



# CULTURE, SOCIETY & MASCULINITIES

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# FILIPINO MEN'S ROLES AND THEIR CORRELATES

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE *FILIPINO ADHERENCE TO MASCULINITY EXPECTATIONS SCALE*

This investigation describes the construction and examination of psychometric properties of the *Filipino Adherence to Masculinity Expectations (FAME) Scale* using a sample of male university students ( $N = 834$ ) in the Philippines. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) indicated support for seven dimensions: Assertiveness and Dominance; Family Orientedness; Sense of Community; Responsibility; Integrity; Intelligence and Academic Achievement; and Respectful Deference to Women and the Elderly. The FAME had excellent internal consistency reliability (Cronbach  $\alpha = .95$ ). It was apparent that the FAME deals with largely prosocial ideals of masculinity in the Philippines. In terms of convergent validity, the FAME had some similar but mostly distinct dimensions as compared to a measure developed for use with U.S. samples: *Masculinity Attitudes, Stress, and Conformity Questionnaire* (MASC; Nabavi & Green, 2003). The discussion explores future directions of research and potential uses of the FAME in clinical work with Filipino male clients.

**KEYWORDS** FILIPINO MEN, MASCULINITY, FACTOR ANALYSIS, VALIDITY, EMIC

The gender role identity paradigm, which dominated research on gender beginning in the early 1930s, viewed masculinity as based on inherent traits or genes. Pleck (1981) proposed that this model does not sufficiently account for the formation of masculine ideology. Instead, he postulated a *Gender Role Strain* paradigm wherein masculinity is regarded as a cultural construction. In this view, men's behavior is accounted for by the conceptions of masculinity that men internalize from their culture. Given this perspective, there is no single, invariant, and universal masculinity, but rather there are *masculinities* that vary

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by age, culture, race, ethnic group, social class, sexual orientation, life stage, marital status, and historical era (Brod, 1987; Gilmore, 1990; Lazur & Majors, 1995; Levant et al., 1992; Levant & Majors, 1997; Levant, Wu & Fischer, 1996; Pleck, Sonenstein & Ku, 1993).

In the gender role strain paradigm, socialization practices may be inferred from gender ideologies. Thus, masculinity ideology is an essential construct in understanding the development and maintenance of the male gender role (Lazur & Majors, 1995). Masculinity ideology is defined as "an individual's internalization of cultural belief systems and attitudes toward masculinity and men's roles" (Pleck et al., 1993, p. 88). Given this definition, masculinity ideology varies as a function of differences in social, historical, political and cultural context. Despite the variety in masculinity ideologies, Pleck posited that "there is a particular constellation of standards and expectations that individually and jointly have various kinds of negative concomitants," which is referred to as *traditional* masculinity ideology (1995, p. 20).

The social construction of masculinity spurred a series of studies in an attempt to expand the scope of masculinity research into the international arena. These studies were in part a response to Connell's (1998) call for a more global perspective about men by expanding the scope of gender and masculinity research to include cross-cultural masculinity ideologies. However, Louie and Low (2003) noted that most of these investigations tend to be empirical and descriptive and are frequently developed from a Western perspective. Pertinent to Asian men, most of the studies were restricted to those living as minorities in the United States or Canada, resulting in a limited understanding of Asian masculinities.

The purpose of the current study was to develop a new instrument that takes into account indigenous and non-Western conceptions of masculinity in the Philippines. This study is part of similar efforts that have explored non-Western forms of masculine gender role norms among Asian-American men (Chua & Fujino, 1999) and Mexican-American men (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008). The investigation also delved into Filipino men's conformity behavior regarding masculinity ideologies. Finally, the study explored existing relationships between conformity to male gender role norms and psychological health. The goal of the new scale is to aid future researchers and clinicians in understanding *emic* (that is, culture-specific) constructs of masculinity and how these impact psychological problems.

#### MASCULINITY IDEOLOGY IN WESTERN AND NON-WESTERN CULTURES

Several investigations looked into the dimensions that underlie the traditional attitudes about men and masculinity, which were defined based on primarily American men. These aspects of masculinity ideology include: inhibition of emotional vulnerability; avoidance of feminine behavior and stereotypically feminine activities; primacy of work, status and achievement; self-reliance; aggression; strength and toughness; dominance and leadership; providing for and protecting one's family; seeking adventure and risk; sexual prowess and objectification of sex; and homophobia (see Brannon & Juni, 1984; David &

Brannon, 1976; Green, 1998; Levant et al., 1992; Thompson & Pleck, 1986). Some of these characteristics have been represented in various measures of masculinity ideology such as the Brannon Masculinity Scale (BMS; Brannon & Juni, 1984), Male Role Norms Scale (MRNS; Thompson & Pleck, 1986), Male Role Norms Inventory (MRNI; Levant et al., 1992), and the Masculinity Attitudes, Stress, and Conformity Questionnaire (MASC; Nabavi & Green, 2003).

There were also some studies that focused on non-Western paradigms of masculine gender role norms. In Chua and Fujino's (1999) study, they suggested that Asian-American men did not perceive their masculinity in opposition to femininity. In fact, some Asian-American men were generating a more flexible conception of masculinity that involve caring characteristics such as being polite, obedient, nurturing in relationships, and willingness to do household chores. Similarly, Arciniega and his colleagues (2008) developed a scale that indicated two independent dimensions of Machismo (that is, Mexican masculinity norm), which they labeled as Traditional Machismo and Caballerismo. Their study described Traditional Machismo as involving more negative aspects of machismo such as hypermasculinity, dominance of men over women, and aggressiveness. On the other hand, Caballerismo involves more positive aspects of the male role that emphasize nurturance, chivalry, and family connectedness.

#### MASCULINITY IDEOLOGY IN THE PHILIPPINES

The available literature on masculinity in the Philippines gives support to the proposition that gender roles are socially constructed. Though there were some similarities to those proposed in Western societies, the masculine gender role norms observed in the Philippines reveal a distinction. There are about 77 ethno-linguistic groups in the Philippines, which are distinct based on language and background (National Commission for Culture and the Arts, 2008). Major groups include the Tagalog, Cebuano, Ilocano, Bisaya, Ilonggo, Bikol, and Waray people (National Statistical Coordination Board, 2005). Blanc-Szanton (1990) has suggested that within these groups, gender roles may differ based on historical, regional, class, and social activity influences. However, we have not found empirical evidence, beyond stereotypes and literary narratives, which looked at the differences among these ethno-linguistic groups in terms of male role norms. As such, the succeeding review focuses on Filipino men in general.

In terms of masculinity ideology, a prevailing theme in the literature is that Filipino men are expected to be the *ama ng tahanan* (father of the home) or the economic providers in the home; and the satisfactory performance of this role is the ultimate indicator of a truly masculine male (Jimenez, 1983; Jurilla, 1986; Macrohom, 1978; McCann-Erickson Survey Group, 1995; Robles, 1986). In a more recent study, where 32 father-son pairs were interviewed about their understanding of masculinity, Aguiling-Dalisay et al. (2000) presented two dominant images of the Filipino male: *protector* and *dominator*. The protector role is realized by getting married and is manifested in being the provider of the household. On the other hand, the dominator image is linked to the societal

expectation for males to be *haligi ng tahanan* (cornerstone of the home) and *padre de pamilya* (father of the family). In this role, males are perceived to take control and take charge in a relationship. Similarly, Tan (1989) concluded that Filipino fathers are mainly *procreators* and *dilettantes*. Tan derived archetypes of fathers and their differing perceptions of fatherhood using the dimensions of activity (high or low) and affection (positive or negative). As a procreator (that is, low activity, negative affection), the father has the main role of provider; and as a dilettante (that is, low activity, positive affection), he has a supporting role to the main caretaker, usually the mother. Despite having a supporting role in taking care of children, the father often takes the upper hand in disciplining children (Lagmay, 1983; Licuanan, 1979; Minoza, Botor, & Tablante, 1984; Porio, Lynch, & Hollnsteiner, 1978).

Responsibility training is viewed as the hallmark of Filipino child-rearing practices that prepares boys for their future adult role as "head of the family" (Lagmay, 1983; Liwag, De la Cruz, & Macapagal, 1998). In a study by Church, Katigbak, and Castañeda (1984-1985), Filipino men consider certain motivational characteristics (e.g., responsibility, determination, hard work) as indicators of good psychological health. Furthermore, being responsible is one trait that female adolescents consider to be masculine (Bantug, 1996).

Though the conventional masculine role of provider or protector seem to support a patriarchal society, Torres (1988) contended that the Filipino family system is bilateral and egalitarian where both father and mother are perceived as equally authoritative in decision situations and equally essential to home life. This "less patriarchal" character of the Filipino family supports sex role complementarity and interchangeable gender roles that social anthropologists have noted to exist in Southeast Asian societies (Alcantara, 1994; Angeles, 2001; David, 1994; Medina, 1991). Moreover, this dynamic is manifested in respecting women and being gentlemanly (Bantug, 1996), viewing women as *partners* (Aguiling-Dalisay et al., 2000) and *ilaw ng tahanan* (light of the home; Angeles, 2001). On the other hand, there is also the Filipino male tendency of placing women in high regard (Andres, 1981). This is also evident in jokes and common sayings, as presented by Angeles (2001) and Andres (1981), such as referring to the wife as *boss* or *kumander* (commander) or referring to Filipino men as *machomachunurin sa asawa* (a play on the word *macho* to mean "I am obedient to my wife"), *under the saya* ("under the skirt" to mean hen-pecked husband), and *Yukuza asawa* (a play on the word *Yakuza*, the Japanese mafia, to mean "I bow to my wife"). The aforementioned studies reflect a wide spectrum on how Filipino men relate with women. This can range from gender equality to placing women on a pedestal. This is not to suggest that sexism and gender inequality does not exist in the Philippines as these are definitely experienced, especially in rural areas where many women are at a disadvantage in accessing educational and labor opportunities.

Some traits have been idealized more commonly for Filipino men like morality, honesty and ethical values (Church et al., 1984-85; Lynch & Makil, 1968); valuing loyal ties to friends and family, *pakikisama* (being able to get along well with others) and oneness with others (Church et al., 1984-85; Guthrie, 1970; Margold, 1995); and alertness, logical thinking, objective competence, and in-

telligence (Bantug, 1996; Church et al., 1984-85; Gamboa, Luciano, Cruz, & Laforteza, 1972; Guthrie, 1970). Education is also prioritized for Filipino men due to its high instrumental value for obtaining secure occupations and, as a consequence, fulfills the expectation for males to be the future providers for their families (Gamboa et al., 1972; Lamug, 1989).

Pertinent to strength, in a study by Jimenez (1983), Filipino masculinity was generally perceived as having connotations of strength with descriptors such as *malakas* (strong), *matipuno* (brawny), *malaki ang katawan* (big-bodied), *maskulado* (muscular), *malusog* (healthy), *matatag ang loob* (strong-willed), *may determinasyon* (determined), and *agresibo* (aggressive). Strength, as an expectation for men, is likewise expressed in being able to endure pain or at least suffer in silence (Sobritchea, 1990); being aggressive and courageous in defending one's or one's family's honor (Macalandong, Masangkay, Consolacion, & Guthrie, 1978; Mangawit, 1981; Razon, 1981); having an aggressive or challenging masculinity; and being able to assert oneself through persuasive words (Margold, 1995).

#### CURRENT STUDY

This article describes the construction, psychometric appraisal, and validation of an indigenous instrument that can be employed to assess dimensions of Filipino masculinity ideology. As the previous literature review on masculinity ideology suggests, there were considerable differences in the gender role norms espoused from a Western perspective and those observed in the Philippines. Also, the existing measures of masculinity ideology do not include Filipino male role norms such as responsibility, family orientedness, deference to women, honesty, and sense of community. Thus, it was imperative to empirically validate these Filipino masculinity ideology dimensions through the construction of a new measure. The goals of this study are three-fold. First, we investigated the construct validity of the Filipino Adherence to Masculinity Expectations (FAME) Scale. Second, we explored the internal consistency reliability of the FAME and its constituent dimensions, which pertain to the categories of Filipino masculine norms. Third, we looked into the relationship between the FAME and the Masculinity Attitudes, Stress and Conformity (MASC) Questionnaire to explore the convergent validity of the FAME with a similar measure of masculine ideology and conformity behavior.

#### METHOD

##### PHASE I: CONSTRUCTION OF THE FAME

###### *Identification of Dimensions*

This step of the measure development intended to identify the dimensions that underlie Filipino masculinity ideology and operationally define these dimensions. First, archival data obtained from a qualitative investigation of the first author (Rubio, 2003) was analyzed. The data were obtained from 255 young adult males, aged 18 to 20 years, who were enrolled in Saint Louis Uni-

versity, Philippines. The students were asked to identify descriptive and prescriptive components of Filipino masculinity. For the descriptive component, they were asked to list three characteristics that describe what Filipino men are *actually* like, while for the prescriptive component, they were asked to list three characteristics that describe what people think an ideal Filipino man *should* be like. A total of 274 descriptive and 187 prescriptive characteristics were generated.

In the current study, a content analysis of the descriptive and prescriptive characteristics from the archival data was conducted. Seven prevalent dimensions were derived from this analysis. Finally, the available literature on masculinity ideology in the Philippines was comprehensively reviewed. The review suggested that the seven dimensions generated from the archival data resonated with previous findings on Filipino masculinity. Thus, all seven dimensions were included in the final version of the FAME. The seven dimensions with their operational definitions are as follows:

1. *Responsibility* – Having a sense of accountability with regards one's life as manifested in being hardworking, planning for the future, and maintaining task commitments.
2. *Family Orientedness* – Inclination to get married and provide adequately for and protect one's family. This includes a desire to support one's extended family.
3. *Respectful Deference to Spouse, Women, and the Elderly* – Tendency to hold one's wife in high regard and view them as equals in a relationship; and maintaining chivalry towards women and the elderly.
4. *Integrity* – Propensity for being honest, trustworthy, and ethically grounded.
5. *Intelligence and Academic Achievement* – Affinity for school-related achievement, and other dimensions of intelligence such as creativity and resourcefulness.
6. *Strength* – Being tough in physique and in the expression of ideas and emotions.
7. *Sense of Community* – Tendency to protect and help the community.

#### *Item Generation and Item Selection by Raters*

The goal of this step was to generate 10 items for each of the seven dimensions derived from the previous phase. The authors constructed the items based on the results of the archival data and from existing literature on Filipino masculinity. An initial pool of 73 items with at least 10 items for each dimension was derived. These preliminary items were presented for review by a panel of judges that was composed of 10 graduate students and one professor in the California School of Professional Psychology at Alliant International University, San Francisco Campus. The 10 student judges were part of a Ph.D. research seminar on Couple, Family and Gender Issues facilitated by the professor and had the following qualifications: currently enrolled as Ph.D. students in a clinical psychology program; and competency in research design

and methodology. For each of the seven dimensions of the FAME, the judges were asked to evaluate the suitability of the item as representative of the dimension. The review resulted in 70 items (that is, 10 items for each of the seven dimensions). This version of the FAME was then reviewed by a panel of three clinical psychologists who have expertise in either (a) gender, couples, and family research; (b) Asian American psychology and multicultural research; or (c) Filipino psychology and Filipino culture. This panel confirmed the suitability of the items for each of the seven dimensions.

At the end of this phase, 70 items were retained with 10 items for each of the seven dimensions. The 70 items pertain to expectations of masculinity in Philippine society and assess the extent to which a respondents' behavior conforms to these expectations. Participants reported the likelihood of each statement on a six-point Likert scale: *strongly agree* (6) to *strongly disagree* (1).

## PHASE 2: VALIDATION OF THE FAME

### *Participants and Procedures*

Undergraduate Filipino male students ( $N = 834$ ) from Saint Louis University in Baguio City, Philippines were enlisted as participants for the study. Saint Louis University is the largest university north of Manila, the capital of the Philippines, with about 20,000 university students. The university attracts students from both urban and rural areas in the northern region of the Philippines. As such, the student population is socio-economically diverse.

The participants were recruited through flyers distributed and posted around the university campus. Students who were interested in participating in the study approached a designated room within a two-week period. Participants were given \$1 as a token of appreciation for devoting at least an hour in answering the different questionnaires.

The mean age of the sample was 19.94 years ( $SD = 1.53$ ; range = 18 to 30 years). In terms of ethnolinguistic representation, 42.80% were Ilocano, 19.70% were Tagalog, 18.10% were Cordilleran or Igorot, 14% were Pangasinense, and 5.40% were from other groups. Pertinent to sexual orientation, the majority of the sample indicated that they were heterosexual (92%). A few self-identified as gay (5.20%) and bisexual (2.90%).

### *Validation Instruments*

*Background Information Questionnaire (BIQ)*. The Background Information Questionnaire asked the participants to provide demographic information concerning age, course enrolled in, sexual orientation, and ethnolinguistic group affiliation.

*Masculinity Attitudes, Stress, and Conformity Questionnaire (MASC; Nabavi & Green, 2003)*. The MASC is a measure that assesses the respondents' attitudes, conformity, and stress in relation to six traditional norms of the male role: (a) Suppression of Emotional Vulnerability, (b) Avoiding Dependency on Others, (c) Self-Destructive Achievement, (d) Striving for Dominance, (e) Aggressive-

ness, and (f) Traditional Views of Sex and Sexuality. These norms were based on a comprehensive review of masculinity ideologies conducted by the second author (Green, 1998). The MASC consists of three scales (that is, Attitudes, Conformity, and Stress) and six traditional norms subscales within each scale, for a total of 18 subscales. For purposes of convergent validation in this study, only the Conformity Scale was used. The Conformity Scale measures the extent to which a respondents' behavior actually conforms to the six traditional norms. The MASC Conformity Scale is a 36-item self-report instrument, each using a 6-point Likert scale response format ranging from *strongly agree* (6) to *strongly disagree* (1). The standardization sample of the MASC consisted of 333 male adults, of which 17% were Asian/Asian American and 5% were Filipino/Filipino American. The MASC Conformity Scale exhibited high internal consistency reliability, Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$ . The MASC also demonstrated a good degree of convergent validity with the Male Role Norms Inventory (MRNI; Levant et al., 1992). The MASC was chosen as a validation measure because it is multidimensional and its standardization sample included Filipino men, who were the target sample for this study. In the current study, the internal consistency reliability of the MASC Conformity Scale was .89.

## RESULTS

### *Construct Validity*

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to look into the underlying dimensions of the FAME and test the hypothesized seven dimensions of Filipino masculinity ideology. This analysis was also used to establish the construct validity of the new instrument. An EFA was chosen over a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) because best practices in new scale development indicate that the initial validation of an instrument necessitates an empirical evaluation of the underlying factor structure (see Worthington & Whittaker, 2006). Considering that a hypothesized factor structure needs to be replicated using a new sample, an EFA needs to be conducted first before a CFA.

As a preliminary step, the data set was evaluated for appropriateness in conducting factor analysis by conducting the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test of sphericity. The KMO measure was 0.96, which indicates that the sample was very adequate (Kaiser, 1974). The Bartlett's test was statistically significant,  $c^2(2415) = 27618.67$ ,  $p < .001$ , which rejected the null hypothesis that the correlation matrix is an identity matrix. These tests suggested that the data was suitable for factoring.

In terms of extraction techniques, common-factors analysis (FA) is generally preferred over principal components analysis (PCA) for scale development (for a comprehensive discussion, see Worthington & Whittaker, 2003). As such, maximum-likelihood factoring (an FA procedure) was used to extract the factors. An oblique rotation method (i.e., Promax) was used based on the assumption that the factors generated would be correlated with each other (Costello & Osborne, 2005). A combination of methods (that is, eigenvalue  $> 1.0$  and scree plot) was used for deciding how many factors to retain. Using

these criteria, seven factors were retained, which accounted for over 43% of the total variance. Table 1 presents the rotated factor structure. Items with factor loadings of .35 or greater were retained. Using this cutoff, 46 of the original 70 items (that is, 66%) were included for interpretation purposes. Another criteria used for item retention was the magnitude of the communalities. The communalities ( $h^2$ ) were fairly good for each of the 46 items, which ranged from .41 to .74, so all these items were retained for factor interpretation.

Most of the factors were labeled according to the seven original Filipino masculinity ideology dimensions from which the items were generated. Factor 1 was labeled Assertiveness and Dominance. The six items loading on this factor suggested that Filipino men are expected to be dominant and manifest confidence in expressing their views. Items in this factor were originally from the Strength dimension. However, items that reflect physical and emotional strength did not load significantly in this factor so the label was changed. Factor 2 was labeled Family Orientedness. This factor consisted of 10 items that denote a Filipino man's ability to protect and provide adequately for his family. Furthermore, this factor also included items that indicate that Filipino men are expected to recognize the egalitarian quality of their relationship with their wives. The items in this factor included most of the items from the originally conceived Family Orientedness dimension, and the Respectful Deference to Spouse, Women, and the Elderly dimension items that were specific to Filipino men's perception of their relationship with their wives.

Factor 3, which was labeled Sense of Community, included seven items that denote the expectation that Filipino men should actively take the initiative in community-related activities and help people who are in need. Factor 4 was labeled Responsibility and the eight items typify the Filipino masculinity ideal of taking an active stance in one's life and career by being hardworking, persevering, and future-oriented. Factor 5 was labeled Integrity, wherein the six items that loaded in this factor involve Filipino male expectations of honesty, fairness, and trustworthiness. Factor 6 was labeled Intelligence and Academic Achievement, and the four items reflect that Filipino men are expected to be intelligent and successful in school-related endeavors. Finally, Factor 7 was labeled Respectful Deference to Women and the Elderly. The four items that loaded on this factor typify the Filipino man as chivalrous especially towards women and the elderly. These items were from the originally conceived Respectful Deference to Spouse, Women, and the Elderly dimension, but only included items that pertain to women in general and the elderly. These seven factors were subsequently referred to as *dimensions* of the Filipino male role in the FAME Scale.

#### *Internal Consistency Reliability and Interdimension Correlations*

Cronbach alpha reliability estimates (Cronbach, 1951) were calculated for the overall scale and corresponding dimensions. The minimum criterion was set at .70, which is an acceptable level for early research stages (Nunnally, 1978). Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and internal consistency reliability coefficients of the FAME Scale and the seven dimensions of the Filipino

Table 1  
*Promax-Rotated Maximum Likelihood Factor Matrix, Final Communalities Estimates, Eigenvalues, and Percentage of Total Variance for the FAME Factors (N = 834)*

Factor and Items	Factor loading	$h^2$
<i>Factor 1: Assertiveness and Dominance</i>		
(Eigenvalue = 14.62, % variance = 8.40)		
I can boldly express my points of view.	.79	.53
I am forceful in the expression of my ideas.	.66	.46
I am dominant.	.65	.41
I am assertive.	.64	.44
I stand up for my beliefs.	.60	.48
I am courageous in voicing out my opinions.	.46	.42
<i>Factor 2: Family Orientedness</i>		
(Eigenvalue = 12.60, % variance = 7.97)		
I would take care of my wife and children.	.90	.67
I would respect the active role of my wife in decision-making.	.66	.57
I would be the head of my family (padre de pamilya).	.63	.55
I would always be responsible for the welfare of my wife and children.	.61	.50
I acknowledge that both men and women are equally capable of contributing to the success of a relationship or marriage.	.59	.48
I would get married and have a family.	.57	.56
I would be a good provider for my family.	.55	.63
I would be the cornerstone of the home (haligi ng tahanan).	.49	.49
I would always be faithful to my wife.	.39	.52
I would do everything to please my wife.	.35	.50
<i>Factor 3: Sense of Community</i>		
(Eigenvalue = 14.70, % variance = 7.03)		
I always strive to be helpful to others.	.85	.65
I am responsive to people who are in need.	.84	.59
I am always ready to give aid to other people.	.81	.60
I volunteer to help people in need.	.73	.62
I always care for the well-being of other people.	.70	.48
I am hospitable at all times.	.40	.43
I take an active part in community projects.	.38	.53
<i>Factor 4: Responsibility</i>		
(Eigenvalue = 14.92, % variance = 5.72)		
I am hard-working at all times.	.91	.56
I handle money responsibly.	.78	.46
I always work hard to achieve my goals in life.	.74	.56
I am responsible in my work or career at all times.	.70	.57

Table 1 continued on page 87

Table 1, continued from page 86

	Factor loading	$h^2$
I am industrious at all times.	.66	.60
I always persevere in my work or career.	.59	.56
I try to get the best opportunities for education.	.48	.50
I carefully plan for the future.	.47	.48
<i>Factor 5: Integrity</i> (Eigenvalue = 14.92, % variance = 3.89)		
I keep my promises.	.69	.45
I am honest at all times.	.67	.44
I am always trustworthy.	.67	.48
I am a "man of my word."	.52	.51
I do not cheat.	.42	.43
I am always fair.	.35	.45
<i>Factor 6: Intelligence and Academic Achievement</i> (Eigenvalue = 7.63, % variance = 3.52)		
I am intelligent.	.77	.64
I perform well academically.	.76	.74
I achieve well in school.	.73	.68
I am smart.	.60	.66
<i>Factor 7: Respectful Deference to Women and the Elderly</i> (Eigenvalue = 13.55, % variance = 2.20)		
I offer my seat (for example: in a jeepney, at church) to a woman or an elderly person.	.87	.59
I let women and the elderly go first (for example: taking a seat in a restaurant, leaving through a door, riding a jeepney).	.78	.63
I always protect women and the elderly.	.52	.60
I am a gentleman at all times.	.36	.50

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations, Number of Items, and Internal Consistency Coefficients of the FAME Scale (N = 834)

Item Group	M	SD	No. of items	$\alpha$
Adherence Total	4.96	0.49	46	0.95
Assertiveness/Dominance	4.72	0.64	6	0.75
Family Orientedness	5.48	0.56	10	0.87
Sense of Community	4.70	0.68	7	0.86
Responsibility	4.93	0.64	8	0.86
Integrity	4.91	0.61	6	0.79
Intelligence/Achievement	4.55	0.70	4	0.84
Respectful Deference	4.98	0.79	4	0.81

male role. The overall FAME Scale and its constituent dimensions had alpha coefficients that ranged from .75 to .95. As presented in Table 3, the correlations among the seven dimensions ranged from .33 to .65 ( $p < .01$ ). These correlations confirm the suitability of an oblique rotation method used in the EFA, since the factors had moderate to strong correlations with each other. Furthermore, these correlations indicate some overlap among the dimensions. However, each of the seven dimensions still accounts for at least 50% unique variance, making them conceptually distinct from each other.

### *Convergent Validity*

Pearson's product-moment correlations of the FAME Scale and its seven dimensions, and the MASC Conformity Scale and subscales were calculated to evaluate the FAME's convergent validity with an instrument that similarly measures conformity to societal norms of masculinity (see Table 4). Using Cohen's (1988) guidelines (*small* = .10, *medium* = .30, *large* = .50) for interpreting magnitudes of correlations, the analyses revealed generally small correlations between the FAME and MASC. A correlation of .30 was established as the threshold criterion for convergent validity. At the scale level, the FAME Adherence total score had a weak correlation with the MASC Conformity Scale score ( $r = .21, p < .01$ ). However, there were moderately strong associations between the FAME Assertiveness and Dominance dimension and the MASC Conformity Scale score ( $r = .38, p < .01$ ), and also between the FAME Adherence total score and the MASC Striving for Dominance subscale ( $r = .38, p < .01$ ).

Pearson  $r$  correlations were also obtained between the FAME dimensions and the MASC subscales. The observed pattern and test of associations (see Table 3) demonstrate that some FAME dimensions were most correlated with conceptually similar measures in the MASC. Specifically, the Assertiveness and Dominance dimension of the FAME was positively correlated with the following dimensions of the MASC: Striving for Dominance, Aggressiveness, and Self-Destructive Achievement (range,  $r_s = .31$  to  $.50, p < .01$ ). Furthermore, the

Table 3  
*Correlations among FAME dimensions (N = 834)*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Adherence Total	1	.71**	.77**	.80**	.82**	.82**	.63**	.77**
2. Assertiveness/Dominance		1	.36**	.52**	.53**	.48**	.55**	.46**
3. Family Orientedness			1	.47**	.53**	.64**	.28**	.61**
4. Sense of Community				1	.59**	.58**	.44**	.65**
5. Responsibility					1	.61**	.56**	.51**
6. Integrity						1	.45**	.59**
7. Intelligence/Achievement							1	.33**
8. Respectful Deference								1

\*\* $p < .01$ .

Table 4

*Convergent Validity Correlations for the FAME Scale and MASC Conformity Scale (N = 834)*

FAME Scale	MASC Conformity Scale						
	Total	SUP	DPN	ACH	DOM	AGG	SEX
Adherence Total	.21**	.20**	.17**	.22**	<b>.36**</b>	.06	-.02
Assertiveness/Dominance	<b>.38**</b>	.21**	.24**	<b>.31**</b>	<b>.50**</b>	<b>.32**</b>	.12**
Family Orientedness	.09**	.17**	.12**	.08*	.21**	-.04	-.07
Sense of Community	.12**	.13**	.08*	.14**	.22**	.01	-.02
Responsibility	.19**	.12**	.10**	.25**	<b>.32**</b>	.06	.02
Integrity	.08*	.18**	.15**	.12**	.19**	-.08*	-.12**
Intelligence/Achievement	.21**	.10**	.13**	.19**	<b>.33**</b>	.14**	.06
Respectful Deference	.10**	.14**	.10**	.10**	.22**	-.04	-.05

*Note.* SUP = Suppression of Emotional Vulnerability; DPN = Avoiding Depending on Others; ACH = Self-Destructive Achievement; DOM = Striving for Dominance; AGG = Aggressiveness; and SEX = Relation to Sex and Sexuality. **Boldface** values indicate that the correlation coefficient met the threshold criterion (that is,  $\geq |.30|$ ) for convergent validity.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

FAME Responsibility; and Intelligence and Academic Achievement dimensions had significant positive correlations with Striving for Dominance on the MASC ( $r_s = .32$  and  $.33$  respectively,  $p < .01$ ).

## DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to construct a theoretically and empirically supported measure that depicts expectations of masculinity in the Philippines and measures conformity behavior of Filipino men to these gender role norms. This led to the development of the Filipino Adherence to Expectations of Masculinity (FAME) Scale. The results provided initial support for the reliability and construct validity of the FAME. In the succeeding discussion, it should be noted that the Filipino men who were recruited as participants in this study were mostly from the northern parts of the Philippines, which include Ilocano, Tagalog, Cordilleran or Igorot, and Pangasinense men. As such, the use of the term *Filipino men* throughout the discussion primarily refers to these specific ethno-linguistic groups.

In terms of internal consistency, the results demonstrated that the FAME was a highly reliable instrument. Similarly, all seven dimensions (that is, Assertiveness and Dominance; Family Orientedness; Sense of Community; Responsibility; Integrity; Intelligence and Academic Achievement; and Respectful Deference to Women and the Elderly) demonstrated adequate internal consistency reliabilities (that is, defined as Cronbach alpha coefficients  $\geq .70$ ).

The analysis that was conducted to evaluate the construct validity of the FAME provided evidence for a seven-factor model of Filipino masculine gender role norms. The factor structure of the FAME was largely similar to the preliminary measure, in that seven factors were identified. This indicates that Filipino men conform to several aspects of the male role. There was also a good deal of unique variance accounted for by each factor. Furthermore, five of the factors that emerged were given similar labels and definitions as the labels and definitions of the original dimensions derived from the analyses of the archival data. The original Strength dimension was not fully replicated. All the seven factors that emerged resonate with the literature reviewed on Filipino masculinity.

The assertiveness and dominance factor reflect the expectation that Filipino men should assert themselves through persuasive words (Margold, 1995). This factor is also similar to the *dominator* image of the Filipino male (Aguiling-Dalisay et al., 2000). In this dominator image, males are perceived to take control and take charge in a relationship. The family orientedness factor has been evident in previous research that concluded that Filipino men are expected to protect and provide for their family (Jurilla, 1986; McCann-Erickson Survey Group, 1995; Robles, 1986). This factor has elements of the two dominant images of the Filipino male: *protector* and *dominator* (Aguiling-Dalisay et al., 2000). The protector role as manifested in being the provider of the household, and the dominator image as linked to the societal expectation for males to be cornerstone of the home. The factor on sense of community hinges on the concept of *pakikisama* (being able to get along well with others), oneness with others, and helping the community (Church et al., 1984-85; Guthrie, 1970; Margold, 1995). The emergence of the responsibility factor is consistent with research that suggests that responsibility training is the hallmark of Filipino child-rearing practices that prepares boys for their future adult role as fathers (Lagmay, 1983; Liwag et al., 1998) and that being responsible is one trait that female adolescents consider to be masculine (Bantug, 1996).

The integrity factor includes expectations of being moral, honest and ethical (Church et al., 1984-85; Lynch & Makil, 1968). The intelligence and academic achievement factor reflects the Filipino male expectations for alertness, logical thinking, objective competence, and intelligence, and educational attainment (Bantug, 1996; Church, 1984-85; Gamboa et al., 1972; Guthrie, 1970; Lamug, 1989). Finally, the respectful deference factor has been evident in previous research suggesting that Filipino men respect and place women in high regard (Andres, 1981; Bantug, 1996).

The most interesting result in the factor analysis was the emergence of the second factor, labeled Family Orientedness, which combined items from the original Family Orientedness and Respectful Deference to Wife, Women, and the Elderly dimensions. The Family Orientedness dimension reflects a paradox in the Filipino male role, which adds to its uniqueness as an emic construct. Filipino men are simultaneously supposed to be constructive patriarchs and egalitarian partners to their wives. On one hand, a Filipino man is perceived to be the *haligi ng tahanan* (cornerstone of the home), who provides adequately for and protects his family. On the other hand, he is also expected to defer to

and placate his wife, and respect her active role in decision-making. This latter expectation reflects the bilateral quality that describes the complementarity of roles between men and women in Southeast Asian countries such as the Philippines (Alcantara, 1994; Angeles, 2001; David, 1994; Karim, 1995; Medina, 1991). The manifestation of these contradicting roles by Filipino men is supported by a tendency, observed in East Asian cultures, to seek compromise solutions to problems (that is, a middle way) and mitigate contradictions (Nisbett, Peng, Choi, & Norenzayan, 2001). Greater acceptance and tolerance for contradiction is underscored in principles of *dialecticism* in its Eastern form (Peng & Nisbett, 2000). Operating within this principle, a Filipino man confronted by the contradictory roles of being both dominant and deferent in the family might seek a middle way to efficiently manifest both roles, without compromising either of them.

In terms of convergent validity with another measure of masculinity, the results indicated that the FAME had some similar but mostly distinct constructs from the MASC, a measure constructed and standardized on a U.S. sample. Though both measures were designed to assess conformity behavior to expectations of masculinity, they differ in most of the socially constructed dimensions they assess. This supports the idea that masculinity ideology has both etic and emic components (Levant et al., 1992). The observed pattern of associations demonstrated that some FAME dimensions were significantly correlated with conceptually similar dimensions of the MASC. For example, the significant correlations between the FAME Assertiveness and Dominance dimension and the three MASC dimensions of Striving for Dominance, Aggressiveness, and Self-destructive Achievement were expected because the former had items (e.g., "I am dominant," and "I am forceful in the expression of my ideas") that conceptually overlap with these MASC dimensions. The Responsibility, and Intelligence and Academic Achievement dimensions of the FAME likewise correlated in the expected direction with the Striving for Dominance dimension of the MASC because both measures had items that describe men's striving for control of one's life and career.

These convergences may be explained by two hypotheses. It is possible that striving for dominance is a masculinity construct that exists in many cultures. On the other hand, these Western dimensions may have been introduced and later integrated into the Filipino culture during the political and military involvement of the U.S. in the Philippines from 1898 to 1992. Such U.S. presence ushered the establishment of an Americanized public school system that inculcated Filipinos with American values (Pido, 1997).

Despite the partial overlap, there was a substantial unshared variance between the two measures. The many weak correlations between most of the FAME dimensions and MASC subscales indicate the existence of emic components of masculinity, which supports the assumption that gender roles are social constructions that vary across societies (Kimmel & Messner, 1989). Overall, the differences between the FAME and the MASC are twofold. First, the FAME seems to deal with largely prosocial ideals of masculinity in the Philippines whereas the MASC taps the problematic norms of the male role reflecting the "dark side of masculinity" (Brooks & Silverstein, 1995). Second, the MASC con-

structs primarily reflect expectations in Western and individualistic cultures. In contrast, some of the expectations of the Filipino male role emanate from shared Asian cultural values such as filial piety (that is, obedience toward parents and authority; Sue & Sue, 1999, pp. 250-272), collectivism (that is, promoting family and group interests over individual needs; Sue & Sue, 2003, pp. 327-442), family recognition through achievement (that is, family members attempt to achieve academically and occupationally; Kim, Yang, Atkinson, Wolfe, & Hong, 2001), deference to authority, and group harmony (Kim, Atkinson, & Yang, 1999; Tang, 1997). Indeed, the FAME dimensions of Family Orientedness; Respectful Deference to Women and the Elderly; Responsibility; Intelligence and Academic Achievement; and Sense of Community are reflective of these Asian cultural values. It is also interesting that some of the FAME dimensions, specifically family orientedness and respectful deference to women, resonate with the construct of *Caballerismo* (which also captures positive aspects of masculine behavior) among Mexican-American men (Arciniega et al., 2008).

### *Limitations of the Study*

There are limitations to be considered when interpreting the results of this study. One limitation is concerned with possible threats to external validity. The FAME Scale is purported to be used for Filipino men. The population of this study, which consisted of young adult men who are undergraduate students in one university in the northern part of the Philippines, was sampled through convenience sampling. This may have influenced the results on the FAME dimensions that relate to one's status as a university student such as Responsibility, and Intelligence and Academic Achievement. Based on the 2000 Census of the Philippines (National Statistical Coordination Board, 2005), only about 13% of the population of men have entered or finished college. Thus, the results of this study may not be generalized to the entire population of 27.5 million Filipino adult men (National Statistical Coordination Board, 2005) or to Filipino men from other age groups. Some of the masculinity ideologies described in this study may also not be applicable for certain groups of Filipino men who are socially marginalized. The Family Orientedness dimension, which emphasizes patriarchal control through marriage, and deference to one's wife, is not applicable to gay and bisexual men. A separate study which used an earlier version of the FAME, prior to validation, concluded that Filipino gay men conformed less to, and experienced greater conflict with, norms for family orientedness and for respectful-deference to spouse, women, and elders (for the interested reader, see Rubio & Green, 2009). Similarly, the aspect of Family Orientedness that pertains to assuming the provider role in a family might not be endorsed by those who have disabilities and are unable to provide for their families.

The results may not be generalized to Filipino men who are residing in other parts of the Philippines or who belong to other ethno-linguistic groups. Based on the 2000 Census on ethno-linguistic groups, the Philippines is primarily comprised of Tagalog (28.10%), Cebuano (13.10%), Ilocano (9%), Bisaya (7.6%), Ilonggo (7.5%), Bikol (6%), and Waray (3.4%) people (National Statistical Co-

ordination Board, 2005). The participants of the present study were mostly Ilocanos who mainly reside in the northern parts of the Philippines. The Tagalog representation approximated the census data. On the other hand, other major groups of the Philippines such as Cebuano, Bisaya, and Ilonggo, who mostly reside in the central regions of the Philippines, were not part of the sample. Furthermore, the results may not be generalized to Filipino men who are non-students, who have a different level of education, and who may have different acculturation levels if residing in an area outside the Philippines.

The study also carries some threats to its construct validity in that it used only one method (that is, self-report) in measuring the concepts of the study. The conclusions regarding Filipino masculinity ideology are restricted to the specific self-report instruments that were used to operationalize these constructs, and observational methods might have yielded different results.

Lastly, this study included another instrument, MASC, for evaluating convergent validity. According to Worthington and Whittaker (2003), although it is possible to include additional scales in the initial stages of scale development to assess for convergent or discriminant validity, it is best to limit such efforts. The use of the same sample for convergent validation undermines the generalizability of the results. As such, caution needs to be exercised in using the results of the convergent validity. A different sample should be used to see if the convergent validity results are replicated.

#### *Considerations for Future Research*

The reliability and validity data from this initial study on the FAME Scale are adequate and promising for this early stage of instrument development. However, additional construct and criterion validity investigations need to be conducted. It is possible that the FAME would demonstrate unique relationships with criterion variables that were theoretically supported to be related to gender role strain. In various studies, conformity to traditional expectations of masculinity and gender role conflict are also predictive of higher levels of anger, depression, anxiety, and substance use (Blazina & Watkins, 1996; Eisler, Skidmore, & Ward, 1988), alexithymia (Levant et al., 2003), reduced relationship satisfaction (Campbell & Snow, 1992), problems with interpersonal intimacy (Fischer & Good, 1997), aggressive and violent behavior (Cohn & Zeichner, 2006; Jakupcak, Lisak, & Roemer, 2002; Jakupcak, Tull, & Roemer, 2005), and lower self-esteem (David & Walsh, 1988; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991). Future investigations could look into the relationship of these variables with the FAME constructs, keeping in mind that FAME assesses mainly prosocial aspects of masculinity, in contrast to these other studies that assessed mainly problematic or pathological aspects of masculinity.

Pertinent to construct validity, the factor structure of the FAME needs to be further explored by using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) on different samples of Filipino men, specifically those from other ethno-linguistic groups in the Philippines. Cross-validation using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) can also be conducted to examine whether the seven dimensions of the FAME can be replicated using a different sample. In terms of reliability, other measures of reliability such as test-retest reliability need to be conducted.

The FAME can also be potentially used for studies on Filipino-American men. Using cross-sectional studies, it would be useful to ascertain how the indigenous dimensions of the male role potentially change for Filipino men from different generations and acculturation levels. To our knowledge, only one study (see Gonzales, Ramos-Sanchez, Tran, & Roeder, 2006) has examined the relationship between masculinity and mental health of Filipino-American men. Furthermore, variables that theoretically and empirically mediate or influence the relationship between gender role stress and psychological distress among ethnic minority men need to be considered. Such variables may include cultural values (Gonzales et al., 2006; Liu & Iwamoto, 2006), acculturation (Gonzales et al., 2006), and racial identity (Carter, Williams, Juby, & Buckley, 2005; Liu, 2002). In this regard, instruments such as the Asian Values Scale (AVS; Kim et al., 1999), the Suinn-Lew Asian American Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (SL-ASIA; Suinn, Rickard-Figueroa, Lew, & Vigil, 1987), the Short Acculturation Scale for Filipino-Americans (De la Cruz, Padilla, & Butts, 1998), and the People of Color Racial Identity Attitude Scale (POCRIAS; Helms, 1995) can be used in combination with the FAME to investigate the dynamics of masculinity among Filipino-American men.

#### *Implications for Clinical Practice*

The results of this study suggest several implications for therapists and counselors working with Filipino male clients. The FAME can be used in therapy sessions to determine whether a Filipino male client's distress is influenced by failure to live up to certain expectations of masculinity. The different dimensions of the FAME can be very informative in discovering specific areas of a client's life where the conflict is most pronounced. Considering that a Filipino's conformity behavior is highly influenced by concerns for social acceptance and group harmony, it is also imperative for a clinician to help male clients avoid blind adherence to societal expectations of masculinity. Clinicians can also use cognitive therapy (A.T. Beck & Weishaar, 1995; J.S. Beck, 1995) techniques to help the client modify excessive conformity to Filipino masculine norms in a way that the client can appraise what he can realistically manifest in his behavior.

For clinicians working with married or partnered male clients, it is necessary to explore how certain dimensions of Filipino masculinity impact their functioning in familial relationships. In particular, it would be helpful to explore with a couple the two opposing roles of being a constructive patriarch and egalitarian partner to their spouse. Filipino men have to master the art of being good providers for and protectors of their family members while simultaneously being egalitarian in decision making rather than hierarchical or autocratic. Based on the results of this study, failure to manifest these two aspects of the male role increases the likelihood of psychological distress. Thus, working on helping male clients integratively assume both aspects of the male role should promote their psychological well-being and functioning in marital and family relationships.

Filipino male clients may also present as being burdened by the societal pressure of adhering to expectations of masculinity. It is common for Filipinos to

come into therapy and complain about being burdened by their problems. The *Pagdadala* (burden-bearing) model (Decenteceo, 1999) was conceived as an indigenous framework to help Filipino clients discuss their concerns with a therapist or counselor. Using this therapeutic model and the FAME dimensions, a clinician can help a male client clarify the specific sources of their burden and explore strategies by which the burden can be "lightened" or managed.

Guided by the *Pagdadala* paradigm (Decenteceo, 1999), a clinician can facilitate the client's identification and clarification of the (a) burden (e.g., difficulty being the sole provider for the family), (b) characteristics as a burden-bearer (e.g., greater expectations for first born sons), (c) burden-bearing style (e.g., exerting considerable pressure to oneself), (d) goals of the burden-bearer (e.g., improved relationship with spouse), and (e) strategies to manage the burden (e.g., inviting significant others for support in sharing the burden). Pertinent to managing the burden, cognitive and behavioral strategies (J.S. Beck, 1995) such as problem-solving; relaxation exercises; and activity scheduling and monitoring can be used as well.

#### CONCLUSION

There has been no previous measure constructed to explore emic masculinity constructs and gender role stress among Filipino men. As an initial attempt, the FAME Scale proves to be a psychometrically sound indigenous questionnaire that supports the multidimensionality of the Filipino male role. Although future studies should continue to explore the reliability and validity of this instrument, the findings of the present study demonstrate that the FAME is a promising instrument for use with Filipino men. In addition, the method of questionnaire construction described here may be a model for developing similar instruments for use in other countries or with racial/ethnic minority populations in the U.S., thus advancing a multicultural perspective in the psychology of men and masculinity.

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# MALE MIDWIVES IN FRANCE

## AN EXAMPLE OF MASCULINIZING A “FEMININE” PROFESSION?

Of 19,208 midwives polled in France in 2010, 349 were men. Based on interviews from a selected group of male midwives and midwifery students, as well as data from a recent study of the midwife profession in France, this study shows that the masculinity brought to this profession by male practitioners can be qualified as “respective masculinity.” This theoretical perspective permits a broader consideration of the existing models that explain male presence in non-traditional professions. These models describe their presence as either a power struggle, a means by which to be promoted, or even as a possible questioning of male identity. Male midwives assert their masculinity by seeking autonomy in their work. They are able to work around the obstacle of showing empathy to female patients, typically considered a gendered predisposition. The case of male midwives shows the dynamics of masculinization when taking into account socio-professional contexts.

**KEYWORDS** GENDER STUDIES, MALE MIDWIVES, MASCULINIZATION, SOCIOLOGY OF PROFESSIONS, FRANCE

This article describes the observation of a rather unexpected evolution for a Western country such as France, namely the presence of men in the midwife profession. From a statistical point of view, this phenomenon remains very marginal, with our recent poll only counting 345 men (1.8%) of approximately 19,208 midwives (Sicard, 2010). All the same, for reasons primarily based on an evolution in midwife recruitment, it is a likely possibility that their numbers are increasing. The arrival of men in this profession could be interpreted as a developing form of masculinization in one of the most characteristically feminine professions. If this is the case, in what ways is this masculinization apparent? Building on research of male presence in nontraditional occupations, male midwives offer a contemporary example of masculinization taking place in a pro-

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fession strongly associated with the feminine gender. This is a phenomenon, studied below, that is beginning to develop in Europe (Charrier, 2004, 2007; Molinier, 1999; Philippe, 2008) if not around the world.

#### BACKGROUND: THE SOCIOLOGY OF MASCULINITY

One can approach the question of masculinization by considering the social construction of masculinity in a given context. Conceptualization of this field of research is still in process. The sociology of masculinity has shown that social constructions of the male gender are changeable. For Connell (1995), as well as for Collinson and Hearn (1996), masculinity is diverse and complex. Consequently, one must speak of *masculinities*. Other forms of masculinity exist alongside “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell, 2000), the culturally exalted form of masculinity guaranteeing the dominant position of men. Recent research has studied the complexity of masculinity and the ambiguity—even fluidity—of this notion in a “post-structural” perspective (Connell, 2000).

This element of fluidity is what French commentators have highlighted. Going beyond the structural position that underlines masculine dominance (Bourdieu, 1998), Welzer-Lang traces contemporary modifications, sketching a complexly changing masculinity (2004). Similarly, Castelain-Meunier observes a “masculine poly-culture” and the emergence of a “modern man” looking to distance itself from “defensive masculinity” which “is unsatisfied in its aspirations for equality, does not respond to their efforts to separate from the stranglehold of their fathers, to their perception of women, their idea of relations with women and children, nor to the numerous practices they seek to innovate” (2005, p. 41). These works echo numerous other statements, such as the conclusions at which Galbraith arrives, based on his research of elementary teachers (1992). He observes men who have a “transformed identity,” a masculine identity that authorizes the rejection of some masculine character traits while maintaining others. This is also what Holyoake observes in his study of psychiatric nurses who are themselves examples of “soft masculinity” (2002). In short, there exist fringe masculinities developed by men favoring careers or professions typically seen as feminine.

The male midwives participating in this study may be part of this movement. The condition of masculinity in flux lead certain men to consider career choices categorized as feminine. In such cases, questions arise concerning men’s gender identity, because it is potentially challenged. Men must adjust their gender identity to their professional situation. Connell (1995) emphasizes that men might consider this situation as a type of downgrade. Given that female-coded professions and careers often have in common the fact that they have low qualifications, a subordinate rank in the symbolic hierarchy of activities, and are seen as closely tied to domestic tasks in terms of actualized capacities, men scrutinize strong male investment in such careers for fear of being considered too feminine. It is known that women’s entering into traditionally masculine careers also lead to men’s rigid and virile behavior (Cockburn, 1991). Research shows that in atypical situations, men choose to develop values and attitudes that are characteristically (traditionally) masculine (Chusmir, 1990; Jome &

Toker, 1998). The fear of being “downgraded” pushes men to a personal investment of values and attitudes that are clearly classified as masculine, even as typical of heightened virility.

#### BACKGROUND: MEN IN NON-TRADITIONAL OCCUPATIONS

Presence of men in non-traditional careers has been conceptualized in very different ways in theories that go beyond perceptions of identity and the social construction of gender. In keeping with the belief that domination is central, Williams (1989) shows substantial benefits of this situation for men, notably with respect to internal hierarchy. She defends the notion of the “glass escalator.” Men guarantee themselves a high profitability in their career advancements, which leads in turn to holding dominant positions in these careers. This dynamic entails side-benefits for men that have traditionally feminine careers. One observes a two-fold advantage: men work in fields of specialization that plays to their strengths, and are also typically better financially compensated. Angeloff and Arborio (2001), discussing the case of cleaning agencies, reveal the strategies used by some men working in this supposedly feminine career as they strive to build an ideal niche for themselves, thus making their career more satisfying. Men succeed in monopolizing more technical tasks, that is to say, the tasks that offer the most assurance of escaping an undervalued or submissive position.

In the domain of conjugal and familial advice, Philippe (2008) shows that the few men present obtain numerous benefits regarding career development, recognition of their abilities, and choice of their field of work. Moreover, if these benefits are judged to be too restricted, they can change their professional orientation. This tends to support the belief that most men who have dedicated themselves to non-traditionally male careers do so for strategic purposes and in the likelihood of obtaining many advantages.

Some authors have tried to classify these strategies by pursuing more nuanced considerations of the dimension of power. In a study based on several cases of men working in typically feminine careers and examining the identity challenges this poses, Cross and Bagihole (2000) conclude on three scenarios: the maintenance of traditional masculine values and consequently of masculine power; the reconstruction of masculine identity leading to a weakening of said power; and finally, a combination of these two possibilities. The authors state that masculine power and its potential weakening coexist. Simpson (2004), building on the work of Williams and Willemez (1993), also shows that there are three types of actors: “seekers,” men that have voluntarily chosen to integrate into a feminine profession; “finders,” men that adopt such a profession without considering it as a career; and “settlers,” professionally unsatisfied men issued from other, generally masculine, professions who permanently settle into such a career. If it seems that initial research underscored the importance of strategic and power relations, more recent findings nuance this structural position regarding the analysis of changing social construction of masculinities.

The situation of men in healthcare professions has been well-researched in France, as in Anglo-Saxon countries. These studies typically report on male

nurses and of male primary school teachers, more seldom on careers like home-maker aides or child minders. These care-based fields are all associated with psychological and social care, as well as with working relationships with patients. Acknowledgement concerning men in such fields is often varied. Vilbrod and Douget (2008) demonstrate a logic of segmentation (Bucher & Strauss, 1992) valid for male private practice nurses in France, given that the latter often feel that they are not doing the same work as their salaried colleagues. Female private practice nurses, on the other hand, do not typically share this sentiment: "being a private practitioner is a synonym for autonomy, liberty, and responsibility" (p. 281). This logic was also identified by Angeloff and Arborio (2001): men, once settled and assigned either by institution or as requested by their female colleagues, or even by their own initiative, take on tasks typically classified as masculine, such as handling of materials. The authors put "at the forefront, evidence of sex-based segmentation in the areas where one would have thought that it was not an option, considering the history of these careers and their lack of social appreciation" (2001, p. 12). In Ireland, Loughrey (2007) notes that if nurses maintain close ties with classical masculine traits, they also show characteristics culturally defined as feminine.

Studies of male midwives are all but nonexistent. Only Bagihole and Cross (2000) address the case of the male midwife. The authors, concentrating on obstacles encountered by the gender minority, put the male midwife in a "mixed" category. The male midwife positions himself in competition with his female colleagues, which is proof that he has not totally relinquished their masculine power, all the while keeping a distance from definitive masculine traits. Nevertheless, this might be generalizing the situation.

Despite of undoubted significance, these theoretical patterns are limited when taking into consideration the presence of men and the masculinization of the midwife profession, indeed for two reasons. On the one hand, men entered into the field after professional evolutions that affected all French midwives. Most of the studies referenced here do not take into consideration the professional dimension; their arguments start from the point of view of men issued from professional heterogeneous backgrounds. On the other hand, this masculinization importantly refers to the concept of empathy, as a supposed handicap. Female midwives have always claimed to have a predisposition or specific ability to "put themselves in the place of the women in labor," because they are female. They supposedly know best how to accompany women through the birthing experience. Empathy is a veritable "gender capacity" (Schweyer, 1996), a capacity acquired though feminine socialization and the lived experience of giving birth. This empathy is presumed despite the fact that many midwives, especially the youngest ones, practice without having given birth themselves. The latter essentially occupy the same position as male midwives, except that they are attributed a maternal power (Jacques, 2007). Empathy must also be understood as a widespread social representation, historically tying women to the role of accompaniment (Gélis, 1984, 1988; Knibiehler & Fouquet, 1977). The capacity for empathy, then, remains a criterion in the evaluation of the work of midwives, even where not explicitly discussed.

## METHODOLOGY

This article is based on research conducted on male midwives in France, and took place in two steps. In 2003, we questioned 100 male midwives via mailed questionnaires; 62 responded at the time. This step had several goals. We needed to better define the characteristics of the social demographic, as well as determine elements specific with regard to professional practice. Afterward, we conducted thirteen detailed, semi-structured interviews from the pool of respondents. During this phase, we were more interested in their professional experience than in their personal experience. We were therefore able to collect data about their socialization, the way they show empathy, the reasons for their professional decisions, and the reactions of those around them regarding their decision. These interviews were supported by an additional ten interviews previously conducted with students of the midwifery school in Grenoble; these interviews were specifically concerned with professional decision motivations. Finally, interventions in several midwifery schools, contacts with the National Order of Midwives (Ordre National des Sages-Femmes), and participation in the Society of the History of Birth's work, allowed us to familiarize ourselves with French midwifery's professional environment.

The presently defended points of view also required access to statistical data. The Order of Midwives has its own professional listing, but this source proved to be inefficient since the available data at times proved out of date. In order to have the most precise information concerning the number of practicing male and female midwives, we used statistical data from the Direction of Research, Studies, Evaluation and Statistics (DREES, Ministry of Health). The present article equally benefited from the results of a study led by the author from 2009 to 2010 based on French midwives. This study established a global view of the profession and compiled the principle issues facing the 811 midwives (4.3% of the midwife population) studied via questionnaire. The results, in sum, reflected a representative sample of the total population of midwives and allowed comparative considerations of the reception of men in the midwife profession.<sup>1</sup>

## THE MIDWIFE PROFESSION IN FRANCE

The midwife profession is regulated. It has an independent Professional Order since 1995, when there were no longer any gynecologist or obstetrician members. The work of a midwife differs from that of an obstetrician<sup>2</sup> by the

<sup>1</sup> The results have not yet been published, but a synopsis can be consulted (Charrier, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> A note concerning language: "male midwives" (*hommes sages-femmes*) is only used in French as concerns men who are practicing midwives, while in English this terminology (including the term "men-midwives") is occasionally used to designate delivery doctors (*médecins*), notably those who in the 18<sup>th</sup> compete with midwives during delivery. We will call them obstetricians (*obstétriciens*).

division of work between “eutocic” birth and “pathological” birth. In reality, it is not so rare that midwives would intervene in a pathological delivery, hence today this is not an operating distinction. Medicalized interventions are increasing due to the current focus on obstetrical risks, and they determine the professional practices of midwives (Carricaburu, 2005).

French midwives work primarily in hospitals (76%), most practice in the public sector (75%), while the remaining 25% work in private institutions. The level of medical care provided at time of birth varies (anesthesia, epidural, cesarean, forceps-facilitated, episiotomy, etc.) but the practice of non-medicalized delivery is limited to home deliveries, which is a marginal practice.<sup>3</sup> A minority of midwives (17%) works in private practices, either individually or with a group. This type of practice has been on the rise for the past ten years. The vast majority of these midwives do not actually do deliveries, since they rarely have access to a maternity ward. As such, the majority of private practice midwives undertake pre- and post-natal care. Other midwives are spread out among instructors in midwifery schools, in Mother and Child Protection services (Protection Maternelle et Infantile), as salaried employees administering State and other public services. The latter offers services to women in social and/or financial difficulty.

Medical schools include midwife training, but midwife schools are becoming increasingly independent. Midwife instructors supervise the training of a class of students and intervene on the same level as professors specialized in obstetrics, gynecology, anatomy, law, sanitation, and social sciences. Training is alternated with clinical training, mostly in public hospital. The duration of training increased from 3 to 4 years in 1984. It currently takes 5 years to complete, after obtaining a high school diploma, because it is now obligatory to take a qualifying exam in the first year of medical studies. The average age of students to complete their formation has increased to 24.3 years (Schreiber, 2004), and the age of midwives is also becoming more homogenous, that is, the gap between older and younger (at graduation) is reduced.<sup>4</sup> The profession has little unemployment; the birth rate has been increasing steadily in France since 2000.<sup>5</sup>

Although the profession is traditionally seen as feminine, it can no longer be said that this is what attracts candidates. In fact, current motivations to enter into the practice have little to do with the feminine dimension. In a study conducted in 2009-2010 based on a representative sample of French midwives, we

<sup>3</sup> According to Jacques (2007, p. 163), 1,300 home deliveries took place in France, accounting for roughly 0.16% of births. We exclude home deliveries due to constraints, such as when the women were unable to go to a medical establishment for reasons such as lack of time or lack of means.

<sup>4</sup> We were able to obtain the average age at time of graduation from a non-published study of midwives (c.f. methodology section). Forty-seven percent of midwives born after 1976 are 24 years old ( $SD = 1.8$ ). For those born before 1976, there are more 23-year-olds, but they only account for 31% of the population ( $SD = 2.6$ ).

<sup>5</sup> 828,000 births in 2010. The fertility rate per woman is 2.01 children.

Table 1  
*Distribution of Reasons for Professional Choice*

	%
By vocation	20.3
By chance	10.2
Because it's in the medical field	22.4
Due to interest in birth and/or infants	30.1
By default, not having been accepted into medical/pharmacy/other school	6.9
To work in a hospital setting	5.8
To have private practice	1.9
Because it's a feminine profession	2.4
Total	100

were able to determine the reasons for entering professional practice. Despite the popularly held view, midwives who choose midwifery by vocation are the minority, accounting for about 20% in all age groups interviewed. The reasons for this professional choice are divided (Table 1).

The main attraction is interest in birth and/or infants. The medical aspect of the profession is also attractive, especially to the younger generation of midwives. Motivations of male midwives are comparable to those of female midwives. It should be remembered that since academic standards for entering into this field of work are higher than for other professions, personal interest is not always sufficient. Moreover, in France, midwifery is considered to be a medical profession.<sup>6</sup>

#### *Factors Enabling Men to Enter the Profession*

The entry of men into midwifery in France is the result of the convergence of several factors. On the one hand, there is the legal dimension: the profession has only become open to men recently. It is not that the practice of midwifery was forbidden, but men were not allowed to follow the training course. That changed when a European directive was passed concerning non-discrimination on grounds of gender in all sectors of professional activity, aimed at guaranteeing women access to all levels of employment.<sup>7</sup> As a result, the first male midwife got his diploma in 1985.<sup>8</sup>

On the other hand, things were changing in the minds of professional midwives. They wanted more recognition and professional independence in relation to the other childbirth-related professions (gynecology, obstetrics,

<sup>6</sup> Midwifery is a medical profession recognized by the Public Health Code.

<sup>7</sup> A European directive at the beginning of the 80s explained the need for non-discrimination on gender grounds in professional life in all EEC member states. French law had to conform to this directive and notably allow men to gain access to the training course in midwifery, because the ban was at that level (May 12, 1982).

<sup>8</sup> The length of the study used to be three years; currently it is four.

medicine, anesthesiology, and nursing). From the end of the nineties onwards, there was a concerted push toward professionalism (Freidson, 1970). The 2001 strike, which was the profession's first big clash with the government, was enthusiastically supported. It explicitly demanded social recognition of the profession. Midwives from all over the country made a point to differentiate their skills from those of the other natal professionals. Generally, they were looking to increase the range of their responsibilities, for example by being able to prescribe a wider range of medicines. Finally, midwives managed to renegotiate the medical status of their profession thanks to a new system of recruitment. Future midwives have to pass a competitive qualifying exam for the first year of medicine, and no longer just a competitive exam for the College of Midwifery. The field now uses the PCEM1 (Premier Cycle des Etudes Médicales 1ère Année, or First Year Pre-Medical Studies) entrance exam. This is the same exam used by students wishing to enter into medical, midwifery, dental, or chiropractic studies. Thus, there is no longer an entrance exam specific for midwifery.

It is during this period when midwives expressed a desire to "reconquer" the medical field<sup>9</sup> that men chose to enter into midwifery training. By opening up the recruitment system to students aiming for medical careers, midwives had opened their recruitment base to students who had not previously considered the profession, particularly men. In fact, in every medical school, the students are graded at the end of the qualifying exam. Each of the medical professions is restricted by a *numerus clausus*, a limited number of places. As a result, those students who tested highest have the widest range of choices. Generally, prospective students make their decisions following this hierarchy: doctor, dentistry, massage and physiotherapy, and midwifery. Many students with a similar high school diploma or school profile (Baccalauréat S: in Science and Mathematics) are attracted to a medical career, and will often retake the exam if they fail the first time.<sup>10</sup> Under these conditions, the student aiming for a career in medicine may not score high enough to become a doctor, but high enough for another medical profession such as a midwifery.<sup>11</sup> This procedure, which opened the way to get into the profession upside down, immediately gave young men the possibility of becoming midwives.

This selection process became operational in medical schools in France in October 2003. Until this time, male presence was essentially unapparent. After the profession was opened to men, a significant number of those trained in 2003 entered the profession, thanks to information spread via specialized journals. Initially an experimental move, the school of midwifery in Grenoble has opted for coed recruitment since 1992. In hindsight, looking back over more than

<sup>9</sup> Midwives have had to accept the entry of anesthesiologists and pediatricians into the maternity field over the course of the past two decades.

<sup>10</sup> Repetition of the year is permitted under exceptional circumstances.

<sup>11</sup> A student at the top of the list is not restricted by rank. The student has the greatest choice of routes. We met female midwife students who, at the end of the competitive exam could have gone on to study medicine, but who preferred midwifery.

twenty years of students, the school has the unique capability to show that the proportion of men has remained stable; between 1 and 4 per graduation class of 20 students. We can even say that there is not a role reversal in the proportions of men to women in the profession, but rather a continuous yet minor presence of men (Table 2).

### *Professional Organization of Natal Care in France*

Midwifery became an actual profession during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries in Europe (Shorter, 1984). However, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, midwives have found themselves in a subordinate position in relation to (male) doctors, who attempted to establish a rational knowledge of delivery and obstetrics (Gelis, 1984). At the same time, midwifery was becoming a livelihood rather than just a function filled by women for the good of, and compensated by, the community. In its modern incarnation, midwifery is concurrent with the appearance of a new player in the field: the obstetrician, ancestor of obstetrician-gynecologists. Men wishing to enter into this field of work progressively transformed their knowledge into an autonomous medical discipline known as obstetrics. Although obstetrics already existed, the field evolved into a renowned scientific discipline that uses a scientific, standardized approach (Schlumbohm, 2002). These new male players in the field eventually took a significant place in most European countries (Donninson, 1977), notably in midwife training. In fact, although the first attempts to professionally train midwives occurred thanks to the work of Mme de Coudray, who was herself a midwife, male obstetricians quickly assumed leadership roles in these schools (Gelis, 1988).

Table 2  
*Numbers and Proportions of Male Midwives 1990-2008*

Year	N° Female midwives	N° Male midwives	% Male midwives
1990	10,705	45	0.42
1995	12,218 <sup>a</sup>	65 <sup>b</sup>	0.53
1996	12,662 <sup>a</sup>	76 <sup>b</sup>	0.60
2001	14,725	95	0.65
2002	15,122	110	0.73
2003	15,684	137	0.87
2004	16,134	156	0.96
2005	16,550	160	0.97
2006	16,995	174	1.02
2007	17,483	200	1.14
2008	17,998	240	1.33

Statistics: DREES

<sup>a</sup> Source: French National Council of Gynaecologists-obstetrician: [http://www.cngof.asso.fr/d\\_cohen/coA\\_03.htm](http://www.cngof.asso.fr/d_cohen/coA_03.htm) (accessed November 26, 2008) <sup>b</sup> Source: Order of Midwives

This provides a background to the contemporary delegating, or “bundling of tasks” (Hughes 1981), between obstetricians and midwives. Over the years, this arrangement became a tradition: men were responsible for mastering medical and scientific skills including operations, particularly caesareans and forceps use, while women were responsible for accompanying the patients, using so-called “female skills” such as empathy. As a result, once the current profession of midwifery was established, this professional organization of natal care was imposed on midwives. Moreover, women had no official representatives. A professional organization of midwives in France was not founded until the end of World War II. However, male obstetricians ran the Order of Midwives. It was only in 1995 that women took over the leadership role of that Order.

This state of affairs led to numerous feminist-based critiques. Oakley (1980) showed that in the United States, the medicalization of natal care and the increased number of obstetricians since the 18<sup>th</sup> century has not been accompanied by an increase in guaranteed safety during delivery for either the mother or the infant. The same author shows elsewhere that modern obstetrics is not a guarantee for the health of women in labor (Oakley, 1984). Other studies, adopting Foucault’s point of view (2000[1963]), insist on the association between male constructions of female inferiority and the social construction of birth and delivery pathology. These studies have suggested that, in the name of safety for women, the medicalization of the natal process and the distinction between pathology and physiology have been imposed upon them (Cahill, 2000). In France, midwives can only use prescriptions reserved for normal deliveries (i.e., without predicted complications). The public health code divides deliveries into two categories: “normal” deliveries and those requiring an operation. Even if this division of work appears to be a function of and adapted to the hierarchical organization of work in French hospitals, it is also a way of keeping obstetrical power in the hands of men and doctors (Dagnaud & Mehl, 1988).

## FINDINGS

### *Who Are Male Midwives?*

Are we in the presence of men who have had a unique socialization that might explain their non-traditional professional choice? Or are they simply “failed doctors” who managed to enter into the medical profession in a roundabout way and are accepting concessions to their original ambition?

In the course of male socialization, women, particularly mothers, play an important role. However it is difficult to conclude on a “matrilineal” professional affiliation even though two male midwives did have a midwife mother.

I have a unique story. I am a fifth generation midwife. So there is a certain weight of family tradition. And my sister didn’t take over, it’s—it’s more a joke than anything else—it.... No, that’s the legend.... My mother was a midwife, my grandmother was a midwife, my great-grandmother was a midwife and my great-great-grandmother was a midwife. In fact she was

a nun, what we call a defrocked nun. (Franck, 32 years old, hospital midwife)

Mothers are more present than fathers in the men's life narratives. Mothers seem to be the most sensitive to their sons' career choices, often in a positive way.

My parents are very open. With my mother, there was no problem. She knew a little bit about the field. She's a doctor. She's very focused on reflection, on listening, finally on opening up. For her, there was no problem. (Simon, 25 years old, student)

Fathers are not absent, but they seem to have had little influence over their sons' career choices. They are particularly attentive to the fact that their son's chosen profession permits a rapid, guaranteed integration into the work force. As such, the position of male midwives implies an "open socialization" (Charrier, 2009) in that they achieve equilibrium between masculine and feminine values (Le Feuvre, 2007). This masculine socialization is not a product of devaluing women and stresses positive representations of women. This is observed in their ability to highlight an interest for the mystery and/or magic of delivery and birth. For example, Fabrice respects the "magic of birth" that he experiences in his work, the fact that he "sees the reaction of the parents," and that he "is present at a special moment in the life of a family, the moment when a family becomes a family. At that moment something extraordinary happens, and I think it's wonderful" (Fabrice, 35, hospital midwife).

These men have often been distanced from what is called hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2000). They more closely identify with "soft masculinity" as previously described in work by Castellain-Meunier (2005), Welzer-Lang (2004), Holyoake (2002), and Galbraith (1992).

Meanwhile, the students who entered the profession via the PCEM1 and therefore have a general knowledge of medicine, demonstrate other forms of awareness. Many confirm their separation with their "medical vocation," because what they experienced in school did not meet their expectations. Many are critical of medical practices that distinguish between the "care" and "cure" provided to patients. However, this does not mean there is a reverse gender-socialization (Mennesson, 2004) in the sense that they also show allegiance to male socialization, especially through participation in sports activities despite the demands of their studies. At this point they show similar comportment as the male nurses interviewed by Loughrey (2007). Facing challenges to their masculine identity, the reaction of these men seems to include maintaining certain signs that are traditionally masculine. For example, William and Philip have long practiced boxing and rugby, while Nicolas is a distinguished alpine skier, and Louis still regularly plays football with his friends. These elements of physicality and masculine sociability are known to be critical elements in the construction of masculine identities (Davisse & Louveau, 1998).

Similarly, the careers and professions they imagined when they were young are often categorized as "masculine" careers. For example, Christopher wanted to be a helicopter pilot:

It was my childhood dream. And in reality, I failed my high school diploma. I wasn't expecting to fail. I tried to pass the pilot exam, since in France, if you want to become a helicopter pilot, you have to be rich or go to the United States for training, or you have to join the army. Once you're in the army, you have to serve for ten years. (Christopher, 37, private practice midwife)

Midwives—students and professionals—emphasize that they have made the right decision and even renounce their original aspirations, especially if they were related to the medical field.

### *Search for Autonomy*

While male midwives might undergo a unique form of gender socialization relative to the evolution of the social construction of the male gender, do they perform differently once established in their profession? This question led us to search for the distinguishing characteristic in the professional integration of male midwives in the professional world: autonomy.

### *Types of Activity*

The first hypothesis we developed was based on the idea of the formation of a specific segment of the professional population that differentiate itself by the way midwives carry out their responsibilities and where they work. As far as the types of activity carried out by male midwives is concerned, if we perceive any gender distinctions, they are marginal (Table 3). Men do not stand out significantly from women, based on their type of practice. Though they were present in hospitals more often in 2002, this difference was negligible five years later. The same is true for private clinics, where the presence of both men and women decreases.

Private practice work is becoming more equally dispersed between male and female practitioners. Globally, about 15% of the midwife population in works private practice. The distinctions between men and women are more noticeable in marginal practices, such as PMI, and the “other” category (primarily including instructors). The tendency to accept temporary work is still coded as masculine, but this is easily understood when one considers the low average age of the population. Temporary work is considered to be a way to enter into a stable professional practice.

We cannot confirm that men are more likely to invest themselves primarily in a professional sector. The way they are spread out across many different types of activity is very similar to the situation of female midwives. Therefore, we were not able to show masculinization taking place in terms of professional choices.

### *Avoidance of Clinical Work, Autonomy Assurance*

At this point, it is necessary to enter into a qualitative interrogation concerning the motivations and the idea that these men have regarding their profes-

Table 3  
Types of Midwife Activity (2002 and 2007)

Sector of Activity	2002				2007					
	men	women	men & women	% men	% women	men	women	men & women	% men	% women
Public Hospitals	82	8,575	8,657	59.9	55.2	116	9,876	9,992	58.0	57.1
Private Clinics (attached to the public hospital service)	3	632	635	2.2	4.1	7	753	760	3.5	4.4
Private Clinics	26	3,027	3,053	19.0	19.5	34	2845	2,879	17.0	16.5
Individual Private Practices	13	1,741	1,754	9.5	11.2	19	1948	1,967	9.5	11.3
Private Group Practices	7	519	526	5.1	3.3	10	658	668	5.0	3.8
Temporary Agency Employed	—	—	—	—	—	7	149	156	3.5	0.9
Maternal and Infant Protection, Family Planning	1	330	331	0.7	2.1	3	389	392	1.5	2.3
Regional, County or Local Civil Servants	0	254	254	0.0	1.6	2	311	313	1.0	1.8
Others	5	469	474	3.6	3.0	2	354	356	1.0	2.0
Total	137	15,547	15,684	100.0	100.0	200	17,283	15,684	100.0	100.0

Source: DREES

sional practice. While conducting our interviews, we noticed how the midwives described their experiences with private clinics. While some had personal experience, having practiced or currently practicing in private clinics, there was a generally negative perception of this kind of work. It was portrayed as restrictive or as a default choice—and as something to be avoided by any means possible. They often work in fixed-term contracts, as replacements, or on a temporary basis. The idea of a work mandate for male midwives is based on these observations. This mandate underscores the idea of remaining autonomous, which is a desire among male midwives.

Autonomy in the workplace is often highly valued among men (Collins & Hearn, 1996). With regard to professional expectations, autonomy clearly separates men and women. Lyndsay (2007) suggests that male dominance in U.S. anesthesiology can be explained because of being able to work autonomously. According to Snyder and Green (2008) men may enter into specialized professions traditionally considered to be feminine because they often find ways to make the work “less feminine” by insisting on the maintenance of certain levels of autonomy. This would explain the reluctance of male midwives to work in clinics, since they consider such a setting compromising their autonomy.

In any event, after graduation, it's most important to start working, to start delivering babies. Of course, you want to be able to independently manage your own work. In a clinic it's hard to do that because you are always being managed by the doctors, who tell you what to do. (André, 32, hospital midwife)

Above all, men consider themselves to be professionals demanding autonomy. While for male midwives this independence is of capital importance, it is less pressing for female midwives. Women are less likely to list autonomy among the traits that they look for in their profession. In the study from 2009-2010, we asked the participants about their current expectations: work autonomy was chosen by only 18.9% of women.

In analyzing the interviews, we observed three trends in how male midwives exercise autonomy. First, the desire for autonomy can be linked to the desire to have a private practice. Working with a private status allows for much more autonomy. Therefore, it is unsurprising that there is a link between wanting to work private practice and the theme of autonomy:

P.C.: What attracted you to private practice?

S.: Autonomy, I think. Autonomy.... There's no hierarchy, you can really work in a way that is good for you. You can accompany couples as you see fit. I say that because in obstetrics there are lots of different approaches ... and why private practice? [*Thinks*] Yes, I think it's the desire to work as you like. (Sébastien, 30, private practice midwife)

The independence sought after by these men can also be explained by the particular nature of their relationships with obstetricians which often includes conflict.

It's true that on occasion I fight to get our point of view heard. When I didn't agree with something—just last night there was only one thing to do... He [the obstetrician] had made a decision ... but even so, I told him, and I'll repeat it if necessary, that I didn't agree. In fact, it is the doctor and the person in charge who have the last word, but that doesn't stop me from telling him. (Fabrice, 36, hospital midwife)

This example shows to what extent men feel the need to insist on their autonomy, at the risk of disrupting professional hierarchies. In contrast, as seen in the 2009-2010 study, most female midwives (61.6%) describe themselves as being in a cooperative relationship with the obstetricians and gynecologists and therefore do not share Fabrice's feelings. Only 29% of females saw their working relationship as one in which they could contribute to the decision-making.

Secondly, men's desire for autonomy is reflected in representations and working conditions of the midwife profession. Men either emphasize the fact that they work independently or complain that they do not have enough independence at work.

I consider myself to be totally independent at X, despite the fact that it is a big center. What I mean to say is that we have a fair amount of freedom. As long as I don't have any problems, my patients are doing well, and my children are doing well, I think that my boss, or at least the head of the department, will leave me alone to work as I like. (Fabien, 35, hospital midwife)

Thirdly, although male midwives' opinions are divided on this topic, there is one common critique of the way that natal care is organized and managed in France. Men are uniquely placed to respond to this question. Not only do they have to evaluate their personal work, but also are they responsible for evaluating the general efficiency of the system. This task provides a further canvas for the valuation of independence, largely as positive:

We're going in the right direction. [...] Apparently the Minister is in agreement with the proposals. I don't know how that will change the reality of the situation. In any event, it's a movement towards more autonomy for midwives, as well as an indication that public services have understood that they have an important role in public health, including prenatal health. They want to be able to rely on midwives. (Christopher, 37, private practice midwife)

There is a clear motivation to guarantee autonomy and even independence among male midwives. The expectation of autonomy is not solely based on a demand for masculinity or even on the idea of guaranteeing masculinity, but on a global view of the profession. This attitude has been observed in other professional situations where men are in the minority, giving it the appearance of a typically male trait.

### *Overcoming a "Predisposition" for Empathy*

Although men may be able to cultivate "masculinity" at the site of their asserted independence, when it comes to the question of empathy, the question is more delicate. Empathy is at the heart of the profession and is one of the justifications for the significant female presence among midwives. Empathy is the capacity to build a relationship based on the (possibility of a) shared experience of delivery, something that allows female midwives to have a special relationship with their patients.<sup>12</sup> Of course, men cannot lay claim to the experience of giving birth, qualifying claims to empathy. However, this is only a partial definition. There are two ways to evaluate empathy in the light of *care* (Paperman & Laugier, 2005; Tronto, 1993). The first way is to consider it as a predisposition. The second is to see it as a combination of practices. Taken in the former sense, empathy cannot be masculine. Professional discussions, such as within the Order of Midwives, have tended to privilege this view, matching that of female midwives who resent male presence, basing their argument on the inability of men to establish a sociable, caring relationship with a pregnant woman or a woman in labor (Jacques, 2007, p. 83). Yet in our 2009-2010 study, 82% of midwives considered that men had a legitimate place in the field. Although 43.6% of female midwives think that their male counterparts have a specific challenge in their relationship with patients, almost as many (42.3%) find that male and female midwives have the same degree of professional challenges.

Negotiating the empathy question, male midwives claim that empathy is, above all, based on social and professional practices. In the data collected in our study, we noted three primary means of conceiving empathy in this manner, respectively stripping empathy from its qualification as "gendered capacity" (Schweyer, 1996). Some male midwives minimize empathy's pertinence by calling into question its psychological dimension—the idea that one can share the mental state of the patient. Some men are explicit on this point, giving credence to the idea of empathy but not the notion of being able to exchange or share the mental state of another. As Guillaume explains regarding pain experienced during labor, listening to women in labor without judging the subjective experience of pain is how one shows empathy, since judgment is possible if empathy is seen as a gender-based character trait:

The fact that I am a man in this profession means that I cannot—even subconsciously—permit myself to say: "she's exaggerating. It doesn't hurt that much," since I can't and never will be able to share this experience. However, based on what she tells me and what she shows me pushes me to ask: "Does it really hurt? Does it hurt just a little? Where? Do you want to change position?" and so on.... I have to believe it, always. Which, in my opinion, allows me to really accompany her through the process. That is,

<sup>12</sup> This definition is more limited than that proposed by Berthoz and Jorland, which gives priority to a cognitive and relative outlook "the psychological capacity to put oneself in the place of another" (2004, p. 19).

I do not allow myself to think for the patient. (Guillaume, 44, private practice midwife)

Others engage with the empathy question by conforming to the classic model of the professional, therapeutic, medical relationship (Freidson, 1984). In this model, empathy comes from professional technique. It is not a question of two members of opposite genders that enter into a relationship, but a woman who expects a professional service. A male midwife can therefore see himself as asexual in his professional relationship:

It's funny, because I don't think that my patients see me as a man. That's what I aim for. I think they see me as a professional: I am a man or a woman. (Francois, 33, hospital midwife)

Francois here puts his gendered role on hold. This is how an empathetic predisposition based on gender is hedged. Seeing oneself as a professional does not prevent the development of an empathetic relationship.

A third solution underlines the continuing transformation of strangeness in being a man in this profession. One is obligated to define the rules of working relationships. Male midwives address the fact that they must establish a contract with the patient. They benefit from increased confidence, as well as from a positive affirmation of their professional activity.

Most of the time, it is good that I am a male midwife, as far as my work relationships are concerned. In fact, that forced me to introduce myself and define a contract. "Hello, I'm a midwife, I am here for that reason." So we establish a contract each time, and that helps enormously with the relationship. When you are a female midwife, based on what I've observed, this contract is understood and there is no need to introduce oneself. I don't agree with that [this way of doing]. Because they don't need a contract: the contract is implicit. In my case, I have to define the contract every time: my mission, why I'm there, how I can help [women] with my services. (Christophe, 38, private practice midwife)

This male midwife is an example of trying to render explicit something that is typically implicit. Rather than acting like empathy is a gender-related predisposition, he makes a stand for active empathy. Men feel they must render explicit, to the point of self-justification, their presence in the profession by mobilizing their empathetic capacity. This explains their insistence on introducing themselves and their mission, which is a way of distinguishing themselves from their female counterparts. Some male midwives think that women do not always find this step necessary, while men must always construct this relation:

P.C.: Do you do anything in particular to establish a relationship with your patient?

S.F.: Well, I start off by introducing myself. That breaks the ice, I suppose, the fact that you say, "Ok, I'm the midwife." I give my first name. This

brings us a little step closer. It creates a little link. (Frédéric, 32, hospital midwife)

#### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS: A RESPECTFUL MASCULINIZATION

Looking at the ways in which male midwives integrate into the profession, we observe little desire to be seen as different from the female counterparts; nor does there appear to be a sentiment of being downgraded. None of these men regrets his professional trajectory.<sup>13</sup> Of course one must bear in mind that midwives enjoy a positive public image, even if some consider that their profession is undervalued, especially in comparison with other medical professions (obstetrics, anesthesiology). The job market is growing and there is a low rate of unemployment. This profession is not among the classically undervalued areas of female work; to the contrary, it is generally considered a prestigious field. Therefore we cannot interpret male presence and masculinization of the field responsible for a status change. It is also difficult to affirm that male midwives are using the “glass elevator” strategy (Williams, 1992).

These men negotiate masculine status through their expressed desire to work autonomously. They also have profiles classifying them as men that have developed “soft” or modern masculinities. Moreover, they manage to get around the idea that empathy is a sex-based predisposition by showing that it can also be a parameter of social and professional practice. These factors taken together demonstrate how men have entered, and can remain, part of midwifery.

Male presence does not mean that there is a segmentation of the midwife population (Bucher & Strauss, 1992). At this point in the analysis, new ways of interpretation will need to be presented. The “respectful revolution” concept, developed by C. Marry (2004), is a prime example of a new mode of interpretation. As is the case for women engineers, we support the idea that French male midwives integrate into this professional sphere without denying any of their masculine qualities and by contributing to the gradual growth of professionalism of the field. Masculinization can be qualified as “respectful” where not changing the professional practice is already in place. Empathy is neither renounced nor devalued by men, it becomes redefined from gender-related tendency to a collection of correct practices and professional behaviors. In a similar vein, the masculinity expressed by these men reflects neither a hierarchical ordering of genders, nor an aim to dominate the professional field.<sup>14</sup> This “respectful” dynamic stands out from the majority of studies of masculinization, generally considered synonymous with *invasion*, or in its less extreme readings, *transformation* of professional practices.

<sup>13</sup> We interviewed two male midwives who no longer practice. One has become a salesperson for obstetrics products, and the other is now teaching biology at a university. Both explained that they are very attached to their past professions and that they feel that even in their new jobs, they are still part of the former.

<sup>14</sup> Most male midwives interviewed did not necessarily wish to see the number of men in the field increase. This is an indication that they are not in a dynamic hegemonic situation.

This explains itself if we take into consideration the socio-professional context. The increase in women engineers is understandable when referring to girls' higher academic success rate as compared to boys,' consistent over several decades in France (Marry, 2004). Comparably, presence of male midwives has become possible because midwifery has undergone radical changes for the past twenty years. There has been a movement towards professionalism, which is illustrated by the desire for independence in respect to other pre- and post-natal professions, a growing demand for knowledge, an increase in the length of training, and an increase in work responsibilities. Midwifery is developing, offers a myriad of occupational possibilities for independence and autonomy, all of which factors that attract current and future midwifery students. We cannot understand the presence and especially the retention of men (indeed: evident masculinization) unless these are related to a profound evolution in the professional milieu.

Given men's only recent entry to the field and their present numbers, this remains, we have argued, a "respectful masculinization." Midwives in France hardly work to establish professional hierarchy, whether objectively or symbolically speaking. There is little evidence of distinction or segmentation, and therefore less opportunity for men to take dominant positions. A different hierarchical structure would probably not have led to this "respectful masculinization."

The present study nevertheless demonstrates that research on the presence of men in careers not traditionally viewed as masculine has a tendency to ignore seemingly vital parameters. These include practice conditions, hierarchical segmentation, and level of qualification. Reckoning with these parameters permits comparative studies of masculinization, for example juxtaposing the case of male midwives with that of male housekeepers (Bagihole & Cross, 2000). It would be pertinent, moreover, for research on masculinity and masculinization to deconstruct the category "non-traditional" occupations or professions, which will often encompass very diverse realities.

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# MASCULINITY AS PRISON IN SAMUEL SELVON'S *A BRIGHTER SUN* JOURNEYING FROM BOY TO MAN

Samuel Selvon's *A Brighter Sun* has been largely approached in terms of Selvon's use of language and his social themes. In this paper, I start from the premise that approaching Selvon's text from a gendered, masculinity studies perspective produces alternative insights into this text. I focus on protagonist Tiger's journey from boyhood to manhood and argue that, through his depiction of Tiger's engagement with his culture, Selvon constructs a central metaphor where the tenor is masculinity and the vehicle is prison. To examine Selvon's representation of Tiger's journey, I utilize Michel Foucault's idea of the panoptic and Judith Butler's notion of gender as performance, suggesting that Selvon develops a carceral conception of normative Indo masculinity, supervising and restricting Tiger.

**KEYWORDS** SAMUEL SELVON, *A BRIGHTER SUN*, MASCULINITY, METAPHOR CRITICISM

A pioneer in West Indian literature, Indian Caribbean writer Samuel Selvon received international acclaim with his first novel, *A Brighter Sun*. The novel was published in 1952 and is set in Trinidad, Selvon's native land. There has been some speculation that this novel was already completed when Selvon, like many West Indians at the time, migrated to Britain after World War II (Dyer, 2002, p. 113). Selvon puts this idea to rest in his interview with Michel Fabre (1988). When asked whether the book was written in Trinidad, Selvon responds, "No, I wrote it, or completed it in London. In Trinidad, I wrote poems and a good deal of short stories ... but I mostly worked" (p. 65). The novel was significant for a number of reasons, one of which was that, according to Ivan Van Sertima, "It was in *A Brighter Sun* that an East Indian writer himself spoke for the first time ... about the life of an Indian family in the Caribbean" (1968, p. 43). Harold Barratt notes that the novel also received critical acclaim because of Selvon's use of Trinidadian dialect (2003, p. 28).

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Selvon has stated that the protagonist, in *A Brighter Sun*, Tiger, is based on a “really old man [whom] he knew,” (Fabre, 1988, p. 69). At the beginning of the novel Tiger is married off to a girl, who, like himself, is Hindu. He moves from Chaguanas to Barataria. Tiger “starts off by gradually discovering about life” (Fabre, 1988, p. 69). He is exposed to a whole new way of life and begins to mature as an individual and a man. His transformation is set against the landscape of changing Trinidadian society.

Many of the critical essays which have been written about *A Brighter Sun* have tended to consider together (or separately addressed) Selvon’s use of language, his commentary on race relations, and his treatment of the move toward independence in Trinidad. Frank Birbalsingh, for example, contends that “Tiger’s biography is merely the frame in which a lavish social canvas is hung” (1988, p. 83). Birbalsingh’s comment suggests that Selvon’s primary focus in the novel is the changing Trinidadian society with Tiger’s story and development largely instrumental to this focus. And while Roydon Salick cautioned that it is important that we do not miss “the historical, colonial context that Selvon so carefully constructs in the novel” (2001, p. 3), it seems equally important to see the protagonist’s biography as more than a mere frame, as there is much to be gained from paying attention to Tiger not only as individual but more importantly as gendered individual. As Kenneth Ramchand states, the book’s real theme is “the growing into manhood of the rural Indian, Tiger,” (1988, p. 160). This is, in fact, an analytic dimension to which many critics have alluded while focusing on other aspects of Selvon’s novel. Critics including Mark Looker (1996), and Harold Barratt (2003), for example, acknowledge the theme of manhood in *A Brighter Sun* but go on to elaborate other themes including community, self-awareness, and the use of language.

Lewis Macleod, in his essay on *The Lonely Londoners*, sums up much of how *A Brighter Sun* has been critically approached, and offers an explanation of why gendered approaches to the novel would prove useful:

While previous studies have noted, but not pursued, the decidedly masculinist emphasis in Selvon, the emerging discourse studying masculinities might well provide a particularly illuminating analytical viewpoint on his work. At the very least, discourses of masculinity provide a critical apparatus that approaches (and ... reaches) Selvon in ways that previous racial, geographic, and self-consciously “progressive” analyses have not. (2005, p. 158)

Macleod’s comments reinforce Selvon’s own belief that manhood is in an important theme in his writings. Asked by Michel Fabre (1988) about the place of women in his writing, Selvon responds, “But they do [have a place]. Of course, there is the question of manhood, or malehood and the role of male chauvinism” (p. 72). One critic who has answered Selvon’s call by focusing specifically on Tiger as a gendered individual is Curdella Forbes (2005).

In this paper, I *want* to extend the conversation started by Forbes and to do so by drawing on MacLeod’s challenge to develop new approaches to Samuel Selvon, with specific reference to Macleod’s belief that reading Selvon’s work

within a frame of masculinity is productive in offering new insights into Selvon's texts. To explore masculinity within *A Brighter Sun*, more specifically Tiger's masculinity, I utilize metaphor criticism to argue that Samuel Selvon utilizes a central metaphor, one in which normative Indo-Caribbean masculinity is likened to a prison. Tiger, Selvon's protagonist, is at risk of becoming a "prisoner of masculinity." A prisoner of masculinity according to Christopher Kilmartin, is someone "who compulsively conform[s] their behavior to masculine norms and lose[s] sight of their individuality in the process" (1997, p. 27). Tiger's prison can be best understood when Foucault's notion of the panoptic and Butler's idea of gender as performance are used to examine how Tiger performs masculinity, and is socialized into a form of masculinity which is extremely stifling to him.

To argue that Selvon utilizes a central metaphor in his text necessitates a discussion of what is meant by "metaphor." In his *Models and Metaphors*, Max Black explains metaphors by drawing on visual imagery:

Suppose I look at the night sky through a piece of heavily smoked glass on which certain lines have been left clear. Then I shall see only the stars that can be made to lie on the lines previously prepared upon the screen, and the stars I do see will be seen as organized by the screen's structure. We can think of a metaphor as such a screen and the system of "associated commonplaces" of the focal word as the network of lines upon the screen. We can say that the principal subject is "seen through" the metaphorical expression—or, if we prefer that the principal subject is "projected upon" the field of the subsidiary subject. (1962, p. 41)

Black's definition of a metaphor as a "filter," is similar to Kenneth Burke's (1989) *terministic screen*. Burke suggests that, "If language is indispensable to human experience it also selects and narrows that experience. It acts a filter and a screen" (1989, p. 12). Burke notes with reference to the terministic screens:

When I speak of "terministic screens," I have particularly in mind some photographs I once saw. They were *different* photographs of the *same* objects, the difference being that they were made with different color filters. Here, something so "factual" as a photograph revealed notable distinctions in texture, and even in form, depending upon which color filter was used for the documentary description of the event being recorded. (pp. 115-116)

Suggesting that metaphors are very much a part of our everyday life, George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) write, "We have found that metaphors allow us to understand one domain of experience in terms of another," (p. 117). They believe that "metaphors ... are systematic devices for further defining a concept and for changing its range of applicability" (p. 125). These various definitions suggest that a metaphor is "a major technique (which a rhetor can use) for facilitating comprehension" (Foss, Foss, & Trapp, 1985, p. 42) and that, as Sonja Foss contends, "the structure of the metaphor itself argues" (2009, p. 270).

If metaphors act as screens and filters, and act as arguments on the part of the orator, how does metaphor relate to Selvon's novel? To address this question is to ask what Selvon's screen is, what the lens through which he wants readers to see normative Indo-Caribbean masculinity. How does he attempt to shape our understanding of Indo-Caribbean masculinity? This is done through the central concern in the novel with Tiger's journey to manhood. Tiger's journey is the "smoked glass," like the photographs in Burke's terministic screen, through which we look at Indo-Caribbean masculinity. What does Selvon want us to see when we look through Tiger's eyes? We see that masculinity is a form of incarceration, limiting and restricting the individual. It is like a prison. How then might Selvon's metaphor be analyzed?

Ivor Richards writings are particularly useful.

To facilitate the description of how a metaphor best secures its effects, Richards introduces two terms, "tenor" and "vehicle," which are already so widely used that they scarcely need explanation. But, briefly, in the sentence, "The Oxford Movement is a spent wave," "Oxford Movement" is the tenor; "spent wave," the vehicle. The tenor, thus, is the main subject, while the vehicle is that to which the tenor is compared. Richards warns us, however, that we must not jump to the conclusion that one, the tenor, is central while the other is peripheral. (Bilsky, 1952, p.132)

Examining metaphor in terms of tenor and vehicle correlates with Black's notion of metaphorical and non-metaphorical use. He explains, "In general, when we speak of a relatively simple metaphor, we are referring to a sentence or another expression in which *some* words are used metaphorically while the remainder are used nonmetaphorically" (1962, p. 27). In Black's example, "The Chairman plowed through the discussion," the word "plowed" is being used metaphorically, while at least one of the words is being used literally (p. 28).

If Selvon's central metaphor is carceral masculinity, the tenor or non-metaphorical word would be "masculinity," while the vehicle and metaphorical word, the thing to which masculinity is being compared is prison/incarceration. Selvon obviously does not mean a physical prison, but suggests that features associated with a prison, such as surveillance, control, and correction, if we are to use Michel Foucault's elaboration of the *panoptic* (as discussed below), can be seen to be associated with normative Indo-Caribbean masculinity. Selvon builds up this vehicle of the prison through Tiger's engagement with his culture and traditions, especially through religious customs; through general societal definitions of manhood, about which he is educated by older Indian men, particularly his father; and through Tiger's internalization of the models of manhood to which he has been exposed, proving destructive not only to Tiger, but also to his wife and child.

In any society, culture helps inform how individuals engage with themselves and each other. Culture is reinforced through the socialization of children and sometimes adults into the society's expectations. According to Michael Crotty (1998), culture may be seen as a way in which societies control their individual members and also reflects the expectations that individuals in turn have of so-

ciety. "As a direct consequence of the way in which we humans have evolved, we depend on culture to direct our behavior and organize our experience," Crotty states (p. 53). Clifford Geertz (1973) reinforces this notion when he points out that "Culture is best seen as the source, rather than the result of human thought and behavior. It is "a set of control mechanisms—plans, recipes, rules, instructions (what computer engineers call "programs")—for the governing of behavior" (p. 44). One specific manner in which culture is intertwined with gender is that culture sometimes affects gender roles. Gender roles, according to Christopher Kilmartin (2007) may be defined as "a set of expectations for behaving, thinking, and feeling that is based on a person's biological sex" (p. 23), or rather, based on "beliefs about how males and females should be (prescriptive) and about how they should *not* be (proscriptive)" (p. 24).

One way in which Selvon constructs prescriptive and proscriptive beliefs about gender roles as particularly incarcerating in *A Brighter Sun* is through his depiction of the religious customs about marriage. Selvon suggests that his community's religious customs contribute to Tiger's imprisonment. Coming from Chaguanas, "arguably the epicenter of the Indo-Trinidadian culture in early forties" (Salick, 2001, p. 25), Tiger's religious heritage as a member of Indian society has implications for the form of masculinity which he is expected to embody. One aspect of this religious heritage was that "[m]arriage among Caribbean Indians used to take place early, soon after puberty, through arrangement by their families" (Chevannes, 2001, p. 5). In keeping with the cultural traditions and cultural expectations about the trajectory of young males like himself, Tiger is thrown into marriage by his parents, an institution for which he is ill-prepared, involving him with someone whom he does not know. Thus begins a journey into an imposed notion of what it means to be a man:

Tiger didn't know anything about the wedding until his father told him. He didn't even know the girl. But he bowed to his parents' wishes. He was only sixteen years old, was not in the habit of attending Indian ceremonies in the village. But he knew a little about weddings, that Indians were married at an early age, and that after the ceremony friends and relatives would bring him gifts until he began to eat; only then would they stop the offerings. (pp. 4-5)

The sense of impending doom which one would associate with a prison sentence is noted when we are told that, at the ceremony, Tiger "looked at everybody and everything with a tight feeling in his throat. He wished he knew more about what was going to happen to him" (p. 5). As Simon Gikandi's (1992) analysis suggests, Tiger is trapped—a prisoner/colonized by the expectations of Indian culture. "The juvenile groom and his bride are asked to live up to a prescribed image of their culture; indeed, the wedding becomes the medium through which Hindu culture in Trinidad rationalizes its function and relevance" (Gikandi, p. 119).

Foucault's notion of "normalizing judgment" helps us to understand why Tiger's predicament is that of being "colonized." Such judgment

differentiates individuals from one another, in terms of the following overall rule: that the rule be made to function as a minimal threshold, as an average to be respected or as an optimum towards which one must move. It measures in quantitative terms and hierarchizes in terms of value the abilities, the level, the 'nature' of individuals. It introduces, through this 'value-giving' measure, the constraint of a conformity that must be achieved ... it *normalizes*. (1995, pp. 182-183)

Normalizing means that individuals are "the intrinsic rightness or wrongness of their acts but by where their actions place them on a *ranked scale that compares them to everyone else*" (Gutting, 2005, p. 84). And as Geoff Dansher et al. (2000) point out, "because most people don't want to become delinquents, they accept the normative values that are supposed to make them 'good' citizens" (p. 60). This is what Tiger's parents have done. For them, "the preservation of their son's Indian identity is mandatory" (Barratt, 2003, p. 29) and to this end they follow custom and marry him off because this is the norm in their society. This is what happens to young boys who turn sixteen. Indeed, as Gikandi suggests, "to his Indian parents [Tiger] is the heir to a proud Hindu tradition defined by masculinity" (p. 119). Tiger's identity is controlled not only through his parents' decision to adhere to religious customs and marry him off at sixteen, but to subsequent definitions and expectations of Indo-Caribbean manhood after marriage. Scholar, Linden Lewis (2006), in his article "Unsettling Masculinity in the Caribbean," helps illustrate how masculinities are imposed upon Caribbean males. He writes that Caribbean masculinity, like other masculinities, is

simultaneously a set of social practices or behaviors, and an ideological position by which men become conscious of themselves as gendered subjects. Masculinity is therefore an ontological process of becoming aware of societal roles and expectations that are inscribed on the text of the body. Men are not born with this awareness of themselves. Society must impose this understanding on them, as it does in similar and different ways for women. This is the context in which we can talk about the idea of masculinity as being socially constructed. For not only does society play a determining role in shaping the consciousness of subjectivity, but it proceeds by sanctions and rewards to police the boundaries of the identities it establishes. (pp. 2-3)

Barry Chevannes and Janet Brown (1998) provide insight into the social practices to which Lewis alludes. They state that Caribbean men generally accept their primary role as that of provider. It is felt that a man who "cannot provide for his family is not a man" (Chevannes & Brown, p. 24). Further, "manhood implies authority, particularly over women and offspring. This authority is seen as natural, being part of 'God's plan'" (p. 24). In terms of man-woman relationships, most men believe they have ultimate power and authority (p. 25). "This view is defended by Christians, Hindus and Moslems as religious tradition, ordained by God, and as historical and cultural inheritance" (p. 25). These

are the broad ideologies about acceptable manhood into which Tiger is indoctrinated, only started off with his wedding.

Alan Johnson's (1997) discourse on the "masculine mold" helps highlight how society shapes and molds Tiger's masculinity and thereby begins a process of indoctrination. Writing about boys and their vulnerabilities as they attempt to acquire masculinity, Johnson states: "Boys have to shape their broad human potential to fit a narrow masculine mold- to devalue emotional attachment, tenderness, vulnerability, and nurturing; to objectify themselves and others" (p. 189). After his wedding, aware that he is now considered and should consider himself a "man," Tiger internalizes what is accepted as normative masculinity and attempts to fit the masculine mold. His reactions to his friends speak to Tiger's attempt at manhood and to the burden and restriction this places upon him.

[A]ll the boys and girls from the neighborhood came up and started to call out to him.... Some of the older folk drove them away, but Tiger would have liked for them to come. He was familiar with them, he could make jokes and talk. But now he was a man. He would have to learn to be a man, he would have to forget his friends. After all, he thought, they still little children. (p. 6)

This situation reveals much about how Tiger's masculinity is supervised, disciplined, and corrected, and can be understood in light of Michel Foucault's theory of the panoptic gaze. "For Foucault, the ideal architectural form of modern disciplinary power is Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, a proposal for maximizing control of prisoners" (Gutting, 2005, p. 82). Foucault saw the panopticon as "one of the ways of disciplining and managing bodies" through surveillance (Danaher et al., 2000, p. 53), "a way of looking that could operate as a general principle of surveillance throughout the social body. This logic of the gaze, like that of discipline, was not confined to the prison, but moved throughout the various institutional spaces in society" (p. 54). Foucault (1981/2000) writes that the panopticon is:

One of the characteristic traits of our society. It's a type of power that is applied to individuals in the form of continuous individual supervision, in the form of control, punishment and compensation, and in the form of correction, that is the molding and transformation of individuals in terms of norms. This threefold aspect of panopticism—supervision, control, correction—seems to be a fundamental and characteristic dimension of power relations that exist in our society. (p. 70)

In this incident, Tiger's identity and manhood is being supervised by the "older folks." While Tiger would have liked to engage with his friends he is quickly corrected and is made aware of the normative behavior expected of "men," and it becomes evident that these norms are restricting and limiting. According to the dictates of his society, engaging with his friends is the behavior of boys and not married men. He is being shown that isolation and lone-

liness are requisite if one is to deem oneself, and to be deemed, a “man.” This form of manhood dictates that he must not act on his emotional desire to be with his friends and must not seem vulnerable. Manhood is defined by acquiring a wife, almost like one acquires property.

The normative form of masculinity which is embraced in his society, and reinforced through the “older folks,” not only requires stoicism, but is rigid as it configures manhood within a binary. Tiger’s identity is narrowly defined. If he is not a “man” he is a “boy” and if he is not a “boy” he is a “man.” One of the traits of Caribbean manhood, according to Chevannes and Brown, is the concern that many remain “bwoys”, or males only—never becoming real men who can meet the later criteria for manhood, beyond the exercise of their sexuality” (1998, p. 24). Tiger’s socialization, by the men who surround him and who themselves have internalized normative models of what it means to be a man, seemingly unaware that “[b]y virtue of their greater social power, [they] are ...in a unique position to help shift this power” (Kilmartin, 2007, p. 3), is such that Tiger becomes obsessed with ensuring that he is not considered a “bwoy.”

Tiger observes how the men around him, especially his father, perform masculinity. Judith Butler’s idea of gender performance helps us understand how the older men behave. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler argues that gender is socially constructed. According to Butler, “the gendered body is performative” (1999, p. 173). She argues that “as a strategy of survival within compulsory systems, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences ... we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right (pp. 177-178). Gender is an act “[a]s in other ritual social dramas, the action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated*. This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation” (p. 178).

Society has already established how masculinity must be performed if one is to be considered “a man;” Tiger follows this script and he learns how to “perform masculinity,” from the direct and indirect instruction of the older men around him because he wants to be accepted as “man” by the other men. This is because an important aspect of masculinity involves men defining themselves against other men in order to be accepted by them, and in the case of especially boys, being accepted by their fathers. As Mike Marlowe (1998), notes, a child’s sense of maleness, or femaleness, is derived from, among others, “the attitudes of parents ... toward the child’s biological sex or gender role” (p. 1). Observing his father and other men around him, Tiger learns that “only men got drunk, not boys” (p. 14); consequently, he seeks to define his masculinity through drinking. Thinking about his father Tiger remembers that:

once in Chaguanas his father was drinking in a rumshop and he had to go and bring him home. When his father saw him he said, “Ohe, boy, come an’ take ah little one, it go killam all de germs in yuh belly.” And he took a little one, urged by his father’s companions, and the rum coursed down his throat as if pitchoil had been soaked in his mouth and a match set to it. (p. 14)

Tiger had decided to drink because “he wanted to ... show them he was a man, that he could swallow rum just as they did” (p. 14).

Another older man, Sookdeo serves as an example. He closely aligns drinking and acquiring masculinity. Sookdeo attempts to numb his failure at acquiring normative definitions of manhood—providing proper housing, attending to his wife’s needs, and feeling very trapped by the responsibility of providing for his daughter through drinking:

Sookdeo lived in a broken-down hut which he was always promising Rookmin, his wife, to repair. But he was never sober enough to do it. Every day, every night, it was the same question he asked in the hut—when was Dolly and Seta going to get married and relieve him of the responsibility of having to feed them? (p. 65)

Given what is suggested by the models around him, drinking becomes integral to Tiger’s definition of manhood, and features prominently in his marriage. As Salick points out, “rum helps Tiger overcome initial sexual ignorance sufficiently to consummate his marriage” (2001, p. 21). The presence of rum in his house symbolizes achieved manhood and its absence the opposite. He has no rum in his house when his friends visit and he feels ashamed (p. 40). This shame is solidified by his father’s response to the absence. “The old man said, ‘Well, you should haveam here already! After all, you is man now, boy, and you must haveam drink in house for when friend come.’” This whole incident is built on the fact that “Tiger’s *bap* seemed to take it that the marriage had turned him into a man right away. He adopted a man-to-man attitude with Tiger, and Tiger tried to keep up with him” (p. 44).

Tiger’s actions reinforce Foucault’s theory that the panoptic gaze, explaining how modern society functions, is also internal. As Danaher et al. (2000) points out, in Foucault’s theory of the panoptic gaze:

the panoptic gaze ... is not something that is simply directed against us by others—it also becomes a way of looking at our own behaviours. Part of our socialization influences us to make ourselves the subject of our own gaze, and so we are constantly monitoring our bodies, actions and feelings. There is a gender dimension to this authority of the gaze. Males are also subject to the gaze.” (pp. 54- 55)

The men around him teach Tiger how his masculinity should be performed not only before the men around him but before women. Tiger internalizes their gaze and treats his wife in a manner in which he believes these men would approve. Boysie, another Indian, socializes Tiger into a form of manhood according to which women are to be treated with suspicion and distrust. Using his conversation with Boysie to justify his actions, Tiger questions his wife Urmilla’s loyalty and commitment to him, treating her as an object of disdain:

Look at how much thing other people does do. And what I do? I only ask she if she if she sure is my baby. Boysie did telling me how one time a girl

try to stick him with a child, and it wasn't he own. He tell me I must watch out for that kind of thing. Man, people too worthless, yes! You have to be on guard all the time! (p. 145)

Tiger is taught that not only does being a man require distrust of women, it also requires intimidating and mentally abusing them:

Tiger refused to think about the baby. Somehow he felt he had done wrong by speaking to his wife and neighbour the way he did, accusing Urmilla of being unfaithful. But he righted the wrong in his mind, arguing that all sorts of things had to happen, not just good all the time. And he hadn't struck Urmilla, he had just threatened her—all of that was good for man to do his wife sometimes. (p. 145)

Here, Tiger creates a distinction between physical violence and verbal violence and, in this instance sadly believes himself to be a better man than those who resort to physical violence. This does not mean that he has not been taught to manifest physical violence in establishing his manhood, for his thoughts reveal the connection he makes between manliness and violence against his wife, a connection attributable to his father. Joseph Pleck's views on fatherhood offers some perspective. "[A] father's involvement may be beneficial not because it will help *support* traditional male roles, but because it will help break them down" (1981, p. 72). Tiger's father is instrumental in supporting traditional male attitudes to women rather than breaking them down. His father's actions have taught Tiger that bullying a woman is one of the prescribed roles of being a man:

Tiger had never smoked. He had only seen his father and others. But he had decided that he was not going to appear a small boy before his wife. Men smoked: he would smoke. He would drink rum, curse, swear, bully the life out of her if she did not obey him. Hadn't he seen when his father did that? (p. 11)

Tiger's internalization of the fact that manhood should be built around "issues of control and dominance" (Johnson, 1997, p. 189) is expressed in another incident, in which he resorts to physical violence. Theories on boys, men, and masculinity would suggest that "Anger is, in fact, one of the few emotions boys are encouraged to have and as a consequence, a lot of other feelings such as hurt, disappointment and even fear get funneled into it" (Levant, 1992, pp. 11-12). Tiger engages in hypermasculinity and expresses his manhood through one of the few emotions he has been taught are available to him as a man—anger. This afforded anger is also fuelled by another outward manifestation of manliness—rum, which proves destructive to Urmilla:

"You never taste the weight of my foot, girl. Is time. I go learn you respect. I go learn you who is man in this house." ... "Take that!" He kicked her across the face." And that!" He kicked her in the stomach, and she doubled

up in agony. He kicked her as she writhed on the floor, the rum spinning in his head and making him dizzy. (p. 176)

Here, Tiger's manhood operates through a "negation of womanhood" (Johnson, 1997, p. 189). Paula Morgan and Valerie Youssef comment that, although there were some who resisted, the Indian woman in Trinidad and Tobago was traditionally seen as "passive, dutiful and subservient," while the man, "in contrast, was ... both overlord and master" (2006, p. 13). It is this attitude towards women to which Tiger subscribes and one which imprisons him, is destructive to Urmilla, and limits his perspective of what constitutes a healthy intimate relationship.

The object of mental and physical assault, we learn that, soon after the wedding, Urmilla's "emotions were too tightly drawn, like ropes across her breasts. And she felt that if she laughed the tautness would snap and set her free. Acting on what he has observed from the older men around him, "It flashed in Tiger's mind that this was rudeness and that he should slap her into respect for him when she laughed" (p.12). An examination of his fears and concerns reveals how normative definitions of masculinity have forced Tiger into a mode of manhood which he does not fully comprehend. One aspect of his fears is revealed in the following extract:

When he was in Chaguanas he was never worried by his thoughts. Was worry one of the signs of a man? And all the incidents since marriage came like giant hands out of the night to hold him down. The sudden movement from boyhood to manhood, his hut, his acquiring the land to plant a garden, the nights with Urmilla, days turning the soil, the baby just born. The hands clutched at his throat. He wanted to cry out in terror and run until he couldn't run again.... He shut his eyes tightly; night came into his head.... Suddenly he sprang up. He was not alone. He had a wife. He had a child...Don't mind it not boy chile. I is a man... (pp. 43-44)

William Pollack explains some of the anxiety that boys like Tiger face and the performances of masculinity into which they are forced as they grow older:

As they grow older, the inner conflict boys feel about masculinity is exacerbated, and they feel compelled to hide their confusion by acting more self-confident than they truly feel (a sense of false self-esteem, leading to increased sadness).... Boys have grave concerns about growing up to be men: They overwhelmingly see manhood as filled with unrewarding work, isolation from friends and family, unhappiness, and disappointment.... Despite the outward appearance they often give of being cheerful and contented, many boys of all ages feel deep feelings of loneliness and alienation. (2006, p. 192)

In one illustration of his anxiety, we learn that, just like he felt directly after the wedding ceremony, Tiger is afraid to show his fear and uncertainty during the course of his marriage. "He signed a contract.... He was worried about the

negotiation; he wished his father or one of his uncles was there with him. But the thought made him ashamed. He was married, and he was a big man now. He might as well learn to do things without the assistance of other people" (p. 13). Thus, a "big man" is not a boy and does not need to be guided. Needing others is a source of shame. Tiger's schizophrenia may be explained in light of Máirtín Mac an Ghail's comment that "A central dichotomy in many young men's lives is between their projection of a public confident masculinity and their experience of private anxieties and insecurities" (cited in Flood, 2002, p. 25). Soon after his marriage, Tiger is frightened and wishes "he knew more about what would happen to him" (p. 5).

His later actions reveal how ostensible performances of masculinity, like drinking, are destructive to men as these acts help them to mask, rather than confront, their fears and insecurities. Tiger is "frightened for himself" after he abandons his wife. This fear takes him to the rumshop. "And the next he knew he was drunk" (p. 179). Tiger displays the symptoms of what sociologist Andreas G. Philaretou and Professor Katherine Allen call a "covertly depressed" man. "Covertly depressed men," they declare "usually turn to any substance, person or action to regulate their self-esteem. In this addictive process, they hope to replenish their basic sense of self as valuable and important, in other words, their from-within self-esteem. As long as their connection to the object of their addiction, be it any tangible substance or intangible ideal, is undisturbed they tend to feel good about themselves" (2001, p. 314). Tiger's drinking can be further understood in light of Pollack's belief that

rigid gender guidelines, or gender straitjackets, push many boys to repress their yearnings for love and connection and to build an invisible, impenetrable wall of toughness around themselves—a "cool pose" (Majors & Billson, 1992) hidden by an emotional "mask" of masculine bravado or invulnerability, leaving them to experience a gamut of lonely painful problems that range from academic failure to drug abuse, from struggles with friends to clinical depression, and from attention deficit disorder to suicide and murder. Behind their masks of pseudo-invulnerability and the drama of action, it is often hard to hear boys' stifled but genuine voices of pain and struggle, their yearning for connection. (2006, p. 191)

Turning back to Kilmartin's (2007) definition of a prisoner of masculinity as someone "who compulsively conform[s] their behavior to masculine norms and lose[s] sight of their individuality in the process" (p. 27), we find that Tiger's actions and thoughts toward the end of the novel, indicate that he has not "lost sight" of his individuality. He moves to find his comfort level within the social institution of masculinity which has been imposed upon him. Tiger's actions can be best understood in light of Michael Kimmel's explanation of identity. Kimmel explains that gender is both a social and individual construction:

Gender identity is socially constructed ... our identities are a fluid assemblage of the meanings and behaviors that we construct from values, im-

ages, and prescriptions we find in the world around us. Our gendered identity is both voluntary—we choose to become who we are—and, coerced—we are pressured, forced, sanctioned, and often physically beaten into submission to some rules. We neither make up the rules as we go along, nor do we glide perfectly and effortlessly into pre-assigned roles. (2000, p. 87)

The first step in attempting to construct his identity occurs when Tiger begins to acknowledge the extent to which the social code of masculinity, a code which he had internalized, has defined and restricted his masculinity. According to Pollack, findings from his study on boys indicate that there exist boys who “are beginning to reject and rebel against outdated rules of masculinity and manhood (2006, p. 94) For Pollack, the voices are saying: “We’re getting ready for a second gender revolution.” He writes: “The boys’ voices we’ve heard seem to be telling us, some directly and some more subtly, “I want out of the old boy code,” “I’m sick of hiding important parts of who I really am,” and “I want to be able to be myself” (p. 94). Tiger tries to “be himself.” His awareness is important and significant for, as Gikandi notes, “in order to subjectify himself in *A Brighter Sun*, Tiger must raise a new knowledge against the overdetermined world of ... Indian culture” (1992, p. 118).

Part of his enlightenment involves interrogating accepted social definitions of manhood. Tiger comments, “To my wife, I man when I sleep with she. To *bap*, I man if I drink rum. But to me, I no man yet” (p. 45). Here, Tiger involves himself in the process of defining his manhood. In a conversation with Joe, Tiger says: “[t]he first time, I used to think as long as you have wife and child, you is a man. So long as you drink rum and smoke, you is a man. That is what my father and them tell me. But no. It take more than that” (p. 116). He comments that, “He soon realized that with their [the other men’s] tongues loosened over a bottle of rum they just talked and argued to pass time away, and he would learn nothing” (p. 64). “Tiger learns that manhood does not mean possessing a wife and fathering a child; it does not mean smoking and drinking rum. Manhood means awareness of one’s identity as a unique individual; it also means satisfying one’s hunger for knowledge” (Barratt, in Zehnder, 2003, p. 29). This hunger for knowledge is expressed in a conversation with Joe. Joe asks, “tell me something. Yuh tink dat because yuh cud read and write yuh is ah better man dan me?” Tiger responds, “Is not a matter of who better than who, Joe. Is just me, inside of me. Things I want to learn, things I want to find out” (p. 109).

There are other ideas which Tiger “must push aside if he is to understand what true manhood is” (Wyke, 1991, pp. 64-65). He pushes aside earlier ideas about literacy. He no longer believes that “Joe couldn’t write, because Joe was a man” (p. 109). Instead literacy features as a part of a revised notion of manhood, as Tiger *learns* to read and write. Tiger also challenges the notions of manhood which the older men had imposed upon him. His response to an approach from a prostitute reveals Tiger’s more mature and critical outlook on masculinity:

A prostitute approached him with an unlighted cigarette but changed her mind as she came closer and turned away. He thought. It must be a hard night for if she can't find a sailor or a soldier, and so much of them all about! He could have shown her money, and that would have brought her back. But what was the use? It didn't prove you were a man. Nor drinking rum, nor swearing, nor screwing a woman. The way Joe talked, you would think these things counted. But look at Joe, man! He still young, and yet he have no ambition! What sort of man is that? (p. 112-113)

Reflecting upon his journey Tiger says, "It seemed such a long time ago. But he was a boy then. Now he was—what? A man? Maybe, but not a man like Joe Martin or Boysie or any of the others. They were content, he was not" (p. 113). His revised definition of manhood is closely aligned with being responsible to his wife and to his child. This is revealed in an exchange with Boysie, who has decided to migrate. Tiger says to Boysie, "So you really going, eh, Boysie? You make up your mind? You leaving Trinidad?" (p. 213). His response to Boysie: "How you want me to leave my wife and child and house and go away just so?" .... A man just can't take up heself and do this and do that" (p. 213). When we juxtapose his words against his earlier belief that that being a man means "coming and going as he pleases" (p. 15), Tiger's transformation is evident. In his new world view, being a man involves a deeper sense of responsibility which is revealed through a commitment to his wife and to his child.

For Tiger, manhood also means not adhering to expected cultural norms and to the belief that only Indians should be his friends. Very early into Tiger's marriage, his uncle had instructed him that "Indians must come first" (p. 203) and that he is to ensure that "creole people keep they distance [and he should maintain only] Indian friend" (p. 48). He rejects his uncle's instruction on interracial friendships: "Why should I look only for Indian friends? What wrong with Joe and Rita? Is true I used to play with Indian friend in the estate, but that ain't no reason why I must shut my heart to other people. Aint a man is a man, don't mind if he skin not white, or if he hair curl?" (p. 48).

As Curdella Forbes (2005) points out, at the end of *A Brighter Sun*, there are still issues with which Tiger must contend. One of these issues is that Tiger, like any member of a society, cannot simply break out of the social confines of what his society and culture define as manhood, but as Kimmel (2000) suggests, gender is not just something into which individuals seamlessly enter, they can also play a part in constructing their masculinity within the wider societal and cultural expectations. Tiger does have power over himself and the choices he makes about his wife and his child. What is important is that Tiger works toward finding an acceptable space for himself in his quest for masculinity. No longer is his a masculinity which is imposed; he becomes actively involved in the process and seeks to, if not totally reject, then interrogate, the prescribed and proscribed gender role expectations imposed upon him.

#### CONCLUSION

Selvon uses the metaphor of masculinity as prison, with the changing vehicles of religious customs, socialization by older men, and the internalization of

cultural definitions of masculinity, to interrogate the prescribed and proscribed gender roles for young boys and men. Approaching Selvon's text from a masculinity studies perspective reinforces that Selvon was innovative not only in his use of language, his exploration of immigration, of community and of nature, but also in his representation, exploration, and commentary on Indo-Caribbean masculinity. Selvon was willing to draw attention to an often overlooked issue, the extent to which normative masculinity can often be limiting, restricting and stifling men and especially for young boys. This would suggest that in some ways, Selvon was well ahead of his time, in pointing out what is one of the major thrusts of men's studies, a movement which Kenneth Clatterbaugh (1997) suggests might have begun in the 1970s, suggesting hegemonic masculinity is destructive not only to women, but also to men and especially to young boys. As Michael Kaufman (1993) in *Cracking the Armour* states, "there is privilege, but there is also pain" (p. 7) when it comes to masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity allows men to wield power but is also painful, resulting in confusion, uncertainty and dissatisfaction, feelings from which men who do not allow themselves to be "prisoners of masculinity," might find some escape.

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## MASCULINITY IN POPULAR SITCOMS, 1955-1960 AND 2000-2005

Common wisdom holds that men as represented in sitcoms have changed substantially from the wise, loving patriarchs of the 1950s, but we currently lack a broad understanding of these changes. Using a random sample of sitcoms from 1955-1960 and 2000-2005, this paper shows that masculinity in sitcoms has actually evolved little since the 1950s. Some changes reflect real evolutions in masculinities and prevent male sitcom characters from becoming dated, such as their move away from nuclear families. Other changes demonstrate a complex relationship between the representation and reality of masculinity, and I argue that understanding the conditions under which sitcoms are produced, as well as their content, helps us unpack this relationship.

**KEYWORDS** MASCULINITY, MEDIA STUDIES, SITCOMS, CULTURAL SOCIOLOGY, CULTURE INDUSTRY

Common wisdom holds that representations of masculinity in sitcoms have changed substantially since the beginning of the television era. While 1950s sitcom fathers like Ward Cleaver and Ozzy Nelson are remembered as wise and loving patriarchs, modern sitcom men are often selfish, dependent, or otherwise flawed (Reimers, 2003; Scharrer, 2001). Some scholars suggest that evolving representations of masculinity on television reflect the evolution of masculinity in real life (Douglas & Olson, 1995; Scharrer). But has masculinity in sitcoms really changed, or is this view distorted by nostalgia and selective cultural memory? In what ways do modern representations of masculinity differ from those in 1950s sitcoms, and in what ways are they unchanged? Furthermore, how do representations of masculinity in the sitcom universe map onto or disconnect from North American masculinities?

Many studies provide in-depth analyses of particular aspects of masculinity in a few sitcoms (see Hanke, 1998; Linder, 2005; McEachern, 1999). Yet, there is also a need to understand *generally* how masculinity is represented in sitcoms, and how that representation has or has not changed. Furthermore, many studies relate television characters to social contexts as if the former is an unproblematic representation of the latter (see Klumas & Marchant, 1994). However,

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no form of culture is mirror. Sitcoms, like any cultural object, are shaped by the societies in which they emerge, but also by the specific people, processes, and industries that produce them (Alexander, 2003; Griswold, 1981), and understanding the production processes can provide a deeper understanding of the points at which representation and reality connect and diverge.

I use a content analysis of randomly sampled popular sitcoms from two time periods, 1955-1960 and 2000-2005, to address the question: how, if at all, have portrayals of masculinity in sitcoms changed from the 1950s to the present day? I find that men in sitcoms have not changed as much as common wisdom may suggest. Their family structures have changed to keep up with real demographic changes and they have largely abandoned behaviors that would make them appear outdated, such as a formal politeness and unidirectional displays of authority. However, men in modern sitcoms are more similar overall to men in 1950s sitcoms than they are different.

I also argue that a thorough understanding of the few observed changes requires an analysis of both North American masculinities and the incentives and constraints of the television industry. Some changes in culturally available ways of doing masculinity are taken up fairly unproblematically in the sitcom universe, but others are transformed or not taken up at all. Understanding the processes by which sitcoms are produced sheds light on why and how images of masculinity in sitcoms take the forms that they do.

This overall picture of how men are portrayed in sitcoms is significant because media images fundamentally shape the social contexts in which individuals act. Whether we understand media images as texts that organize discourse and local social relations (Smith, 1989) or as "symbolic resources" that people strategically apply to their own lives (Swidler, 1986), the point is the same: media portrayals of men provide models that individual men can emulate or reject, and that shape culturally available standards to which men may be held accountable (West & Zimmerman, 1987). My purpose here is to describe the most widespread ways in which masculinity is represented in sitcoms, as the mass-oriented nature and cultural availability of these images puts them in a likely position to shape men's enactment of masculinity in reality (Schudson, 1989).

#### SITCOMS AS A FUNHOUSE MIRROR

Cultural sociologists largely agree that culture is not a mirror into which researchers can gaze to learn about society. Although some have argued that cultural and artistic works express the *zeitgeist* of a society (see Alexander, 2003, for a summary and critique of such arguments), many scholars show that any such expression is heavily mediated by the industries in which culture is produced and consumed. Griswold (1981) shows that the solitary, adventuring hero associated with classic American literature may reflect a nascent American spirit, as is commonly argued; however, it also reflects copyright laws that encouraged American writers to produce novels whose plots and characters differed from those in European literature. Similarly, Radway (1984) provides a nuanced analysis of how the romance novel cohered as a genre, explaining

how its form and content were shaped, besides evolving gender roles, by technical advances in book publishing and marketing.

Culture-producing industries clearly shape how social realities are taken up, transformed by, and presented in cultural works. In short, they distort cultural objects' reflection of society; however, this distortion occurs in patterned, predictable ways. Alexander suggests the metaphor of a funhouse mirror, whose reflection is "systematically" distorting, which suggests that it is amenable to study" (2003, p. 34). By analyzing the conditions under which a sitcom or novel was produced, we can consider what those conditions might have contributed to the form and content of the finished product. A thorough analysis of male sitcom characters therefore requires an understanding of North American masculinity, and the demands and constraints of the television industry.

#### THE TELEVISION INDUSTRY AND SITCOM PRODUCTION

Sitcoms are mass-market commodities whose primary purpose is profit. They are part of what has been called the "culture industry," where cultural objects "are no longer *also* commodities, they are commodities through and through" (Adorno, 1975, p. 14). Television networks profit from sitcoms by airing programs with mass appeal and attracting large audiences, which allows them to generate advertising revenue (Gitlin, 2000, p. 25; Mittell, 2003, p. 44). The details of this process have evolved as the television industry has developed—for example, some stations have abandoned mass marketing for niche marketing or "narrowcasting" (Gitlin, p. 329)—but the underlying structures and incentives remain unchanged. Other forms of visual, story-based media allow for multiple motives; film studios may produce both profitable blockbusters and critically acclaimed but commercially unsuccessful films (Baumann, 2001). In contrast, unprofitable television rarely survives on aesthetic merit (Bielby & Bielby, 1994).

The profit motive creates incentives for television producers to create male sitcom characters that are relatable to viewers. This encourages audiences to emotionally engage with the characters and tune in every week (Gitlin, 2000, p. 65; Mayerle, 1994, p. 105). Because mass audiences are heterogeneous by definition, men in sitcoms cannot resemble most viewers in terms of demographic factors like age, marital status, or ethnicity. They are instead made realistic through the everyday issues that they face and their reactions (Moore, Bensman, & Van Dyke, 2006, p. 171). We may not all live in large blended families like the Brady Bunch, but can nevertheless relate to the sibling squabbles and school troubles that the children encounter. Even sitcoms like *Mork & Mindy*, *Alf*, and *Gilligan's Island* that have far-fetched premises deal with widely relatable issues like romance and family dynamics.

Once a technique such as realism succeeds it is rarely varied, as television production is highly ritualized. Other visual, story-based mediums such as film and theatre can take years to develop and present a finished product, but a television series must produce multiple episodes per year. This is only possible because of an "assembly line" style of production that leaves little time for experimentation (Kubey, 2004, p. 10; Mittell, 2003, pp. 45-46).

Even if the pace of television production allowed innovation, it would not necessarily pay off. Most industry actors strongly prefer content that is familiar, even repetitive (Bielby & Bielby, 1994; Kubey, 2004, p. 10). Advertisers are hesitant to back new shows that audiences might not like, networks avoid purchasing shows that audiences and advertisers might not support, and studios often avoid developing shows that will be difficult to sell to networks. Advertisers, networks, and studios may hope for the payoff that comes with a unique groundbreaking hit; however, such hits are so rare and so difficult to predict that “blatant imitation” is more common than innovation (Bielby & Bielby; Gitlin, 2000, p. 65). This desire for a genre-busting hit, combined with the tendency to model new shows on past successes, creates cycles of “innovation, imitation, saturation” (Mittell, 2003, p. 48). When one show is successful, other networks run imitations or variations until the trend is no longer interesting to audiences or profitable.

This tendency toward imitation promotes reliance on stock characters and stock humor, which are based on “formulas that prescribe format, themes, premises, characterization” and other key elements (Bielby & Bielby, 1994, p. 1292). These formulas allow writers, actors, and directors to create sitcoms at the necessary fast pace, and also allow audiences to quickly and easily understand what they see (Becker, 1982). Formulas function as shorthand allowing writers and producers to convey detailed ideas succinctly. The “blue-collar slob” is a complex idea that invokes issues of gender, social class, and occupational status; however, in a sitcom the entire idea can be communicated in a single belch.

The most important convention in the sitcom genre is humor, and television norms such as realistic characters are often enacted only to the extent that they do not violate this rule (Frazer & Frazer, 1993, p. 165). Accordingly, many traits, such as incompetence or anger, are regularly exaggerated for comic effect. The “working-class buffoon,” for example, is a comic staple (Scharrer, 2001, p. 24). When these traits are exaggerated regularly enough, they lead to easily recognizable “stock” characters (Dalton & Linder, 2005, p. 8) that become crucial to the sitcom genre, such as the “hen-pecked husband” like Al Bundy (Kervin, 1990, p. 216), the “mock-macho” like Tim Taylor or Hayden Fox (Hanke, 1998; Klumas & Marchant, 1994), or the “hothead” like Danny Williams or Ralph Kramden (Kutulas, 2005b).

The formulas of the sitcom genre also lead to stock humor: themes and situations that are recycled and repeated in different contexts. Certain types of comedy, such as the husband who rebels against his wife’s nagging to do something foolish and immature, are “so deeply ingrained in our culture that audiences still respond to them, and writers hardly know what to write without them” (Frazer & Frazer, 1993, p. 172). Overall, the television industry provides sitcom writers and producers with incentives to develop male sitcom characters that are realistic and relatable to audiences. However, the formulas of the sitcom genre may mitigate this realism by encouraging writers and producers to develop exaggeratedly comical characters that resemble well-known, culturally available “stock” characters.

## NORTH AMERICAN MASCULINITY IN THE TELEVISION ERA

The tendency toward realistic characters in the sitcom genre makes it particularly important to consider how masculinity is understood in the social and cultural context where sitcoms are produced. However, understanding masculinity does not mean elaborating a singular, coherent image of masculinity; gender scholars argue that multiple masculinities are culturally available at any given time (Kimmel, 2006), although only a few are dominant or "hegemonic" (Connell, 2005) and function as ideals. In West and Zimmerman's (1987) terms, there are multiple, evolving ways of "doing" masculinity, some more culturally resonant than others.

The meaning and practice of masculinity also varies significantly by social location. Intersectional theorists importantly point out that gender has different meanings for men of different races, religions, sexualities, nationalities, ethnicities, and classes (Stasiulis, 1999). However, as the images of masculinity presented in the popular sitcoms in this sample overwhelmingly focus on White, secular, heterosexual, North American masculinity, so will the following discussion and this project generally.

North American masculinity has undergone substantial changes in the twentieth century (Gerson, 1993; Kimmel, 2006), and many of these changes interestingly occurred near the beginning of the television era. Beginning with industrialization and lasting until around the 1950s, dominant ways of doing masculinity tended to center on breadwinning, providing for a family, and exercising authority within that family (Kimmel, 2006; Morgan, 2004; Rose, 1991). Not all men enacted masculinity in this way or achieved this ideal, but all men benefited from the social dominance that it conferred (Connell, 2005).

Beginning in the mid-1900s, social changes challenged both dominant conceptions of masculinity and men's privileged status. Two world wars and a shifting economic climate upset men's ability to provide for their families, disrupting their status as breadwinners (Kimmel, 2006). Technological development led to a shift from a (masculine) production-based to a (feminine) service-oriented economy reducing the number of available quality, unionized men's jobs (Creese, 1993; Luxton & Corman, 2001). Women and minority groups gained political and legal rights, and moved into traditional male spheres such as workplaces and politics. Collectively, these changes have been described as a "crisis of masculinity" (Kimmel, 2006, p. 81), as older ways of doing masculinity were no longer culturally resonant and new images of masculinity developed, evolving in multiple divergent directions (Doyle, 1984; Kimmel, 2006). Many of these images are evident in the media today.

Some men experience these changes in available masculinities as a loss of privilege. In many such cases, masculinity has been redefined by anger and victimization, a phenomenon that Savran (1998) calls "white male backlash." Some men redefine masculinity by simultaneously embracing and rejecting the role of a victim, claiming persecution by "feminazis," minorities, and special interest groups who they believe have taken what is rightfully theirs (Savran, 1998). These men "feel themselves besieged, their entitlement thwarted, their stature belittled" (Kimmel, 2006, p. 218). They cling to older, breadwinner-ori-

ented images of masculinity, expecting to provide for a family and becoming frustrated when quality jobs are not available and their expectations are thwarted.

This reconstructed masculinity appears in the media as the angry White male. Eminem, a popular musician, still presents himself as a victim despite his considerable financial success (Kimmel, 2006, p. 233). Others “like Rush Limbaugh, Mike Savage, and a host of other radio hosts ... lash out at everyone else as the source of their woes” (Kimmel, p. 217). Brayton (2007) explains how White male backlash is enacted in MTV’s *Jackass*; the show’s sadomasochistic, self-deprecating stunts are a de-privileged White man’s attempt at failure on his own terms. Stunts like eating a “vomit omelette” and giving oneself a “bungee wedgie” — which are exactly what they sound like — allow the perpetrators to disempower themselves “before the multicultural or feminist Other is given the opportunity” (Brayton, p. 62). The angry White man thus regains some degree of power in his perceived powerlessness.

White male backlash appears in sitcoms through subtle suggestions of victimization. It is seen in the “hen-pecked husband” (Kervin, 1990, p. 216) or the husband who is “fearfully respectful” of his wife (Reimers, 2003, p. 117), such as Ray Barone of *Everybody Loves Raymond*, or Hal of *Malcolm in the Middle*. Other sitcom characters, like Ralph Kramden, simply work hard but never seem to get ahead. Sometimes, themes of victimization are more explicit. In *Married...with Children*, Al Bundy regularly complains that his family sees him as a meal ticket (Kervin, 1990).

Another reconstruction of masculinity is based on a rejection of adulthood and the responsibilities associated with family life. While the breadwinning role was culturally defined as a path to adulthood and masculinity in the early 1900s, some modern men come to view it as a burden (Ehrenreich, 1983; Gerson, 1993). Many men thus began a “flight from commitment” (Ehrenreich) by rejecting marriage and adulthood, avoiding responsibility within family life, or focusing on careers that provide them with personal autonomy (Gerson). This way of doing masculinity focuses on maintaining autonomy and individuality in the face of normative structures (Gardiner, 2000).

This masculinity sometimes appears in the media as men enacting the traditional breadwinning role while behaving like overgrown children, such as Homer Simpson, or who explicitly refuse to function as adults, such as Lester Burnham in the 1999 film *American Beauty*. Gardiner shows how this childish masculinity is reflected in the TV show *South Park* and the performing art troupe *The Blue Man Group*, who exhibit “anality in their raucous delight in noise, mess, evacuation, and expulsion” (Gardiner, 2000, p. 252). This refusal to accept adulthood, he argues, is a rejection of “the impersonal, overarching authority of the law of the father and ... the more seductive, amorphous, and relentless power of corporate advertising” (p. 252).

This anti-adult male role also appears in sitcoms. The theme of male childishness that must constantly contend with female authority is a standard sitcom formula (Frazer & Frazer, 1993, p. 170); for example, Tim Taylor’s ill-advised attempts to add “more power” to various household tools are checked by his realist wife. This masculinity is also seen in characters like Jack McFarland on

*Will and Grace*, Joey Tribiani on *Friends*, and Jerry Seinfeld on *Seinfeld*, who reject traditional markers of adulthood and responsibility, such as marriage, steady jobs, and children. Instead, their lives involve multiple sexual partners and self-directed work; all three of these characters are self-employed as actors or comedians.

Interestingly, other men redefine masculinity in precisely the opposite way, through caring and emotional commitment to fatherhood. Rather than modeling themselves after the financially supportive but emotionally absent breadwinner, some men downplay the significance of their paid work and instead invest their time and energy in raising their children (Doucet, 2006; Gerson, 1993). Working-class men in particular emphasize their ability to make ends meet in economically challenging times, but also their ability to empathize with others and teach their children right from wrong (Lamont, 2000). Even Hochschild's (1989) classic work on the division of labor in American households found a substantial minority of men who prioritized their marriages and children ahead of their careers. Interestingly, many of the fathers in Hochschild's and Lamont's studies who embodied this type of masculinity were Black men, contrary to stereotypes of Black absentee fathers.

Another North American reconstruction of masculinity is "metrosexuality" (Kimmel, 2006), which allows men to reclaim their lost social status through consumerism and purchasing power. Shows like *Sex and the City* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, and "chick flicks" like *My Best Friend's Wedding* promote an urban, polished masculinity that equates manhood with consumption through expensive personal care, fashionable clothes, and other luxury items (Kimmel, pp. 224-225). Metrosexuality is a particularly interesting reconstruction of masculinity, as consumption is typically associated with femininity (Gardiner, 2000). The man who is overly concerned about his appearance "occupies a feminized position, since he must be the object of the gaze" rather than an agentic subject (Weber, 2006, p. 288). In sitcoms, metrosexuality often blends with homosexuality to the point where the two are indistinguishable; some of the few characters who enact this kind of masculinity are Will Truman and Jack McFarland of *Will and Grace*, both gay characters.

In short, the meanings of masculinity have undergone drastic changes between the two time periods studied here, and these changes provide the cultural context in which sitcom writers and producers must navigate what they consider realistic, relatable representations of masculinity. The question of precisely how the sitcom industry negotiates, interprets, and represents this context is still an open one.

#### THE MODERN SITCOM MAN: POTENTIAL DIRECTIONS

Overall, there was stronger social consensus on what it meant to be a man in the 1950s, even if not all men lived up to ideals of masculinity (Kimmel, 2006; Rose, 1992). In contrast, there is considerably more uncertainty about what masculinity means in the latter half of the twentieth century (Gerson, 1993), which provides context for the sitcoms from 2000-2005. I would therefore expect more varied representations of masculinity in the later time period sampled, and the appearance of newly permissible behaviors like consumption,

femininity, and emotional engagement in fatherhood. Yet the argument that men are still reacting to a loss of breadwinner status and its associated privilege leads to many questions about how masculinity is portrayed in sitcoms in the 1950s and today. Have men in sitcoms today become angrier, or more likely to present themselves as victims compared to men in sitcoms in the 1950s? Connell's, Doyle's, and Kimmel's work would suggest this. However, exaggerated anger and victimization are part of the formulas of the sitcom genre, so masculinity in 1950s sitcoms may have been represented through anger and victimization as well.

Similarly, if men's social status is no longer assured, has men's status in sitcoms changed to reflect this? Do men in modern sitcoms assert authority less frequently than men in 1950s sitcoms, and are they more often subject to others' authority? Are they treated less respectfully? Some work points in this direction (Reimers, 2003; Kutulas, 2005b). In an analysis of joke-telling in sitcoms, Scharrer (2001, p. 27) argues that early sitcom fathers were largely exempt from ridicule due to their roles as breadwinners and authority figures; however, sitcom fathers are now considered "fair game" as the butt of others' jokes. If men in sitcoms have become potential targets of ridicule where they were not before, are they now more likely to be portrayed negatively—for example, to be shown as stupid, immature, or lazy—compared to men in 1950s sitcoms?

Furthermore, which images of masculinity are generally present in the sitcom universe, and which are absent? Do all of the newly available ways of doing masculinity—through consumption and fatherhood, for example—appear in sitcoms, or are some privileged over others? How can we understand this presence and absence?

## METHODS

### *Coding System*

The coding system for this study was developed inductively. Taking the preceding questions and issues as a starting point, I used a non-random trial sample of sitcoms to develop codes that captured observable behaviors. This trial sample included sitcoms from all available time periods to avoid biasing the coding system toward one era. The finished coding system describes one male character in one sitcom episode. It includes three sections. The first section collects demographic information, the second section codes the character's behaviors, and the third section codes the character's interactions with others. After testing and finalizing the coding system on the trial sample, I applied it to the research sample.

Although the codebook includes a definition for each construct and examples of indicators for each code, no qualitative coding system can predict every kind of content that might occur in the data. When it was unclear whether I should code a behavior or event, I attempted to determine what was intended by the sitcom creators, considering the context in which the behavior or interaction occurred. One construct recorded whether the character was portrayed as refined/upper-class, shown through behaviors like enjoyment of fine wines

and highbrow culture, or whether he was portrayed as unrefined/working-class, shown through traditionally lowbrow behavior like weight lifting, drinking beer, and watching sports. This raised an important question: how explicit must a behavior be before it is coded? Is drinking beer and watching football unrefined, even if the show makes no reference to class? I often decided to apply the code. Decisions about sitcom characters' actions and lifestyles are not made haphazardly; producers scrutinize, market-test, and tweak almost every detail (Gitlin, 2000) so that everything that a character does contributes to his intended image. Accordingly, in most cases it *is* significant that a character is shown drinking beer and watching sports rather than golfing, shopping, playing polo, or doing something else.

### *Sampling*

This study uses a random sample of sitcoms that appeared in Neilson's top 20 ratings from the 1955-1960 and 2000-2005 seasons. A "situation comedy" or sitcom is defined as a show with a 30-minute run-time, laugh track, and scripted, narrative storyline that continued from episode to episode. A random sample of 35 episodes was taken from each time period, for a total of 70 episodes.<sup>1</sup> Once an episode was sampled, I coded the first adult male cast member (that is, not a walk-on or minor recurring character) to take a verbal turn.

A strength of this sampling method is that it targets sitcoms that were popular when first airing, rather than sitcoms that became popular in reruns or on DVD. This ensures that the representations of masculinity in these sitcoms reflect what resonated with (and therefore, was likely considered realistic by) audiences at the time, rather than what resonated with audiences in later time periods that adopted them. *The Brady Bunch*, for example, never appeared among Neilson's top-20 rated shows during its original run in 1969 and the early 1970s; it did not become popular until later in syndication. The focus on mass programming and only the most popular sitcoms is also appropriate for this study's purpose of describing the most widespread, culturally available representations of masculinity.

### DATA

The data includes 6 shows from each time period, for a total of 12 unique shows. From 1955-1960, the sample includes: *Father Knows Best*, *I Love Lucy*, *Make Room for Daddy*, *Private Secretary*, *The Real McCoys*, and *The Honeymooners*. From 2000-2005, the sample includes: *Becker*, *Everybody Loves Raymond*, *Frasier*, *Friends*, *Two and a Half Men*, and *Will and Grace*. Because many sitcoms had more

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<sup>1</sup> I excluded one show from the 1950s, *December Bride*, because no episodes from any season were available and selected replacement episodes from the other series in the sample. For two other shows, *Father Knows Best* and *Becker*, the episodes selected were not yet available and were replaced with randomly selected episodes from the closest available season. This avoided excluding those shows entirely, and likely had a minimal impact on the data as the portrayal of a given sitcom character tends to be "consistent across episodes within a single program" (Scharrer, 2001, p. 32).

than one adult male character, more than 12 unique male characters are included in this sample: 8 from 1955-1960, and 12 from 2000-2005.

## FINDINGS

### *Demographic Data: Changes in Family Structure*

This first section captures information about the characters' marital status, number of children, and race/ethnicity. It shows that obvious changes have occurred in male sitcom characters' family structure. Men in 1950s sitcoms are overwhelmingly married with children, while men in sitcoms in the early 2000s are overwhelmingly childless and romantically available; that is, single, separated, or divorced (see Tables 1 and 2).

These tables even under-represent this trend. Children in the 1950s sitcoms in this sample typically appeared in every episode and were central figures in the plot, such as the Anderson children in *Father Knows Best* and the Williams children in *Make Room for Daddy*. The only 1950s child that was not a key character was Little Ricky in *I Love Lucy*, who appeared on screen only briefly and infrequently. Today, the child who is central to a sitcom plot is the exception, not the rule. Even though *Everybody Loves Raymond* is primarily set in the Barone family home and the family has three children, the children are rarely seen onscreen and are usually assumed to be upstairs or at school. Similarly, male characters on *Frasier*, *Friends*, and *Will and Grace* have children who live primarily with custodial mothers, outside of the sitcoms' social universe, and are rarely seen or mentioned onscreen. The exception in 2000-2005 is Jake Harper, the son on *Two and a Half Men*, who appears in every episode and is central to the show's titular plot.

Table 1  
*Marital Status*

Time Period	Single	Married	Separated/ Divorced	Widowed	Total
1955-1960	3 (8.6%)	30 (85.7%)	0 (0.0%)	2 (5.7%)	35 (100%)
2000-2005	17 (48.7%)	9 (25.7%)	9 (25.7%)	0 (0.0%)	35 (100%)
Total	20 (28.6%)	39 (55.7%)	9 (12.9)	2 (2.9%)	70 (100%)

Table 2  
*Number of Children*

Time Period	0	1	2	3	Total
1955-1960	10 (28.6%)	4 (5.7%)	0 (0.0%)	21 (60.0%)	35 (100%)
2000-2005	19 (54.3%)	11 (31.4%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (14.3%)	35 (100%)
Total	29 (41.4%)	15 (21.4%)	0 (0.0%)	26 (37.1%)	70 (100%)

On the surface, these changes are a simple reflection of demographic trends. North Americans are marrying later, having fewer children, and divorcing more often compared to the 1950s. Because sitcom characters must engage audiences by dealing with realistic social issues, sitcom creators must respond to viewers' changing social realities. We can therefore understand this change by considering both social reality and the sitcom industry.

However, these changes also demonstrate something more. While most 1950s sitcoms were truly family sitcoms (with the exception of *Private Secretary*, which is set in the office of a Hollywood talent agent and revolves around his relationship with his female secretary), most of the 2000-2005 sitcoms focus on individuals. 1950s sitcoms revolved around nuclear families or approximations thereof, such as married couples who have yet to conceive (the Kramdens on *The Honeymooners*) or reconstructed families (*Make Room for Daddy*, which involves remarriage after the death of a spouse; *The Real McCoys*, where three children live with a grandparent). However, the sitcoms in the 2000-2005 sample focus on individuals who may or may not be related, and who may or may not live together. Adult siblings, who effectively function as friends, are often more important to sitcoms' plot than children. In fact, in three of the six shows sampled from this time period have adult siblings as main characters (Ray and Robert Barone on *Everybody Loves Raymond*; Niles and Frasier Crane on *Frasier*; Ross and Monica Gellar on *Friends*). Other sitcoms revolve around individuals who are not related at all, such as *Will and Grace* and *Becker* which center on a group of friends and coworkers, respectively. These changes suggest that the basic social unit in the sitcom universe is no longer the family but the individual.

Research suggests that as many men are turning *away* from enacting masculinity through breadwinning, some are turning *toward* two opposing alternatives: personal and emotional engagement in work as a means to autonomy and financial freedom (Gerson, 1993), and disengagement from work in favor of emotional investment in fatherhood and family life (Hochschild, 1989; Lamont, 2000). Yet, the focus on individuals rather than families as the basic social unit suggests that sitcoms prioritize and privilege the autonomy-centric rather than family-oriented images of masculinity; the latter are in fact conspicuously absent. The sitcoms in 2000-2005 emphasize men's careers and dating lives rather than their roles as fathers. Frasier Crane, for example, is shown at his job as a radio psychologist in virtually every episode in this sample, and with a potential or actual romantic partner in approximately half of the episodes; however, his son never appears and is infrequently mentioned.

Interestingly, family-oriented masculinity seemed more prevalent in the sample of sitcoms from 1955-1960, even though literature on masculinity in this period tends to emphasize fathers as economic providers rather than sources of emotional support. Jim Anderson (*Father Knows Best*) and Danny Williams (*Make Room for Daddy*) were frequently shown in activities that demonstrate emotional engagement with their families, like playing baseball or building derby cars with their children. In fact, children's misadventures and fathers' solutions were a recurring plot device. Although both men were also shown at

Table 3  
Race

Time Period	White	Latino	Total
1955-1960	31 (88.6%)	4 (11.4%)	35 (100%)
2000-2005	35 (100.0%)	0 (0.0%)	35 (100%)
Total	66 (94.3%)	4 (5.7%)	70 (100%)

their jobs (an insurance salesman and a nightclub entertainer, respectively), their domestic life was usually more important than their careers.

What could motivate the sitcom industry to favor representations of family-oriented masculinity in 1955-1960, and autonomous masculinity in 2000-2005? Along with others, I suggest that sitcoms represent *ideals* of masculinity (Frazer & Frazer, 1993; Reimers, 2003) more so than what most men actually do. Even if many men in the 1950s left the emotional work of raising children up to women, the ideal father was a wise, loving patriarch who provided moral guidance for his family (Reimers). In contrast, even though many men today are actively engaged in fatherhood and some even exit paid work to be primary caregivers, (Doucet, 2006; Gerson, 1993, 2010), this is not a particularly strong or culturally available ideal. In fact, the modern middle-class rhetoric of self-realization actively discourages adults (both men and women) from sacrificing themselves for their children (McMahon, 1995, p. 2). It is this individualistic, middle-class ideal that gets taken up and presented in sitcoms, as men are largely shown as autonomous, self-actualizing agents pursuing personal happiness. Clearly, this is a complex process of representation that involves understanding both social reality, and the ways that the sitcom industry transforms and represents that reality (see Table 3).

This study finds no change in the racial diversity of male sitcom characters. At the beginning of the television era only Ricky Ricardo, a Cuban character, broke the color barrier. There was no increase in racial diversity in sitcoms in the 2000s; the most ethnically diverse characters were Joey Tribiani and Robert and Raymond Barone, whose Italian heritage is central to their characters. Only one show, *Becker*, had a non-White adult male cast member who was eligible to be coded, but he did not take the first verbal turn in any sampled episodes. Racially diverse sitcoms were being made from 2000-2005 but were not popular enough to rank among Neilson's top 20, possibly because many of them aired on specialty channels like UPN.<sup>2</sup> This clearly does not reflect reality, as the mainstream sitcom universe provides no representations of non-White masculinities when North American society is becoming increasingly diverse. This is likely explained by factors in the television industry, lying beyond the scope of the present study.

<sup>2</sup> These include *Girlfriends*, *The Parkers*, *The Bernie Mac Show*, *Whoopi*, *Eve*, *That's So Raven*.

*Men's Behaviors*

The codes in this section capture the ways a male sitcom character behaves. Table 4 indicates the average number of times per episode that a character displays a given behavior. For example, the first row indicates that male sitcom characters enacted "self-deprecating" behaviors an average of 0.89 times per episode in 1955-1960, and an average of 1.86 times per episode in 2000-2005. Codes are not mutually exclusive; one behavior or incident can be coded multiple ways (see Table 4).

Strikingly, few differences were found between 1955-1960 and 2000-2005. Many kinds of humor and behaviors do not appear to have changed: stupidity, machismo, self-confidence, and self-deprecation are equally as common in the 1950s and 2000. This is somewhat surprising, as literature on masculinity documents the decreasing significance of men as breadwinners and family heads (Gerson, 1993; Kimmel, 2006). We might therefore expect that men in sitcoms today need no longer signal to audiences their ability to provide for a family (Reimers, 2003; Schrarrer, 2001), and therefore display fewer incidences of self-confidence and machismo and more incidences of stupidity and self-deprecation. These changes do not appear in the sitcom universe, although modern masculinity is more likely to be portrayed through immaturity.

This finding points to the complex relationship between reality and representation. Does this mean that men are not actually abandoning the bread-

Table 4

*Difference of Means Test: Personal Characteristics by Time Period (Average Number of Behaviors per Episode)*

Characteristic	1955-1960	2000-2005	T-stat.	P-value
Self-deprecating	0.89	1.86	-1.776	.080
Confident	2.23	1.31	1.494	.140
Immature	0.83	4.23	-3.938	.000*
Mature	0.80	0.89	-0.244	.808
Positive attitudes toward authority	0.31	0.34	-0.107	.915
Negative attitudes toward authority	0.00	0.03	-1.000	.321
High expectation of rewards	1.51	0.26	2.442	.017*
Low expectation of rewards	0.54	0.17	2.035	.046*
Lazy	0.09	0.00	-1.785	.079
Ambitious	0.26	0.31	-.220	.826
Stupid	0.57	1.09	-1.325	.190
Intelligent	0.43	0.77	-1.114	.269
Unrefined	2.11	0.03	1.811	.075
Refined	0.37	0.60	-.647	.520
Macho	0.34	0.26	.424	.673
Effeminate	0.00	3.63	-3.730	.000*

\* code reaches statistical significance.

winner role? Does it mean that the breadwinner ideal persists even if the enactment is no longer a reality for many men? The data presented here cannot answer these questions, as studying media representations does not straightforwardly map onto the society from which those representations emerge (Alexander, 2003). However, a key feature of the sitcom industry sheds light on this stability in representation: the genre's hallmark imperative of humor. All of the aforementioned behaviors are commonly exaggerated to make audiences laugh. Self-confidence and machismo can become comic overconfidence and buffoonery, and stupidity and self-deprecation characterize a familiar stock character: the endearing but foolish oaf. Sitcom producers therefore have incentives to portray and exaggerate *all* of these behaviors in *both* time periods. Representational continuity may not tell us much about masculinity in reality, but it tells us something about how masculinity is transformed and presented at the site of mass mediation.

One significant difference is that 2000-2005 male sitcom characters are portrayed as effeminate an average of 3.63 times per episode, a strikingly emergent style of behavior never occurring in the 1955-1960 sample. This code was most often applied to gay characters, such as Will Truman and Jack McFarland of *Will and Grace*, whose language and behaviors are clearly intended to evoke femininity. However, this code was occasionally applied to heterosexual characters, most often Frasier and Niles Crane, who were shown doing stereotypically feminine things like jumping on a chair to avoid mice and refusing to fix a car engine because they did not want to get their hands dirty.

A preliminary reading of this change may suggest that gay and feminine masculinities did not appear in 1950s because they were not widely considered acceptable, but are now considered mainstream enough to become culturally available as sitcom images. In Connell's (2000) terms, gay and effeminate masculinities may have evolved from "subordinated" to "complicit" masculinities, which are not themselves dominant or hegemonic and do not actively challenge hegemonic masculinities. Interestingly, qualitative evidence points to the continuing devaluation of these gay/feminine masculinities, despite their novel appearance in the sitcom universe: a laugh track was activated virtually every time I applied this code, suggesting that these masculinities are objects of ridicule. This consistent activation of the laugh track did not occur with other codes: for example, men often made self-confident or self-deprecating statements without the cueing of laughter. But when Niles and Frasier Crane do not want to get their hands dirty to inspect a car engine, or when Jack McFarland prances into a room in a manner clearly intended to highlight his femininity, the audience is explicitly invited to laugh at them.

Another key issue is that gay/feminine masculinities (even if devalued) received increasing representation in the later time period, while non-White masculinities did not. The reasons for this likely lie in the structure, incentives, and constraints of the television industry. Black sitcoms like *The Cosby Show*, *The Jeffersons*, *Ahem*, and *Fresh Prince of Bel-Air* consistently appeared in Neilson's top 20 ratings throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s. However, by 1994 Black sitcoms had disappeared from the top 20 rated shows and did not return until after 2005. Why did this occur? Perhaps sitcom producers took this de-

creasing popularity in the early 1990s as evidence of Black sitcoms' "saturation" (Mittell, 2003), invested less in their development and promotion, and relegated them to specialty channels like UPN, thus rendering Black masculinities invisible in the most popular sitcom programming. In apparent contrast, gay/feminine masculinities in 2000-2005 may be in an earlier phase of the "innovation, imitation, saturation" cycle (Mittell). However, regardless of the factors shaping the presence of gay/feminine masculinities and absence of non-White masculinities, the consequences are the same: non-White masculinities are symbolically excluded from the sitcom universe in 2000-2005, while gay masculinities are treated as viable, if subordinate, subject positions.

### *Interpersonal Relations*

The codes in this section capture the ways male sitcom characters interact with other characters. Like the codes in the preceding section, they are not mutually exclusive. The numbers in the table below report the average number of times per episode that an indicator for a code was present. For example, the first row indicates that male sitcom characters experienced victimization by a specific Other an average of 0.97 times per episode in 1955-1960 and 1.49 times per episode in 2000-2005 (see Table 5).

Table 5  
*Difference of Means Test: Male Sitcom Characters' Interpersonal Relations (Average Number of Interactions per Episode)*

Behavior	1955-1960	2000-2005	T-stat.	P-value
Experiences victimization by a specific other	0.97	1.49	-.935	.353
Experiences victimization by a general other	0.74	0.46	1.054	.297
Expresses anger toward a specific other	5.63	4.77	.689	.494
Expresses anger toward a general other	0.83	0.37	.915	.366
Is the target of someone else's anger	3.11	2.97	.143	.887
Asserts authority	14.41	5.83	5.162	.000*
Is subject to others' authority	7.78	5.66	1.687	.093
Is respectful to others	8.19	3.17	5.929	.000*
Is disrespectful to others	15.59	12.71	1.234	.224
Is treated respectfully by others	7.50	3.77	3.378	.002*
Is treated disrespectfully by others	10.38	11.03	-.350	.730
Expresses enjoyment of his family	0.49	0.09	1.632	.107
Expresses resentment toward his family	0.34	0.26	.374	.710
Expresses an emotional attachment to others	2.97	2.60	.517	.607
Expresses no emotional attachment where it would normally be expected	0.17	1.23	-3.137	.003*

\* code reaches statistical significance.

Again, there are few apparent differences between the 1950s and the 2000s. Male characters in both eras are equally likely to be victimized, express anger, experience someone else's anger, be disrespectful to others, and be treated disrespectfully. Whether or not ways of enacting masculinity in real life are more likely today to involve anger and victimization (Brayton, 2007; Gardiner, 2000), the sitcom formulas in which male characters participate remain largely unchanged.

Male sitcom characters in the 1950s asserted authority an average of over 14 times per episode; in contrast, male characters after 2000 asserted authority on average less than 6 times per episode, a significant difference. This is a fairly clear example of how male sitcom characters must evolve to avoid becoming outdated and unrealistic. As women gain authority in workplaces and families, it is likely that authoritarian masculinity no longer resonates with audiences. By giving male characters large amounts of authority, sitcom writers and producers risk signaling to their audiences that they are out of touch.

Interestingly, although no differences are found in interactions signaling disrespect, male sitcom characters in the 1950s were more likely to be respectful to others, *and* to be treated respectfully. This change is likely shaped by changing standards of decorum rather than evolutions in culturally acceptable images of masculinity. Meyrowitz (1985) argues that barriers between our frontstage and backstage selves have eroded as behaviors and opinions that would have previously been kept private, such as pertaining to sexuality or personal failures, are now considered an acceptable part of a person's public self. Media such as reality television and daytime talk shows provide a confessional forum where guests can chronicle their battles with drug abuse, sexual deviance, mental disorder, and other deeply personal topics in a public forum (Gamson, 1999). In this cultural context where failure and personal struggle are routinely on public display, I argue that sitcom characters who display the more reserved, formal politeness of the 1950s by being consistently *respectful* and *respected* are no longer relatable. They are unable to emotionally engage audiences in the ways that sitcom producers require, and appear less frequently onscreen.

This finding is important for suggesting that apparent changes in representations of masculinity may not have much to do with masculinity. Both male and female characters in the 2000s are more frequently portrayed as having deep-seated personal troubles. Chandler Bing (*Friends*) has persistent self-esteem issues, Alan and Charlie Harper (*Two and a Half Men*) have long-running trouble relating to women, and John Becker (*Becker*) is a misanthrope; however, Monica Gellar (*Friends*) has issues with perfectionism and control, and Roz (*Frasier*) has issues relating to men. In contrast, both men's and women's character flaws in the 1950s were portrayed as relatively minor foibles: Ralph Kramden's (*The Honeymooners*) quick temper often got him into trouble, and Lucy Ricardo (*I Love Lucy*) was constantly scheming to get into show business with her husband. These examples highlight that understanding the contingency of gender's significance as analytic topos importantly refers to the industries in which culture is produced.

## CONCLUSION

This study has attempted to paint a broad picture of the representations of masculinity available in the sitcom universe from 2000-2005. It has also asked how, if at all, modern representations of masculinity differ from those in sitcoms from 1955-1960. Overall, male sitcom characters have changed little since the 1950s. Some of the observed changes are fairly straightforwardly explained, allowing men in sitcoms to mirror changes in reality: their family structures have evolved away from nuclear families and they have discarded some behaviors that would make them appear dated, such as formal politeness and the unchallenged exercise of authority. However, some changes, or lack thereof, highlight fissures between masculinities and their representations. Although some men prioritize fatherhood over their careers (Doucet, 2006; Gerson, 1993; Lamont, 2000) representations of these men who enact masculinity through fatherhood are conspicuously absent; masculinity in modern sitcoms is more often associated with personal autonomy, careers, and dating. Gay and feminine masculinities did not exist in sitcoms in the late 1950s, but abound in the early 2000s; non-White masculinities are absent from this later time period despite increasing ethnic diversity in North America. Fatherhood-oriented and non-White masculinities are symbolically excluded from the sitcom universe. As sitcoms are a particularly popular, ubiquitous, and mass-oriented form of media, this absence is not trivial.

I have also argued that considering production processes in the television industry can help us understand how masculinity is transformed and represented in sitcoms. Sitcoms require realistic, relatable characters, often pushing masculinity in sitcoms to mirror changes in real life. However, the tendency to represent ideals rather than reality and the need for humorous behaviors and interactions may also lead to gaps between representations and realities.

Sitcoms, as a form of mass communication, are not trivial cultural objects. Cultural representations shape the ways that people make sense of social realities by providing narratives and logics that individuals can use to make sense of their own lives (Smith, 1989; Swidler, 1986). Individuals' meaning-making processes and subsequent actions then get taken up, transformed, and represented anew in mass media. Rather than viewing sitcoms as a unidirectional (if distorted) representation of social reality, we should rather see media and society as engaged in a dialogue. In this study, I have attempted to map out what kinds of messages are being communicated about and to one set of voices in this dialogue.

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# FROM PATHOLOGY TO CHOICE

## REGULATORY DISCOURSES AND THE HISTORIC CONFLATION OF HOMOSEXUALITY AND MALE SEX WORK

While scholarship indicates that male sex work is likely as historically entrenched as female sex work (West & DeVilliers, 1993), sex work has generally been conceived in the sociological imagination in relation to heterosexual norms, with women as the providers of the sex acts and males as the consumers or organizers of the sexual exchange. Reviewing existing literature, this paper explores the myriad discourses that have served to regulate male sex work, categorizing modes of regulation through a discursive lens. Although male sex workers were historically exempt from the formalities of the criminal justice system and regulatory techniques such as mandatory medical examinations and licensing, the prohibition of homosexuality constituted a symbolic act that discursively constructed and reinforced notions that male sex workers were sexually deviant, pathological and contributed to the spread of HIV.

**KEYWORDS** PROSTITUTION, MALE SEX WORK, REGULATION, HOMOSEXUALITY, DISCOURSE

Evoking images of females as providers of sexual fantasy and/or sex acts and of males as the consumers or organizers of the commercial exchange (Bimbi, 2007; Van der Poel, 1992), sex work has generally been conceived in relation to heterosexual norms, with social inquiry largely limited to the study of women as sex workers (Dennis, 2008; West & DeVilliers, 1993; Wilcox & Christmann, 2008). While empirical studies on male sex work only emerged within the last half century (Bimbi), it is erroneous to assume that the existence of men employing their sexuality in commercial exchange is a recent phenomenon, or that its need for regulation was never posited within the literature (Smart, 1978; West & DeVilliers). Scholarship indicates that male sex work is likely as historically entrenched as female sex work (West & DeVilliers), evidenced by accounts of men providing sexual services in ancient Greece and Rome, where, in some cases, it was licensed and taxed (Bimbi; Ringdal, 2004; West & DeVilliers).

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Although analogous to its female counterpart, the provision of sexual services by men was not always regarded as a significant social problem (Scott, 2003). Coeval the emergence of the category “adolescent” (Scott), societal conceptualizations of normative male sexuality and sexual identity developed as the exchange of sexual services by men to other men became synonymous with the problematic of homosexuality (Kaye, 2003; Scott; Weeks, 2007, 1981). The historical transformation of regulatory narratives structuring male sex work involves a complex nexus between sexual, psycho-social, medical, and most recently, labour discourses. As a means to bridge available research, this paper commences with a general outline of scholarship on male sex work, followed by an overview of concomitant regulatory discourses—sexual, psychological, medical, and labour—conceptually integrating them within broader narratives of social regulation.

#### ANALYTIC FRAMEWORK

The data presented in this article are derived from a synthesis and analysis of scholarly literature on male sex work. Following the world-systems theory geographical classification utilized by Dennis (2008), this paper focuses specifically on literature stemming from the “core” region (Western Europe, North America excluding Mexico, Australia, and New Zealand). A search was performed using Sociological Abstracts on Scholars Portal (ProQuest), a large social science database for articles in peer reviewed journals, with any of several keywords, including *male sex work*, *male prostitution*, *sex work*, *prostitution*. Given political, economic, and socio-cultural differences, articles detailing the global male sex work industry in geographic locations outside of the cited geographical purview were excluded.

Within this paper, I use the term *discourse* to refer to the different ways that “social entities and relations [are] construct[ed] or constitute[d]” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 3). Discourse, then, does not simply reflect social reality, but actively constructs it (Fairclough). Theorizing surrounding discourses, particularly their constitutive and disciplinary effects, owes much to the writings of Foucault (1978), who conceptualizes discourse as dealing with more than just words and texts, but also accounting for the “social and political context and differentials of institutional power” (McLaren, 2002, p. 90). According to Foucault, discourses create regulatory spaces in which identities are formed, reinforced, and reproduced. These discourses, amounting to an omnipresent disciplinary regime, are employed as a means to maintain social control over, in this instance, various gendered and sexed conceptions and practices to guarantee that identities are suited to heteronormativity.

The fact that historically male sex work was rarely formally regulated suggests that there is nothing inherently problematic with the act itself. Rather, prostitution, both male and female, is made governable by problematizing the actions and activities related to it, such as communication. By containing prostitution within particular associations (crime, violence, social disorder) it becomes a governable domain. For Rose, rendering a “population, a national economy, an enterprise, a family, a child or even oneself” governable, is a mat-

ter of “defining boundaries, rendering that within them visible, assembling information about that which is included and devising techniques to mobilize the forces and entities thus revealed” (1999, p. 33). It is through problematic associations that a domain such as prostitution becomes thought of as something that needs to be regulated. Analyzing the discourses that make a domain amenable to government elucidates “not only the systems of thought through which authorities have posed and specified the problems for government, but also the systems of action through which they have sought to give effect to government” (Rose & Miller 1992, p. 177). Problematic associations speak to those discourses that serve a regulatory purpose. In order to problematize, and thus regulate, male-to-male commercial sexual exchanges, discursive associations (non-normative sexuality, individual pathology, vectors of transmission) have been inextricably linked to the exclusion and control of homosexuality.

#### TYPOLOGIES OF MALE SEX WORK

Academic scholarship on male sex work is largely focused on street workers, likely resulting from their greater visibility and accessibility to researchers (Minichiello et al., 2001). Notable exceptions to this include empirical accounts of male exotic dancers (Boden, 2007; DeMarco, 2007; Tewksbury, 1994), escorts (Parsons, Koken & Bimbi, 2007; Salamon, 1989; Wilcox & Christmann, 2008), and porn stars (Escoffier, 2003). Comparative empirical analyses of males employed in the different sectors of the male sex work industry (Joffe & Dockrell, 1995; Minichiello et al., 2000), between female and male sex workers (Weinberg, Shaver & Williams, 1999), and sex workers and non-sex workers (Earls & David, 1989), have added to the growing corpus of literature.

Male sex work has been variously articulated within the literature. For Caulkins and Coombs (1976) there exist four types of male sex worker: street hustler, bar hustler, call boy, and kept boy. More recently, Van der Poel (1992) has expressed that male sex workers may be classified as pseudo-prostitutes, hustlers, occasionals, and professionals. Categorization has also been informed by the diversity of sectors in which males are employed; for instance, Joffe and Dockrell (1995) note that most literature classifies male sex workers as escorts, masseurs, or street workers. This multiplicity of operationalizations has not been conceptually integrated, making it impossible to define the precise boundaries of what constitutes male sex work. Expressing this sentiment, Van der Poel (1992) argues that “over the years, anything even remotely resembling male prostitution has been called just that and new types are still being ‘discovered’,” including, for instance, the male hitch-hiker who “reluctantly suffer[s] the sexual advances of the motorist” (p. 261).

Although as argued academic interest in male sex work is relatively recent (Browne & Minichiello, 1996b; Satz, 1995), its narratives highlight not only the diversity of experiences within male sex work and between individual sex workers, but also emphasize how male sex work itself is variously conceptualized and brought into the public domain. A prominent and recurrent feature of the literature is an emphasis on discourses related to homosexuality, individual pathology, and conduits of HIV/AIDS. Although rarely formally po-

liced or regulated, discursive regulation broadly accomplished the same feat—to contain and confine male sex workers within the social imagination. Recently, discourses of male sex work as work have served to shift narratives of moral and medical regulation, to regulation based on labour.

### REGULATING MALE SEX WORK

There is a widely shared, if also frequently contested, truism that sex work is the world's oldest profession (Richards, 1982; Satz, 1995; West & DeVilliers, 1993).<sup>1</sup> If sex work is to be considered the world's oldest profession, then it follows that its policing and regulation are the world's oldest concerns. An assessment of the historiography of prostitution and its regulation illustrates not only the ahistorical nature of sex work (West & DeVilliers, 1993), but also the intrinsic role of normative narratives of sexuality and gender to its regulation (Scott et al., 2005). Despite its association with gender deviation and social disorder, male sex work, unlike its female counterpart (Scott, 2003), was not regarded as a public concern until the emergence of a particular language surrounding sexual identity allowed for "normative assessments and judgments to be made concerning particular classes of male prostitute" (Scott, p. 179). As a result, broad distinctions emerged between heterosexual/masculine and homosexual/effeminate (Scott), altering the ways in which male sex work was understood and targeted for regulation.

Unlike its female counterpart, male sex workers were not historically subject to periodic medical examinations and strict rules administered by police (Peniston, 2001; Smart, 1978), effectively ignoring their existence. Although authorities suspected certain men of selling sexual services, records listing "male prostitute" status do not exist (Peniston; Ringdal, 2004) though working-class men were frequently charged with misdemeanour offences (Peniston; Satz, 1995), such as "importuning by males" or "indecentcy between males" (Smart, 1978, p. 7). Generally male sex workers are arrested with less frequency than female sex workers, are less likely to be found guilty, and when tried, receive shorter sentences (Satz). That homosexual sex work was "fairly concentrated" and "offend[ed] relatively few people" served as explanations why female sex workers were more likely to face prosecution than males (Richards, 1982, p. 131fn). It appears that historically male sex workers were not regarded as culpable until a special concern for male (homo)sexuality developed. Male sex work was then targeted as a way to control homosexuality and "rid the street of overt displays of prostitution" (Weeks, 2007, p. 53).

<sup>1</sup> Satz (1995, p. 78) argues that this is a "mistaken idea" that "supports and embodies the widely held belief that men have strong sex drives which must be satisfied—largely though gaining access to some woman's body." If sex work refers to an instance of a commercial exchange of services, Richards (1982, p. 88) contends that "it is misleading to interpret [...] patterns of promiscuity among primitive peoples as forms of prostitution, for such peoples attached little value to virginity"—connoting that commercial markets, and thus the development of sex as a commodity, are coextensive with the emergence of urban civilization.

According to Weeks, both prostitution and male homosexuality were policed using similar or related legislation since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which effectively served to criminalize all private and public forms of male homosexual activity (2007, p. 49). As a result, even where there exist criminal records of “male prostitution,” it is impossible to disaggregate male sex workers and male homosexuals, as they were historically conflated (Smart, 1978). The concern, however, was not with the actual act of engaging in male-to-male sexual activity per se, but by “the experience of homosexuality as a stigmatized category” (Weeks, 1981, p. 130). Homosexuality itself became the target of regulation, and both homosexual males and males who engaged in homosexual prostitution were assumed to be predisposed towards deviancy, corruption, and sexual degeneracy (Weeks, 1981). It has been theorized that the existence of male prostitution has largely been neglected as a result of implicit taboos of homosexuality that threaten the conceptual integrity of male sexuality (De Cecco, 1991; Ringdal, 2004). Males are socially constructed as “all-powerful, potent and macho when it comes to sex” (De Cecco, p. ix), thus for a man to sell, or purchase, sex from another man threatens this conceptualization, as “men are not supposed to be the objects of lust” (De Cecco, p. ix; Phoenix & Oerton, 2005; Satz, 1995).

By referring to the *regulation* of male sex workers, I am not referring to state codification and enforcement but rather those unwritten norms, values, and taboos serving to regulate human and social behaviour. Regulatory frameworks, the collection of rules that allow or restrict certain human actions create sexed subjects, that is, how “the sex that is done is understood or integrated into people’s sexual lives” (Phoenix & Oerton, 2005, p. 8). These frameworks construct *normal* and *natural* sex as occurring privately within a heterosexual, marital relationship largely focused on the genitals of both partners (Phoenix & Oerton, p. 10). The focus of this review is to highlight the myriad articulations of male sex work and the different categories and concepts by which male sex work itself, through its regulation, is constituted. It is the attempt to categorize what constitute *normal* and *natural* sexual activities, that have led to regulatory discourses that conceptualize male sex work within broader narratives of homosexuality that are imbued with assumptions of the perverse, the pathological, and the diseased.

### *Sexual Regulation: The Problematic of Homosexuality*

In many respects, the history of the study of male sex work is coterminous with the psychological study and pathologization of homosexuality (Bimbi, 2007; Kaye, 2003; Koken et al., 2005; Weeks, 2007, 1981), emerging in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century when the increasing prevalence of gay men offering to pay for the sexual services of working class men led to societal prohibitions on all homosexual persons and activities (Kaye, 2003). For Weeks, it is “significant that writings on male prostitution began to emerge simultaneously with the notion of ‘homosexuals’ being an identifiable breed of persons with special needs, passions and lusts” (1981, p. 113). Homosexuality and male sex work have been intertwined through narratives of promiscuity, sex without commitment or reproduction; challenging governing discourses surrounding sexual exchange,

“turning it from something engaged in by *normal* men into something only *queer* men practiced” (Kaye, 2003, p. 2, italics in original) and into a subject of investigation. With regards to regulation, the “deviance” of men providing sexual services for financial gain was ancillary to the supposed “deviance” of homosexuality (Weeks, 1981, p. 31).

The task of identifying the sexual identity of male sex workers concerned early sexologists (Kaye, 2003), proving both “the subject of contradictory findings” and “extremely difficult” (Boyer, 1989, p. 154). While the majority of male sex workers are engaged in male-to-male sexual acts with their clients (Satz, 1995), identification as homosexual is not universal. The adolescent males in Reiss’ (1961) pioneering study did not consider themselves bisexual or gay but assumed that all of their clients were males. On the other hand, Minichiello et al. (2001) found that more than half of their 183 male sex worker participants self-identified as gay, while only 5.5 percent self-identified as heterosexual. Most studies, however, extend discussion of sexual orientation beyond the simplistic gay-straight dichotomy, highlighting the existence of “gay for pay” sex workers: men who claimed a normative heterosexual identity yet simultaneously engaged in homosexual activity (Boles & Elifson, 1994; Earls & David, 1989; Estep et al., 1992; Minichiello et al., 2001; Morse et al., 1991; Visano, 1987; Weinberg et al., 1999). Boles and Elifson suggest that the sexual behaviour of male sex workers should be understood through their self-identifications, rather than through the sexual activities in which they engage. Doing so would challenge binary categorizations of heterosexuality and homosexuality, deconstructing ideas that engaging in same-sex sexual activity necessarily implies homosexual self-identity.

Surveying then available literature, Earls and David (1989) note that the number of male sex workers reporting to be homosexual increased over time, with early studies reporting higher numbers of heterosexual-identified males (e.g., Coombs, 1974; Reiss, 1961) and predominantly homosexual identification in later accounts (e.g., Visano, 1987). This may be a result of various factors, including (a) increasing social acceptance of homosexuality and the higher incidence of male sex workers admitting their sexual orientation without fear of repercussion (Earls & David; Pleak & Meyer-Bahlburg, 1990); (b) increasing numbers of homosexual males using their sexual orientation for financial gain (Earls & David); (c) researchers’ reluctance to identify participants as homosexual due to the “notion of the heterosexual forced into sex with older men corresponded with medical and criminological discourses of homosexuality and their themes of child-adult sexual exploitation” (Scott et al., 2005, p. 323); and (d) more inclusive sampling selection methods applied to different sectors of the industry (Pleak & Meyer-Bahlburg, 1990; Scott et al.). Boyer (1989) notes that homosexuality itself may act as an impetus for entering the sex industry, enabling men to act on their sexual desires in ways that correspond with the cultural image of homosexuality, providing them with an identity. Research indicates that male sex work is not as heavily stigmatized within the gay community as it remains in the larger heterosexual community (Koken et al., 2005), accounting for the increased prominence of gay-identified men employed in the sex industry.

*Psycho-Social Regulation: The Problematic of Individual Pathology and Socialization*

Throughout the 1960s to 1980s theories of sex work focused on the aetiology of men's involvement in sex work. As both sex work and homosexual sexual activity were constructed as deviant and abnormal (Scott et al., 2005; Krafft-Ebing, 1965; Visano, 1987) they were consigned to the regulatory rationalities of criminality or mental disturbance (Van der Poel, 1992). Indeed, during this era, homosexuality was not only coterminous with discourses of promiscuity, but with mental illness as well, the diagnosis of "homosexual" not removed from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* until 1974 (APA, 1974). Early contributions viewed male sex work as pathological and universally deviant (Coombs, 1974; Krafft-Ebing), and identified supposed predisposing psycho-social factors. Male sex workers were reported as marked by deprived socio-economic background, poor parental role models, and low intelligence, and having run away from home and school, lacking any marketable skills (Boyer, 1989; Coombs; Dennis, 2008; Reiss, 1961). They would experience familial violence, including sexual abuse, and earlier sexual debut with older sexual partners (Earls & David, 1989). Alcohol and drug abuse was cited as common (Morse et al., 1992), as were attendance in detention centres, criminal records, and a history of violence (Coombs; Visano). MacNamara (1965, p. 204) found that most male prostitutes within his study were between the ages of 15-20, had low intelligence and educational attainment, were illegitimate children raised in abusive households, and possessed several personality defects; that is, they were immature, irresponsible, and mentally unstable. Within this frame, any decision to sell sex would be informed by a combination of "coercion and comfort" factors, such as developing an independent personality, the experience of negative labelling, and the desire to gain the acceptance and attention of adults.

While not to discount the experiences of those men who have suffered childhood sexual abuse or who engage in sex work as a result of substance abuse, literature indicates that the characterization of all male sex workers as psychologically unstable, desperate, or destitute is tenuous (West & DeVilliers, 1993). Davies and Feldman (1997) note that while some male sex workers identified previous child or adolescent sexual abuse as a factor in their decision to enter the industry, the "data will not support the conclusion that the connection is causal" (p. 51). Psycho-social studies focusing solely on accounts of individual pathology have been challenged for their lack of methodological rigor (Browne & Minichiello, 1996b; Van der Poel, 1992) and for essentialist portrayals of male sex workers as social misfits desperate for money with a history of childhood sexual abuse (Scott et al., 2005), overemphasizing "problematic male sex populations (street prostitutes) at the expense of other relatively unproblematic male sex populations (independent escort)" (Wilcox & Christmann, 2008, p. 119). It has been suggested that a researcher's objectivity may be influenced by the prevailing cultural attitudes towards homosexuality (Kaye, 2003; Koken et al., 2005; Weeks, 1981), resulting in sensationalistic accounts that reinforce stigma (Bimbi, 2007; Koken et al., 2005). Furthermore, by relying on binary assessments of individual psychology and pathology, oversimplifies

the many possible histories that male sex workers experience and neglects to account for the varying meanings possibly assigned to such experiences.

Although such pathological characterizations may account for the experiences of some male sex workers, later studies refute such portrayals. Simon, Morse, Balson, Osofsky and Gaumer (1993) argue that psychological indicators, such as social alienation and personal inadequacy, more likely result from their working conditions rather than an innate psycho-pathological condition. Earls and David (1989) found “no evidence that the prostitutes came from broken homes any more so than the non-prostitutes group,” indicating that there was “higher family divorce and/or separation among the control subjects [non-prostituting males] than among the prostitute group” (pp. 414-415). Some male sex workers recount idyllic suburban childhoods, who decided to enter sex work to capitalize on their physiques (Dennis, 2008). Contrary to beliefs posited by early accounts focusing on the supposed pathologies and deficiencies, sex workers demonstrate “remarkable resilience and fortitude in maintaining emotional stability given the social aspects of their work environment” (Browne & Minichiello, 1996b, p. 36; Simon et al.).

#### *Medical Regulation: HIV/AIDS Epidemic*

While female sex workers were historically associated with the transmission of venereal disease during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, men employing their sexuality in commerce were infrequently linked with venereal disease (Kaye, 2003; Peniston, 2001). As known and suspected female sex workers were implicated into a regulatory system that involved periodic medical examinations and treatments, the existence of males engaging in similar behaviours remained unacknowledged (Peniston). Rather than identifying specific sexual acts as having the possibility of transmitting disease, campaigns against the spread of venereal disease during World War I warned men against sleeping with “loose women” (Chauncey, 1994, pp. 85-86). Taking advantage of the medical ignorance of the time, or believing the propaganda themselves, gay men occasionally informed potential partners that engaging in sexual intercourse posed no risk (Kaye).

The advent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic during the 1980s not only shifted attention toward homosexual men, but also focused attention on men who engaged in homosexual commercial exchanges (Brown & Minichiello, 1996b). The perception that male sex workers “play[ed] a pivotal role in the spread of HIV” (Joffe & Dockrell, 1995, p. 333) and constituted a “public threat” (Scott et al., 2005, p. 334) has led to a significant body of research attending to high-risk sexual behaviour and HIV/AIDS incidences among sex workers, attempting to understand risk perceptions and safe-sex practices employed by male sex workers (Brown & Minichiello, 1995; de Graaf et al., 1994; Earls & David, 1989; Estep et al., 1992; Joffe & Dockrell, 1995; Mariño et al., 2000; Minichiello et al., 2000; Minichiello et al., 1998; Pleak & Meyer-Bahlburg, 1990; Simon et al., 1993).

That sex work constitutes a significant means by which HIV/AIDS spreads continues to stimulate academic scholarship. Rarely is concern in such studies focused on the safety of the male sex worker. Instead the latter is viewed as

transmitting “the HIV virus to heterosexual or bisexual clients, who then went home and infected wives, girlfriends and female prostitutes,” (Dennis, 2008, p. 18) spreading AIDS to the general (heterosexual and non-sex working) population. In a study involving 211 male sex workers, Morse et al. (1991) concluded that their results supported the contention that “male prostitutes serve as a bridge of HIV infection into populations with currently low infection rates through contact with both non-customer sexual partners and customers and thus indirectly to spouses and sexual partners of these individuals” (p. 535). With respect to assessing incidences of HIV/AIDS among male sex workers, existing research is contradictory. Compared to the non-sex worker population, some studies report a higher incidence of sexually transmitted infections (STI) among male sex workers (Earls & David, 1989; Estep et al., 1992; Morse et al., 1991; Pleak & Meyer-Bahlburg, 1990; Simon et al., 1993; Weber et al., 2001), highlighting increased likelihood of transmission (Morse et al.; Weber et al.), while others indicate that there exist no marked differences in STI rates between males involved in the commercial sale of sex and other groups engaging in similar activities, such as gay men with multiple sex partners (compare Minichiello et al., 1998).

Although it has been argued that male-to-male sex work may bring into contact “segments of the populations in which there is a high prevalence of HIV infection” (de Graaf et al., 1994, p. 28), it has been emphasized that engaging in sex work per se is not a risk factor. Much literature indicates that knowledge of HIV/AIDS is high among male sex workers (Earls & David, 1989; de Graaf et al.; Estep et al., 1992; Minichiello et al., 1998; Pleak & Meyer-Bahlburg, 1990; Simon et al., 1993). Comparative studies find that male sex workers possess considerable awareness of HIV/AIDS and safer sex practices, relative to the non-sex worker population (Earls & David). Some literature indicates that male sex workers are more knowledgeable of safer sex practices than their female counterparts (Parker, 2006) largely attributable to educational campaigns developed by the gay community. Irrespective of knowledge, however, male sex workers are increasingly vulnerable to disease transmission due to sexually risky behaviours such as inconsistent condom use with commercial clients (de Graaf et al.; Joffe & Dockrell, 1995), failure to use condoms with non-commercial intimate partners (Joffe & Dockrell; Morse et al., 1991; Pleak & Meyer-Bahlburg), and intravenous drug use (Browne & Minichiello, 1996b; Weber et al., 2001). Drug (ab)use may place male sex workers at additional risk, where desperation for money may compromise adherence to safer sex strategies (de Graaf et al.; Estep et al.; Minichiello et al.). Alternately, assertiveness and the feeling of having control and power over the commercial sexual exchange with a client increases use of safer sex precautions (Browne & Minichiello, 1996b; Joffe & Dockrell).

Contemporary research has challenged the perception of sex workers as transmitters of disease, supporting the stance that sex workers should be considered experts and educators of safer sex techniques. Browne and Minichiello maintain that “the sexual skills and safer sex strategies which sex workers adopt could be used educationally to inform the wider public about practising safe sex” (1995, p. 619). Considering sex workers, both male and female, to be

safe-sex educators is aligned with the discourse of sex work *as* work. Enabling sex workers to engage in, and have control over, commercial sexual transactions will enhance their ability and confidence to negotiate and demand safe-sex practices with their clients (Browne & Minichiello, 1996a; Joffe & Dockrell, 1995).

### *Regulating Labour: Male Sex Work as Work*

Prior to the 1980s, men who provided sexual services for commercial exchange self-identified or were presumed to be homosexual (Bimbi, 2007). The HIV/AIDS epidemic led to the inclusion of gay men in empirical studies of male sex work and the revelation that “engaging in sex [is] a legitimate source of income” (Bimbi, p. 10) rather than “a profession ... not to be taken seriously” (Sagarin & Jolly, 1983, p. 28). As contemporary literature indicates, the decision to engage in male sex work is an occupational choice arrived at through rational and economic liberations (Brown & Minichiello, 1996b; Davies & Feldman, 1997; Parsons, Koken & Bimbi; Scott et al., 2005; Van der Poel, 1992; Wilcox & Christmann, 2008). It has been acknowledged that even during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, engaging in homosexual prostitution was an occupational decision made by the men involved (Weeks, 1981). As sex workers demanded recognition, specifically that their voices be included in research and within social service organizations, the focus on sex-as-work became prominent (compare Bimbi).

While the sex-as-work perspective was reported in historical accounts, contemporary research has focused on the professionalization of the industry. Sex work is considered to be a job to those who engage in the commercial sale of sexuality (Brown & Minichiello, 1996b; Minichiello et al., 2001; Van der Poel, 1992; Wilcox & Christmann, 2008). Male sex workers are increasingly adopting a “hospitality attitude towards their work” (Minichiello et al., p. 48), treating commercial sex as any other service-oriented business (Browne & Minichiello, 1996a,b; Minichiello et al., 2001; Van der Poel; Visano, 1987). Parsons, Koken and Bimbi (2007) indicate that several research participants “emphasized the importance of doing their own research prior to beginning work as an escort ... to get an idea of what the work ‘is really like’” (p. 225). In a review of academic research involving male sex workers, Dennis finds that such articles “involved the discourse of choice. They were never forced or coerced; they made career decisions” (2008, p. 19). Furthermore, it has been reported that some male sex workers strive to maintain a professional level of involvement with clients by observing an informal professional code of ethics (Parsons, Koken & Bimbi; Van der Poel; Visano) and intend on remaining in the occupation (Wilcox & Christmann).

It is important to note that not all male sex workers professionalize the industry or consider sex work to be a profession. Some literature indicates that street prostitutes hold less positive views of their income-generating activities than do off-street independent sex workers (Minichiello et al., 2001; Van der Poel, 1992). For de Graaf et al. (1994), the discrepancy between positive and negative attitudes towards sex work is not inherent to a specific sector of the sex

industry, but instead is related to substance use and abuse. Non-addicted street sex workers expressed positive feelings towards their work, while those that were addicted were more ambivalent or negative, intending to “quit work as soon as possible or ... already trying to do so” (de Graaf et al., p. 281). Neither population, with the exception of one respondent, considered sex work to be a vocation or professional job (de Graaf et al.). Both Van der Poel (1992) and Davies and Feldman (1987) indicate that professional aspirations among male sex workers are uncommon, perhaps stemming from the temporary nature of their work, the use of sex work as a secondary source of income, the lack of familial responsibilities, or the lesser degree of institutionalization of the male sex trade. It has been postulated that male sex workers are less likely to professionalize their work as the boundaries separating their “professional” and private life are vague, as they are more likely to develop friendships with clients, and as they are able to express their own sexuality freely through the course of their work (Browne & Minichiello, 1996b; de Graaf et al.). For many men, engaging in the sale of sexual interaction is a part-time endeavour, outside of full-time and permanent employment (Satz, 1995), which may provide another rationale for the lack of professionalizing their sexual labour.

These studies demonstrate that the meaning of sex work is not static, and that the decision to enter the sex industry is encapsulated within varying degrees of agency, choice, and professionalism. Every worker’s experience is different, as are rationales for engaging in sex work. While the primary motivation for entering the industry is cited as being economic gain (Davies & Feldman, 1997; de Graaf et al., 1994; Earls & David, 1989; Luckenbill, 1985; Minichiello et al., 2001; Scott et al., 2005; Wilcox & Christmann, 2008), others reasons include sexual satisfaction (de Graaf et al., 1994; Luckenbill), freedom and flexibility offered by the lifestyle (Earls & David, 1989; Wilcox & Christmann), curiosity and adventure (Luckenbill), participating in gay male subculture, or motivations arising from a larger constellation of deviant activities (Luckenbill; Minichiello et al., 2001; Visano, 1987).

Although all of the male sex workers in a study conducted by Wilcox and Christmann (2008) asserted that their choice to enter the sex industry was freely made, the notion of “free choice” was qualified in reflecting on their decision-making process.

If, however, one considers the life stories of the men in our sample, with one or two exceptions, there was something in their backgrounds which served to limit the choices open to them—education failure or personality characteristics meant that their ‘choice’ to participate in other, more legitimate, employment opportunities was limited. (p. 133)

Although this underscores the need for theorizing the notion of “choice” itself, it is important for researchers not to undermine the self-determinations expressed by sex workers. Even if made within a constraint of choices, the decision to enter into sex work should nevertheless be regarded as a valid choice. Certainly, the notion of “constrained choices” is not intrinsic to the decision of engaging in sex work, as limitations of career opportunities are evident across racial, classed, gendered, and occupational strata.

Viewing sex work as a profession has multiple benefits. Primarily, it enables men to understand their labour within the context of (socially constructed) acceptable masculine behaviour. Associated with discourses of labour and business, male sex workers are able to “capitalise on male sexuality as part of their creative ingenuity within the work ethic of society” (Browne & Minichiello, 1996a, p. 90). Secondly, professionalizing sex work provides sex workers with the assertiveness and confidence required to negotiate safer sex practices and maintain control over the commercial sex exchange (Browne & Minichiello, 1996a; Joffe & Dockrell, 1995). Finally, by conceiving of male sex work as an occupation “in which the risk of HIV and AIDS is little more than one of a number of occupational hazards” (Allman & Meyers, 1999, p. 74), it will enable policy-makers and enforcement to shift from current regulatory tactics emphasizing individual pathology, disease transmission, and sexual stigma, towards the promotion of healthy sexuality and occupational safety (Allman & Meyers). Viewing sex work as legitimate work does not necessarily imply that it will be regarded as an appropriate career option for everyone, as commonly levied in opposition; however, it will allow those who choose to enter, remain in, or exit the industry, to do so with greater security and autonomy and less stigma.

#### CONCLUSION

Reviewing existing literature, this paper has explored the myriad discourses that have served to regulate male sex work. Although male sex workers were historically exempt from regulatory techniques such as mandatory medical examinations and licensing, the prohibition of homosexuality constituted a symbolic act that discursively constructed and reinforced notions that male sex workers were sexually deviant, pathological, and contributed to the spread of HIV. Most recently, male sex work has been discursively constructed as a legitimate form of labour.

Although these divisions have been articulated within the literature, one must be cautious not to assume a linear progression of discourses that are neatly categorized, but rather as discourses, and subsequent narratives, that are interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Earlier discourses, such as those dealing with promiscuity and disease, continue to exist alongside newer regulatory discourses of labour. The (in)congruence of these parallel and conflicting discourses most evidently manifests itself in the continuing debates over the criminalization, legalization, and decriminalization of the sex industry.

The fact that the “problem” of male sex work is secondary to the “problem” of homosexuality (Weeks, 1981), signifies that there is something located outside the discursive construction (i.e., the definition) of sex work, that presupposes the need for its regulation. That is, sex work itself cannot be regulated without being bounded to specific discourses (e.g., sexual deviance, individual psycho-pathology, mental malaise) arising from broader narratives of stigmatized homosexuality. As evidenced, male sex work was largely regulated as it represented a deviant (homosexual) status (Scott, 2003; Weeks, 1981), and not as a result of the specific acts that were being engaged in. Narratives of nor-

mative male sexuality were also implicit in the regulation of the male sex industry, as there do not exist social constructions accounting for male sexuality as “an independent capacity” (Satz, 1995, p. 78) available for commercial sale. Taboos surrounding homosexuality and male sex work serve to defend conceptualizations of men as “the active providers of sex rather than the passive receptors” (De Cecco, 1991, p. ix). In order to protect normative discourses of male sexuality, the existence of male sex work was effectively ignored, rather than emphatically policed. The “problem” of male sex work is, and has always been, a problem of its supposed effects, rather than an issue inherent within sex work itself, as has been suggested by the discourses deployed to justify its regulation.

Research on commercial sex work continues to disproportionately focus on women (Bimbi, 2007; Logan, 2010; Weitzer, 2010), with the possible result that male sex work contradicts conceptualizations of gender and sex inequalities or stereotypical gendered sexual discourses (Brown & Minichiello, 1996b). It is being argued that “male sex workers are difficult to conceptualize in current economic, social and gender theories of prostitution because all participants are the same gender” (Logan, p. 679). It is interesting to note that male sex work has generally been regulated informally through subtle modes of discursive regulation, and outside of the formalities of criminal justice. That a myriad of regulatory (psycho-social, medical, sexual) discourses continue to coexist and inform each other, creates an exciting new terrain by which to study and understand male sex work. Scott et al. (2005) note that we must acknowledge the changing context of the sex industry, including “shifts in public attitudes toward sexuality (including male-to-male sex) and a sex industry that is moving away from the streets and into mainstream service environments such as the Internet, the media and private agencies” (p. 337). Particularly with respect to male sex work, these changes have not yet been fully investigated. Furthermore, as qualitative research on male sex workers informing theories of sexuality and masculinity have recently emerged, Logan notes that “many quantitative questions whose answers could complement the qualitative approach remain unanswered” (p. 679), citing the lack of knowledge regarding the population size or geographic distribution of male sex work. Understanding the history and regulatory context of male sex work serves to permit more nuanced understandings of the industry, including further reflection on how men experience these informal modes of regulation through their labour.

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# UNRAVELING WARRIORS, NERDS, RACE, EROTICISM & RAPE

## REVISIONIST READINGS OF MASCULINITIES IN *THE MATRIX*

*The Matrix* (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1999) combines elements of traditional and evolving masculinities that merit scrutiny anew in an era of increased inquiry into men's studies, experiences, and identities, including popular cultural representations. Taking *The Matrix* as an analytic frame, the present critique queers interpretations of men's power and identities in popular culture and society with evolving concepts of masculinities and male sexualities. Specifically, the film's chief protagonist, Thomas Anderson (or Neo, as he becomes known), is studied with reference to a four-fold analytic scope: the warrior icon and nerdism; racism and sexism; misandry; and homoeroticism and male rape.

**KEYWORDS** *THE MATRIX* (FILM), MASCULINITIES, HOMOEROTICISM, MALE RAPE, QUEER THEORY

I can see it in your eyes. You have the look of a man who accepts what he sees  
because he is expecting to wake up.      –Morpheus

*The Matrix* (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1999), a 350 million dollar grossing film with a cult following, dozens of dedicated websites, and record video and DVD sales, continues to capture the imagination of fans. Written and directed by the Wachowski brothers, in this futuristic film, humans are at war with sophisticated computers who have taken over the world. Neo (Canadian actor Keanu Reeves) is made attentive to his destiny to save the world by two superhuman, leather-clad fighters, Trinity (Carrie-Anne Moss) and Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne), who lead a small group of human anti-computer terrorists.

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*The Matrix* may be viewed as a postmodern critique of capitalist society, where realities and simulations are difficult to distinguish (Lutzka, 2006), and characterized by a nostalgic longing for a less fake present, like the more “real,” personable, and less technology-ridden past. Part of *The Matrix*’s widespread appeal lies in intertextuality, its homage to a range of philosophical ideas, Western literature, television, and film. In the beginning of the film, when Neo is in his apartment and guests arrive to buy a pirated disc, Neo has it hidden within a hollowed-out book by Jean Baudrillard (1981), *Simulacra and Simulation*. There are further references to *The Neuromancer* (1984) by William Gibson, *Gulliver’s Travels* (Swift, 1959), and *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* (Carroll, 1977), which all entail entering an alternate reality or fantasy world, calling into question interpretations of what is “real,” as well as societal power relations based on the real. There are references to the television series *Get Smart* (Nelson, Bilson, Adams, Kormack, & Brooks, 1965-1969), for doors and phones are integral to *The Matrix*. There are striking similarities to one of the original Star Trek episodes, *The Menagerie: Part II* (Butler & Daniels, 1966), in which “Talosians” place Captain Pike (Jeffrey Hunter) in illusory worlds inspired by his memory or imagination. Once scarred and crippled beyond recognition, Captain Pike ultimately chooses to live out his life in this fantasy paradise of youth, strength, and physical beauty. Finally, there are plot and character similarities with various classic sci-fi films, including *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (Kaufman, 1978; Siegel, 1956), *Soylent Green* (Fleischer, 1973), *Logan’s Run* (Anderson, 1976), *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982), and *Total Recall* (Verhoeven, 1990), films that figure alternate realities faced by a small band of freedom fighters, wedded to the pursuit of “reality,” seeking truth and freedom from government oppression.

With subtle overtones of evolution in racial and gender parity, *The Matrix* combines elements of traditional and evolving masculinities that merit ongoing scrutiny, in the present era of inquiry into men’s studies, experiences, and identities (Heasley & Stewart-Harris, 2010; Weaver-Hightower, 2003). Celebrating the film’s 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary Blu-ray release, White (2009) claims, “No one (not even the Wachowski brothers themselves) has been able to match its pop-culture resonance or its balance between ambitious style and engaging storytelling.”

Taking *The Matrix* as an analytic frame, the present critique *queers* interpretations of men’s power and identities in popular culture and society with evolving concepts of masculinities and male sexualities. In queer theory, *queer* is used as a verb to rigorously investigate knowledge that is provocative and anti-status quo (Gosse, 2008; Ruffolo, 2008), in order to forge revisionist ways of knowing and understanding, through the primary lens of sexuality. Key tenets of queer theory (Capper, 1999; Gosse, 2006; Jagose, 1996) include raising thought-provoking, and what are for some, troubling or taboo topics; unraveling status quo assumptions, beliefs, and commonplace understandings; destabilizing heteronormativity; exploring social and educational phenomena through the critical lens of sexuality; refocusing themes on who and what is included/excluded, when, how, and why; and heightening awareness of those silenced and made invisible, or knowledge that is difficult to bear.

My analysis covers four parts, each of which interrogates aspects of identity of the chief protagonist in *The Matrix*, Thomas Anderson (or Neo, as he becomes known): the warrior icon and nerdism; racism and sexism; misandry; and homoeroticism and male rape.

#### THE WARRIOR ICON AND NERDISM

Concepts of masculinities, including that of White, straight, working men, are in transition (Gosse, 2009a), which is reflected in *The Matrix*. Sparks (1996) states that the action films of Schwarzenegger, Stallone, and others, are a reaction against instability in modern concepts of masculine gender identities. Traditionally, “real manhood” seems a precarious standing that males are incited to attain against great opposition—a heroic quest for qualities of self-direction, discipline, and absolute self-reliance (Gilmore, 1990). Horrocks (1994, p. 90) argues that boys construct an adamant armour against femininity, and strive to be tough, loud, and belligerent, repressing such feminine qualities as tenderness, affection, and sentimentality. Males learn to fetishize females, to build friendships with other men contingent on homophobia and misogyny. Similarly, action heroes embody traditional warrior qualities, such as nobility of purpose, physical strength, courage, action over reflection, and emotional restraint, while conversely today’s North American culture appears to repudiate such historical “manly” virtues (Kleinfel, 2006).

Neo is somewhat different from characters in the line of Stallone or Schwarzenegger, in keeping with Wick’s (1996, p. 94) supposition that the “manly man” action hero of the nineties was undergoing a transformation. Neo is the embodiment of a sleeker, more technologically advanced anti-hero, rather than the oversized, over-muscled, and hyper-masculinized bodies of his predecessors (Lee, 2005). Whereas many action heroes continue to be brawny, married, and somehow connected to law enforcement in their daily jobs, Neo is what is vernacularly called a *computer geek* or *nerd*, single, and physically unimposing,<sup>1</sup> at least until he transforms into a martial arts and weapons expert. A *nerd*, according to Kendall (1999, p. 353), combines aspects of hypermasculinity (intellect, lack of sartorial display, lack of “feminine” social and relational skill) and perceived feminization or subordinated masculinity (lack of sport ability, small body size, deprivation of sexual relationships with women). Nerds usually have the latest in technology but live in rudimentary conditions. Neo’s apartment is described in the movie script as a “technological rat nest” (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1998, p. 12) with cables everywhere and equipment on table tops. Thomas Anderson, or Neo as he is known as a hacker, is a well-reputed hacker showing superior computer intellect. His interpersonal skills with the clients/friends are strained; they come knocking at his door having to convince him to go out for the evening and leave his computer. He has a non-

<sup>1</sup> His body type is closer to the androgynous Calvin Klein or GAP model look of contemporary beauty standards, which is an evolution from the rock-hard, body builder action hero.

imposing, un-athletic physique, particularly when he is initially severed from the Matrix, with his atrophied muscles never having been used. He never alludes to wife or girlfriends, unlike most action film heroes who are usually marked by the motivation of protecting daughters and wives or avenging wrongs done to the females in their lives. Furthermore, Neo appears curiously impervious to Trinity's overt romantic interest in him for much of the film's duration.

Unlike Mellencamp's assertion that college students distance themselves from Thomas Anderson (Mellencamp, 2001), Neo's nerdism, and subsequent transformation into a warrior, are key to his popularity.<sup>2</sup> What explains nerdy Thomas Anderson/Neo's ongoing popularity? He is clearly no Rambo or Rocky—at least not in the early stages of *The Matrix*. The answer may lie in his transformation from “sissy boy” to “warrior man.” Thornton (1993, pp. 124, 152) claims that male viewers vicariously live out fantasies of violence through their gaze as spectators. He refers to the implicit sexual tropes of fighting, sexual prowess, domination, and victory contained in sports and action films, all of which linked to the male viewer's identification with the athlete or action hero. Sweetman (1997, p. 26) suggests that White middle class men often hold jobs that require responsibility and rationality, traits viewed as non-warrior-like and, therefore, feminine. These men may readily identify with nerdy Neo, who becomes increasingly warrior-like as the film progresses. Furthermore, the male body as spectacle allows for concepts of masculinity and heroism to objectify male bodies, while neutralizing homoerotic implications, presenting them as inspirational. This may help explain why many boys and men are die-hard spectators for sports such as football and hockey and so-called “guy” action flicks rather than more romantic “chick flicks.”

Neo's appeal, then, lies in his becoming a hero/warrior, not in his being one from the start. When Neo is “downloading” martial arts (into his brain), Tank declares in admiration, “Ten hours straight. He's a machine” (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1998, p. 47), followed by Neo's body spasms, relaxing as his eyes open, and breath hissing from his lips, as if in orgasm. Teenage boys spend on average 17 hours playing video games per week, and many more surfing the net (Sax, 2009). Boys are also far more likely to feel bullied or harmed at school (Yau & O'Reilly, 2007), and to be victims of theft and serious and violent victimization at greater rates than girls (Freeman, 2004, p. 50). Therefore, the average teenage boy may relate to the nerdy aspect of Neo, and vicariously celebrate Neo's transformation into a warrior and superman. Abetting the ready appeal of Neo's Pygmalion transformation from mouse to superman, *The Matrix* is a twist on the Old Testament “David and Goliath” story sure to resonate with Judeo-Christian audiences.

Additionally, war metaphors are often used in business in North America (Molloy, 1999, p. 96), and Neo is portrayed as a nondescript office worker, al-

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<sup>2</sup> However, it may be that a broader and perhaps older and less technologically savvy audience, may relate to the theme of technological alienation, and self-liberation, as Barton (2006, pp. 55-56) suggests.

lotted a cubicle in a big office. Analogously, he may be viewed as a disembodied sort of lowly infantry soldier on the technological front. Similar to the infantry soldiers in *Glory* (Zwick, 1989) or *Full Metal Jacket* (Kubrick, 1987) who are verbally abused by their drill sergeant, he is subject to a ‘tearing down,’ or harsh lecturing and belittlement by his superior, the office manager, in order to make him conform to company procedures and values, such as being on time for work. This may be interpreted as part of Neo’s passage to manhood. Males who are still establishing themselves career-wise and low on the corporate ladder, will appreciate the element of escapism from their humdrum lives when identifying with Neo, who as the insignificant, lowly, slacker employee eventually gets to beat his enemy in the form of serialized clones dressed in the standard blue suit wardrobe of corporate executives. Escapism has regulatory implications, as it may serve to temporarily brighten their spirits, giving them an illusion of power, so that they return to work with less resentment, thereby contributing to keeping them in line: productive for the capitalist machine.

This film, moreover, may build on, then assuage, spectator fears in the looming competitive world of technology, as doltish Neo is overwhelmed by, then masters and defeats, the Matrix/computers. Molloy (1999, p. 4) suggests that within a racialized discourse we subsume the Other we fear. Substituting technology for race as an “Other” to be feared, *The Matrix* may show how certain citizens fear technology. The film’s shots of confined spaces, interspersed with great heights, and infinite, white spaces, may serve to add to a sense of insignificance, powerlessness, and isolation, indeed, cosmic loneliness. In popular culture and media, this reflects what Kingwell (1996, pp. 44, 55, 110, 122, 293) calls “Gumpism,” a fear of intellectuals and technology, often incorporating conspiracy theories, that frequently associates mental deficiency with virtue. Kingwell finds irony in the fact that, “We North Americans find ourselves, on the brink of the third millennium, living in a high-tech society in which, paradoxically, stupidity is our highest badge of goodness” (p. 44).

It comes as no surprise, then, that Neo is nerdy. While a computer hacker, Neo is also something of a social dullard, rarely emoting, robot-like, showing little verbal skill, meager philosophical reasoning or indulgences (he learns to solve his problems with *brawn* not *brain*), socially awkward, and referred to by the Oracle as, “Not too bright, though.” Furthermore, conspiracy theories may be viewed as a way of rationalizing why certain individuals have limited control over life, indeed as escapism in its worst sense—encouraging the individual to believe he is the crux of existence (“A very ugly,” 1999). Ever striving to achieve an ultimately illusive control over one’s surroundings and the familial and societal respect and prestige it engenders, may be at the core of many males’ sense of accomplishment and failure in life. Therefore, a film such as *The Matrix* may reinforce the average male’s self-esteem and sense of adequacy in the real world, for a similarly mundane worker may be equally easily transformed into a world-saving super hero. Tracing Neo’s journey to a stereotypical sort of warrior-manhood, *The Matrix* also evokes, like other American action/war films such as *Gladiator* (Scott, 2003), *Saving Private Ryan* (Spielberg, 1999), and the *Hurt Locker* (Bigelow, 2009), a mixture of patriotism and nostal-

gia for hyper-masculine and warrior skills native to a capitalist world but increasingly impractical in a post 9/11, recession pressed, increasingly socialist society, where brains, interpersonal skills, and critical and imaginative thinking are needed to thrive (Gosse, 2010a; Rosin, 2010).

#### RACISM AND SEXISM

Morpheus, played by Laurence Fishburne, is the stereotypical “black buddy” of action film, sacrificing himself for the White<sup>3</sup> man, a hybrid of the intellectual Thomas and father-figure John Rawlins in *Glory* (Zwick, 1989). Morpheus is also seemingly unable to be killed, following the racist Southern myth that you can’t kill a Black by rape or beating. Morpheus undergoes a brutal Rodneyesque type beating at the hands of police, which may serve to help White audience members identify with his character, but how is unclear. On the one hand, they may feel outrage over a Black man being punished like Rodney King (Gray, 2007). Then again, Morpheus is a virtuous man, unlike King who was a career criminal. Morpheus is also superhuman, impervious to pain by normal thresholds, so his beating may serve to minimize King’s beating in people’s eyes—if Morpheus survives and ends up fine, then, maybe, King’s beating wasn’t so bad, so White conscience is alleviated. Either way, the film’s Kingesque beating is an ambiguous scene that shows Morpheus’ articulated willingness to sacrifice his life for Neo, yet another example of a Black man Uncle Tomming, that is, showing subservience to a White man (Modleski, 2000), of which cinema is rife. For instance, in *The Green Mile*, the main Black character, John Coffey, is innocent of the rape and murder of two White girls. Yet, he is convicted, tried, and eventually electrocuted, despite the “good” relationship he develops with his guards who discover he is not only innocent, but also gifted with healing powers readily employed to their advantage. The Black man is but another means to empower or enrich the White man, whether deportations, massacres, forced labor, or slavery have been used (Fanon, 1963, p. 79). Therefore, Morpheus’ willingness, indeed enthusiasm to die for a White man, so that Neo attains hero status and thus manhood, is in keeping with colonial history and prejudice. In addition, Morpheus, like John Coffey in *The Green Mile*, shares another stereotypical trait: the directors work very hard at establishing their stature and strength, connotative of sexuality, in keeping with the “big, Black buck/stud” stereotype.

The Oracle (played by Gloria Foster), an Oprah Winfrey-like spiritual leader/mother figure, resembles a Black governess of White plantation children, with a dash of African spiritualism and mystique thrown in. Her duty is to provide advice to the Chosen One, the one who will liberate humans, and like Neo, most neophytes in her parlor appear to be White, and those who are not, are light-skinned. She is the image of the traditional (grand)mother, do-

<sup>3</sup> Keanu Reeves’s father has Chinese and Hawai’ian heritage, but Reeves “passes” (Piper, 1991) for White; everyone I asked to define Reeves’ ethnicity responded, “White.”

mesticated, baking and cooking in the kitchen, replete with apron, dispersing ageless wisdom with a sweet smile to dullard Neo. Her power is not portrayed as an executive, lawyer, doctor, university lecturer, or any other contemporary image of women's liberation, but rather as a parody of a 1950s domesticated, nurturing mother, secure in dispelling advice and cookies, remote to the blood and guts reality of the physical battles that the predominantly male characters engage in. The African American character of the Oracle, like Morpheus, is a subordinate, secondary one, used to prop up Neo on his passage into manhood and heroism, as he saves the world.

Phiel (1993, p. 135), claims that in action films, women are frequently presented either as domesticated servants or as love toys. However, queering the roles of women in action films may expose the sacrifice of males in real life towards girls and women, who dominate in matters of home life, sex, and love, and rarely place themselves in life threatening occupations such as soldier/warrior (Farrell, 2005). Furthermore, women's mortality rates in the workplace are far below that of men for men dominate in occupations where working conditions tend to be dirtier, entail exposure to the elements, unconventional hours, physical prowess and stamina, and increased risk of physical harm. For instance, in Canada between 2006-2008, there were 987 workplace fatalities among men against 43 among women, with most deaths occurring within the male-dominated occupations of transport, equipment operation, construction, processing and manufacturing, machine operation, assembly, and labour (Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, 2010). In film, approximately 96% of those killed are male; women are rarely killed in film, as compared to men, and almost never if they appear in three or more scenes (Farrell, 1993, pp. 224, 225), and this film is no exception. In *The Matrix*, sexy, blonde Switch is silently and painlessly killed as her cerebral plugin is withdrawn, as opposed to the legions of male characters who are endlessly slaughtered in bloody fight scenes, receiving mortal knives wounds, frenetic beatings, and bullets to head and body. Trinity, the principal female warrior, is never actually beaten or wounded in *The Matrix*, as she usually flees from the agents.

However, Trinity does save Neo's life in one scene, and dispatches men at various times throughout the film, showing that *The Matrix* is at times a transitional film for gender roles, for she *is* sometimes a fighting warrior. In real life, men frequently put their lives at risk, often to be chief breadwinners, in the most dangerous occupations (Men at Risk, 2003, 2008). Similarly, in action films, male characters usually fight to either protect, avenge, please, or impress their girl and women kin—whether a love interest such as Trinity or a guiding matriarch/mother figure such as the Oracle. The latter is calling the shots in implicit and explicit ways, for Morpheus says, "When he [Neo] died, the Oracle prophesied his return and envisioned that his coming would hail the destruction of the Matrix, an end to the war and freedom for our people. That is why there are those of us that have spent our entire lives searching the Matrix, looking for him" (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1998, p. 43).

Moreover, Trinity is a problematic female warrior—similar to her predecessors Zena, Warrior Princess, and Buffy, the Vampire Slayer, or in more recent years, *Aeon Flux* (Kusama, 2005) and Alice of *Resident Evil* (Mulcahy, 2007; Witt,

2004)—in that depictions of female warriors present women with new sets of unattainable ideals. Played by leather-clad Carrie-Anne Moss (an ex-model), Trinity's physical beauty and athleticism, like more contemporary female action heroes, remains unattainable for most women, and an impossible ideal for most men to aspire to date. As Cypher (an operative who preferred the Matrix to the real world) says to Trinity, after she has brought Neo—the potential Savior—his food and lovingly pulled a blanket over him, “I don't remember you ever bringing me dinner” (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1998, p. 52); and upon viewing her coma-like body, “You know, for a long time, I thought I was in love with you, Trinity. I used to dream about you...” (p. 87). The top warrior-hero-to-be gets the beautiful woman, unlike his lesser counterparts, who have been doggedly fighting for years to win her attention.

In addition, the irony and allure of female beauty is compounded in this Woman in Red, the Marilyn Monroesque-type cyber-sprite that the youthful character Mouse creates and attempts to prostitute to Neo, who, in his nerdishness, declines. “The Woman in Red,” from a feminist perspective, may be seen as objectification of women at its most clichéd. Mouse attempts to prostitute her to Neo, and uses her as his personal love toy. She is the misogynist nerd's dream girl—“She doesn't talk much...,” brags Mouse (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1998, p. 63). She is a blonde, beautiful, hip-swinging parody of sexuality, willing and able to please sexually, and there are no strings attached—you merely unplug yourself from the computer program once sexual gratification has been achieved.

Yet she embodies what an average nerd may never attain—the attention and sexual companionship of a beautiful, lustful woman, unless he becomes Bill Gates' rich. Mouse further defends her existence: “Pay no attention to these hypocrites, Neo. To deny our impulses is to deny the very thing that makes us human.” Sex, whether for men or women, need not be looked at with puritanical distaste, albeit in school, children are taught that, “Sex is dirty. Boys initiate the dirt” (Farrell, 2007). This paradox serves to (i) empower girls and women sexually, for they are the gatekeepers of sex, and achieves this through repudiating loose women such as prostitutes like the Woman in Red; (ii) portray boys and men who desire sex as sexually deviant and, therefore, girls and women as purer and morally superior. This helps propagate a sexist dualism, juxtaposing the intrinsic virtue of women, and the “vice” of men (Segal, 1990).

Many of the female characters in *The Matrix* are accordingly unattainable, modelesque visions for the average girl/woman, and equally unattainable for the average guy, or real life *nerd*, reinforcing a moralistic, sexually punitive gender divide. While the African American Oracle dons the apron of a domestic servant, Trinity is erotically garbed in black like an s/m mistress when she brings Neo dinner, and reveals her erotic feeling toward him. Overall, *The Matrix*, while presenting Switch and Trinity as warriors, nevertheless propagates unrealistic ideals of female beauty and athleticism, objectifies and stereotypes women, reduces them to secondary roles to prop up the hero's heterosexuality (so that heterosexual males will better relate to him), and serves to reinstate the traditional male's altruism towards girls and women.

## MISANDRY

Stereotypes continue along this familiar train in what viewers may initially see as a progressive film, since Trinity has “masculine” qualities of toughness, resolve, physical prowess, and aggression. Inevitably, Trinity also conforms to the “damsel in distress” leitmotif of action films, for without Neo’s Herculean feats, she would have perished several times. To emphasize the interchangeability and misandric expendability of men in the film, the agents have the ability to instantaneously inhabit any person’s body. Although an agent does at one point inhabit the body of an old woman, he is not killed in this body. However, agents are often killed when inhabiting men’s bodies, and in brutal fashion. One receives a knife in the head, another is crushed beneath a subway train, several are plummeted with bullets, and another’s head explodes, for example. Men, supposedly, due to their brutish nature, are expendable, and killing them is sport.

The widespread cultural belief that men are fiends and rapists dates back decades: “Whatever they may be in public life, whatever their relationships with men, in their relationships with women, all men are rapists, and that’s all they are. They rape us with their eyes, their laws, and their codes” (French, 1977, p. 433). Solanas (1967) infamously wrote:

Eaten up with guilt, shame, fears and insecurities and obtaining, if he’s lucky, a barely perceptible physical feeling, the male is, nonetheless, obsessed with screwing; he’ll swim through a river of snot, wade nostril-deep through a mile of vomit, if he thinks there’ll be a friendly pussy awaiting him. He’ll screw a woman he despises, any snaggle-toothed hag, and furthermore, pay for the opportunity. Why? Relieving physical tension isn’t the answer, as masturbation suffices for that. It’s not ego satisfaction; that doesn’t explain screwing corpses and babies.

Due to ideological feminism’s<sup>4</sup> phallogentrism, or privileging of the hegemonic, masculine phallus and sexuality in meaning-making, contemporary audiences have been duly cued to react with horror at White women being threatened, beaten, or especially potentially raped, and to acknowledge the potentiality of men as physical, psychological, and sexual aggressors where they are not made protectors or avengers of girls’ and women’s honor, as seen in *Panic Room* (Fincher, 2002), *The Brave One* (Jordan, 2008), *The Road* (Hillcoat, 2009), and *The Book of Eli* (Hughes & Hughes, 2010). This may enduringly depend on the trope of *amour courtois* gaining popularity in the Middle Ages (Bayliss, 2008; Wollock, 2011), and persisting in cinema and throughout society to this day: the lover tries to make himself worthy of his mistress by acting

<sup>4</sup> Nathanson and Young (2006) claim that “ideological feminism” presents all issues from the point of view of women and, in the process, explicitly or implicitly attacks men as a class. They conjecture that ideological feminism is silently reshaping law, public policy, education, and journalism.

bravely, honorably, and nobly, and by doing whatever deeds she might desire. The premise of courtly love, with its exaltation of the feminine, stipulates men's chivalrous avenging of wrongs done to girls and women.

The counterpart of courtly love and chivalry is that men may be injured, or even killed, in their duty towards womenfolk. This implication is so embedded in popular culture, and has endured for so many centuries, that moral outrage rarely manifests itself over the abuse, maiming, and slaughter of boys and men in action films. In real life, younger men are fodder for war (Epstein & Johnson, 1998), and *Männerbund*, or male bonding and expression of love between males, is so ardently policed that it can only occur outside of heterosexual relationships, and without homophobic reprisal, during war, or metaphorical elaborations of war, such as in the world of sport. This may imply fathers' emotional distancing from their sons. Society's endorsing of violence towards boys, young men, and mature men, may be seen as part of an on-going toughening-up process, one that can only accord transitory manhood status to males, for manhood must be constantly reaffirmed and re-earned. Indeed, audiences appear desensitized to the killing of males in film, and regard violence towards boys and men as popular entertainment.

After having kidnapped Neo and shoved him onto a car, the beautiful androgynous Switch points a large gun at him and warns, "Listen to me, coppertop! We don't have time for twenty questions. Right now there is only one rule. Our way or the highway." The message is: do it our way, either be a man of action and fight for us, or you are useless, and will be pushed out of the car and killed/alienated from female society. Neo, anagrammatically, may be given "one rule," not various messiah references: he is not empowered but presented a single manly route—that of warrior, or else a living death plugged (back?) into the *matrix* (Greek for *womb*). And the choice of warrior means probable death: embattling seemingly immortal and invulnerable agents.

Deconstructing manhood in action films, another sexual incongruity surfaces. Cypher eroticizes Trinity's helpless body but does not touch her when she is plugged into the Matrix. Yet, Trinity eroticizes over Neo's body towards the end, her kiss transforming this lifeless man into a superhero,<sup>5</sup> but rare would be the audience member who would think of her as "perverted." If the roles were reversed, would the same be true? Juliet can kiss Romeo's corpse and it is romantic, but could Romeo do the same and provoke a similar spectator reaction? This asymmetry may be reflective of *androgenophobia* (Gosse, 2011) or widespread popular cultural conventions that maleness, the male body, and male sexualities (these are indelibly wedded in North American consciousness in particular) are unclean, perverse, and menacing.

Rather than the Grimm Brothers "Sleeping Beauty," who retains her "feminine" beauty, delicacy, and goodness, Neo is a modern "Sleeping Brute," who

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<sup>5</sup> Once awakened from Trinity's unsolicited kiss, Neo violently wins the world from evil, suffering multiple gunshot wounds, brutal, exaggerated hand-to-hand combat, laughable in its hyperbole of masculine willpower and strength, and the gruesome head exploding scene of his antagonist, Agent Smith.

awakens from a kiss to become a “masculinized,” mean, tough, tenacious killing machine—all due to the love and erotic attention of a woman. (Sleeping) Beauty and Brute are the outdated, binary antithesis two sides of a cinematic gender coin. Accordingly, and as reflected in films like *The Matrix*, it is acceptable for a man to act like a beast if he will save a woman, for to her he transforms into a hero and prince (Farrell, 1993, p. 84).

To judge audience response at this point is obviously delicate and problematic given the often historical or futuristic settings of action movies.<sup>6</sup> Women encouraging men to become warriors dates back centuries. During WWI, women in the British Commonwealth gave able-bodied-looking men on the street white feathers to symbolize the men’s apparent cowardice (Simkin, 1997-2011), since they were not away fighting overseas. Some more modern women enduringly admit to valuing toughness, power, and wars of various sorts (Sylvester, 1987, pp. 501-502) and lament the demise of traditional, hegemonic masculinities in lieu of a more emotive, sensitive, and thus “feminized” New Millennium male (Eckler, 2002). This creates a bombardment of mixed messages for many present boys and men who strive to find mates who respect non-hegemonic male identities, beyond the goofy, immature, and violent stereotypes rife in popular culture.

From the start, Trinity finds Neo attractive due to his promise and, ultimately, his displays of fearlessness, aggression, courage, strength, and warrior prowess. The fantasy that the lowly, powerless worker-drone can accomplish incredible feats, and reap the prestige of a beautiful woman to “love,” or rather, respect him, is an age old facet of European lore—women are often what a man fights for (Hartsock, 1987, pp. 141-142). If a soldier can prove his courage and valor in battle, he may indeed merit a beautiful female, even one whose station in life is above his. She, in turn, benefits from the prestige and creature comforts, and hence security, that his heroism has earned. Seeing beautiful, ex-model Carrie-Anne Moss as Trinity, enamored by nerdy Thomas Anderson as Neo, connotes a regulatory message, giving men temporary respite in fantasy, to live vicariously, and fulfill society’s expectation of “work, marry, and support a family” (Farrell, 1986, p. 298) with nary a whimper. Meanwhile, men’s American reality offers chilling images of growing unrest, depression, drug abuse, alcoholism, health problems, lowered life expectancy, and increasingly low educational attainment (Gosse, 2011).

#### HOMOEROTICISM AND MALE RAPE

*Homo*—derived from Latin and Greek, means *the same*, or having similar characteristics (Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary, 1995), whereas—*erotic*, stemming from the Greek god of *love*, born of Chaos, connotes the personification of love and desire in all aspects (Bobo, 1995). When one combines *homo* and—*erotic* together to form *homoerotic*, the most common interpretation would

<sup>6</sup> Russell Crowe became a worldwide sex symbol for millions of women following his role as the bloody, violent warrior Maximus in *Gladiator* (Scott, 2000).

denote *homosexuality*, or sexual desire directed toward, or actualized with, a member of the same sex. The two are intimately linked. However, homoeroticism need not manifest itself in what contemporary society would necessarily term gay or queer lifestyle. Many men who display homoerotic desire would never qualify their desire as homoerotic or homosexual, or themselves as queer or gay. Rather, repudiation of the homoerotic is often viewed as an affirmation of one's heterosexuality, and war (like competitive sport in popular culture) weds the homoerotic and homophobic where men must bond around the proviso of homosexuality (Horrocks, 1995, p. 11). Therefore, the fine line between manifestations of homoeroticism, homosexuality, and heterosexual concepts of masculinity in males often appears intricately interwoven and equivocal. In sum, the *homoerotic* entails that which is desired and associated with one's own gender, which may or may not involve sexual desire (desire can latch onto traits or qualities viewed as masculine), whereas *homosexual* entails actual direct physical, sexual contact between two or more males.

Homoeroticism of a sexual content is rampant in Black/White men's cinematic interplay. In *The Green Mile* (Darabont, 1999), Coffey lays his hands on his guard's crotch (Edgecombe, played by Tom Hanks), and after some homoerotic struggle and groaning, Coffey thereby cures him of a nasty urinary infection. Edgecombe then proceeds to hurry home and pleasure his wife four times in one night, a feat his forty-four year old body hadn't accomplished since he was nineteen. Through the homoerotic exchange between the two men, the Black man infuses not only some of his strength in to the weaker White men, but also some of his legendary sexual prowess.

Similarly, in *The Matrix* Keanu Reeves' character Neo has homoerotic encounters that need to be counteracted in order to ensure White male heterosexual identification with his character. Before being rescued by the Zionists, agents kidnap Neo and question him in a white, windowless room. The agents gag him, hold him down, and proceed to penetrate his belly button via a hybrid insect/machine creature that acts as a homing device. Homophobia may in part be articulated as a fear of male penetration/dominance, and can bond straight males together. Neo's symbolic experience of male rape solicits the attribution of evil to its agents, the antagonists, through its homosexual connotation, and of heterosexuality to its victim, Neo, through the horror it visibly inspires in him. Where Scarce (1997, p. 59) proposes that males who do not conform to traditional notions of manhood run a greater risk of being sexually assaulted—Neo, the nerdy, weak, disembodied underdog, conforms to this pattern.

Heteronormativity is constantly reinforced in *The Matrix* (Bahng, 2006), so Neo's assaulted by White men, his being mentored by Black man Morpheus and bossed around by White women, has to be heterosexualized and masculinized. On Morpheus' orders, Trinity uses a machine to get the creature out of Neo's belly, thereby restoring some semblance of his masculinity. By sending two women warriors (Trinity and Switch) to rescue Neo, Morpheus underplays Neo's homoerotic rape by the agents, restoring Neo's heterosexuality; Neo literally puts himself in the hands of two women, disrobing for them in order to be "cured" of the phallic creature the agents put inside him. Again,

some of the legendary, (hetero)sexual prowess of a Black man has been bestowed on a White man.

It is postulated that male victims of sexual assault may act out their feelings later, often in violent ways, and that the stoic way of dealing with pain is typically male (McMullen, 1990). Neo's rape is indeed a step towards his embracing of violence, although such a supposition may carry misandric overtones—women who are raped are victims, men who are raped become violent. Male love/homoeroticism is only permitted to develop in full intensity in the presence of suffering and death, for relationships among heterosexual as well as homosexual men risk being perceived and punished as deviant. Wicks (1996) suggests that sports are commonly used for the expression of friendships, but emotions of caring or love among males are vigilantly held in check, even among buddies who have known each other for years. Frequently a mentor-protégé relationship transpires, as between Morpheus and Neo in *The Matrix*. Neo engages in homoerotic battle with his mentor, Morpheus, played by Laurence Fishburne, soon after his recuperation, both cloaked in s/m black leather garb and standing nose to nose. Not incidentally, Neo's belly button, is unequivocally severed from all semblance of femininity now that the insertion site of the umbilical cord (referring one to one's mother, and hence to one's omnipresent feminine side) has been re-opened, abused, and reclosed. Now Neo can journey toward his rebirth as a "real man"—a traditional warrior—away from his nerdy past persona, through Morpheus' tutoring and "tough love" martial training. In society, as in film, males are only permitted to engage in physical intimacy or show love to one another in the presence of death or war or their metaphorical deliverance.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, although it may be argued that Thomas Anderson's rebirth occurs once unplugged from the Matrix, laying on a table in the "real" world (Emig, 2006), Thomas's true rebirth into masculinity lies not only in the reversion of his rape but also in his intricate relationship with Morpheus.

Morpheus, whose name means *changer*, transforms Neo from boy to man, imbuing him, under his tutelage, with uncommon strength and power. Morpheus masterminds the capturing of Neo from the evil clutches of the computers/machines, who use him as a human battery. In the homoerotic vent, Morpheus has been "watching" Neo for a long time via computer, connoting a voyeuristic fascination. To mask the homoerotic connotations of Morpheus saving a White man, as opposed to the acceptable, standard "damsel in distress," Morpheus first sends Trinity, then Trinity together with another Zionist female, Switch, to be his emissaries. Finally, Neo is figuratively reborn. In fact, Morpheus relates to him that he had not been born, but grown in huge fields devoted to growing human babies. This is similar to armies' "rebirth" of recruits away from females in hazing rituals, where "feminine" qualities such as caring and tenderness are mocked, scorned, or satirized. In *The Matrix*, once Neo has undergone some medical attention and wakes up, the first person he sees and talks to is Morpheus. Neonate Neo now belongs to him.

<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, *The Matrix* conforms to this, as with its misogynist and racist elements, sending disturbing cues of what is "normal" and acceptable.

Morpheus then asserts a sort of homoerotic dominance over him by guiding a coaxial line into the jack at the base of Neo's head, so that a man has yet again penetrated our nascent hero. To counteract the gesture, Neo has to fight a bloody battle with Morpheus using martial arts. Metaphorically, Neo must now assert and prove his manhood and heterosexuality via physical prowess and courage, in order to earn the respect of Morpheus and the other Zionists. Morpheus pummels his new recruit, rather effortlessly dominating him. Then Neo has to jump from one building to another, and falls to the ground, symbolically dying, to be reborn as a warrior, capable of the "manly" feats of mastering his fears, fighting skills, and inner- and physical strength. Homosocial birth brings to dominance Neo's supposedly innate, warrior might. Morpheus' devotion is so strong to Neo that he eventually offers to give his life for him (a returned favor), as a love relationship would warrant. Neo's passage into manhood is long and arduous. Since masculinity is contingent on a however constantly shifting demand, he must continuously pursue it.

The only way for a man to earn it forever is to sacrifice his life, as in war, which Neo proceeds to do. He winds up saving the life of kidnapped Morpheus toward the end of the film, rescuing him from the evil clutches of the agents. By saving Morpheus, Neo has symbolically killed him as leader (Harbrechter, 2006), thereby committing a metaphoric patricide, reinstating the archetypal masculine qualities of stoicism, self-reliance, and ultimate autonomy (Gosse, 2009b; Pollack, 1998, pp. 23-25). In this scene, we see how the tortured Morpheus appears to receive something like virility from Neo, the White man. Roles have been reversed. In this way, Neo has asserted dominance over the Black man; the protégé has become the master, thus reaffirming White power, and his prerogative to gain the damsel in distress, the most sought after female, Trinity.

Ultimately, Neo progresses from becoming "The One" an anagram of his name, "Neo," to the ultimate archetype of traditional masculine heroism, "alone/alone" or "one" man against evil, a Jesus-line savior who follows what may be the "one" or major rule for males—sacrifice yourselves for others, particularly females, and you may just win their love, and social acceptance.

#### CODA

Viewed anew from a queer perspective on sexuality as well as a sympathetic, yet academically rigorous view of boys' and men's place in the gender order (Gosse, 2010b; Young, 2007), *The Matrix* may be re-read as a futuristic and matriarchal film, in which female characters live safer, more protected, and more stable lives and identities, as opposed to the male characters who are continually putting their lives at risk to protect, serve, and avenge them, while experiencing life altering revelations and transformations that upset their sense of self, reality, and psychological and physical security in society. Moreover, *The Matrix* can be viewed as a catalyst for examining alternate realities in which men live and struggle to find more settled and accepted masculine identities, and sense of agency, in an age where traditional hegemonic masculine traits occupy a progressively precarious site of contestation. Although situated in a veneer of patriarchy, for there are no evil female agents, women characters such

as the Oracle and Trinity hugely influence and indeed mastermind the unfolding of the plot towards a nebulous victory, for they manipulate the thoughts and actions of the protagonist, Neo, and that of secondary characters such as Morpheus, the spurned Cypher, and the sacrificial, more nerdy digital warriors, Mouse and Tank, who never fully reach Nietzschean *Übermensch* status before getting killed.

Increasingly, Western culture prizes brains over brawn, and communication and interpersonal skills (Rosin, 2010) rather than a dive-in, give 'em hell attitude typical of traditional action films redolent of the "Boy Code" (Fine, 1999; Pollack, 1998, p. 23-25) valuing brute strength, aggression, and lack of emotionalism. What consequences does this have for boys and men? As Freire suggests, oppression is most complete when it is not even recognized (2000).

The premise of boys' and men's hegemonic power, commonly framed within feminist discourses of patriarchy, must be rigorously questioned. Compared to girls, boys receive more negative attention from teachers, dislike school, are more often victims of bullying and assault, take fewer advanced placement courses, assume fewer leadership roles in extra-curricular activities in high school, drop out of school, and commit suicide in far greater numbers (Gosse, Parr, & Kristolaitis, 2010; Zheng, 2009). Men occupy the most hazardous jobs in society (Farrell, 2005; Staff, 2008), die much earlier than women, account for a majority of the homeless (Farrell, 2007), attend university in fewer numbers (Frenette & Zeman, 2007), and increasingly are minorities in the most prestigious professions—education, law, and various branches of medicine (Finley, 2007; Hoff Summers, 2007). Are men, and women, clinging to dualistic and increasingly outdated gender stereotypes, reflected in action films but not reflecting current manifestations of power in society at large?

*The Matrix's* nerdy, technologically savvy, socially inept, pretty boy anti-hero, may pass beyond the bulky, meathead Rocky or Rambo soldier-type of the 1980s and 1990s, albeit the former does eventually transform, or revert, into the equivalent of the latter. The film does show evolution in staging female warriors such as Trinity and Switch, but also lapses into the typical "damsel in distress" leitmotif that endures in most movies today. Increasingly, chief action hero protagonists are female.<sup>8</sup> All of these women action heroes slaughter scores of men in these films but rarely women.

I propose that the current phenomenon of women action heroes, taking on what have traditionally been seen as hegemonic masculine traits (brute

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<sup>8</sup> This applies widely from the martial arts assassin "The Bride," played by lanky, blonde Uma Thurman in *Kill Bill, Vol. I* (Tarantino, 2003) and *II* (Tarantino, 2004), deadly Alice in the *Resident Evil* (Mulcahy, 2007; Witt, 2004), played by former supermodel Milla Jovovich, as well as her similar warrior role in *Ultraviolet* (Wimmer, 2006), and likewise with the violently vengeful Aeon Flux, played by former model Charlize Theron (Kusama, 2005), to the various assassins played by celebrated beauty Angelina Joli, including her roles in *Lara Croft: The Cradle of Life* (Bont, 2003), *Lara Croft: Tomb Raider* (West, 2006), *Wanted* (Bekmambetov, 2008), *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* (Liman, 2005), and *Salt* (Noyce, 2010).

strength, stoicism, lack of emotionality, extreme and gory physical violence) signifies two major cultural trends: (1) a shift towards acknowledging women's increased power in society, and (2) an indication of men's decreased sense of empowerment, since men now frequently (i) occupy the "man in distress" position in many of these films, (ii) are physically and emotionally weaker than the female action hero, (iii) are utterly besotted and a servant of women's will, and/or (iv) occupy the position of the one-dimensional malevolent antagonist. None of these new male roles can be assimilated with the hegemonic male power postulated throughout gender theory.

Towards the end of *The Matrix*, now a fully transformed and victorious warrior, Neo, like a converted Anthony de Mello follower (1992, p. 133), chides the ruling agents with glib Eastern philosophy:

I believe deep down, we both want this world to change. I believe that the Matrix can remain our cage or it can become our chrysalis, that's what you helped me to understand. That to be free, you cannot change your cage. You have to change yourself. (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1998, p. 125)

As society continues to evolve, as conceptions of historical gender and identity roles increasingly unravel, it will be interesting to see whether hegemonic traits associated with capitalist "ruling," may transform beyond the persistent controlling, violent, and bloody vent of gender, whether male or female. How might these new traits then be reinvented, represented, and reinterpreted in cinema and popular culture? Can subtle psychological manipulation be equally acknowledged as salient elements of power, over the historical panacea of gender? How can the pull of sexual and sensual shades of power be better understood? How might policing of boys and men's (and girls' and women's) masculinities—especially for those who do not confirm to gender, racial, class, sexual orientation, mobility/physical prowess, communication, and sundry identity expectations—be better studied, and thus, indeed, *transformed*?

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