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ABSTRACT

A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF MASCULINITY AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGE MALES

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Northern Illinois University, 2016
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The purposes of this grounded theory study were to explore how traditional-aged community college males experience masculinity and to examine how they engage with community college support systems. Eleven diverse participants engaged in three interviews each in which they were asked to reflect on their definitions of masculinity as well as their activities on and off campus. Open, axial, and selective coding methods were employed, and a new theory emerged. The new theory suggests that the participants' hesitation to make concrete educational decisions is related to their resistance to manhood. Findings implicate the need to engage faculty in the support of male students who find themselves in an important transitional stage of development. A reexamination of current national community college policy trends is also implicated. Recommendations for academic personnel, students, and parents are made, and suggestions for further research are given.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
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A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION OF MASCULINITY
AMONG COMMUNITY COLLEGE MALES

BY

MARIANNE FONTES
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Mary Beth Henning

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DEDICATION

To my children, Madeline and Mitchell; they will always be my most important teachers

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Despite educators' and policy makers' best efforts, the American higher education system is having difficulty graduating students. Of those who began taking classes in a public higher education institution in 2008, approximately half (51%) graduated within five years of beginning (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). The percentage is only slightly better when examining graduation rates after six years—56% (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). Community college personnel are experiencing even more difficulty when it comes to completion. Only 15% of community college students graduated with a degree or certificate within five years, despite 80% expressing a desire to do so within two years (Jenkins & Fink, 2015). Graduation rates are dismal for Black and Latino students, with only 38% and 47%, respectively, graduating from public four-year universities after six years from enrollment date (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Only 26% of Black students and 35% of Latino students ever graduate from a two-year college (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Discussions centering on low graduation rates in general and poor performance of students of color in particular have been ongoing and consistent for the past forty years (Kuh et al., 2006; Nora, 2002; Pascarella & Terenzine, 1991; Tinto, 1993) and have garnered the attention of local, state, and national policy makers. The conversation, however, is just beginning regarding the trend of underperformance specific to college males. In 2007, 34% of males compared to 42% of females graduated from public and private universities within

four years of enrolling (Sax, 2008). The discrepancy between the two genders decreases at the five-year and six-year marks; however, female graduates still outnumber men by at least 5% during these time frames (Sax, 2008). Despite robust fire science, criminology, welding, and mechanics programs (traditionally male-driven fields) at community colleges, females graduate at a rate of six points higher than male students (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Among all racial groups, women outpace men in college enrollment and graduation (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Not only are males struggling to finish college in a timely manner, they are also having difficulty with social issues as well. Males are responsible for over 80% of theft and vandalism on campus and 90% of violence and sexual assault cases (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). College males are more likely to be intoxicated on campus and be involved in drug and alcohol-related incidents at residence halls and other college living environments (Harper & Harris, 2010). Historically, when women struggled with persistence and engagement, the academy was quick to point to institutionalized sexism as one of the causes (Capraro, 2004). When discussing low performance of students of color, institutionalized racism is identified as a contributing factor. As educators encounter low performance among males, however, “the academy is quickly putting its hands up: *we do not have an explanation*” (Capraro, 2004, p. 23). It seems that college administrators are hesitant to admit that a group that has historically experienced privilege academically (White males) are struggling in that setting.

Student development practitioners and researchers argue that a misunderstanding of male identity contributes to a lack of effective programming for college men (Harper &

Harris, 2010; Laker & Davis, 2011). Namely, the misunderstanding stems from an archaic belief that the ways in which young men behave are part of their nature, thus out of anyone's control. The assumption that male behavior is out of anyone's control does little to address the needs of male students. Laker and Davis (2011) contend that studies exploring the intersection of masculinity and higher education are needed in order to help this population of students. The current study is one such study, as it explored the ways in which traditional-aged community college males experience masculinity and examined how they engaged in community college support systems.

Problem Statement

“Ohio Teenagers Found Guilty of Rape” (*NY Times*, Mar. 17, 2013)

“Yale Fraternity Chant About Rape” (*The Chronicle of Higher Ed*, Oct. 16, 2010)

“Virginia Tech Shooting Leaves 33 Dead” (*Washington Post*, Apr. 16, 2007)

“Florida A&M Hazing Incident Turns Deadly” (*NY Times*, Mar 1, 2012)

“Study: 23% of Women Sexually Assaulted in College” (CNN, September 15, 2015)

“At Colleges Women Are Leaving Men in the Dust” (*NY Times*, July 9, 2006)

The headlines above are a small sampling of incidents and patterns related to college-aged men. Despite the alarming information above, little attention has been paid to exploring why males are disproportionately more likely to violate school conduct codes, break the law, and drop out of college (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Males continue to overwhelm university judicial offices, expulsion hearings, and drop-out statistics, but very few people ask, “Why Men?” Rather, parents, teachers, administrators, and others who interact with

young men rely on phrases such as “boys will be boys” to justify negative behavior. Instead of explaining the phenomenon of boys’ and men’s behavior, “boys will be boys” implies that their behavior is essential, leaving unexamined the *reason* why they make the choices to begin with.

Deciding that men just can’t help themselves because they are men allows these behaviors to continue, putting in danger young men and everyone else with whom they may have a relationship. Specifically, women have a chance of being harmed if men’s behavior continues to go unexamined in a meaningful way. A closer look at young men’s gender identity reveals that their biological “maleness” may not be inherently violent or sexist; rather, they are socialized very early to avoid appearing weak, accept violence as a part of life, and engage in sexist behaviors, which could lead to incidents like the previously mentioned headlines.

Conceptual Framework

Male identity theories developed by O’Neil (1981) and Kimmel (1996) and Connell’s (2005) theory of hegemonic masculinity served as conceptual frameworks for this study. A unifying concept of these theories is the understanding that gender roles have been narrowly defined for men, and they, like women, are restricted in their expression of gender and are often physically and psychologically harmed by those restrictions. Additionally, considering that the participants in this study were between the ages of 19 and 21, the theory of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000) served as a conceptual framework for this study.

Because this study was situated in the context of higher education, prominent student affairs theories provided a framework for understanding males in this context. The three theories that were explored are Chickering and Reisser's (1993) theory of identity development, Astin's (1999) theory of student involvement, and Baxter Magolda's (2001) learning partnership model. These three theories were selected not only for their widespread presence in college and university policy but also because they lend themselves well to providing the foundation for male development programs. Each theory will be explained in more detail in the following chapter.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purposes of this study were to explore how traditional-aged community college males experience masculinity and to examine how they engage with community college support systems. Ultimately, a theory emerged that explains the process of defining masculinity for these participants and opportunities to support these students were revealed. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What meanings do traditional-aged community college males make of their masculinity?
2. How do traditional-aged community college males describe their relationships and activities with males and females on and off campus?
3. How do traditional-aged community college males describe their experience when using campus resources and engaging in campus programs?

4. How do traditional-aged community college males negotiate accepted masculine gender norms with their own concept of masculinity?

Significance of the Study

Recently, scholars have conducted qualitative studies that examine the intersection of masculine gender roles and college-aged males in order to better understand behaviors in which college men often engage. Specific behaviors include excessive drinking, sexist behaviors, and violence (Davis, 2002; Edwards, 2007; Harris, 2008). Although those studies provided insight into the gendered behaviors of college men, they are limited to the perspectives of fraternity members, athletic team members, and otherwise more visible students on campus. Furthermore, the bulk of peer-reviewed, published studies have been conducted with four-year university students, leaving out the voices of community college and trade school males. Additionally, because most of the researchers in the field of masculinities studies are male, a female researcher perspective may provide nuanced insights into the experiences of college males generally and community college males in particular. Overall, the lack of studies that examine the experiences of community college men hinders meaningful assessment of this population.

This study, as well, provided insight into the effectiveness of current policy decisions underway within the community college system. Recently, there has been an increased focus on the two-year college and its role in the community. The Obama Administration as well as numerous non-profit organizations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, have allocated resources for improving the outcomes of community college students. The renewed

interest in the community college has engendered new global policy that serves to define philosophy and practice with the community college system. In 2009, a non-profit organization, Complete College America, was formed with the mission to “significantly increase the number of Americans with a quality career certificate or college degree” and to “close attainment gaps for underrepresented populations” (Complete College America, 2016). In order to achieve their mission, they have enlisted the help of hundreds of colleges in 37 states that have pledged to employ specific strategies outlined by the consortium. Although Complete College America does provide some guidelines about how best to reach its goals, individual colleges can shape their programs to fit the needs of their specific populations. Because the participants of this study were drawn from a Complete College America alliance institution, this study provided insight into the effectiveness and appropriateness of the organization’s policies and practices.

Delimitations

I am currently employed at the college where the study took place and from which the participants were drawn and, thus, had ample access to the potential participants and to the interview spaces. According to the literature on masculine identity (Edwards, 2007; Harper & Harris, 2008; Kimmel, 2010), young men are concerned with how they will be perceived by other men and often restrict themselves to less than honest expressions of their feelings. Considering this, it was possible for me, as a female, to elicit more straightforward responses. I created an honest and respectful environment prior to the interview sessions in order to alleviate any discomfort the young men may have experienced around sharing personal

information with me. Finally, I was committed to grounded theory methodology, so the lack of an agenda on my part was a delimitation.

Assumptions

Among my assumptions and biases that may have influenced the study is the belief that these young men identify as male and that they, when asked, will be able to define what it means to be a male. I assumed that they would be familiar with the concept of gender, specifically masculinity. Additionally, I assumed that many young men experience conflict when attempting to conform to established gender roles. I also assumed that men would make different, healthier choices alone than they would in a group. Additionally, I believed, were it not for the fear of some consequence, men would be freer to express emotion, including fear and sadness. I also had the assumption that most men that I would interview would present hypermasculine traits or would have reported engaging in risky behavior associated with hypermasculinity. Furthermore, I assumed that participants would find the community college environment supportive and would, if given the chance, take advantage of campus resources. I continually reflected on my assumptions and shared my questions with my peers who work with community college male students in order to check for biases that may have been inherent in the questioning.

Definitions

In order to provide clarity within the study, the following concepts are defined:

Community College—A two-year public institution that grants certificates, diplomas, and associate degrees.

Gender Identity—A person's private sense of one's own gender, often described as one's sense of being male, female, or other.

Masculinity—A set of qualities, characteristics or roles generally considered typical of, or appropriate to, a man (Reeser, 2010).

Student Affairs—A division of higher education concerned with the overall wellness of students, including their social, physical, mental, and emotional health. Student affairs personnel can include counselors, advisors, psychologists, and anyone who is engaged with students outside of the classroom setting.

Organization of the Study

This grounded theory study is organized into six chapters. The first chapter provides an overview of the study, including the significance of the study and relevant research questions. Chapter 2 clarifies conceptual frameworks, and Chapter 3 explores and reviews the important literature in the field. I chose to include a separate chapter for the conceptual frameworks because the expansive topic utilizes theories from gender studies, masculinity studies, identity studies, and higher education. The research design, including details about data collection and analysis, is explained in the fourth chapter. Results from the interviews

dictated by the grounded theory research design are shared in Chapter 5. Finally, Chapter 6 explains the grounded theory that emerged from this study and discusses the findings, implications, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Most would agree that men have historically experienced gender privilege and, as a result, their gender has been relatively invisible (Kimmel & Messner, 2010). In other words, the fact that men are men doesn't matter in daily life because it is thought that men experience no limitations because of it (Kimmel & Messner, 2010). To the extent that the male gender role was examined, it was deemed positive because it encouraged behaviors associated with independence, honor, hard work, and strength. Beginning in the early 1980s, however, these traits have been re-evaluated and criticized for potentially causing conflict and strain for men. O'Neil (1981), Kimmel (1996), and Connell (1995, 2005) contend that men who do not conform fully to socialized gender roles experience oppression and limitations. Furthermore, masculinity is now being understood to be as complex and varied as femininity.

In this chapter, theories from the field of masculinity will be presented, as will pioneering theories about college-aged men and their relationship to masculinity. These theories provided the context for this study on the intersection of community college males and masculinity. One of the purposes of this study was to examine the support systems utilized by community college males. In order to help give insight into the structure of those systems, prominent student affairs theories provided a framework for understanding males in this context and are reviewed in this chapter. Additionally, considering that the participants of this study were between the ages of 19 and 21, the theory of emerging adulthood (Arnett,

2000) is explained in this chapter. Consistent with grounded theory methodology, which allows for the conceptual frameworks and literature review to be revisited after analyzing the results of the study, Arnett (2000) was added to this chapter.

Hegemonic Masculinity

Rather than define masculinity as a character type or behavioral norm, Connell (2005) focuses on processes and relationships whereby women and men express their gendered lives. Connell argues that masculinity can only be “briefly” defined as “simultaneously a place in gender relations, and the practices through which men and women engage that place in gender, and the effects of these practices in bodily experiences, personality, and culture” (p. 71). Both masculinity and femininity reflect social practices in the way gender is ordered. Connell (2005) identifies a three-fold model of the structure of gender: power, production, and emotional attachment. Connell (2005) uses these structures to explain masculinity intersections between race, class, and sexual orientation. By the second edition of *Masculinities*, Connell (2005) acknowledges that it had become more commonplace to recognize multiple masculinities, such as Black or homosexual; however, Connell warns of a danger in oversimplifying. Indeed, there is not only *one* Black masculinity or *one* homosexual masculinity. In examining relationships between multiple masculinities, Connell (2005) recognizes the “hard compulsions under which gender is configured” (p. 76) and explains the pleasures and pains of a gendered experience.

Utilizing Antonio Gramsci's concept of hegemony related to class relations, in which a group maintains a leading position in social life, Connell (2005) gives us the following definition of hegemonic masculinity:

The configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (p. 77)

At any given time, one form of masculinity above others might be praised in American culture. These forms may not represent a specific shape, size, or look but are often expressed through Hollywood leading men or popular athletes. Connell's (2005) assertion that men who do not conform fully to the accepted embodiment of masculinity become victims of patriarchy (hegemonic masculinity) is reminiscent of O'Neil's (1981) conclusions about the consequences of not behaving within the boundaries of socially accepted gendered norms.

David and Brannon (1976), Levant et al. (1992), Mahalik, Good, and Englar-Carlson (2003), and O'Neil (1981) developed frameworks that explain gender norms that men are encouraged to follow. Taken in their totality, these frameworks detail restrictive behaviors that encourage suppression of emotion, violence, risk taking, and heterosexuality. Mahalik, Locke, et al. (2003) explain that in addition to social situations, "observing how popular men and women act" (p. 3) influences men's perceptions of gender norms. A cursory glance of media portrayals of masculinity and an analysis of role models that boys and men emulate reveal a consensus of masculine norms valued in America. Superheroes, sports figures, and leading men represent self-reliance, strength, and toughness. They suppress their emotions (except anger), and they never back down from a fight. They are heterosexual, violent, risk-

taking adventurers who always get the girl. These norms represent a glorified form of masculinity that entices men to engage in a myriad of behaviors in pursuit of this ideal.

The pressure to live up to these norms can cause negative consequences for men, which O'Neil (1981) calls "gender role conflict," or GRC. O'Neil defines GRC as conflict that occurs when "rigid or restrictive gender roles learned during socialization prohibit a person from using one's human potential" (p. 204). O'Neil explains that when faced with restrictive norms that do not allow free expression of self, a person has two choices: conform to the accepted norms or "combat and resist" (p. 204) those norms. Both choices can be problematic for the individual and those around him.

O'Neil (1981) calls the oppression of men by rigid gender role socialization the "masculine mystique" (p. 205). O'Neil understands that this is difficult for men to believe and accept because they have been socialized to be sexist and "many of their attitudes, values, and behaviors have never been challenged or analyzed" (p. 205). A synthesis of assumptions associated with the masculine mystique is:

- Men are biologically superior to women.
- Masculinity is the superior form of gender identity.
- Masculine power, dominance, competition, and control are essential in proving one's masculinity.
- Vulnerabilities, feelings, and emotions in men are signs of femininity and should be avoided.
- Communication that emphasizes human emotions and feelings are feminine and should be avoided.

- Sex is a primary means to prove one's masculinity.
- Vulnerability and intimacy with other men are to be avoided.
- Men's work and career success are measures of their masculinity.
- Men are vastly different and superior to women in career abilities. Men's primary role is that of the breadwinner and women's is that of the caretaker of home and children.

(O'Neil, 1981)

The assumptions listed above can be summarized into one troubling belief and attitude: Men are superior to women and, thus, characteristics and traits associated with being female are to be devalued and restricted. O'Neil calls this "the fear of femininity" (1981, p. 206). As defined by O'Neil, the fear of femininity is a "strong, negative emotion associated with feminine values, attitudes, and behaviors" (O'Neil, 1981, p. 206) that can lead to harmful behaviors against self and others. O'Neil (1981) contends that the assumptions that have led to oppression of women also work to permit men to oppress *other men* who exhibit feminine traits. Because this study involved male students, an understanding of gender role conflict (O'Neil, 1981) and hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995) is important. In addition to theories about masculinity, the theory of emerging adulthood informed this study and is explained in the next section.

Emerging Adulthood

Until 2000, psychologists, social behaviorists, and educators mainly relied on Erikson (1950, 1968) to understand their clients' and students' psychosocial development. According to Erikson (1950), one's psychosocial development ended at adulthood, which was at

approximately age 18. After Erikson (1968), Keniston (1971) theorized that those in their late teens and early twenties were in a period of *youth*, which was the time of “role experimentation between adolescence and young adulthood” (Arnett, 2000, p. 470). Youth, as described by Keniston (1971), was abundant with “tension between self and society” (p. 8) and when continued role experimentation took place. Considering that Keniston (1971) conducted his research during an era of upheaval (Civil Rights legislation had just passed, and many young people were protesting the Vietnam War), Arnett (2000) argues that Keniston’s (1971) stage of youth “reflects a historical moment rather than any enduring characteristic of the period” (Arnett, 2000, p. 470). Believing that *youth* was too ambiguous a term with too many connotations to sufficiently describe the late teens and early twenties, Arnett (2000) developed the theory of emerging adulthood as a distinct demographic. Because the participants in the current study fall between ages 19 and 21 and the findings revealed behaviors associated with this stage of development, Arnett (2000) provides in an important framework for this study.

Although there is a great deal of demographic variability reflected in individuals during this time period, the unifying feature of emerging adulthood, according to Arnett (2000), is instability. Emerging adults experience a high degree of residential instability, moving in and out of their parents’ house a number of times during those years, and they also experience substantial changes in their school attendance. Although 70% of emerging adults enroll in higher education, fewer than one-quarter earn a four-year or two-year degree in their desired timeline, and almost half never finish (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). Those recent statistics would not be a surprise to Arnett, who explained that for emerging adults,

“college education is often pursued in a nonlinear way, frequently combined with work and punctuated by periods of non-attendance” (Arnett, 2000, p. 471). Even after graduating, many emerging adults either pursue an advanced degree or otherwise take their time in joining the workforce (Arnett, 2015).

A key feature of emerging adulthood, and one that is in direct opposition of Erikson (1950), is that it offers a time for exploration, namely identity exploration. Erikson (1950) argued that the main identity crisis was raised and resolved in adolescence. The popularity of this argument has shaped identity research for the past several decades. Although successful in providing a framework for identity development, most researchers agree that Erikson was incomplete and that identity was rarely solidified by 18 years old (Arnett, 2000; Keniston, 1971; Levinson, 1978; Valde, 1996; Whitbourne & Tesch, 1985). According to Arnett (2000),

Identity formation involves trying out various life possibilities and gradually moving toward making enduring decisions. The process begins in adolescence but takes place mainly in emerging adulthood. (p. 473)

Arnett (2000) continues to argue that the emerging adulthood provides opportunity for exploration in love, work, and education. With regard to education, Arnett (2000) explains that emerging adults “try out various possibilities that would prepare them for different kinds of work” (p. 474), noting that college students often change majors more than once, especially in their first two years of college.

Another notable finding in Arnett (2000) is that emerging adulthood enjoys distinction among other theories of development in its subjectivity. People in this stage of development neither see themselves as adolescents nor as adults. Before Arnett (2000), society had no name for this state of limbo in which 18- to 25-year-olds found themselves. While the

expected factors contributed to their undefined state, such as not being settled into a career, not being married, and not having established a stable residence, these did not consistently rank at the top of reasons why the participants did not identify as adults. The top three criteria for the transition to adulthood were accepting responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent (Arnett, 2000).

Emerging adulthood is characterized by a high degree of instability and change. This stage of development often accompanies identity, work, and educational exploration and is often the time when a person transitions from dependency to self-sufficiency. Because 70% of emerging adults enter college after high school (Arnett, 2015), both four-year and two-year institutions have important roles to play in their transition to adulthood. Considering the implication of the theory of emerging adulthood and that this study examines masculinity in the context of higher education, this study provides a closer examination of the intersection of those two conditions. In an effort to contextualize this intersection, the next section explores relevant educational theories related to identity development.

Student Affairs

Student affairs administrators, faculty, and staff have long been concerned with students' maturation and personal development. Dating as far back as the inception of the American university, college personnel have been expected to manage the social and co-curricular lives of their students (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). The earliest need arose from student discipline issues as well as from students' displeasure with school policy (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). Students were involved in clubs and activism with no administrator or faculty

to oversee these organizations, and when issues arose, there was no clear means to address unrest and problems. As universities began to diversify at the turn of the century and move into the modern era, college personnel agreed that students had a wide array of needs that extended beyond the classroom; thus, the student personnel, or student affairs, profession was born (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). The student affairs profession was aligned with the original concept of higher education which was concerned with the “development of the individual to be a well-rounded, balanced citizen who had a foundation in education and social and moral convictions” (p. 64). Reflecting the racial and gender discrimination of the time, national organizations for student affairs professionals were fragmented to represent the different groups of people (Dungy & Gordon, 2011). Even though these affiliates still exist, they have strong ties to the most recognized student affairs organizations—the National Association of Student Affairs Professionals (NASPA) and the American College Personnel Association (ACPA).

As higher education institutions continued to evolve, so did the student affairs profession. In addition to assisting students with housing and financial aid needs, administrators were concerned with the development of students and turned to accepted development theories to guide their profession. In a review of every major research report since 1967 on the role of higher education and student development, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) defined four categories of theories that were instrumental in informing student development at higher education institutions: psychosocial theories, cognitive theories, typology theories, and person-environment interaction theories. Two categories—

psychosocial and cognitive—are salient when seeking to foster healthy development for students, and they provide the bulk of current theoretical contexts for student development.

Student development theories begin with the assumption that student learning and growth involve much more than acquisition of knowledge and skills and that higher education institutions are responsible for guiding students through various developmental stages and crises. Student affairs professionals believe that administrators, faculty, and staff must collaborate to create environments throughout campus that foster student growth and give them opportunities to apply new learning. Although it is difficult to find two institutions that practice student development in the same way, elements of the following three theories are present on almost any campus. Chickering and Reisser (1993), Astin (1999), and Baxter Magolda (2001) have defined popular theories that call for student-centered college environments. Each theory is relevant, as well, when thinking about the success and wellness of college-aged men and relevant to this study, which seeks to examine the support systems utilized by community college males.

Chickering and Reisser

Expanding upon Erikson's (1980) notion that stabilization of identity is most likely to occur during young adulthood, Arthur Chickering was the first to develop a theoretical framework that could be used to guide development of college-aged students. The framework, updated with Linda Reisser in their book *Education and Identity* (1993), proposes seven vectors of identity development. The seven vectors are: 1) developing competence, 2) managing emotions, 3) moving through autonomy toward interdependence, 4) developing

mature interpersonal relationships, 5) establishing identity, 6) developing purpose, and 7) developing integrity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). The authors not only theorize about identity development; they also propose that human development should be the “organizing purpose” of higher education (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 265). Through their institutional objectives, institutional size, faculty-student interaction, curriculum, teaching practices, diverse student communities, and student affairs programs, institutions can either foster development of their student body or impede its process.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) explain how each factor can contribute to and influence student development. In the area of faculty-student interaction, for example, the authors cite research to support the hypothesis that,

When student-faculty interaction is frequent and friendly and when it occurs in diverse situations calling for varied roles and relationships, development of intellectual competence, sense of competence, autonomy, and independence, purpose and integrity are encouraged. (p. 269)

Because one of the first steps for achievement of the third vector (moving through autonomy toward interdependence) is redefining relationships with parents, faculty can provide access to an open adult who is willing to share experiences with students and help them navigate their development. Another factor that contributes to enhanced development, according to Chickering and Reisser, is being a part of positive friendships and student committees. Based on the literature, the authors hypothesize that when students are “encouraged to form friendships and participate in communities...development across all seven vectors is fostered” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 275). Regardless whether the communities take place in residence halls, fraternities, or within informal friendships, they have potentially lifelong

ramifications, and the interactions will naturally cause students to grow mentally and emotionally. Furthermore, “the sense of self is strengthened when students encounter different kinds of people and situations” (Chickering & Reisser, 1993, p. 396) through friendships and communities.

Chickering and Reisser (1993) were the first theorists to apply human development theory specifically to college-aged students and to delineate stages—or in their case “vectors”—of student development. They also connected positive student development to key factors within and throughout the institution and by doing so offered an unabashed critique of the way personnel have thought about the purpose of higher education. *Education and Identity* continues to challenge administrators, faculty, and educational program professionals to think critically about the barriers to student growth inherent in the structure of the academy.

Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement

Another important theory relevant to the student affairs profession and mission is Astin’s (1999) theory of student involvement. Originally published in 1984, Astin based his theory on findings from an earlier longitudinal study on college dropouts (Astin, 1975). In the 1975 study, Astin found that factors that contributed to a student staying in college suggest involvement (i.e., on-campus residence, on-campus employment, and membership in fraternities and sororities). Astin (1999) defines student involvement as the following:

Student involvement refers to the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience. Thus, a highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends much time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students. (p. 518)

Astin (1999) theorized that in order to be effective, every aspect of the college—from location of buildings and dormitories, to teaching pedagogy, to extra-curricular activities—must be conceptualized from the student’s point of view. According to Astin (1999), the most valuable resource an institution has is students’ time, and the more time students devote to a particular activity or task, the more successful they will be. Although a student-centered environment might be more mainstream now, the notion that a college president ought to consider the proximity of the dormitories to the largest lecture hall was radical at the time and remains controversial among administrators and faculty of the academy.

In developing his theory, Astin (1999) critiqued the accepted pedagogical theories of the time: subject matter theory, resource theory, and the individualized theory. The subject matter theory falls short because it posits that simply exposing students to certain content will lead to student growth and development. According to Astin (1999), a “serious limitation of this theory is that it assigns students a passive role in the learning process” (p. 520). This approach, which results in mostly lecture classes, favors highly motivated students who are good listeners, note takers, and readers. Furthermore, the continued commitment to the subject matter theory, Astin argues, may be responsible for the difficulty in increasing success for students who are most at risk.

The resource theory of pedagogy is a favorite among more prestigious schools. Administrators at these institutions argue that the more resources they have—often defined by accomplished faculty, bright students, and a low faculty-student ratio—the better that growth, development, and learning will be fostered. Astin (1999) argues that the main problem with

this approach is its “focus on mere accumulation of resources with little attention given to the use or deployment of such resources” (p. 520). For example, after recruiting a well-published faculty member, administrators may not evaluate whether or not that person works well with students. An important flaw in the resource theory of pedagogy is that it fails to recognize students’ time as a valuable resource (Astin, 1999) and thus pays little attention to leveraging that time.

Perhaps the best of the three accepted pedagogical theories is the individualized theory, which seeks to identify content and methods that fit the needs of students individually. As opposed to a structured approach, the individualized theory emphasizes electives and choice. Proponents of the individualized theory tend to be administrators, faculty, and personnel who support development theories such as Chickering and Reisser (1993), discussed earlier in this chapter. Astin (1999) appreciates the goal of the individualized theory and its focus on students’ needs but critiques it for being too expensive to implement and “difficult to define with precision” (p. 521).

Astin (1999) argues that the theory of student involvement will “provide a link between what is emphasized in the three accepted theories and the learning outcomes desired by the student and professor” (p. 522). Rather than expecting that exposing students to content will cause them to learn it, the curriculum must require effort and investment (involvement) by the student to bring about learning and development. The theory of involvement encourages cooperative and active learning, which has potential to engage students who are at risk (Tinto, 1993). In contrast to the resource theory, the student involvement theory focuses less on what the instructor and institution do or have and more on

what the *students* do and their level of motivation (Astin, 1999). Instead of discounting the psychosocial development theories that have helped to shape the individualized theory, Astin explains that his theory is “qualitatively” different from developmental theories (p. 522). Although theories such as those defined by Chickering and Reisser (1993) focus on outcomes, the theory of student involvement is “more concerned with behavioral mechanisms” (p. 522), and Astin suggests that the approaches should be implemented together.

The theory of student involvement has many implications for faculty, administrators, counselors, and staff. With the theory in mind, faculty will focus less on content and technique and more on how the student is responding and interacting with the content (Astin, 1999). Institutions that adopt a student involvement theory will find that their counselors have a more important, expanded role. Counselors are in a unique position to work one on one with students and can more readily gauge a student’s level of investment in certain classes and activities. If the unified institutional goal is one of involvement, administrators, faculty, and counselors can evaluate their effectiveness by measuring the extent to which students are involved with the college experience.

Baxter Magolda’s Learning Partnership Model

Building upon theories of holistic identity development, Baxter Magolda (2001) conducted a 22-year longitudinal study in which participants described conditions at work and school that helped them transition from relying on others to trusting “their own internal voices” (King & Baxter Magolda, 2011, p. 216). Baxter Magolda (2004) calls this the journey to self-authorship. Participants in the study reported that they followed paths set out by

college personnel and parents as they entered college but soon discovered that they were not satisfied. Students then reported spending most of their twenties navigating the journey between relying on others' visions of themselves and trusting their own (Baxter Magolda, 2001). Not until their thirties did participants begin to author their own lives by first realizing that, while they could not control reality, they could control their reaction to it (Baxter Magolda, 2001).

Researchers applied Baxter Magolda's (2001) theory of self-authorship to studies on college students and found similar processes (see Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes & Kasch, 2007; Torres & Hernandez, 2007), inspiring Baxter Magolda to examine whether or not learning environments that foster movement toward self-authorship could be created on college campuses. As a result, Baxter Magolda (2004) developed the learning partnership model for higher education institutions. Troubled by the disconnect between learning and development as represented by separate departments and divisions on campus devoted to the two areas, Baxter Magolda (2004) explicitly connected the approaches in the learning partnership model.

The first step in connecting learning and development is to create "rich environments" (King & Baxter Magolda, 2011, p. 215) that can be shaped and structured for specific purposes. Examples of rich environments include study abroad programs, first-year experiences, senior capstone courses, and learning communities. A common element of these environments is that they not only give students new skills, but they allow space and time for skills and knowledge to be internalized by encouraging reflective activities such as discussion and journal writing (King & Baxter Magolda, 2011). The roles that the educator and learner play in these environments are also an important attribute of the learning partnership model.

The educator provides guidance and support while the learner directs his/her learning. The educator also challenges the learner to “develop internal authority” (King & Baxter Magolda, 2011, p. 217) by explicitly highlighting the complexity of the human condition. Some educators may be unfamiliar and uncomfortable with taking a “back seat” in the learning process, but when student learners are placed at the center of the learning experience, it becomes easier for educators to determine what they need to do to foster growth. Just as in Astin (1999), the components of self-authorship are closely related to the desired learning outcomes of most institutions and require that departments and divisions throughout the college have a firm grounding in student learning and development.

Summary

O’Neil (1981) explored masculine gender norms and their effect on men and their masculine identity and developed the theory of gender role conflict. Building upon O’Neil (1981), Connell (1995) explained hegemonic masculinity, a condition in which men are complicit in their own oppression. Both theories have implications for this study since the participants are male. Arnett (2000) studied both females and males ages 18-25 and their process of forming identity. Arnett defined emerging adulthood as the identity stage in which many college students find themselves.

The student affairs models reviewed have been used as frameworks when considering programs for males. For example, O’Neil and Crasper (2011) integrate Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) notion that identity development is the dominant issue for college men and demonstrate how gender role conflict affects the seven vectors of development. Laker and

Davis (2011) refer to Astin's (1999) student involvement theory to support the creation of on-campus men's groups. Still, without a comprehensive understanding of male development theory, academic and student affairs professionals can only go so far in helping college men reach their full potential.

Davis and Laker (2004) challenge educators to heed the "professional mandate" (p. 48) to design and implement educational and social interventions for men that consider male development theory. Just as studies on university males have helped to begin the conversation of how best to serve men at four-year institutions (Davis, 2002; Edwards, 2007; Harper & Harris, 2010; Harris, 2008), a study on community college males will inform personnel at two-year colleges about the specific circumstances that those males face. Although there may be overlap in the lived experiences of university and community college males, a study on the latter population might also illustrate important differences. In short, a study on community college males stands to reveal how community colleges can support this population of students.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

The following chapter reviews relevant literature related to masculinity and the community college and reveals how socially accepted masculine norms restrict men's full expression of self and how adherence to these norms encourages behaviors that are harmful to men and those with whom they interact. Studies will be presented that defend the claim that college men, in particular, experience stress and conflict while enrolled in school in order to live up to expected gender norms. Included in the literature review is information on current national trends of the community college and how community college males currently fare in the college setting. The review begins with studies that explore gender role conflict and behaviors associated with boys and men. The literature review then moves to an exploration of the intersection of masculinity and higher education and then, specifically, summarizes literature about community college males. After the results of the current study were revealed, literature related to the effect of faculty-student interactions on students' perceptions of their college was added. The literature indicates a need for studies specific to the population in this study.

Gender Role Conflict

In response to the need for a valid instrument to measure and assess men's personal gender-role attitudes, behaviors, and conflicts, O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, and Wrightsman

(1986) created the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS). The GRCS assesses men's thoughts and feelings about their gendered behaviors and the degree to which men are either conflicted or comfortable in particular situations. The researchers hypothesized that gender role conflict would be experienced by men in situations related to success, power, and competition and that men would experience conflict when pressured to restrict their emotions. The questionnaire was distributed to 527 undergraduate university men and contains in excess of 50 self-report items. The researchers found two significant patterns: men who reported themselves to be neither masculine nor feminine (undifferentiated) had significantly higher scores on both restrictive emotionality and lack of emotional response, and men who reported themselves as masculine scored higher on restrictive affectionate behavior between men and homophobia than did undifferentiated and feminine men. The results suggest that men experience gender role conflict whether or not they conform to gender roles.

Using the GRCS, Good and Mintz (1990) examined components of gender role conflict (success and power, restrictive emotionality, restrictive affectionate behavior between men, and conflicts between work and family) and its relationship to depression. The researchers found that adherence to traditional male roles was associated with higher incidence of depression. Four hundred and eighty-one undergraduate males took the surveys, and descriptive statistics showed all four components of gender role conflict to be significantly related to depression.

Building upon Good and Mintz (1990), Sharpe and Heppner (1991) conducted a similar study intended to further examine the relationship of gender role conflict and psychological well-being. One hundred and ninety male undergraduate students took the

GRCS along with several other instruments designed to measure levels of depression, anxiety, self-esteem, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction. The researchers predicted that gender role conflict would be negatively correlated with self-esteem, intimacy, and relationship satisfaction and positively correlated with anxiety and depression. With the exception of the hypothesis regarding level of relationship satisfaction, all of the other hypotheses were strongly supported. The results of Sharpe and Heppner (1991) suggest complexity between male gender roles and psychological well-being and indicate a need for further studies.

At approximately the same time that researchers were testing the GRCS, Eisler, Skidmore, and Ward (1988) developed a questionnaire to measure masculine gender role stress (MGRS). The questionnaire consisted of 66 items that contained scenarios that were potentially stressful for men, and the participants were asked to rate each item from stressful to extremely stressful. Examples of the scenarios include being outperformed at work by the opposite sex and telling someone that you feel hurt by what they said. The researchers predicted that men would be more prone to psychological stress in situations that required them to act in ways defined as feminine and/or as threatening to male control. Because the researchers intended to discover the ways in which men compared to women experienced stress due to masculinity, the instrument was distributed to both male and female participants. Results indicated that men experience far more stress than women when they have difficulty living up to masculine norms and when they find themselves in situations that require them to behave in a more traditionally feminine capacity (e.g., expressing emotion).

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, quantitative studies were conducted on university students that supported a link between adherence to masculine gender role norms

and lower psychological well-being (Eisler, Skidmore, & Ward, 1988; Good & Mintz, 1991; O'Neil et al., 1986; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991). Although important for understanding the correlation between masculinity and conflict, studies reviewed share several limitations. First, they were conducted on White undergraduates with a mean age of 19.5 years old. Second, all of the studies were quantitative, which suggests a need for qualitative research that explores how men make meaning of their gender roles. Additionally, even though participants were university males, the researchers did not purposefully examine the intersection of college identity and masculinity; the participants were just an easily accessible sample. Finally, these studies identified psychological states influenced by conformity or nonconformity to masculine norms; they did not examine behaviors associated with those states.

Behaviors Associated with Adherence to Masculine Norms

In addition to affecting psychological well-being, research supports that adherence to masculinity norms also negatively affects men's physical health and behavior. Two decades of research summarized and reviewed by Courtenay (2011) provide evidence that men's behavior is a major contributor to their overall poorer health and higher death rates. Examples of controllable behaviors that increase men's risk for disease, injury, or death include engagement in substance abuse, risk taking and reckless behavior, violence, and overall lack of preventative health and dental care. Considering some of the attitudes discussed earlier associated with masculinity norms (O'Neil, 1981)—such as not appearing weak and a belief of physical superiority—one can connect poor health choices to the socialization of masculine gender.

Because the literature in Courtenay's (2011) review assumed that the positive attributes of masculinity have been accepted by the majority, it did not expand on how some aspects of male gender socialization may lead to better health. The very same assumptions discussed above can be said to account for men being productive in work, committed to family, fearless in a crisis, and willing to join careers such as the military, fire-fighting, or law enforcement. Additionally, while helpful for the categorizing and understanding of attitudes and behaviors associated with masculinity norms, the studies and reports were based on men seeking psychological care or ones who volunteered for an assessment. The participants were White and in some cases were not asked about their sexual orientation. Even though Courtenay (2011) reviewed a robust sample of studies and reports related to masculine behavior, qualitative research was mostly absent from the review.

Intersection of Masculinity and Education

One arena in which the attitudes and behaviors of masculine norms is being played out is school. Male students at every stage of education, kindergarten through college, are responsible for over 90% of infractions involving violence, sexual harassment and assault, drugs, and theft on school campuses (Courtenay, 2011). Instead of critically examining the role gender socialization may play in the occurrence of violations, educators often institute stricter policies and punishments. And rather than problematizing the behavior, parents, educators, and the community often resort to the common cliché, "boys will be boys."

Pollack (1999), Harper and Harris (2010), Laker and Davis (2012), and Kimmel (1996, 2008) agree that the problem is larger and more systematic than any one boy or group

of boys behaving badly. William Pollack in 1999 introduced the “boy code” in his book *Real Boys*. Pollack spent over two decades interviewing and researching adolescent boys ages 8-11. He visited them on the playground, in their classroom, in the neighborhood, and in the therapist’s office. His goal was to discover why boys were disproportionately involved in harmful behaviors in and out of school. Pollack concludes that the “boy code”—a set of unspoken rules constructed by American society and reinforced at home and school—contributes to the problem with boys. One young man in his study summarized the boy code as “shut up and take it or you’ll be sorry” (Pollack, 1998, p. 5). Implicit in the code is emotional restrictiveness and the code of silence (shut up), not appearing weak (take it), and accepting the constant threat of violence (you’ll be sorry). The categories of the boy code are reminiscent of the assumptions theorized by O’Neil (1981) in that emotional restrictiveness is encouraged. Studying boys in their school environment as opposed to just the clinical setting added an important caveat to the findings: the boys in Pollack’s study expressed the worry that they would be judged or punished if they broke the code. Pollack explains that the use of shame by their peers for not adhering to the boy code is pervasive in school and within sports. He explains, “As soon as a boy behaves in a way that is not considered manly, he is likely to meet resistance” (p. 11), which may come in the form of humiliation or violence. Not only might boys feel internal stress or conflict for adhering to masculinity norms, but around their peers there can be real anxiety over the worry of being shamed or bullied.

Restricting emotions, not appearing weak, accepting violence (by either engaging in violence or not reporting it), and a fear of being ostracized by their peers are consistent with what Kimmel (2008) discovered when he researched young men ages 16-24. Kimmel

expanded the boy code to fit what he saw on high school and college campuses. “Guyland” is a place similar to the playgrounds of elementary school, but with more serious implications and a more explicit set of rules that dictate relationships with women and sex. The popularity of the slang phrase, “bros before hos,” which suggests that young men should put other young men before any girl and implies that all girls are whores, exemplifies an aspect of the “guy code” accepted by college-aged men (Kimmel, 2008). Furthermore, the consequences of not appearing weak can have more dangerous implications than in elementary school. In 4th grade, for example, “not appearing weak” might just mean agreeing to play tackle football without pads or not backing down from a fight, but in college it might mean drinking a bottle of whiskey in 20 minutes. Kimmel (2008) supported studies (referred to earlier in this review) by O’Neil et al. (1986), Good and Mintz (1990), and Sharpe and Heppner (1991) who found that gender role conflict is experienced by college men, and it negatively affected their psychological well-being.

In the last decade and in response to calls for more qualitative studies on gender identity of college men (Capraro, 1994), several scholars conducted and published qualitative research examining masculine identity among university males. Using O’Neil (1981) as a framework for his study, Davis (2002) found that adherence to masculine norms hindered college men’s ability to communicate effectively, which could impede their development and success. His research also provided evidence that “college men were fearful about how other people might interpret their behavior” (p. 517), supporting O’Neil’s (1981) “fear of femininity.” The fear of femininity posits that men avoid behaviors that might be viewed as feminine or gay by their peers. A student in Davis’s study said, “You know if at the bar

someone bumps into you, you have to be the tough guy. You can't have guys thinking weird things about you. You have to prove yourself" (Davis, 2002, p. 516). A worry of being judged by one's peers is consistent with O'Neil's (1981) "gender role conflict." The voices of Davis's participants suggest a need for campus programming to address the topic of male gender identity. The findings of Davis's study encouraged me to include research questions that more directly explore the intersection of higher education and masculinity.

As it was one of the first qualitative studies of its kind, Davis's work influenced later scholars in the field. Edwards (2007) interviewed ten diverse college men and used open-ended interviews to explore what it means to be a man. The participants in Edwards's study expressed a limited view of what it means to be a man but included descriptors such as competitive, respected, in control, and aggressive. The men in his study further disclosed that a worry of being thought of as gay led to their masculine behaviors. Also influenced by Davis (2002), Harris (2008) conducted a similar study on a more diverse population. (Davis interviewed only White men, whereas Harris's participants were ethnically diverse). Like Kimmel (2008), Harris found that the men in his study were conflicted about performing hypermasculine behaviors—such as engaging in excessive drinking, sexism, and violence—yet continued to participate with their peers in these activities for fear of being judged or "losing masculine status" (Harris, 2008, p. 467). The men in Harris's study reported that the students who chose to limit their drinking were called names like "sissy" and "weak" (p. 467). Referring to O'Neil (1981), Harris connects his findings to the theory of the Fear of Femininity. Harris also encourages college personnel to provide interventions that allow men to reflect upon their gender identity and performance.

Davis and Laker (2004; Laker & Davis, 2011), Harper and Harris (2010), and Harris and Edwards (2010) contend that administrators have been reluctant to implement programs for men since, historically, they have been seen as the privileged gender (Harper & Harris, 2010). In their book, *College Men and Masculinities: Theory, Research and Implications for Practice*, Harper and Harris (2010), identify five flawed assumptions about the privileged position of college men and have termed it the Model Gender Majority Myth:

1. Every male student benefits similarly from gender privilege
2. Gender initiatives need not include men unless they are focused on reducing violence and sexual assault against women
3. Undergraduate men do not encounter harmful stereotypes, social and academic challenges, and differential treatment in college environments because of their gender
4. Male students do not require gender-specific resources and support
5. Historical dominance and structural determinism ensure success for the overwhelming majority of contemporary college men. (Harper & Harris, 2010)

From this perspective, Harper and Harris (2010), Laker and Davis (2011), Kimmel (2008), and Edwards (2007) encourage exploration of best practice to promote a more comprehensive treatment of gender issues on campuses. The recommendations by Davis and Laker (2004), Edwards (2007), Kimmel (2008), Harper and Harris (2010), and Laker and Davis (2011) have been piloted and implemented nationally in large universities.

Although many of the studies did include diverse participants, further research is needed on students with intersecting identities (e.g., Latino and homosexual). Participants in

the studies of college men were also overwhelmingly affiliated with fraternities, athletics, or leadership groups, so may not represent the student population as a whole. Additionally, as shown by Sallee and Harris (2011), male participants may respond differently depending on whether the interviewer is male or female. With a male interviewer (Harris in this case), the men were more likely to use expletives and explicit sexual language when talking about women. The men softened their language and refrained from using expletives when interviewed by Sallee, a female. Since most of the recent studies that examine the intersection of masculinity and higher education have been conducted by men, more studies are needed with a female scholar at the helm. As a female researcher, my study has the possibility of illuminating nuances of gender performance in specific situations (e.g., when a woman is present). Missing altogether from the studies of college males is a representation of community college and trade school male perspectives. Researchers have shown that the profile of community college males differs from university males (Bush & Bush, 2010; Wood, 2013). Studies are needed to help answer the question of how community college men experience their gender and the ways in which the community college environment can support their development.

The Community College

More than six million students nationally enroll in community college, making it the largest part of the nation's higher education system (AACC, 2014). Through their mission statements, most community colleges express a commitment to open access and affordability. Comprehensive in nature, American community colleges offer on-the-job training,

certificates, associate degrees, and transferable credit. Recognizing the need of America's workforce to obtain a certificate or degree in order to be competitive in a global economy, the Obama Administration has committed to allocating an unprecedented amount of resources to community colleges and set a goal that by 2020 "America will once again have the highest proportion of college graduates in the world, and community colleges will produce an additional 5 million graduates" (The White House, 2016, p. 1). The focus on degree attainment and the specific goal set forth by President Obama is known as the College Completion Agenda (College Completion Challenge, 2014). The completion agenda is supported by the American Association of Community Colleges as well as many nonprofit organizations, such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Lumina Foundation (College Completion Challenge, 2014). The completion agenda has translated into a widespread alliance, Complete College America, which is supported by 37 states and hundreds of community colleges. Because of its extensive support, Complete College America's agenda has shaped the direction of many community colleges throughout the nation.

Complete College America

Complete College America, an alliance between a state's governor and its colleges and universities, has identified five strategies designed to dramatically increase graduation rates. Those strategies are: 1) performance funding, 2) co-requisite remediation, 3) 15-credit hours for full-time requirement, 4) structured schedules, and 5) guided pathways to success (Complete College America, 2016). Although some of the strategies have garnered more

acceptance than others, most of the 37 states in the alliance employ a majority of the strategies. Among community colleges, co-requisite remediation, guided pathways, and structured schedules are being implemented with the most frequency (Complete College America, 2016). Two strategies that are relevant to this study are guided pathways and structured schedules.

Guided pathways and structured schedules are strategies that are gaining in popularity among community college presidents and boards. Although they are listed as two separate strategies, they frequently work together. Guided pathways encourage students to select “whole programs of study in which students choose coherent academic majors” (Complete College America, 2016, p. 5) early in their college career. At Ace College (a pseudonym) in suburban Chicago, where the current study took place, students are asked to choose such a pathway during orientation week. Students at Ace and elsewhere are expected to remain on their chosen path unless given special approval by a counselor or academic advisor to change. In order to enforce adherence to a pathway, students are warned of the financial and time consequences if they choose a course outside of the pathway. Additionally, in order to make it easier for students to stay on track, necessary classes in specific pathways are scheduled in blocks of times that work best for most students. Pathways and structured schedules work together to expedite the decision-making process for students; indeed, all a student has to choose is his whole program of study, and the courses are selected and scheduled for him. Proponents of these two strategies claim that they increase graduation rates while decrease the average time it takes a student to graduate. Flagship programs at community colleges, such

the one at the City University at New York, boasts graduation rates three times higher than the national average (Complete College America, 2016).

Because many of the initiatives of Complete College America have yet to be scaled up, it remains to be seen whether or not these programs work for all students. To be sure, the hope is that such a large consortium of professionals would have carefully considered the needs of the diverse students who attend community college while developing these strategies. Perhaps, for example, students of color or adult students might demand a slightly different approach than the current trends outline. A study dedicated to male students might reveal the need for a more varied approach.

Faculty-Student Interactions

Based on their review of several thousand studies of college student development, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) leave little doubt about the importance of positive faculty-student interactions on students' connection to their institutions. Tinto (1993) is one of the most widely cited and well-known studies that corroborates Pascarella and Terenzini (1991). Tinto (1993) suggests a correlation between favorable early interactions between faculty and students and increases in retention. More recently, Umbach and Wawrzynski (2005), after analyzing two data sets in order to explore the relationship between faculty behavior towards students and students' perceptions of their campuses, found that "positive perceptions of supportive campuses increased where faculty members interacted frequently with their students" (p. 164). Their findings were not limited to interactions within a course and included more informal interactions outside of the classroom.

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) is an instrument that asks questions about institutional practice and student behavior that are correlated to student learning and retention. Williams-Chehmani (2009) relied heavily on CCSSE's data set to study the effects of faculty-student interaction within the community college. Williams-Chehmani (2009) reviewed data from 10,000 part-time and full-time community college faculty and found that part-time instructors were less likely to interact outside of the classroom than full-time instructors. The lack of outside interaction resulted in a lower rate of retention, satisfaction, and learning for students (Williams-Chehmani, 2009). Furthermore, the CCSSE responses, as analyzed by Williams-Chehmani (2009), revealed that community college students desire more interaction with faculty outside of the classroom, and the findings were consistent with Pascarella and Terenzine (2005), which showed that learning continues to occur during informal interactions with faculty. As a result, Williams-Chehmani (2009) recommends more opportunities for professional development among both part-time and full-time professors, centering on the importance of informal faculty-student interaction.

Understanding that The Completion Agenda as stated by the Obama Administration is dependent upon the work of community colleges to help students attain their goals, Rhoades (2012) provides a critique of current community college policy measures, namely of the focus on student graduation. Rhoades (2012) contends that such a focus can be "counterproductive in terms of faculty/student contact outside the classroom" (p. 9), which he claims is a key factor in various positive student outcomes. Rhoades continues:

Despite all that we know about the significance of student contact with faculty in fostering positive student outcomes, current policy proposals evidence remarkably little acknowledgement or focus on the positive role of professors. (p. 10)

To make matters worse, according to Rhoades (2012), professors are being framed as the problem, as policy makers quote the cost of instruction as one of the main causes of the budget constraints.

The Community College Male

Unfortunately, not all students who attend community college achieve their goal. Traditional-aged males, in particular, drop out at higher rates than their female counterparts (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). African American and Latino men, especially, are completing at a much lower rate than females and White males (U.S. Department of Education, 2013). The relatively low achievement rates of men of color prompted the Lumina Foundation for Education to fund a study that explored possible reasons for the achievement gap (Gardenhire-Crooks et al., 2010). Through the voices of 87 community college men of color, the researchers discovered the participants' perspectives on motivations for attending college, encounters with prejudice, and identities as men of color. Interestingly, even though the men expressed experiencing negative stereotypes based on their race or ethnicity, they rejected the idea that such attitudes affected their behavior as a student. Instead, the men expressed that their identity as men, "characterized principally by self-reliance...exerted a powerful influence on their ability to engage in college" (p. iii). The men explained that when they acted in ways that reinforced traditional masculine norms—such as not seeking financial or academic help—their chances of success lowered. The participants also said that they would continue to prioritize work over school because being able to provide for their families was at the core of their identities as men (Gardenhire-Crooks et al., 2010). The results suggest

a correlation between male identity and lower academic performance. Although this study illuminated the voices of community college men of color, it is important to note that it was neither peer-reviewed nor published in a reputable journal. Also, the study was limited to the perspectives of men of color who tested and enrolled in developmental/remedial math courses and may not represent other college men of color.

To the extent that studies have been conducted that explore masculinity among community college males, they have been primarily focused on men of color. Flowers (2006), Harper and Harris (2008), Bush and Bush (2010), Wood (2013), Harper (2009), and Wood and Harris (2013) have begun building a foundation of research on African American community college males; however, a recent literature review on community college men of color (Wood & Harris, 2013) found a scarcity of published articles on the topic. Of the only 16 peer-reviewed articles, none was found in what the authors consider “mainstream” higher education journals (p. 176). The situation is bleaker when attempting to find published articles on community college men in general. Harris and Harper (2010) provide a small window into the lives of the community college male. The study profiled four racially diverse community college males and showed they experienced conflicts related to masculine identity while enrolled in community college. The experiences of the four men were consistent with gender role conflict (O’Neil, 1981), which was discussed earlier in this chapter.

Recently a more thorough study on community college men was dissertated. Niemi (2014) explored the relationship between video game playing and male student development at two-year institutions. As a result of interviewing 13 participants, Niemi (2014) found a correlation between video game play and the ways in which his participants form masculine

identity. Namely, Niemi (2014) discovered that reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity within video game play influenced participants' definition of masculinity. Importantly, Niemi (2014) exposed a gap on the literature concerning the role of two-year institutions in the development of male students. Niemi (2014), too, exposed that the bulk of studies on college men have been about four-year university males.

In response to the lack of empirical data on community college men, Wood and Harris (2013) developed the Community College Survey of Men (CCSM). The survey is intended to measure five factors about community college males: 1) sense of belonging, 2) degree utility, 3) self-efficacy, 4) intrinsic interest, and 5) racial/gender climate—and the degree to which these factors affect academic success. In the pilot study, the CCSM was distributed to 595 ethnically diverse male students of a large metropolitan community college. The findings supported the hypothesis that underlying factors contributed to the academic success (or lack thereof) of college men. Even though the creation of the instrument was informed by research on men of color, the results indicated that it is applicable to men from various backgrounds. Wood and Harris (2013) call for further studies using the CCSM and more studies on the validity and reliability of the instrument.

Summary

For the past 30 years, evidence from empirical studies has supported the theory that masculinity has been narrowly defined and that men are psychologically harmed by the limited accepted ways to express their gender (Eisler, Skidmore, & Ward, 1988; Good & Mintz, 1990; O'Neil et al, 1986; Sharpe & Heppner, 1981). Recently, scholars have

conducted qualitative studies that examine the intersection of masculine gender roles and college-aged males in order to better understand behaviors in which college men often engage, such as excessive drinking, sexist behaviors, and violence (Davis, 2002; Edwards, 2007; Harris, 2008). Although those studies have provided insight into the gendered behaviors of college men, they have been limited to the perspectives of fraternity members, athletic team members, and otherwise more visible students on campus. Furthermore, the bulk of peer-reviewed, published studies have been conducted with four-year university students, leaving out the voices of community college and trade school males and, thus, missing an opportunity to examine how the community college can support these students.

Just as studies on university males have helped to begin the conversation of how best to serve men at four-year institutions (Davis, 2002; Edwards, 2007; Harper & Harris, 2010; Harris, 2008), a study on community college males will inform personnel at two-year colleges about the specific circumstances that those males face. While there may be overlap in the lived experiences of university and community college males, a study on the latter population might also illustrate important differences. Additionally, female researcher perspectives are needed to help provide nuanced insights into the experiences of college males generally and community college males in particular. Overall, the lack of studies that examine the experiences of community college men hinders meaningful support of this population.

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

The purposes of this study were to explore how traditional-aged community college males experience masculinity and to examine how they engage with community college support systems. The exploration was guided by the following research questions:

1. What meanings do traditional-aged community college students make of their masculinity?
2. How do traditional-aged male community college students describe their relationships and activities with males and females on and off campus?
3. How do traditional-aged male community college students describe their experience when using campus resources and engaging in campus programs?
4. How do traditional-aged male community college students negotiate accepted masculine gender norms with their own concept of masculinity?

The following chapter provides an outline of the methodological approach that was used for this study.

Research Design

Rationale for Qualitative Research Methodology

Most previous studies that explored masculinity in the context of higher education (Eisler, Skidmore, & Ward, 1988; Good & Mintz, 1990; O'Neil et al, 1986; Sharpe &

Heppner, 1981) were quantitative in nature. Although these studies helped to inform and define college-aged men's notions of masculinity, they did not fully explore the intersection of higher education and masculinity because they were not designed to purposefully do so. Furthermore, the researchers were not intentional in their selection of participants because they simply invited students who were readily available by virtue of having been enrolled in entry-level psychology courses or were patients of theirs in a clinical setting. Rather than relying on surveys and questionnaires to discover truths about a topic as personal as gender, Davis (2002) employed interview methods to examine masculine gender identity and higher education. Through his study, young men's voices were heard and specific experiences were detailed. Qualitative inquiry seeks to discover the where, when, how, and under what circumstances behavior comes to be (Creswell, 2013). Through interviewing, especially, a researcher can understand "the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience" (Seidman, 2013). Because this study sought to explore how college-aged men define, experience, and construct masculinity within the context of higher education, a qualitative research design was best suited for this study.

Rationale for a Grounded Theory Methodology Study

Harris's (2008) and Edwards's (2007) grounded theory studies with college-aged men and masculinities inspired me to use the method for my own study. In each case, the researchers were able to develop a theory about how college-aged men make meaning of their masculine identities. One of the key theories that emerged in Harris's (2008) study was that campus environments influence masculinities in both positive and negative ways. Edwards

(2007) theorized that college-aged men feel the need to “put a mask on” (156) in order to measure up to others’ expectations of themselves. Both studies concluded that male-related bonding activities—namely athletics and fraternities—provide spaces for men to pressure other men into performing what they think is masculine behavior, such as misogyny, homophobia, and excessive alcohol consumption (Harris & Edwards, 2010). With the absence of fraternities and high-profile competitive sports, the community college atmosphere may not provide the same opportunities for men to engage in negative behaviors. Because there are virtually no studies on the intersection of masculinity and community college men, the field is ripe for a grounded theory study that seeks to explain how this population of men experience their masculine identity.

Grounded theory emerged in the 1960s as a result of research conducted by its founders, Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss. In the seventh edition of their seminal work on the method, Glaser and Strauss (2012) claim that prior to their method most research in the social, behavioral, and health sciences concerned itself with validating or more rigorously testing an existing theory. When introduced, grounded theory provided a method whereby “the discovery of theory from data—systematically obtained and analyzed in social research—could be furthered” (p. 1). The authors contend that researchers have failed to “explicitly refer to their work as generating theory” (p. 17) because they have been “too busy formulating their ideas within the rhetoric of verification” (p. 17). Grounded theory, then, challenged the accepted deductive system of theorizing (which called for theory first and data second) by encouraging data collection prior to development of a theory derived from the data.

Arguably, what sets grounded theory apart from other qualitative methods (aside from the goal of developing a theory) is its data analysis process. Glaser and Strauss (2012) posit that the use of comparative analysis *during* data collection and *while* coding is at the center of generating sound theory. While the authors concede that most research methods use comparative analysis, they argue that when used to generate a theory, comparative analysis is systematically different. When used to verify a theory, for example, researchers compare data and developing themes with a hypothesis that was formed based on existing studies.

According to Glaser and Strauss (2012), continually seeking to verify or discount an existing theory “hinders generation of a new theory” and “stifles” (p. 43) the researcher. Instead, when researchers use Glaser and Strauss’s (2012) constant comparative method of joint coding and analysis, they are more likely to discover and recognize emerging theories from the data.

As a former student of both Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, Kathy Charmaz has much respect for the origin and evolution of grounded theory. Both Glaser and Strauss discuss theory as if it is somehow hidden in the data waiting for a researcher to discover. Unlike her mentors and consistent with the view of agency, Charmaz “assumes that neither data nor theories are discovered” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 10); rather, researchers “construct grounded theories through past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices” (p. 10). Furthermore, in keeping with the notion of agency, Charmaz emphasizes that only the participants can bring their perspectives based on their lived experiences; thus, the data is subject to both the participants’ and the researchers’ interpretations. As such, theory is co-constructed by participants and researchers, and researchers must “acknowledge that the resulting theory is an interpretation” (Charmaz, 2006,

p. 130). A danger in this is that the researcher may have difficulty separating her biases and preconceived ideas from the research. Throughout the study, I maintained my own presuppositions, and I confronted how my interpretation may be affecting the research. The next section explains factors of which I remained aware and were careful not to allow them to unduly affect my research during this study.

Positionality

Researchers and participants share the experience of research. As such, the identities of both researcher and participants have the potential of affecting the research. The nature of qualitative research necessarily places researchers as the data collectors, and it is reasonable to believe that any former experience researchers have had with the topic may influence the research process. In order to decrease their level of influence and bias, researchers are asked to acknowledge and examine their own positionality. Positionality is the “space in which objectivism and subjectivism meet” (Hall, 1990, p. 18). Positionality is neither a limitation nor delimitation to a study; it simply is what it is. My family of origin and my position as a full-time faculty member at the institution where the study took place are the two principal aspects of my positionality that were necessarily and importantly acknowledged and examined throughout.

I first became interested in the topic of masculinity and its intersection with higher education when, as a community college English instructor, I noticed male students performing at lower rates than their female counterparts. I also noticed that male students were less likely to take advantage of my office hours, study groups, and peer interactions

outside of the classroom. Although I did not interview any of my current and former students, the participants were aware that I was a faculty member at their institution, and I was aware that they may be hesitant to respond honestly with their thoughts about the college. I created an atmosphere that was friendly and casual and was careful not to ask questions about the college until after the second interview—after which they felt more at ease.

Because my family of origin has been heavily influenced by patriarchal cultural attitudes in which gender roles were established along traditional lines (i.e., men worked outside of the home and women were expected to do all of the childcare and domestic duties), I have had a skewed perspective on masculinity and femininity. Throughout my adulthood, I have had to examine and re-examine my propensity to define masculinity in stereotypical terms, which usually included traits associated with hypermasculine behavior. I noticed that when I was asked to select participants for a mock study on masculinity during my doctoral coursework, I chose men who presented with hypermasculine traits, like those supported by my family of origin. In order for that obvious bias to not intrude on my research, I asked for volunteers from large lecture classes and randomly selected participants from a stack of applicants. Additionally, I regularly kept a journal of memos—explained more thoroughly in Chapter 6—which encouraged reflexivity throughout the research process. Peer debriefing, discussed later in this chapter, also aided in ensuring that my biases did not overly influence the final report.

Setting and Participants

The setting where the study was conducted and from which I drew the participants is a mid-sized, midwestern suburban community college, referred to here as Ace College. Ace College is a comprehensive community college in a suburb of Chicago. Ace College enrolls approximately 45% male and 55% female students. Of Ace's 16,000 students, they identify as 56% White, 18% Hispanic, 9% Asian (including Indian), 5% Black and 12% as "other."

Participants met three criteria in order to be selected for the study: 1) identify as male, 2) enrolled as a full-time student at Ace College, and 3) between the ages of 19 and 21. Potential participants were asked to fill out a short questionnaire in which they self-disclosed ethnicity, socioeconomic background, and sexual orientation (see Appendix A). The final sample consisted of ethnically diverse, heterosexual males, aged 19-21.

Participants were recruited directly from the researcher in the form of announcements made in Psychology 101 and English 101 classes across campus. Snowball sampling was also used to recruit two of the participants. Approximately 30 participants were recruited for this study, but data were gathered until what has traditionally been referred to as "saturation" (Glaser, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Saturation is defined as the point at which "gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 113). For this study, saturation was reached at the point in which 11 participants began to respond with similar answers that represented a repeat of categories and themes. Because a researcher who conducts a grounded theory study is interested in following the data wherever it may take her, the saturation criterion worked well with the organization of the study. Not all grounded

theorists agree with this definition or with the concept of saturation, however (see Charmaz, 2006). Instead, Charmaz (2006) suggests to “be open” to what is happening in the field and be willing to grapple with it” (p. 115). I allowed the data to determine what came next while being aware of the point at which saturation took place. In order to achieve this, I engaged in memo and journal writing, which is discussed later in this chapter.

Data Collection

The meaning people make of their lives is represented by the language they use and the stories they tell. A well-thoughtout interview structure and session can get to the heart of how participants experience and make meaning of their world. Successful interview sessions will provide “rich data that reveal the respondents’ perspectives” (Bogden & Biklen, 2007, p. 104). Additionally, interviews are the preferred data collection method of grounded theory (Creswell, 2013). In order to thoroughly answer all of my research questions, I conducted three semi-structured interviews of varying lengths that followed the three-interview series recommended by Seidman (2013).

As described by Seidman (2013), the first 60-minute interview focused on the participant’s life history. I asked the participants to reflect on their experiences with families, school, and work. Putting the participants’ experiences in context was especially important for my study as I sought to answer how the participants describe themselves as male and how they define masculinity (see Appendix B). During the second 60-minute interview, I asked participants to give details about their present lived experience with the topic. This interview session got to the essence of Research Questions 2 and 3, which ask students to describe

relationships and experiences on and off campus, including the campus resources they had utilized as well as connections they had made with college personnel (see Appendix C). The final interview, which took about 30 minutes, asked the participants to reflect on their past and present experiences in order to make meaning of them. By asking participants to explore the past and clarify details of the present, the conditions for reflection were created (Seidman, 2013). Arguably, the participants are making meaning throughout all three interviews, but in the third, “making meaning is at the center of our attention” (Seidman, 2013, p. 23). The final interview integrated the participants’ experiences and reflection in order to answer my first research question: What meanings do traditional-aged community college males make of their masculinity? (see Appendix D). Even though the three-interview series is often used in phenomenological studies, the technique mirrors the decision-making process a grounded theorist is committed to. Seidman (2013) discusses the value of the three-interview series:

Each interview comprises a multitude of decisions that the interviewer must make. The open-ended, in-depth inquiry is best carried out in a structure that allows both the participant and the interviewer to maintain a sense of the focus of each interview in the series. (p. 23)

Balancing focus and flexibility is crucial with grounded theory as well as with the three-series interview technique. According to Seidman (2013) one of the most important aspects of interviewing is to let “the questions follow, as much as possible, from what the participant is saying” (p. 84). During the course of the interviews, I freely asked follow-up questions that naturally arose from the participants’ responses.

With a true grounded theory design, researchers must be willing to go where the data takes them (Glaser & Strauss, 2012), and I remained open to the possibility of conducting

observation of any consistent setting described by participants. As it turned out, the interviews were thorough enough to reach saturation.

Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded with a voice recorder. While transcribing, I was sure to transcribe every word the participants stated rather than paraphrase because to “substitute the researcher’s paraphrasing...of what the participants say...is to substitute the researcher’s consciousness for that of the participant” (Seidman, 2013, p. 117). Because of the time-consuming nature of transcribing one’s own interviews, Seidman (2013) recommends that researchers hire an outsider transcriber. Not only is this recommendation costly, it seems that some of the interview might be lost if an outsider were tasked with transcribing. In the event that an interviewee’s voice is muffled or low, the researcher would have a better chance of deciphering what was said because of her familiarity with the context and process. For these reasons, I transcribed all of the data.

Grounded theorists study data as it is collected and begin to sort and synthesize data through coding (Charmaz, 2006). With an emphasis on what is happening in “the scene” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 3), grounded theorists employ three main levels of coding. Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Charmaz (2006) recommend that researchers use open, axial, and selective coding. Open coding allows a researcher to create categories freely as opposed to being limited by predetermined labels. Although there are several approaches to open coding, I used *in vivo* coding (Saldaña, 2013) to inform which categories to create. *In vivo* coding, also known as “verbatim coding” or “literal coding” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 91), is a process by which

the researcher creates categories based on the interviewees' exact words. A commitment to in vivo coding can help the interview data come alive during analysis. Approximately 20 categories were established during the open coding phase of analysis. An example of the categories that emerged during the first round of coding include "comments about father," "difference between a boy and a man," and "view of self" (see Appendix E).

As recommended by Strauss and Corbin (1998), I used axial coding during the second round of coding. While open coding separates data into pieces, axial coding brings data back together again (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This method was helpful in determining the common characteristics of the new theory that emerged from my grounded theory study. Once the open codes were established for this study, I began relating codes to one another. For example, I re-examined the open code "comments about father" and linked that language to the code "comments about other males." Those codes were eventually connected to "difference between a boy and man," which was instrumental to informing a theory about the participants' developmental stages (see Appendix F). As common characteristics emerged, new data was selectively coded (see Appendix F). According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), selective coding is "the process of selecting the core category and...validating the relationships between categories" (p. 116) in order to formalize those relationships into theoretical frameworks. Selective coding eventually led to a theory that explained how the responses and behaviors of the participants were connected to the purposes of this study. A core category that emerged during the selective coding phase of this study was "responsibility." Evidence used to support this category is presented in the next chapter.

Once coding, integrating, and defining a theory are complete, researchers are ready for the final stage—writing their theories. Glaser and Strauss (2012) explain:

When a researcher is convinced that his analytic framework forms a systematic substantive theory, that is a reasonably accurate statement of the matters studied, and that is couched in a form that others going into the same field can use—then he can publish his results with confidence. (p. 113)

Ideally, the coded data and a series of memos and themes will have coalesced into a substantive or formal theory that adds to the literature on the topic. Given the findings of this study and what they expose regarding the limits of current community college policy trends and the significance of the faculty-student relationship, I added studies about faculty-student interaction to the literature review. The new theory that emerged from this study is discussed in Chapter 6.

Verification Procedures

Memo Writing

Memo writing is a “pivotal intermediate step between data collection and draft writing” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). Not only does memo writing work to elicit new ideas and insights, it also prompts a researcher to “analyze data and codes early in the research process” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). Memo writing ensures that relevant data is remembered and nuanced analysis is not forgotten. Grounded theory asks that researchers study their memos early on as well as revisit and revise memos throughout the process. Time and distance allow researchers to discover gaps, check the veracity of their data, discover crucial next steps, and move their research to a deeper analytical level. I wrote memos immediately after each interview, while

transcribing, and after each read-through. The memos helped tremendously in not allowing my biases to go unchecked and in keeping me on track before and during data analysis (see Appendix G). Especially, the memos helped clarify the emerging grounded theory.

Peer Debriefing

I also utilized peer debriefing as a method to establish validation and trustworthiness of my research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The purpose of peer debriefing was to allow for my colleagues to challenge my interpretation of the data. Four colleagues who had experience with male students were recruited for this endeavor. I asked the lead advisor of an on-campus men's group, the student conduct code officer, a counselor in the center for new students, and a faculty member in the fire science program (a program with 90% male participants) to check my interpretations. After asking important questions that challenged any potential biases that may have been present because of my own history (with which two of the peer-reviewers were familiar), my colleagues concluded that my interpretations were reasonable and astute.

Member Checking

Additionally, I used member checking to verify my data. Member checking is an accepted and often expected means of verifying data analysis. Member checking involves presenting the analysis to the participants as a means of validating findings (Saldaña, 2013). In addition to confirming research, revisiting with the participants allows for time to elaborate on already established codes. Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain that it is only fair to share with the participants what researchers have learned and how they have interpreted what

participants have said. For a grounded theory study, the feedback session has the opportunity to clarify the veracity of the emerging theory. During the recruitment phase of the project, I told participants that there would be a review session at some point after the last interview. Within a week of transcribing the last interview, I invited participants to a casual meeting in a central location on campus to review the transcription of all of the interviews. Ten of the 11 participants engaged in the member check process. The participants found my transcription correct and coding to be plausible.

Summary

The purposes of this study were to explore how traditional-aged community college males experience masculinity and to examine how they engage with community college support systems. Because the field is emerging and there are few studies that specifically explore the intersection of masculinity and the community college, my study has a possibility of leading to a new theory on the topic. To that end, I selected grounded theory methodology to conduct my study. With carefully constructed interview guides, flexible coding methods, and solid verification procedures, my study is a rich addition to the existing literature in the field. The results of my study are explained in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

Summary of Methodology

Over the course of three interviews each, 11 participants responded to semi-structured questions guided by the research questions. Data were analyzed using in vivo coding (Saldana, 2013), which allowed for the exact language of the participant to be used in order to establish broad codes. During the second round of coding, axial coding (Saldana, 2013) was employed in order to categorize data based on thematic similarity. Consistent with the grounded theory approach, a new theory was developed as a result of close data analysis of the participants' responses.

Participants

Eleven community college males between the ages of 19 and 21 participated in the study from April-June 2015. The participants self-identified their ethnicity, socio-economic status, and sexual preference (see Table 1). Four participants identified as Asian, three as Hispanic, three as White, and one as Black. Eight were 19 years old, one was 20, and two were 21. All students were at least in their second year at Ace College, with two students scheduled to graduate within the semester during which data were collected. Only one student, Frank, identified as "wealthy," while the others identified as "middle class." All

students identified as heterosexual. Although participants provided nuanced explanations of their experiences, there were several consistent categories that emerged which were used to inform an eventual grounded theory on masculinities and the community college. In this chapter, the actual language of the participants is used to support the various categories of responses. Participants were asked questions that helped them to reflect on masculinity and on their views toward their education. Participants were also asked about their perceived level of support on and off campus.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Ethnicity	SES	Sexual Preference
Randy	19	White	Middle Class	Heterosexual
Frank	19	Asian (East Indian)	Wealthy	Heterosexual
Sanjay	19	Asian (East Indian)	Middle Class	Heterosexual
Shawn	19	Asian	Middle Class	Heterosexual
Jay	19	African-American	Middle Class	Heterosexual
Antonio	19	Hispanic	Middle Class	Heterosexual
Hector	19	Hispanic	Middle Class	Heterosexual
Len	19	Asian	Middle Class	Heterosexual
Carlos	20	Hispanic	Middle Class	Heterosexual
Steven	21	White	Middle Class	Heterosexual
Tommy	21	White	Middle Class	Heterosexual

Views of Masculinity

The purposes of the study were to explore the ways in which traditional-aged community college males experience masculinity and to examine how they engage in community college support systems. In this study, four main factors influenced the participants' meaning of masculinity: 1) messages from fathers, 2) messages from other males, 3) societal expressions of masculinity, and 4) relationship with mother.

Messages from Father

Only three participants reported overall favorable opinions of their fathers. For the rest of the participants, their relationships with their fathers ranged from non-existent to strained. Their fathers, nonetheless, shaped their views of what a man should or should not do, even if those messages were inconsistent. When asked to describe a masculine role model, Randy said:

I guess it used to be my dad. My dad was always a proud guy. He was born in Sicily, so you know, the way he was important to me and I wanted to be like him. He was a role model, but that changed when I found out what he did to my mom.

Randy explained that his dad and mom divorced when an extra-marital affair came to light. He described his dad's behavior towards his mom as "aggressive" and "mean." When asked if he thought his dad's behavior was appropriate for a man, he said, "No, and it totally changed the way I saw him. I never wanted to be like him." For Randy, his dad's behavior informed his notion of masculinity in a contradictory fashion, and it became clear throughout the second interview that he was still examining it even five years after his parents divorced:

It seems hard to say that I don't have a good relationship with my dad, and I guess I do, too, but we've always had a strained relationship even though he was supposed to be there for me. But it's hard to think about because of all of the stuff we went through. I'm supposed to grow up like him and it wouldn't be so bad...his flaws...but what he chose to do with them was bad, so I'm not sure.

Randy's father's message led to a general feeling of hypocrisy about the world around him.

He expressed regret that part of the process of becoming a man was realizing that the world was not what it seemed when he was younger. He said, "You have all of these ideas that the world is perfect then you grow up...and it's hard to have a perfect world when you're older."

Randy did not know how to describe what he meant by a "perfect" world.

Tommy, too, reported a discrepancy between his dad's actual behavior and the ideals expressed by his father. He hesitantly identified his father as a role model. After saying, "I guess my dad is a role model," he explained that he and his dad recently got into a fight about his dad's girlfriend:

That was one thing that I didn't respect with him. What he did was disrespectful and it was about material things which I don't respect. He got mad at her and still bought her the things she wanted.

Tommy did not feel comfortable sharing more specific details about the argument between his dad and girlfriend but offered that his dad had also treated his mom poorly. He said, "My dad was a little aggressive with my mom, too." Immediately, though, Tommy said that something he admired about his dad was that he taught him to "always treat a woman with respect."

Although Tommy did not describe his father's behavior as hypocritical, he continued to describe his father's contradictory behavior during the course of the interview. He said that it was a "man's responsibility" to treat a woman well and, while acknowledging that his dad did not always live up to that standard, he referred to his dad as someone with "good morals."

In separate interviews, Steven, Jay, and Shawn reported not having a relationship at all with their fathers. When asked why he did not speak with his father, Steven said, “Well, we have nothing in common. I mean what would I say to him? He doesn’t know me.” Steven explained that his parents divorced when he was 11 and that he lived fulltime with his mom. He did express a desire in the future to get to know his dad and said, “I should, I guess,” but was in no rush to do so. Similarly, Jay said he never knew his father, and he sometimes wondered if he should try to know him but does not see the point in it. Still, he questioned whether or not he should reach out. He said, “I mean, I’m supposed to, right? Well, that’s what people say, I’m supposed to. But he’s the man. Why doesn’t he reach out?” As Shawn’s father still lived in the Philippines, he asked, “How am I supposed to have a relationship with him? He is far away and has another family.” In addition to the dueling messages they have about whether or not they should have relationships with their fathers, framing their answers as questions may reveal that they are still making meaning about their fathers’ roles and what their relationships with them should be.

Three of the participants identified their fathers as positive role models and as men they admired. In all three cases, the participants defined masculinity as the behavior their fathers had exhibited. Frank’s father emigrated from India, and Frank admired him for his hard work and ambition. He said he looked up to his father because he “started working right away” and had “three or four jobs” in order to bring the rest of the family here from India. His dad directly told Frank that part of being a man was to work hard and provide for the family.

My dad is very supportive of what I do. This one time I got a bad grade, and he just told me to try harder. He told me that I had to get good grades so that I could have a good job and have a better life. He wants me to have a better life than he had. He said,

“I want you to have a better life for your kids later on.” I have to study harder so that my kids have it easy.

Still, Frank expressed some lack of clarity about how one was supposed to focus on school and work at the same time. He shared that his father never graduated high school because he began working at an early age. Frank attributed his family’s wealth (he was the only participant who identified as wealthy) to his dad’s hard work. He said, “The only thing I don’t understand is why my dad thinks school will help me make money; it’s not what he did.” Frank, like the other participants, perceived mixed messages about what it took to be a successful man from his father.

Another participant, Hector, seemed to have the closest relationship of all the participants to his father. He and his father share a love of soccer and are on the same team together. Hector described himself as a “leader” and said that he got that trait from his father. He said, “He’s a leader, too, and taught me how to be one.” When asked how he learned to be a leader from his father, he said that his father was the captain of the soccer team and taught him how to lead through soccer. Hector described his father in many other positive terms, including “hard worker” and “dedicated.” Even though he described an overall strong, clear relationship with his father, he still shared contradictory messages from his father’s behavior:

Since my dad is the captain of the team, he gets to see how I play. After the game we sit around and talk about how I played. He always points out what I did wrong and teases me about it. Don’t get me wrong, it isn’t mean, it’s just kind of like banter. But he does stuff wrong, too, and we never get to talk about that.

His father’s seemingly double standard created a question for Hector about his father’s stated desirable traits and his behavior. Later, Hector said that a value he learned from his father was to respect women. When asked whether or not his father adhered to that value, he said, “Yeah,

mostly.” When pressed, Hector changed his answer and said, “Yeah, he’s respectful.” Just like Tommy, Hector hesitated to expose the hypocrisy of his father’s behavior.

Of all of the participants, Carlos had the most awareness and acceptance of his father’s conflicting behavior. Rather than questioning the contradiction, he understood his father’s hypermasculine behavior to be at once unhealthy yet necessary. Carlos confidently stated that his dad was a role model but “for the wrong reasons.” He said:

He never cries, never yells, pushes the limits...gets no sleep. He can build a house, fix a car, paint, landscape, does electric work. He can do it all. And all of it is for us to have a good life. I mean, it’s not good to not sleep and to never cry, but it’s what has to be done so we can have a good life.

Carlos continued to speak of how difficult it has been for his family and him since his family emigrated from Mexico and expressed regret that the burden has fallen on his dad. He said that sometimes his dad “wasn’t the nicest person in the world but it’s easy to understand why.” He said that his dad was a “real man” because he knew when to “be quiet and when to speak and when to get work done.” Carlos’s nuanced understanding of the difficult choices that men sometimes have to make was atypical for the participants; nonetheless, he still reported contradiction within his dad’s behavior. He expressed that it would take time for him to figure out how to be “good to myself and other people” while being the one who “takes care of everyone.”

Based on the majority of the participants’ responses, masculinity, as defined by their fathers, was simultaneously something for which to strive as well as a thing to reject. Questions about acceptable male behavior abounded for those who had some sort of relationship with their fathers, as they had opportunities to compare their fathers’ words with

their actions. This was true even for those who did not have relationships with their fathers. For the participants, their fathers often provided the first glimpse of masculine gendered behavior, but they each had other males who shaped their concept of masculinity. The influence of other males is discussed in the next section.

Messages from Other Males

In addition to their fathers, the participants were each able to identify at least one other male who contributed to their definition of masculinity and who helped them define their own masculinity. Teachers, mentors, and coaches were mentioned, but overwhelmingly, the other male was either a step-father or uncle. In fact, the participants' uncles and step-fathers provided a model of a desired balance between boyhood and manhood. While these other males provided a more consistent definition of manhood than their fathers, the way they were described was more aligned with the participants' definitions of a boy rather than a man.

Boys and Men

Each participant was asked about his perceived difference between a boy and a man. The participants were then asked to place themselves on a point along their own "boy/man spectrum." The participants summarized their definitions of a boy by being unaware of his present condition or his future. Shawn humorously said, "A boy has no clue what he is doing," and Tommy said, "A boy just does what he wants, and at the same time does not know what he wants." Having little or no responsibilities was a theme of boyhood among all of the participants. According to Steven, a boy "still lives at home and doesn't have to pay for

anything,” and Len said that a boy does not have to worry about consequences because “he is not responsible for anything.” Frank explained the difference by sharing the difference between his younger brother and him:

If you’re a boy, you’re basically just goofing around all of the time, and you don’t know the difference between right and wrong. My brother is like that right now. He sometimes talks back to my parents and goofs off at school. Me, on the other hand, I know when I should be talking back to my parents and when I shouldn’t be. He, on the other hand, just does it when he feels like it.

In a separate interview, Antonio agreed, “A boy is someone who just enjoys himself and does goofy stuff.” Additionally, in their opinions, a boy was not asked to protect or care for others and, according to Jay, “he’s dependent in every way.” To illustrate the difference between a boy and a man (and to assert himself as a man), Carlos told the following story:

This summer our family was in South Dakota on vacation. On our first day there, we were hit by a tornado 5 miles away. Most of the boys went down to the basement and slept like nothing, while the rest of us stayed up the longest we could, pushing the boundaries of sleep to make some of the kids more safe. I stayed up three days to make sure everyone was safe. That’s how I knew the difference between a boy and a man.

Without exception, the participants spoke of boyhood as a freer time—a time in which they were cared for, had fewer responsibilities, and enjoyed a broader range of expression.

Except for Carlos, who saw himself more to the right of the continuum, all of the participants saw themselves in the middle of their own boy/man spectrum. Hector said that he was in the middle because “I can’t provide for myself,” and Tommy said, “Well, I still live at home and don’t pay for that much right now.” Even though the participants placed themselves in the middle of the spectrum, there was much uncertainty as they pondered aloud where they fit. Note Randy’s contradictory language:

Um...I don't know how I would rate myself...I would like to say that I'm a man because I do my own thing, but at the same time I'm very childish because I live at home, and my mom pays for my cell phone bill. I mean, I pay for my own gas and my own food, but still live at home...I guess I don't feel much like a man. I mean I am 19 and do my own thing, but I just kind of feel childish, I guess.

Most of the participants repeated phrases like "I don't know" and "I guess" when attempting to explain whether they were boys or men. Sanjay, who initially answered confidently, "I am definitely a man," said when asked why, "Um...I guess I've matured...uh, well, I don't have many responsibilities right now." Sanjay, like other participants, contradicted himself within the same response. As they began to describe their male role models (other than their fathers), it became clear that the participants valued a mixture of boy and man-like qualities and expressed their desire to retain both as they got older.

When asked what Steven liked most about his step-father, he said, "I don't know. He just goofs around with me a lot, and I like it." Hector had a similar answer about his uncle. He said, "My uncle is just so jovial and is a lot of fun. He is the most fun on the soccer team." Frank said that his uncle, like his father, is also hard working but knows "how to joke around with me a lot." Jay, who does not have a relationship with his father, said of his uncle:

My uncle is the perfect man. He knows how to take care of our family but also knows how to be fun and joke around. I literally can go to him about anything. I would say I want to grow up to be like him, but there might be someone else out there that I haven't met who I might really want to be like. Still, I must say, he's pretty cool.

Like the other participants, Jay appreciated his uncle's open nature and ability to joke around, mirroring what he said regarding the definition of a boy: "A boy just jokes around a lot."

Time and time again, the participants admired the boy-like qualities of men other than their fathers. Simultaneously, these men were praised both for their ability to be responsible, to

take care of others (coinciding with the participants' definition of a man), and for their ability to be light. Randy idealized his uncle Mario for his role of taking care of others:

He [Mario] is always willing to help out people who aren't even his family. We had a caretaker for our Nona (grandmother) when she was getting older, and he would always invite her to family functions and help her out and pay for things for her and things like that. He never let it get him down, though. We still were able to joke around and play video games together.

During their respective interviews, Jay, Sanjay, and Carlos echoed Randy's sentiments as they explained their uncles who took care of them and were seen as "cool and fun." Jay's uncle, for example, provides for the whole family and "even though he grew up in a bad area, he never got involved with gangs." Jay admired him for being able to resist the pressures of the neighborhood in which he grew up and choosing to be responsible. Jay added, "I like having an uncle who can hang with my friends and still be the one to take care of my mom and me."

Three participants—Steven, Carlos, and Randy—identified non-family members as male role models. Steven named a youth leader, Carlos, a best friend, and Randy spoke of a Hollywood actor, Dwayne Johnson. Dwayne Johnson, also known as "the Rock," is famous for his very large muscular build as well as for his leading roles in action movies. In several comedic movies, The Rock often plays the role of the physically strong man who must learn sensitivity, patience, and warmth in order to resolve conflict. The transformation of these characters is the basis for the funniest jokes in the movies. When asked what he liked about the Rock, Randy replied, "He's just a really big guy who is also nice and cool." By "cool" Randy meant, "You know, someone who can talk with anyone and can do anything without a problem. And also someone who can make fun of himself." Even though the Rock is more of an idea than a real person, the character coincides with what the other participants admired

about their step-fathers and uncles—the ability to take care of business and still joke around.

Steven similarly described his youth leader:

What I look up to with him is that he was able to have a family, run a youth group, and be very responsible. I mean he had a family and he was still a lot of fun to be with. Unfortunately, he moved away.

Steven said that since his youth leader moved away he didn't really know anyone who had the balance of maturity and fun that he admired. Carlos found that balance in a best friend:

He's my age but he is the captain of the soccer varsity team and one of the nicest guys you will ever know. No matter how bad things are, he is always positive. His heart is so huge which is rare these days. He doesn't drink because he takes care of his family. Even though he's young, he takes care of his family. He told me once, "Sometimes I feel like I'm missing out of the fun parts of my life by being responsible, but it pays off."

When asked about the differences between a boy and a man, the participants overwhelmingly identified having responsibilities and being less dependent as the main differences. Additionally, the participants equated playfulness and joking behavior with being a boy. In all cases, the participants admired men (other than their fathers) for possessing a balance of those qualities. The admiration they felt for their step-fathers, uncles, youth leaders, and friends had the potential of providing a map of sorts for their own path to manhood, but because of conflicting messages from their fathers (previously discussed) and societal definitions of masculinity, they remained unsure of how they construct their masculine identities.

Societal Expressions of Masculinity

During the second interview, the participants were asked to discuss the activities in which they engage with their friends and family members. As they explained their

recreational activities, it became evident that their friends, activities, and societal expectations of masculinity influenced the meaning they were attempting to make of their own masculinity.

The participants were asked to describe what they did during leisurely time with their friends. All of the participants said they had at least one group of friends with whom they regularly played video games. Two main categories of video games emerged from the participants' responses: first-person shooter games, i.e., *Call of Duty*, *Halo*, *Grand Theft Auto*, in which the player takes on the persona of the lead character in a mission-driven plot to gain resources, and sports-themed games, specifically, *NBA 2K15* (basketball) and *Madden* (football), where players choose which star-athlete they would like to embody during game play. When asked to describe the lead character in the first-person shooter games, Shawn said, "He's a badass," and Steven said, "He's really tough." Sanjay described the lead character of *Call of Duty* as "really smart" and someone who "always wins." Len explained that the lead character in *Assassin's Creed* is "someone who is tough and nice at the same time and always figures out the problem." Frank and Hector primarily played sports themed games, and Frank said, "I play because I want to be just like LeBron [James]. He's everything I want to be." LeBron James is considered one of the most valuable professional NBA players, who excels from any position on the court. Additionally, he is often described as one of the most aggressive players on the team. When pressed further, Frank said that he admired his strength, basketball skill, and that "he can do whatever he wants, and his team wins because of him." Tommy summed up the sentiment behind the reason these young men admired the characters in the video games: "The guys in the video games, well, they are real men." In all examples,

the “real men” of the video games exhibited accepted masculine behaviors such as aggressiveness, feeling no pain, and leadership.

In addition to playing video games, the participants engaged in various other “hanging out” activities with their male friends. The two most common activities among the participants were hanging out at the mall and going to parties. The participants were asked about females that they might encounter as a group while at the mall or at a party. Specifically, they were asked to explain the conversation that might occur when a female, who at least one person in the group thinks is attractive, walks by. Hector said that he and his friends would immediately comment on her looks and say things like, “Wow, look at that. She’s hot.” Frank, after politely saying that he and his friends would say “she’s nice looking,” admitted that the actual language they might use was “fine as hell,” and then he said, “We would comment on her butt.” He continued:

We would say whether she has a big butt or not. Yeah, we would definitely look and comment on her physical aspect. It’s only after a while of looking if one of the guys wanted to find out more about her, he would go talk with her and see if she was nice.

The language used to describe an attractive woman was similar within Sanjay’s and Randy’s groups of friends. They both said that it would not be respectable and “her body would be talked about.” Len was very honest in saying that the group would mostly engage in talk about her body, which he described as “typical guys stuff,” but he was sure to state that there was a difference between him and one or two guys in his group:

Yeah, one guy in our group would be like “Whoah! Look at that!” and be like, “Would you [expletive] her?” Those guys are the wolves. They are just real thirsty for women, and they would do and say anything. Not me, though. I give women the respect they deserve.

Len, like the other participants, said that although he might listen to what their friends say, he would never engage in “raunchy” or disrespectful talk. Randy, Sanjay, Tommy, and Steven additionally said they would need lots of encouragement to even approach a female that they found attractive. On the surface, the participants seemed comfortable that they did not feel compelled to define their masculinity to include objectification of women, but upon further questioning, their answers contradicted that confidence. When asked which member of their respective groups they found most admirable, all of the participants chose the male in their groups who was the most aggressive and sure of himself when it came to women. In all cases, the most admired male was the one who would often begin objectifying an attractive woman. The participants described these men as “leaders,” “confident,” and “in control” and said that that friend got the respect of the group. Most of the participants had not begun to reconcile this obvious contradiction.

Notions of Sexism

In an effort to further gauge how cultural and societal definitions of masculinity informed their own ideas, the participants were asked to reflect on their perceived differences between how men and women are treated in society. The participants were asked which genders they thought enjoyed more advantages. Surprisingly, all participants focused on men’s advantages in the workplace. Despite their friends’ behaviors towards women and the values espoused by their video game characters, they simply did not have a nuanced understanding of the many arenas in which men were privileged. Frank’s response was the most basic. He said, “Men get to have the physical jobs because they are stronger.” Shawn

said that men are advantaged because “men get to be in more leadership roles at work,” and Hector noted, “Women are not treated equally. No one believes they can do the same job as a man.” Because of societal views of women, Steven said:

Women, it seems like, have to prove themselves in a lot of careers. For example, I want to be a cop, and I have been around a lot of cops, and the guys don't have to prove themselves. They are just trusted from the beginning that they can do the job. The burden is on women to prove themselves and act tough so they can get the job.

Randy came the closest to understanding the underlying cause of workplace inequality. He said, “Men just get more respect in some fields like the medical field” but stopped short of a deeper understanding of inequality by saying, “The lack of respect is shown in the pay scale. I think women still get paid less for the same job.” The most extreme understanding of career inequality came from Sanjay. He said, “Women pretty much just have to be in the house.” He added, “I don't believe that, though. I believe in full equality.” In each case, the participants lamented that men had this advantage and denied that their beliefs that society functioned this way contributed to stereotypes of women.

Video games provided one avenue for societal definitions of masculinity to present themselves. The participants also understood—albeit minimally—historical cultural norms that privileged men over women, and while they were quick to add they didn't agree with those norms, the participants, nonetheless, found themselves negotiating with them in order to make meaning of their own masculinity. To underscore the impact of contradictory messages about masculinity, the participants admired their friends who most exhibited traits they found deplorable. As the next section will show, most participants had strong relationships with

their mothers, which helped to ground them as they navigated the mixed messages of masculinity.

Relationship with Mother

For all but Carlos, their mothers were the most trusted, respected, and valued member of their circle of family and friends and provided consistency in messaging about what was important. While often not directly, their mothers gave messages of masculinity that the participants did not question or seem confused about.

In contrast to their descriptions of their fathers, the participants spoke of their mothers in loving, kind, laudatory, and, at times, highly metaphoric language. Jay referred to her as “my everything” and “the reason I work so hard and have to make a change in this world.” Antonio called his mother his “guardian angel,” and reminiscent of why he placed himself as more of a boy than man said, “She takes care of me, puts food on the table every day, and cares for all us.” Several of the participants, in fact, explicitly praised their mothers for taking care of them through the food she provided. Sanjay said, “My mom takes care of me and makes the best food ever!” Frank similarly explained:

My mom cooks the best Indian food every day. And when we are tired of Indian food she will make whatever we want like Chinese food. She’s the only one in the family who doesn’t eat meat, but she makes things with meat for my brother and me. She’s the best because she just always takes care of us.

The care their mothers gave (and continue to give) them worked to increase trust and intimacy for the participants and allowed for them to consider seriously her view of appropriate

behavior of men and boys. Shawn's description of the trust between his mom and him summarized many of the participants' experiences:

I have a very trusting relationship with my mom. We have a relationship that she knows she can tell me anything, and I will listen. I can go to her with anything. One time when I was really young my friends were doing something that I didn't like—I think like picking up cigarette butts off the ground. Well, I didn't want to do it so I asked her about it. That's what started it. I trust whatever she says to do. Yeah, just a really trusting relationship.

For Shawn, like others, that trust extended to her advice about school, girlfriends, and peer relationships. Randy and Steven referred to themselves as a "mama's boy" because of how close they are to their moms, although they had slightly different views on what the phrase meant. For Randy, being a "mama's boy" was the result of a deep trust of his mom. He said, "My mom just always accepts me, and if I was in trouble, I would go to her first." Steven, on the other hand, associated being a "mama's boy" with his unwillingness to get into trouble:

I can't remember what it was...I was really young....My friend Jake wanted to go ding-dong ditching and me being the good mama's boy, I was like, "oh, let's not" and they were like "yes, we are going to do it." I'm a mama's boy because I stay out of drugs and always try to be the good kid whatever I'm doing.

By equating "good" behavior with being a "mama's boy," Steven expressed the message that he and the other participants received about appropriate behavior from their mothers. Those participants—all but one—preferred the behavior their mothers espoused as opposed to that exemplified by their fathers, friends, and fictional video games characters. In fact, all of them preferred to be viewed as the "good" boy, the boy who is kind and measured. As the participants continue to make meaning of masculinity, their mothers' care and messaging reminded them that there was no rush to the process and everything would be all right.

Summary of Views of Masculinity

In addition to their relationships with their mothers, three factors continue to inform the participants' experience of masculinity: messages from their fathers, messages from other males, and societal expressions of masculinity. Their fathers' behaviors often were in contradiction to their actions. Furthermore, the participants had trouble reconciling the playful behavior of their step-fathers and uncles with the concept of manhood. Additionally, they fantasized about possessing masculine characteristics as exemplified in the lead characters of the video games they played but rejected that same behavior in their friends. For many of the participants, this was the first time they were asked to reflect on their construction of masculinity; as a result, their definitions are still evolving.

In addition to questions intended to explore the ways in which participants make meaning of masculinity, they were asked questions to ascertain their level of engagement at Ace College and their correlating views of their educational experiences. The next section further explains the results of this study.

Views of College

Because one of the purposes of this study was to examine how the community college supports male students, their responses assisted with informing whether or not Ace College could be doing more to help this population. The participants' answers centered on three main categories: 1) reasons for attending Ace College, 2) college resources, and 3) feelings toward their professors.

Reasons for Attending Ace College

When asked to explain their decision to come to Ace, the participants made it clear that it was less a decision than it was a default. Randy explained that he was “aimless” after high school and had “no direction.” He decided to come to Ace because it was in his community and would stay “until I figure out what I want to do next.” Sanjay, similarly, did not know what he wanted to do when he chose to come to Ace. He said:

Well, this is my second year at Ace. And, well, towards the end of my high school, I really did not know what I wanted to do. So I thought I could take some gen-eds over here or something and try to like figure out what I wanted to do. So that is my major reason for coming to Ace.

When asked if he had chosen a major, he said, “That’s not what community colleges are for.”

Steven, Tommy, and Shawn chose Ace for financial reasons. Simply put, it was less expensive than other colleges and close to home. Steven said that his mom “pushed me to come here because it was cheap.” While having chosen Ace primarily for the same reasons as the other participants, Frank and Len were beginning, however slightly, to recognize the benefits of their choice. Frank said:

Well, the main reason I chose Ace was because it was cheaper than the other schools I mean, I was planning on going to another school, but then I figured out it would be cheaper for my parents to pay. While I’m here I could try to get scholarships and learn some stuff before I actually transfer. So, yeah, it’s just easier for them.

He explained that it might have been harder for him to secure scholarships while already attending the school of his choice. Len also expressed some value in having chosen Ace:

My decision was based on wanting to get my gen-eds out of the way, so I wouldn’t stress out about doing those classes and my major at the same time. So I could get it over with in 2 years at Ace and transfer to a university to work on my major.

He ended the explanation, though, with, “I wish I could have done it all at one school.” For Len, who was about to graduate, there was some regret for having chosen Ace College. Consistently, the participants cited financial reasons and the fact that the college was close to home as their main reasons for choosing Ace.

Experience with Campus Resources

In an effort to determine how engaged participants were in accessing campus resources and their feelings about those experiences, questions about their activities on campus were asked. Randy was by far the most engaged of the participants. He reported that he had been to see the counselors, financial aid office, and the Writing Center. He also was in a first-year seminar class, “Vanishing Animals,” that was taught in conjunction with his biology class. He explained the first-year seminar class:

You know when you take the class you get your tuition paid for and you learn a lot about the way counselors can help you, and you learn a lot about the school. The class was tied to my biology class.

He continued to say that the first-year seminar class encouraged him to study overseas in Costa Rica, which he took advantage of the following summer. He described the study abroad program as an “awesome experience.”

While theirs did not lead to a summer in Costa Rica, Tommy and Frank both took advantage of first-year seminar courses that, according to Frank, “made it easier for me see counselors on campus.” Tommy also had a good experience with his first-year seminar course because it “made me less lost.” As a result, he regularly visited the Writing Center and counselors in the semesters following.

Steven, Antonio, and Carlos had all seen counselors on campus and reported that it was a positive experience. Antonio said:

I didn't want to go to a counselor at first, but then my friend went and he said that they help you choose your classes. When it came time to choose classes, I didn't know what to do. My counselor—I can't remember her name—help me choose and now I go every semester.

Academic counseling, in fact, was the most often accessed campus resource, with 10 participants having visited a counselor at least once. Only one participant, Sanjay, had not visited an academic counselor. When asked if he had heard of the resource, he said, “Yes, but I don't need one.” He did, though, visit a counselor in psychological services after his dad died. He described that experience as positive. In all cases, students first heard of the opportunity to engage in academic counseling during orientation week. Not surprisingly, the most consistent resource with which participants connected was faculty. Participants' experiences with faculty members are described in the next section.

Experience with Professors

When asked how they would overall rank Ace College on a scale of 1-10 with 10 being “perfect,” participants on average responded “9.” The participants were then asked to reflect on what factors contributed to such a high ranking, and every participant named a faculty member who directly influenced their positive assessment of Ace. Randy said of his biology professor:

Of all the teachers, he definitely has to be the most passionate. You know, he's here for the kids and for education and to get kids interested in what he loves and what he teaches. I would go to him for anything.

When asked to clarify what “anything” meant, he said, “You know, advice on school and personal stuff, too.” Randy explained, as well, that his biology teacher was a “good” teacher because “he cares about what he is doing, and it shows when he is giving a lesson.” Randy, like most participants, could not explain the strategies his biology teacher employed that could have led to a “good lesson.”

Steven named his statistics teacher as the one who led to a positive experience at Ace. Of his statistics professor, he said, “He is great. He prints out notes. He is just overall a great teacher.” Frank was less clear as to why he thought so highly of his English professor. He just said, “I liked him better than any other professor, and they are all good here.” Hector described his psychology professor in the following way:

She is super nice. She helps us; she explains very well. You get the feeling that she will help you anytime. I personally haven’t asked for a lot of help, but if I needed it, I know she would be there. She is so nice.

Hector also said that his math teacher is “very helpful whenever I have a question.” He commented that the two teachers make it “very nice and easy” at Ace College.

Jay, Len, and Carlos had had the same English professor, although not at the same time. These three participants described her as their favorite teacher. Carlos’s comments were repeated by Jay and Len almost exactly during their individual interviews. He said:

My English teacher is the best. She is always prepared and has high energy for the class. A lot of students don’t participate, but that doesn’t matter because the class is never boring. She always has something different for us to do.

When asked how this professor has contributed to his overall feeling of Ace, Carlos said, “She’s the main reason I think the college is a good college.” Jay, similarly, said, “She has made my semester.” Len responded in his interview with, “She makes me feel like I matter.”

The other participants—Shawn, Tommy, Sanjay, and Antonio—named professors (different ones) who “care about the students.” For Tommy, it was his health teacher. He said, “She is just there for you, you know.” When asked to clarify what “there for you” meant, he said, “You can just tell she cares about us and likes what she does.” Sanjay felt connected to his math teacher and said, “He takes a lot of time to show he cares.” Antonio and Shawn felt connected to their philosophy professor (they had the same one). Shawn said, “He makes you think about things. He cares what we think.” Again, in each of the participants’ cases, fondness for at least one professor contributed most significantly to their overall positive review of Ace.

Overall Feelings About Ace

Except for their experiences with professors, participants did not express strong feelings toward Ace College. Shawn perfectly described most of the participants’ sentiments when he said, “I have no strong feelings towards it. It’s not like I walk around proud that I go to Ace. It’s a community college.” Even connections he had made with professors and positive experiences with counselors did not make him feel “proud” to be there. Although all of the participants acknowledged that Ace was a “good” school and that in general people should be proud for going to any college, many of them said they would wait until they attended a four-year university before they felt connected.

One way their lack of connection to the college manifested itself was in the fact that most had not yet chosen a major and did not seem in a rush to do so. Jay said, “I’ve gotten lots of help, but I don’t really want to choose my major yet. That’s not what community college is

for.” Like the other participants, Jay recognized that there were counselors and others who were willing to help him choose his major, but he did not think that it was necessary so early in his college career. Although Hector, too, had taken advantage of campus resources like the Writing Center and counselors, after two years he was unsure of his major and seemed in no rush to finalize that decision. He emphasized that he was “still trying things out and taking my time.” Tommy, as well, did not know what he wanted to do yet, even though he was nearing the end of his third year.

Len was one of the few participants who had decided a major, graphic arts, and chose Ace even though he did not feel that it was the best choice for his major. As mentioned earlier, he primarily chose Ace for its cost and proximity to home, and despite the fact that he had found opportunities to practice photography at the college (he is the photographer for the school newspaper), he said, “I want to wait until my next college to really get into it.”

Comfortable and Uncomfortable Situations

In a continued effort to examine how participants felt about Ace College, they were asked to reflect on the spaces in which they felt the most comfortable and the spaces in which they felt the most uncomfortable or stressed. All of the participants said they felt most comfortable at home. They gave obvious reasons as to why home was the place they enjoyed the most comfort, including familiarity and having family present. Frank said, “I can just be myself at home.” When asked why he couldn’t be himself elsewhere, he clarified, “Oh, I can be myself wherever, but it’s just easier at home.” When pushed further he simply said, “It’s where I grew up.” Len and Steven also said that home was the most comfortable because it’s

where they grew up. Tommy explained, “[I am most comfortable with] the people who I love the most, like my mom, dad, with people who give you the most security like with family and friends.” Tommy immediately contradicted part of his statement, however, when he was asked where he feels the most stressed:

Um, I guess...with my dad I get like...well, it’s always kind of temporary and there are a lot of things that set him off. He is not a bad guy, I mean I don’t want to make him sound bad, he just gets triggered really easily.

Tommy’s response is reminiscent of his earlier comments about his dad in which he desired to be like him but knew his behavior was not something to be modeled. Shifting the topic a bit, Tommy followed the last statement with, “Oh, I get stressed at finals time, too.” Randy, Steven, and Antonio also expressed that they were stressed during tests. When asked how they handle discomfort and stress, they all gave some version of the same answer: they handle it themselves. Tommy was one of the only ones who expressed a desire for another way to handle it. He said, “I wish I could get help somehow, but I just can’t. I find it really hard to get help.” When asked why he found it hard he said, “I don’t have an answer to that.” Carlos, too, expressed that it would be “nice” to get help for stress, but he said that he never would because “that is not my thing.” He, too, did not have an answer as to why it wasn’t “his thing.” Tommy and Carlos stood out among the participants by expressing a desire to get help with stress; the majority of the participants expressed that their stress was not substantial and that they could handle it on their own.

Summary of Views of College

Despite expressing ambivalence toward their decision to attend Ace, the participants reported mostly positive experiences at the college. Even though the participants recounted pleasant experiences while visiting a counselor or the Writing Center, they did not overwhelmingly acknowledge they were receiving benefits at Ace beyond the financial and convenient. Their positive experiences at Ace were mostly tied to the views they held of their professors. Although participants reported that they experienced stress during finals week, only two participants expressed a desire to get help for that stress; the other participants were content to handle it on their own.

Summary of Results

The purposes of the study were to explore the ways in which traditional-aged community college males experience masculinity and to examine how they engage with community college support systems. The 11 participants in this study were asked to reflect on their environments and relationships in order to explore from where messages about masculinity might come. Four factors emerged that influenced their evolving definition of masculinity: messages from fathers, messages from other males (primarily uncles and step-fathers), societal expectations of males, and messages from their mothers. They often expressed contradictory statements about masculinity and had halting speech when discussing masculinity and while describing themselves as men. The participants reported that their fathers' advice about masculinity was often contradictory to their behaviors, and it was their

uncles and step-fathers who exhibited a more balanced expression of masculinity. Still, there was ambiguity about the messages from these other men because the participants did not quite understand how to reconcile playful and responsible behavior as they made meaning of their own masculinity. Additionally, the participants reported being at once drawn to and repelled by popular images of masculinity as portrayed in video games and by some of their friends. Through their relationships with their mothers, the participants were comforted with food, nurturing, and subtle advice. And even though their mothers, too, provided somewhat contradictory messaging about masculinity, the participants expressed a deep trust in their mothers' perspectives and were comforted by their words and actions.

Regarding their feelings about Ace College, the participants shared that their decisions to attend Ace had little to do with educational direction; rather, they chose Ace for convenience and financial benefit. As such, the majority of participants felt little or no pride in their choice and virtually no connection to the college, despite reporting positive experiences with faculty, staff, and services. The average rating of Ace College on a 1-10 scale was a 9, and their overwhelmingly positive interactions with professors led to that rating. Although many participants took advantage of college resources such as academic counseling and the Writing Center, most did not feel overly inspired by these services. Overall, the participants described Ace College as a last resort, having wished they had had the means and direction to have gone elsewhere.

The next chapter considers the results of this study in relation to the research questions and to previous research and theories. The next chapter also presents a new theory on the topic and offers implications for practitioners and recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purposes of this study were to explore how traditional-aged community college males experience masculinity and to examine how they engage with community college support systems. Eleven participants each engaged in three interviews in which they were asked questions about their relationships and activities on and off campus. Theories from masculinity studies, identity development, and student affairs provided the conceptual framework for this study. In this chapter, the conclusions will be discussed in the context of the literature reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 in order to examine the ways in which the conclusions are consistent or incongruent with the published literature in the field of masculinity and higher education. The grounded theory that emerged from this study will also be presented. Implications for parents, faculty, staff, and administrators will be discussed. The chapter will conclude with an acknowledgment of the limitations of this study and suggestions for further research.

Conclusions

As a result of this study, three major conclusions were reached. Each of the conclusions will be explained in the context of the research questions and in relation to the literature review. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What meanings do traditional-aged community college males make of their masculinity?
2. How do traditional-aged male community college males describe their relationships and activities with males and females on and off campus?
3. How do traditional-aged male community college males describe their experience when using campus resources and engaging in campus programs?
4. How do traditional-aged male community college males negotiate accepted masculine gender norms with their own concept of masculinity?

Conclusion #1

Traditional-aged community college males are still navigating and making meaning of masculinity.

The first conclusion that addresses Research Questions 1 and 4 is that participants in this study have not clearly defined masculinity and are just beginning to navigate the often contradictory messages they receive from parents, adult role models, friends, and societal expectations of men. Contradictory messages from their fathers, especially, were the cause of some hesitation and confusion about masculinity. Tommy said of his father, “I’m not sure why he said to treat a woman with respect when he was not that nice to my mom.” Hector, when discussing his father, said, “My dad always points out what I do wrong, but he does stuff wrong, too. We never get to talk about that.” Although the participants were troubled by their fathers’ contradictory behaviors, they did not express any concern for their own contradictory comments about admirable traits they found in other men. For example, the

participants reported that they admired their friends who demonstrated aggressive behavior toward women and moments later said they would never engage in such behavior because women “deserve respect.” Additionally, the participants did not seem to be in a hurry to sort out these contradictions and, in fact, at times expressed resistance toward their imminent arrival into manhood. While discussing his impending manhood, Randy said, “I like being taken care of, so I guess I don’t want to be one [a man] yet.” After explaining why he thought of himself as a boy rather than a man, Sanjay said, “I still live at home and want to be taken care of.” Overall, participants expressed a longing for a state of boyhood as well as to be considered men but were unsure what masculine characteristic they were most likely to gravitate toward.

Conclusion #2

Traditional-aged community college males do not feel limited by masculine norms.

When participants were asked to describe activities with friends both off and on campus in pursuit of Research Question 2, they described activities that were neither risky nor dangerous. Although they did engage in activities commonly enjoyed by males (i.e., sports and video games), they did not report engaging in risky behaviors also common among males, such as excessive drinking or physical risk-taking. Most participants, in fact, explained that they were content with being the “mama’s boy” and were proud of being the one who did not do anything that would warrant getting in trouble. Randy said, “I am pretty much the square of the group,” and Steven said, “I pretty much just go to school and come home, you know, I stay out of trouble.” Participants did share stories of being friends with other males who acted

in hypermasculine ways, but they were sure to distinguish themselves from those males by saying something similar to what Len said: “I would never be like that. I give women the respect they deserve.” Participants moved freely between explaining times they played soccer or basketball with friends and discussing pleasure in seeing a movie with their moms. Overall, participants seemed more at ease with a broader range of activities and interactions with friends than what was previously reported in the literature (Courtenay, 2011).

Conclusion #3

Traditional-aged community college males’ attitudes towards community college are ambiguous and non-committal.

Research Question 4 asked about participants’ experiences with campus resources and programs. Participants rarely accessed campus resources except when they followed through on a pre-planned counseling session during their first semester. None of the participants were engaged in extra-curricular programs at Ace, and none reported a connection to any particular area of campus. Not only did participants not engage with campus resources, all but one participant had not chosen a major, and they did not intend to do so while at community college. “That’s not what community college is for,” said Tommy. Participants did report an overall positive feeling toward Ace, but that feeling was largely a result of their relationships with one or two faculty members. Despite positive experiences on campus, the participants overwhelmingly did not articulate benefits of attending community college beyond the practical ones of convenience and financial ease.

Grounded Theory

The following grounded theory was constructed from the above conclusions: the participants resist making concrete educational choices, which is related to their resistance toward the logical consequence of those choices--growing up and becoming men. In other words, there exists an inverse relationship between adulthood and educational choice. If their educational choices were to be more concrete, their ability to avoid manhood would decrease. Throughout all three interviews, the participants expressed no rush to choose a major or to even be connected to their community college campus while sharing the comfort they felt with being taken care of by their mothers and with not having to be fully financially responsible for themselves. The data support that the participants define themselves more as boys than men, and the primary condition that would make them men is being responsible for themselves. The main reason the participants gave for not being responsible for themselves is that they still lived at home. Primarily, their choice to come to community college was because it was their parents' desire and it was close to home.

Discussion

Because a paucity of studies exists on the intersection of masculinity and community college, the conclusions of this study expose a critical gap in the literature. Namely, this study revealed that the participants do not experience gender role conflict (O'Neil, 1981) nor fear of femininity (O'Neil et al., 1986) in the same way suggested by previous studies on college men. The participants in this study also challenged the notion that college-aged men engage in

risky behaviors, as suggested by numerous previous studies (Courtenay, 2011; Eisler, Skidmore & Ward, 1988; Good & Mintz, 1991; O’Neil et al., 1986; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991). This study supports previous research on masculinities and resistance (Kehler, 2012; Niemi, 2014) and research that suggests a “hit or miss” approach to performing masculinity (Edwards, Davis, & Foste, 2012). One of the most important findings of this study is evidence that these participants experience the characteristics of emerging adulthood as described by Arnett (2000), and their stage of development plays a role in their resistance and indecision regarding masculinity and educational choices. Understanding how this study challenges and supports current literature about the intersection of masculinity and higher education can guide community college practitioners in responding to the academic and social needs of the young men on their campuses.

Behavior Associated with Adherence to Masculine Norms

Previous studies on masculinity and higher education overwhelmingly focused on university males (Courtenay, 2011; Davis & Laker, 2004; Edwards, 2008; Edwards & Harris, 2010; Eisler, Skidmore & Ward, 1988; Good & Mintz, 1991; Harper & Harris, 2010; Laker & Davis, 2011; O’Neil et al. 1986; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991). Those studies revealed a connection between hypermasculine behavior and a propensity to engage in risky behaviors that had the potential to harm themselves and others. Courtenay (2011) reviewed two decades of literature that provided evidence that men’s behavior is a major contributor to their overall poorer health and higher death rates. When asked about activities they engaged in with their friends both past and present, none of the participants in this study described activities that

were dangerous or harmful to themselves or others. In fact, most of the participants identified as being “good” boys and the one in their groups who was less likely to get into trouble. Perhaps an explanation of these differences can be found by examining the participants themselves.

Previous studies (Davis, 2002; Davis & Laker, 2004; Harris & Harper, 2010) examined males who were overrepresented in fraternities, athletics, and other male group leadership roles. The current study allowed the voices of males who are not involved in fraternities or athletics to be heard and revealed that they do not struggle with the same kinds of pressures to perform masculinity in socially accepted ways. In fact, the participants felt free to not have to define masculinity in such narrow terms and allowed themselves freedom of expression not always afforded to fraternity males. Additionally, the community college environment does not provide the same opportunities for highly visible all-male groups, thus reducing the likelihood that its males will feel pressured by other males to engage in risky behavior, and, as a result, provides a safer environment than the university. Because the community college environment differs so greatly from that of a four-year institution, there is a need for more published studies on community college males and community college students in general. Community colleges are complex and dynamic, and their student body represents the diverse challenges faced by society at large. Focused research on the students of this unique American institution is sorely needed.

Gender Role Conflict

An important conceptual framework from which this study was conducted was the theory of gender role conflict (O'Neil, 1981; O'Neil et al., 1986). Gender role conflict is explained as the stress and anxiety that men may feel when asked to conform to and/or reject established masculine norms (O'Neil, 1981). Gender role conflict has been shown to cause stress and anxiety among university males. Although the community college males in this study did express an admiration for some of the traits associated with established masculine norms, they did not feel compelled to perform and seemed comfortable with being the "square" of the group or the "mama's boy." Overall, the findings of this study suggest that some community college men do not experience gender role conflict in the same way as previous reports on university males; rather, they are comfortable without a concrete definition of masculinity.

Construction of Masculinity

Although the findings in this study were not supported by previous studies about university males, they did correlate to the findings of a recent study that examined the connection of video games to community college males' perceptions of masculinity. Many of the participants in Niemi's (2014) study chose community college for financial benefit, mirroring the findings in this study. Just as in this study, Niemi (2014) found that community college males relate responsibility with achieved manhood. Niemi (2014) also found that his participants had multiple definitions of masculinity and suggested that there is some

confusion as to what is considered masculine. One of his participants used the word “convoluted” (p. 119) to describe the changing expectations of manhood, echoing the expression of confusion by many in the current study. Perhaps the most important similarity between Niemi (2014) and this study is that both studies found that there was some resistance to defining manhood and masculinity. In Niemi (2014), the resistance was represented by a participant “shrugging his shoulders” (p. 135) accompanied by a “hand gesture suggesting ambivalence” (p. 135) toward defining masculinity. As mentioned in Chapter 5, most of the participants in this study gave contradictory definitions and often used halting and hesitant speech when attempting to define masculinity, indicating that they were still in the process of constructing masculinity and had some reluctance to do so.

The current study also supports the findings of Kehler (2004), although that particular study was conducted on high school seniors. As in this study, Kehler (2004) found that there was tension in the participants between competing versions of masculinity, and rather than bother to tease out their own definitions of masculinity among the conflicting messages from friends and family, those young men chose to resist deciding either way and, rather, to engage in the complex work of negotiating norms of any given situation—understanding that these could change by the minute. The participants in the current study were, for the first time, coming to terms with conflicting notions of masculinity, but it was clear that they were not in a position to support or reject any one expression of masculinity. The participants at once seemed to reject the behavior of the most aggressive male in their respective groups while applauding him for being “confident,” “a leader,” and “in control.” They also expressed respect for the boy-like behaviors of their uncles but wondered how one could be a man and

engage in “playful” behavior. Just as the subjects in Foste, Edwards and Davis’s (2012) case study, these community college males were content with the “trial and error” (p. 124) of negotiating manhood.

Emerging Adulthood

Another theory that framed this study was the theory of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2000). The theory of emerging adulthood challenged Erikson’s (1968) development stages and contends that there is a distinct stage after adolescence and before adulthood, usually occurring between ages 18 and 25. Emerging adulthood is characterized as a time when “many different directions remain possible” (Arnett, 2000, p. 469) and when the “exploration of life’s possibilities is greater for most people than it will be at any other period in their life course” (p. 469). Although the intention for the current study was to explore masculine identity among community college males, the findings overwhelmingly suggest that the most salient aspect of the participants’ identity is their place within the emerging adulthood developmental stage (Arnett, 2000). As discussed in Chapter 5, most of the participants were unsure about their academic direction; even their decision to come to community college was not made with much purpose. Many of the participants had not declared a major, and those who had were waiting until they transferred in order to seriously begin their studies. According to Arnett (2000), emerging adults “try out various [educational] possibilities . . . changing majors more than once” (p. 474). The emerging adult attempts to explore many academic choices and experiences in order to “prepare them for different kinds of future

work” (p. 474). The participants’ non-committal view of education, ambivalence toward Ace College, and reluctance to identify as a serious student support their place as emerging adults.

Emerging adults identify taking care of oneself as a crucial component of adulthood (Arnett, 2000, 2010). One of the primary qualities of this stage, then, is for the emerging adult to gain financial independence in order to become self-sufficient. Since the current study focused on masculinity, the participants named their financial dependence as a marker that they had not quite reached manhood. To the participants, manhood was synonymous with adulthood, and they were sure they had not reached either. Because the participants still lived at home and had most of their basic needs met by their parents, they described themselves as not having quite reached adulthood, although they had some “adult-like” responsibilities such as paying for a few of their bills. Arnett (2000) contends that those who find themselves in emerging adulthood are between the ages of 18 and 25. Because the participants were either 19 or 20, it is not surprising that none of the participants reported being in a hurry to move out of their parents’ house and live on their own, particularly when that decision would accompany other concrete decisions that would propel them into manhood.

The Community College

Gardenshire-Crooks et al. (2010) found that community college males reinforced traditional masculine norms such as not seeking academic help, which decreased their chances of success. Although the participants in this study did, on occasion, seek help from counselors and tutors, they only did so because of a course requirement or as part of the orientation process. Gardenshire-Crooks et al. (2010) also found that the community college men in their

study had not fully committed to their student identity because of other responsibilities outside of school, such work or family commitments. Similarly, the participants in this study expressed some resistance and hesitation to be a fully committed college student. They, for the most part, had not selected a major and were waiting until they transferred to feel connected to their school. Small attempts were made to connect to campus resources, but the participants did not describe those experiences as supportive. Their experiences with faculty members, however, were described as supportive—even trusting and caring. Each participant connected with at least one faculty member whose interactions ranged from academic help to personal advice. The participants' responses reflected the results of Center for Community College Student Engagement (2014) in which 30 diverse community college men were surveyed about their engagement and connection to their school. Three of the four most important factors involved connection with another person, with a majority of students reporting that instructor quality mattered as a precursor to that connection. Just as in *Aspirations to Achievement*, the participants in the current study reported connecting with faculty who “[care] about students” and are “interested in their jobs.”

Summary of Discussion

The participants struggled to clearly define and explain the traits of masculinity that they found most admirable and that had contributed most to their emerging definition of manhood. The difficulty and reluctance to clearly identify masculine traits that they possess or aspire to can be better understood when examined through the lens of the stage of emerging adulthood. As they described men in their lives, the participants seemed to get more confused

about what they had experienced, and they had difficulty speaking about masculinity without contradiction. Specifically, as they explored their fathers' behaviors and actions, the participants simultaneously demonstrated attraction and repulsion to certain masculine behaviors. The participants' reflections about masculinity confirmed their status in the stage of emerging adulthood. According to Arnett (2000), identity formation involves "trying out various possibilities" (p. 473) before making enduring choices. A key feature of emerging adulthood is that it is the "period of life that offers the most opportunity for identity exploration" (p. 473). Traditional-aged college students, in particular, have the opportunity to be exposed to a variety of worldviews about culture, gender, race and politics, allowing them to re-examine "beliefs they have learned from their families and to form a set of beliefs that is the product of their own reflections" (p. 474).

For many of the participants, these interviews were the first time they had been asked to reflect on the messages about masculinity they received from family, friends, and society, so it is understandable that their answers abounded with contradiction and even resistance. Although the participants were overall ambivalent about their education, they desired to make a connection, as exemplified by their relationships with faculty members. For all of the participants, connection to faculty dictated their overall feeling about the college, which was largely positive. The next section discusses implications of the findings of this study.

Implications

Grounded Theory

The participants resist making concrete educational choices, which is related to their resistance toward the logical consequence of those choices: growing up and becoming men. As long as they remain non-committal and indifferent toward school, they can stave off adulthood (and manhood) for a little longer. Likewise, as long as they are not men, they can remain uncertain about their education. Considering the emerging theory that revealed itself as a result of this grounded theory study, there are implications for community college personnel and parents who have an interest in supporting male community college students.

Re-Examine the Completion Agenda

Unfortunately, the current political climate of higher education does not favor the needs of male students like those who participated in this study. In response to low graduation rates of community college students, many presidents and boards of education have adopted “the completion agenda” (The College Completion Agenda, 2014). The completion agenda’s mission is to double the number of students who, by the year 2020, earn a one-year certificate, associate degree, or transfer to a four-year college or university (The College Completion Agenda, 2014). The organization has identified five “game changers” that if employed should:

Double the number of remedial students successfully completing gateway courses.
Triple the graduation rates for students transferring with associate degrees. Quadruple the successful completion of career certificate programs (n.p.)

While the strategies, if followed, certainly will increase degree attainment, none of them addresses the reason why students are not graduating in the first place. None of them offers strategies to help develop students so that personnel can be sure that students have chosen a path that most closely resembles their identity. Most importantly, none of the “game changers” considers the importance of exploration during the emerging adulthood stage (Arnett, 2000). Complete College America’s agenda assumes that students ages 18-25 have reached adulthood and are ready to make lasting academic major and career decisions. This study supports a more comprehensive approach to supporting students through their education—an approach that provides opportunities and spaces for students to explore the many possibilities available to them as they mature at their own pace. Certainly, it is important for students to attain their educational goals, and no one wants them to waste time or money unnecessarily. But this study suggests that focusing on student development, as opposed to degree attainment, will render a more confident, competent, and mature student.

Focus on Student Development

Leaders in the field of student development, Chickering and Reisser (1993) identify seven vectors of development that college policies and practices are responsible to foster. Two of them—moving through autonomy through interdependence and establishing identity—are salient in the context of this study. As revealed through this study, the participants understand themselves to be at once dependent and mature. They also understand that gaining responsibility in the form of financial independence would move them closer to

adulthood. Adulthood is accompanied with more concrete decisions and a clearer sense of direction. It follows, then, that the better community colleges can be at encouraging maturity and independence, the more likely students will choose their major and graduate in a timely manner. As a result of autonomy and independence, a more honest identity is established, so instead of continuing in a confused state because of contradictory messages received from family and friends, an independent male student realizes that he has the tools necessary to wade through the contradictions and define masculinity for himself. The structured nature of Complete College America does the opposite of encouraging independence; indeed, when examining closely its strategies, one discovers that most decisions are made *for* the student instead of *by* the student. Understanding that increasingly community colleges' financial stability is dependent on students graduating, it is not recommended to completely disregard the goals and strategies of Complete College America. Rather, presidents and board members should reconsider their level of commitment to the completion agenda and examine whether or not it is at the expense of student development programs.

Enlist the Help of Faculty

Participants in this study were able to identify at least one faculty member with whom they connected. The participants sought out faculty members for academic and personal advice, and more than one participant claimed that the teaching faculty at Ace was the main reason they thought highly of the institution. In many respects, this should not come as a surprise to college personnel because the classroom is the one area on campus that a student is sure to visit regularly. The classroom, in many ways, is a ready-made space that lends itself to

intimate conversations with an attentive audience. Given the uniqueness of the classroom setting, faculty ought to be more intentional in their interactions with students. Community college administrators can support faculty by offering professional development opportunities aimed at preparing faculty for the diverse needs of their students. When faculty are given the opportunity to consider that the participants named “caring” as a desirable faculty trait, for example, faculty can begin to unpack what it means to care and how caring might manifest itself in their lessons and interactions.

Involve Parents and Students

Redefining relationships with parents is the first step toward autonomy (Chickering & Reisser, 1993). This study revealed that a key factor in identifying as boys instead of men was that they still lived at home. Many of the participants did not seem eager to give up the comforts of being taken care of, primarily by their mothers. Parents and representatives from the college can work together to simultaneously ease the transition into adulthood while encouraging independent and autonomous thought and decisions. One way this might be achieved is to add a discussion about independence and its connection to concrete decision making to parent orientation agendas. Of course the conversation should not take place in the absence of the students themselves. College personnel should be explicit when explaining to students the importance of making decisions for themselves and taking responsibility for those decisions. Parents, then, should encourage their sons to make choices on his own, stepping in only when absolutely necessary.

Summary of Implications

College is one of the few times in a person's life to explore new fields, pursue familiar topics in more depth, examine career opportunities, and discover new talents and capabilities. Ironically, recent policies that guide strategic plans seek to limit opportunities for exploration and discovery in service of quicker degree attainment. While one can understand the benefit of finishing what one starts, it is recommended that college administrators and board members do not sacrifice student development programs in the process. Furthermore, faculty is a yet-to-be-tapped resource for intentional interactions with students that can have a profound impact on students' views of their college and themselves. Parents and students share responsibility for encouraging a greater sense of autonomy and independence, and both should be part of the conversation.

Limitations

The study was limited to community college males ages 19-21 who attend a mid-sized comprehensive community college in the Midwest. Although this study did include voices from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, it did not specifically explore the differences in culture that may have contributed to a particular participant's response. More research is needed that closely examines the role of culture in the construction of masculinity. Additionally, although a plethora of studies (Astin, 1999; Chickering & Reissersr, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993) exist on the benefits of faculty-student

interactions, none explore the importance of this relationship for male students who, because of cultural and societal norms of masculinity, may find it difficult to intentionally seek help.

A final limitation of the study lies within the positionality of the researcher. Since the researcher was a full-time faculty member at the college in which the study took place, the participants may have been hesitant to reveal negative aspects of the institution. Another aspect of the researcher's positionality that may have limited the study is her previous propensity to define masculinity in culturally normed ways. The researcher noted that in a previous practice study to fulfill the requirements of a class where she chose her own participants, she chose participants who more directly presented with hypermasculine traits and behaviors, whereas when the participants were chosen by others, they presented with a broader range of masculine traits. Additionally, the participants may not have felt comfortable sharing aspects of masculinity with a female researcher. It was noted that it took much prodding for participants to use the exact language that they use with their male friends.

Suggestions for Further Research

Although the present study provided a new theory about community college males, it represents a snapshot in time and context. The field would benefit from a longitudinal study on the topic. A longitudinal study has the potential to illuminate how meanings of masculinity change throughout students' attendance at community college. A longitudinal study would also document how students' attitudes might change as they begin to shed the accoutrements of boyhood and gain more responsibility. Considering the positionality of the researcher, there is an opportunity for more clarity on how male students respond differently to male and

female researchers. One way to gain clarity is to conduct a study with two researchers, one male and one female, similar to Sallee and Harris (2011). Such a study has the potential to reveal important aspects of the meanings community college males make of masculinity.

The self-identified ethnic backgrounds of the participants of this study included White, East Indian, African American, and Hispanic, although this study did not examine cultural differences that may have influenced the participants' notions of masculinity. Further studies that explore the ways in which ethnic and cultural expectations of masculinity may affect one's experience of masculinity are needed for this population of males.

Because this study revealed more about the developmental stage of emerging adulthood than it did about masculinity, more research is encouraged on the student body as whole, including females, who likely experience the trials of emerging adulthood as well. A thorough examination of how emerging adulthood affects retention, persistence, and graduation is needed. The discussion of this study critiqued popular policies and practices consistent with the completion agenda. Further studies that explore the long-term effects of these policies are implicated.

Closing

Eleven diverse participants shared their reflections, feelings, and thoughts about their experiences with their family and friends. They also shared their feelings about their community college attendance and experience. During the course of three interviews each, important insights were gained into the meanings they are beginning to make about masculinity, their orientation toward school, and, most significant, their developmental stage.

The results of this study suggest that the males who adhere to hegemonic traits of masculinity have been overrepresented in studies on the intersection of higher education and masculinity. Indeed, athletes and fraternity members comprised most of the participants in previous studies. Because athletes and fraternity members represent a fraction of college males, one must wonder why those males have driven the scholarship in the field. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the male voices that have been heard in the field are from those who have been privileged to speak. Researcher bias could be playing a role in the selection of the participants, even if the samples have been chosen somewhat randomly. The leading researchers in the field should continue to engage in more reflective practice before, during, and after their studies in order to ensure that their own notions of masculinity have not inadvertently made their way into the sampling pool.

As stated throughout this study, the trend in community college and higher education in general is to ensure that students earn a degree or certificate in a reasonable amount of time. To that end, organizations such as Complete College America are beginning to offer funding incentives to those institutions that greatly increase their number of graduates by 2020. President Obama has even made it a national goal. Although one can appreciate and understand the value of students earning their degree in a timely manner, this study showed that, particularly for community college males, there is no rush to complete and there might even be resistance to a forced program of study. The participants' responses reinforce a need for community colleges to remember the aspect of their missions that calls for student development. As emerging adults, community college males are in need of guidance, mentoring, and coaching while they muddle through the last stage of childhood development

and the beginning of adulthood. Colleges run the risk of acting as a too-strict parent for whom students might jump through hoops, only to completely change course when they are on their own. Considering that students are approaching adulthood when they enroll in community college, too much forced on them too soon has the potential of backfiring once they become adults. Personnel must remember that traditional-aged students are in fragile, transitional states during their time on campus and, while they can benefit from (and long for) guidance, they may resist heavy-handed control.

Budget constraints and financial instability often drive decisions regarding strategic plans and directions. One cost-saving measure that is beginning to be employed by community colleges is automated counseling and advising. The participants in this study reported feeling connected to at least one faculty member and expressed that that particular connection led to an overall positive rating of the college. Rather than feeling connected because of the subject matter or because they were taking advantage of a program of study, the participants reported feeling connected because the faculty members cared about them. Community college presidents and boards of education can do more to utilize the strengths of the current faculty and staff. Remembering that students come in contact with faculty more than any other campus personnel can go a long way when budgeting for professional development workshops for faculty. Faculty have a unique opportunity to do more than teach their subject matter; with proper development, they can become the reason these students persist at the college.

Although this study's findings were not consistent with the findings of previous studies on college males, it did reveal the importance of listening to the counter-narratives that

are often silenced among louder, more privileged voices. All who have an interest in supporting community college males have a mandate to hear the sometimes quiet voices of their students while they—the students—navigate through a crucial, fragile, and ever-changing life stage.

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APPENDIX A
PROFILE QUESTIONNAIRE

Name _____

Date of Birth _____

Year at Ace College _____

Race Ethnicity (check one)

- African American/Black
- Asian/Asian American
- Latino/Hispanic
- Biracial Multiethnic
- Native American/American Indian
- White/Caucasian

Sexual Orientation (check one)

- Heterosexual
- Homosexual
- Bisexual

Socioeconomic Background

- Low Income
- Middle/Working Class
- Wealthy

APPENDIX B
FIRST INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. If you had to describe yourself using three words, what would they be?
2. What are you most proud of in your life?
3. Tell me about the male role models/men in your life.
4. Tell me a story about your childhood in which you learned how boys were supposed to behave.
5. Describe your relationships with older male family members.
6. Tell me about your important relationships in your life as you were growing up.
 - a. Relationships with females
 - b. Relationships with males
7. How do you explain the difference between a boy and a man? Explain how you think you came to those definitions.
8. Tell me a story about something that happened on the playground in elementary school.
9. Tell me a story about something that happened in gym class in middle school.
10. Tell me a story about a time you felt pressured to do something you didn't want to do while in a group of other boys/men.
11. Tell me a story about the last time you and your male friends hung out socially.
12. What do you think are the advantages/disadvantages of being male?
13. Explain a time you thought you should have stood up to another male but didn't do it.
14. Has there ever been a time that you wanted to do something but didn't for fear of disapproval from male friends? If so, explain.

APPENDIX C
SECOND INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How long have you been a student at Ace College? Tell me about your choice to come to Ace.
2. Based on you're the definitions of what it means to be a man that you gave last time, explain where your friends fit on the boy/man spectrum.
3. What is acceptable male behavior within your group of friends?
4. Describe the most popular guy your age you know.
5. If you and your male friends are hanging out and a young woman walks by, what are some things that might be said? If I were listening to a guys talking about girls, what would I hear?
6. What have you done recently that you know would make/would have made your father or another adult male in your life proud? What would make/would have made your mother or another adult female in your life proud?
7. Tell me about a place/setting/situation where you are the most comfortable.
8. Tell me about a place/setting/situation where you feel the most stress?
9. Tell me about campus resources and activities you've been involved with on campus.
10. What have been your experiences with faculty, staff, and other employees on campus?
11. Discuss a time you were treated well by faculty, staff, and other employees on campus. Discuss a time you were not treated well.

APPENDIX D
THIRD INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Now that we've had some time since the last two interviews, I'd like you to reflect on what we talked about. What do you think of some of the experiences you've had at home and school? Explain how you think these experiences have come together to shape how you are now.
2. Has anything happened since the last interview that you'd like me to know about?
3. Is there anything else you want to tell me about yourself, your relationships, your gender, or other aspects of your identity?

APPENDIX E

SAMPLE FIRST ROUND OF CODING

Comments about Father

Quote	Participant
“okay relationship”	Tommy
“we don’t talk much but never did”	Shawn
“I don’t respect him”	Randy
“he’s aggressive with my mom”	Tommy
“he taught me about soccer”	Hector
“taught me that man takes responsibility for his actions”	Carlos
“we don’t talk much”	Len
“not that close with him”	Steven
“Gone a lot—2-3 days a week”	Frank
“he is supportive”	Antonio
“pushes me to do better in school”	Len
“hard worker”	Frank
“proud guy”	Tommy
“traditional”	Randy
“sometimes it’s good, sometimes it’s not”	Steven
“our relationship is friendly”	Randy
“I have issues with his girlfriend”	Tommy

APPENDIX F

SAMPLE SECOND ROUND OF CODING

Comments about Father		Boy vs. Man	Comments about Other Males	
Participant	Quote	B=Boy; M=Man Relevant Quote	Quote	Participant
Tommy	“okay relationship”	B=“knows how to joke around” M=works all of the time	“jokes around with me”	Tommy
Shawn	“we don’t talk much but never did”	M=“treats people well”	“good guy”	Shawn
Randy	“I don’t respect him”	M=“has good morals”	“moral guy”	Randy
Tommy	“he’s aggressive with my mom”	M=“respectful towards women”	“treats my mom well”	Tommy
Hector	“he taught me about soccer”	M=“teaches me things”	“good role model”	Hector
Carlos	“taught me that a man takes responsibility for his actions”	M=“knows how to take care of family”	“family orientated”	Carlos
Len	“we don’t talk much”	M=“is there for family”	“helps me with school”	Len
Steven	“sometimes it’s good, sometimes it’s not”	B=“goofing around” M=“serious”	“talks with me about important things”	Steven
Randy	“our relationship is serious”	B= “joking around” M=“serious”	“jokes around with me”	Randy
Tommy	“I have issues with his girlfriend”	M=helps his family	“helps me out”	Tommy
Jay	“I never see him”	B=fun M=responsibilities	“jovial”	Jay

Participant	More Boy than Man
Tommy	“I can’t provide for myself” “I still live at home”
Steven	“I don’t have to pay for anything and still live at home.”
Len	“I am not responsible for anything.”
Sanjay	“I don’t have responsibilities right now.”
Randy	“I still don’t know what I want to do.”
Frank	“I’m more of a man than my brother, but I still am like a boy.”
Tommy	“A boy does what he wants and at the same time doesn’t know what he wants, like me.”

APPENIDX G
SAMPLE MEMO

April 4, 2015

I am really surprised that Randy was able to share as much as he did with me about his feelings towards his father especially. He was much more open than I had expected him to be. It was difficult for me to not get caught up in his family history and want to help him. I did, in fact, once try to let him know that what he was going through was perfectly okay and that it is normal for a person at his age to start to question the messages his parents have given him. Especially for a boy to start to separate himself from his father. I have to remember to not be a teacher or mother in this case. I did think a lot about Mitch [my son] while listening to Randy. I can't believe that in a few short years he will be Randy's age. Will he be as reflective as Randy is about his parents' behavior? Of course I loved it that Randy is as close to his mom as he is. I want that for Mitch and me, too. That is the thing I can't do right now. I can't think about Mitch. I will say that Randy seems very comfortable in his own skin and comfortable not conforming to stereotypical masculine behavior.

April 15, 2015

It is difficult to get that much at Len. He seems very uncomfortable and the questions seem to pain him a little. I wonder why he volunteered for the study; it is obvious he is uncomfortable. It is interesting that he has almost no relationship with his father. He, like the other participants, does not subscribe to stereotypically masculine characteristics. Very different than the young men that I selected for the mock study for Laura's class.

May 2, 2015

After interviewing all of the participants once, I am beginning to notice that they do not behave in ways consistent with the previous studies like by Davis and Harris. Maybe this is because they go to community college? Maybe it's because they are not on a sports team or in a fraternity. It's too bad that a lot of the literature on college men has been on that population of students because they do not represent the majority. Even the news stories on sexual assault... I mean take the fraternity and athletic culture out of it...is sexual assault rampant on campus? The public is made to believe that college campuses are not safe for women but it's only a small number of men acting as the perpetrators.

November 10, 2016

There is a connection between how they view themselves as men and their relationship to college. I can't quite put my finger on it yet, like how to word it. And I don't know which comes first. It is clear they are in no rush to make concrete decisions about school, and they are in no rush to give up the comforts of home. But which is first? I think that their desire to stay young and to not group up is the cause of them being okay with living at home and going

to community college. We should remember that is who we have at our school. Just kids who don't want to group up.