Today's College Students

A READER

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Chapter 9

Today's College Men: Challenges, Issues, and Successes

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Recent years have seen an abundance of media headlines that proclaim (and reinforce, correctly or not) a crisis of masculinity for males in the United States. With titles such as “The End of Men” (Rosin, 2010), “Men’s Lib” (Romano & Dokopil, 2010), and “Is There a Crisis in Education of Males?” (Jaschik, 2008), powerful messages are being sent to readers that males are suffering and not succeeding in society. To be sure, society is changing, and, as a result, the socialization of males is shifting along with it. But is there really a crisis of masculinity, particularly in higher education? The answer is: it depends, and context matters. Certainly, we understand that the aforementioned news articles call attention to men and masculinity, but these headlines reinforce messages that are deeply entrenched in hegemonic masculinity, or those cultural practices, behaviors, and ideologies that maintain dominant power for men, particularly heterosexual men (Donaldson, 1993). Seminal works by gender studies scholars such as Michael Kimmel and Michael Messner, and higher education scholars such as Frank Harris, Shaun Harper, Tracy Davis, and Jason Laker, certainly point to challenges and issues that college males must face. But the real picture is not all doom and gloom, either.

This chapter argues that college men, like many of the other student populations discussed in this book, face particular issues and challenges, but they also have many successes within the college and university environment. The aim of the chapter is to share these issues, challenges, and successes within a framework that explores the intersectionality of gender and other social identities, aligning with Tarrant and Katz (2008), who remind us that “masculinity comes in many forms and packages and these multiple masculinities are informed, limited, and modified by race, ethnicity, class background, sexual orientation, and personal predilections” (p. 10). While much of the historical work on college men has focused on White, heterosexual males, the stories of a variety of men—including men of color, gay, bisexual, fluid, queer, and transgender—are integrated into
the chapter. Understanding the breadth of what it means to be a college man in today's society (an overwhelming and difficult task) is a key consideration in illuminating the developmental experiences of this student population.

Framing the Terminology of Male and Man
While this chapter explores the issues, challenges, and successes of college men, it is important to comment at the outset on the specific terms employed herein. Throughout this chapter, specific use of the terms male/males and man/men is maintained. For the purposes of this work, male is meant as a descriptor of one's biological sex; man describes one's gender identity; and masculine and/or feminine is connected to one's gender role (Lev, 2004). Kimmel and Messner (2010) further situate this distinction in the framework of social construction: “the important fact of men’s lives is not that they are biological males, but that they become men. Our sex may be male, but our identity as men is developed through a complex process of interaction with the culture...” (p. xvii). Additionally, Connell (2005) explains that gender “is social practice that constantly refers to bodies and what bodies do, it is not social practice reduced to the body” (p. 71). Evans, Forney, Guido, Patron, and Renn (2009) agree and further clarify that “sex and gender are thus very closely related, but they are not synonymous, and an individual’s gender cannot be assumed in all cases to match what is expected based on his or her sex” (p. 329). Much of the literature on college men has largely been work on college males, meaning that scholars (see Kimmel, 2008; Rhoads, 2010) have often used male and man interchangeably or used the term men as an aggregate term without fully addressing the complexity of gender identity and expression that is represented by that term. For example, the use of men would suggest that transgender men or gay, bisexual, or queer men would be included in the discussion of that work; however, scholars often inadequately explore the experiences of these men and instead focus on the experiences of cisgender, heterosexual males (Harris, 2008; Tlapaugh & Nicolazzo, 2013).

Historical Implications for College Men
Colleges and universities in the United States have historically been environments designed to serve males in their ongoing education and career vocation. In their research, Harper and Harris (2010a) cite the work of Frederick Rudolph, who documented that it took 205 years (from the establishment of what is now Harvard University in 1636, to 1841, when Oberlin College graduated its first female student) for women to gain a foothold in higher education. Colleges and universities were developed to benefit males and male privilege through ideology, pedagogy, norms, and expectations (Harper & Harris, 2010a). While women were able to access higher education in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries through women's colleges, these access issues highlight a significant disparity that reinforced a privileging of males through hegemonic ideals and gender norms (Harper & Harris, 2010a). Understanding the history of men in relation to institutions of higher education is critical to contextualizing the issues college men face today.

Who Are Today's College Men?

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, there were 151,781,326 males in the United States, or 49.2% of the total population (Howden & Meyer, 2011). Of this total, males from the ages of...
15 to 24 number 12,405,142, or a little over 8% of the male population of the United States (Howden & Meyer, 2011). This is important to consider, given the emphasis on individuals within this age range who attend colleges and universities in the United States. In fact, the U.S. Department of Education's National Center for Education Statistics (2012b) indicated that "Between 2000 and 2010, the number of 18- to 24-year-olds increased from 27.3 million to 30.7 million, an increase of 12 percent" (para. 4). In addition, the percentage of males attending college immediately after high school increased from 53% in 1975 to 63% in 2010 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012a). Furthermore, 29% of these males attend 2-year colleges (i.e., community colleges), while 34% go directly to 4-year institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012a). The National Center for Education Statistics (2012c) reports that in 2010, 7,825,200 males of all ages were enrolled in undergraduate colleges and universities in the United States.

**Gender Gap in College**

While progress has been made over the past century in terms of women attending (as well as working in) institutions of higher education, it is important to recognize that concerns linger about the lack of gender equality on college and university campuses (Harper & Harris, 2010a). In his work, Kimmel (2006) illuminates a growing concern among educators that fewer men are attending college, with women outperforming men in terms of attendance and completion of degrees. Many college and university administrators have concerns about the declining enrollment of men within institutions and the push to provide services and outreach to that population (Kimmel, 2008). However, Kimmel also clarifies this issue, citing Cynthia Fuchs Epstein's concept of "deceptive distinction," in which differences may appear to be based on gender but, in fact, are about socioeconomic status and race or ethnicity. Indeed, Kimmel (2006) highlights the fact that racial disparity exists among college students. "Among middle-class, white, high school graduates going to college this year, half are male and half are female. But only 37 percent of black college students and 45 percent of Hispanic students are male." (Kimmel, 2006, p. 67). In adding dimensions of social class to this discussion, Reed (2011) argues that popular reports about the declining enrollment of men in colleges and universities are misleading. Instead, he finds that "SES [socio-economic status] in combination with gender appears to have the most significant influence on male student postsecondary success" (Reed, 2011, p. 116). This deeper look at the data highlights a growing concern when it comes to issues of the intersection of race, class, and gender. These intersections also provide important implications for one's identity development in college.

**Identity Development of College Men**

Historically, the foundational research relating to human development, particularly college student development theories, has used males as the sample population (see Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erikson, 1980; Kohlberg, 1976; Perry, 1970). As college and university student bodies became more diversified during the mid to late 20th century, developmental theorists began to explore dimensions of identities that were underrepresented, including—but not limited to—the experiences of people of color, women, and LGBT individuals (Evans et al., 2009). Since early studies used males as their sample population, there was a widely held assumption that these works explained the experiences of males (Davis & Laker, 2004; Harper
& Harris, 2010a, 2010b). However, this assumption was troubling, as these theories were never viewed through the lens of gender (Davis & Laker, 2004). In the past decade, scholars have been particularly interested in understanding the complex question of how young men develop within the context of higher education institutions. This section includes an overview of hegemonic masculinity, a key concept that informs much of the scholarship on college men, as well as contemporary research on the identity development of college men.

**Hegemonic Masculinity**

The notion of hegemonic masculinity plays a central role in the socialization of young men in college. Kimmel and Davis (2011) define hegemony as “the process of influence where we learn to earnestly embrace a system of beliefs and practices that essentially harm us, while working to uphold the interests of others who have power over us” (p. 9). Through a lens of gender, specifically masculinity, hegemonic masculinity can be viewed as the reification of traditional masculine norms that damage and hurt those who uphold those notions (Kimmel & Davis, 2011). Young men, particularly those within the college environment, are influenced and affected by hegemonic masculinity every day. Through media, peers, families, and educational institutions themselves, college men (and their peers) engage in a system that perpetuates the enforcement of gender norms and expectations (Kimmel, 2008; Kimmel & Davis, 2011).

Much of the literature on college men describes negative interpersonal behaviors, with an emphasis on alcohol abuse (Capraro, 2010; Harper, Harris, & Mmeje, 2010; Harris, 2008; Harris & Struve, 2009), disciplinary actions (Harper et al., 2010), hazing behaviors (Allan & Madden, 2008; Kimmel, 2008), perpetrating sexual assaults (Harris, 2008; Stulhofer, Busko, & Landripet, 2010), online addictions, including online gambling (Kimmel, 2008), and pornography (Stulhofer et al., 2010). Often, these negative behaviors and/or experiences connect to O’Neill’s (1981) concept of gender role conflict, or “a psychological state in which gender roles have negative consequences or impact on the person or others” (p. 203). Gender role conflict is a byproduct of men’s fear of femininity (O’Neil, 1981), which emerges in four distinct patterns: (1) success, power, and competition; (2) restrictive emotionality; (3) restrictive associative behavior between men; and (4) conflict between work and family relations (O’Neill, Helm, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 2010). Kimmel (2008) expands on O’Neill’s work, positing that college men navigate gendered rules and expectations—in what is known as “The Guy Code”—but do so in contentious ways. Kimmel highlights the tensions these men feel in struggling “to live up to a definition of masculinity they feel they had no part in creating, and yet from which they feel powerless to escape” (p. 43). As a result, the failure these men experience in terms of measuring up to notions of hegemonic masculinity creates a culture of risk taking, restrictive posturing behaviors, and feelings of being inauthentic or fraudulent (Kimmel, 2008; O’Neil et al., 2010). Kimmel’s notion of “The Guy Code” is interconnected with Butler’s (1993) notion of gender performance, or the repeated (and often unexamined) self-expression of one’s gender. These experiences of gender performativity play a central role in the growth and development of young men attending colleges and universities. The lessons learned from gender studies scholars such as Kimmel and O’Neil have also informed the thinking of higher education scholars who have investigated the development of college men. The next section provides an overview of these scholars’ investigations of young men’s experiences while attending colleges and universities in the United States.
**Davis's Exploration of Gender Role Conflict on College Males**

In 2002, Tracy Davis provided significant insights into the experiences of college males by building upon O'Neil's work on gender role conflict. By situating the phenomenon of gender role conflict within the confines of higher education, Davis explored the critical question of "how college men are coping with culturally defined notions of what it means to be a man" (Davis, 2002, p. 510). For his phenomenological study, Davis used 10 participants ages 18 to 21 who were all White, heterosexual, cisgender males serving in an active leadership role on campus (Davis, 2002). Five central themes emerged from Davis's study: "the importance of self-expression, code of communication caveats, fear of femininity, confusion about and distancing from masculinity, and a sense of challenge without support" (p. 514).

Elaborating on these central themes, Davis highlights how his participants discussed a growing appreciation for self-expression, something that these college males had only begun to practice in college (Davis, 2002). However, this form of self-expression had certain limitations that were often connected to others' perceptions of them and their own safety (Davis, 2002). Communication styles of these young males upheld certain gendered notions as well. The participants outlined the need for greater masculine performance such as the use of humor or put-downs in face-to-face conversations, while patterns of greater emotional vulnerability, particularly with other men, emerged in side-to-side conversations (Davis, 2002). Participants often struggled with a fear of being perceived as feminine, which is interconnected with homophobia; as a result, the males often restricted their behaviors in terms of communication patterns, apparel worn, or even the use of cologne (Davis, 2002). Finally, the males expressed a feeling of being left out on campus in terms of programs, services, and opportunities offered specifically to women. Many men perceived that faculty and administrators worked more proactively to support female students. Male students were challenged but given very little support in and out of the classroom (Davis, 2002).

Davis's work initiated an important dialogue concerning the development of young males in college. It is critical to understand that Davis's work inspired a new generation of scholars who study the complexities of one's gender in college. At the same time, a key critique of Davis's work was the absence of understanding how race and other dimensions of identity played a role in college men's development. This gap in the literature served as an impetus for emerging scholars such as Frank Harris and Keith Edwards to begin to explore how these dimensions of identity played a further role in young men's lives.

**Harris's Model of College Men's Conceptualizations of Masculinities**

Frank Harris III's (2008) study was conducted in an effort to understand how young men in college made meaning of masculinities and how the college environment influenced that process. His original study was conducted in two distinct phases with a total of 68 participants attending a large, private university on the West Coast (Harris, 2008; Harris & Edwards, 2010). These participants represented an array of racial, social class, and sexual orientation identities as well as different experiences related to student engagement on campus (Harris, 2008).

From Harris's grounded theory study, three main variables emerged as key factors in his (2010) model. The first variable dealt with how college men made meaning of masculinity and how their attitudes and behaviors met those ideas about masculinity (Harris, 2010). For the men in this study, masculinity was often equated with issues of being respected by others, having self-confidence, taking on responsibility, and maintaining physical prowess, including
one's fitness and sexual behavior (Harris, 2010). The second variable was contextual influences within the campus environment that continued to reinforce and challenge one's meanings of masculinity. These included the influence of one's family, interactions with one's on-campus peers, and participation in masculine-affirming organizations and/or activities (Harris, 2010). Finally, gender norms and expectations that are a result of both meanings of masculinity within the context of the collegiate environment was the final variable (Harris, 2010). Activities identified by the men as those in which they participated with other men included "binge drinking, playing video games, watching and discussing sports, and sharing the details of sexual relationships" (Harris & Edwards, 2010, p. 48). This mirrors Kimmel's (2008) findings on the behaviors exhibited by college men, as well as much of the literature on the impact of fraternity life (Anderson, 2008; Rhoads, 2010) and athletics (Anderson, 2002, 2008) on college men. Harris's findings also connect with those of Keith Edwards, who similarly investigated the identity development of men in college.

**Edwards's Model of College Male Identity Development**

Keith Edwards's study involved 10 men, including one trans- man, all attending a large, public, 4-year university in the Middle Atlantic and represented a wide array of backgrounds and interests, including social identities—race, class, and sexual orientation—and campus involvement, such as involvement in athletics, fraternity life, residential life employees, and campus organization officers (Edwards & Jones, 2009; Harris & Edwards, 2010). Participants in this study were interviewed three times "to explore what it meant for them to be a man, how their understandings of what being a man meant changed over time, and the influences that prompted these changes" (Harris & Edwards, 2010, p. 46).

The metaphor of a mask being worn is the central organizing theme within Edwards's study (Edwards & Jones, 2009). The men described being socialized from an early age about the gender norms and expectations that were expected of them, and, consequently, they indicated a great deal of pressure to conform to those expectations by both individuals in their lives as well as institutions (Edwards & Jones, 2009; Harris & Edwards, 2010). As a result, the men indicated that they felt as though they wore different masks based upon the contexts in which they operated (Edwards & Jones, 2009). This concept of the mask was used to describe the tensions they felt when they experienced male gender role conflict in relation to the expectations of others around them (Edwards & Jones, 2009). This mask metaphor can be seen as a key ideology surrounding the performativity of gender, where men are actively attempting to perform masculinity to varying levels of success.

The subjects in Edwards's study characterized their expectations as men in college to be that of the underperforming and unprepared man, with specific behaviors including competitive heterosexual sex, alcohol and drug use and potential abuse, being unprepared for academic classes and exams, and not following policies and procedures outlined by the campus administration (Edwards & Jones, 2009; Harris & Edwards, 2010). Certainly, Edwards's findings correlate with Kimmel's (2008) discussions of college men and the aforementioned "Guy Code." Three overarching categories emerged from the study as consequences of the performance of masculinity: "misogynistic relationships and attitudes toward women, limited relationships with other men, and a loss of self" (Harris & Edwards, 2010, p. 47). Both Harris's and Edwards's studies helped advance our understanding of how young men in college develop. In addition, their work has encouraged other scholars to continue investigating the complexities
of college men, particularly through an intersectional lens of gender and other social group memberships that include race, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation.

**Intersectional Approaches to Male Identity Development**

While the scholarship of Frank Harris and Keith Edwards continues to provide vital information on the experiences of college men, other scholars continue to investigate issues pertaining to the intersection of gender and other social identities. This research is meant to fill a gap identified by Harris (2008), who acknowledges that “oftentimes the experiences of men of color and nonheterosexual men are not disaggregated from the larger, predominantly White, male college student population” (p. 454). Scholarship on the intersections of masculinities and social class (Reed, 2011), masculinities and race (Harper, 2005), and masculinities and sexual orientation (Tillapaugh, 2012) has continued to provide helpful insights into the development of men in college.

Shaun Harper’s (2005) work with high-achieving African American males reframed the existing literature on that particular student population. Citing the fact that high-achieving African American college males are rarely discussed in the literature on college men, Harper (2005) states that typically the narratives on such a man include:

> the reasons why he is underrepresented in postsecondary education, the academic difficulty he often encounters, the racism and stereotyping that cause him grief and frustration, his incompatibility with predominantly white learning environments, the shortage of same-race faculty and staff on whom he can rely for mentoring and support, and the reasons why he is retained least often among both sexes and all racial and ethnic groups in higher education. (p. 9)

For the participants in Harper’s study, involvement in student leadership positions that provide an opportunity to bring positive social change to their campuses, particularly for other students of color, became an important part of their experiences in college. Through these positions, students were able to debunk previously held assumptions of peers, faculty, and administrators about African American men (Harper, 2005). The examples of these young African American males highlight the ways in which college men act as positive role models for others on campus and provide a counter-narrative to the usual tropes attributed to African American men on campus (Harper, 2005).

Like Harper’s work, Brian D. Reed’s (2011) research on the intersections of socioeconomic and work identity with masculinity and college success opened up a new discussion among scholars interested in issues pertaining to college men. In Reed’s (2011) review of the existing literature on socioeconomic status (SES) and masculinity, he found that males from low SES backgrounds were less likely to enroll and graduate from colleges and universities as compared to their high-SES male and low-SES female peers. “In addition, men overall are participating in fewer educationally purposeful activities associated with persistence-to-graduation and increasing their time spent on activities that actually impede their chances of success” (Reed, 2011, p. 116). Reed (2011) identified four common themes in the existing literature on the intersections of race, class, and gender on the educational journeys of low-SES males: “school as a site of lowered expectations, overtly policed behavior, curriculum tracking, and persistent disengagement” (p. 119). Young college males from low-SES backgrounds experience lower perceptions of academic success by instructors, and they are often tracked into remedial courses or programs that reinforce notions that they are unequipped to succeed academically (Reed,
2011). Additionally, parental support (or the lack thereof) also plays a central role in the academic success of these young males, particularly within postsecondary systems (Reed, 2011). Through his work, Reed provides a helpful reminder that "all men do not exact the same degree of power and privilege from patriarchy and sexism" (p. 126). This disparity between power and privilege plays out for males from low-SES backgrounds but can also connect to larger issues of racial identity or sexual orientation.

As a result of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy, non-heterosexual males often experience marginalization in terms of their masculinity (Kimmel, 2008). Tillapaugh's (2012) work investigated how gay males in college made meaning of their multiple identities, particularly the connections between their maleness and sexual orientation. The 17 males, representing a variety of races, social classes, and religions, discussed their lived experiences as gay males in college and the critical influences that either helped or hindered the meaning-making of their multiple identities. In his work, Tillapaugh outlined that these men experienced conflicting messages about masculinity. While they often rejected notions of hegemonic masculinity, they still desired to be seen as masculine by others. Those gay males who identified as "less masculine" often experienced greater issues of bullying, hostility, and alienation from other men, including their gay male peers (Tillapaugh, 2012). Participation in gay-affirming spaces such as LGBT student organizations, academic courses on gender and/or sexuality, and support networks of LGBT-identified friends provided young gay males with the opportunity to learn about their identities, make meaning of socialized messages regarding their gay male identities, and examine systems of power, privilege, and difference (Tillapaugh, 2012). For the males in the study, Tillapaugh found that the development of one's gay male identities was also deeply connected to other social and personal identities. For example, young gay males in this study who were from high-SES backgrounds often had parents who were affiliated with more conservative religious institutions and political ideologies. These young men were also more likely to have experienced mental health issues, including depression, cutting behaviors, and suicidal ideation and/or attempts, than their peers in the study because of compartmentalization of their gay identity (Tillapaugh, 2012).

Findings from studies such as these have significant implications for working with and supporting young men and their development. In addition, new research is forthcoming from other scholars, such as Chase Catalano's work on transgender men and Rachel Wagner's work on White straight men engaged in social justice work, which discusses the challenges and successes facing young men in college and promises to open new dialogues among professionals in higher education. Understanding the developmental implications for college men is essential, but the next section explores some of the environmental realities for college men today. Included in this discussion are the issues, challenges, and successes college men are experiencing today through student engagement, issues of health and well-being, and programmatic intervention.

Environmental Realities for College Men

Sociologist and gender studies scholar Michael Kimmel's book *Guyland* explores the experiences of males from the ages of 18 to 26, particularly those attending college (Kimmel, 2008). In his work, Kimmel (2008) illuminates how the college environment serves as a gendered arena for the socialization of young people. He explains that college
becomes the arena in which young men so relentlessly seem to act out, seem to take the greatest risks, and do some of the stupidest things. Directionless and often clueless, they rely increasingly on their peers to usher them into adulthood and validate their masculinity. And their peers often have some interesting plans for what they will have to endure to prove that they are real men. (p. 43)

These plans include the abuse of alcohol and drugs, experiences of hazing, competitive sexual behavior, and upholding gender norms that are steeped in homophobia and hegemonic masculinity (Kimmel, 2008).

Health and Well-Being of College Men
There is very little question that college men are more susceptible to issues of risky behaviors, which play a role in their health and well-being (Capraro, 2010; Courtenay, 2010; Davies, Shen-Miller, & Isacco, 2010; Iwamoto, Corbin, Lejuez, & MacPherson, 2013). In fact, college men often participate in these risky behaviors, such as binge drinking (Kimmel, 2008; Wechsler & Wuehrich, 2002), competitive sexual behavior (Harris, 2008), or hazing activities (Allan & Madden, 2008), in order to prove their masculinity and acquire power and authority from their peers (Courtenay, 2010). In their research, Iwamoto and colleagues (2013) found that college men who “exhibit the norms of desiring many sexual partners at the same time (playboy), enjoying risk-taking activities regardless of potential consequences (risk taking), and focusing on the importance of winning are at heightened risk for heavy drinking” (p. 8). For the men who uphold these gender norms and performances, there is greater concern for their alcohol consumption and personal well-being (Harris, 2008; Iwamoto et al., 2013; Kimmel, 2008). At the same time, some scholars (Courtenay, 2010; Iwamoto, Cheng, Lee, Takeamatsu, & Gordon, 2011) argue that some gendered norms surrounding masculinity “such as self-reliance or emotional control may protect against problematic drinking patterns because they are consistent with self-control and potentially regulate alcohol intake” (Iwamoto et al., 2011, p. 907).

Proving one’s dominance and power over others, particularly other men, plays out among college men in different ways. For instance, Kimmel (2008) discusses the culture of initiation in colleges and universities where men must prove their masculinity in different contexts. Behaviors that could be considered hazing are just one example of the challenges that college men might face (Kimmel, 2008). In their nationwide study on college hazing, Allan and Madden (2008) found that 61% of male respondents had experienced a hazing incident within their organization or team. Examples of these hazing incidents include, but are not limited to, “alcohol consumption, humiliation, isolation, sleep-deprivation, and sex acts” (Allan & Madden, 2008, p. 5). For students involved in fraternities and sororities, 7 out of 10 reported experiencing acts of hazing (Allan & Madden, 2008, 2012). In terms of alcohol consumption, students reported mandatory participation in drinking games as the hazing behavior most often experienced. However, students involved in culturally based fraternities reported alcohol-related hazing experiences at a much lower rate than their peers (Allan & Madden, 2012).

Risky sexual behavior is another important phenomenon playing out among college men. In their work, LaBrie, Earleywine, Schiffman, Pedersen, and Marriot (2010) found a correlation among alcohol consumption, condom use, and one’s familiarity with a sexual partner. “While 72% of casual partner sex events where no drinking occurred involved condom use, only 56% of similar events after drinking involved condom use” (LaBrie et al., 2010, p. 365).
As a result, there is a greater risk in the transmission of infection (LaBrie et al., 2010). This agrees with the findings of Tillapaugh’s (2012) study of gay males in terms of their sexual experimentation with casual partners and experiences of unsafe sexual behavior fueled by alcohol and/or drug use. In addition, scholars have discussed college men’s competitive sexual behavior, particularly in connection with “locker room” talk (Harris, 2008; Kimmel, 2008). Kimmel (2008) notes that for many college men, “The actual experience of sex pales in comparison to the experience of talking about sex” (p. 206). For many college males, one’s report of sexual conquests and exploits serves as a means of gaining prestige, yet it is often just bluster and bravado (Kimmel, 2008).

Programming for College Men’s Success & Development
There have been an increasing number of programs, initiatives, and services designed to meet the needs of college men and help them begin to explore the concept of masculinity and its influence on their lives as men. These have largely served as an opportunity for participants to be critically self-reflective in community with others around issues of gender, societal expectations of males, and how they might proactively step outside of these norms to their own benefit and that of others. For example, the Male Athletes Against Violence (MAAV) at the University of Maine is a peer education program with representatives from all men’s athletic teams. They discuss issues relating to masculinity and social justice and serve as advocates for sexual assault prevention and violence against women (MAAV, n.d.).

In addition, the Masculinity Dialogues at the University of St. Thomas (Klobassa, 2009) and the Masculinity Awareness Gained through Introspection and Solidarity (MAGIS) program at Loyola University Maryland (Paquette, 2009) were two initiatives that were grounded in dialogues between college males and both professional staff and peer facilitators that worked to interrogate hegemonic masculinity and its influence on one’s behaviors, perceptions, and interactions. Likewise, the Men’s Group established through the University of California, San Diego’s LGBT Resource Center is a peer-facilitated weekly discussion group among male-identified members of the campus’s LGBT community. This group explores the intersections between sexuality and gender within the context of the UCSD community and beyond (Men’s Group, n.d.). These dialogue spaces become an important place for young males to explore their larger sense of self and discuss with others the role that gender and masculinities play in their lives (Men’s Group, n.d.). The four programs described here are just a few of the increasing number of initiatives, programs, and services designed specifically to help young men in their development within the college environment. As higher education professionals continue to educate themselves about the issues, challenges, and successes of college men, it is hoped that programs such as these can be adapted and implemented on campuses across the country in the name of helping young men work toward healthy masculinities.

Concluding Thoughts
Given the ever-changing dynamics of higher education, it is difficult to adequately summarize the issues, challenges, and successes of college men. It is clear that men attending colleges and universities in the United States arrive at those institutions with years of socialization about what it means to be a man, and they often feel a need to prove themselves to their peers. The college environment itself plays a major role in perpetuating those gender role expectations
for them, creating “Guyland,” a space where men are initiated into a culture of entitlement, silence, and protection to uphold and reproduce the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Kimmel, 2008; Kimmel & Davis, 2011). At the same time, it must be acknowledged that there are college men who proactively reject those notions of hegemonic masculinity and tap into healthy masculinities. Many men are becoming engaged as allies in developmental work such as sexual assault prevention, bystander intervention training, or taking active roles in social justice education on their campus.

While the media continue to spin the myth that there is a crisis of masculinity in our society, we need to be critical consumers of those headlines. Are college men facing issues and obstacles on their journeys through higher education? Yes, of course. Each of the student populations discussed in this book faces unique challenges because of the dynamic systems of power, privilege, and oppression of which they (and we) are a part. College men are included in this as well. Higher education professionals must continue disaggregating men as one singular monolithic identity. Instead, it must be understood that one’s maleness or one’s masculinity is just one part of one’s larger holistic identity. By understanding the complex interconnectedness of one’s holistic self, student affairs professionals are then able to gain a better understanding of the unique issues, challenges, and successes of our students, including today’s college men.

References


