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Intersecting Identities: Navigating the Relationship Between Masculine Performativity and Feminist Ideology

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INTERSECTING IDENTITIES: NAVIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN

MASCULINE PERFORMATIVITY AND FEMINIST IDEOLOGY

by

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INTERSECTING IDENTITIES: NAVIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
MASCULINE PERFORMATIVITY AND FEMINIST IDEOLOGY

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As masculinities scholarship continues to explore how masculinity develops and how differing masculinities contribute to the lived experiences of masculine-identified subjects, it is important to understand how masculinity also intersects with other, salient identities for subjects. Literature related to masculine gender performance, liberatory feminist theory, and student development theory provide important lenses in approaching the topic of masculine intersectionality, but have not otherwise been synthesized to illuminate how masculine-identified students navigate intersectionality with feminism and feminist scholarship.

This qualitative case study explored how one participant experienced and made meaning of zir masculine and feminist identities in the varying spaces on campus at Midwest Private University (MPU). MPU is a four-year private, liberal arts institution located in the Midwest region of the United States. Qualitative interviews were conducted utilizing three semi-structured interviews with one participant over the course of one academic week via Skype. Intermittent journal activities were completed by the participant between interviews and informed the semi-structured interviews. Overall findings indicate the participant's experience making meaning of zir gender is consistent with existing models of masculinity development, and illuminated implications for

practice when serving masculine-identified students as they develop as feminists and

activists. Directions for future research are also suggested.

Acknowledgments

To my brave and inspiring participant whose profound experiences are the base for this study, I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I have been so fortunate to work with you and to tell your story. You inspire me to be a better ally, feminist, and person. I wish you all of the best as you continue to grow and affect positive change in the world around you.

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Finally, to my parents, who first taught me it was okay to want to know more and to ask questions—and then had the distinct pleasure of attempting to provide answers. I am so fortunate to have you in my corner, always rooting for me and confident I will

succeed. This has been a long time coming, and I promise I am done with school for a

while.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I have wanted them to have an answer to the question "what is feminism?" that is rooted

neither in fear or fantasy. I have wanted them to have this simple definition to read again

and again so they know: "Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and

oppression." I love this definition, which I first offered more than 10 years ago in my

book Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center. *I love it because it so clearly states that*

the movement is not about being anti-male. It makes it clear that the problem is sexism.

And that clarity helps us remember that all of us, female and male, have been socialized

from birth on to accept sexist thought and action (hooks, 2000, p. xiv).

Before college if someone had asked me how I felt about my gender I would have

likely responded with alarming ambivalence, a characteristic of incredibly privileged

people of which I am still occasionally guilty. As a White, cisgender man it was not until

I began to learn to critique gender from an academic lens that I realized the incredible

value of asking questions about the impact of gender on the varying topics I have since

encountered. As only one person, the weight of gender and oppression has sometimes

felt unbearable, or worse it has felt as though this oppression is a phenomenon for which

I am personally responsible. It is these times where the feminist community, in which I

have found myself welcomed and engaged, is where I turn.

This study is an interrogation of how one participant makes meaning of zir[1]

identity as a masculine-identified feminist and college student at the crux of one of the

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[1] Zie/Zir/Zir are inclusive, gender-neutral pronouns that best fit the identity of the
participant in this study. Pronoun usage is explored further in subsequent sections of this
study.

most significant developmental periods in a person's life. In *Feminism is for Everybody*

bell hooks (2000), one of the most notable and respected contemporary feminists

publishing today, extended an invitation to readers to engage in feminism and develop

understandings of what sexism and sexist exploitation mean within inherently oppressive

and problematic political systems. Hooks (2000) stated:

> As all advocates of feminist politics know, most people do not understand sexism,
>
> or if they do, they think it is not a problem. Masses of people think that feminism
>
> is always and only about women seeking to be equal to men. And a huge
>
> majority of these folks think feminism is anti-male. (p. 1)

In delving into what feminist scholarship has to say about sexism, sexist exploitation, and

patriarchal oppression, it is quotes similar to the one above that continue to be some of

the most poignant, resonant statements illustrating the work still to be done. This study is

an effort to address one of these gaps in current research, focusing in on how masculinity

and feminism intersect in meaningful and challenging ways for one masculine-identified

participant in the hopes of better incorporating masculine perspectives in feminist

scholarship.

Gender, and particularly masculinity as a construct and as a concept, has been the

basis of scholarly research focused on cultural practice (Herdt, 1994), psychosocial

experience (Reeves-Sanday, 2007), performative agency (Butler, 1990), and verbal

utterance (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2005), to name only a few of what could be an

impressive and long list of studies rooted in masculinities. Developing understandings of

identity performance and engagement and examining how performative subjects

experience gendered politics and their own gender identities serves as the basis for

coursework on college campuses (Edwards, 2008; Libertin, 1987; McMahon, 1993; Stanovsky, 1997), as well as several notable publications within the field of higher or postsecondary education (Bank, 2011; Laker & Davis, 2011). Gender is something of concern if we are to continue progressively developing an educational environment on college and university campuses in which access and inclusion are not only possible, but also the norm for the students in attendance. Although understanding gendered politics and lived experiences is of key concern to this study and to higher education as a broad field, too often gender based studies fail to actively examine the experiences of masculine subjects in their gender development. This failure to include men's experiences comes at the expense of marginalizing a population of concern, particularly if we are to be effectively intersectional in developing understandings of the varying identities students may develop during their time in college.

Rarely are the feminist experiences of men explored in feminist scholarship (hooks, 2000). As understandings of gender develop and masculinities scholarship continues to gain an established foothold in academic publications, the exploration of men's experiences will likely continue to become increasingly popular. This research study is intended to serve as an example of feminist interrogation of the masculine experience, focusing on how one masculine-identified research participant engages with feminist scholarship, spaces, and conversations in an effort to understand how feminism, as an overarching and motivating ideology, is understood and experienced by a person who does not identify as a woman. Often in conversations centered or focused on gender and feminist activism, stakeholders are concerned about the potential for anti-male sentiments (hooks, 2000). From a research perspective, the male feminist experience

may be at best elusive and controversial and at worst deemed impossible by some of the feminist community (Libertin, 1987). This study is a response to the challenges of effectively exploring the masculine experience as the overarching mission to end sexism and sexist oppression is worked toward.

Purpose Statement and Research Questions

The purpose of this case study is to explore how one undergraduate, masculine-identified student makes meaning from and navigates the intersections of zir varying performative identities, paying particular attention to zir masculine gender performativity, and how feminist ideology shapes and informs zir worldview. The research questions guiding this study were:

- How does one masculine identified feminist make meaning of the salience of zir gender and feminist identities in the varying spatial contexts of zir college campus?

- How does one masculine identified feminist navigate the intersections of zir masculine and feminist identities?

Research Design

This case study is concerned with exploring the unique experiences of one participant. Case study research is characterized by the collection of multiple forms of data (Mertens, 2010), and is defined as occurring within a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). Through the use of semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and rich and thick descriptions, I aim to explore and accurately depict how one masculine-identified college student experiences and makes meaning of zir varying salient identities within the contextual limits of the college campus zie attends as a student. In order to accomplish

these goals purposeful sampling guaranteed the participant's experience was consistent with the framework and research parameters. Sampling criteria included the participant self-identifying both as masculine and as feminist, and either actively participating in a feminist organization or majoring or minoring in women's studies at MPU.

In conducting the study the participant participated in a series of three semi-structured interviews concerned with developing understandings of zir experience engaging with peer feminists, accessing feminist spaces, and developing understandings of feminist and gender-based concepts relative to zir lived experience. Intermittent journaling activities were structured between the semi-structured interviews as an opportunity for the participant to engage in self-reflection and external processing. The journals collected were coded, along with the transcribed interviews, to identify emergent themes.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following terms are utilized frequently. As broad concepts, a general understanding of the following terms and ideas is foundationally important for an informed analysis of this written product. These terms are as follows:

Feminist/Feminism: There are many, many definitions of what constitutes feminism, and at the root of feminist expression is how each feminist defines what the movement means to them, personally. For the purpose of this study, "feminism" is defined by bell hooks (2000) and is "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (p. viii).

Masculinities: Heasley (2007) posited men's studies, or masculinities, "can best be understood as a broad interdisciplinary field of study that provides, in whatever discipline it surfaces, a critical examination of how our concepts of masculinity are influenced by and influence society" (p. 243). Masculinities scholarship, in this sense, is interrogation from a lens concerned with exploring, understanding, or explaining the experiences of agentic performers who identify as masculine.

Performance/Performative: According to Bell (2008) when theorists are tasked with defining performance the best definitions generally include three interrelated concepts. The first is that performance is both "a process and product" (p. 16). In this sense, performance or performativity operates on several planes, and operates contextually based on the lens from which the interrogator engages the performative action. Secondly, "performance is productive and purposeful" (p. 16). And third, performance is "traditional and transformative" (p. 17). There is a more in depth overview of performative theoretical concepts in chapter two.

Agency: There is much debate surrounding the varying definitions of agency, which are deeply rooted in tension over the efficacy and relevance of structuralism in theory. The definition that has informed this paper is laid out by Emirbayer and Misehe (1998), and acknowledges that Locke's writing in the late 1970's has "affirmed the capacity of human beings to shape the circumstances in which they live" (964). In this sense, agency, at its most basic level, is an individual performer's capacity or ability to make decisions and follow through on actions.

Masculinity acts: The codification of behavior is one of the ways one can interpret an individual performer's identities. Masculinity acts, in this sense, are the actions that

masculine subjects engage in that are coded, through discourse or cultural construction, as inherently masculine and embodying masculine gender (Connell, 2001).

Delimitations

In designing this study around the mission to interpret and gain understanding from one person's experiences, the methodology intentionally served to illustrate and examine how the participant experienced and made meaning of the examples and accounts zie shared. As a result of the methodology employed in this study the findings are transferable, and informed by rich, thick description shared by the participant. As a qualitative study the results are not generalizable. Through the use of a series of semi-structured interviews I was able to develop rapport with the participant, and collect rich data from interviews and intermittent journaling activities. The data was informed by the decision to conduct the study at MPU, which offered several courses and organizations for the participant to engage in and reference when sharing personal accounts.

Conclusion

This study is a unique exploration of one student's experience as it related to two salient and sometimes competing identities. Positioned at the intersection of feminist and masculinities scholarship, the aim to explore and better understand how one participant makes meaning of scholarship and ideology that is sometimes difficult for masculine-identified stakeholders to engage with will illuminate how the participant experiences and understands these aspects of zir identity.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

The production of scholarship framed by qualitative inquiry necessitates significant consideration of previous scholarship related to the subject at hand. As Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006) noted, "in good qualitative studies, researchers identify the theoretical perspectives that guide their work" (p. 24). The purpose of this study was to interrogate the relationship between masculine performativity and feminist ideology, and in endeavoring to fulfill these aims theoretical considerations are in four primary areas: masculinities scholarship, performance theory, student development, and feminist theory and scholarship. Thus, as a fundamentally interdisciplinary study, the literature reviewed in this chapter is focused narrowly on the relevant components contributing to this research study.

At the crux of this study are the varying intersectional aspects of four separate, but related theoretical areas or disciplines. To this end, critically and intentionally investigating the relationship between performative masculinity and feminist ideology aims to address a gap in the current scholarship and promote the goal of including voices and perspectives that have otherwise failed to be included in feminist scholarship. "The personal is political" has been noted formally as a motivating principle, or motto of second-wave feminism, focusing on how women's perspectives and experiences were systemically excluded. This motivating concept translates to the third-wave, which concerns the voices of women who continued to be excluded, and translates to this study because the voice central in the research is that of a masculine-identified participant in feminist activism.   Parallels between the personal and political serve as a point of

departure for both the review of relevant literature, as well as this overarching study because stakeholders in feminism are affected by systemic issues and are actively working to eliminate sexism and sexist exploitation as a result of these problematic structures. This study aims to better include men's experiences in the larger conversation of gendered politicization (Mack-Canty, 2004).

In this chapter, I provide a broad overview of the scholarship concerned with identity performance and emergent feminist theory, both of which provide insight into possible outcomes for this study. From an interdisciplinary focus five overarching themes emerged from the four theoretical areas contributing to this literature review. These themes address the pertinent, key elements of the available scholarship on performative gender identity, the historical and contemporary ideologies that have shaped masculinities scholarship, and how feminist theory addresses consciousness raising. These themes center around the value of men's voices and experiences, manhood or masculinity acts as potentially damaging to men, manhood or masculinity acts as potentially damaging to women, masculinity as a performative experience for men, and masculinity as a developmental experience.

Value of Men's Voices and Experiences

"This cultural disturbance about gender and the position of men has given impetus to the

social-scientific work on masculinites that has been accelerating since the mid 1980s."

(Connell, 2001, p. 14)

"A feminist vision which embraces the feminist masculinity, which loves boys and men

and demands on their behalf every right we desire for girls and women, can renew the

American Male." (hooks, 2001, p. 71)

As masculinities scholarship has developed, the interrogation into what constitutes and embodies masculine gender is approached from varying focal perspectives. At the root of many scholarly efforts in masculinities is an overarching question of whether men's experiences are valuable, or relevant in the larger scope of gendered politics and scholarship. Moving forward from this motivating question, as a socially constructed identity, the constitution and criticism of masculinity is almost always contextually driven by the research or scholarship and the varying contextual influences affecting the perspectives and approaches of the scholars producing the work (Connell, 2001). Constituting, or perhaps even quantifying masculinity, in this sense, poses a unique set of challenges. As Heasley (2007) so aptly articulated:

> men's movement, including men's studies, is rooted in Western culture by three
> historical developments: the psychoanalytical movement started by Sigmund
> Freud in the late nineteenth century, the suffrage movement, and the second wave
> of the feminist movement beginning in the 1960s. (Bank, 2011, p. 235)

Connell (2001) explored the historical approach to masculinities scholarship, and found several overarching themes in the broad scope of masculinities scholarship, which ultimately contribute to fundamental aspects of the discipline in contemporary scholarship.

Initially, Connell (2001) posited the idea of "multiple masculinities" (p. 16). As a general rule, the majority of masculinities scholarship was conducted by researchers based in the United States, Great Britain, and Germany (Connell, 2001), however the cultural practices of masculinity in the varying cultures interrogated prove "there is no one pattern of masculinity that is found everywhere" (Connell, 2001, p. 16).

Accordingly, this approach to illuminating the varying masculinities, though wrought

with its own problems, makes it possible to understand how various groups of men are

able to develop and inculcate varying ideal masculinities, within the contextual bounds of

their individual groups (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009, p. 284). With so many experiences

coming together to contribute to what can be understood as the masculine experience,

positioning these perspectives into the larger scope of gender studies is a valuable

endeavor and one that provides insight into better understanding how masculine-

identified individuals experience their gendered identities.

Both men's studies and women's studies, as academic disciplines, are motivated

from an intellectual perspective concerned with understanding and making meaning of

gender and gendered experiences (Edwards, 2008). As Madlala (1995) noted, for most

students who self-identify as feminist the identity commonly develops in the first two

years of their experience in postsecondary education, and the classroom exploration and

discussions of gender for these students is one that contributes to meaning making

capacity. Lewis stated, "the challenge of feminist teaching is in finding ways to make

speakable and legitimate the personal/political investments we *all* make in the meanings

we ascribe to our historically contingent experiences" (as cited in Wagner, 2011, p. 11).

Lewis noted the necessity of exploring with women the paradox of living in a world

where it is both in their best interests and against them to comply with the dominant

group. Similarly, men both benefit from and are harmed by patriarchy. Encouraging

men to explore the contradictions can foster the necessary dissonance for growth and

development (Laker & Davis, 2011, p. 220). By failing to critically explore gender from

varying lenses, including masculinities, what is at risk is further inculcating the damaging

gender binary, which negatively affects stakeholders across the spectrum of gendered performativity because it limits performative agency and restricts stakeholders' ability to critique and resist hegemonic gender structures (Linklater, 2004).

In learning about feminism and gendered politics, the classroom has served as the locus of inquiry in many studies (Edwards, 2008; Libertin, 1987; Madlala, 1995; Stanovsky, 1997). For self-identified feminists exposure to feminist scholarship was identified as responsible for the development of feminist, not feminine political viewpoints—indicating men are capable of developing feminist political views without completely shunning their own masculinity (Edwards, 2008). Despite more and more people self-identifying as feminist, Moi (2008) noted "current college students, women and men, are loath to assign positive connotations to the word *feminist*" (p. 148). As Stanovsky (1997) noted, "many college classrooms are occupied predominantly by young, white, middle class students" (p. 14). From the White, middle class perspective, developing conversations centered on differing perspectives and experiences necessitates an approach that supports and encourages mindful exploration of different subjectivities, especially through encouraging and supporting non-White, non-dominant participants to share their experiences. To address the tensions that originate from incorporating different voices, and to speculate on how feminists develop in their differing identities Stanovsky (1997), in reflecting on his own gendered experience as a man teaching an introductory women's studies course, provides three units by which students articulate experiences: speaking as, speaking for, and speaking with.

Within the trajectory of feminist conversations taking place in classrooms and how they develop over the course of academic periods Stanovsky (1997) noted three

stages: speaking as, speaking for, and speaking with. Stanovsky (1997) described

"speaking as" as "something unproblematic, and easily accomplished" (p. 10). In order

to speak as, speakers must simply speak from the vantage point of their own lived

experiences. When tasked with sharing personal experiences, though, people tend to

progress toward "speaking for," in which belonging to the group in question enables the

speaker to effectively volunteer their voice and input as an overarching, or general

perspective that is representative of the collective experience (Stanovsky, 1997).

Although stakeholders may initially consider speaking on behalf of their peers as

unproblematic, Stanovsky (1997) indicated the ultimate goal is for students to ultimately

"speak with," because in *speaking for* the risk of marginalizing and oppressing the

experiences of others from the same group is concerning.   Speaking with, as Stanovsky

(1997) noted, "does not require that one be able to speak as or speak for women" (p. 13).

Understanding how peers are capable of effectively framing and developing

conversations around gendered politics without marginalizing others promotes "the

possibility of recovering the diversity of women's voices" (Stanovsky, 1997, p. 3).

Though Stanovsky (1997) is concerned with feminist development, these same units are

applicable to how students engage and discuss men's experiences, which ultimately

makes possible the goal of also including diverse and nuanced perspectives on

masculinity and masculinities scholarship.

When students come to the point of conducting informed, inclusive conversations

concerned with the experiences of masculine subjects or men, the process may look or

feel considerably different when compared to conversations that center on women (Laker

& Davis, 2011). Initially, masculinity must be operationally defined in good faith to

promote dialogue and effective discussion. Bell hooks (2000) made the bold claim, "clearly we need new strategies, new theories, guides that will show us how to create a world where feminist masculinity thrives" (p. 71). In order to accomplish this goal, approaching masculinities scholarship may require restructuring our approach, and to this end Wagner (2011) defined masculinity as "captur[ing] the experience, the social performance of conducting oneself in a fashion that is commonly accepted as 'manly'" (Laker & Davis, 2011, p. 212). This definition reifies the gendered dichotomy of man versus woman quite explicitly, but hones in on the need to establish boundaries and limitations in the overarching conversation in order to address specific aspects of masculine subjectivity that may or may not be valuable.

In exploring male feminist identity development, from a women's studies perspective, Edwards (2008) poses the simple question *do men make better feminists*, to which the answer is a resounding no. This question, and much of the conversation, centers around the idea that feminism for men is considered "less risky" than it is for women (Carver, 1996; Edwards, 2008; Stanovsky, 1997). Feminism, in being less risky, may originate from an underlying ideology promoting tolerance of women's suffrage, or even generally women's experiences as a marginalized population (Connell, 2001). Edwards (2008) stated:

> If I am a straight man preaching feminism—a man who empathizes with those of another gender and a man who takes up Judith Butler's call 'to undo restrictively normative conceptions of sexual gendered life' clearly I cannot be dogmatic or intolerant. (p. 149)

At the core of this statement, and getting at the core of valuing men's experiences, is this idea that in order for men to be supportive of women and engaged with feminist activism or scholarship there must be a transgressive or defiant motivation to resist patriarchy and empower voices systemically excluded by conventional scholarship. In order for men to effectively and critically engage feminist practice there must be self-motivated and discerning questioning into their position as privileged and valued because they identify as men, but this transgressive action is perhaps more damaging to patriarchy than it is to men, as a collective entity (Laker & Davis, 2011).

Edwards (2008) is another example of an academic feminist whose work centered on his experience teaching an introductory course in women's studies. In keeping with ideological transgression as a motivating perspective, Edwards (2008) noted, "if a man takes his feminism for granted, if he teaches Introduction to Women's Studies without straightforwardly confronting the limitations of his experience, he will end up skirting the very foundation of the course" (p. 146).   The foundation of the course, in this context, clearly requires both critical introspection on the part of the stakeholders, and also the promotion of a space that values and includes the voices of men as members of the community. In this sense, for developing feminist conversations, particularly those poised to affect and contribute to developmental feminist identities, the perspectives of men and women must be critically examined, included, and valued. In accomplishing this goal there is the potential for a revised canonical understanding of the historical, sociopolitical, and interpersonal contextual developments of men's and women's lives (Libertin, 1987).

Manhood or Masculinity Acts as Potentially Damaging to Men

Masculine identity is centrally informed by what theorists consider "manhood acts" (Carver, 1996; Connell, 2001; Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009; Stanovsky, 1997). These acts are coded by language and cultural understandings to embody, and in many ways signify gender on a binary system that generally privileges masculinity as ideal. In establishing masculine or male privilege as a product of patriarchal norms, feminist criticism of masculinity and manhood acts is in many ways motivated by the base knowledge that men have a vested interest in maintaining and hiding male privilege (Stanovsky, 1997). In considering manhood acts as representative of larger masculinity and masculine identity, the concept of representative actions is not exclusively relegated to criticisms of masculinity. Feminist acts, meaning acts that embody and performatively accomplish feminist goals as structured by the same motivating logic as Carver (1996), are potentially equally representative of the varying feminist ideologies and concepts employed by feminists. When feminists acts are carried out by men patriarchal norms consider these acts to be blatantly intolerable (Madlala, 1995).

As Edwards (2008) noted, "pro-feminist men have the potential to blur and muddle the gender binary itself" (p. 152). This potential comes at the price of possibly alienating oneself from the larger masculine community. As Connell (2001) noted, the gender structures of a given society are responsible for the definition of particular acts as feminine and masculine. Assuming this to be true, there is an underlying assumption of a collective masculinity; a collective masculinity representative of the ideal masculine behavior and embodiment that may not in fact exist at all in any one person. In considering the spectrum of privilege, as it relates both between the commonly accepted two genders and within individual genders, masculinity is not a static concept, and some

types of masculinity are considered more valuable than others (Connell, 2001). While Connell (2001) indicated the lineation of the gender binary is produced by contextual factors that operate outside of individuals control, the same can be said for the value placed on the varying performative masculinities and manhood acts that structurally define masculinity within the various contexts it may operationally reside.

Given the prevalence of masculine identity, gendered discursive production and expectations are seemingly inescapable. While some masculinities may be honored and valorized to a high degree, the opposite can be said of those masculinities deemed undesirable—namely homosexuality (Connell, 2001; Stanovsky, 1997). As Roof (1992) noted, a striking number of male-identified supporters of academic feminism on college campuses are also gay-identified, and often male feminists forget or overlook gay-male feminists perhaps as much as queer theoreticians sometimes overlook or subsume lesbians. Acknowledging hegemony, relative to gendered experiences for masculine identified actors as well as for women, is a crucial component needed to understand how agency intersects with masculinity or manhood acts. As Connell (2001) posited, "hegemonic masculinity is hegemonic not just in relation to other masculinities, but in relation to gender as a whole" (p. 17). Hegemonic masculinity, from this operational understanding, exudes power not only over men and masculine actors, but instead over the collective gender performative community. Adhering to hegemonic masculinity as a masculine actor presents the potentiality for men to alienate themselves from their individual selves through their desire to reject women and other men who may not also adhere rigidly to the norms and concepts celebrated by the hegemonic structure (Laker & Davis, 2011).

Feminist activity, coupled with manhood acts, threatens hegemony and hegemonic masculinity. To this end, consciousness raising has been "central to the process of creating a critical awareness of our culture" (Sowards & Renegar, 2004, p. 535). While the sympathetic man is often overlooked by feminist women (Roof, 1992), the concept of multiple masculinities is significantly impactful when considering how masculine identified people can harness and appropriate the various resources available to them to the end of emphasizing and criticizing hegemonic masculinity through performative manhood acts. There is an ongoing assumption that the subject of academic discourse is male, and from a historical perspective this assumption's validity is problematic (Carver, 1996). While theorists have determined the subjects in some foundational theories contributing to political science, history, economics, etc., are definitely not women, Carver (1996) argued the generalizations that theoretical constructions make relative to the experiences of the subject overlook, whether inactively or intentionally, the complexity and variety of men's experiences in ways that make the subject's gendered experience difficult to understand at best, and irrelevant at worst. As Schrock and Schwalbe (2009) acknowledged, "manhood acts have the effect of reproducing an unequal gender order," (p. 280) and while this may ring true, feminist acts by men, when framed simultaneously as feminist and masculine, can disrupt this unbalanced order.

Establishing order and disrupting the hegemonic ideals in the quest for equality is repeatedly positioned by those interested in maintaining patriarchal privilege as potentially damaging to men. Establishing order to a historically unbalanced system is also terribly difficult to accomplish. As bell hooks (2000) speculated, "even if individual

men divested of patriarchal privilege the system of patriarchy, sexism, and male domination would still remain intact, and women would still be exploited and/or oppressed" (p. 69). Gender politics are analytically challenging because individual investment in systemic issues can contribute to how actors approach or interpret issues (Edwards, 2008). As McMahon (1993) noted, "even men whose analysis includes a critique of patriarchy often fail to see 'masculinity' – and their own part in expressions of masculinity – as a problem" (p. 675). Identifying oneself and one's gendered identity or performativity as the source of problematic or oppressive actions is challenging because internalizing feelings of responsibility may challenge hegemonic masculinity in ways that have not otherwise been explored.

Feminism, as a means to an end, has been criticized as being inherently anti-male, though at its base feminism is more aptly described as anti-male dominance, not necessarily anti-male itself (hooks, 2000). Prominent theorists frame feminism, as a movement and as a body of scholarship as fundamentally motivated by liberation. In harnessing this potential, feminist criticism is an important component that works to achieve the end goal of liberation for all people who are affected by hegemonic gender (hooks, 2000). As an ideology that aims to be universally inclusive, hooks (2000) entertained this, and speculated "if feminist theory had offered more liberatory visions of masculinity it would have been impossible for anyone to dismiss the movement as anti-male" (p. 69). Dismissing feminism or men's experiences has the potential to be damaging, both to progress as it relates to resisting hegemony and to the individual stakeholders accomplishing feminist work.

Men, as a collective group, are a community that still has much to share through scholarly inquiry. As McMahon (1993) noted, "further evidence of men's 'relation' nature can be found in the evidence showing that men value family life more highly than paid work, identify companionship as the most important aspect of marriage, and identify their wives as their "best friend" (p. 680). This finding from over twenty years ago indicates even despite hegemony's best efforts, some men have been, are, and will continue to be able and willing to resist some of the widely based assumptions of what it means to be masculine.

Masculinity or Manhood Acts as Potentially Damaging to Women

The vast majority of feminists identify as women, and in exploring masculinities and how manhood or masculinity acts operate within the cultural arena, the question of women's experiences with masculinity is both pertinent and thought provoking. Manhood acts, as the embodiment of masculine identity, reflect the attitudinal and cultural meaning systems that privilege and position masculinity contextually. In exploring women's experiences with manhood acts, the aim is to promote an analysis of power and privilege in a way that is not about the powerful or privileged, themselves, but instead how power works, at a foundational level. In examining power dynamics at this level it is clear some gendered constructs are dismissed to the margins in an effort to celebrate what discourse values as ideal and thus places at the center (Linklater, 2004). In this sense, masculinity, as the embodiment of patriarchal privilege, is representative of the privilege masculine-identified subjects are inherently afforded, further marginalizing women and preventing the equity feminism works toward.

Bell hooks' (2000) definition of feminism as "a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (p. viii) is an umbrella definition that is universally inclusive to anyone affected by sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression, but the source of this oppression is ambiguous if we are to consider feminism and its motivating ideologies as liberatory without being inherently anti-male. In liberating efforts, the production of feminist scholarship, particularly feminist scholarship concerned with the criticism of unbalanced power structures favoring masculine identity, is often embodied in conversations (Stanovsky, 1997), and often takes place in the classroom (Libertin, 1987; Madlala, 1995; Stanovsky, 1997; Edwards, 2008). When feminist conversations become concerned with men's conversations, there is the potential this will come at the expense of failing to examine and interrogate women's experiences—in essence further marginalizing the experiences of women and furthering male domination and masculine privilege.

The polarization of gender operates in varying political arenas, and perhaps at the crux of the issue of masculinity as damaging to women is tension surrounding divisional labor practices and attitudes (Stanovsky, 1997). Feminism, as a transgressive, liberatory, and in many ways misunderstood movement (Libertin, 1987), is often considered women's work by male academics because the sheer notion of identifying as a man is seen as preventing men from being able to understand or effectively practice feminism (Stanovsky, 1997). If this attitude toward the preclusion of men is to ring true, men are absolved from understanding and practicing, let alone teaching, feminism and feminist ideology in academic spaces where students can benefit and develop from varying and nuanced perspectives.

On the topic of teaching feminism, and as noted earlier in this literature review, Edwards (2008) stated "if a man takes his feminism for granted, if he teaches Introduction to Women's Studies without straightforwardly confronting the limitations of his experience, he will end up skirting the very foundation of the course" (p. 146). Because pro-feminist men have great potential to affect change and promote liberatory practice, due in part to their privilege, having masculine-identified academics effectively engaging and teaching feminism is important, otherwise the risk of negatively affecting students as they develop in their feminist identities is great. This transgressive experience, which is potentially disruptive for men and women alike, is even more challenging when considering men's "vested interest in maintaining and hiding male privilege" (Stanovsky, 1997, p. 11). The challenge of adequately addressing the limitations of one's experience, acknowledge the collective privilege of men and masculine-identified actors, create a community in which women and men alike feel supported in developing as feminists, and accomplish course goals is one that is lofty, but achievable (Edwards, 2008; McMahon, 1993; Stanovsky, 1997).

As noted in the previous section, when considering masculinities as potentially damaging to men, an aspect of this transgressive practice of concern to feminism, masculinities scholarship, and this study, are the challenges of patriarchal criticism as productively effective and meaningful to the larger systemic issues feminists and feminist scholarship work toward disrupting and abolishing. As bell hooks (2000) acknowledged, "even if individual men divested of patriarchal privilege, the system of patriarchy, sexism, and male domination would still remain intact, and women would still be exploited and/or oppressed" (p. 67). Change, at the systemic or discursive level, is

needed in order for gendered politicization and power structures to become more
balanced, with the ultimate goal of ending sexism as a motivating ideology because
women have been oppressed, exploited, and excluded for too long.

Masculinity as a Performative Experience for Men

Navigating the complex relationships between masculinity and constructivist
thinking necessitates acknowledging tension between biological materiality, or the
presence of secondary sex characteristics associated with being male, and performative
gender identity. Biological essentialism makes the assumption that the biological or
genetic composition of a body will be in congruence with the performative gender of that
body, meaning biological females will perform and assumably identify as women,
whereas biological males will perform and assumably identify as men (Carver, 1996). In
making this assumption, men and women are in opposition to one another, with the line
being drawn at the biological ability or capacity to theoretically carry and birth children
(Carver, 1996). This approach is reductive, because in the dichotomized relationship
between masculinity and femininity the premise of co-construction operates to establish
the boundaries between the performance of two mutually exclusive genders, in essence
permanently marginalizing women and promoting privilege and patriarchal principles
that further oppress women (Butler, 1990; Silverman, 1996). In response to these
tensions, the reframing of masculine interrogation is grounded in acknowledging the
"public male" (Connell 2006). The public male, in this sense, embodies a masculinity
that more positively encompasses a psychology of competitive self-interest in material
things, rather than a focus on nurturing or emotion (Connell, 2006, p. 678). Manhood

acts, as introduced by Schrock and Schwalbe (2009) are the performative embodiments of this public masculinity, and serve as active representations of masculine ideologies.

The focus on quantifying maleness, or determining what qualities a masculine actor must possess or express, has the potentiality of being severely limiting for men (Heasley, 2011; Silverman, 1996; Laker & Davis, 2011). In a world where masculine identified subjects are consistently positioned as the privileged gender at best, and actively at fault for oppression at worst, liberatory practice for men is met with significant resistance (Laker & Davis, 2011; Madlala, 1995). This resistance may be grounded in patriarchal assumptions that require women to become experts on men's experiences in order to survive (Wagner, 2011). From a student affairs perspective this expectation and tension is especially resonant because social justice conversations so often prescribe oppression and marginalization to the body. As Wagner (2011) aptly noted, the body "can easily fit into a category of 'dominant' or 'subordinate'" (Laker & Davis, p. 211). While there is a field of privilege, men, as a collective whole, continue to be positioned as superior to women in these conversations, but how masculinity is produced or comes to fruition is something men struggle with because masculinity is more than the body a particular masculine identified actor occupies. This tension is reified intensely for feminist men whose consciousness of the vested interest in the preservation of male privilege causes their transgressive actions to cause conflict internally with their identity, which is informed by their body and biological experience.

Masculine performativity is discursively produced (Butler, 1990; Silverman, 1996). Judith Butler (1990) is credited as the seminal scholar to propose a theory on how masculinity is performatively accomplished—a theory and a scholar whose foundations

are in the phenomena of drag, which is most aptly housed in the cultural realm of

homosexual men. Butler's (1990) work *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of*

sex makes the overarching argument that gender and biological sex are separate

categories or realms of the constituting elements of an actor or person. Biological

materiality, that is the presence of secondary sex characteristics including but not limited

to codified genitalia, for men or women is not necessarily considered a non-influential

factor contributing to the performance of gender as much as it is potentially irrelevant for

those actors whose biology does not align with their performative gender. This is

important because masculinities "do not exist prior to social behavior, either as bodily

states or fixed personalities. Rather, masculinities come into existence as people act"

(Connell, 2001, p. 18).   In performing masculinity, Butler (1990) posited *reiteration* and

citation as the units by which masculine performativity is discursively produced and

coded. Reiteration, at its most basic level, is the idea of a masculine identified actor

reproducing a behavior or ideology that is culturally coded as masculine because the

actors' meaning systems and cultural understandings have identified the specific behavior

as fundamentally masculine. This codification is potentially a result of the hegemonic

ideals of masculinity discussed earlier in this chapter. Citation, as the other unit Butler

(1990) proposed, is the internalized referent by which the actor justifies a manhood act as

contributing to his own masculine identity. Reiteration and citation are coupled together,

and do not operate individually in a way that can be measured. This foundational theory

is not without flaws, namely that it is based on a Eurocentric familial structure in which

masculine-identified actors are assumed to have had access to masculine performing

figures, but it serves to explain and make meaning of how masculine identified actors come into understanding their masculinity as a salient and active aspect of their identities.

Masculinity as a Developmental Experience

Masculinities scholarship in higher education literature is increasingly concerned with how men experience developmental progress during their postsecondary educational experiences. From a historical perspective, the experiences of men have contributed to many of the theoretical models employed in student affairs practice (Harris, 2010). Harris (2010) noted that in student development scholarship several classic theories were developed and based largely on the experiences of White men, but these theories did not purposefully and intentionally explore how the participants' gender impacted the data collected to form the models. In considering these limitations, scholarship focused on masculine gender identity has focused on judicial representation (Harper, Harris, & Mmeje, 2005), masculine gendered expectations (Davis, 2002; Edwards & Jones, 2009), and meaning making capacity (Harper, 2005) in an effort to develop theoretical models and a body of scholarship that supports men and suggests best practices for supporting students in their gender identity development.

Men's experiences in college are focused on postsecondary education as a developmental period, and are largely informed by how masculine socialization has impacted masculine-identified subjects' development before beginning postsecondary education (Davis, 2002). In looking at how masculine-identified subjects develop understandings of gender and their own masculinity, it is important to note that masculinity is informed both by internal and external interpretations of what constitutes masculine gender (Edwards & Jones, 2009). These expectations contribute to how

participants performatively experience gender, and outwardly express their identities. In a study of ten research participants, Edwards and Jones' (2009) noted:

> The participants all experienced society's expectations of them as men to be a set of very narrow, rigid, and limiting ways of being a man that were initially relatively straightforward and then increased in complexity and became applicable to greater aspects of their lives over time. (p. 214)

In acknowledging this complexity, Edwards and Jones (2010) argued the participants engaged with a trajectory, of sorts, in which ultimately participants' increasing agentic capacity to resist hegemonic gender was a product of internally defining masculinity, and determining what was consistent with the participants' beliefs and feelings about masculinity. This developmental experience is especially important to acknowledge, because external influencers for these participants, starting early in their socialization, were defined in the study as not only about who the participants were supposed to ultimately become, but also who they could not be, which focused on non-ideal masculinities including feminine or homosexual behaviors (Edwards & Jones, 2009).

Masculinity, in much of the literature, is identified as a source of problematic aspects of the masculine-identified subject's college experience. Harper, Harris, and Mmeje (2005) argued masculinity and the patriarchal norms contributing to masculine socialization contribute to the positive skew in men's involvement in policy violations and campus judicial proceedings. Accordingly, Harper et. al (2005) stated, "in order to develop higher degrees of interpersonal competence, college men often feel the need to engage in socially desirable behaviors that will presumably win the approval of their same-sex peers, even if these acts violate campus rules" (p. 576). These factors

influencing development focus on how masculine-identified students experience gender as an aspect of identity, but it was Harris (2010) who focused on how men's meaning making and conceptualization contributes to how masculinity intersects with varying identities that masculine-identified subjects may also experience.

From an intersectional perspective, student development theory is concerned with how identity salience contributes to the lived experiences of students in postsecondary education because students have multiple lenses that contribute to their perspectives (Evans, et al., 2010; Harris, 2010). As Harris (2010) noted, "issues of race/ethnicity, class, religion, and sexual orientation interact and influence the development of these multiple masculinities" (p. 300). In looking at how these intersecting and salient identities contribute to what constitutes a whole person, or masculine-identified actor, the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (RMMDI) posited a "meaning making filter" that informs how students interpret and experience contextual factors that are understood through identity-based lenses (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007). As a two-dimensional model, the RMMDI is concerned with how contextual factors and internal identity factors interact, paying particular attention to where intersections occur (Abes, et. al, 2007). The intersectional proximity to the core sense of self contributes to identity salience in students (Abes, et. al, 2007), and informs this study focused on intersectionality, at its core.

The existing literature on masculinities and intersectionality is focused on how men and masculine-identified subjects are socialized, and how masculinity is an intersectional factor for students. This study is an exploration of how masculinity interacts with feminist ideology, addressing an existing gap in the present literature. As

understandings of masculine intersectionality develop through scholarship the potentiality to understand how social justice and feminist ally behavior come to fruition will be explored. As Edwards (2006) noted, ally behavior is generally a product of self-motivated interest, and is associated with dominant identities. Though Edwards' (2006) study focused on how students experience developing as social justice allies, the general scope of the study does not address the intricacies contributing to feminist identity development, particularly for masculine identified subjects. Understanding how students interpret their privilege and cultivate relationships and investment with subordinated groups is important, but in-depth research is needed to gain understandings of how men and masculine-identified subjects develop and become invested as feminists.

Summary

Masculinities scholarship and feminist interrogation into the experiences of masculine-identified actors provide a window by which scholars can theorize about how men experience their masculine identities. While the problematized aspects of masculinity are of particular concern to feminist critics, it is clear men who participate or buy into consciousness raising are challenged by the very systems that also oppress and exploit women (hooks, 2000). While masculinities scholarship, and the overarching focus on men's experiences, is a broad field, concerns and trepidation regarding the value of men's experiences, as well as how to critique masculinities in an effective and inclusive way are valid, but do not necessarily prevent effective research.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The experiences of men in academic classrooms is an aspect of educational research often overlooked in favor of interrogating and better representing marginalized and underrepresented populations (Laker & Davis, 2011). While these aims are often positively motivated and outcomes generally garner favorable results for the populations of interest, contemporary research on the male academic experience is necessary to guarantee interventions and current models continue to address and support students from all backgrounds to be successful in their experiences. If men are expected to actively participate in feminist coursework, degree programs, or even activism, it is important to understand how these experiences translate to their experience making meaning of gender identity. While masculinities scholarship aims to theorize and evaluate the masculine performative experience, feminism and the many motivating ideologies comprising the movement is of concern to men and women working toward establishing balance and eliciting a more progressive gendered political arena.

As a qualitative study, this project utilized an interview intensive approach centering on how gender influences a masculine-identified student's engagement and development in classroom spaces where his gender, which is generally privileged, may be marginalized and critiqued in ways typically not present in other experiences. The interrogation into the experiences of men in classroom spaces and settings centered and focused by the mission of exploring the experiences of women is best rationalized by Audre Lorde (1984), who in the groundbreaking essay "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" stated:

> In a world of possibility for us all, our personal visions help lay the groundwork for political action. The failure of academic feminists to recognize difference as a crucial strength is a failure to reach beyond the first patriarchal lesson. In our world, divide and conquer must become define and empower. (p. 2)

Inasmuch, understanding difference as a "crucial strength" serves as the foundational and motivating point of departure for this study.

Difference, in this sense, centers almost entirely on the now tumultuous and debated idea of the gender binary. Men and women are often considered drastically different, to the point that the motivation of men's engagement in feminism and feminist spaces is debated and questioned (Boone & Cadden, 1990). To engage in true feminist critique, employing the definitions laid out as fundamental to this study, the varying experiences of all participants in academic, feminist spaces must be adequately represented and understood. In this endeavor, it is absolutely crucial to understand each individual actors' agency in constructing and interpreting their own version of what constitutes reality. This reality, in turn, is a representative example of how actors make meaning of their experiences making meaning of their varying identities and intersectionality. In doing so, this study aimed to understand one participant's experience making meaning of zir gender and navigating the complex intersections of zir identities in spaces in which zir gender may at best affect, and at worst hinder or prevent zir access, in the hopes to pave the way to better understanding the experiences of others in similar such spaces, particularly as pedagogical and disciplinary practices progressively develop and affect the teaching and production of feminist scholarship.

Epistemology

The use of the interpretive/constructivist lens, as outlined by Merriam (2009), contributed to the process of this research. In the interpretive/constructivist epistemological approach, the purpose and mission for the researcher is to describe, understand, and interpret, ultimately seeking to understand and interpret multiple realities (Merriam, 2009). The participant in this study constructs zir own reality, and the framework from which the research was conducted is centered on how identity salience produces multiple realities for even just one person.

Additionally, gendered performavity, as outlined by Butler (1990) and expanded upon by Bell (2008), contributed to understanding not only how gender is a performative, or active, experience for the performer, but also how the lived and performed experiences of agents are contextual, and understood through varying lenses. Through the use of document analysis, which informed and impacted the semi-structured interview protocol, specific performative behaviors or actions displayed by the participant were explored in detail by the participant in a journal format, and the researcher gleaned data from these self reflexive exercises to better understand the participant's motivation and perception of zir gender in contextual, or spatial ways.

Research Approach

The purpose of this study was to delve into the various experiences of one participant, in the hope of gleaning data that may help to understand how zie makes meaning relative to the varying identities zie experiences and constructs. As Merriam (2009) stated, "qualitative researchers are interested in *understanding the meaning people have constructed*, that is, how people make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world" (p. 13). The selection of a qualitative approach in this study was an

intentional decision motivated by the intent to collect and interpret data that will illustrate how the participant in this study makes meaning of zir gender in various contexts.

Case study research is characterized by what is considered a bounded system (Merriam, 2009). In selecting a case for this study, the primary interest was in opting for a bounded system in which masculine gendered behavior and understanding was paramount to the personal experiences of the participant. According to Yin (2014) a case study approach is most appropriate when research questions are centered on how or why a participant does something, there is no need to control behavioral events, and the research focus is contemporary in nature (p. 9). In elaborating on the selection of cases Merriam (2009) posited the selection of case study can be motivated because "we have a general question, an issue, a problem that we are interested in, and we feel than an in-depth study of a particular instance or case will illuminate that interest" (p. 81). Case study methodology is one that comprises multiple forms of data and makes sense of these data together through triangulation (Mertens, 2010). In the context of this study the case is comprised of one participant, whose experiences as a masculine-identified feminist are the basis for inquiry.

Research Site

Midwest Private University is a private university located in the Midwest region of the United States in a medium to large metropolitan area of approximately 550,000 people. Consistently ranked as a top tier masters-granting institution for its region, the institution is comprised of approximately 5,500 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students. As a liberal arts institution, undergraduate students are exposed to demanding coursework across the spectrum of arts and sciences.

Participant

As a study concerned with understanding how one student experiences and makes meaning of zir masculine identity relative to zir feminist identity, understanding how the participant self identifies is crucial to understanding how zie experiences zir identities. The sampling criteria for this study required the participant to self-identify as masculine-identified, and to be actively engaged in feminist coursework or activism through a major or minor in women's and gender studies or involvement in a feminist student organization on Midwestern Private University's campus. At the time of data collection, Stefan[2] was a 22 year old junior in college and was actively involved in several feminist organizations on Midwestern Private University's campus. As a biological male, zie self-identified as gender nonconforming, but masculine-identified. As a militant feminist zir experiences engaging in feminist and gender based criticism were rooted in academic, co-curricular, and interpersonal experiences, offering a wide berth of experience when asked about zir lived experiences navigating the intersectionality of zir varying identities.

Data Collection

The collection of data in case studies is generally characterized by extensive exploration of multiple sources of information, which provides an in-depth illustration of what comprises the case in question (Creswell, 2013). In order to collect and analyze this data I employed a semi-structured interview approach, with document analysis that informed subsequent interviews. The participant was interviewed three times, over the course of one week, with the formal interview protocol available in Appendix D.

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[2] The name "Stefan" is a pseudonym that was selected by the participant for the purpose of this study.

Semi-structured interviews and document analysis were employed in this study to hone in the research on how the participant perceives and makes meaning, because zie, and zir experience, are the case in question. These research decisions enabled the case in question to be a comprehensive exploration of meaning making as it relates to the participants perception, experience, performance, and reported feelings.

Document analysis. The participant completed a series of three self-reflexive, observationally motivated journals over the course of the research study. The journals were structured around the participant reflecting on how zir gender may have impacted zir performative behavior, spatial consumption, and general decision-making. Journals were submitted to the researcher the evening before the next interview was to take place, so the researcher could analyze the document and extract data for the semi-structured interview protocol.

Semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted via Skype during the spring 2015 semester over the course of one week while the participant was a junior. I selected the semi-structured interview approach intentionally, so I was able to adapt and address questions and tailor the protocol according to the participant's responses, as well as clarify and utilize data collected from the journals the participant completed between interviews. Merriam (2009) places interview structures on a continuum, and notes semi-structured to be characterized by the interview questions being used with flexibility, the largest portion of the interview being driven by the interview protocol, and the wording and order of questions not being predetermined (p. 89).

The semi-structured interviews were sequential in nature, and covered topics including how the participant came to understand gender identity both theoretically and

personally, experiences where the participant felt successful in engaging in gendered dialogue and activism, and how the participant experienced gender and gendered conversations from an emotional, or feeling centered perspective. The participant was encouraged to be reflexive as part of the semi-structured interviews, and was encouraged to elaborate on experiences volunteered as part of the protocol.

The varying theoretical perspectives presented in this research study have contributed to deeper understandings of construction in the varying realms in which understanding reality is of pertinence to the study. Initially, the Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (Evans et al., 2010) contributed to understanding identity salience, which made understanding how identity impacts how reality is experienced and constructed possible. To this end, this study was structured around interviews focused on developing understandings of these salient identities from a constructivist lens so as to understand how the participant structured zir own varying realities

Data Analysis

In order to analyze the sources of data in this study I utilized open coding and in vivo codes in order to make meaning of the raw data (Merriam, 2009). Through the use of inductive data analysis and open coding I was able to establish codes from the data without establishing categories before analysis. Emergent themes, as a result of this practice, were products of the participant's personal accounts, through interviews and self-reflective journals, and constituted in vivo codes because they were formed from the participant's own articulated accounts (Creswell, 2011).

As a result of these practices I identified four overarching, emergent themes from the data, with specific subthemes contributing to how the data answers the guiding research questions of this study. These themes and subthemes are explored in depth in Chapter 4.

Trustworthiness

In order to assure trustworthiness and goodness in this study I employed the use of member checks, triangulation, and rich and thick descriptions (Mertens, 2010).

Member checking. To establish credibility and ensure the participant's meaning making was adequately portrayed in this study I employed member checks. Mertens (2010) asserts "member checks involve the researcher seeking verification with the respondent groups about the constructions that are developing as a result of the data collected and analyzed" (p. 257). Member checks were conducted after interview data was transcribed, and correspondence was conducted via email. Member checks consisted of the researcher verifying emergent themes as consistent with the participant's experiences, both holistically and within the context of the study.

Triangulation. In order to verify trustworthiness across varying sources of data, information that was collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis, and was evaluated to determine consistency and validity (Mertens, 2010). Because textual, document based observational data and transcribed interview data were the basis of this study the information was compared against one another to guarantee the meaning derived was consistent with the participant's experience. In order to determine emergent themes some examples were included in both textual documents or journals, as well as topics covered in the semi-structured interviews.

Rich and thick description. According to Mertens (2010) it is the researcher's responsibility to provide enough detail to enable the reader to make determinations about research validity. Accordingly, "extensive and careful description of the time, place, context, and culture" is key to making this description sufficient (Mertens, 2010, p. 259). For the purpose of this study I include description of the participant's campus environment at Midwest Private University, and describe the contextual and spatial surroundings that directly impacted the self-reflexive journaling the participant completed.

Ethics

According to Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006) "ethical issues may emerge in the data collection phases of research because of how data are collected, where data are collected, and why data are collected" (p. 165). Engaging with human subjects requires ethical consideration, because participants have rights to which they are entitled. In order to address ethical concerns in this study the participant received the informed consent document via email one week before the beginning of data collection. Prior to the beginning of our first interview the participant and I discussed the informed consent document at length to ensure the participant was aware of zir rights and privileges. To ensure confidentiality the participant was encouraged to select zir own pseudonym, and the institution at which research was conducted was also assigned a pseudonym. Ensuring the confidentiality of this study was a priority at all points of data collection.

Limitations

As a qualitative study interrogating the lived experiences of one participant, the primary limitation for this study was my own investment in feminist identity

development as a feminist and scholar. Sharing similarities and identities with the participant in this study enabled me to connect and build rapport with the participant, but there was the inherent risk of projecting my own expectations and predilections into the analysis of the data. Additionally, the study as originally designed included intermittent observations of the participant to be conducted on MPU's campus, which were not possible to complete due to an initial prospective participant declining to be observed.

Another limitation was that the participant in this study identified as White, and from a working class background, so the data collected, while still transferable, did not incorporate additional historically marginalized identities that contributed to the participant's lived experiences. The research site, as another limitation, afforded rich experiences to the participant, but the pool of possible student volunteers for this study was small, at just two people.

Researcher Experience and Reflexivity

Acknowledging reflexivity and the individualized positionality of oneself as a researcher is a fundamental aspect of conducting exceptional research. As Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006) noted:

> One of the issues that must be integrated into all phases of the research design, in order to maintain congruence in the research process, is the influence of your own social identities and the social identities of participants in the research process. (p. 101)

Understanding my own varying identities, as well as their varying salience, serves as a point of departure for my interrogation and understanding of others' identities. In this

sense, being a White, cisgender man who identifies with third-wave feminism has a tremendous impact on my approach to topics as a researcher.

I am privileged in many ways, particularly as they relate to my most salient identities. I was raised in an economically stable, nuclear family and have been supported in my pursuit of an advanced degree in an intellectually focused field. While not currently affiliated with a religious order, my parents and extended family readily identify as Protestant Christians. Being raised in a political swing state I was able to gain exposure to varying political views before ultimately developing my own political ideology, which most readily aligns with socially and fiscally liberal policies.

I consider myself the recipient of a world-class feminist education from a respected, private institution where the vast majority of my peers were of the same socioeconomic and racial background. This particular aspect of my experience is one I am especially cognizant of while pursuing this research project, particularly because "researchers must guard against assuming their experiences are similar to those of their participants" (Jones et al., 2006, p. 103). While my background pursuing feminist scholarship has been overwhelmingly positive and developmentally influential, I am aware this is not a universal experience, and am excited by the opportunity to delve into understanding the experiences of others.

Conclusion

In this chapter the methodological decisions and interventions outlined serve as the basis for the study. Understanding these decisions enable a higher level of understanding of the results of the study, including but not limited to the data, analytical

interpretations, and discussion of research findings, which are the focus of chapters 4 and

5.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this research study was to explore how one student makes meaning of the intersections between masculine performativity and feminist ideology. Because men's meaning making capacity relative to the intersectional relationship with feminism is something that previous literature has done little to explore, I intentionally utilized research parameters to assist in selecting a participant whose experience developing as a feminist would present insight into how masculine identity impacted this overarching development. The guiding research questions for this study served to focus on how the participant experienced and processed zir varying situational understandings of masculinity and feminism. The research questions were:

- How does one masculine identified feminist make meaning of the salience of zir gender and feminist identities in the varying spatial contexts of zir college campus?

- How does one masculine identified feminist navigate the intersections of zir masculine and feminist identities?

In endeavoring to answer these research questions several themes regarding how the participant experienced feminism and makes meaning of the intersecting identities in question emerged from the data gathered. These themes provide insight into answering the research questions framing this study.

Introduction to Participant

The participant in this study was a twenty-two year old college junior at Midwestern Private University who completed a series of three Skype interviews over the

course of one week. In addition to interviews, the participant completed reflective journals concerned with how zie interpreted spatial and situational experiences. The participant self-selected the pseudonym "Stefan," and expressed that "zie" and "zir" are the pronouns that zie identified with. Stefan identified as gender non-conforming and was born biologically male. When reflecting on zir experiences as a feminist, zir experiences in the classroom in theory-intensive courses, and zir experiences being engaged in a pro-reproductive rights student organization on MPU's campus all had significantly impacted zir development and understandings of gender and feminist activism.

At the time of this study Stefan had completed the majority of zir major requirements for a degree in rhetoric and communication studies at MPU. As a junior in college, zie had been exposed to several courses dealing extensively with feminist theory, and much of zir understanding of gender and feminism are results of theory intensive exploration. Stefan's advanced understanding of theoretical structures in gender and feminist theory were an invaluable aspect of this study.

Stefan's co-curricular experiences on MPU's campus were also significant aspects of zir experience. Throughout the course of zir time at MPU Stefan was involved in a pro-reproductive rights organization, which employed a common-leadership philosophy where there were no elected leaders. Zie also worked off-campus for the duration of zir time as a student, first with young children and then at a restaurant serving the vegetarian and vegan community of the mid-size metropolitan area surrounding Midwestern Private University. Stefan's accounts of zir experiences outside of the classroom engaging with peers provide a view into how zie engages with feminist and

gender concepts in zir personal life, which are different from zir experience in courses on MPU's campus.

Stefan is one of two children, and zir biological parents are separated. As an out-of-state student at MPU, Stefan's support system at MPU was primarily comprised of peers zie had met through courses and activities. At the time of this study Stefan's brother, who identifies as cisgender male, had completed one year of study at MPU. Stefan's relationship with zir brother was generally positive, and zie was able to take a gender-theory course with zir brother during the academic year and to carry the conversations and concepts into their familial lives. Stefan had come out to zir mother as gender non-conforming, but had never discussed zir sexual orientation with her.

As an activist, Stefan identified as a militant feminist. Political economy and elections, as well as current events contributed greatly to Stefan's experiences engaging with peer feminists and activists concerned with gender and social justice. Stefan fundamentally disagreed with the electoral process employed in the United States, and is critical of liberal feminism that promotes gender equality, which often overlooks or ignores the effects of capitalism and racial politics for populations historically and systemically excluded from these conversations.

In performing zir gender non-conforming identity, Stefan regularly engaged in performative behavior that disrupts peer perceptions of hegemonic gender. Stefan regularly wears nail polish and cosmetics, and occasionally would wear a skirt to work at the vegan restaurant where zie was employed.

Overview of Themes

Four themes emerged from what Stefan shared during zir interviews and through the journaling activity regarding how zie makes meaning of zir masculine gender performativity and feminist identity. The first theme (I) was concerned with gender and feminism as ideas that are constructed, or products of discourse. This theme emerged when Stefan was discussing how zie experiences gender, and how zie has experienced gendered conversations with peers and children through work and involvement in organizations at MPU. The second theme (II), bodily materiality as a contributing factor to assumptions, explores how the presence of biological secondary sex characteristics contribute to how others perceive and understand the people or bodies that they interact with. The third theme (III) is concerned with how specific concepts generally coded as feminist are polarizing when considering individual feminists' perspectives and performed identities. This theme is primarily concerned with how different feminisms exist, much like there are different versions of masculinity. The fourth, and final, theme (IV) identifies how masculinities are essential to feminist discourse and ideology. These themes attend to research questions framing the study. The themes and subthemes are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Research Themes and Subthemes

Theme I: Gender and Feminism as Constructed Ideas
Subthemes: • People are taught gender   • Gender is a regulated idea   • Feminism is a learned concept
Theme II: Bodily Materiality as a Contributing Factor to Assumptions
Subthemes: • Presence of the male penis   • Absence of the female uterus   • Assumptions about sexual orientation
Theme III: Feminist Concepts as Polarizing Ideas
Subthemes:

• Multiple feminisms
• Wage gap
• Reproductive rights and access
Theme IV: Masculinities as Essential to Feminism
Subthemes:
• Maintaining masculinity
• Value of ally behavior to women
• Feminism as active performative experience

Theme I: Gender and Feminism as Constructed Ideas.

The first major emergent theme from the data relates to the discursive origin of gender and feminism as overarching concepts. Stefan, in reflecting on prior conversations and experiences, referenced how people zie has engaged with have learned problematic or oppressive views on gender and gender performativity. Three subthemes, *people are taught gender, gender is a regulated idea,* and *feminism is a learned concept* appeared from data analysis. These subthemes are explored further.

People are taught gender. During Stefan's undergraduate experience zie spent a portion of time working with elementary aged children, and in reflecting on this experience zie shared in interviews that zie was frustrated and horrified by "how deeply entrenched" misogyny and patriarchy are, even for children. As part of the interview Stefan shared the following personal account:

Okay, um, I guess let's see freshman year near the end of first semester I started painting my nails, and um, and for a long time I got a lot of flack for that. Like, I used to work with kids and I used to have kids that were like elementary school age that would ask me if I was a boy or a girl, and then like would interrogate me about my nails, and that kind of stuck out that, like, even as young as, like, kindergarten or first grade kids already had set gender roles build in and that was

something that was, like, hardwired into kids from that early on. And that they

had been taught that already – it was horrifying.

Here Stefan suggested one of the genderqueer performative activities that zie engaged in

was an especially poignant source of tension in zir professional role working with young

children. How children and peers perceive zir and zir gender identity contributed to

tension Stefan experienced because of zir failure to abide by gendered expectations,

which Stefan observed as being deeply entrenched from a young age.

> ***Gender is a regulated idea.*** In further reflecting on how painting zir fingernails

contributed to tension in the workplace, Stefan noted how the children zie worked with

responded to zir decision to engage in zir outward expression of zir genderqueer identity

by sharing the following account:

> Yeah. It wasn't so much the kid that was making me angry, it was the idea that,
>
> like, that early on kids were already taught, um, about masculinity and about what
>
> it meant to be a man. And if you didn't fit into that box then you weren't a man, I
>
> guess. And, like, there were already set connotations for what it meant that in a
>
> sense being a man meant you can't paint your nails.

Here Stefan referenced how gender and the expectations attributed to bodies and actors

are deeply entrenched in people, but identifying the source of these ideas is difficult, if

not impossible, to determine. This relates to the second research question guiding this

study, because Stefan's experience navigating zir gendered experience is informed both

by how zie interprets gender, as well as how peers perceive and experience gender. As

someone whose performative identity is considered disruptive to hegemonic gender, the

intersectionality of Stefan's salient identities is unique to zir lived experience, and the

weight of that burden is amplified by peers resisting or policing Stefan's performative identities.

Feminism is a learned concept. In reflecting on zir development as a feminist, Stefan noted feminist theory, and exposure to feminist ideas in the classroom as monumentally significant in zir development as a feminist. Stefan shared "by taking classes that used feminist authors and were feminist theory intensive" zie began "identifying as a feminist through that lens." This development is especially important in understanding Stefan's experience because zie discussed having "found feminism" in high school, through using feminist principles and authors as the basis for argumentations in debate, but did not begin to identify as a feminist until zie had begun college and was exposed to feminist authors in the classroom.

This exposure in the classroom was fundamental to Stefan's understandings, and zie identified Judith Butler as the author whose writing was the source of zir understanding of gender performativity. Stefan also identified bell hooks, particularly her work *Feminism is for Everybody,* as foundationally significant scholarly figures that contributed to zir educational experience. In both examples Stefan shared the scholarly examples are points of departure in zir development because they provide frameworks for personal reference, as well as are assistive in enabling people to develop vocabulary and critical lenses in identifying gender politics and feminist structures.

Theme II: Bodily Materiality as a Contributing Factor to Assumptions

The second emergent theme as a result of the data Stefan provided was related to how the presence of secondary sex characteristics associated with biological maleness and femaleness is a source of tension in zir experience as a genderqueer feminist. Three

subthemes emerged as part of this theme, *presence of the male penis, absence of the female uterus,* and *assumptions about sexual orientation*, and are explored further.

    Presence of the male penis. At the time of interviews Stefan shared that zie had been coming out and sharing that zie is gender non-conforming for about six months. As a biological male, Stefan felt zie experienced the assumed male privilege generally attributed to masculine performers, and was especially reflective about zir own biology as it related to zir ability to engage in feminist conversations. When discussing this topic Stefan shared that "sometimes, uh, having a penis can be a serious disadvantage when talking about feminism." In this sense, Stefan's experience as a biological male directly impacted zir ability to engage with peer feminists who identify as women because zir biological experience was inconsistent with cisgender females. In this sense, Stefan's penis prevents zir access to spaces because the symbolic phallic privilege and patriarchal norms generally associated with the male penis ascribe meaning to Stefan's body and experiences, even though Stefan's gender identity is not cisgender male, which complicated how Stefan experienced the world.

    Absence of the female uterus. Stefan's experience as a biological male did not stop at the presence of zir secondary sex characteristics. In reflecting on feminist conversations, particularly related to liberal feminist politics, Stefan also felt zir worth and value as a feminist was impacted by zir biological maleness in the sense that zir does not have the reproductive capacity to carry biological children because zir does not have a uterus. As a political anarchist Stefan shared zie does not support voting as an expression of citizenship, and that in discussing elections with peer feminists the lack of zir uterus had come up multiple times:

I don't really like any candidate, but um I was particularly critiquing feminists who vote for Hillary Clinton for ignoring her policies on business, um, her war policies, immigration policies, uh, and ended up taking a lot of flack because I don't have a uterus and Hillary Clinton is, uh, pro reproductive rights. And so the argument was that as a person without a uterus I don't have the right to talk about who we should be electing because reproductive rights are an important issue to feminism.

Here Stefan's experience as a biological male barred zir from engaging in a conversation motivated, by Stefan, at addressing aspects of feminism zie identified as potentially more important. Because Stefan could not claim the biological materiality that constitutes womanhood, in this context, zir voice was considered less valuable, and Stefan was not entitled to hold the opinions zir shared, according to the peers zie was engaging in conversation. In making meaning of this experience, Stefan was frustrated by the narrow restrictions zir performative gender was policed by, but was also cognizant of the sexist oppression women experience every day. As a feminist ally Stefan's priority, particularly in this interaction, was supporting women in an appropriate capacity, which was by remaining silent as an ally to hear personal accounts of women's experiences.

Assumptions about sexual orientation. When Stefan was discussing zir experience as a gender non-conforming feminist, one of the experiences zie referenced several times was that peers or strangers often made the assumption that instead of being gender non-conforming zie was actually gay-identified. As a feminist Stefan did not necessarily take offense to this assumption, but rather was clear in sharing that the way gender and sexuality are coded in society made people's interpretive worldview narrower

than zie would prefer. What Stefan was also clear in considering was how addressing

this narrow worldview, and correcting assumptions, was something that took

considerable effort and time. Stefan stated:

> So, like, sometimes at work I'll have people come up and, um, asking me if I have
>
> a boyfriend and stuff. And, it's like, no, um, and like, it's just conversations like
>
> that, um, where people assume something about you and you play along to make
>
> it easier and so that you don't have to respond or explain because you don't have
>
> time or don't want to.

Here Stefan is getting at the effort it takes to resist patriarchy and misogyny when

confronted with the assumptions other people may hold about your own performative

practices and identities. Stefan did not necessarily opt to correct assumptions every time

they are made about zir performative identities. This marginalizes and overlooks

Stefan's valuable and enriching perspective, but expecting Stefan to educate every person

who inappropriately prescribes meaning to zir experience is problematic because it is not

zir responsibility to educate people who hold majority, or privileged identities. Stefan

was clearly confident in zir identities, but was not always in a position to resist patriarchy

and norms at the level of educating every person who marginalized zir experiences.

In relating this particular theme to the larger scope of the study, one of the most

important aspects of this was that Stefan was invested in maintaining masculine identified

feminists can engage in and practice varying sexual orientation-based identities, and

being informed and actively engaged regarding topics of gender are not precursor factors

to be considered when speculating about someone's sexual orientation. Stefan was

fortunate to have a generally positive experience as a gender non-conforming feminist,

but there are inherent risks and issues that are systemically present in society that do limit Stefan's agency and ability to disrupt hegemonic gender.

Theme III: Feminist Concepts as Polarizing Ideas

The third theme that emerged from the data was centered on how feminism and feminist concepts are not universally agreed upon by the larger feminist community. In relating this theme to how Stefan made meaning of zir feminist and masculine identities, the individual agentic capacities of feminists plays a role in how people interpret, practice, and teach the many concepts that constitute feminist ideology, as a larger structure. In analyzing this theme three subthemes, *multiple feminisms, wage gap,* and *reproductive rights and access* emerged and are explored further.

Multiple feminisms. In masculinities scholarship the plurality, and multiplicity of masculinity is acknowledged extensively in the literature and in analyzing the data the reality of multiple feminisms emerged as an equally relevant component in Stefan's experience making meaning of zir identities. Because stakeholders in the varying arenas of feminism and masculinities construct and politically promote their ideas, to pretend each feminist constituency aims for the same end goals is not realistic. While overarching ideas, such as ending sexism and sexist oppression, may be unifying and overarching concepts each individual feminist is responsible for identifying what aspects of feminist ideology are most important to them. When discussing how Stefan connected with peer feminists zir shared this insight:

> Um, like, I think a lot of men are interested in, like, liberal feminism, um, and that to me is concerning. I mean a lot of women are concerned with, um, liberal feminism, which is also concerning, so I'm always excited when anybody is

interested in learning more about feminism or engaging in more feminism and

activism, but I'm always really nervous when that happens because I don't really

know what type of feminism you're after.

Here Stefan acknowledged how individual feminists priorities may not necessarily align

with peer feminists, though they may share commonality in identifying openly as

feminists. In Stefan's case, zie most closely identified with militant feminism, concerned

with critiquing large-scale patriarchy and racist structures at a systemic level, and as a

gender non-conforming feminist Stefan was especially sensitive to hegemonic gender.

When interacting with peer feminists whose priorities do not necessarily align with zir

priorities in feminism there is the potential for tension in how Stefan and the peer

participants make meaning of the topics contributing to feminist dialogue. Liberal

feminism and priorities are explored in the further subthemes.

Wage gap. One of the priorities of liberal feminism that Stefan noted when

discussing how feminist concepts can be polarizing was the wage gap between men and

women. As a popular example of how sexist oppression has disenfranchised women in

the workplace, the wage gap is assumed to be a priority, though some feminists are

concerned focusing on the capital advancement of women is a narrow approach. Stefan

shared the following statement:

> Liberal feminism is more concerned with reform, um, and still adopts, like, the
>
> apples to apples approach. Liberal feminism is more concerned with closing, like,
>
> wage gaps than it is with addressing overall patriarchy. There's usually a
>
> disconnect between the wage gap and like broader issues of gender equality
>
> between race and, um, also, um, with capitalism and everything else.

In sharing these examples Stefan noted zir own priorities as a feminist were motivated by an encompassing perspective especially critical of patriarchy, or the source of male privilege zie was often afforded.

   Reproductive rights and access. The other polarizing issue Stefan noted as relevant in zir experience making meaning of zir feminist and masculine identities was the right to access to reproductive healthcare. As a concept especially relevant to the second wave of feminism, the polarity of this topic is different from the wage gap in the sense that Stefan was clear in articulating the polarization was more concerned with who can speak regarding the topic, not necessarily who agrees with the overarching idea of access and reproductive rights. Stefan shared the following insight:

> Um, yeah I think a lot of times, like, talking about reproductive rights with my friends, um, a lot of times my privilege as a person with a penis is challenged. And a lot of times my right to speak from my viewpoint is, uh, criticized because I don't have a uterus, which I understand. Um, but yeah, so I think a lot of times, depending on the issue that you're talking about, not checking privilege can be problematic.

This example gets at the hierarchy sometimes in place that regulates who can voice concerns or opinions about polarizing topics. As a feminist, Stefan was, in this example, positioned as not entitled to oppose a political candidate because the candidate supports women's access to reproductive healthcare because zie did not have a uterus, which is especially interesting considering Stefan's genderqueer identity in which zie did not identify as a man or woman and was therefore less concerned with materiality of zir own body.

Theme IV: Masculinities as Essential to Feminism

The final emergent theme from the data centered on how the involvement of men in feminist activism and scholarship is essential to progress. As the theme relates to the research questions, Stefan's own sense of value to the feminist ideology zie adopted as zir philosophy motivated zir and assisted in zir capacity to make meaning of zir intersecting identities because these ideas informed how Stefan both experienced and reflected on what happens around zir. In reflecting on zir experiences, Stefan noted "There's a lot more involved in it than getting equal pay. It's a far larger thing than that. I mean, even bell hooks talks about that in *Feminism is for Everybody* in that men are essential to feminism." Two subthemes emerged in the data, *maintaining masculinity* and *value of ally behavior to women.* These subthemes are explored further.

Maintaining masculinity. When reflecting on zir experience connecting with peer feminists who identify as men or masculine Stefan referenced zir experience maintaining zir masculine identity as relevant. In feminist outreach, which Stefan had engaged in, zie shared the following insight:

So, sometimes it's kind of, uh, an awkward position to be in. Um, but on the other hand you can more easily talk to men about feminism and be like, "look, I'm a feminist and I can maintain some modicum of masculinity in doing so," and so it's – it's that they're a little more comfortable when talking to someone that they perceive as being more masculine about feminism.

While Stefan is open about zir identity as a gender non-conforming feminist, it was clear zir masculine privilege and ability to maintain a masculine appearance enabled zir to connect with masculine identified peers and discuss feminism from a lens that promoted

access for men, a capacity which female-identified feminists may not be able to tap into. In this sense, peer masculine-identified feminists may contribute to feminist identity development in their peers.

Stefan's capacity for meaning making was focused on how the ascribed masculine and patriarchal privilege that accompanies zir biological experience is something that can be harnessed and employed for a feminist purpose. While Stefan resisted patriarchy and hegemonic gender at the core of zir identities, these privilege structures were politically relevant when attempting to subsume patriarchal privilege in the hopes of better including and valuing diverse perspectives. Because Stefan was nuanced, and capable of acknowledging these potentialities that are products of zir experience zie was able to engage effectively with peers and promote the agendas and ideas that were priorities to zir in zir feminist activism.

Value of ally behavior to women. In understanding men's involvement in feminism as essential it is important to consider how men's involvement may affect or be perceived by female-identified peers. As a community with overarching ideologies that unify feminists, how individual dynamics contribute to how feminists make meaning of their identities is important. When reflecting how zie engages with women-identified peer feminists, in particular an experience where zie may have felt zir voice was not especially valuable, Stefan shared this insight:

> Um, yeah, actually that happens a lot when I'm talking to liberal friends about elections – and talking about reproductive rights, um, and a lot of times I either, like, won't talk or minimize how much I talk because I don't have a uterus and it's not, and, I'm not at the forefront of the impact of that. So a lot of times I'll,

like, I'm more prone to sit back and listen to what somebody else has to say

before going in and talking. Or, if I choose to talk at all, um, and another area that

I do that in is, I think, um, like with street harassment and stuff. So, like, I'll let

somebody else talk about that and sit back and listen.

In reflecting on these experiences it is clear Stefan considered zir ability to listen and

provide a forum for which peer feminists can voice concerns as a form of support and

ally behavior because so often women's experiences are dismissed in the interest of

maintaining patriarchal privilege. In considering zir own masculine privilege, Stefan was

cognizant of how peer perceptions can contribute to zir access to feminist spaces, and

because Stefan was able to perform allyship in this way zir connections to peer feminists

were more solidly based.

Conclusion

The four central themes - gender and feminism as constructed ideas, bodily

materiality as a contributing factor to assumptions, feminist concepts as polarizing ideas,

and masculinities as essential to feminism - gleaned from the data presented in Stefan's

interviews and journal activities illustrated how one masculine-identified feminist makes

meaning of zir feminist and masculine identities. These themes address the research

questions guiding the study, and illustrate how Stefan's experiences as a college student

have contributed to zir development in zir masculine and feminist identities. Chapter five

explores the implications of the study, and connects the themes presented in this chapter

to the reviewed literature. Best practices for supporting students developing in their

feminist or masculine identities are suggested, and recommendations for future research

are made.

Chapter 5

Discussion

As scholars and activists continue to make strides in gender-based scholarship and outreach, particularly on college campuses, understanding how students develop in their feminist and gendered identities while in college is increasingly relevant if professionals aim to successfully support students in their varied experiences making meaning of these identities. Feminist identity development, as an aspect of identity development that has not been extensively researched and reported upon by scholars concerned with student development, is consistent with other models in student development, namely in that feminist development is complex and unique for each student. There are several factors that contribute to how students make meaning of their varying identities, and as the field of higher education progresses it is imperative that more research and interrogation be done in order to develop best practices for supporting students during their experiences pursuing postsecondary education.

Summary of Findings

The following research sub-questions were designed to explore how the participant was able to make meaning of the intersections between zir masculine performativity and feminist ideology:

- How does one masculine identified feminist make meaning of the salience of zir gender and feminist identities in the varying spatial contexts of zir college campus?

- How does one masculine identified feminist navigate the intersections of zir masculine and feminist identities?

A series of three interviews utilizing a semi-structured interview protocol were conducted with the participant. In the interviews there was ample opportunity for the participant to share personal experiences that zie identified as important in zir development as a feminist and masculine performer. As the primary researcher, I was concerned with approaching the interviews and conversations with the participant from an intersectional, developmental perspective in order to develop an understanding of how the participant's experiences have contributed to zir development in and understanding of zir identities. In recruiting participants at Midwestern Private University two students volunteered who were eligible for the study based on the research parameters. The initial participant declined a portion of the study, and was no longer eligible. The second volunteer was the research participant, and zir experiences are the foundation for this study. The personal accounts shared in this study are poignant, and deeply reflective examples of how the participant has experienced zir development as a feminist, particularly relative to zir identity as a biological male who is gender non-conforming. As a participant advanced in zir educational trajectory, this study explores the experiences of a student who has spent significant amounts of time in the classroom interrogating gender as a concept and topic, as well as simply on campus experiencing higher education. The study was not able to include the perspectives of students who are early in their development in their identities.

In this concluding chapter, the four emergent themes from the data obtained from interviews and reflective journals are summarized and connections between the reviewed literature and the data are illuminated. Implications of the study are explored, and future research recommendations are made.

Summary of Themes

Four primary themes were established from the research questions and the data collected through semi-structured interviews and reflective journaling. In order to adequately explore each theme, subthemes were developed to identify contributing factors in understanding the themes of gender and feminism as constructed ideas, bodily materiality as a contributing factor to assumptions, feminist concepts as polarizing ideas, and masculinities as essential to feminism. The subthemes related to gender and feminism as constructed ideas include *people are taught gender, gender is a regulated idea,* and *feminism is a learned concept.* The subthemes related to bodily materiality as a contributing factor to assumptions include *presence of the male penis, absence of the female uterus,* and *assumptions about sexual orientation.* The subthemes related to feminist concepts as polarizing ideas include *multiple feminisms, wage gap,* and *reproductive rights and access.* The subthemes related to the final theme, masculinities as essential to feminism, include *maintaining masculinity, value of ally behavior to women,* and *feminism as active performative experience.* The main takeaways from these findings are summarized:

- How the participant understood gender and feminist ideology as overarching concepts contributed to zir understanding of gender and feminism in zir personal development and experience. As an advanced student, the participant was able to describe zir experiences with varying feminist ideologies from a nuanced lens.

- How the participant understood zir biological identity contributed to zir experiences interacting with peer feminists. It is important to explore how biology contributes to the performative experiences of stakeholders in feminist

and masculinities scholarship because the binary construction of biological identity is institutionalized at a systemic level.

- Understanding the broad array of ideologies that inform multiple feminisms contributed to tension between Stefan and peer feminists. While the movement to end sexist oppression has motivating principles that many feminists identify with, the means to accomplishing these goals may look different for varying feminist constituents.

- The participant identified men's, or masculine performers', role in feminist movements is crucial if we are to accomplish the goal of ending sexism and sexist oppression. In considering this, it is crucial to promote feminist identity development for masculine performers through varying venues that enable men/masculine performers to invest themselves in the cause and to work toward gendered balance.

Connections to Literature

Gender and Feminism as Constructed Ideas

From a theoretical perspective, developing understandings of feminism and gender as culturally or socially constructed ideas is hardly novel. Research in higher education concerned with gender and feminism consistently posited the constructed understandings of gender as central to understanding how people experience their gender identities (Bank, 2011; Laker & Davis, 2011; Stanovsky, 1997). In understanding these concepts as constructed there is potential for tension between stakeholders, and this tension can contribute to how people experience and develop in understanding the concepts as they relate to their own motivating ideologies and personal agentic capacities.

When considering how masculine-identified stakeholders experience learning about and engaging with feminist and gender based scholarship it is crucial to consider, initially, how the topics have been presented and explained, and secondly, where the source of the understanding originates for each person.

People are taught gender. As perhaps one of the most hegemonic cultural structures operating in the contemporary United States, the source of understanding and codifying gender is, in many ways, surrounding all of us (Connell, 2001). In considering how the participant shared personal accounts of zir learning, both in the classroom and through co-curricular involvement, it was clear there was a level of academic interrogation into the topic of gender that was influential in zir understanding of gender, relative to zir experience and the study as an experiential aspect of zir development. The source of learning about gender for the participant in this study was identified as dynamic, academically rigorous conversations taking place in courses zie was enrolled in at Midwestern Private University. Exposure to theoretical scholarship in feminism and gender scholarship, as well as discussions rooted in seminar-style educational methods contributed to a nuanced perspective on the topics at hand (Edwards, 2008). Understanding these concepts focused on identity development contributed to Stefan's development as an ally and feminist activist (Edwards, 2006).

Getting at the root of where masculine-identified subjects, in particular, are exposed to gender and feminist based scholarship is key to determining how the experiences contribute to their development in their varying identities. For the participant in this study the academic space of the classroom afforded an opportunity to reflect on and better understand zir experiences and share in peer scholars' exploration.

In considering how masculine-identified subjects engage with scholarship concerned with patriarchal and phallocentric privilege it is key to recall that there is no universal masculinity that masculine-identified performers experience collectively, nor is there a guarantee that in scholastic endeavors that students will successfully develop a critical lens toward privilege and oppression (Connell, 2001; McMahon, 1993). It is ideal, when considering effective educational experiences, to endeavor that both scholars or teachers, as well students, will be afforded the developmental opportunity to effectively understand and critique their own privilege. It is also important that systemic sources of oppression are acknowledged and critiqued, so as to assist stakeholders in developing nuanced perspectives on the state of gendered and feminist politics (Edwards, 2008).

Gender is a regulated idea. When reflecting on zir experiences as a gender non-conforming, biologically male feminist, Stefan referenced several experiences having zir performative gender policed. Gender, as a constructed idea, is discursively produced and bodies execute gender through actions and utterances (Butler, 1990; Carver, 1996; Davis, 2002; Edwards & Jones, 2009; Silverman, 1996). In considering Butler's (1990) theoretical understandings of *reiteration* and *citation,* how gender is produced and expressed, particularly by masculine-identified performers, is key to understanding how abject gender acts (Silverman, 1996) are policed and criticized, both publicly and privately. For Stefan the act of removing zir masculine gendered mask was an accomplished, and important aspect of zir experience making meaning of zir gender identity (Edwards & Jones, 2009).

The systemic and overarching gendered expectations present in society are deeply seeded, and contribute to how performers experience gender policing (McMahon,

1993). With the larger structure concerned with maintaining the binary of male vs. female, masculine vs. feminine, how masculine subjects experience developing in identities that threaten masculine privilege through critique and activism is of concern if these masculine-identified constituents need support in their development (Edwards, 2006; Edwards, 2008).

 Feminism is a learned concept. While the goal of eradicating sexism and sexist oppression originates in grassroots resistance and formed organically, the unifying concept of feminism is very much at home in academic spaces (hooks, 2001). In analyzing the data collected for this study it was clear the participant's in-class experiences examining and critiquing gender and critiquing masculine privilege and patriarchy contributed positively to zir development as a feminist and ability to recognize the intersectionality of zir identities. As Edwards (2008) noted, the feminist classroom provides students with the opportunity to question the perspectives and identities they hold, individually, in order to ascertain if their perspectives are informed by racist and sexist thinking. Understanding how contextual factors contribute to individual perspectives, in this sense, is a product of the academic experience and is beneficial in developing a vocabulary and capacity to critique privilege and oppression from varying vantage points.

 In relating how feminism is learned to the experiences of masculine-identified subjects it is key to note that feminist academic spaces provide masculine performers a venue to effectively address how masculine privilege has produced limitations in their experiences with gender (Edwards, 2008). In this experience learning to execute feminist criticism masculine identified subjects are also presented with the positive opportunity

for their perceived privilege and performed identities to shift as topics are broached

through academic inquiry (Stanovsky, 1997) and to begin to actively engage in

transgressive behavior consistent with internalized feelings toward gender (Edwards &

Jones, 2009). In courses and spaces concerned with gender and feminism it is possible

for masculine-identified subjects to learn of, and distance themselves from, the "vested

interest in maintaining and hiding male privilege" (Stanovsky, 1997, p. 11), enabling

masculine-identified subjects to execute feminist criticism and successfully access spaces

coded as feminist.

Bodily Materiality as a Contributing Factor to Assumptions

The biological capacity to exhibit secondary sex characteristics is, from a

scientific perspective, relevant to biological sex and reproduction, not performative

gender or sexuality (Butler, 1990). Gender, as a constructed idea and performed

experience, operates outside of the male vs. female binary rooted in biology because it is

fundamentally concerned with how a performer identifies internally with gender. As

resistance to the gender binary, masculine vs. feminine, gains traction in scholarship and

the media the push to develop understandings of the separate categories of sex, sexuality,

and gender are increasingly relevant.

Presence of the male penis. In reflecting on zir experiences with peer feminists,

both masculine and feminine identified, the participant in this study referenced

experiences where having a penis limited zir access to spaces and zir ability to engage in

conversations motivated by gender. The penis, as perhaps the most universally

acknowledged symbol of masculinity, in many ways represents the patriarchal privilege

that the participant is afforded simply by being born biologically male. This coding of

the participant's body, though, is not consistent with zir lived experience as gender non-conforming, and it limits the participant's agency as a feminist doing important work concerned with eradicating sexist exploitation and oppression. Having a penis, while something the participant did not necessarily resent, was a limitation in the participant's experience because of peers' resistance to separating biological sex from performative gender. This limitation is very much real in the participant's experience, but is not consistent with feminist and gender scholarship concerned with promoting performative gender as an individual, and unique experience for subjects regardless of biology.

Absence of the female uterus. When reviewing the data collected from the participant the other aspect of the participant's experience that limited or excluded zir from feminist spaces and conversations was the participant's reproductive capacity to carry children, which is another aspect of exclusion rooted in biological materiality. The uterus is, in some ways, the battleground of the second wave of the feminist movement, and is of integral importance when considering how the political arena, at the systemic level, has oppressed and exploited women (Libertin, 1987). As a biological male the participant was especially conscious of how valuable it was for zir to engage in ally behavior in conversations about reproductive politics as an embodiment of zir reflexivity and consciousness about privilege and lived experience, but this divide where masculine-identified constituents are positioned as irrelevant to reproductive politics is concerning and worthy of further consideration.

Assumptions about sexual orientation. In sharing personal accounts as part of the semi-structured interviews conducted for this study the participant reflected on several occasions in zir personal life and personal interactions where zir sexual

orientation was a source of tension or conflict with peers and the occasional stranger. With gender, sex, and sexuality as independent categories that all inform the collective person, the participant's sexual orientation, much like zir gender identity, is a deeply personal aspect of zir identity, and it operates as an important identity for self reflection. It is not an identity that others should necessarily speculate on, nor should assumptions inform how the participant's gender identity and feminism are interpreted by peers.

Feminist Concepts as Polarizing Ideas

Part of what motivates feminist activism and engagement is the simple fact that not all people agree that sexist exploitation and oppression should be eradicated. While the general literature, as well as this study, are clear in acknowledging there is no universal definition of feminism, nor is there a particular unifying concept that all feminists identify as a universal priority, it is the tensions between stakeholders in feminism that may contribute to tension between peer feminists. In reflecting on zir experiences, the participant in this study referenced instances in conversations with peers where despite all of the participants openly identifying as feminists there are significant disagreements on what constitutes appropriate behavior or intervention.

Multiple feminisms. In interrogating masculinities scholarship one of the most poignant aspects of the field is that there is no universal masculinity (Connell, 2001). This concept of multiple masculinities sets the standard for interrogation into cultural practice (Herdt, 1994). In sharing personal accounts of conversations the participant in this study had engaged in one of the aspects that came up with peers was a similar concept, rooted in the different motivating ideologies that comprise different feminisms. As hooks (2001) noted, there is a place in feminism for every person, and in

accomplishing this feat the varying types of feminism are of importance to individual stakeholders. Developing as an ally, relative to the multiple priorities presented through motivating ideologies contributes to how allies develop in social justice based identities (Edwards, 2006).

The participant in this study defined zir feminism as largely concerned with addressing systemic issues like patriarchal privilege and capitalism, and acknowledged most peer feminists zie interacted with were concerned with the practice of liberal feminism. Liberal feminism, as the participant described it, is largely concerned with closing the wage gap and promoting access to reproductive rights, which are explored further below. Stefan takes issue with liberal feminism because the methods often employed in endeavoring to accomplish the aforementioned goals often overlook how stakeholders' intersectionality contributes to their lived experiences, particularly in their racial and ethnic identities. In order to support feminist activism and engagement it is important to understand at the core what motivates stakeholders to engage with feminism and gender based activism.

Wage gap. As an aspect of liberal feminism, Stefan referenced peers' desire to close the wage gap as an aspect of feminist discourse that zir peers saw as a priority of feminism. Equal pay for equal work, as an aspect of critiquing sexist exploitation, is a concept that is impacted by gender, race and ethnicity, and other factors out of the control of the individual workers. Because equal pay for equal work is especially critical of men's historic privilege in the workplace, this critique is especially transgressive for masculine-identified feminists because it goes beyond theoretical benefits and produces the potentiality for tangible results for women in the workplace (Edwards, 2008). Stefan,

as a militant feminist, was especially critical of capitalism, but was still required to work and engage with female-identified peers. Though Stefan was critical of the wage gap, zie was also sensitive to understanding zir privilege in the workplace, which zie could not feasibly reject.

Reproductive rights and access. Women's safe and legal access to reproductive healthcare and resources was an acknowledged priority of the second wave of feminism (hooks, 2001). Reproductive rights are polarizing for numerous reasons, and particularly for masculine-identified stakeholders who may not be welcome in conversations about reproductive rights how stakeholders navigate these conversations can sometimes be difficult (Edwards, 2008). At the core of this subtheme is that individual women's agency in determining medical decisions is affected by several outside factors that also affect how stakeholders approach reproductive rights and access. As someone positioned to never have to make the decision to terminate a pregnancy, Stefan's experience with reproductive rights was limited, and informed by peer perspectives. Stefan's access and investment, in this sense, was unique because zie was not always welcomed or supported in these conversations.

Masculinities as Essential to Feminism

If feminism is to accomplish the goal of eliminating sexist oppression and sexism masculine identified subjects will be crucial in affecting positive change. As a movement that is not inherently anti-male, including masculine perspectives that contribute positively to the goals of feminist activism and engagement is crucial to developing a system where feminist masculinity is possible and celebrated (hooks, 2001). Developing spaces and conversations where men's criticism and transgressive refusal to actively

benefit from patriarchal privilege positively contributes to the movement of feminism because the internal critique divests men of their assumed investment in maintaining oppressive structures in tangible and meaningful ways (McMahon, 1993).

Men, as an overarching population, are positioned as deeply invested in maintaining patriarchy, and male feminism is transgressive to the point that Madlala (1995) refers to masculine feminism as "blatantly intolerable" (p. 1). Theory as a liberatory practice, for men and women alike, provides context for subjects to make meaning of the structures that oppress bodies at a personal level. Developing understandings of these concepts –patriarchy, capitalism, hegemonic gender, sexism, racism, etc. – is crucial in developing the capacity to resist and engage actively in feminist discourse. Stefan, as a feminist, noted the concepts mentioned above as deeply influential in zir development as a feminist, and as especially significant as zie developed and understood zir place in the feminist community.

Maintaining masculinity. As a biological male who is masculine-identified, Stefan referenced experiences connecting with peer-feminists who identified as men were made more feasible by zir outward masculine performative expression. Part of what Roof (1992) acknowledged in looking at male feminist community development was how men can preserve some aspects of what contributes to their identities. Maintaining masculine expression in a way that does not oppress women or contribute to exploiting subjects who are not feminine-identified is challenging, but it is an important component of the masculine feminist experience. Hooks (2001), in *Feminism is for Everybody,* made the claim that feminism needs "new strategies, new theories, guides that will show us how to create a world where feminist masculinity thrives" (p. 71) and in focusing on this

feminist spaces and engaging conversations become more accessible and relatable to masculine-identified stakeholders.

 Value of ally behavior to women. In reflecting on experiences where the participant's voice was not valuable or relevant to conversations the participant in this study was especially interested in sharing that in those instances zir presence and engagement was still valued by peers. The ability for masculine-identified stakeholders to connect with women and feminism through engaging in ally behavior is a key component of feminist masculinity (hooks, 2001; McMahon, 1993). It is important for masculine-identified subjects to acknowledge the limitations of their experiences if masculine-identified stakeholders are to develop into speaking from a nuanced and inclusive space (Edwards, 2008; Stanovsky, 1997). Stefan, as an activist and peer feminist, referenced several experiences connecting with women and having those conversations serve as foundationally informative to zir perspectives on topics zie did not personally experience, an example being street harassment.

 Feminism as active performative experience. Throughout the course of the interviews conducted with the participant zie repeatedly referred to feminism as an active performative experience by focusing on how zie and zir peers *do* feminism. As Edwards (2008) noted, pro-feminist masculine-identified subjects have the potential to disrupt and blur the gender binary, and in working toward accomplishing this goal the experience is active, and engaging. Feminist work, as it is often called, is a hallmark of the feminist movement, and it is referenced repeatedly in the literature as the product of feminist toil. Real results, as products of this work, contribute to the mission of individual feminists and serve constituencies that feminists are interested in supporting and representing.

Implications of Study and Recommendations for Future Research

In considering how masculine subjects make meaning of their intersectionality and varying identities it is clear there is significant work still to be done by scholars in women's, gender, and sexuality studies, as well as higher education. As more students engage with feminist activism and coursework on campus, and as the gender binary continues to be dismantled by theorists, scholars, and activists supporting students in making meaning of their intersectional identities will likely be a reality for practitioners working directly with students. While there is research on how men make meaning of masculinity, and an impressive body of scholarship dedicated to feminist theory, it is crucial that future research focus on how students experience engaging with these topics in order to develop strategies to best support them as they are challenged by their own experiences. The following are major implications for future practice, as illuminated by this study:

- Future research should strive to focus in on identity development at the intersectional crux of feminism and gender. It is clear from this study that there are students on campus making meaning of these intersections and that they are willing to share their experiences to contribute positively to other students who may have similar experiences. As there are identity development structures for varying identities including LGBTQ and race or ethnicity, there should be work on how students develop as feminists relative to their other salient identities.

- Future research should strive to continue including voices of non-binary gendered subjects in an attempt to divest scholarship from inculcating limited perspectives. From this study it is clear that the participant's experience being

socialized as a biological male, and experience coming out as gender non-conforming contributed greatly to zir capacity to make meaning of zir experiences. This qualitative method, centered on how the participant experienced these instances should be a priority in future research.

- Future research should seek to explore how cisgender students interpret and make meaning of the gender binary relative to their own experiences, as well as peer constituents who do not ascribe to the binary. In order to develop strategies for collectively supporting students as a general population it is important that scholarship center on how students experiences contribute to their meaning making and how peer interactions contribute to individual development.

- Future research should seek to explore how students have felt alienated by scholarship centered on feminism and gendered politics or do not have the means to engage academically with these topics, in order to develop strategies for supporting students who do not necessarily have an academic space in which to process through their experiences or who resist the topics. In this study the classroom experience was crucial in the participant's meaning making capacity, but not all students are afforded this opportunity to develop and focus academically on these topics.

Implications for Practice

In endeavoring to apply the results of this study to informed practice in student affairs the major takeaway is that how masculine-identified students internally and externally define their masculinity and masculine-gender is a deeply personal and developmental process. Additionally, how masculine-identified students engage in

making meaning of how this masculine identity intersects with other, varying identities is influenced by contextual factors, as well as how developed the student is in examining zir masculine identity. Masculinity, as a broad concept, is one that masculine-identified students grow and develop in, and as a result facilitating opportunities for students to examine their intersectionality and perceptions of their identities is important in order to reach new levels of internal analysis and understandings.

Particularly as students develop in identities that are sometimes misunderstood, or are challenging, sensitivity to how the process of identity development occurs is also a major implication for informed practice. As a study concerned with how a genderqueer, militant feminist made meaning of zir identities, the viewpoints and perspectives included in this study are not universal, however the value of people's input to the larger scope of understandings is something that should be acknowledged and fostered.

Conclusion

This study was designed to provide an understanding of how one participant developed in zir ability to make meaning of zir intersectional masculine and feminist identities. One student reflected on zir experiences in the classroom, and on campus engaging with feminist and gender scholarship and activism, focusing on how zir experiences contributed to zir identity development and experiential learning and how these factors contributed to zir own self-awareness as a masculine performer and feminist activist. The many experiences the participant shared illuminate a rich and rewarding experience, both in the classroom and out, engaging in dialogue about gender and feminism that have positively contributed to zir experience as a college student and developing activist in the feminist community. The findings of this study indicate that

while the masculine-identified subject is able to actively and successfully acclimate and become active in the feminist community, it requires a high level of self-reflection and awareness to be successful in accessing these spaces. The findings also illuminate some implications in supporting students who may have similar experiences to the participant, and provide areas where future research can potentially address areas where the scholarship is weak or not developed.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Document

Participant Informed Consent Form
Must be on University of Nebraska Letterhead

Title: Intersecting identities: Navigating the relationship between masculine performativity and feminist ideology

Purpose:
This project aims to explore the experience of a male college student who identifies as feminist, paying special attention to how the possible tension between the identities contributes to the participant's experience. You are invited to participate in this study because you are a male college student who is studying women's and gender studies or are involved in a feminist organization. Participants must be 19 years of age or older.

Procedures:
The participant will be asked to reflect on their experiences as a man in feminist spaces during interviews that are audio recorded for transcription purposes. These questions range from demographic questions, to reflecting on when the participant first became aware of their privileged gender identity, describing conversations about gender in which the participant has engaged, describing the level of connection the participant feels to gendered scholarship, etc. Additionally, the participant is asked to complete three journals, reflecting on their interaction with peers or colleagues, the use and consumption of space on campus, and how his experience on the given day may have been affected by his gender. Interviews, conducted via Skype, are expected to last between 1 and 2 hours and will be conducted in a secure, private location. These interviews will be audio recorded, with no identifying information included.

Benefits:
There are no direct benefits to you as a research participant.

Risks and/or Discomforts:
There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Confidentiality:
Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's office on a password protected computer and will only be seen by the investigator during the study. No identifying information for the participant will be included in the audio recording, notes, or final research project. All data will be destroyed after completion of the research project. The participant's Skype username, IP address, and other technological identifying information will not be stored or retained by the researcher.

Compensation:
You will receive a $100 gift card to Amazon for participating in this project that will be delivered upon completion of the final interview.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:
You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may contact the investigator(s) at the phone numbers below. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965 to voice concerns about the research or if you have any questions about your rights as a research participant.

Freedom to Withdraw:
 Participation in this study is voluntary. You can refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or in any other way receive a penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:
You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Participant:

_____

_____
      Signature of Research Participant   Date

Name and Phone number of investigator(s)

Zachary Pace, Principal Investigator   Office: (402) 472-3726
Elizabeth Niehaus, Ph.D., Advisor   Office: (402) 472-4236

Appendix B

Recruitment Email to Faculty

Zac Pace -

Email – Faculty

Project: Intersecting identities: Navigating the relationship between masculine performativity and feminist ideology
IRB: 14691

Dear Drs. Perrine and Younger,

I am currently a graduate student pursuing my MA in Student Affairs at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and am in the process of beginning work on my master's thesis, a qualitative study titled "Intersecting identities: Navigating the relationship between masculine performativity and feminist ideology." I am writing to ask for your help in soliciting prospective participants for my study. As faculty in women's and gender studies, I was wondering if you could pass along an email to any male students who are either majoring or minoring in women's and gender studies, or are actively engaged in a feminist organization on Drake's campus that may be interested in participating in my week-long study. I plan to observe the student for between 20 and 30 hours, over the course of a week, as well as conduct a series of three interviews that will each last between one and two hours. I will be offering a research incentive of a $100 Amazon gift card to the participant selected.

If you have any students who you feel may be interested and meet my research parameters I would greatly appreciate it if you could pass along this opportunity to them.

If you have any questions about my study please do not hesitate to ask.

Best,
--
Zac Pace

Appendix C

Recruitment Email to Participant

Zac Pace -

<center>Email - Participant</center>

Project: Intersecting identities: Navigating the relationship between masculine
performativity and feminist ideology
IRB: 14691

Dear <name>:

My name is Zac Pace and I am currently a graduate student at the University of
Nebraska-Lincoln where I am pursuing my master's degree in Educational
Administration with a specialization in student affairs. I am conducting a study titled
"Intersecting identities: Navigating the relationship between masculine performativity
and feminist ideology" and have asked faculty in the department of Women's and Gender
Studies at Drake to pass along this email to students who may be interested in
participating in my study.

The study is designed around a week-long time frame that includes between 20 and 30
hours of observation, as well as a series of three audio-recorded interviews that will last
between 1 and 2 hours each. In conducting this research I aim to better understand how
male students navigate and make meaning of their gender as it relates to their feminist
identities. The study is a confidential, low-risk research project that I do not foresee
creating any negative implications for you as a participant. In order to participate the
only qualifications are identifying as male, and feminist, as well as being at least 19 years
of age.

If you are interested in participating in this study please email me at
Zachary.pace@unl.edu, and I will provide the informed consent document, as well as any
answers to questions you may have regarding the study.

Best,
--
Zac Pace

Appendix D

Interview Protocol

Zac Pace -

Interview Protocol

Project: Intersecting identities: Navigating the relationship between masculine performativity and feminist ideology IRB: 14691

Interview 1:

To last between one and two hours.

- Demographic questions: o Age: _____ o Preferredpronouns:_____

- Could you offer a definition of the word "man"?

- Could you offer a definition or an interpretation of the term "masculine"?

- Describe your feminist background and how you've gotten to where you are presently with studying women's and gender studies or participating in feminist organizations?

- Describe your first, or an early conversation you had about gender. o How did this conversation make you feel?

- Describe a conversation or experience where you felt your gender impacted how you responded to the conversation? o How did you make meaning of this, both during and after the conversation?

- Describe the level of connection you feel to other men who are interested in   conversations and/or activism that is related to gender? o How did you meet these people?

- Describe the level of connection you feel to women who are actively studying or engaging in gender activism? o How did you meet these people?

- Describe how you feel your gender affects studying or engaging in feminist   conversations? Interview 2: To last between one and two hours.

- Describe an experience where you may have felt our voice was not valuable in a conversation, or where you did not speak up even though you had something you wanted to say.

- Describe how you define or understand the term "privilege"? o From where does this definition or understanding come?

- Describe how, based off of your definition, privilege affects gender.

- Describe an instance where your understanding of privilege was challenged.

- Describe how you define or understand the term "performance", as in "gender performance"? o From where does this definition or understanding come?

- Describe how gender performance affects your understanding of your own gender, relative to your personal interest in gender from an academic lens.

- Describe an instance where your understanding of gender performance was challenged.

- Describe an instance where your gender, or feminist identity, was challenged or questioned.

- Describe how often you consider your gender, when approaching a conversation that is feminist.

- Describe a time where you initiated a conversation about gender with primarily male peers. o How did the conversation go? o How did you feel during and after the conversation? Interview 3: To last between one and two hours.

- Describe how you have felt answering questions about gender as part of this study.

- Describe any areas where you have felt conflicted, or your response was challenging for you to articulate.

- Describe any instances where you felt your gender directly or indirectly affected how you responded to a question.

- Describe any areas where you would like to re-articulate, or clarify a claim you have made.

Appendix E

Journal Document

Journal _____ Date: _____

Please reflect on your interactions today with your peers or colleagues:

In what ways could your gender have potentially affected these interactions?

What spaces and facilities did you find yourself utilizing today? Why were you using them?

Describe how any of these spaces and facilities could be inherently gendered, or limited for accessibility?