Masculinities in Higher Education [Book review of Masculinities in Higher Education]

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Masculinities in Higher Education: Theoretical and Practical Considerations ed. by Jason A. Laker &amp; Tracy Davis (review)

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that mention a specific faith tradition address Christianity; it would be ideal to have more perspectives from other religious worldviews.

In full-disclosure, I came to Lindholm’s book with much interest, having worked on the Spirituality in Higher Education Project as a graduate student on the CSBV (although not the faculty data). However, her book spoke most meaningfully to me from my position as a faculty member juggling multiple roles and identities. Lindholm’s book should be of interest not only to those committed to the study of faculty and spirituality/religiosity, but faculty members who find themselves wondering about finding meaning and purpose in academia, as well as those who seek to better understand the challenges that faculty face.

REFERENCE


Masculinities in Higher Education: Theoretical and Practical Considerations

Jason A. Laker & Tracy Davis (Editors)
New York, NY: Routledge, 2011, 248 pages, $49.95 (softcover)

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In their book, Masculinities in Higher Education: Theoretical and Practical Implications, Laker and Davis aim to illuminate the lived experiences and developmental influences affecting college men. The authors contend that “the explicit examination of women’s, men’s, and trans individuals’ gendered lived experiences and development is critical to dismantling hegemonic gender binaries and associated privilege and oppression” (Laker & Davis, 2011, p. xii). In fact, the authors have created a valuable resource for higher education professionals interested in understanding how the college environment, as well as those inhabiting that environment, affects the lives of young men on a personal and systemic level.

Masculinities in Higher Education: Theoretical and Practical Implications is organized into three sections: (a) Theoretical and Historical Perspectives; (b) Identity Intersections with Masculinities; and (c) Effective Interventions with College Men. This volume provides a comprehensive review of empirical research and effective interventions for professional practice geared towards college men. Intended for administrators and faculty members, graduate students in professional preparation programs may also find the content particularly relevant. I have used this book twice now as required reading for students in a College Men and Masculinities course; the students have found the content to be accessible, informative, and extremely useful in their work with college men. Individuals at all levels of their professional careers in higher education will certainly gain much from the contributions made by authors of this book.

The book begins with a foreword by Jane Fried who insightfully describes the changes within higher education regarding gender over the past 100 years and sets the stage for the importance of understanding college men and their unique developmental needs. In their introduction, Laker and Davis synthesize the contemporary research on college men and outline the aim of their book, where they promise to “provide conceptual challenges to the status-quo (which evidence suggests has not been effective), and theoretically sound educational strategies to successfully promote men’s learning and development” (p. xii).

In chapter 1, Kimmel and Davis explore theoretical constructs around men’s development through the lens of hegemonic masculinity. In their chapter, they expand upon
findings discussed in Kimmel’s (2008) book, *Guyland*, specifically the three cultures of entitlement, silence, and protection that often are found and reinforced within colleges and universities to the detriment of many young men. O’Neil and Crapser discuss the challenges in programming to college men in chapter 2 and interweave O’Neil’s (2008) seminal work on gender role conflict with Chickering and Reisser’s (1993) seven vectors of psychosocial development as a conceptual framework for reaching college men through intentional programming. Harris and Barone offer an important discussion challenging the monolithic concept of “men” and problematize myths about college men and masculinities in chapter 3. This chapter highlights the troublesome consequences of reifying the gender binary and research and practice founded in deficit model approaches.

In chapter 4, Laker highlights developmental strategies and pedagogical tools that can be used to effectively engage college men and avoid “bad dog” interactions, which the author explains as interactions where men are shamed or condemned for their thoughts and/or behaviors.

Chapter 5 begins the section on intersections of identity and masculinities, and is authored by Harper, Wardell, and McGuire. The authors provide an illustrative case study of the influences of one’s multiple social identities on one’s development using the story of Tyson, a biracial, gay male with a dual socioeconomic identity with his single mother’s working class background and his father and stepmother’s middle class experiences. In chapter 6, Berila discusses the intersections of sexual orientation and masculinities, particularly around the performances individuals make around gender and sexuality and the need for supporting such expressions. Reed, in chapter 7, highlights the connections between masculinity and college success for males from a low socioeconomic status. This chapter also includes strategies for college student educators to utilize pertaining to the intersections between class and gender.

In chapter 8, Gerschick provides an insightful discussion of the contemporary experiences of men with disabilities, which includes contemporary statistics on this population and helpful strategies for supporting these men in their educational pursuits.

Davis, LaPrad, and Dixon advocate for the use of critical pedagogies, such as consciousness-raising groups, experiential learning, and service learning, with male-centered groups, such as fraternities or athletic groups in chapter 9. In chapter 10, Berkowitz highlights current research that suggests that college men often feel restricted in terms of their gendered socialization; he encourages the use of this data through a social norms campaign to help college men engage in behaviors that promote health and well-being. Courtenay offers strategies for the implementation of effective services designed to address college men’s health in chapter 11. Providing insights on how the socialization of young men in the United States has created health issues for this population, he offers a six-point plan for higher education professionals to use to help young men engage in healthy behaviors. In chapter 12, Ludeman discusses male gender role socialization and its influence on young men’s misconduct in the college environment. The author advocates for moving away from traditional judicial interventions to specifically designed developmental interventions for college men.

The final chapter (chapter 13), written by Wagner, connects the concepts surrounding liberatory practice and men’s development from a feminist perspective. Wagner’s chapter deftly argues that engaging in men’s development work serves as an act of undermining patriarchy within higher education.

As the complex landscape of today’s colleges and universities continues to evolve,
we must continue to understand all aspects of our students and their development. As Wagner states in her chapter, “we all contribute to the socialization of gender” (p. 221). If we, as higher education professionals, are to acknowledge our own roles in the socialization of our students, we must actively engage with our students, our colleagues, and ourselves in ways that promote understanding and advocacy for equity for our students. Laker and Davis’s *Masculinities in Higher Education* provides an excellent framework to help take an active step in supporting the development and educational success of college men through cutting-edge research that informs professional practice.

**REFERENCES**

