with the heteronormative family and marriage. Queer characters, such as Evgeny and Alexandr, and untraditional performances of gender, such as the feminine activity of window-shopping, or matriarchal decision-making, are likely to remain in Ladispoli. The move to America is not a move from a homeland to a diaspora, or vice versa; it is, rather, a lateral move within a diaspora, which, nonetheless, promises the Russian Jews citizenship, documented legibility, and legal rights. It also, however, demands that the heteronormative masculinity and marriage plot re-emerge as the dominant narratives.

In an earlier prolepsis, the narrator describes a trip from the U. S. abroad, during which he saw his Israeli Uncle Pinya for the last time: “In the summer of 1998, less than a year before I met my wife and my life changed forever, I took my last long trip as a bachelor … I had visited my dear Estonia and also stayed in Poland, where Jewish memories were for sale in Krakow’s Jewish town. … After that I went to Israel and spent two weeks touring the country” (p. 204). The very experience of the diasporic life through world travel happens at the end of the narrator’s bachelor life, as if marriage not only “changes his life” but also helps him settle permanently in his new home(land).

AFTER DIASPORA?

Though the narrator ends his own story of waiting for America with a sense of impending conjugal felicity, one of the text’s most vivid concluding
images takes the reader away from a domestic idyll and back to Ladispoli. Three years after his arrival in America, the narrator visits Alina and Lyonya Soloveitchik in their new home in Cleveland, where they lead a rather prosaic but apparently successful and well-adjusted lives: “Alina was working as a lab tech. Lyonya … went back to school to get ‘an American PhD.’ On the inside, their ranch house in Cleveland Heights had the look of a Soviet apartment, and the wife and husband Soloveitchik both still looked very Soviet, especially so in contrast to their own Americanized children” (p. 212). The interior of an immigrant’s home often serves to problematize the issues of belonging and adaptation. Martin Manalansan’s (2005) description of a gay Filipino man’s small New York City apartment divided into an “American” and a “Filipino” section (pp. 150-152) is a compelling illustration of this phenomenon.

Likewise, an inside/outside divide, both aesthetic and cultural, clearly marks the space that the Soloveitchiks inhabit in the United States. Underneath the veneer of placid suburban existence pulsates an irreducible and intractable non-identity that precludes domesticity from setting in, and the middle-class suburban outside from coalescing conveniently with the “foreign” interior. This non-identity harkens back to the “diaspora within diaspora” and is anchored in the image of Alina’s body, in Ladispoli, available to the desiring narrative gaze: “I cannot imagine the Ladispoli beach without the Soloveitchiks in the center of the shot. Standing on the floral sheet under the stupefying midday sun, Alina is changing out of her black bikini with gold buckles” (p. 214). The queer space that the immigrants had left behind is depicted as a woman who is untamed by patriarchy and publicly sexual.

The memoir, then, does not conclude with an entirely happily-ever-after domestic scene; in effect, mediated by a fond memory, Ladispoli infringes both upon the normative domestic scene and upon the territory of national identity, or citizenship, and renders the latter territory diasporic. This intrusion troubles and redraws the boundaries of the homeland in the diaspora/homeland binary and calls into question the viability of the binary itself. Waiting for America: A Story of Emigration is a text that depicts the complexity of the contemporary narratives of perennially diasporic global migrants and offers the possibility of creating a theoretical paradigm that resonates with their experiences.

REFERENCES


In this article I explore the multiple masculinities developed in work of the White American “gangsta” rapper Eminem. I suggest his work is a site of praxis for a range of discourses that are accorded positions of power within popular culture, such as the privileging of “Whiteness” (Fanon, 1986; Grealy, 2008, p. 861; Rose, 1994), hyper-hegemonic masculinities (Hickey-Moody & Savage, forthcoming), and misogynist constructions of the female body (Keathley, 2002; Kenway, Kraack, & Hickey-Moody, 2006, pp. 131-132). I argue that Eminem’s work performs an unstable idea of the masculine subject and that this is part of his appeal as a male icon: Eminem sells the idea that the hegemonic man can also be needy and scared.¹

I first began thinking about the cultural significance of Eminem’s work in late 2000, when the popularity of his 1999 Slim Shady EP was doubled by the

¹ While dominant images of Eminem present him as a stereotypical, muscle bound rapper, early images of the performer feature a much thinner, seemingly undernourished man. Pictures that feature him dressed as a mummy or psychiatric patient also allow suggestions of physical weakness.
success of the *Marshall Mathers* LP and its especially well received single, *Stan*. Here was a man making money out of his supposed helplessness (via pretend craziness) and his lack of authenticity (*he’s not Black, he raps like he’s Black, and he is milking this*). Eminem sells the idea that hegemonic colonial figureheads experience postmodern, multiple realities and have multiple subjectivities.\(^2\) On one level, it is interesting to see someone making money out of satirizing “himself” — his masculinity, the genre of music he performs, his race, and his subjectivities (see Holmes-Smith, 1997). On another, like so many other famous *gangsta* rappers, Eminem is a sexist, macho music icon making money out of misogynist lyrics and the always imminently racist overtones of a White man’s success in a Black industry. I argue that it is exactly this paradox that has made Eminem so successful. If he were only a crazy, weedy man who teased himself about his Whiteness in a Black industry, he would surely appeal only to a select “indie hip hop” market. But if he had only ever been the aggressive, “hegemonic man” that he has become, Eminem would only appeal to *gangsta* rap fans won over by the machismo and anger embedded in the genre. As it stands, his appeal bridges both demographics. The art in making and marketing Eminem was exactly this bringing together of opposites — the castrated White man (Klages, 2000) and the hegemonic Black phallus (Crawford, 2008).

Eminem is a very theatrical performer, and often “sets the scene” for a song’s narrative (see, for example, *Guilty Conscience*, 1999). He has developed three characters that he performs when he raps (Marshall Mathers, Slim Shady, Eminem) and he moves between these characters in his songs, but will also mimic others (other rappers, women, super heroes, physics teachers, the list goes on) when telling a story through rapping. Through his different personas, Eminem destabilizes fantasies of the homogenous “masculine” subject while also performing a convincing iteration of such fantasies through the overarching, hegemonic, and misogynist nature of the Eminem brand.

This marriage of seemingly opposite performances is hardly the substance of a social revolution; however, it does represent a shift in conceptualizations of masculinity performed in “hardcore” rap music. Gangsta rap has a history of privileging very specific, hyper-hegemonic masculine identities (Grealy, 2008; Hickey-Moody & Savage, forthcoming), and while Eminem’s work adheres to this formula, he does so with enough self-reflexivity to suggest the formula is a performance. It is this denaturalization of hegemony I want to

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\(^2\) Other figureheads of popular culture not associated with hip-hop music (Courtney Love, U2’s Bono, and Elton John) have suggested that Eminem’s work informs a “postmodern” analysis of contemporary American culture, given that without the commercialized framework of hip-hop and gangsta rap to support him, his work would have a much smaller audience. Popular presses’ reception of Eminem’s work has focused largely on chastising him for re-enforcing sexual stereotyping and misogyny. The fact that the media have largely missed the intended irony in his work may have increased the significance of the irony in the eyes of his viewers.
explore. I examine the ways in which the characters, or personas, of Marshall Mathers and Slim Shady perform contradictory ideas of masculinity that disrupt hegemonic fantasies constructed in relation to the “macho” character of Eminem. However, as I will show, in this instance the hegemon regains ultimate control over his unruly facets, reterritorializing both the mundane and the pathetic/crazy aspects of himself in order to reaffirm the power of White hegemonic masculinity. Indeed, it is precisely because of his Whiteness that Eminem can loosen his grip on hegemonic masculinity: albeit very briefly.

First, I want to discuss the gendered context to which I refer by suggesting that Eminem does represent a shift, if an ultimately incomplete one, in conceptualizations of masculinity performed in hardcore gangsta rap music. Grealy explains:

Gangsta rap’s dominance in the early 1990s spoke in response to ‘politically conscious rap’ and its middle-class focus. Baldwin claims that the early ‘[L.A. gangsta rappers] contend that the nationalist focus on Africa—both past and present—obscures the daily battles poor black folk have to wage in contemporary America’ (2004, p. 165), their contention echoing Fanon’s disappointment with negritude as a politically effective discourse. Gangsta rap facilitated roles such as the gangsta, the thug, the hustler and the pimp/player—highly masculine performances through their links to the criminal domain—and married these identities with that of the superstar. Such performances invoke society’s denigrated urban lower classes and glorify the hardships endured by blacks. (2008, p. 857)

As this passage suggests, and as affirmed elsewhere (Hickey-Moody & Savage, forthcoming), gangsta masculinity presents an extreme form of Connell’s “hegemonic masculinity,” that is, a masculinity constructed through the understanding that men should dominate women (Connell, 2000, p. 77). Connell (2000, 2005) and Demetriou (2001) elaborate this concept by positing a hegemonic structure within masculinity, through which certain groups of men dominate other men (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005, p. 835; Demetriou 2001, p. 337). Gangsta men claim an idealized kind of masculinity that dominates and eclipses the social visibility of alternative masculinities (Hickey-Moody & Savage). Hegemonic masculinity is a performance and embodiment of “pure” masculinity, founded on qualities such as force and competence, strength and skill. The hegemonic man is physically strong and emotionally stoic (Connell, 2000, p. 5).

I argue that Eminem offers a hyperbolic White (bleached) version of gangsta masculinity, which is both embodied and performative. I also contend that “his division of self [which] allows his performance to extend beyond appropriation into conscious mimicry” (Grealy, 2008, p. 859) is both a luxury afforded by his Whiteness and a source of great appeal to young male fans, who know all too well that hegemonic masculinity is indeed embedded “in the body … [via] a social process, full of tension and contradiction” (Connell, 1983, p. 30).
I want to introduce the “everyman” persona of Marshall Mathers, the name by which Eminem was christened, and which I give to his performance of the depressed and the mundane—“my name is Marshall Mathers, I’m an alcoholic....”; “Sometimes I just feel like my father, I hate to be bothered with all of this nonsense it’s constant.” The “everyman” character consolidated in Marshall figures on the 2000 record and title song Marshall Mathers but predates this record. Having grown up in lower working class Detroit with his single mother (McNamee, 2000), Marshall Mathers’ character milks every inch of his “real” White trash biography in appealing to listeners. Indeed, the character offers a contemporary, lower working class iteration of “an English morality play of the 15th century ... [which treats] allegorically the theme of death and the fate of the human soul—of Everyman’s soul as he tries to justify his time on earth ...”. For the working class man who is out of work, there simply is no justification for his time on earth (see McDowell, 2003). Marshall Mathers complains:

I’m tired of life ...
I’m tired of backstabbing ass snakes with friendly grins
I’m tired of committing so many sins
Tired of always giving in when this bottle of Henny wins
Tired of never having any ends
Tired of having skinny friends hooked on crack and mini-thins.
(If I Had, 1999)

As these lyrics suggest, day-to-day histories of unemployed life before celebrity shape the everyman parables told by Marshall. These parables also offer insight into the identity through which Eminem “aligns himself in respect to class with the contemporary poor in America in which Black Americans are largely situated, and racially with Black history, which in his apparent understanding is grounded in class struggle” (Grealy, 2008, p. 860). However, on

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4 Quote taken from the Eminem song “I Just Don’t Give a Fuck” (1998).
7 Grealy suggests that Eminem’s success can in part be attributed to his utilization of class discourse. He inhabits a ‘white trash’ identity—‘I’m a piece of white trash / I say it proudly’ (Eminem, in 8 Mile, dir. Hanson 2002)—which is one originally invoked by African-Americans (Taylor 2005, p. 342) [...] Eminem can be associated with most of the issues described as central to the politics of Kitwana’s ‘hip-hop generation’. His privileging class over race in the construction of his claim to cultural authenticity suggests that America’s shifting socio-economic structure provides points of identification with political positions originally and explicitly organized
balance, the Marshall Mathers morality play tells of working-class defeat more than class struggle *per se*. He is the story of every young man born into a future of limited prospects, every boy who feels hard done by, and who blames his stunted life on the failings of his mother.  

**MEET SLIM SHADY, “BRAIN DEAD LIKE JANE BRADY”**

Next, I would like to introduce “Slim Shady,” the crazy, drug addicted and at times childishly needy persona performed by Eminem. While the Slim Shady persona is overtly performed in songs such as *My Name Is* (1999), *I’m Shady* (1999), and *The Real Slim Shady* (2000), it appears consistently throughout Eminem’s songs as the abjected face of his masculinity (on abjection, see Kenway & Hickey-Moody, 2008). For example, the song *Kim* (2000) depicts an insecure man unable to live without his female partner, and *3am* (2009) narrates the story of a psychiatrically unwell patient, haunted by his own murderous actions. This trope of mental illness dominates the video clip for *My Name Is* (1999) which visually presents Slim Shady as a psychiatric patient in hospital and causing trouble. A number of characteristics in the needy, scared, and at times decidedly brat-like tones of Slim Shady can be read as the antithesis of the domineering male (e.g. “Kim, you think I’m ugly, don’t you?” Eminem, *Kim*, 2000, “I ain’t had a woman in years, my palms are too hairy to hide;” *My Name Is*, 1999; “Is he nuts? NO! He’s insane!” Insane, 2009). This character of the desperate, masturbating, crazy young man looks like the figurehead of a Ritalin generation of White working class boys (see McDowell, 2003). Rising above both the hopeless, everyday Marshall Mathers, who is marking time until his death, and the crazy runt Slim Shady, who seems to be expediting the process of his own death, is the hegemonic figure of Eminem, who manages to colonize his less successful selves.

I agree with Grealy, but also contend that through the character of Marshall Mathers Eminem positions himself as mainstream male America. He is every American White man born poor.

8 Furthermore, the symbolic threat of the mother’s sexuality provokes castration anxiety, as the mother’s unmarried sexual activity suggests a voracious sexual appetite, fuelled both by her womb and the possibility of ‘vagina dentata’ (Creed, 2005, p. 23): the vagina with teeth, capable of castrating the misguided son tempted into her sexual embrace.

9 Quote taken from the Eminem song “I Just don’t give a fuck” (1998).
EMINEM: A CONCEPT THAT WORKS

The gangsta rap persona Eminem models a figure of patriarchal strength, embodying gangsta masculinity as a spectacular instantiation of Connell’s “hegemonic masculinity:” a masculinity constructed through the understanding that men should dominate women (Connell, 2000, p. 77). Eminem represents a hyper-masculinized character who embodies or relies on not just a disavowal of the feminine, but also a self-appointed White-Black status unattainable by “other White rappers.” Calling himself “a concept that works,” he sings:

Twenty million other White rappers emerge
But no matter how many fish in the sea
It'll be so empty, without me. (*Without Me*, 2002)

As I suggested above, gangsta culture is gendered and racialized in specific ways, but to see gangsta as a “Black thing” needs specification (Hickey-Moody & Savage, forthcoming). Of course, the history of gangsta is specifically located in African American culture, emerging as

a culturally indigenous example of black masculine fashioning. At a linguistic level, the term appropriates and revises “gangster,” of course, a word primarily attached to white masculine organized crime .... In general, rap discourses as signification of the “gangsta” recall the term “nigga,” which attempts to revise and unsettle the historical racist epithet “nigger” while affirming friendship and community among black men. (Richardson, 2007, p. 221)

A contemporary articulation of gangsta, Eminem focuses on expressions of class and social power more than race (Grealy, 2008, p. 860). But in engaging with and reproducing discourses around gangsta, is Eminem doing anything other than territorializing “Black cool” (Hickey-Moody & Savage, forthcoming; hooks, 2004)? I argue that it is precisely because of his Whiteness that Eminem successfully sells a version of gangsta that deviates in some ways from the imploded tropes of thug, hustler, and pimp/player.

NON-HEGEMONIC LYRICAL PERSONAE AS A WHITE LUXURY?

Various forms of racial and sexual prejudice and abuse have long been institutionalized within Western society. Gangsta rap music resonates with a tried formula of heteronormative performances that appear increasingly misogynistic in their depictions of women. The top of the music charts have always been about somehow “one upping” the star you are knocking off the

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10 Quote taken from the Eminem song “Without me.”

11 Margo Crawford (2008) and Frances Welsing (1991) also argue that Black gangsta masculinities pose a symbolic alternative to existing male patriarchal social structures.
podium and, as such, new stars often are a bit ruder, faster, more “in your face,” or in some way more noticeable than their predecessor. On one level, Eminem’s fame echoes the colonial tale of “White supremacy.” The history of hip-hop has largely been about developing a contemporary African-American sensibility and identity, and as such has offered a platform for African-American social issues (Fanon, 1986). But Eminem’s reworking of conventional hip-hop/gangsta rap performativity, at a time of hip-hop culture having become one of the most lucrative markets in capitalist society (Watson, 2004), has relied on a media logic that sets him apart from the Black norm.

Media interest has also opened up a site that has traditionally served as a cultural stronghold for African-American culture to vehement attack, as discussed by Patterson (2000, 2001). A White man performing the musical style that was developed to represent the cultural unity and strength of African-American community signals that cultural norms have become “fair game” for the White cultural critic. It is hard to believe that Eminem’s swearing and rudeness is more offensive to White middle-class cultural sensibilities than that of other (Black) rappers—“we got here to fuck this shit up tonight. Now I’m a-try an’ fuck this bitch” (Xzibit in Sutherland, 2001, p. 24).

In spite of Eminem’s assertion that “I don’t make Black music …. I don’t make White music, I make fight music for high school kids” (The Real Slim Shady, 2000), Eminem looks like a White version of a Black rapper, and he is part of a Black scene. There is a fair swag of anger, dislocation, and perversion in Eminem’s work, spread across his lyrical content, his elaboration of lyrical “personas,” and on-stage performance style. The general take on his success offered by popular cultural press has been that his success has come about in spite of abhorrent lyrics. I would argue that Eminem became a commercial success because he tried to “piss the whole world off.” The content of Eminem’s work is not easily divorced from his style of delivery. Eminem’s three distinct personas are both connected to and dislocated from each other. In developing the characters of Eminem, Slim Shady, and Marshall Mathers, along with their respective aural/visual/physical sensibilities, Eminem replicates a conventional patriarchal figuration (Eminem: “you gonna get knocked the fuck out like Mike Tyson”) that is arguably a cornerstone of the genre within which he is working, but also stages two markedly different personas, thus stretching the boundaries of gender performativity within gangsta rap/hip hop culture and counteracting the hegemonic singulars of masculinity.

What is of interest to me here is that the demographic most committed to consuming Eminem is perhaps the one in serious need of an apparatus with which the hegemonic stability of middle-class White maleness can be queried—

12 “Eminem ... pissed the whole world off. From the inevitable outrage of gay and women’s rights groups to the seasoned liberals of the worldwide media.... Now, in 2001 there’s barely one voice of dissent left. The sheer obviousness of his unparalleled gift has seduced the most conservative of culture watchers.” Alexi Hay, Juice Magazine, May 5, 2001, p. 47. See also, for example, NME, December 2000; The Face, December 2000; Juice Magazine, May 2, 2001.
and Eminem knows it: “Its shit like this that I kick to these rich White kids, who just might see how fucked up this sick life is” (D12, 2001, Ain’t Nuttin’ But Music).

It seems that Eminem’s Black/Whiteness evades what Richard Dyer describes as an impossible corporeality characterizing the business of being “White:”

... in practice whites have accorded themselves a special relation to race and thus their own and other bodies. They have more of that unquantifiable something, something spirit that puts them above race. This is a badge of superiority, yet it also creates an instability for whites at the hidden heart of the notion of race, namely heterosexual reproduction and its attendant sex roles. Whites must reproduce themselves, yet they must also control and transcend their bodies. Only by (impossibly) doing both can they be white. (Dyer, 1997, p. 30)

Far from “transcending” his body and wearing Whiteness as a badge of superiority, Eminem is preoccupied with the corporeal—he wants to fuck, to get stoned, and to fight. His fascination for carnal pleasures is tied in with the fact that his work actively bridges racial divides. His “blood brother” PROOF, with whom he shares a “D-12” tattoo,13 is a Detroit born African-American. Eminem conventionally portrays his Black fellow posse members as his family, his intellectual and cultural peers for whom he would “fight or die” (Devils Night, 2001). Arguing that his White “trailer trash” upbringing provided him with little other than a chip on his shoulders the size of the Empire State and a serious drug habit (“where the fuck d’you think I picked up the habit? All I had to do was walk in the room and lift up the mattress”—Eminem, 2000), Eminem has schooled himself in the “art” of Blackness (Fanon, 1986).

Eminem’s self-styled performance of race highlights its always/already constructed character. It is only when the “White” male ceases to reproduce “himself” and, rather, begins to reproduce himself as “other,” that he engenders mainstream cultural unease. To Eminem, corporeal “Whiteness” is far from “a badge of superiority” (Dyer, 1997, p. 30). Rather, it is the history he works to disavow.

To seemingly add insult to injury of the White male imaginary, Eminem fundamentally disrupts the “attendant sex roles” of heterosexual reproduction (Dyer, 1997, p. 30). Interestingly enough, he performs this disjunction in what Dyer might call a “characteristically White” fashion. Eminem’s attention to “attendant sex roles” is initially rendered queer through his schizophrenic personae. He is a “masculine” misogynist, but he is also effeminate in his redeployment of a contemporary gothic sensibility. Images of Eminem bound in straight jackets, wrapped up like a mummy with his wrists slit, sitting, derelict and desolate in the corner of a dirty alley, have all been concomitant

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13 D-12 is the name of the band Eminem started with fellow Detroit rappers. Alter egos are a feature of each of the rappers in this group.
with his rise to fame. Indeed, this “new gothic” sensibility (as it has been labeled by some popular media), is more than a purely visual aesthetic—it has an aural capacity as well. Eminem’s music is heavy with the rings of Gothic church bells (*The Way I Am*, 2000) and eerie sound effects. His work in 2002 (*The Slim Shady Show*, LP) saw a reinvention of the “freak-show” genre in yet another appropriation of sub-cultural performance styles. His 2009 album *Re-lapse* is set in a psychiatric asylum.

Discomfort around Eminem’s blithe appropriation of subcultural styles, signifiers of race, and of class (while Eminem grew up in a poor household, his financial circumstances have certainly changed) may explain why people are so unnerved by his work. If you make your fortune “acting Black,” are you effectively perverting African-American cultural unity? There are no simple answers to this question, and this is what is so unnerving about Eminem’s work. The tensions accompanying politics concerning identity and community that Eminem’s work produces “show up” apparent inconsistencies pertaining to embodiment and its intermeshing with the semiotics of sexualities, class, culture, and gender. Eminem’s politics are not particularly avant-garde, yet he manages to shift belief systems slightly off centre, just so they stop fitting the frame, thus leaving his audience feeling somewhat uncomfortable, and in this, his work resonates with “postmodern” intellectual maneuvering.

Here is, arguably, the first male figure in hip hop culture that suggests boys can be plain, boring, unwell, needy, weak, strong, successful, and attractive—a “schizophrenic” alter-ity replacing a hegemonic ordering. Eminem is no Clark Kent running off to become a different person in which his brilliance becomes manifest. His three characters are all developed aspects of the one person, and a performance of the schizophrenic experience of being “a man” alternating in a culture that popularizes violently narrow gendered roles, and working in a cultural industry that glorifies make-believe.

Eminem’s work is a performance of heteronormative sexual ideals that trivialize the politics of queer or gay identities, at the same time as they highlight the ironic nature of the fact that heteronormativity holds so much power in Western culture. Eminem’s work has been strongly criticized by gay activist groups, because of its homophobic content. He constantly “makes jokes” about being gay and while on one level this is evidently homophobic, on another level Eminem may be trying to parody social norms inherent in the assumptive status of heterosexuality, family, and the distribution of social power.

**CONCLUSION**

Ambiguous, contradictory, and unstable depictions of the late-capitalist male were a feature of Indie pop and its precursor, Glam rock. Bands such as the Dandy Warhols, The Cure, The Smiths, Sonic Youth, and of course David Bowie have made an art form of bending and reimagining gendered, “masculine” norms. Eminem reserves palatable ambiguity for the White, hetero, stable subject; ambiguity which moves beyond the inversion/reconstruction of
gender difference (singular) seen for instance in Emo\textsuperscript{14} music, and clearly antagonizes latent homophobia in much male teenage gossip, in order to appease the anxiety produced by what all boys know, but no-one tells them, namely, that there is no “correct” way of being a man. While the largely Black US hardcore rap community, alternative/indie pop cultures, and would-be bourgeoisie cultural police have taken interest in Eminem’s work for notably varied reasons, his concerts are predominantly attended by White young men wearing baseball caps (Hasted, 2003, p. 38, 87, 187, 149, 138, 150). I remain unconvinced as to the extent to which this demographic is able to read the ways in which Eminem’s work queries/queers ideas of White power and hegemonic masculinity. However, I would argue that these boys may well read Eminem’s multiple-personality crisis with familiar recognition (see McDowell, 2003). Embodying the contradictions of being normal/boring/young/scared/angry does not contradict a “masculine” habitus. Besides: even weird schizos who reckon they are ugly get to be famous, so why shouldn’t every schoolboy?

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\textsuperscript{14}Emo is a noun derived from the musical genre known as Emotional-Punk and used largely in reference to Emo fans, but encompasses elements of identity politics and community formation. I use Emo as an example here because deviation from heterosexual practices is often considered a defining part of Emo masculinity.


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