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## Exploring the Social Construction of Masculinity and Its Differential Expression in Culturally Different Populations Using a Mixed Method Approach

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**EXPLORING THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY AND ITS  
DIFFERENTIAL EXPRESSION IN CULTURALLY DIFFERENT POPULATIONS  
USING A MIXED METHOD APPROACH**

**PROFESSIONAL DISSERTATION**

**SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY**

**OF**

**THE SCHOOL OF PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY  
WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY**

**BY**

**BRYAN DAVIS, PSY.M., M.S.**

**IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE  
OF  
DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**Dayton, Ohio**

**July, 2019**

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**WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
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June 25, 2018

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE DISSERTATION PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY **BRYAN DAVIS** ENTITLED **EXPLORING THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY AND ITS DIFFERENTIAL EXPRESSION IN CULTURALLY DIFFERENT POPULATIONS USING A MIXED METHOD APPROACH** BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY.

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## **Abstract**

Previous research on gender conflict and strain quantitatively measured traditional masculinity ideology from western societal norms. The current study added to the previous research and qualitatively studied masculinity performance in men from different cultures: Black, Asian, Latino. Results from this study added to masculinity research due to the mixed method approach of both quantitative and qualitative research in males from diverse groups. Information gained from this study enabled masculinity to be operationally defined by different cultural focus groups and compared in order to explore distinct masculinity expression. Information was gained by measuring traditional masculinity ideology quantitatively on the Male Role Norms Inventory-Short Form (MRNI-SF). In addition, the males participated in separate focus groups to provide narratives of their masculinity performance beyond their traditional masculine ideology measured on the MRNI-SF. The current study showed that traditional masculine gender ideology was similar within all males, but how they expressed their masculine ideology appeared different in the Black, Asian, and Latino focus groups. Information from the current study will add to the masculinity research and increase understanding on the complexity of masculinity expression due to the integration of multiple cultural variables. Such knowledge will also enhance the cultural competence of providers and improve mental health resources for diverse men.

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## **Chapter I**

### **Statement of the Problem**

Gender roles have been a topic of research within psychology for the past 30-40 years. The current literature of masculinity explores traditional masculine ideology and gender performance that are socially constructed by the dominant culture of western society. Research supports that adherence to such rigid masculine ideology and behaviors can create negative outcomes, such as gender role conflict and gender role strain. But, such findings insulate white men and their experience within western society, while many men of non-dominant cultural groups struggle to define themselves.

Addis and Mahalik (2003) argued for a multidisciplinary approach to study beliefs about masculinity and its behavioral correlates specific to particular contexts. Unfortunately, empirical work within similar contexts has often produced homogenous ideas of masculinity that misleadingly conflated culture with national boundaries (Gutmann, 1997). Masculinity research from different disciplines has also begun to consider the complex, multidimensional relationship between masculinity and cultural contexts. Lazur and Major (1995) described cultural variations of male gender role strain and argued that cultural variations from dominant masculinity can be attributed to racism and to norms specific to particular “cultures of color.” These factors, in relation to masculinity ideology, work together to create a double bind (Phillips, 2006). Cornwall and Lindisfarne (1994) noted that participating in culturally valued activities transformed

beliefs about gender identity, and in many cultures, beliefs about masculinity have been intertwined and multidimensional. Research has supported that gender development is intertwined and integrated within cultural norms. Therefore, in order to accurately conceptualize males of color the intersection between race and gender must be considered.

Previous masculinity research has highlighted a number of inventories that quantitatively measure masculinity and enable researchers to determine which group or culture may endorse traditional masculinity ideology (Wong, Shea, LaFollette, Hickman, Cruz, & Boghokian, 2011). However, these measures fall short in regards to contextualizing the experience of traditional masculinity ideology. The current study will seek to demonstrate that all men in the United States are influenced by a Westernized masculinity ideology, but that the performance and perception of masculinity may be different depending on the culture a male is from. Specifically, the current study will explore how the combination of factors such as gender expression, race, ethnicity, cultural adherence, acculturation, prejudice, and oppression can influence masculinity performance and perception.

The current study will utilize a mixed methods approach to allow for the capturing of the narratives of males representing a broad spectrum of diversity. These narratives will supplement the numerical data and expound on what it means to be masculine. Information from the current study can be clinically applied to better serve diverse males by educating providers of the nuanced differences of masculinity

expression. Research results will further inform appropriate treatment for racially diverse males as well as improve diagnostic clarification, build trust, and reduce the barriers to mental health opportunities.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Theories of Gender Development**

The initial research on gender development relied on the cognitive perspective and assumed that children were in constant search to make sense of the social world around them. The first cognitive theory of gender development was Lawrence Kohlberg's (1966) cognitive developmental approach. Kohlberg believed children would develop general logic, construct an understanding of the world around them, and experience discrepancies between what they already knew and what they discovered in their environment. To explain his theory, Kohlberg (1966) used the concept of stages to describe development process as a sequence of the separate and linear events.

It was believed that these stages unfolded over time, and all children graduated through the stages to achieve an adult level of intellectual functioning. At each proceeding stage, the child possessed more complex motor skills and cognitive abilities. Although different behaviors characterized different stages, the transition between stages was gradual. However, at each stage there were defined developmental changes in the areas of play, language, morality, space, time, and number (Singer & Revenson, 1997).

Kohlberg (1966) argued that children also developed a sense of gender identity in a sequence of distinct stages and adhered to gender roles dependent on their gender identity. These stages included: gender identity, stability, constancy.

Gender identity required the simple ability to label oneself and others as a boy or girl and was postulated as the basic organizer and regulator of children's gender learning (Kohlberg, 1966). Gender stability included the recognition that gender remains constant over time. For example, one's sex would remain the same in adulthood as it was when one was a baby. The final component of within the linear stages was gender constancy, and it was thought to be mastered at about age six or seven years (Kohlberg, 1966). At that stage, the child possessed the added knowledge that gender was invariant despite changes in appearance, dress, or activity. Children developed the stereotypic conceptions of gender from what they saw and heard around them. Once they achieved gender constancy they positively valued their gender identity and sought out behaviors that were congruent with their conception (Kohlberg, 1966).

Although Kohlberg's theory attracted much attention over the decades, the main tenets did not fare well empirically. Studies generally have failed to corroborate the link between children's attainment of gender constancy and their gender linked conduct (Huston, 1983). Long before children attained gender constancy, they preferred to play with toys traditionally associated with their gender (Carter & Levy, 1988), to model their behavior after same-sex models (Bussey & Bandura, 1984), and to reward peers for gender appropriate behavior (Bussey & Bandura, 1992). Moreover, growing awareness of gender constancy did not increase children's preferences for same-gender roles and

activities (Smetana & Letourneau, 1984). Although it was thought that stable gender constancy was not attained until about six years of age, two year olds performed remarkably well in sorting pictures of feminine and masculine toys, articles of clothing, tools and appliances in terms of their typical gender relatedness (Thompson, 1975).

In search of better understanding, a new group of cognitive approaches to gender research emerged called gender schema theories. Gender schema theory (Bem, 1981) was based on the idea that children formed organized knowledge structures, or schemas, which were gender related conceptions of themselves and others that influenced their thinking and behavior. Although similar to Kohlberg's theory in the assumption that children played an active role in gender development, gender schema theory assumed a more basic understanding of gender is all that was required to motivate children's behavior and thinking.

Rather than requiring the attainment of gender constancy for development of gender orientations, only the mastery of gender identity, the ability of children to label themselves and others as males or females, was considered necessary for gender schema development to begin (Martin & Halverson, 1981). Once formed, the gender schema expanded to include knowledge of activities and interests, personality and social attributes, and scripts about gender linked activities (Martin, 1995).

Once the schema was developed, children are expected to behave in ways consistent with traditional gender roles (Bussey & Bandura, 1999). The motivating force guiding children's gender linked conduct, as in cognitive developmental theory, relied on gender label matching in which children wanted to be like others of their own sex. For

example, G.I. Joe's are labeled "for boys" and "I am a boy" which means 'G.I. Joes are for me' (Martin & Halverson, 1981). It was believed that gender schema theory would predict that the more gender knowledge the child possessed, the more strongly they would show gender linked preferences.

Gender schema theory provided a useful framework for examining the cognitive processing of gender information once gender schemas were developed. In particular, it shed light on how gender schematic processing affects attention, organization, and memory of gender related information (Ruble & Martin, 1998). Other models of gender schema that focused on adults similarly demonstrated gender biases in information processing. However, gender schematic processing was found to be unrelated to either children's or adult's gender conduct and also inconsistent across different measures of gender schematization. The hypothesized relationship received no empirical support and failed to confirm gender knowledge as the determinant of gender linked behaviors (Martin, 1991).

### **Socialized Masculinity**

In more contemporary gender theories, the sources of gender differentiation have been found to lie more in social and institutional practices rather than fixed properties of the individual. Drawing on diverse bodies of research, Geis (1993) documented the social construction and perpetuation of stereotypic gender differentiation. Rather than abiding by the idea that males are born with inherent gender traits, Bussey and Bandura (1999) developed the social cognitive theory of gender and challenged popular gender theories such as gender constancy theory (Kohlberg, 1966), and gender schema theory (Bem,

1981) by expressing the importance of environmental factors. Before this, the environment males lived in was mostly ignored as an essential agent of gender development. Since this realization, research has supported the significance of gender socialization and its effect on masculinity expression and performance.

As previously stated, some modern positions such as Kohlberg's and others assumed that boys and men were born with some amount of innate maleness that was fixed and could evolve in a biologically predetermined manner (Phillips, 2006). Postmodern positions, such as Bussey and Bandura (1999), posited that babies were born into a culture that began creating them as male from utero. As a cultural construction, males come to know themselves and others through the gendered norms that proliferated in every aspect of the cultural context. As Phillips (2006) described, gender norms are within the air we breathe.

Instead of developing from innate gender traits, males were taught ways of performing and expressing gender from a very early age. Such messages on the development of gender orientation were conveyed from the very beginning of life. As young children learn and explore in their new social world, parents do not delay the process of influencing gender orientations. On the contrary, parents begin the task at the very outset of development and often reveal strong gendered beliefs about their newborns even when there are no objective differences in size or activity. For example, parents of newborn girls rate them as finer featured, weaker, softer, and more delicate than parents of newborn boys (Karraker, Vogel, & Lake, 1995).

Early gender critiques often come from immediate care givers and those closest to the male, often in the same home. Just as we learn through our environment that we should not touch a hot stove, we learn different gendered behaviors. The early learning of gendered behaviors takes place in an inconspicuous manner for the child. Learning the principles of maleness is based upon the male's actions and the consequences of those actions. For example, when a young male falls and hurts himself, he is usually praised if he does not cry and displays "toughness" from something as simple as a knee scrape. Common situations such as this provide positive reinforcement (praise) of emotional restriction, which is learned and often generalized in future behaviors and emotions.

Feedback informs males from an early age what is a "right" way to behave as males, and "wrong" ways to behave as males. But, the potential for isolative learning about gender norms stems from limited opportunities to "compare notes" about what they are learning about maleness. Within early gender development, this environment mainly comprised of the immediate family and intermediate exposure to popular culture. For males, their environment is all that they see, know, and interact with. This reciprocal relationship is what influences children to perform traditional and stereotypical ways of being "boys." This interaction informs boys how they "ought" to behave. If behavior varies outside of those gendered rules, they are often quickly corrected.

Such learned gender roles and behaviors are not often created by parents, but passed down from parent to child from previous generations of social learning. Parents, who were once parented themselves, often display similar styles of parental expectations that they were instructed to adhere to. This is a repetitive cycle that often mirrors the gender

norms of society and are the only lens for a male child to understand how to be a male. Parents who espouse traditional gender orientations actively encourage and reward traditional gender linked activities and pursuits in their sons (Blakemore, 1998).

As children's social world expands outside of the home, so does access to social learning outside of the home. Within this context, peer groups (friends) and other male figures become significant influences regarding masculinity development. During the gender socialization process, care givers, peers, and other male figures reinforce actions that provide a point of reference for acceptable behaviors that will garner positive appraisal and subsequent high self-esteem. These influences in the male's life become additional "teachers" and add to their gender related curriculum on how to precisely be a male in society.

Similar to parents, peers also model and sanction styles of conduct and serve as comparative references for appraisal and validation of personal efficacy (Bandura, 1997). Gender segregation can increase the influence applied by peers by creating highly differentiated environments for boys. In these peer interactions children reward each other for gender appropriate activities and punish gender conduct considered inappropriate for their gender (Lamb, Easterbrooks, & Holden, 1980). Consistent with parental practices, peer's negative sanctions for other gender conduct and playmates are stronger for boys than for girls (Bandura, 1999). Moreover, boys are much more likely to be criticized for activities considered to be feminine than are girls for engaging in male-typical activities (Fagot, 1985).

In other theories, the peer group is singled out as the prime socializing agency of gender development (Leaper, 1994). In social cognitive theory, the peer group functions as an interdependent subsystem where peers are both the product as well as the contributing producers of gender differentiation (Bandura, 1999). Peer affiliation is something that can be influenced for child from the family. Parents encourage peer associations that uphold parental standards and support valued styles of behavior in contexts in which the parents are not present (Bandura & Walters, 1959). The parents, in turn, provide further guidance and support on how to deal with situations or dilemmas that arise with their peers. These findings support a transactional influence process rather than one in which gendering influence only flows unidirectionally from peers, the peer group is not the initiating agency of gender differentiation but rather the reflection of the normative orientation of the society at large (Bandura, 1999).

Once subgroups are formed, the group dynamics of mutual modeling, social sanctioning, activity structuring, and social and psychological territoriality come into play (Bandura, 1999). Societal influence from interdependent social systems are not only important in the initial gender formation, but also in the maintenance of rigid masculinity performance. The amount of environmental sanctioning by parents and peers can leave few aspects of children's lives untouched. What is left is often influenced by a pervasive cultural modeling of gender roles. For example, children are continually exposed to models of gender linked behavior in storybooks, video games, and in representations of society on the television screen of every household (Dietz, 1998). Males are generally portrayed as directive, strong, aggressive, independent, tough, powerful, pursuing

engaging occupations and recreational activities. In addition, men are more likely to be shown exercising control over events, whereas women tend to be more at the mercy of others, especially in coercive relationships which populate the prime time fare (Hodges, Brandt, & Kline, 1981).

### **Traditional Masculinity Ideology**

Boys and young men learn at an early age that being “manly” means that they can only portray themselves in ways that are consistent with the social creation of what is “manly.” Such social pressure can steer boys to believe that they are only allowed to express themselves in limiting ways in which fulfill the stereotype that has been created around them. A male’s beliefs about how they are expected to behave and respond are core aspects of masculinity ideology. According to the prescriptive gender expectations, men often perform behaviors that are in accordance with their conceptions of masculinity, oftentimes internalized from their culture (Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1993) In the dominant culture within the United States, these conceptions of masculinity focus on toughness, restrictive emotionality, anti-femininity, sexual virility, achievement and status, and self-reliance, among other things (Thompson, Pleck, & Ferrera, 1992). The conceptions shape both men’s views of themselves as well as their decisions and behaviors in several domains. However, because men do not live in isolation, their development is greatly influenced by the immediate world around them.

Despite the diversity in masculinity ideology in the contemporary United States, there is a distinct constellation of standards and expectations that males learn to internalize and perform. Researchers termed these specific masculinity standards as

traditional masculinity ideology (David and Brannon (1976) and identified four components from the multidimensional construct: that men should not be feminine (“no sissy stuff”), that men should strive to be respected for successful achievement (“the big wheel”), that men should never show weakness (“the sturdy oak”), and that men should seek adventure and risk, even accepting violence if necessary (“give ’em hell”). The closer that a male conforms to the standards the closer he is to being a “real man.” As Brannon (1976) pointed out, the pressure to live up to such unrealistic idealization of masculinity is strong is often maintained through the social forces (parents, peers, media).

The “Sturdy Oak” stereotype requires males to be emotionally restrictive, not excitable in a minor crisis, and able to separate feelings from ideas. Being viewed as unemotional is central to the “strong-and silent” masculine script (Brannon, 1976). Enacting this script helps boys and men to live up to masculine role expectations of stoicism and in control of their feelings.

A male endorsing the “No Sissy Stuff” stereotype is unemotional, independent, direct, thinks men are superior to women, and a “tough guy.” For example, when boys learn to be tough, they frequently do so by suppressing emotions potentially associated with vulnerability. Other “tough guy” messages that relate to presenting issues include prescriptions that men must be aggressive, fearless, and invulnerable. (Mahalik, Good, & Englar-Carlson, 2003). Unfortunately, adherence to the scripts of emotional restriction, aggressiveness, and attempts to be fearless can contribute to health problems and premature death. Often, the extent to which a man is considered masculine is socially defined through his behaviors. In this vein, men are far more likely than women to take

risks while driving motor vehicles and are involved in fatal crashes three times more often than women (Li, 1998).

The “Give ‘Em Hell” stereotype is one that is aggressive, comfortable with aggression, adventurous, and competitive. Violence becomes part of the socialization of men early in life when they are encouraged to fight in order to “build character” and keep from being bullied (Levant & Pollack, 1995). Later on, men may belong to groups that are primarily male (military, sports teams, college fraternities) in which a certain amount of violent peer hazing is considered an acceptable way of initiating men into an exclusive “club” (Begley, 2003).

Violence also plays an especially prominent role in the world of organized sports, which is an important model for many males. Sports such as boxing, football, and professional wrestling directly encourage male violence against other males. Additionally, coaches’ and parents’ support of violence in practices and games can lead to blind admiration that determines future behavior of boys (Pollack, 1998). Thus, boys and men may learn that violence is, at least to some extent, a socially acceptable way to generally behave and work out problems. Males may not learn to separate aggression and violence that occur within the context of a sporting event from aggression and violence against others outside of the sports arena (Mahalik et al., 2003). Outside of their affiliation to structured groups, males are still disproportionately violent and perpetrate most forms of violent crime (Uniform Crime Report, 1997). Violence and aggression may also be an avenue through which some boys and men compensate for uncomfortable feelings such as shame and hurt feelings (Bergman, 1995). Therefore, instead of

recognizing, processing, and effectively coping with their feelings, males may externalize their distress by taking it out on others.

A male endorsing the “Big Wheel” stereotype may express dominance, business skills, confidence, leadership, and ambition. Many of the expressions may lead to financial and personal success for male. For example, competition may be viewed as a way to “get ahead” and an important aspect of careers, self-fulfillment, and self-identification (Mahalik et al., 2003). But, over endorsement of such behavior can also lead to negative side effects in the areas of health or interpersonal relationships. For example, a male attempting to “keep up” (society standards) and “get a ahead” (competition) may work so much that he fails to take care of himself (heart attack) or his family (divorce).

### **Consequences from Traditional Masculinity Ideology**

The popular culture's influence of a socially constructed narratives concerning stereotypical masculinity performance pressures many males to adhere to traditional gender norms. While there are perceived benefits for this rigid adherence (e.g., feelings of power and control), blind acceptance of traditional gender norms also leaves men in a paradox. This paradox is due to the negative consequences of fulfilling traditional gender norms that conflict with its perceived benefits. But, if men do not adhere to traditional gender norm behaviors, they are often ridiculed for such actions. Therefore, this strain leaves men without a safe place to perform their gender without facing some sort of negative consequence. The Gender Role Strain Paradigm (GRSP) was introduced by Joseph Pleck (1995) to describe the relational, psychological, and emotional strain put on

males when their expectations for masculinity development conflict with the models they have been socialized to adhere to from family, peers, and popular culture.

Originally formulated by Pleck (1981) as the Sex Role Strain Paradigm, the GRSP is the forerunner, in the psychology of men, and social constructionism, having been formulated before social constructionism emerged as a new perspective on masculinity (Pleck, 1995). The GRSP views gender roles not as biologically determined but rather as psychologically and socially constructed entities that bring certain advantages and disadvantages and, most importantly, can change. While acknowledging the biological differences between men and women, the GRSP argues that it is not the biological differences of sex that make for masculinity and femininity. These concepts are instead socially constructed from biological, psychological, and social experience (Levant, 2011).

### **Types of Masculine Gender Role Strain**

Although a male can fulfill his gender role standards, GRSP states that contemporary gender roles are contradictory and inconsistent and the proportion of males who violate gender roles is high. According to GRSP, performing such gender behaviors creates negative consequences because the behavioral characteristics that are socially prescribed can be inherently dysfunctional (aggression, emotional restriction, etc.).

Factors found to be correlated with the endorsement of traditional masculinity ideology include: Low self-esteem (Davis, 1987), anxiety (Davis, 1987), alexithymia (Levant et al., 2003), depression (Good & Mintz, 1990), difficulties in intimacy (Maxton, 1994; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991), and relationship violence (Jakupcak, Lisak, & Roemer, 2002). Pleck's (1995) original formulation of the paradigm stimulated research on three varieties

of male gender role strain, termed: discrepancy strain, dysfunction strain, and trauma strain.

**Discrepancy Strain.** Society creates a high expectations for men to live up to through traditional gender norms. These norms are often unachievable and the constructed and powerful ideals lead men to conflicted and inconsistent ways of performing their masculinity. Naturally, discrepancy builds in how they realistically fail to match their ideals. For example, how is a male supposed to be athletic, strong, intelligent, tough, unemotional, rich, popular, stoic, personable, independent etc.? When a male unavoidably fails to live up to his internalized masculine ideal he develops discrepancy strain. Similar to a dog chasing its own tail, many men fail to realize that it is impossible to adhere to all the socially constructed behaviors, in which they internalize and potentially self blame.

**Dysfunction Strain.** Dysfunction strain results when a male successfully performs the socially constructed requirements of the traditional masculine ideology. But, due to the extent of his adherence negative physical, mental, or emotional consequences result. Such side effects may involve more than the male, such as family and friends. The endorsement and performance of traditional masculinity ideology has been found to be associated with a range of problematic individual and relational variables, including reluctance to discuss condom use with partners, fear of intimacy, lower relationship satisfaction, more negative beliefs about the father's role, lower paternal participation in child care, negative attitudes toward racial diversity and women's equality, attitudes conducive to sexual harassment, self-reports of sexual aggression, lower forgiveness of

racial discrimination, alexithymia (difficulty putting emotions into words), and reluctance to seek psychological help (Levant 2011). Male gender adherence of ideology and performance promotes conflict for the male who successfully follows through in traditional behaviors but has to pay the cost of adhering. At the same time, if the male does not adhere and performs behaviors against traditional norms, he again has to deal with the cost (ridicule, internalization, shame, teasing, etc.). Adhering or not, males are always paying the price physically, mentally and interpersonally.

**Trauma Strain.** Trauma strain is unique among the GRSP due to its application to certain groups of men whose experiences with gender role strain and are thought to be particularly harsh (Levant 2011). Therefore, the level of masculinity ideology adherence and rigidity has lead to psychological trauma for the male due to their actions (violence) or response to their actions (self blame, avoidance). This includes men of color (Lazur & Majors, 1995), professional athletes (Messner, 1992), veterans (Brooks, 1990), and survivors of child abuse (Lisak, 1995). It is also recognized that gay and bisexual men are normatively traumatized by male gender role strain by virtue of growing up in a heterosexist society (Sanchez, Westefeld, Liu, & Vilain, 2010). Levant (1992) specifically proposed that mild to moderate alexithymia may result from the normative emotion socialization of boys, a process informed by traditional masculinity ideologies. In support of this proposal, Levant and Pollack (1995) broadly viewed the socialization under traditional masculinity ideology as inherently traumatic.

## **Differences in Masculinity Ideology**

Pleck (1995) proposed the term masculinity ideology, where beliefs about the roles socially thought to be appropriate males. The dominant masculinity ideologies influence how parents, teachers, and peers socialize children and thus how children think, feel, and behave in regard to gender salient matters (Levant, 1996). Specifically, through social interactions resulting in reinforcement, punishment, and observational learning, masculinity ideologies inform, encourage, and constrain boys (and men) to conform to the prevailing male role norms by adopting certain socially sanctioned masculine behaviors and avoiding certain prescribed behaviors (Levant, 2011).

In order to understand and measure masculinity ideology male expression must be placed in the context of particular cultures. Such information will display the variety of component beliefs that may be endorsed to different degrees and related to each other in varying ways, both in different individuals and in different social subgroups (Pleck, 1995). The concept of masculinity ideology does not assume that there is a single, unvarying, universal standard for masculinity, but within the diversity of actual and possible standards about men and masculinity in contemporary U.S. culture, there is a particular set of standards and expectations (O'Neil, 1981).

In addition to the U.S., common sets of standards and expectations have been found to be associated with the male role around the world: procreation (father), provision (worker), and protection (soldier) (Levant 2011). All societies socialize males to develop the set of characteristics that are necessary to perform the gendered behaviors embedded in those roles and cultural variables may outweigh nature in the masculinity

puzzle (Gilmore, 1990). In contrast, the dominant masculinity ideology is only postulated to uphold existing gender based power structures in the Western World that privilege men, most particularly upper class, White, heterosexual, able bodied, Christian men (Levant 2011).

Numerous masculinity researchers have found masculinity ideology to be a social construction, therefore ideals of manhood should look different for men of different social classes, races, ethnic groups, sexual orientations, life stages, and historical eras. Despite the near universality of the dominant form (western society) of masculinity ideology, differences in overall endorsement and in the weighting of the norms have been found according to differences in such dimensions of diversity as age, generation within a family, ethnicity, race, nationality, social class, geographic region of residence, sex, sexual orientation, and disability status (Levant, Cuthbert, et al., 2003; Levant & Majors, 1997; Levant, Majors, & Kelley, 1998; Levant & Richmond, 2007; Levant, Richmond, et al., 2003; Levant, Wu, & Fischer, 1996; Pleck et al., 1994b; Thompson & Pleck, 1987; Wu, Levant, & Sellers, 2001). The variation of masculinity expression may be simply due to differences in emphasis or form (Gilmore, 1990), while other variations may reflect more substantive contrast in gender ideology, performance, and overall expression.

Although it is recognized that there are differences in masculinity expression based on diversity variables, it is important to focus attention on those differences of men from diverse backgrounds to truly understand the full experiences of men. Without an understanding of the complexities of masculinity development, ideology, performance, and expression, differing cultural configurations are silenced. Although western

psychology defines itself as a universal and inclusive psychology, it can contradict and block its own progress by deriving from an array of traditional assumptions about knowledge, the person, and culture. Such assumptions both invite and ultimately preclude the possibility for a culturally inclusive discipline (Gergen, 2015).

### **Masculinity Across Cultures**

The following section will explore masculine ideologies and gender role norms from different cultures. All in which make up the diverse population in the United States. By describing male ideology, gender norms, and strain singularly through traditional western norms, we fail to expound on the complexity of masculinity. In conjunction with the “cloak” of traditional western masculine expectations previously reviewed, these males of different cultural groups bring multidimensional cultural variables to their male experience.

**Black Masculinity.** For many Black males, their reference group is very often the Black community and culture; however, the social meaning given to their “Black” appearance is not often defined by the Black community and culture but by an often discriminatory and racist society that characterizes them as dumb, deviant, and dangerous (Kniffley, 2014). Historically, Black communities and culture in American society have experienced and been characterized by sustained oppression, discrimination, and marginalization (Sanders Thompson & Akbar, 2003). The sustained oppression, discrimination, and marginalization has had an effect on the individual and collective identity development of Black males. Essentially, it casts negativity and doubt upon their individual processes of constructing and establishing their masculinity.

While there has been extensive research into Black racial identity development, the scientific literature has not fully addressed the factors, complexity, or multidimensionality affecting Black identification (Rogers, Scott, & Way, 2015). Sanders Thompson & Akbar's (2003) use of the terms "complexity" and "multidimensionality" very accurately highlight the conceptualization of Black racial identity development. Defining one's Blackness is not as simple as assigning a label or designating an individual into a category. The experience, complexity and multidimensionality of Black identity are further compounded when gender is included. Gender and race are core tenets of Black identity and Reid and Comas-Diaz (1990) asserted that race and gender in conjunction with each other are the most salient characteristics contributing to one's sense of identity.

Historically, the identity of Black males in America has suffered from the ills of racism and discrimination, which have contributed to problems of anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and low levels of self-esteem (Mahalik, Pierre, & Wan, 2006). To understand the Black male experience in America, one must consider and analyze the complexity of the problems they face in being, not only Black but also male (Mincey, Alfonso, Hackney, & Luque).

In considering what it means to be male, one must have a sense of awareness and understanding of the conceptualization of gender. Understanding the intersectionality of racial and gender identities is paramount to conceptualizing the Black male experience in America. Traditional definitions and descriptions of masculinity have, historically, been from a White paradigm. Akbar (1991) noted that White/Eurocentric ideals of masculinity

have, historically, also emphasized individualism, competitiveness, dominance, power, and control. He asserted that this White/Eurocentric worldview of masculinity was not a genuine representation of the full spectrum of perspectives and experiences of Black males.

Traditional masculinity ideology may stretch across the racial/cultural spectrum and apply to Black males who attempt to conform to White/Eurocentric standards. But, Black males often face challenges related to their attempt to conform to the traditional White paradigm of masculinity. In addition, systemic racism, discrimination, and stereotyping that interferes with their masculinity development and actualization. Such interference produces conflict within Black males as they now question, not only their masculinity, but their identity and role within the context of American society as well as the very communities from which they come. Attempting to resolve this conflict, Black males may resort to constructing identities that revolve around being emotionally restrictive, angry, aggressive, violent, tough, sexually promiscuous, and/or cool (Mincey et al., 2015).

Similar to the conflict and interference Franklin (1994) proposed that Black men developed their identity by navigating and maneuvering through three groups: 1) the primary group; 2) the peer group; and 3) the mainstream societal group. The Black males' primary group consisted of his family and contain values and norms similar to that of mainstream, White America such as freedom, competitiveness, democracy, and individualism. However, due to the realities of racism, discrimination, poverty, and other vestiges of slavery and White supremacy, Franklin (1994) expressed that these norms and

values were expressed from a Black perspective. The salient group helps the Black male learn the skills necessary to attempt to negotiate and control his role in American society.

To escape the confines of traditional White masculinity expectations, Black males have constructed attitudes, interests, and mannerisms that uniquely define their masculinity termed, “compulsory masculinity”, “exaggerated masculinity”, “cool pose”, “reactionary masculinity”, “Black male masculinity”, and/or “the compulsive masculine alternative” (Majors & Billson, 1992). These constructed attitudes, interests, and mannerisms include certain physical postures, styles of clothing, content and rhythm of speech, overall demeanor, and forms of standing, walking and greeting; as well as, restriction of emotions or expression of only anger, denial of vulnerability, predominant focus on heterosexuality, contempt for feminine qualities, distrust of authority, and the need for approval and support from peers.

For Black males, the development of these alternative masculine attitudes and behaviors are a means to cope with the conflict of attempting to fill traditional roles of White masculinity as well as coping with and navigating limited opportunities within American society due to racism and discrimination. It’s a presentation of self that is used to create, or establish, their masculine identity. Through the use of an array of masks, acts, and facades, this masculine identity is used to control what impression is given, or expressed, to others. It’s an adaptation towards positive masculinity development that includes dynamic and positive qualities such as dignity, respect, control, self-esteem, and the ability to deal effectively with his environment. The alternative masculinity unfortunately creates a paradox for Black males. For example, cool pose on one hand

embodies the ingenuity and brilliance of the Black male to develop a manner in which to exemplify control, strength, and pride in the face of racism, oppression, and discrimination. On the other hand, the constructed identity of cool pose can become more important than life itself, and consequentially, self destructive. It can keep Black men from engaging in interpersonal intimacy, commitment, and caring relationships. It becomes self deceptive, in that, the Black male may lose the capacity to know and experience his own feelings and express them to others, even when it is safe to do so.

Whether it is cool pose or other alternative forms of Black masculinity, the intent or purpose very often remains the same. Black males develop coping mechanisms, as well as protective factors, to combat historical and contemporary experiences of oppression, racism, discrimination, and social inequality in American society. These forms of alternative masculinity, although containing potential harmful effects, can help Black males to form a sense of identity in an American society that consistently devalues, or outright ignores, their existence.

Black males often receive validation through their group influences (peers, family, media portrayals) that enable the development of gender identity in a comfortable and secure environment (Franklin, 1994). In contrast, the lack of acceptance and conflicting messages about their role and identity in the media and systematic oppression in American society, can produce a detrimental and/or destructive expression of masculinity. As a result it may perpetuate the use of hypermasculine traits as means of individual control or group acceptance by displaying emotion restriction, anger, aggression, and violence. As Majors and Billson (1992) noted, respect holds such a premium for Black

males that many are willing to risk anything for it. For developing Black males, the threat of ostracism from the group can be motivation enough to choose or conform to identities and exhibit hypermasculine behaviors that help them be just “one of the guys.”

### **Asian Masculinity.**

*Western Asia.* In nineteenth century British colonial India, officials monitored high-status caste groups for female infanticide and neglect practices. It soon became apparent that the agricultural caste of Jats in the Punjab (both Hindu and Sikh) presented an alarming child sex ratio, in some places showing only 694 girls per 1,000 boys (Malhotra, 2002). Among agricultural castes in north India, land was traditionally given as a major component of dowry for each daughter’s marriage. Hence, more daughters meant more dowries, leaving less land for the daughter’s natal family; land was a limited resource and presented an ecological constraint which led families to limit the number of daughters and instead select for sons (Hudson & den Boer, 2004)

Anthropological studies of gender in India have observed that beliefs about caste purity, caste superiority, and chastity constituted culturally valued beliefs about masculinity (Dube, 2001). In India, a chaste woman, or pativirta, has been believed to hold magical powers that are strong enough to curse even the gods (Malhotra, 2002). Wadley (1991) wrote that in order to control and direct her powers, the dominant ideology states that the [south Indian] Tamil woman should be constrained and controlled by her male kin. In this way, chastity beliefs have two major dimensions: (a) a script of controlled behaviors, especially potentially sexual behaviors, and (b) sacred, divine powers of chaste women that are both feared and revered (Yim & Mahalingam, 2006).

Often, the former component of chastity (prescriptive behaviors ascribed to women) has been emphasized to maintain boundaries of in-group identity and prevent any mixing of groups, such as through inter-caste marriage (Malhotra, 2002).

Because women were believed to embody the “purity” of the caste, men have been expected to control the sexual behavior of women (Hudson & den Boer, 2004) and the valor of an ideal man has resided in his ability to protect and honor the chaste behavior of women in his family (Dube, 2001). For example, Gilmore (1990) singled out honor as the dominant theme that governed the lives of Punjabi men. Gilmore noted that “izzat” a term of Arabic and Persian origin translated as “honor” described a philosophy of life that for Sikh Jats of the Punjab, reflects their paramount concern for male power, in which a man’s duty is to be stalwart in defense of his family (Gilmore, 1990). Above all, the Sikh Jat man must never give in to threats that might diminish his family’s position (Gilmore, 1990). Honor concepts such as izzat have served define and maintain not only family identity, but larger group identities as well, such as caste.

In addition to honor, the endogamous marriage system has been critical in maintaining caste boundaries because the mixing of castes could have represented a significant loss of identity and any historical prestige attached to one’s caste identity (Malhotra, 2002). Thus, a largely pan-Indian cultural propensity has placed a high premium on defining masculinity as the ability to protect family and kin, and preserve the purity of women and caste identity (Gilmore, 1990).

In sum, the cultural ecological context of male surplus populations has been noted by demographers and historians for the polarization of gender ideals. However, the

intentional use of male surplus populations as an ecological context for the production of masculinity has been understudied within the field of psychology. The converging evidence of the cultural psychological research on masculinity has suggested that ecological context (e.g., male surplus population) plays a critical role in shaping beliefs about masculinity (Hudson & den Boer, 2004). Thus, Yim and Mahalingam, (2006) examined the relationship between endorsement of idealized beliefs about gender and psychological well-being within the ecological context of a male-surplus population in Punjab, India. For the sample population, the examined cultural ideals of machismo, chastity practices, chastity divinity, and caste identity were significantly intercorrelated with one another. Additionally, in regression analyses it was found that men who endorsed more chastity practices had lower life satisfaction, but men who endorsed more chastity divinity had higher life satisfaction. The finding that cultural ideal beliefs were significantly intercorrelated was consistent with previous findings (Yim and Mahalingam 2006).

The finding that men endorsed significant levels of machismo was consistent with previous research findings that men also endorsed chastity and caste identity strongly confirmed the prediction that men would endorse all salient cultural beliefs (Levant et al., 2003, Hudson & den Boer, 2004). The stronger endorsement of traditional cultural ideals exhibited by men in this sample reflects the values of the competitive male surplus environment where only the most successful men are able to marry (Gregg, 2005). In other words, in order to compete in academics and career within institutions built on traditional cultural ideals, it may be advantageous for men to endorse these ideals more

strongly and thus may be more motivated to be successful (Gilmore, 1990; Mahalingam, 2006). In fact, men in this context might have been taught from a young age to especially value traditional cultural gender ideals like machismo, chastity, and caste identity, in order to give them a competitive edge in this particular ecological context as adults (Yim & Mahalingam, 2006). A differing ecological context, such as western society has not been explored. Future research is needed to examine the relationship between traditional male gender norm adherence when acculturated into a non-male surplus society.

*Eastern/South Eastern Asia.* Chua and Fujino (1999) argued that Asian American masculinity can be considered best through social representation theory, which is counter to seeing gender and masculinity as a purely internal and individual process. They also emphasized that Asian American masculinity was socially constructed around ‘model minority’ maleness and not in terms of the dominant construction of masculinity (Chua & Fujino, 1999). Chua and Fujino (1999) recognized that there were Asian American men who choose to frame masculinity in terms of hegemonic masculinity. But, due to the contradiction in being both a privileged group by gender and a subordinated group by race, Asian American men may redefine their masculinity since racism may prevent them from fully emulating White masculinity.

The research studying masculinity within Asian American men is needed because socioculturally, they have been racially stereotyped as effeminate and nonmasculine (Mok, 1998). Although a few research studies exist (e.g., Chua & Fujino, 1999; Kim, O’Neil, & Owen, 1996; Levant, Wu, & Fischer, 1996), the relationship between racism and masculinity among Asian American men specifically has been left virtually

unexamined. Thus, to fully understand Asian American masculinity, it is important to appreciate the complexity of Asian American masculine experiences as a product of masculine and racial intersections (Shek, 2006). Asian Americans, in general, represent a broad group of ethnic backgrounds that have been “racialized” into a homogenous racial group in the United States (J. W. Chan, 1998). From Orientals, to Yellow and Brown people, to Asian Americans, to Asian Pacific Americans, and, finally, to Asian American and Pacific Islanders, racial malleability has been part of the struggle for self-definition (Uba, 1994). However, along with racial and ethnic self-determinism, Asian American men have also struggled to break stereotypes and redefine themselves as men in the United States (J. W. Chan, 1998; Mok, 1998).

Some Asian American men are brought up under stringent gender role expectations such as a focus on group harmony and filial piety, carrying on their family name and conforming to the expectations of the parents (S. J. Lee, 1996). Often, pleasing parents and parental pressure to succeed lead to academic stress, poor self-image and performance, and interpersonal dysfunction (Shek, 2006). Depending on age and acculturation, cultural and masculinity issues may vary. For example, among older Asian American men, especially fathers, threats to their patriarchal position (i.e., a loss of masculinity, stress and frustration, and inability to be the breadwinner) within the family may result in a reassertion of control over the family through physical abuse (Lum, 1998; Rimonte, 1991). For some men, domestic violence is justified or minimized as a culturally congruent means to reinforce cultural and patriarchal structures (Rimonte, 1991).

Racism adds to the confusion of being a “minority man” in America (Liu, 2002). For instance, even though the model minority image (e.g., educationally and economically successful) is supposedly positive, Asian American men are still denigrated as asexual overachievers (J. W. Chan, 1998; Mok, 1998). Chan (1998) postulated that Asian American men are faced with a choice when confronted with the White masculine norm. The middle ground is a difficult position for Asian American men because they may need to simultaneously accept and repudiate the White masculine norm in search of alternative definitions of masculinity.

When research has focused on Asian American men, they are typically compared with “normative” White masculinity (Liu, 2002). For example, Chua and Fujino (1999) found that Asian American men did not see their masculinity in opposition to femininity. Instead, Asian American masculinity was usually tied to being polite, obedient, and a willingness to do domestic tasks. In contrast, White men endorsed a more traditional notion of masculinity that avoided those attributes listed by Asian American men (Chua & Fujino, 1999).

Kim et al. (1996) studied gender role conflict among 125 Asian Americans. The authors contended that restricting emotions is one of the costs that Asian American must deal with in their success. Acculturation was another important variable because the Asian American men may have felt freer to display their emotions as American society was seen as more liberal notion on the expression of affect than in typical Asian societies (Kim et al., 1996).

Kim, Atkinson, and Yang (1999) identified six value dimensions of Asian culture when determining adherence to Asian values: (a) conformity to norms, (b) family recognition through achievement, (c) emotional self-control, (d) collectivism, (e) humility, and (f) filial piety. Examining values is essential to understanding the depth of an individual's cultural adherence, because acculturation alone generally neglects this dimension (Kim et al., 1999). This may be performed by complying with familial and social expectations, following gender roles, adhering to family role hierarchy, and being cognizant of family reputation are all part of conformity to norms (Kim, Yang, Atkinson, Wolfe, & Hong, 2001). Family recognition through achievement means that males are consciously aware that they should avoid bringing shame to the family name (Liu, 2002). Therefore, males attempt to achieve academically and occupationally (Kim et al., 2001). Self-control entails avoidance of emotional displays, particularly in public, which are seen as an absence of maturity by many Asian adults. Collectivism refers to promoting family and group interests over individual needs and to exhibit humility means avoiding self aggrandizement and being modest regarding one's achievements. Finally, filial piety refers to obedience toward parents and authority (Sue & Sue, 2003).

Further research has been done in response to explore Asian male values. Gonzales, Sánchez, Tran, & Roeder (2006) examined the relationship among acculturation, cultural values, and masculinity as measured by traditional male role norms within Filipino American males. Results suggested that as Filipino males became more acculturated, they experienced higher rates of depression. The current results were a novel given that previous research found that less acculturated Asian Americans

experienced a higher degree of mental health problems than did more acculturated Asian Americans (Abe & Zane, 1990). It is also possible that cultural adherence may serve as a protective factor to problems, and as traditional culture begins to dissipate during the acculturation process, it leaves individuals vulnerable to increased mental health problems.

Results also suggested that in spite of levels of acculturation, greater adherence to Asian values resulted in greater adherence to male role norms. Contrary to previous research (Chua & Fijino, 1999; Mok, 1998), exposure to the dominant culture may have little or no impact on male role norms or Filipino-American masculinity ideology. The results may be a function of external versus internal assessment of cultural adherence (Gonzales, Sánchez, Tran, & Roeder, 2006). Thus, externally an Asian male can appear highly acculturated to others, but internally still function from traditional values. Therefore, the paradoxical relationship of acculturation and Asian value adherence may create a complex form of gender role strain for Asian males. The relationship of such variables, including prejudicial/oppressive factors need further exploration to provide clarity of Asian masculinity.

**Latino Masculinity.** Recent studies have investigated various demographic and cultural variables associated with adherence to a traditional masculinity ideology. The literature on masculinity ideology and Latino men, has presented some evidence to support speculation that Latino men may endorse more traditionally masculine gender roles than European American men (Saez, Casado, & Wade, 2009). One study found that Latino men endorsed higher degrees of traditional masculinity ideology than did

European Americans and African Americans (Abreu, Goodyear, Campos, & Newcomb, 2000).

While the research on cross-cultural differences in traditional masculinity ideology is sparse, there is ample literature on Latino masculinity, almost all of which invariably addresses the construct of “machismo.” The term machismo primarily spawned from the social and psychological literature on Mexican males and has long been used synonymously with Latino male identity (Mirandé, 1997). However, past efforts to understand machismo have not arrived at a consensus description or definition of the term (Saez, Casado, & Wade, 2009). Some conceptions of machismo emphasize exaggerated forms of male gender role behaviors such as heavy drinking, toughness, aggressiveness, risk taking, and virility (Mosher, 1991), while alternative definitions for machismo have been proposed that endorse machismo as a culturally valued and desirable ideal of courage, honor, virility, physical strength, and as representing a protector, provider, and authority figure (Abreu et al., 2000). Despite the varying conceptions of machismo, some authors have suggested that within psychological literature, there has been a tendency to focus only on the negative characteristics of machismo (e.g., aggressiveness, chauvinism, hypermasculinity, sexism (Arciniega, Anderson, Tovar-Blank, & Tracey, 2008).

Recent research on Latino masculinity proposed a multidimensional view of machismo, which embraced both positive and negative qualities associated with the construct (Torres, Solberg, & Carlstrom, 2002). In one study, Arciniega et al. (2008) developed a bi-dimensional measure of machismo. Their research supported a two-

dimensional characterization of machismo, which included “traditional machismo” (described as aggressive, sexist, chauvinistic, and hypermasculine attitudes and behaviors), and “caballerismo” (referring to nurturance, family centeredness, and chivalrousness). In another study, Torres, Solberg, and Carlstrom (2002) provided a more inclusive and multidimensional perspective of machismo and identified five separate identity dimensions within Latino masculinity: contemporary masculinity, machismo, traditional machismo, conflicted/compassionate machismo, and contemporary machismo. Nevertheless, even the most inclusive definitions of machismo seem to suggest that some aspects of machismo were congruent with Levant’s (2011) conception of a traditional masculinity ideology.

Similarly, studies of Latino masculinity ideology have identified maladaptive characteristics that are inherently harmful to those who endorse machismo. One study described the macho personality constellation, as a primarily Hispanic phenomenon with three defining characteristics: callous sexuality toward women, a perception of violence as manly, and the view that danger is exciting (Mosher & Anderson, 1986). Other studies have found that machismo is associated with aggression, delinquent or criminal behavior, and alcohol/drug related behavior (Mosher & Sirkin, 1984) and higher rates of depression, neuroticism, and psychoticism (Lara, 1991). In Arciniega et al’s (2008) study, Latino men who endorsed traditional machismo characteristics were more likely to report having maladaptive coping styles, alexithymia, and a history of fights and arrests. Other studies have also linked machismo with aggressiveness (Parrot, Zeichner, & Stephens, 2003), and physical and sexual violence (Mosher & Anderson, 1986).

Research supports an understanding of machismo as a particular kind of traditional masculinity ideology occurring in Latino men, which has potentially harmful effects for those who endorse it and others around them (Saez, Casado, & Wade, 2009). Research also seems to support speculation that Latino males may endorse greater levels of traditional masculinity ideology than any other group, potentially putting them at higher risk for engaging in harmful behaviors. Research investigating the relationship of ethnic identity to men's endorsement of traditional masculinity ideology, while currently limited, has demonstrated a positive association. In one recent study, ethnic belonging was found to be a main predictor of traditional masculinity ideology among Latino men (Abreu et al., 2000).

Thus, Latino males' endorsement of traditional masculinity ideology may be significantly associated with their degree of identification with their ethnicity. In support of this view Saez, Casado, & Wade (2009) assessed the role of three factors that contributed to the adherence to traditional masculinity ideology in Latino men. In particular, they examined the influence of ethnic identity, gender role socialization, and male identity. The relationship found between ethnic identity and hypermasculinity was consistent with previous research by Abreu et al. (2000). Overall, research showed that Latino men who strongly identified with their ethnicity were more likely to endorse attitudes and behaviors consistent with exaggerated forms of traditional masculinity ideology.

## **Understanding Masculinity**

Currently, there are a variety of inventories that measure traditional masculinity ideology in order to gauge the level of adherence to gender norms that may be disruptive in males' functioning (Wong et al., 2011). As previously noted, strong adherence to traditional masculinity ideology predicts negative consequences related to emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in males due to conflict and strain (Levant, 2011). Therefore, assessing a males' endorsement of traditional masculinity ideology is helpful in developing gender conscious treatment plans.

Unfortunately, traditional masculinity ideology is limited to Western societal gender norms (Pleck, 1995). Although such norms provide useful information of gender behaviors based on traditional masculinity ideology in non minority males, it does not capture the full story of the lived experiences of racially/ethnically diverse males. That is why it is important to use qualitative research strategies in order to discover the nuanced differences in masculinity ideology and expression beyond quantitative results. For example, masculinity research has found that Latino males and Black males score similarly on rates of adherence to traditional masculinity ideology (Levant & Richmond, 2007) but the important information that may differentiate the similar quantitative scores is not clear.

The assumption of a males lived experience based on quantitative data alone may leave out important information that may be vital in the therapeutic setting. Such a void in information and assumptions in masculinity expression may negatively affect diagnostic clarification, therapeutic alliance, and drop out rates of diverse men.

Information from qualitative research would inform providers of these specific differences in masculinity experience and expression to inform treatment. Regardless of cultural backgrounds, understanding the differences in masculinity expression in diverse men requires a direct immersion into the male and culture in question. Therefore, a mixed methods approaches allows narratives to supplement the quantitative data to not only “learn about” the cultures in this case, but through progressive coordination, “learn with” (Gergen, 2015).

## Chapter III

### Method

#### Participants

Participants were recruited from undergraduate and graduate programs from Wright State University in five collections of data during the 2016–2017 academic years. Twelve participants began the study, and all completed it, for a completion rate of 100%. Participants identified as Black/African American, 41.6%, Asian, 33.3% (Chinese, Indonesian, Vietnamese, South Asian), and Latino/Hispanic, 25.1% (Peruvian, Bolivian, Puerto Rican). 58.3% of the participants indicated that they were born or grew up in the United States and 33.3% indicated they were born and grew up in a different country. Ages ranged from 19 to 28 years, with a mean of 23.3 years. The median age was 22.5, and the modal age was 22.

#### Materials

**Previous Measures: Male Role Norms Inventory.** The original Male Role Norms Inventory (MNRI) was developed by Levant, R., Hirsch, L., Celentano, E., Cozza, T., Hill, S., MacEachern, M., Marty, N., & Schnedeker, J. (1992) to measure traditional masculinity ideology. The MRNI consists of 57 normative statements to which subjects indicate their degree of agreement/disagreement on 7-point Likert-type scales. The seven subscales that measure the norms of traditional masculinity ideology and one subscale that measures nontraditional male norms. The subscales include: Avoidance of

Femininity, Fear and Hatred of Homosexuals, Self-Reliance, Aggression, Achievement/Status, Non Relational Attitudes Toward Sex, Restrictive Emotionality, Nontraditional Attitudes Toward Masculinity, and Total Traditional scale. The MRNI has been used in over 40 empirical studies, including multicultural investigations in the United States (examining masculinity ideologies in African American, Latino(a), Asian American, and European American communities), cross-national studies (in Russia, China, and Pakistan), and studies in which the relationships between masculinity ideologies and other constructs were examined (see also Levant & Richmond, 2007, for a review of the MRNI studies reported over the 15-year period from 1992 to 2007).

**Previous Measures: Male Role Norms Inventory-Revised.** According to Levant, R. F., Smalley, K. B., Aupont, M., House, A., Richmond, K., & Noronha, D. (2007) the original MRNI was revised and several significant changes were made resulting in an instrument called the Male Role Norms Inventory–Revised. During the process of revision of the MRNI Levant et al. (2007) found some items were not associated as expected with their theorized subscales and necessitated a rethinking of the meaning and names of particular subscales. Specifically, the results suggested a slightly revised seven-factor structure, based on 39 items: Avoidance of Femininity, Negativity toward Sexual Minorities, Self-reliance through Mechanical Skills (formerly Self-reliance), Toughness (formerly Aggression), Dominance, Importance of Sex (formerly Non-relational Attitudes toward Sexuality), and Restrictive Emotionality. Results from Levant, Rankin, Williams, Hasan, & Smalley (2010) suggested that the subscales of the revised 53-item MRNI-R are more reliable than those in the original MRNI.

Correlations of the subscales with each other and with the total scale suggested that the subscales measure different aspects of the same broad construct. Support for the hypothesized dimensionality of the MRNI-R was provided by an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) described in a second study of the MRNI-R (Levant et al., 2010). As reported by Levant et al. (2010), alpha coefficients for the MRNI-R ranged from .75 to .92 for subscale scores, and .96 for the total scale score. Analyses of men's responses provided evidence for convergent validity based on the significant correlation of the MRNI-R with the Male Role Attitudes Scale (Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1994). The Male Role Attitudes Scale was another measure of traditional masculinity ideology with subclass of: Avoidance of femininity, concealing emotions, dedication to work and family, skills that warrant respect, mental and physical toughness, self reliance, and risk taking and violence. Evidence for discriminant validity was also found through the nonsignificant correlation with the Masculinity Scale of the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (Spence & Helmreich, 1978), which fundamentally differs from the MRNI-R because it measures masculine personality traits as contrasted with normative expectations for masculine behavior. Evidence was also found for concurrent validity through the significant correlations with three scales that measure related constructs: the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (Mahalik et al., 2003), the Gender Role Conflict Scale (O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986), and the Normative Male Alexithymia Scale (Levant et al., 2006).

The results of Levant et al., (2010) was consistent with Levant et al., (2007) finding that the endorsement of traditional masculinity ideology varied by race/ethnicity,

and supported the construct validity of the MRNI-R. The MRNI-R was also found to be useful in clinical setting because of the ability to accurately measure endorsement levels of traditional masculinity ideology and its associations with lower self-esteem, anxiety, alexithymia, depression, difficulties in intimacy, and relationship violence (Levant & Richmond, 2006).

Short forms of masculinity instruments have appeared recently, due to the interest in instruments with good psychometric properties that can be completed quickly such as the Conformity to Masculine Norms Inventory (Parent & Moradi, 2009) and the Gender Role Conflict Scale (Wester, Vogel, O'Neil, & Danforth, 2012). Given the centrality of traditional masculinity ideology to the Gender Role Strain Paradigm (Levant, 2011), it seemed both useful and functional to have a short multidimensional scale with good psychometric properties.

**Current Measure: Male Role Norms Inventory-Short Form.** Levant, Hall, & Rankin (2013) developed of a condensed form of the MRNI-R, called the Male Role Norms Inventory-Short Form. The MNRI-SF built on previous research from the MRNI (Levant et al. 2007) and the MRNI-R (Levant et al., 2010) and assessed the multiple dimensions of masculinity ideology in a brief measure. The MRNI-SF was developed by selecting three of the highest loading items from each subscale of the MRNI-R (Levant et al. 2013). Items were chosen to capture the specific construct and to avoid redundancy. Responses to items were made on a seven point likert scale (ranging from one strongly disagree to seven strongly agree). Higher scores indicated higher levels of endorsement of traditional masculinity ideology. The authors found that the 21 items of the MNRI-SF

showed similar seven-factor dimensionality to the MRNI-R that were confirmed by factor analysis and demonstrate good reliability and validity. (Levant et al. 2013).

### **Procedure**

The current study used both quantitative and qualitative methods to generate themes associated with the masculinity ideology and performance of men from different cultures. Participants engaged in a semi-structured (based on seven pre-developed questions) one-hour dialogue. The males within the different cultural focus groups (Black, Latino, Asian) completed the MNRI-SF and their self reported data was quantified in terms of overall traditional masculinity ideology adherence from the seven different sub scales including: Avoidance of Femininity, Negative toward Sexual Minorities, Self Reliance through Mechanical Skills, Toughness, Importance of Sex, Restrictive Emotionality, and Dominance.

In addition to the quantitative data from the MRNI-SF subscales, previously developed qualitative questions were asked to provide narratives of each culturally different focus group in regard to their quantitative scores. The MRNI-SF consisted of twenty one questions total questions and included three questions for each of the seven subscales. The seven developed qualitative questions were open ended and enhanced the three close ended quantitative questions representing each subscale.

Information gathered from the narratives of the men in each culturally different focus group represented the unique differences in masculine ideology and performance and provided information to the research questions: Is there a united performance of masculinity ideology that spans across cultures? If so, what is that? If not, how is it

different? How can therapist be more mindful and utilize those nuanced differences in masculinity ideology? Answers to the research questions will be used to inform specific areas of intervention and to provide recommendations to improve resource effectiveness for men from diverse cultures.

Table 1

*MRNI-SF Mean Subscale Scores*

	Black Males	Asian Males	Latino Males
N	5	4	3
Country of Origin	Ghana, U.S.	China, Indonesia, Vietnam, India	Peru, Puerto Rico, Mexico
Mean Range of MRNI-SF	1.0-7.0	1.0-7.0	1.0-7.0
Avoidance of Feminity	2.73	3.0	3.77
Negativity Toward Sexual Minorities	2.47	1.77	1.53
Self Reliance through Mechanical Skills	*4.66	*5.89	*4.89
Toughness	*4.60	*5.67	*6.33
Dominance	1.93	2.23	1.56
Importance of Sex	2.80	3.0	3.33
Restrictive Emotionality	2.46	3.22	3.67
Sum of Means	21.65	24.78	25.08

*Note:* \* indicated the highest loading subscale scores for each focus group. Results showed consistency and high scores in the subscales of self reliance through mechanical skills and toughness.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Results**

#### **MRNI-SF Mean Subscale Scores**

After completing the MRNI-SF the members of the three male focus groups (Black, Asian, Latino) scores were recorded via the separate subscales. The seven subscales on the MRNI-SF consisted of three questions for a total of twenty one questions. Available scores ranged between one (strongly disagree) and seven (Strongly Agree). Total scores of each subscale question were added together and divided by three, providing a mean score per subscale. Next, the mean of subscale was divided again by the number of participants in each focus group and provided a final group mean to the separate subscales. Table 1 displays the group mean scores and represents the level of adherence to each of the seven subscales. Scores showed a level of adherence to all seven subscales and consistently high adherence across all groups to sub scales of self reliance through mechanical Skills and toughness.

Following the completion of the inventory the males participated in a brief group interview separated by cultures. The males answered open ended questions based on each traditional masculinity subscale from the MRNI-SF. The questions facilitated a collaborative discussion within the separate focus group to provide important dialogue behind their quantitative scores from the inventory. Table 2 table represents the

qualitative questions in accordance the subscales from the MRNI-SF, followed by the dialogue from their answers separated by focus group.

Table 2

*Qualitative Focus Group Questions*

Subscale from MNRI-SF	Qualitative Question
Avoidance of Femininity	What makes you a man?
Negativity toward Sexual Minorities	Should a man only marry a woman? Why/ Why not?
Self Reliance through Mechanical Skills	How important is it for men to fix things on their own?
Toughness	Is being tough important to be a man? Why/ Why not?
Importance of Sex	How important should sex be for a man?
Restrictive Emotionality	When is it okay for men to show emotions?
Dominance	Are men better equipped to have leadership positions?

**Focus Group Narratives**

**Black Male Focus Group.**

*What makes you a man?* The Black males emphasized the centrality of parental and media influences in forming their masculinity ideology. From their parents the Black males were taught to be independent, strong (psychically/emotionally) due to racial oppression from society.

“You can’t afford to be weak.”

“In order to get by you must be individually strong.”

“I personally learned this from my dad, just watching him do what he did. I would say someone who provides and protects their family and being there for people who depend on you.”

“Im the same way. I mean my father never sat down and told me, “hey this is how you need to be.” As I got older I felt that I was trying to emulate him as I learned from him through watching him. I then tried to integrate in my own traits.”

When a male parent was not present, the group agreed that they looked to the media for a strong male role model or father figure.

“Especially helpful if you didn’t have a father at home, to base your experience off of”

“Man it’s TV, and I thought we had a lot of good representation on shows. I would sit and watch a lot of TV in the late 90s for example on Friday nights and Saturday nights and watch sitcom reruns. I realized that after I got older but the Cosby show, Fresh Prince, Family Matters, were staples in my household. All of those you look back they were funny but there was also like a loving seriousness within the family. So I was able to see that, and if my father never sat down and modeled such behavior at times I would be able to be engaged with the male representations on the sitcoms and learn from that. I picked up on all of that and that helped shape me.”

Using the parents and media as their reported sources of information into masculinity performance, the males also discussed specific ways of providing for those

around them. Providing, was defined as doing activities for other but also financially providing for others. They also stressed the importance of financially providing for others as a males main responsibility, and one that has to be done before they can do other things such as emotionally express. Similar to a hierarchy of needs, first was displaying that they could provide financially (cars and clothes) then came the freedom to safely emotionally express themselves.

“Once you have shown financially that you can provide, then you can be the emotional person.”

“Singers can be emotional but an individual person can’t do that. You’re not Drake, you’re you.”

**Main Themes.** Masculinity learned from parents, peers, religion, and tv shows (90s sitcoms). Being a man means: responsibility, toughness, protector, independent, and provider.

***Should a man only marry a woman? Why/Why not?*** The Black males collectively shared that they felt pressured from an early age of marrying and having children. It was talked about as an expectation that they needed to live up to, or else they would be viewed as odd, or that something was wrong with them.

“There is also the idea that a male must marry and have kids and we are looked at as something is wrong if you do not do that. It’s like a pressure.”

The males also shared how their view of heterosexual marriage was strongly influenced by their parents and their religious influence.

“I learned this from my parents and my family and they learned it from their parents and their family but it all came back from the church. People do not realize how big of an influence the church is, even if you do not attend, especially in the Black community it is a major institution that shape a lot of attitudes.”

“Parents enforced views from a young age. Not right, but what the bible says.

“Religion was something that I had to learn as a kid and I was taught that homosexuality was wrong and they should not marry, my parents enforced the same thing. And I agreed with them, but as I got older and as I started seeing things differently.”

“If you asked me this 7 years ago you would see my face be like, ew gross. Because I grew up in a county where it is illegal to be homosexual. Guana is predominately Christian, I think 50% Christian and 30% Islam. Both having similar views on homosexuality.”

Another factor of that impacted their view on homosexuality was their collective lack of exposure to it. In their experience, homosexuality was something that was not talked about, and if it was if was through jokes or to negatively harass another person. Due to their lack of exposure, homosexuality was something that they didn't have to think about until recently.

“I was never around a gay person until a couple of years ago.”

As college students they found their college environment that is more “progressive” due to the diversity of students on campus. This experience has led them to confront their previous views of homosexuality.

"Growing up I never saw two men together, obviously my parents are married, I was just never exposed to it. But now being a millennial it is more around us and in movies etc. so I'm around it more I guess."

"I agree the same way. My personal beliefs cannot represent everybody. You can do what you want to do, I believe that men should marry women but at the end of the day it is your decision and whatever floats your boat."

"I don't think so, is it my personal belief that you should, yes, but really its like do what you want to do. I can't judge you, I may not understand it, or like it, but I'm not going to judge or or try to stop it."

**Main Themes.** The males learned views from parents, religion, and lack of exposure. Expressed discomfort with the idea of homosexuality until recent exposure. Conflicted between past learning and the recent exposure. Homosexuality was not full embraced but seen as tolerable.

**How important is it for men to fix things on their own?** The Black males asserted that stereotypically men and woman were supposed to know how to do certain things due to gender role expectations and parental, societal pressure. They felt that men had the role to be head of household so its expected that they knew how to fix things. Men are taught such things and women were not which created gender normed expectations. Traditionally, they agreed that a man who knew how to fix things or was the

most handy was the most manly due to the ability to withstand life struggles. In response to the question, all males came back to the idea of “providing” and the importance of being able to know how to do things and living up to expectations. If you didn’t know it created internal struggle.

“I’m not going to lie, growing up when something would break or something went wrong, my mom expected me to know how to fix it.”

“I think it goes back to what a man should be like, he should be the head of the family. If there is something wrong the house you are expected to fix it. The males are taught these things from their fathers and it is passed on.”

“It also serves as a skill if one is on his own. The fixer, it is a means of providing for ones family and knowing how to fix things.”

“We have to wear so many different hats to provide.”

Providing came at great importance and showed independency. In addition it was important that this quality was seen by others. Being handy showed that you could provide for a female. If the Black males did not live up to their expectations of fixing, interpersonal and individual conflict issued.

“I think changing your tire is a very good one because of the situation potential with a women.”

“My wife jokes with friends about the time he didn't know how to change a tire, which causes them to look at me like, you didn't know how to do that?”

“When I was driving from Columbus I got a flat tire and my wife looked at me like I was supposed to know how to fix it or know what to do. On one side, I agree that because as a man I am physically stronger. So, these things that involve strength, as the guy, I am okay with it. Now for this time, it was my first time changing a tire, I had to call my brother to instruct me. I didn’t know how to do it. My wife tells the story and I’m looked at like “you’re a man and you didn’t know how to change a tire?” It seems like the man who knows how to fix things or is the most handy is the most manly.”

“I feel that men should be able to fix certain things, a flat tire I just think that you should be able to fix a flat tire if you're a man. If my tire goes down and I have to call another man to fix my tire...that would annoy me, I need to be able to do some form of handy work. That actually happened to me, a friend of mine was with a guy who's tire got flat and she called me to come and fix the tire and he was pissed. It was like I was almost showing him up, like it's your girlfriend is in need and you can't be there for her?”

“I have a friend of mine who calls me when she hears a funny noise from her car. Im no mechanic but theres an expectation that I can at least tell her what to do about it or where to go to get it fixed. But as in a relationship, if you can be that first provider and they have to call another male who is not a professional at it, like it would be different if it was AAA but another guy? That would bother me.”

“It is still an ego thing, though, for example I just moved my girlfriend into her apartment and I had to change the dryer chord, I couldn't do it and I had to pay somebody so therefore it was fixed and I provided but I was still like damn I can't do this on my own?”

“I think that comes back to the provider. I feel like it is almost like a right of passage. This is important in Black culture, even if we do not have a male to show us. If you told me to fix a tire right now I wouldn't know how but I'd kill that tire, especially if I'm with my girl.”

“Once again, all of this fixing is all coming back to a woman and impressing women. Not to be self sufficient necessarily.”

Although being capable of fixing things physically was seen as important, they also emphasized the importance of being able to financially provide. Financial provision was seen by the group as still fixing. Fixing and providing was seen as a simple click on their phone.

“The more money and not being able to fix it personally it may be seen as a privileged to being a bee to taps for it, still provide without being able to get your hands dirty.”

“I don't know if it is important, I think its handy if you're able to save some money and be able to fix some things, but if I have the money to get my tire fixed, I believe that I fixed it too.”

“It seems like if you can't do one than you better be able to do the other. Then you are not providing in any way.”

**Main Themes.** Gender role expectations to be able to fix things and to provide financially. Pressured to do so by peers, family, and women, and consequences/loss of status if they fail to live up to expectations. Important to be able to provide and be independent because it helps them withstand from life struggles (oppression, racism, prejudice). Fixing things was important but not as important as being able to financially provide for a female.

***Is being tough important to be a man? Why/Why not?*** The Black males stressed the importance of “toughness” so that they could live up to expectations of others. They reported that a Black males simply can’t afford to be weak or sad. Anger seemed to be the only expectable emotion to they could express, especially during adolescents.

“Thinking about my upbringing it is important to be tough and live up to that expectations.”

“We can go cry to our moms but even then she’ll help for a bit but she’s going to tell you to suck it up, or I’ll give you something to cry about.”

“You cannot afford to break down or be weak. If you do break down, you become less than. If I’m caught crying that would be “what is wrong with you?” Its not for boys. It goes against that expectations of what a man should act like and be like.”

“You have to be taught because you have to fight, you must be tough physically and mentally. Just standing up for yourself is something that is really big and you’re taught from a young age not to display sadness or depression.”

“Mine would be, being able to withstand life struggles, you know, when life punches you in the mouth.”

“We are taught, especially from an early age, you know if a girlfriend cheats on you your supposed to shake that off, you don't do well on a test, your supposed to be whatever about it.”

“Sometimes if your passionate about something and someone does something that you do not like, men are supposed to be stoic and nothin is supposed to be bother us and it's supposed to roll right off, but if we get passionate or sensitive about something, its like why are you so sensitive...thats not being tough.”

The Black males spoke about how their toughness sustained there status amongst their peer group and women. From a male peer perspective you were expected to be tough, aggressive, and stoic. And if you failed to live up to expectations of toughness, there were consequences.

“We are a product of our environment. I lost a fight in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and I was reminded about it in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The fights you lose all the teasing, your environment teaches you to be tough. You won't make it out if you aren't tough. You cannot afford not to be tough.

“Vulnerability to ridicule and looking weak is a big motivator to not feel that way or being put in the position.”

“You have to be tough because you have to fight, you must be physically and mentally tough. Its hard to trust others around you, so even if you were to break down, nobody would really understand your feelings. It's a waste of time. You will also be reminded of the time that you broke down or lost a fight. It will hang

over your head. It is important to be physically tough and mentally tough to deal with life. But, we are not taught how to be emotionally or mentally tough.”

One male shared how this way of being masculine worked during his adolescence to sustain his social status, but, as he got older his rigid gender performance made other life experiences harder.

“Your prime view point is that physical toughness, that's what you're supposed to display and we spend so much of our adolescent years building that up that we do not tap that emotional aspect side, so later in life when we hit those definitive years in the 20's it also harder to plug anything new in an change that mindset.

Adhering to the performance of toughness was a medium for others to see them as a provider.

“I think that women are looking for a man who can protect them, so I think that a not tough individual would be seen as weak and also that they cannot provide for their partner.”

“If you're not tough, it makes you look at the person as less of a man. I think that big part of being tough at least in the Black community, I think that mental toughness is really looked over upon. Having the image of being tough and masculine. And Black is more athletic, looking tough is just as impotent as actually being tough”

The Black males viewed toughness as a way to get out of there environment. Toughness was also seen as an important to be noticed buy others (peers and women). For example the men agreed that women want a man that will provide for them, they

need a “tough” male that is capable of doing so. Also, being emotionally tough was seen as secondary to physical toughness.

“This may stem from women looking for a provider, and they can see that with physical toughness. This is more powerful than mental or emotional toughness.”

“Women want someone who is strong and who can protect them. Also doing it for our own confidence and pride.”

“Toughness is valued based on the ability to survive or get out of the hood. Therefore we overplay things like toughness in order to get out or be different or better.”

“With toughness comes the sense that you can provide, but more importantly what can you provide, especially in a monetary way. Females are drawn to the fancy things because it is a show of what I can provide, dinners, cars, etc.”

“Therefore when we can provide that in forms of toughness and monetary things that's a big deal. Emotional toughness is okay but it's the but that's going to be overlooked by physical toughness and the image of providing every time. Now after you display toughness and can monetarily provide then emotional support may be important.”

The Black males believed that they had to “do more” in terms of expressing their toughness compared to white males.

“Things are exacerbated in the Black community. Like, every man needs to provide for their family but in the Black community, you've got different obstacles and the male traits are often overplayed because that's essential to

survive, period. In the Black community it's like, are you able to provide? but also what are you able to provide?"

"For a white man it may be needed to provide in the family, sure, but there may be some generational wealth or ability to get a job, so he doesn't have to work as hard compared to a black male who has more difficulties. It becomes harder to provide so male norms are overplayed in that sense."

**Main Themes.** Important to be tough and look tough so that you can live up to expectations. Social consequences from peers and loss of status if you fail. Also doing it for our own confidence and pride. Can't afford to break down or be weak, have to be tough because you have to fight, you must be physically and mentally tough to survive in the environment. Anger only acceptable emotion. Physical toughness was more powerful than mental or emotional toughness. Women wanted someone who was strong, protective, and a provider. Only after all of these areas were completed, the Black males had the freedom to safely express emotions.

**How important should sex be for a man?** The Black males shared their experiences of living with expectations of being hyper-sexual. Meeting such expectations were often reinforced by their peers.

"Being a Black male, you are expected to be hypersexual. I've worked with a few white females and they expect that you have big manhood and that you are very good at sex. As a man, you should be able to perform whenever the female asks for it. These are the expectations that we receive as Black men. If among your

friends when you are growing up you expected to take advantage whenever it is presented to you. If you don't it's like, what's wrong with you?"

Sexual behavior was praised and showed they were desired or had something to offer. It also reinforced the previous theme of being a provider.

"Men who are "players" are glamorized. This displays a sign of strength and being a real man I guess. So, if you give that impression than there is a lot of respect that it comes with."

"Its important amongst peers like we have to knock em down and show our body count, I think the amount of emphasis put on it is over the top."

"That pressure is there from your peers when you are younger, but as you get older that seems to die down a little bit.

"Our culture acts is like an invisible hand that is perpetuating the male sex driven process."

If hyper sexual behavior was not acted upon then the males stated that they would be questioned of their manhood and face consequences from their environment.

"If your not doing it it shows that you're weak, in your peers eyes, especially at a young age that is really what you feel about yourself you internalize it."

"It depends wherefore at and what age you're at, but the higher number the better.

I think that if you're not knocking them down it shows that you are week, I think that black culture is very quick to sexualize, so if you're not doing that, you get asked are you gay? Are you good? I think that is why are culture is more

homophobic is because we are focusing on sex. In terms of number, the ability to

get more of it quantity is better, is definitely valued more. This shows you are not tied down, you still got it."

The Black males believed that highly sexual behavior stemmed from having fewer opportunities. Therefore the more that they could have of something, the better. The construct of "more is better" was exemplified and reinforced from their environment (peers, media).

"I never grew up in the hood but as we are talking about it the more the more I realized that what I did while growing up was determined by what was going on in the hood or watching Black movies, I can still relate because I'm in that culture. Even though I may be a little better off financially, I still emphasize those same behaviors such as knocking down the women. I may not have the mindset but I have adopted the values based on my culture with the masculinity aspect. Like we don't see these marriages last a long time, but mine has, my parents, and those that were around me did, but despite that I still have that "numbers" valued over a single person."

"Masculinity as a whole and being Black really just comes from image and that derives from being a minority because our image and we have to do 10x more and when people see us they see are skin first and are skin is pervasive throughout everything. They see I'm Black already, now I have to almost compensate and work harder to get what I want. It's a preconceived notion that when you're Black in a white world we have to overcome that."

**Main Themes.** Social expectations to be hypersexual. Being a “player” is glamorized, it displayed strength and being a “real man.” Hypersexuality showed that they were desirable, and could provide via higher numbers. Desirability showed that they could provide and was seen as important to self and others due to having fewer opportunities based on oppression, racism, prejudice.

***When is it okay for men to show emotions?*** The Black males expressed limited times when it is considered “ok” to show emotions. The males directly referred emotions to meaning crying and displayed a rigid definition of the term emotions that matched the limited usage of emotions. The limited emotional expressions was reinforced and learned from a young age, beginning with parents and later on from peers and other environmental influences.

“Parents brain wash you at an early age to get rid of those emotions because no one likes an emotional person. You should be able to move in and forget about it.”

“My father passed away when I was in high school and prior to that I never recalled my father cry. After that my mother told me about situations of my father that he was emotional, but he was on his death bed. So that s not something that I never saw or noticed.”

“I’ve seen my dad cry twice my entire life, and that was when his mother died and then once in church. Thats it, and it was okay with me. I didn't need to see my dad crying over every little thing.”

“The mindset of not showing your emotions is institutional we have been brought down by so much that you whining about something its like we have all experienced it and have experienced so much worse. We can all talk about the racism and place and everything, but when it comes to talking about emotions its like, are you getting soft over it? Like it’s supposed to wipe right off and I think that is what I mean by it coming from an institution. This oppression that we have to over come despite.”

The Black males also shared that they had a limited number of others they could safely be transparent and vulnerable with. Showing emotions and being vulnerable was not an easy task due to societal expectations of how a male should conduct themselves.

"Either around a person you really trust or by yourself.”

“We may sit down with our mother, but we are not going to sit down with anybody else to share those emotions.”

“Even if you cry it has to be at funeral or for a good reason. The tear must drop off your face. You can cry but it must fit. You can never be sad, it’s never okay. You cannot afford to not be strong enough to deal with life as a Black man. Your parents almost instill this in you. They’ll say don’t let it get to you, don’t break down, you cannot afford to break down. How can you fill expectations and be the man that we all expect you to be if you break down? You can’t do all of that and still be in touch with your emotions.

“In dire situations you are allowed to show emotions, like if something happens to your mother, or immediate family. Other than that though I don't think it is seen as okay. Maybe if you do it behind closed doors, but even then it would take an extreme situation in terms of death or incarceration.”

“The only way that it is okay is when something has happened immediately close to you. Like your friend or brother got shot and died, but if you're talking about your boss at work, you know what I mean I'm going to leave like I do not want to listen to your sob story.”

The Black males also reported that they were not prepared to talk about emotions. As a culture, showing emotions was not something that is valued or rewarded. Therefore, if emotions came up in conversation, it was something that was quickly solved.

“You know if I'm with him (points to other male in focus group) and I think that something is off I'm going to ask “you good?” Which is going to prompt him to say “yes” or “I'm good.” So I already have the answer before I'm done asking the question. You're is not “hey on a scale of 1-10 how do you feel right now?”

“We'll I'm like a 6 and its because...” That opens up dialogue because in our community we do not have open ended questions, its yes or no.”

“You cannot show sadness, or depression. “Depression is a white people thing” you can't be a Black anything and be depressed. If you a Black man you're an angry black man but not a depressed Black man. It is more acceptable to be angry than to be sad. If you get angry you can talk shit to the person who made you angry and if it gets physical so be it. But you cannot be sad. In that way although

we are limited in our emotions we are still able to use anger to show strength and dominance.

Crying was seen as an ultimate low, and meant that you were defeated or weak.

The only time that a male was allowed to cry or get emotional was when something catastrophic happened. Even then, they were expected to show their emotions in a prescribed fashion.

“As Black men, we just view crying as the most defeated point, like oh you're crying then this must have really just broke you.

“I would see them as emotionally unstable and not being able to control their emotions. You know weak, not having control. There is a time and place for everything and being able to control them especially when it is appropriate.

If the Black males were to show their emotions or express themselves in a non traditional way, they had to earn the right to do so.

“They only people who can show how they feel are artists or famous people, but every day people can't do that. It like who are you trying to be?”

The Black males showed insight into their emotional restriction but it did not relieve them from their rigid mode of expression.

“I think that's it is interesting that we are all saying that you cannot show your emotions but Black people have a the stigma of the angry Black man so we try to tone down everything.”

“You know for males we are supposed to have those walls up but unfortunately that stuff ends up eating us alive and why we die at an early age and we don't let that go until we are on our death bed.

*Main Themes.* Anger was the only acceptable emotion, and came with a secondary gain of proving strength and dominance. The males learned from parents that they could not afford to be weak as Black person, emotions were unhelpful, not to be shown, and suppressed. Emotions showed they were broken, soft, emotionally unstable, not in control. Toughness was a necessity to overcome the racism felt from society.

*Are men better equipped to have leadership positions?* The Black males shared that they believed that men were better equipped for leadership positions due to their privilege as men. They received better training to be leaders but it did not mean that women could not establish themselves into that role.

“My parents concentrate more on me than my sisters at being a leader, therefore due to the preparations as a male growing up and the expectation, I feel that I would be better equipped. Not because I think I am better, but because I had the “training” due to gender roles.

“But, I think that we men really have to experience it and go through it so at the same time, men may be more equipped for it although I think that women can do it too.”

“I do think that men may be better equipped, not to say that women can't do it, but I look at logic vs. feelings. I feel that men work on logic and women work of feelings. Their initial reaction is more emotion based, where as some decision

may be better answered in that way, but logically, it would be better to function and lead based on logic. Again, I would never tell anybody that I just answered that question that way.”

“Similarly I do not think that women can't do it, I just feel that men are better equipped to lead.”

“I remember when I was in the 3rd grade a male student ripped up his 94% paper, which was a very good grade, he ripped it up because a girl in the class beat him by 1 point. He is mad because a girl beat him. Growing up in that culture, you cannot let a girl beat you, in anything, grades, racing, a fight, etc.”

Although the Black males believed that women could perform similar roles, they were also uncomfortable with the idea that they would be considered less than a woman and paid less. They were also conflicted by idea of their significant other earning more money and being the “bread winner.” If that was the case, they would not want others (peers) to know about it.

“If a woman made more money than me than that would really challenge me, I don't know if I would be okay with that. If we were both doing okay it would be one thing like we are both killing it.”

“There is so much pressure to be a certain way and if you're not then you have to deal with the consequences from that.”

“Friends, parents, everyone is going to see you as oh you can't take care of your house, your finances, your own etc.”

“Yeah but if I'm making like 30k and she's making 100k I would not be okay with that.

“If it was closer to 50k and 90k and she didn't see us as equal then I feel disrespected, like if she hung it over my head.”

“I think that we can look at it as an ego thing. It can be exacerbated in a relationship.”

“I think that we are more equipped because at the end of the day, married, kids, family, whatever, if you get the foreclosure notice pinned on the house, your wife is going to come to you and ask what you are going to do about it, you know that buck stops there. And that comes back to the provider and I think that it is something that is in the back of our head you know the buck has to stop somewhere.

Although the Black males felt better equipped to be leaders, many of the men came from a household where their mother was the provider. This created a conflict in their answers and a conflict that they recognized as the dialogue continued.

“My mom was the head of my household, looking back I ask would I want my father to be the head of my house and no I wouldn't change it. She did a good job.”

“Most people would give you the script that corresponds with the bible that men should be head of the household. But, when you actually look within the household most decisions are made by the mom or the woman.

“Some of the most assertive women I know are Black woman, when they are leading a home full of kids and when the male is not present they must be assertive and lead to take care of the children. They are the bosses of the house.”

“It’s harder to answer that questions now as well with all of the movements, the feminist movements going on right now.”

**Main Themes.** Pressure and expectation to be leaders due to being better equipped. Males did not feel they were better than women but were taught to be better than females. If they are not in a leadership role or the “bread winner” it causes internal and interpersonal conflict. Males were in conflict due to progressive and traditional masculinity ideology in relation women’s rights and power.

#### **Asian Male Focus Group.**

**What makes you a man?** The Asian male focus group discussed a mixture of masculine ideologies. They shared masculinity views that diverted from their cultural norms and were more progressive in nature. In combination, they described a strong influence from family and culture, which consisted of traditional views and expectations. The males described strong gender influences from family and parents who passed on cultural values. The expected model that was learned in a linear process: father to son, family to son.

“In terms of being male, culturally there will always be people prior to you also there will be expectations for you to be.”

“I think that all the conservative values that my parents implanted in me and I look at society like its moving forward, and we may need to break the conservative ideals in order to keep moving forward or else we will be stuck in the past. My parents told me that men should never cry and hold in their feelings, they should be strong, have guts, physical strength, they don't take anything from anybody, they give out favors, they provide. It's really a bunch of stereotypes.”

“Therefore I have never thought that a woman should be classified as lower than a man because my mom is my role model for women and my dad is my role model for men. I see them as equals. I received messages from them we are all equals.”

“I am from China. I grew up there and when I go back, a lot of western/ progressive ideas are being echoed over there, versus our parent's generation. So, I wonder about the culture and generational differences.”

“My parents had an arranged marriage. The man works and the woman is a stay at home mom, and that is a very prominent feature in our there generation. The man also got significantly more education, and again this is maybe 50 years ago so we are going back in time. But my mom only has a high school equivalent education and my father is a business man.”

“He has always been progressive and more open minded and my mom has been the one who is more conservative, like men should do this, you need to get a job, men are strong, not that I take offense to it but woman also think in that way.”

**Main Themes.** Main influence of being male learned from parts and culture. As males age and become more independent they developed more progressive/flexible masculinity. Conflict between traditional vs. individual/progressive ideas.

**Should a man only marry a woman? Why/Why not?** The Asian males discussed the conservative and traditional ideology that their parents and culture had about same sex marriage and homosexuality. These views were influenced by religion and cultural expectations of male behavior and had been followed by the Asian males since childhood. The Asian males differed in the source of their learned conservative views. For example, culture (China, Vietnam) and religion (India, Indonesia) played an integrated role in social learning. Due to these views and expectations, the males shared how they were not exposed to homosexuality which initially made it difficult to have an independent opinion that differed from their cultural and parental viewpoints.

“Yeah you don’t really talk about it”

“Where I come from in Indonesia, I grew up there for 19 years. Everyone in high school, my friends joke about being gay. They pretend to be gay, I don’t know why but it is a joke. The idea of homosexuality is still so strange that they don’t take it seriously. I would say religion plays a large role in Indonesia, Everyone is so conservative. You need to have your religion on your I.D. cards and it is mostly Muslim too.”

“In China it was centered around gendered roles and relationship roles, what is expected. Rather than religion and was a specific religion is saying about homosexuality that’s not where I received my messages.”

“For my parents I would say that it comes from religion, and culture, I believe they become conjoined after a number of years.”

“For myself I would say it is more of tradition, they were not religious or devote until recently, but nothing has really changed about their ideals so I think it stems from their culture and ideals from culture. Steady conservatism, I’m Vietnamese.”

As adult/college aged, the Asian males formed their own independent views about same sex marriage and homosexuality. They shared that their change in opinion was due to there exposure to new information that they integrated into their own views. Some of which was opposed to parental and cultural views. For many of the males, exposure to homosexuality did not happen until recently and the exposure had a profound impact on their views. It also showed their ability and willingness to adapt to their environment and potentially be flexible in their views based on the environmental expectations and openness to new information. They placed a high emphasis on the awareness to more information to in order to have competent viewpoints.

"My parents say that same sex marriage is improper and disgusting and when they see something like that on the TV they have a reaction. I have realized that same sex marriage does not bother me nor does it effect me so why would I be offended by it or think negative towards it?"

"Even in my parents generation, a lot of them are born with a lot of traditional ideas, gender roles, but the more that you get introduced to any kind of

information about LGBT and the more education the more progressive my family became.”

“It was years 5 years ago for me, yeah, 5 years ago in high school, that’s when I recognized I’m seeing a lot of LGBT stuff but prior to that I didn’t see anything.”

“Even 10 years ago I feel that it was polar opposite”

**Main Themes.** Original views on homosexuality came from conservative cultures (China, Vietnam) or religion (India, Indonesia). Homosexuality viewed as taboo to talk about and created a lack of exposure until recently. Recent exposure allowed for opposing viewpoints from parents and culture, more education of the subject, and openness.

**How important is it for men to fix things on their own?** Within this Asian male group they placed a high emphasis on competence in terms of fixing things. Being masculine was seen as being competent, and not knowing something was embarrassing and showed incompetence. The task did not matter for them, for example sewing, cooking, cleaning, or fixing a tire, they would be embarrassed if they could not do any of these tasks. The lack of knowledge would show their incompetence. If they didn’t know how to do something then they would view themselves as a burden to others for having to ask for help. Independence was seen as important and the males shared their high expectations for themselves to know how to do a lot of different things, which was admittedly difficult to keep up with.

“Yeah I saw that I put it as important because I think that it is important for people in general.”

“Yeah like cooking or cleaning the house.”

“If you can fix stuff or do dishes or learn how to do stuff, you would be less independent on your own, regardless of sex or gender”

“Being who you are as person, I feel like I personally will prefer a high level of independence where I can get by on my own, it might be you know we are all in college and trying to find our own role.”

“Independence is very important for us.”

“I feel I should learn to do something on my own, and when you ask for help you become a burden in their shoes. For example my car, men are supposed to be very auto heavy, and they should know how to change their oil. So when I looked at the difference in money, I thought man, I should learn how to do this, but I don’t really want to learn how to do this. I don’t ask a friend to help change my oil, I just go pay to get it done.”

“It would be embarrassing, I wasn’t willing or able to change my oil by myself. Not really a knock on my masculinity but more a knock on my competence.”

“Like your burdening other people time with your incompetence.”

“If you’re asking as more of a guy thing of being a burden, you know I think of that it doesn’t make a difference for me. For example if I’m crocheting something and I ask for help, or if I’m changing my oil. For me, the embarrassment would be the same for both.”

“I think that it’s a conflict of what is expected of you and what you’re willing to do yourself, for me it is like I have a problem I can’t fix it and I am going out to

ask for help, how are others going to look at me, like you're a guy you should know how to fix this this but its lie."

"Yeah I think that there is a lot of expectations like for everything, from cars to computers, to emotions, sports, etc."

**Main Themes.** High emphasis as it being seen as a competence issue rather than a "gender" issue. Being masculine seen as being competent, and not knowing something was embarrassing, shows incompetence, and lack of independency. Expressed importance of showing competence no matter the task including stereotypical feminine tasks.

***Is being tough important to be a man? Why/Why not?*** The Asian males shared that emotions were ok to show but you had to do it in the right or proper way. At the start of the interview question the males wanted to differentiate what was meant by "toughness." Immediately there was a need for distinction to determine if the question was about physical toughness to emotional toughness. The Asian males felt that being emotionally tough is important as well as showing proper emotion regulation.

"Like what kind of tough? There is emotionally tough and physically tough. It would be good to have both traits."

"Physical toughness is important but not as necessary anymore because we are not hunter gatherers."

"Yeah to the point were men try to synthetically try to become strong and have a physique that is expected for men. I think a lot of that is men doing this to pick up women."

“Even if you do not actually need it. The function of it is not there. Like the function of having muscles the size of basketballs is not functional but others see that as good?”

“I think there are more values to that, toughness is an attribute, but being smart is an attribute too. It depends on what you determine as a value. Me, being intellectually strong is more important to me than my physical strength.”

The Asian males emphasized other ways of displaying strength beyond physical strength. They viewed toughness as being emotionally tough (regulation skills) and physically tough (muscular strength). They discussed the importance to emotionally regulate. For example, too much or too little was seen as negative. Instead of viewing toughness as a dichotomous yes or no, the Asian male group placed toughness on a spectrum that overlapped with the spectrum of appropriate usage based on environmental expectations.

"I agree but there is a threshold for both ways of being tough. Like you can be too emotionally tough and close people out, and too physically tough.”

“I think of this as two questions, like how do you handle yourself in times of stress. One important aspect of being emotionally tough, you are able to identify them and choose what to do with them. You have to be able to figure out the emotions and be educated and how you use them in times of failing a test, or when Trump got elected. Physical toughness there has been this need to protect ourselves from hunter gathers to build shelters to protect oneself from the elements, but now we have law and order and do not need to train for war, but it

is still an expected aspect that men fall in to and think they need to be physically fit even though it is not necessary.”

“It’s not being overly sensitive about everything. Like, someone’s parents just died, you should be sad for that, but if someone failed their exam, there is no need to cry or mourn their exam... there is no need for that, just move on. So, there is this proper usage of emotion.”

**Main Themes.** Being emotionally tough was important as well as showing proper emotion regulation. Not doing so displayed a lack of control and burdening others with their emotions. Physical toughness was an attribute, but being intelligent and showing intellectual strength was more important than physical strength. Again males placed a high emphasis in showing other ways of strength/toughness beyond just physical.

**How important should sex be for a man?** The Asian males shared that sex was fueled by what others think they should do, and sex was often to pursue a goal. They described the function of sex from simply passing their genes to procreate as well as the high social expectations.

“If it aligned with your desires and goals than I guess it should be important but if not than its whatever.”

“It should be aligned with your individual desires and goals of sex, but if it is not that important for you then it shouldn’t be important.”

"I agree with that. Its subjective.”

“I think that men do this to pursue a goal, and it’s enjoyment for them”

“I think that it is also fueled by what others think of you and your abilities to pursue women and sleep with them. I think that it is both.

"I think that it is like the saying, “eating to live and now living to eat.” The more we eat the more that we show people that I'm better than you. Western culture, bigger is better, the more is better.”

Premarital sex was described as taboo due to religion or culture: Vietnamese, Indonesian, India. But in China it reportedly was becoming more of a norm due to westernization.

“Growing up in Indonesia, My peers had different views of sex. Sex outside marriage is taboo. Nobody does that, nobody talks about it. The government is very strict about it. Students were caught making out and got expelled from school. Still very taboo.”

“Vietnamese culture is similar to that. It is wrong to go around and sleep with a lot of people.”

"Indian culture is the same way. "

“China is becoming more common with divorce, and becoming more westernized. Premarital sex is no big deal anymore. It used to be more strict but not so much anymore, especially in the cities. There is also a lot of political factors, we used to have the one child policy so that influenced to serve as a deterrent because that was a law. The more you go around and have sex the more kids potentially. Now that aspect is still kind of the same.”

**Main Themes.** Sex was described as an societal expectation and followed the the idea that more equalled better. Asian Males viewed sex as more of a function and a means to an end. Premarital sex was taboo due to religion and cultural upbringing but was becoming more of a norm due to westernization.

**When is it okay for men to show emotions?** Similar to the toughness question the Asian males viewed these terms as more flexible and less rigid in terms of their definition and performance.

“Define expressing emotions?”

The Asian males stressed the importance of performing in ways that fit expectations. Therefore, the proper usage of emotions was important to them.

“From my culture you would simply follow whatever was culturally expected. Like crying and mourning at a funeral but not at a wedding. It depends on the situation to not make others uncomfortable. Proper usage again.”

The Asian male group did not speak about emotions as only “crying” and explored other emotions, such as anger. Anger was allowed and the males discussed how they would trouble shoot to anger because they knew how to show it. Anger was seen as better than displaying embarrassment. Embarrassment meant a lack of competence, independency, and control. The Asian males believed they needed to be able to show whatever was socially acceptable. For example, anger was more acceptable than crying. Whatever emotion was to be shown it was well thought out before hand. Therefore, the Asian males had to be strategic in the process of showing their emotions and they were responsible for knowing how to properly regulate themselves.

“Like we are allowed to show anger and I think for guys I feel like anger is what is seen but there are other emotions going on. We are allowed to show and it is more acceptable to express.”

“I think maybe we just haven’t learned how to express it differently. You feel confused at a feeling, you can trouble shoot to anger.”

“Anger is easier to have then maybe feeling embarrassed.”

“Anger is often more acceptable and accepted over crying especially when around other males.”

“You should be able to show whatever you want but you may have to leave to have that emotion. So holding anger, or holding back tears etc. So we can have them but you have to be strategic or its self-destructive.”

**Main Themes.** The proper usage of emotions was important. Anger was better than feeling embarrassed. Whatever the emotion, it was seen as better to have in privacy and to be strategic in the process of showing it.

***Are men better equipped to have leadership positions?*** The Asian males reported that leadership came down to the ability to manage stress during stressful times. In addition, they described it as the ability to show competency in how to lead themselves and others during stressful moments. They referenced their upbringing from parents and their cultures did not display women in leadership roles.

“Indonesia is not as progressive. Men still see woman as a lesser gender and sexual harassment is normal in the workplace and my friends from Indonesia make sexist jokes. I am not in the same place as that.”

“I would say the same in China, a woman in a professional setting is becoming more common, but politically the conservative party would flip out if a woman was in power or held a significant role.”

The Asian males believed that women were not trained like men to be leaders and males had more grooming than women did for such roles. Women were taught to adhere to gender roles which were consistently under men. The Asian males believed that if a woman was in a leadership role it was because of a man's doing.

“If a woman climbed to a leadership position in Vietnam it would be because a man helped her get there it was not done solely by her. A male had an influence. It is rare, but there are successful women and it is only seen in fashion or more feminine careers.”

“We did have a female president. I was very young but she was the daughter of our first president and the male influence may have played a role.”

Based on cultural expectations, the males shared that it would be seen as unacceptable for females to have careers in more dominantly male oriented professions. The Asian males believed that women could have such professions but were speaking to their cultural expectations.

“I have a friend with me in medical school who is Indian like me but she is a female. Her dad consistently persuaded her to not be a physician but a dentist or a pharmacist. The Physician was seen as a male job and not a female job.”

“So if a female was working to become a doctor it would not be as supported. If I had a boss and it is a woman in a suit it would throw me off as a male. If it was an Indian woman I assume her to be a very strong woman and an exception. Not because woman can’t but based on cultural expectations.

**Main Themes.** Males were viewed as better at managing emotions during stressful times. According to Asian males, women in Asian culture were taught to adhere to consistently be under men and if a woman was in a leadership role it would be viewed as a man’s doing. Females in more male professions was not supported in Asian culture, but the Asian males in the focus group did not have a problem with it.

#### **Latino Male Focus Group.**

**What makes you a man?** According to the Latino males, being masculine involved a significant other and having someone to take care of. They specifically described the importance of relations with others in terms of being manly, for example it was important that as a Latino male to live up to expectations of others, such as being a provider, athletic, loyal with peers, responsible, and desirable to women. It was also important that a male be comfortable in being the center of attention.

“The fact that you have a significant other. Having a partner.”

“Caring for someone or taking care of someone. I'm an older brother so I take care of my younger brother and I'm going to continue to do that with future children. So being a provider, being physical, playing sports, and being athletic at least a little bit.”

“For me it has a lot to do with the way you treat the other people around you, with respect. The picture you give to others who are around you. Being responsible, being a very adult mature person, something people look up to. Not being afraid to be the center of attention, not to be afraid of your position and being looked up to.”

“You are expected to put up with the crap that your friends give you.”

“I have a latino friend who was very conservative and never tried to pick up girls when he went out, and he was made fun of.”

**Main Themes.** Masculinity meant taking care of someone, being a provider, independency, how others see you, how you treat others, being responsible, being ok with being the center of attention, living up to others expectations, being athletic, being athletic, loyal with peers, having a lot of sex and picking up women.

***Should a man only marry a woman? Why/Why not?*** The Latino males all agreed that homosexuality was something that they were not exposed to before college. The lack of exposure was influenced by religion (catholic) and reinforced by their parents and culture. The males shared that this way of thinking was instilled within the catholic church’s view and they felt that such views skewed the public view of homosexuality, especially within Latin culture. Since attending college the males still didn’t see homosexuality as “normal” but were tolerant of it.

“When I was growing up I never saw gay couples, I saw gay people but not gay couples. Now that you ask me I have no problem with a gay couple being

together but as a culture it is a “no no” because the country is extremely catholic so they say that is wrong.”

“I don't see it as a normal thing but I believe in freedom of speech and they should be allowed to do that. I never met a gay person until I got to college, like all through high school, everything.”

“This is a very catholic, religious Latino kind of thing. There is this stereotype of a nation man being very macho and being the alpha, at least in my family I have no problem with it. For me if he is all of the things I stated in the first question and is gay, who am I to say thats wrong?”

“Traditionally, in Puerto Rico, it would be looked at differently from 3 generations, you know my grandparents 65 and up is different than the 30 year old. You know the younger generation is more concerned on character and who the person is rather than all of the sexuality. My parents age 45 and up their still bias but at the end of the day they will notice what you bring to the table but still have some of traditional views. Buy grandmother for example, I could show her the most successful, best looking, handsome man in the world, but the moment I mention that he is gay... it all goes to hell. I would say that 85% of the population in Puerto Rico is catholic and the church really skews the views of many Puerto Ricans when it comes to homosexuality.”

“And the church public condemns homosexuals. And people defend their homophobia because of what the church says.”

“My grandmother is from Bolivia on getting married and relationships. Her biggest thing I mean the biggest thing is to marry someone who is the same race and catholic. An after that maybe a different race but catholic, and after that at least an established religion that is normalized. And definitely not same sex.”

**Main Themes.** Not being exposed to homosexuality due to cultural opinion of homosexuality. Their opinions of homosexuality were strongly influenced by religion (Catholic). The Latino males did not view homosexuality as normal but tolerated of it.

**How important is it for men to fix things on their own?** The Latino males described masculine gender roles as being passed down from generation to generation. They reflected on their fathers and grandfathers fixing things around the house when they were younger.

“My grandfather used to tell me that you either have to be smart or strong.”

The Latino males agreed that if they did not know how to fix things, it would be embarrassing, especially if such deficiencies were exposed in front of women.

“I would be embarrassed if I couldn't fix a tire and I was with a girl. She would tell all of her friends about it.”

If other people found out that they could not fix things, such as change their car tire for example, their peer groups would think less of them. According to the Latino males, Latina women usually sought out a male figure to help fix things or financially provide for them. They further shared that they did not need to know how to fix things with their hands if they could afford to fix it.

“They'll say stuff but I think that it's all about money. It's another means of providing, I don't need to fix anything if I can pay to get it done.”

One of the Latino males stated that if he was dressed nicely he would not try to change a car tire to impress a woman. He believed that his appearance was just as important.

“If we are going someplace nice and I'm dressed nicely, I do not want to get myself dirty, and sweaty I will call AAA I have no issue with that. If we are just hanging out, I will try to fix it, I don't care. I wouldn't feel emasculated I just don't know how to change a tire, I know other guys would feel emasculated and would feel like they had to fix it themselves and would never call somebody else.”

**Main Themes.** Social expectations to know how to perform tasks and show independence. It would be embarrassing if they did not know how to fix something especially in front of a girl, other people would find out and think less of you. Women usually look to a male figure to help fix or pay and the males felt that they needed to meet that expectation. But, their appearance was another important factor. They would not risk getting dirty if it was not worth it due to the need to meet visual expectations (dress) of others and maintain their status.

***Is being tough important to be a man? Why/Why not?*** The Latino males shared the importance of being physically tough especially in the eyes of women. Latina females wanted to be protected by a strong and tough person in order to feel safe. The males believed that physical toughness was important so you would be noticed by others.

“Yes especially when you are younger so the girls can notice you. The girls feel safe with a strong man. A big guy is a good body guard, provide safety.”

“They want the guy whatever it is who shows the most skills. Whether that is a gang or soccer team etc. Being noticeable. Toughness, fighting to show off for females.”

“Sure bigger faster stronger is better. Younger girls like under 25 will usually go for the bigger, better looking guy, the more brute physical guy, the best athlete, best dancers. The status of your friend group.”

According to the Latino males, it was also important to be tough due to the ability to deal with life circumstances. Not being tough meant that a man was weak, and the males stressed the importance of not “breaking down.” It was expected that males were tough and unaffected by things. If males had to cry it had to be hidden, unless it was something really important like a funeral..

“Honestly being tough in general is important, it is expected, life isn't easy, things don't go the way you want, shit happens, you have to be tough regardless, you can't break down overtime something happened to you. In Latino culture if your heart is broken or a girl breaks up with you, you act like nothing happened.”

**Main Themes.** Important to be tough especially in the eyes of women who want to be protected by someone strong, tough, and safe. Being tough helped males stand out and deal with life circumstances. It was expected that they were tough and unaffected by things.

*How important should sex be for a man?* The Latino males reported that sex was very important. Being sexual and being desirable to women was influenced by their peers as well as their family (uncles). Having sex was valued and showed that they were part of the male group and desired by others. The Latino males stated that they were reinforced to not have a relationship and sleep around with women. But, it was important to bring the “one” home only if she was the “one.” The Latino males wanted to “have fun” until it was time to “settle down.” At that time, they would demonstrate control and choose the “one” and have loyal marriage.

“Super important, with my cousin they talk about it all the time. All they talk about is getting a girl. You are only cool unless you take her to bed. My grandfather had 4 wives and 12 kids. My cousins are always trying to hook me up with people and their friends. Thats valued, it will make you a man if you are having sex. You will feel proud of yourself and truly become part of the male group. You group will encourage it, they will work to help you get laid. But for women its like the opposite. This is coming from peers, parents etc. and if you don't so it than there is something wrong with you.”

“As for being young its about picking up the girls and having sex, not about relationships. In my family, my parents do not talk about at all, but when my uncle comes around they encourage me to party and meet girls and party.”

“Thats so true, my uncles are the same way. I think that males can be seen as desirable if they are having a lot of sex.”

“If you do not have a girlfriend than you have to try and go all the way with the girls.”

“For me it was fun, to sleep with a lot of women it made me feel like a man. Now being in a relationship it is even better. Through a cultural lens it is typical, men should always go out, women should not. So for men it is reinforced and praised to go out to find women but women are shamed if they did the same thing.

Culturally I don't want to say its expected but when you say you are going out with a friend group, it is known what you are actually doing.”

**Main Themes.** Very important to be sexual, it was influenced by peers and family and showed they were a part of the male group. Being sexual displayed that they were desired. It was reinforced that the Latino males not have a relationship and sleep around when they were young. But, when they were ready, they would settle down and marry “the one.”

**When is it okay for men to show emotions?** The Latino males conceptualized emotions as crying and according to them it was almost never okay to to show emotions. Only at a funeral or a break up was it allowed to get emotional and cry.

“Major events, such as a break up or a funeral. I am a more emotional person so I get emotional about a lot of stuff, but I have also had to hide that growing up. We are supposed to not show emotion and be stoic in most situations but then I would get emotional afterwards. But culturally crying at a funeral like when my grandfather died, when my mother passes away, things like that it is ok but it has to be something significant, not crying over every little thing.”

When the Latino males felt that they would get emotional they would never show it. Instead, they would leave the situation to not show others that they are crying. If they showed emotions they would be ridiculed for a long time. They expressed that they were expected to be stoic, not get emotional, and not cry over little things.

“Never. Strap up. You do not cry like a little girl, there is not time to cry. My cousin cried a lot when he was a kid and he was called a baby for a long time. It stuck with him, you're told to toughen up. Only when your mother dies can you cry. After an argument my uncle was gone the next morning. I leave too.”

It was considered okay to get angry because something good could come from it. For example a man can fight, and everyone would see it and it proved he was stronger and better than another male. Also, The males heard that they would show emotions to “sweet talk” a female, if that’s what she liked or wanted. The Latino males stand they would only show vulnerability in their emotions as a means to an end. The males were open to be flexible with their emotions and follow whatever a female wanted. But if they did, they expressed that it was “fake” especially if it came up in conversation around male peers.

“To get a girl. You have to serenade the girl if you want her and talk sweet. But then you tell the boys yeah I got, so really its fake. But if the girls wants a tough guy than you do not have to show any emotions.”

“To fight, because they may use that emotion to get some recognition for it but with their wife they can't do that so they either don't show it or they leave. The male has to be getting something out of it. Serenading a woman, fighting for pride. etc.”

**Main Themes.** Males expected to be stoic and not show emotions due to ridicule. Emotions can only be shown for a specific reason, funeral or if males are getting something out of it: a woman, a fight, improved status, and personal pride.

***Are men better equipped to have leadership positions?*** The Latino males reported that male gender norms better equipped them for leadership roles. Not that women couldn't have leadership positions, but men had better opportunities and more training.

“Society is like a family. And just like a family, the male makes the final decision. If a family has something nice it is because the man earned it, credit is not usually given to the woman in the family. Personally I grew up with women and if had a woman boss it would be fine. But to my uncles it would not be ok. The woman who are in charge in my country is because their husband is the boss. It is not done by solely the woman it is because of the man. Woman do not rise to power by themselves there is always a man involved.”

“Bolivia had a woman president. Woman are raised to do household chores and men are raised to be leaders.”

“Puerto Rican culture, the father brings home the money etc. but the mother has the last word. My grandmother was the queen of the house, what she said went. In my house the same goes, my mom has the final word.”

In contrast, one Latino male spoke about a hypothetical scenario of a woman receiving a job over him. He believed that if it happened it was because he wasn't good enough and would attribute it as a personal failure and not a gender issue.

“If a woman gets a job over you, she is probably more experienced, more prepared, and I don't look at them like oh their better than me I look at myself, self blame, internalize. Not looking at the gender of someone else or reasons why someone got a position, I look at myself. We are very self conscious culturally, looking better, commercials in Puerto Ricans are all image focused and I internally look at myself like that too.”

**Main Themes.** Social norms better equip men for leadership roles and to make the final decisions. Women do not not have the same opportunities as men. Males subordinate to women would self blame and be seen as less than by others.

## **Chapter V**

### **Discussion**

The current study explored the social construction of masculinity in men from diverse cultures including the similarities and differences in traditional masculinity ideology and performance. Results suggested that the males within the Black, Asian, and Latino focus groups displayed similarities in their quantitative data. All focus groups showed similar mean scores on the different subscales representing traditional masculinity ideology on the MRNI-SF. But, within the qualitative focus groups, the males expanded on their traditional masculinity ideology and provided useful dialogue that showed nuanced differences to the performance of their ideology. The novel information was beneficial and provided information to the research questions: Is there a united performance of masculinity ideology that spans across cultures? If so, what is that? If not, how is it different? In regard to the new information, how can therapist be more mindful and utilize those nuanced differences in the performance of traditional masculinity ideology?

#### **United Performance of Masculinity Ideology**

##### **Similarities.**

***Social Construction.*** In support of the first research question there was evidence that supported a united performance of masculinity ideology among males from different cultural backgrounds in this study. Regardless of cultural backgrounds, the males in the

focus groups showed similarities in learning how to be a man from external sources such as family, culture, and media. The external expectations included being a provider for others specifically in performing tasks around the home as well as financially providing for their family or significant others. The performance of providing distinguished them as manly.

***Homosexuality.*** The males in the study also shared similarities in their lack of exposure to homosexuality. In addition, the males across focus groups expressed that they formed their opinions about homosexuality from their cultural and religion. All males in the focus group stated that they were raised to understand homosexuality as taboo and they learned to avoid anything that had to do with homosexuality or same sex marriage. As the males became more independent and started college they developed their own views on homosexuality. Based on increased exposure to homosexuality in the college setting the males across all focus groups were in the process of developing a “tolerant” opinion of homosexuality and an openness to continued acceptance.

***Being Handy/Provision.*** The males in the study also emphasized the importance of knowing to fix things and believed that it was an expectation from family as well as society. Specifically the males in focus groups discussed the importance of being capable of fixing things themselves but also financially providing. The idea of “financially fixing” was seen as necessary, especially if the males did not know how to fix something themselves. It was expected that the males should have the capability of providing no matter how it was done. The males also put a high emphasis on showing others that they could provide, especially in front of a female. The males in the focus groups

distinguished that providing showed that they were independent and reliable to others. All focus groups showed commonality in their relational emphasis of providing, and wanted to live up to the the expectations of others.

***Toughness.*** Toughness was important to all males in the different focus groups and they described toughness as an expectation from others (peers and family). It meant that they were not expected to show any emotions besides anger. Not being emotional, not crying, and being stoic was a a common performance to display their toughness. The performance of toughness showed that the males were capable of controlling their emotions and that they were not weak men. The males in the study specifically saw toughness as a means to communicate that they were capable of providing for others. If the males could not perform the the expected stoicism they understood the incoming social consequences from their surroundings (ridicule). The males in the study felt that they were only allowed to show emotions beyond anger during extreme events, such as a family funeral. Even in such extreme moments the males still felt that they could only become emotional in specific way, such as letting tears fall from their face. If they could not be emotional during extreme events in a “manly” way, they shared that they would be better of removing themselves and crying in private.

***Sex Expectations.*** The males in the study described sex and being sexual as an expectation they were supposed to live up to from their peers and society. Specifically the males believed that the performance of sexual prowess displayed that they were desirable, powerful, and demonstrated that they could provide for females. The males in the study shared that if they did not act on opportunities for sex, then they would be

challenged by peers and their sexuality would be questioned. In order to demonstrate that they were manly they felt it was important to have as much sex as they could.

***Leadership.*** In terms of leadership capabilities, the males in all focus groups described that they felt better equipped for leadership positions over females. It reflected their gendered upbringing and expectations from their different cultures where men were viewed as superior and often held leadership positions over a female. Although all the males had a foundational belief that they were better equipped and were better prepared than females, they all believed that females were capable of having leadership positions. But, if a female had a high professional role or leadership position it was viewed as being dependent on male influence.

***Summary.*** Regardless of cultural backgrounds, the males in the focus groups showed similarities in learning how to be a man from external sources such as family, culture, and media. The external expectations included being a provider for others specifically in performing tasks around the home as well as financially providing for their family or significant others. The performance of providing distinguished them as manly. The males in the study also shared similarities in their lack of exposure to homosexuality and expressed that they formed their opinions about homosexuality from their cultural and religion. All males in the focus group stated that they were raised to understand homosexuality as taboo and they learned to avoid anything that had to do with homosexuality or same sex marriage. Toughness was important to all males in the different focus groups and they described toughness as an expectation from others (peers and family). The performance of toughness meant that they were not expected to show

any emotions besides anger and being stoic was a a common performance to display their toughness. The males in the study described sex and being sexual as an expectation they were supposed to live up to from their peers and society. All the males had a foundational belief that they were better equipped fo leadership positions and were better prepared than females.

### **Differences in Performance of Masculinity Ideology Across Cultures**

In response to the first research question there was also support of distinct differences in the performance of masculinity ideology among the men from different cultures. Although the quantitative scores displayed similarity in traditional masculinity ideology in all focus groups, the narratives were different between groups in terms of their masculinity performance. Evidence was shown that although masculinity ideology looked the same on the inventory the performance behind their masculinity ideology was distinct to each cultural group.

#### **Black Male Focus Group.**

*Social Construction.* The Black male group emphasized their external teachers of masculinity: parents, peers, and media and aligned with Franklin's (1994) theoretical triangle of socialization where he proposed that Black men developed their identity by navigating and maneuvering through three groups: 1) the primary group; 2) the peer group; and 3) the mainstream societal group. From the three groups, the Black males in the study felt they had to live up to the learned Black masculine expectations in order to survive the hardships of life. Specifically, the Black males believed that their behavioral expectations were initially learned from their parents, and maintained through

reinforcement by their peers and media. All of which prepared them to withstand racial oppression and prejudice from the world around them. Kniffley, (2014) stated that the reference group for Black males was very often the Black community and culture; however, the social meaning given to their “Black” appearance was not often defined by the Black community and culture.

***Toughness.*** The Black males in this study believed that they had to rigidly adhere to the masculinity defined by their parents, peers, and media. One of the learned performances of that masculine ideology was toughness. The Black males reported that they felt prepared to be tough to show that they could provide and/or get out of their environment. In addition, the Black males in the study emphasized the importance of physical toughness over mental toughness. Rather than displaying their thoughts and emotions and being ridiculed and questioned on their maleness, the expression of physical toughness sustained the Black males’ status within the peer group and made them more attractive towards women. Such statements supported Majors and Billson (1992) assertion that respect held such a premium for Black males that many are willing to risk anything for it, including their lives. For developing Black males, the threat of ostracism from the group can be motivation enough to choose or conform to identities and exhibit hypermasculine behaviors that help them be “just one of the guys.”

Black males further discussed the meaning behind their masculine ideology of toughness. Toughness was described in a relational manner by being a means to show that they were better than others. The Black males in the study expressed the difficulty of standing out or making it out of their environment due to the restrictions put on them

from a racially oppressive society. For example, the systematic and chronic nature of institutional racism, disproportionate representation in the criminal justice system, underemployment, unemployment, and limited access to educational opportunities, contributed to Black male masculinity ideology. From these limitations, the males described their masculinity ideology of toughness as a competitive performance in order to distinguish themselves from other Black males, increase their social status, and improve their ability to get out of their environment. To stand out, the Black males in the study felt that they had to adhere to traditional masculinity ideology and outperform others. Their narratives aligned with Mincey et al., (2015) examples of male gender performance as emotionally restrictive, angry, aggressive, violent, tough, sexually promiscuous, and/or cool. The Black males agreed that “hypermasculinity” was reinforced from their culture as “more is better” and all stemmed from the secondary gains from their hypermasculinity: respected, desired, and seen as a provider.

***Being Handy/Provision.*** The Black males in the study also emphasized their ability to fix things with their hands. But, if they could not fix things, they were expected to afford to fix things financially. The Black males reported that fixing things and paying for things was all done to meet the expectations of a female and demonstrated their ability to provide for others. The Black males emphasized the importance of financially providing due to others in the Black community reportedly “living pay check to pay check” and not having the financial means due to a lack of resources from educational and employment opportunities. Similar to hypermasculine behaviors, more money was

seen as better and showed that a Black male had the ability to provide, increase their status with peers, and made them more desirable to females.

***Display of Emotions.*** In contrast to hypermasculinity described by the Black males in the study, they felt unprepared to talk about emotions and the expression of emotions. The polarity in their masculine performance was due to emotions being “unhelpful” within Black culture and showed dependency and weakness. Although the Black males understood that not showing emotions was not healthy for them, they adhered to them anyway because of the expectations and potential consequences. For example, being perceived by others as weak, not independent, and not tough, resulted in lesser status and desirability from women. Because of the negative consequences of showing emotions, the males were not instructed in how to discuss emotions and restrictive behavior was reinforced by their peers and media. In rare circumstances the males agreed that they could cry but only if someone close to them passed away. The males shared they had to stoically cry (flat affect) and simply let the tears roll down their face. According to the Black males, crying in any other way beside stoically displayed a lack of control, brokenness, and weakness (antithesis to Black masculinity).

***Leadership.*** Within their expected performance of masculine ideology, the Black males in the study also felt that they were expected to be leaders, especially when compared to women. The males described how uncomfortable they would be working under a woman or having a wife that made more money than them. Although the males believed that women could perform similar roles, they were also uncomfortable with the idea that they would be considered less than a woman and paid less. They further

reported that they would never admit to their friends that their wife made more money due to the contradiction with their traditional masculine expectations/ideology. It would also make them feel dependent, weak, and possessing the ability to provide. Although many of the Black males in the study were raised by their mother who modeled an independent female leader of their house, they still felt that men were superior due to social expectations.

The described expectations presented a paradox of their relationship with women, mothers, and women leaders. On one hand they saw they respected their mothers who raised them and played a significant role in their lives, often times making decisions and being the “leader” of the house even when a male was present. On the contrary, the males were surrounded by derogatory music about women and performance expectations directly opposing femininity. If the Black males in the study did not live up to such expectations, they faced consequences from peers and lose their status amongst the group. Such consequences may play a role in their lack of comfort of female leadership or female partner leadership due to how it may be perceived by others.

**Summary.** The Black males in this study emphasized that their behavioral expectations were initially learned from their parents, and maintained through reinforcement by their peers and media. All of which prepared them to withstand racial oppression and prejudice from the world around them. In addition, the Black males in the study emphasized the importance of physical toughness over the importance of emotional toughness. Physical toughness showed that they could provide and/or get out of their environment and expressed the difficulty of standing out or making it out of their

environment due to the restrictions put on them from a racially oppressive society. The Black males agreed that “hypermasculinity” was reinforced from their culture as “more is better” and all stemmed from the secondary gains from their hypermasculinity: respected, desired, and seen as a provider. The Black males in the study put a higher emphasis on financially providing due to not having the financial means due to a lack of resources from educational and employment opportunities. The Black males in the study saw emotions as “unhelpful” within Black culture and showed dependency and weakness. Although the males believed that women could perform similar roles, they were also uncomfortable with the idea that they would be considered less than a woman and paid less due to the contradiction with their traditional masculine expectations/ideology.

#### **Differences in Asian Male Focus Group.**

*Social Construction.* The Asian males in the study stated that they learned their masculinity ideology from parents and Asian culture. In contrast to the Black and Latino focus groups, the Asian males in the study explained their masculinity ideology and performance in a more linear, direct, and almost “manualized” learning process in accordance with cultural and parental expectation. The narratives of the Asian males in this study aligned with Lee’s (1996) findings that some Asian American men are brought up under stringent gender role expectations such as a focus on group harmony and filial piety, carrying on their family name and conforming to the expectations of the parents. It also was consistent with Sue and Sue (2003) emphasis on collectivism within Asian culture and refers to promoting family and group interests over individual needs within Asian culture.

***Being Handy/Provision.*** Further differences were shown particularly with in the Asian male focus group, due to their perceived masculine flexibility, specifically, when they discussed their cultural expectations of fixing things. The Asian males emphasized the importance of being competent in the performance of whatever task was presented to them. According to the Asian group, the performance of the masculine ideology of fixing included sewing, cooking, cleaning, or fixing a tire. All performances, regardless of gender norms, was included in their masculine ideology of knowing how to fix things. If the Asian males did not know how to sew or change a tire, they would be equally embarrassed. Failing to perform their masculine ideology meant that they were not independent, not competent, and a burden to others.

Although the Asian males in the study appeared to perform their masculinity in a more flexible manner, they were still rigidly adhering to their masculinity ideology. For example, Chua and Fujino (1999) found that Asian American men did not see their masculinity in opposition to femininity. Acculturation was another important variable because the Asian American men may have felt freer to display their emotions as American society generally has a more liberal notion on the expression of affect than in typical Asian societies. It may also be confusing to others, who may view an Asian male as less masculine due to more flexible performance without knowing that Asian males may be just as rigid in masculinity ideology as those perplexed by their gender performance. Chang (1998) stated that such an undefined middle ground was a difficult position for Asian American men because they may need to simultaneously accept and repudiate the White masculine norm in search of alternative definitions of masculinity.

***Toughness.*** Although the Asian males in the study scored high on their adherence to toughness, their view on toughness was different in comparison to the other male groups. The Asian males conceptualized toughness on a spectrum of both physical and emotional toughness. Asian males in the study felt that emotional toughness was more important than physical toughness and was direct contrast to the Black male focus group. The Asian males viewed emotional toughness as more helpful and functional over physical toughness. Therefore, an Asian male may not appear physically tough or domineering but may be adhering just as rigidly to the masculinity ideology. In terms of toughness it mattered most to the Asian males in the study to perform emotional toughness and properly regulate emotions. Sue and Sue (2013) agreed and stated that self control entailed avoidance of emotional displays, particularly in public, which is seen as maturity by many Asian adults.

***Display of Emotions.*** In addition, the Asian males in the study emphasized the “proper usage” of emotions. Instead of viewing emotions as a dichotomous yes or no, the Asian male group placed emotions on a spectrum that overlaps with another spectrum of appropriate usage based on environmental expectations. Similar to a performance manual, the Asian males in the study believed that there was a time and place for the performance of emotions, and it was up to the male to competently perform when necessary. A lack of competence in emotional performance showed weakness, dependency, and resulted in embarrassment. Embarrassment further displayed a lack of competence, independency, control. Regardless of performance, the Asian males still

adhered to the masculinity ideology of toughness and emotion restriction while performing in accordance with their cultural script.

***Sex Expectations.*** In contrast to the other focus group, the Asian males in the study did not view the performance of sex as important. Within Asian culture premarital sex was viewed as taboo, therefore the performance expectation was emphasized compared to other male groups in the study. The Asian males in the study did not feel the pressure within their culture to have sex and viewed sex as a function rather than a pleasure. Although the Asian males in the study knew that sex was emphasized in western culture, they viewed the expectation as separate from Asian culture. Yim & Mahalingam, (2006) hypothesized that Asian males have been taught from a young age to especially value traditional cultural gender ideals in order to give them a competitive edge in this particular ecological context as adults. Although the adherence to masculine ideology was the similar, Mok (1998) shared that the divergence of sexual performance leaves others to denigrate Asian American men as asexual overachievers.

***Summary.*** The Asian males in the study explained their masculinity ideology and performance in a more linear, direct, and almost “manualized” learning process in accordance with cultural and parental expectation. Further differences were shown due to their perceived masculine flexibility. The Asian males emphasized the importance of being competent in the performance of whatever task was presented to them. All performance, regardless of gender norms was included in their masculine ideology of knowing how to fix things. Failing to perform their masculine ideology meant that they were not independent, not competent, and a burden to others. Although the Asian males

in the study appeared to perform their masculinity in a more flexible manner, they were still rigidly adhering to their masculinity ideology. The Asian males in the study felt that emotional toughness was more important than physical toughness due to emotional toughness being more helpful and functional. The Asian male group placed emotions on a spectrum that overlaps with another spectrum of appropriate usage based on environmental expectations. A lack of competence in emotional performance showed weakness, dependency, and resulted in embarrassment. Although the Asian males in the study knew that sex was emphasized in western culture, they viewed the expectation as separate from Asian culture.

#### **Differences in Latino Male Focus Group.**

*Social Construction.* The Latino males in the study shared that they learned their masculinity ideology from Latino culture and emphasized their masculinity performance in a relational manner of providing and protecting others. In addition, the Latino males in the study shared that men should be comfortable being the the center of attention and desirable to women. Their responses were consistent with Abreu et. al's (2000) findings that Latino masculine performance of courage, honor, virility, physical strength, and as representing a protector, provider, and authority figure was culturally valued. Of the three focus groups, the Latino males scored the highest in traditional masculine ideology adherence. The Latino males' subscale scores were consistent with Saez, Casado, & Wade (2009) who found that Latino men may endorse more traditionally masculine gender roles than European American men and Black men. High traditional masculinity

adherence often called “Machismo” in Latino culture, included exaggerated forms of male gender role behaviors (Mosher, 1991).

***Being Handy/Provision.*** The Latino males in the study emphasized the importance of fixing things on their own. They believed that knowing how to fix things demonstrated independence to others and met cultural expectations of providing for others. The Latino males defined provision as fixing things, intelligence, and financially. If they did not know how to fix something they would still attempt to do so in order to show they were not afraid or embarrassed to learn how something was done (independency, toughness). The ability to fix things was viewed relationally to the Latino males in the study and demonstrated that they were capable of providing for others and themselves (independency).

The Latino males in the study shared that part of the performance of providing was their appearance to others. For example, the Latino males in the study agreed that if they had to fix a tire when they were dressed nicely, they would elect not to fix the tire due to the potential of getting dirty. If no one was there to see them change the tire, it may not be viewed as worth the trouble, especially if they were on their way to attend a social event. If others saw them dirty and not looking their best, they may be looked down upon, even if it was due to fulfilling another masculine expectation. The appearance based pressure dictated the performance that they would do in a given situation, potentially always asking themselves “how will this look to others?”

***Toughness.*** Toughness was another traditional masculine ideology subscale that was adhered to by the Latino males in the study. They believed that being physically

tough was important to display to women. In doing so, it showed that the Latino males could protect and provide for them. The Latino males also shared that females were looking for those qualities in males, and it was important to meet their expectations of toughness. In addition, the Latino males in the study viewed toughness in a rigid and dichotomous nature: tough or weak. The performance of toughness was important due to the opportunity of others to acknowledge it. Physical toughness maintained the Latino males' status in their peer group, and maintaining their status was very important. Therefore any sign of weakness would jeopardize their status within their social environment.

*Display of Emotions.* The Latino males in the study also agreed that there was never a time when emotions were appropriate and synonymously paired emotions with crying. Crying or getting emotional meant that the male was weak and a male could only cry if something drastic happened such as at a funeral. When probed to talk about other emotions, the Latino males in the study made an exception with the display of anger and believed it was acceptable because of the potential for a secondary gain. They believed that anger was the only emotion that they could show and it was functional due to the opportunity to win a fight and be seen by others as tough and a provider.

In contrast to other focus groups, the Latino males in the study also expressed that for a female, they would “pretend” to be emotional for her if that was what she wanted. For example, the males shared that they would be sensitive or sweet talk a girl, if that's what she liked. Or, if a female wanted any of the Latino males in the study to be more stoic and tough, they would do that instead. In a relational sense, the masculine

performance of the Latino males in the study appeared to be flexible but only to appease a female before returning back to performing transitional masculinity ideology.

***Sex Expectations.*** According to the Latino males in the study, sex behaviors displayed power and enabled them to maintain their status with peers. Having sex with a lot of women was seen as positive within their peer group and displayed that they were desired and “hooking up” with women enabled the males to maintain their status within the peer group and females (desirable, provider). Therefore, performance of sex behaviors was reinforced by salient groups of friends and family (uncles). The Latino males reported that “going out” was an event that they got dressed up for specifically to stand out to females and have sex. Such interactions would increase their status with others and fulfill masculine expectations (virility) with females (desire, provision) and males (dominance, control).

***Leadership.*** In regards to leadership positions the Latino males differed from other groups due to how they attributed leadership qualities as more of a personal ability issue than a gender issue. They believed that regardless of male or female leadership positions it came down to individual ability. The Latino males emphasized the importance of looking and performing at their best to sustain their relational status among their groups and be viewed as successful. A female in a leadership position over them meant that the Latino males in the study were not being their best selves and signified a personal flaw. The Latino males in the study would blame themselves and internalize the failure due to the loss of status in comparison to others.

*Summary.* The Latino males in the study shared that they learned their masculinity ideology from Latino culture and emphasized their masculinity performance in a relational manner of providing, protecting others, being the center of attention, and desirable to women. Fixing things was viewed relationally but the Latino males in the study and demonstrated to others that they were capable of providing for others and care for themselves (independency). They believed that being physically tough was important to display to women and showed they could protect and provide. The Latino males in the study believed that anger was the only emotion that they could show and it was functional due to the opportunity to win a fight and be seen by others as tough and a provider. They would “pretend” to be emotional for female and appeared to be flexible but only to appease a female before returning back to performing traditional masculinity ideology. Sex was a means to display dominance and to show they were part of the male group (control) and female group (desirable, provider). A female in a leadership position over them meant that the Latino males in the study were not being their best selves and they would blame themselves and internalize the failure due to the loss of status in comparison to others.

### **Mindful Interventions for Clinicians**

Results from the mixed method approach of this study showed similarities in the males’ masculine ideology adherence and distinctly different performances. The emergence of this new information can be used to inform professionals and show that masculinity may be performed differently between men, especially men with diverse backgrounds, upbringing, and cultural expectations. Such information will allow

providers to be more mindful and utilize the nuanced differences in masculinity performance to build a strong alliance and inform intervention. For example, instead of modifying cultural expectations clinicians can focus intervention to modify male gender performance in a more flexible way.

It will be important clinicians to recognize that they are not just working with distress but a male with a distress. For men in therapy there are conflicting aspects of their masculinity ideology influencing the presentation of the distress and the subsequent treatment approach. Clinicians must find a way first to engage the male in conversation to give permission to himself to display those emotions and give him the tools needed for when he goes out to his community.

**Black Males.** Given the unique challenges Black males face, it is important to tailor mental health advocacy and implementation of clinical interventions to the fit the needs of this population. Black males have been found to be the least likely to seek help and engage in mental health services and this may be due to the conflict associated with help seeking because it goes against the masculine ideologies of toughness and independency. Literature has focused on three main areas that act as barriers of the mental health service amongst black males: cultural mistrust, stigma, and limited access to services (Kniffley, Brown Jr., Davis 2018). Therefore its is important for clinicians to utilize effective culturally competent relationship building frameworks to accomplish treatment goals and reduce stigma/mistrust.

The therapeutic relationship must provide an environment for Black males to experience emotional and relational vulnerabilities, without judgement. The opportunities

from an accepting and less pressured environment may enable Black males to acknowledge and process the identity conflicts they experience in relation to their radicalized masculinity. Moreover, the accepting environment may provide Black males with opportunities to engage in the challenging work of identity reconciliation and developing skillsets needed to adaptively address the experiences of chronic racism and gender role conflict. Emdin (2012) suggested five relational themes that clinicians should use to develop an effective therapeutic alliance with Black males: cogenertative (working with to break down power differential), collaborative (collective and open), contextual (influence of sociocultural messages), and content focused (accurate conceptualization, treatment development, and interventions based on knowledge of Black male experiences).

Many Black males are constantly engaged in a mental tug-of-war between of what society says they should be and what their culture says they have the capability to be. In addition, to their conflicted identity they face racism and discrimination. Black males have to decide whether to adhere to their black culture, which can bring racism and oppression, or to try to be part of white culture, which can alienate them for their culture. Aggressiveness for example may not be coming from the adherence to white traditional forms but stem from more racial oppression and frustration in conflicted state of masculine identity. Cultural competent clinicians can communicate their understanding of societal oppression to display that they are there to work with him, not to impose some sort of theoretical orientation on him. Goals of treatment may include developing narratives so Black males begin to think of themselves differently and are able to address

issues of discrimination appropriately. In addition, it will be important to help the Black males develop the skills necessary to resolve the conflict themselves after the therapeutic process has ended.

The negative impact of racism and gender role conflicts can be openly discussed in session in and enable Black males to consider the social, political, and cultural factors that influence their performances and expectations of Black masculinity. A new self conceptualization can aid in the development of adaptive skills sets to navigate the chronic racial oppression that they experience. In essence, clinicians need to help Black males gain insight into their authentic self, in order for them to determine their own radicalized masculinity expression. From this point, flexible masculinity performances can be collaboratively explored and employed to align with their authentic self identification as a Black male, instead of giving in to societal pressures to adhere to stereotypical and limited views of Black masculinity.

**Asian Males.** When working with Asian males, cultural competency is essential to understand the conflicted relationship between Asian and Western cultures when it comes to masculinity performance. Acknowledgment of such conflict will inform clinical interventions to the fit the needs of this population. Although research depicts Asian males as feminine, the quantitative data shows the Asian males in this group had high scores in traditional masculinity ideology and scored higher than Black males.

The high scores to traditional masculinity ideology appeared to be inconsistent with the narratives of flexible gender performance by the Asian males in the study. Therefore, it will be important for clinicians to not assume such flexible gender

performance as stereotypical (feminine) but rather conceptualize their gender flexibility as a display of traditional masculinity ideology. Clinicians must also be aware that adherence to masculine ideology stemmed from the importance of showing competence, independence, and emotional control.

In accordance with the Asian males in the study, not being able to properly regulate their emotions showed a lack of competence and produced feeling of embarrassment. Feeling embarrassed and incompetent was described as the lowest feeling by the males in the focus group. Clinicians must recognize that for an Asian male to be in the therapy room, they are contradicting almost all of their masculine ideology values and may be feeling especially vulnerable, incompetent, and burdensome. In the therapeutic environment, it will be important to frame intervention goals that align with their cultural values. For example, one intervention goal may be to provide the necessary coping skills for the Asian males to learn, become more competent, and independent with their emotions in order to properly regulate in the future. It may be helpful to assign intervention strategies in a direct and linear approach with Asian males to maintain consistency with previous learning styles with parents and culture. Clinicians can use this linear style with Asian males to promote personal acceptance and further independence to develop their own “rule book” on masculinity. Further, clinicians can help facilitate the acceptance of the new route and have reconciliation around the performance of their masculine ideology.

Conflict of masculinity ideology and performance stemmed from the “stuck” point that Asian males in this study found themselves between Asian and Western

culture. Although adhering to the same masculine ideology, the performance looked distantly different. Asian males may feel conflicted due to the parental and cultural expectations to adhere to Asian masculinity ideology. Although this may come with praise and reinforcement from their culture and family, it leaves the males disconnected to Western culture due to the difference in masculine performance. In contrast, if they adhere to the same Western societal masculinity performance and are praised by popular culture, it may ostracize them from family and culture. It is important for Clinicians to be aware of the masculinity performance paradox presented by the Asian males in this study in order to inform helpful behavioral interventions. A lack of cultural competence, awareness, and sensitivity by the clinician may unintentionally exacerbate stress levels for Asian males and tarnish a therapeutic alliance.

**Latino Males.** When working with Latino males, it will be important for clinicians to understand the level of adherence to traditional masculinity ideology and the context around their masculinity performance. In terms of the MRNI-SF, the Latino male focus group scored highest amongst all focus groups (Black and Asian) in terms of traditional male ideology adherence and supported the literature that Latino males score higher than others in terms of traditional masculinity adherence. In terms of intervention, it may be beneficial promote a more flexible gender performance due to the potential negative consequences from their reported strong traditional masculinity adherence.

Behind the high level of traditional masculine ideology, Latino males in this study provided evidence of a strong relational context to their gender ideology. The Latino males emphasized the importance to meet cultural expectations in order to be desirable

and stand out to females. Also, fulfilling gender expectations allowed them to assert themselves within their peer group and advance their status amongst other males. The Latino males made it clear that any deviation from traditional masculine ideology and performance was a threat to their status amongst their community. A loss to their status would be devastating and carry a significant burden. Clinicians must be sensitive to magnitude of risk that a loss in status means to a Latino male and the potential burden of stress to maintain it. Knowing this, clinicians can view the Latino males gender adherence contextually and validate the pressures that Latino males face in their performance.

Validation and understanding of the cultural expectations of Latino males can lead to a stronger therapeutic alliance and enable them to feel comfortable in session. With such high traditional masculinity ideology, the Latino males may feel uncomfortable in a help seeking role. Buy in from the Latino males may be increased if the interventions are framed in a manner that complements their strong adherence to masculinity ideology. For example, the Latino male will gain more independence, power, and control through his gained flexibility in gender performance. Instead of changing the Latino males masculinity ideology, the clinician must focus on their gender performance in order to navigate their individual masculinity within their cultural expectations.

According to the Latino males in the study, appearance was important to them. The males shared scenarios where they put on an “act” in order to obtain a goal. For example, they discussed how they would flexibly follow what a female wanted them to do in terms of their behavior (sensitive or tough). The clinician can help Latino males

generalize their gender performance flexibility to “pretend” in order to continue to meet the expectations of others and reduce conflict.

The Latino males in the study described their masculinity ideology as “preset” by their culture. Instead of a fundamental change to a potentially solidified masculinity ideology, Latino males can gain skills to express themselves in accordance with what the environment presents and flexibly oscillate their masculine performance to align with cultural expectations. Such intervention enables Latino males to define their masculinity and perform it without the stress, conflict, and strain accustomed to rigid traditional masculinity adherence.

## **Chapter VI**

### **Conclusions**

The current study explored the social construction of masculinity in men from diverse cultures. Specifically, the current study explored similarities and differences in traditional masculinity ideology and performance among college age males of color. In this study, masculinity was examined as a relational construct in conjunction with other salient cultural norms identified by diverse males. Traditional masculinity ideology was measured based on the level of adherence in men from Black, Latino, and Asian culture. Similarities were found between all groups regarding their level of adherence to traditional masculinity ideology on the MNRI-SF, and the males scored specifically high on the subscales of “fixing things with their hands” and “toughness.” After the completion of the inventory, the males were separated into focus groups (Black, Latino, and Asian) to answer qualitative questions based on their inventory subscale scores. Thematic analysis from the focus groups indicated that although the males in the study yielded similar quantitative scores the context surrounding those scores( related to traditional masculinity ideology) produced significant discrepancies in defining masculinity performance based racial differences.

### **Future Directions**

The present study focused on the similarities and differences of masculinity ideology and performance in males from diverse cultures. For future study, qualitative

research investigating the meanings associated with masculinity among men may help distinguish the ways in which men make sense of their culturally valued gender expectations. Instead of group males across cultures together, determining cultural variables that influence gender performance will be important to further distinguish more effective clinical interventions. An important aspect of the current study was that the most similar and elevated scores of traditional masculinity ideology subscales produced the most variability within the dialogues of the males within different focus groups. These results highlight the need for gender role strain to be further examined in future studies to determine its influence on a male's endorsement of beliefs about traditional masculinity ideology align with his actions. More specifically, exploration and clarity is needed to assess the impact of traditional masculinity ideology adherence and culturally influenced masculinity performance. The potential differences in masculinity performance may add another layer to the gender role strain theory of masculinity that has yet to be explored in men of color. For example, measures of adherence of masculinity ideology, such as those used in this study, could be used in combination with qualitative interviews that probe for the specific pressures participants diverse males experience regarding their ability achieve their ideal conception(s) of manhood and the conflict between cultural expectations.

In this study, a common theme that influenced the expression of traditional masculinity ideology and performance was religion. The males in the study discussed many different religious backgrounds and noted that they modeled their behavior after the moral codes taught by the religion, even if they did not practice it. The current study

found consistent religious underpinnings in the expression of the males masculinity ideology and performance but many of the males across focus groups did not realize religion as an influence. Further exploration into the intersection of gender ideology, performance, and religion will be a helpful addition to the masculinity research.

In addition, further exploration is needed involving males from diverse cultures and the relationship between traditional masculinity ideology and performance in order to inform intervention and provide sufficient resources. To accurately conceptualize males of color, the intersection between race and gender must be considered. In addition, much can be learned from qualitative studies of local social worlds, where cultural competence can illuminate individual experience and suffering, and provide the context necessary to look towards a healthier and more equitable future.

Mental health services for males is limited, especially for males who come from diverse cultures. Additional research and implementation of culturally competent intervention strategies, advocacy services, and didactic training are needed. Current services for diverse males usually exist only on a small scale and the existence of such programs may be too reliant on individual staff or personnel that may not be culturally competent in their understanding of masculinity performance. Ensuring ongoing diversity training in relation to gender performance remains an issue as this is often dependent on larger organizations that may have different priorities. The impact of these specialized training on developing the cultural competence of the larger health care organization or health system may also be limited.

## **Strengths**

The current study was unique in its mixed method approach and models a new direction in masculinity research. For the first time, the current study qualitatively measured and compared masculinity ideology in men from different cultures in a single study. Qualitative research is lacking in the study of masculinity and information from the current study added another layer of understanding (Wong et al., 2011). The analysis of the current demonstrated that relying on only quantitative data may restrict therapeutically beneficial information to help males of color. Therefore, masculinity inventories such as the MNRI-SF may need to add a narrative section to their inventories in order to fill the void of lost information and fully measure masculinity ideology adherence. The impact from the information is clinically relevant and will help educate clinicians and potentially impact their work with diverse males. Alternatively, failing to utilize information from the current study may add to the barriers of mental health services for diverse men and contribute to further missed opportunity, mistrust, misdiagnosis, and dropout (Kniffley, Brown Jr., Davis, 2018).

## **Limitations**

The limitations of this study included the use of a self-report instrument with a limited sample size as well as time for interviewing (one-two hours). Additionally, participants were made up of only college aged students and may not be an accurate representation of Black, Latino, and Asian community as a whole. Additionally, results for this study may disproportionately reflect cultural values for Black, Latino and Asian males. Further research should expand on these finding and individually explore diverse

male groups in a less generalized format. For example, Asian participants in this study identified as Chinese, Vietnamese, Indonesian, and Indian. Further research could explore cultural differences that are distinct to the individual cultures, such as Japanese males compared to Indonesian males instead of generalizing all Asian males.

The current study did not account for the potential role of the participants college majors. For example, there may be difference between a statistics major and a psychology major in terms of narrative information and processing during the qualitative focus group questions. Other studies have suggested the role that SES and education might play but don't know here because it wasn't specifically assessed in the demographic questionnaire. By only interviewing college students or more academically educated individuals, we may be missing another sub section of masculinity expression in males with more limited resources. Future research can expand in such areas to gain better understanding to the differences in masculinity expression.

The narrative themes developed in the current study were done independently and may contain subjective bias. Instead of acting independently to decipher themes from the focus group narratives, a team of coders could have been utilized to reduce any bias during theme development. Also, qualitative software would have helped to better organize the narrative content and to discover additional themes that may have been missed.

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