GRASSROOTS OF THE MEN’S MOVEMENT:
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY OF AN INDEPENDENT MEN’S GROUP

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GRASSROOTS OF THE MEN'S MOVEMENT:
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Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an ethnographic case study of an independent men’s group in a small mid-western city which claims no affiliation with any organized faction of the men’s movement. It is groups such as this that I contend make up the grass-roots of the men’s movement. The intent of my research was to understand why White, middle-aged, middle-class, heterosexual men (or middlers) seek the homosocial support of a men’s group.

I approach this question in two ways. First, I describe what benefits the men hope to gain through their participation in the group. Secondly, I explain how the setting of the men’s group provides these benefits. I also examine whether, and in what ways these men are resisting or reinforcing the patriarchal structure that affords them the privileged status they enjoy as a result of their ascribed status characteristics.

Data for this study includes field notes from fifteen months of participant observation in conjunction with face-to-face interviews with the eight men who comprise the “core” group members. Analysis of the data reveals that these men seek a time and place in which to periodically relieve themselves of the burdens of the self-presentation that accompanies hegemonic masculinity. The men’s group provides a place where the men feel emotionally safe in presenting what they consider to be their “true selves” by normalizing activities such as self-disclosure.
and emotional expression, and through strict adherence to mutual promises of
confidentiality.

The increased intimacy that results from these practices creates a sense of
gendered community that minimizes gender role conflict and dissonance in
gendered social identity while increasing social self esteem through mutual support
of men’s personal masculinity. In short, group participation helps men feel good
about being men and perhaps remedies (in part) the isolation men feel in the larger
world. However, the men’s apparent inability to feel safe engaging in these practices
outside of the group constitutes a non-challenge to either the patriarchal structure
or to hegemonic masculinity on a personal level.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For a man who worked as a remodeling contractor and house painter for over 20 years of his life, a college education was a pipe dream, and a graduate degree nothing but fantasy. In entering the final stages of completing my thesis, I find myself feeling as though I have accomplished the impossible, and yet lack the full realization that a graduate degree has become a reality for me. Although these contradictory feelings leave me uncustomarily speechless, it is my hope that the following expressions will be read and understood with the depth and breadth of emotion with which they are written.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Since the mid 1980’s there has been an increased interest in the study of the social construction of masculinity (Brod, 1987; Connell, 1987, 1995; Kimmel and Mosmiller, 1992; Kimmel, 1996; Messner and Sabo, 1990 Messner, 1997). Much of this research, inspiring popular cultural reflections within the media, has posited that there is a “crisis of masculinity” in western industrialized nations (Kimmel, 1996; Messner, 1997a; Haenfler, 2004). Although much of this work has centered on the perception of boys’ underachievement in the field of education (Epstein et al, 1998; Renold, 2004), there is ample evidence that adult men are also struggling to find the meaning of manhood in a post-industrialized, pro-feminist world. For example Gordon Brown, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer, recently referred to men over 50 years old as the “lost generation” (McDowell, 2000).

One of the most compelling pieces of evidence of this crisis of masculinity among adult men is the sheer numbers of individuals involved in men’s movements and organizations of one form or another. Over one million Christian men have attended Promise Keeper events in stadiums across the country (Haenfler, 2004) and the Mankind Project, associated with the Mytho-Poetic men’s movement, boasts
having 23 organizational centers in the United States, Canada, and England with more than 10,000 men having completed their New Warrior Adventure Training Weekend (the Mankind Project web page, 2001; Fox, 2004). For the purposes of this paper, “men's movement” will be used as an umbrella term to describe a number of groups including, but not limited to The Promise Keepers, The Mytho-Poetic Men’s Movement, men’s rights activists, and pro-feminist groups such as The National Organization for Men Against Sexism (NOMAS).

All of these groups contend that definitions of masculinity require change, even if they disagree with the types of change needed and the best methods for achieving that change. Interestingly, regardless of the particular philosophical bent or political rhetoric of the group, they are each overwhelmingly comprised of white, heterosexual, middle-aged, middle-class men. I will hereafter adopt the term “middlers” from Donald Levy to describe this population who most closely resembles Goffman’s “unblushing male” (Goffman, 1963; Levy, 2005).

Middlers are sociologically considered to be among the most privileged members of society. These men, simply by virtue of their race, class, age, able-bodiness, marital status, and personal history are defined as normative (Levy, 2005). In fact, these status characteristics are necessary resources for the achievement of hegemonic masculinity, which is described as the currently most honored form of being a man (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). As those who represent the cultural ideal to which all others should aspire, these men are afforded many opportunities in areas such as education, employment, and business
which may not be as easily obtained for individuals with fewer, or even none of
these characteristics.

“We are all implicated in systems of race, gender, class, and sexuality – these
identities shape all of our lives and our life chances, independent of our intentions
(Ferber, 2000). Those who experience the least amount of oppression are
considered to be among the most privileged, as this is the nature of these
relationships of oppression (Ferber, 2000). This is true regardless of whether we
are consciously aware of our position within these systems.

In this study, I investigate the sociological phenomenon in which these
privileged members of society are gathering in small groups across the country to
seek and offer homosocial support. Specifically I seek to explain why middlers seek
the support of a men's group given the abundance of opportunities available to them
by virtue of their ascribed social status characteristics and their apparent lack of
oppressive experiences. In order to gain a better understanding to the answer of
why middlers are attending men’s groups, I approach this question in two ways.
First, what are the benefits that men hope to gain through their participation in the
group? Secondly, how does the setting of the men’s group provide these benefits? I
also hope to discover whether, and in what ways these men are resisting or
reinforcing the patriarchal structure that affords them their privilege.

There has been very little ethnographic research that seeks to explain men's
understanding of masculinities at the micro level (Haenfler, 2004). The current
study attempts to fill this gap in the literature through an ethnographic case study of
a small, independent men's group in a small mid-western city, which claims no
affiliation with any aspect or faction of the men's movement. I contend that groups such as these make up the core components, or what I have termed the grass roots, of the men's movement, despite their lack of affiliation with larger men’s movement organizations.

I have had the privilege of observing this group for fifteen months beginning with its conception and first meeting. Analysis of field notes from participant observation and open-ended interviews conducted with individual group members have provided detailed accounts of group activities and the personal experiences of the participants. These accounts reveal a process involving self disclosure, mutual support, intimate friendship, and a gendered sense of community that validates each man's personal enactment of masculinity. It is only through the deep level of participation I’ve experienced with this group that I was able to gain a clear picture of the group dynamics and the reasons for participation. By being accepted as a group member and included in the emotionally safe space of the group’s meetings I was privy to activities and discussions not shared with non-members.

The Case Study

The definition of case study research is somewhat ambiguous. In fact, despite widespread use of this methodology, consensus on the proper definition of a case, or of a case study, has not yet been developed (Ragin & Becker, 1992; Gerring, 2007; Levy, 2008). However there does seem to be some agreement as to specific characteristics of case studies and the definition of a case that help to distinguish it from other qualitative techniques. For example, the case study “attempts to examine
a contemporary phenomenon in its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 1981, p. 59). The boundaries of the case are spatial as well as temporal, as the case is examined either at a particular point in time or over some delineated period of time (Gerring, 2004).

In the case of the small, independent men’s group that is the focus of this research, commonly held values such as confidentiality, in conjunction with fluctuating membership, clouds the spatial boundaries, making it difficult to even define a men’s group. This makes the ethnographic case study an extremely suitable design for the current research, despite the ambiguity inherent in this enterprise (Gerring, 2004). In fact, “it is the very fuzziness of case studies that grant them a strong advantage in research at the exploratory stages” (Gerring, 2004, p. 350).

To better understand the concept of a case, I refer to Gerring’s (2004) comparison of qualitative data to the rectangular data set familiarly presented in computer software programs such as SPSS or SAS. This useful analogy describes qualitative variables as columns, observations as cells, cases as rows, and units as either individual cases or a group of cases, depending on the analysis and research design. The boundaries of a particular case, as well as the unit, are defined by the research question proposed. As the current study attempts to discover why men feel the need for the support of a men’s group, each group member constitutes a case because individual reasons for participation may vary.

As a qualitative research methodology, the case study can, in some ways, resemble the grounded theory approach first described by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The defining components of a grounded theory approach that are
incorporated into this case study include the simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis, making comparisons during each stage of analysis, and constructing analytic codes and categories as they emerge from the data, (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987; Charmaz, 2006).

However, there are also differences between the case study method and a grounded theory approach. What seems to be the most commonly agreed upon difference is the use of a conceptual framework developed prior to data analysis. In fact, this is another defining feature of the case study (Yin, 1981). A conceptual framework allows analysis to occur with a sensitization to theory, and begins with “the assumption that the researcher never begins with a clean slate” (Ragin and Becker, 1992, p. 182). Even when we believe ourselves to be theoretically unfettered, our perceptions and ideas concerning the research project are influenced by our previous readings of scholarly literature, personal experience, and conversations with peers and mentors (Ragin and Becker, 1992).

As researchers, we also have a tendency to develop a “theoretical fix” once in touch with our data. By articulating the theoretical notions guiding our research at the outset, we are able to improve our ability to elaborate theory (Ragin and Becker, 1992). In his defense of the one-shot case study, Campbell (1975) asserts that by having a clear conceptual framework, the search for an explanation becomes a pattern matching process that can be applied even if there is only a single case because the pattern must fit implications derived from theory (Yin, 1981).

This practice also allows for the development of a priori codes developed from theory in addition to the use of emergent codes as promoted in grounded
theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987; Charmaz, 2006). Thus, the case study can be used as a method of theory elaboration as well as theory generation, allowing for verification and discovery to occur simultaneously. This differs from Glaser and Strauss’s position that discovery carries with it a tendency to force the data to fit the model being verified (Ragin and Becker, 1992).

Although case study research has been useful in theory generation, its best use seems to be in “adding to existing experience and human understanding” (Stake, 1978, p. 7). Intentionality and empathy are essential to understanding social problems. However, information that is holistic and episodic is also useful for this purpose. The discourse of researchers who are attempting to increase their understanding of social issues “… features and solicits these qualities. And these qualities match nicely the characteristics of the case study” (Stake, 1978, p. 7).

The conceptual framework used for the current research project consists of theory from the masculinities literature, gendered social identity, and intimacy in male to male friendship as well as the literature surrounding the men’s movement and men’s groups. Although broad and general in nature, this framework adheres to the advice given by Yin (1981) that researchers should allow for flexibility in the construction of the conceptual framework, so that topics, questions, and ideas about why middlers seek the support of men’s groups can be modified as needed with the collection and analysis of data. In fact, many researchers who have conducted intensive case studies report that their initial views, assumptions, and hypotheses required revision as the study progressed (Campbell, 1975; Ragin 1992; Geertz 1995; Wievioka, 1992; Flyvbjerg, 1998, 2001, 2006). I now turn to a review of the
literature that informs my research and in which the current study is grounded. This is not meant to act as a literature review that lays out an argument in support of a hypothesis. Rather, it is a description of the theories and literature to which I am sensitive during the research process as I simultaneously remain open to what the data reveals.
Masculinities

The concept of multiple masculinities found its beginnings in an article entitled “Towards a New Sociology of Masculinity” (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee, 1985) and grew directly out of homosexual men’s experiences of violence by heterosexual men. The article was critical of the “male sex role” literature popular at the time and eventually evolved into a sociological theory of gender that proposed a model of power relations and multiple masculinities (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell’s contribution of “hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity” became critical to the development of the masculinities literature (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005).

Drawing on West and Zimmerman’s (1975) concept of “doing gender”, hegemonic masculinity was defined as “the pattern of practice (things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). Hegemonic masculinity represented the most honored way of being a man within a given place and time, although only a minority of men had access to the resources necessary for its enactment. All other men were required to position themselves in relation to this
ideal, creating subordinated masculinities in a hierarchical structure. Those men who benefited from the resulting patriarchy but were not heavily invested in the dominance aspects of the structure were considered to be enacting a complicit masculinity. According to Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) it is precisely these men, who also comprise the middlers of the current study, for whom the concept of hegemonic masculinity is most influential. As described above, by virtue of their gender, race, class, sexuality, and able-bodiness, these men possess the ascribed social status characteristics necessary for the successful enactment of hegemonic masculinity.

The concept of “protest masculinity” developed in later work includes any enactment of masculinity that rejects or challenges hegemonic masculinity, and may involve attributes as varied as machismo, transexualism, and homosexual desire (Connell, 2000). Although Connell includes the “macho man syndrome” in his description of protest masculinity, I view this more as a compensatory masculinity, in which one set of resources, i.e. physical strength and the threat of violence, are exaggerated in order to compensate for the perceived lack of alternative resources such as wealth or prestige. In short such men strike a “hegemonic bargain” (Chen, 1999), in which a man adopts a “gender strategy” (Hochschild, 1989) that “achieves manhood” by trading on characteristics particular to his race, class, generation or sexuality. This concept is used by Chen (1999) to explain ways in which men who comprise subaltern masculinities actually contribute to their own subordination.

Continuing work in the area of subaltern masculinities contributed to other research centered on the costs and consequences of hegemonic masculinity. For
example, efforts in criminology linked patterns of aggression to the pursuit of
hegemonic masculinity (Bufkin, 1999; Messerschmidt, 1997), and Messner (1992)
illustrated the physical and emotional costs to men in professional sports who
embodied hegemonic masculinity. The degree to which one engages in hegemonic
complicity has even been found to influence the interaction styles men choose in
their same-sex relationships. Men with less hegemonic complicity are more likely to
interact as friends, while the interaction style of those with increased levels of
complicity is described as “comradeship” (Levy, 2005).

Friendship/Intimacy

Common beliefs concerning friendship assert that the prominent activities of
women’s intimate relationships are talking and sharing feelings, while men’s
interactions are comprised of shared activities such as sports (Walker, 1994). These
assumptions have been supported by past researchers such as Lillian Rubin (1985),
who ascribed these phenomena to both psychic development and the gendered
socialization of children. Scott Swain (1989) argued that to regard men as being
deficient in their capacity for intimacy ignores the possibility of non-verbal
intimacy. Others, such as Karen Hansen (1992) rejected the psychic development
argument as essentialist and argued that these claims ignore historical and
geographic differences in intimate behavior. However, few dispute the notion that
contemporary friendships reflect these stereotypic gender differences in friendship
as normative (Bell, 1981; Caldwell and Paplau, 1982; Eichenbaum and Orbach,
1989; Oliker, 1989; Sharrod, 1987; Swain, 1989; Walker, 1994).
There is some evidence in recent literature hinting that these gendered friendship norms may be in transition. In a qualitative study of men’s perceptions of intimacy, Patrick and Beckenbauch (2009) found that all the men interviewed expressed a need and desire for intimacy. The men in this study viewed intimacy as “a necessary space that they could visit and relieve themselves of the burdens of masculinity, yet also expressed no desire to stop “being male”” (Patrick and Beckenbauch, 2009, p. 55). Additionally, Wellman (1992) argued that suburbanization has decreased the importance of men’s social ties in the public sphere and increased the importance of domestic ties, leading to male friendships that more closely resemble those of women. These new forms of friendship are likely to include aspects such as emotional support, companionship, and domestic services (Walker, 1994).

This need and desire among men for increased intimacy seems to be especially important for men who have reached middle-age status. In an examination of men through the life course, Tamir (1982) found that men at this stage of the life cycle report a feeling of discontent which reflects a period of introspection focusing on such issues as mortality, self-assessment, and sex roles. No longer primarily focused on the role of “provider” at this age, the introspection and self-assessment of sex roles may bring awareness of their deficiency in the arena of intimate social ties.

Despite awareness of the desire for increased intimacy in their relationships, actually engaging in intimate behaviors is problematic for many men. One of the behaviors most often studied in research on intimate friendship is that of self-
disclosure. Schaefer and Olsen (1981) actually describe emotional intimacy, in part, as the act of self-disclosure. Pearce and Sharp (1973) defined self-disclosure as occurring “when people voluntarily communicate information about themselves that other people are unlikely to know or discover from other sources” (Bowman, 2008, p. 316). Many researchers go a step further, suggesting that the information shared should be private, resulting in possible negative consequences if that information becomes commonly available (Miller and Steinberg, 1975; Parks, 1982; Bowman, 2008).

Men are reluctant to engage in this self-disclosure process and avoid discussing topics such as fear and sadness with their male friends (Allen and Hacoun, 1976; Davidson and Duberman, 1982; Rubin, 1983; Bowman, 2008). According to Walker (1994), men are threatened by intimacy because it touches the feminine part of their psyche that they were taught to repress in early childhood during the process of masculine socialization. Kimmel (2007) discusses how masculinity is defined to be the opposite of anything feminine. If the expressions of feelings are normalized to the domain of the feminine, then men’s use of this means to develop intimacy could create a dissonance in their self identity (Patrick and Beckenbauch, 2009). Due to the fact that this dissonance is directly related to whether the men view themselves as masculine or feminine, it may be more accurate to refer to this as a dissonance in the men’s gendered self-identity. If however, self disclosure and the expressions of feelings are accepted as normative within particular settings such as men’s groups, then the use of self-disclosure and
emotional expression could result in increased intimacy within men's same sex friendships (Bowman, 2008).

One variable that may be instrumental in deciding whether men will engage in self-disclosure is trust. Patrick and Beckenbauch (2009) found that men required an emotionally safe environment before they felt comfortable sharing such personal information. Similarly, Sternbauch (2001) discussed the importance of creating an emotionally safe environment as a necessary first stage in the development of groups dedicated to the recovery of men's capacity for relational connection. He proposed that the creation of this "safe space" leads to the development of increased intimacy within the group and opens individual members to the possibility of "authentic self presentation" (Sternbauch, 2001, p. 63). Interestingly, mutual self-disclosure was reported by Patrick and Beckenbauch (2009) as one strategy for creating trust, indicating a reciprocal relationship between trust and self-disclosure.

In addition to trust, simultaneous validation of one's masculinity seems to be necessary in order to counteract stereotypes and gender ideologies surrounding engagement in the "feminine" behavior of self disclosure. Fasteau (1975) discussed how the work on male bonding which showed that men feel comfortable when together with other men in groups could be explained by men's need for assurance of their masculinity (Tognoli, 1980). Singleton (2003) supported this notion by discussing how the individuals participating in the men's groups from his study, while subversive of some hegemonic behaviors, interacted in many ways that were consistent with how middle-class men have traditionally related to each other. I
now turn to a discussion of the different factions of the men’s movement, and of the
scant literature surrounding the subject of men’s groups.

Men’s Movement/Men’s Groups

With a few exceptions, past research on the men’s movement has been
almost entirely focused on the published writings, political rhetoric, and
philosophical stances of group leaders from specific factions of the movement
(Magnuson, 2007). One of the issues with this methodological approach is the
assumption that members of these organizations unreflectively internalize the
beliefs of the movement leaders. In addition, these writings do not include the large
numbers of men who gather in homes and churches across the country to form
independent men’s groups not affiliated with any specific organization within the
men’s movement such as the case of the current study. However, if we are to
recognize potential similarities in reasons for involvement between the
independent group of the current study and the more organized factions, a basic
understanding of the philosophical underpinnings and history of these perspectives
is necessary.

Clatterbaugh (1990) claimed that there are at least six different perspectives
to be considered under the umbrella of the term “men’s movement”. However, for
the purposes of this paper, I will examine the four that represent the most distinct
sociopolitical orientations. These include the liberal profeminist, the promasculinist,
the Marxist/Socialist, and the male spiritual perspectives (Rickabaugh, 1994). In
addition, I examine two of the best known groups engaging in “men’s ministries”;
the Promise Keepers and the Catholic men’s movement. These factions are of particular interest in that they represent various degrees of anti-feminist, pro-male, and profeminist sentiments as well as distinct constructions of masculinity (Kimmel, 1987; Fox, 2004).

The profeminist perspective emerged as part of the second wave feminist movement with men coming together in the late 1960's and early 1970's to organize around issues such as domestic violence, rape, and pornography. Many of these men became active in publishing books and articles (Astrachan, 1986; Messner, 1997), forming consciousness-raising groups (Williamson, 1997), and creating formal organizations (Messner, 1997). The 1981 Men and Masculinity conference inspired the National Men's Organization's formation, which later became the National Organization for Changing Men (NOCM), and then the National Organization for Men Against Sexism (NOMAS) in 1990 (Fox, 2004). In addition, recent technological advancements have led to the formation of internet groups such as Profeminist.org which are able to engage in global recruitment.

The liberal profeminist faction begins with “the acknowledgement that men have power and privilege in a male dominated society” (Kauffman, 1994, p. 156). This perspective, represented by Brod (1987), Pleck (1981), and Messner (1987), suggests that men and women work together to end sexism and homophobia, as well as discrimination based on race or sexual orientation. These organizations advocate for the elimination of negative aspects of masculinity such as violence and aggression, and the celebration of positive aspects of masculinity such as fatherhood (Rickabaugh, 1994).
In contrast, promasculinist organizations view homophobia and anti-discriminatory efforts as civil rights issues rather than men’s issues (Rickabaugh, 1994). Writings by Farrell (1987) and Goldberg (1976) represent this perspective, which asserts that men have been victims of a feminized legal system, and men’s legal rights should be extended; especially within the realm of home and family in cases of divorce and child custody. The view that feminism is an enemy of the traditional masculinity they seek to protect represents the “backlash” camp of this perspective (Fox, 2004), which found its beginnings with the formation of the Men’s Rights Association by Richard Doyle in 1973. After a publication by Goldberg (1986) entitled “The Hazards of Being Male: Surviving the Myth of Male Privilege”, a number of other men’s rights organizations were formed. The National Congress for Men is one of these, bringing together activists who are concerned with such issues. Other organizations include the National Organization for Men and the Men’s Defense Association, as well as internet organizations such as patriarchy.com and Mensactivism.org (Fox, 2004).

The other camp within the men’s rights faction of the men’s movement makes the claim that women and men are both victimized by patriarchy, albeit differently, and that men and women need to acknowledge their mutual oppression. Members of the “gender reconciliation” camp view themselves as compatible with some branches of feminism; an opinion most feminists would disagree with given the failure of this camp to recognize that women have been historically oppressed by men. For example, Warren Farrell (1993) describes himself as:
A men’s liberationist (or “masculinist”) when men’s liberation is defined as equal opportunity and equal responsibility for both sexes. I am a feminist when feminism favors equal opportunities and responsibilities for both sexes. I oppose both movements when either says our sex is the oppressed sex, therefore, “we deserve rights.” (p.19; emphasis in original) (Fox, 2004, p. 105).

The Marxist/Socialist orientation focuses on the role of capitalist society in the shaping of men’s identity (Cliff, 1984; Tolson, 1997). This perspective argues that the powerlessness that results from men’s alienation from the products of their labor leads to the domination of women. The solution offered to stop this cycle of male alienation, powerlessness, and patriarchal domination is to change the social and economic class structure of Western society (Rickabaugh, 1994).

Examples of this view can be found in the increasingly common attitude among middlers expressing discontent with the “provider role” of masculinity that requires emotional stoicism and stunts personal growth and life satisfaction (Magnuson, 2008). Recent work has examined the negative effects that workplace demands have had on men’s participation in the family (Hochschild, 1997; Hood, 1993; Hughes Galinsky, & Morris, 1992; Kagan and Weissbourd, 1994; Magnuson, 2008). This viewpoint seems to be almost universal among the other factions of the men’s movement, and can easily be incorporated into each of their philosophical perspectives.

The male spiritual perspective, otherwise known as the mytho-poetic men’s movement, is represented by popular writings of authors such as Bly (1990), Rowan (1987), and Keen (1991) to name a few. In fact, this faction of the movement traces its beginnings to an interview by Robert Bly in New Age Magazine (1982), and his
subsequent book published in 1990 entitled *Iron John: A book About Men*. Advocates of this perspective believe that social change begins with the personal growth of the individual. Making extensive use of concepts from Jungian psychology, movement leaders encourage the examination and application of archetypes found in myth and stories as guides for individual men to create change in their personal lives. This perspective thus resembles in many ways a form of self-help movement (Connell, 1993) as well as a quasi-religious movement (Schwalbe, 1996).

Gathering nationally at weekend conferences and locally in small, organized men's groups, members support each other's efforts at resolving issues, such as coming to terms with one's father, with a form of auto-analysis and self-disclosure (Rickabaugh, 1994). They also use myths, poetry, drumming, and a mix of Western and non-Western spirituality to encourage male-to-male bonding, intimacy, and increase emotive abilities among the men (Magnuson, 2008). Ritual initiation, or rites of passage, are advocated by members and leaders alike (Fox, 2004), giving rise to an entire sub-group of the movement whose focus is to offer “Weekend Warrior Trainings” as a means of undergoing initiation into a “mature manhood” (the Mankind Project web-page, 2009).

Among these socio-political perspectives, those most noted for advocating the use of small, locally organized men's groups are the liberal pro-feminists and the mytho-poets. However, a large number of men's groups meet as an outgrowth of their religious affiliation, encouraging forms of masculinity originating in their respective religious beliefs. Perhaps two of the largest and best known groups from this men's ministries movement are the Promise Keepers and the Catholic men's
movement, although many others exist that have received little to no attention in academic literature.

The Catholic men’s movement officially began in 1996 when the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops Committee on Marriage and Family recognized the success of The Promise Keepers and created a Catholic alternative encouraging the development of men’s ministries within the church (Gelfer, 2008). Based on their popularity among Catholic men’s ministries participants, two books written by Catholics seem to exemplify the views of this faction of the men’s movement. These are Patrick Arnold’s (1991) *Wildmen, Warriors, and Kings: Masculine Spirituality and the Bible*, and *The Wild Man’s Journey: Reflections on Male Spirituality* authored by Richard Rohr and Joseph Matros (1992) (Gelfer, 2008). Both of these works “present a model of masculinity that is closely aligned with the regular mythopoetic men’s movement and are subject to much of the same critique, including rigid gender stereotyping, misogyny, androcentrism, homophobia, and political, racial, and economic naivety (Brod, 1992; Hagan, 1992; Ross, 1992; Kimmel, 1995; Schwalbe, 1996; Messner, 1997)” (Gelfer, 2008, p. 44).

One of the most detailed examinations of The Promise Keepers to date comes from Messner’s (1997) *Politics of masculinities*. Based on an overview of scholarly literature and a manual written by The Promise Keepers’ Ed Cole, Messner reports that this group is little more than an “essentialist retreat” from progressive gender politics (Messner, 1997). However, a study by Bartowski (2000) used more of a micro-level approach to study this group. The author examines how men attending accountability groups associated with The Promise Keepers negotiate and
reformulate the competing gender discourses of instrumental and expressive masculinity. The study also examined “how social interaction and identity negotiation within these settings meld together contradictory gender practices, thereby producing a godly masculinity that is marked by both expressive and instrumental characteristics” (Bartowski, 2000, p. 33).

Although little discussion has been offered in scholarly literature concerning the small independent groups that are the focus of the current research, one study by Reddin and Sonn (2003) did examine men’s individual experiences in such groups. After interviewing men who had reported involvement in men’s groups, the authors describe the men’s experiences as consisting of mutual support for introspective assessment and emotional work that provided opportunities to develop emotional openness, intimacy, and personal growth. Although this supports similar findings in the literature on men’s friendships and intimacy, the study also described these groups as a means of reducing gender role conflict.

Gender role conflict is defined as “a psychological state in which gender roles have negative consequences on the individual or others” (O’Neil, as cited by Reddin and Sonn, 2003, p. 3). According to the authors, gender role conflict is a direct result of the collapsing norms of masculinity described by Levant (1992), and O’Shaughnessy (1999). These norms include restrictive emotionality, self reliance, avoiding femininity, seeking status and success, aggression, fear of intimacy, and homophobia (Reddin and Sonn, 2003). The men’s groups, through the encouragement of emotional expression, increased intimacy, and the vulnerability that results from self-disclosure are seen by the authors as one way in which men
learn to deal with social and psychological issues such as gender role conflict. This subject is directly related to men’s gendered social identity. I therefore now turn to a discussion of this topic, and of how it may relate to the men’s group experience.

Gendered Social Identity

Social Identity Theory, according to Tajfel and Turner (1979, 1986), suggests that one’s concept of self is comprised of both personal and social identity. For them, social identity is described as the aspect of a person’s self-concept that is developed from their membership in a social group together with the emotional significance attached to membership (Tajfel, 1978). With group membership being connected to a person’s self-concept, or identity, and presumably to one’s self esteem, individuals are motivated to maintain a positive social identity through social comparisons with other in-group members.

Social Identity researchers have long recognized the centrality of gender to one’s self concept and the idea of a gender derived social identification (Abrams, 1989; Condor, 1986; Skevington & Baker, 1989; Williams, 1984; Deaux & LaFrance, 1998; Frable, 1997). This research has, so far, been primarily centered on the social identity of women as low-status group members despite the recognition that parallel analyses of men could be equally important in understanding the psychological processes that either facilitate or deter social change (Kimmel, 1987). In fact, there is evidence that men’s sense of well being and self-concept is even more closely tied to group-based notions of appropriate behavior than for women (Burris, Branscombe & Klar, 1997; O’Neil, Goode, and Holmes, 1995).
There have also been studies suggesting that traditional men exhibit stronger gender social identification than non-traditional men (Abrams, 1989; Cameron and Lalonde, 2001). One study in particular (Thomas, 1990) that investigated men’s gender identity and ideology found that men with pro-feminist attitudes tended to reject masculinity in both their self-concept and cultural stereotypes. For these men, their gender identity was generally uninformed by the political dimensions of gender relations and tended to focus on the idea of “personal masculinity” (Cameron and Lalonde, 2001).

Having weaker ties to the group suggests that “being a man” is a less desirable gendered social identity for those individuals who are more supportive of feminism and are searching for their personal masculinity. In fact, Thomas (1990), suggested that men may be confronted with a negative group image that portrays them as perpetrators of oppressive social relations. Although women are able to identify as “feminists” with their increased awareness of gender relations, men who hold the described negative group image have no similar, normative source for group identification that maintains a positive self-image (Cameron and Lalonde, 2001).

More recent research in the area of gendered social identities includes work by Oswald & Lindstedt (2006), who conducted an exploratory study concerning how men self-stereotype according to their gender. "Self-stereotyping is the process through which a person integrates the group stereotypes into his/her self-concept and how the stereotypes subsequently influence his/her self perceptions and behaviors" (Oswald & Lindstedt, 2006, p. 447). Recognizing that gender is a core
aspect of one’s identity (Deaux & Lafrance, 1998; Frable, 1997; Abrams, 1989; Condor, 1986; Skevington & Baker, 1989; Williams, 1984), the study found a positive significant relationship for men between self-stereotyping for masculine personality traits and social self esteem. Thus, self-stereotyping for personality traits that are considered unmasculine would be expected to have a negative effect on a man’s social self esteem.

Other research by Burn, Aboud, & Moyles (2000) demonstrated that gender social identity was significantly related to support for feminism, and that the direction of that relationship varies by gender. Women with a strong gender social identity are more likely to support feminism than women with weak gender social identities. On the other hand, men with strong gender social identities are less likely than men with weak gender social identities to support feminism.

Cumulatively, these studies provide evidence that non-traditional men, (those who support feminist ideas) who tend to have weaker gender social identities due to their preference for personal over hegemonic masculinity, may benefit from membership in some social group that supports a positive self-image of the individual as a man. It is possible that membership in a men’s group, or involvement in some aspect of the men’s movement, creates a gendered sense of community that helps men to minimize gender role conflict (Reddin and Sonn, 2003) and dissonance in men’s self identity (Patrick and Beckenbauch, 2009), while increasing social self esteem (Oswald & Lindstedt, 2006) through mutual support of personal masculinity (Cameron and Lalonde, 2001).
This notion of men creating a personal masculinity may also offer a new perspective on the feminist critiques of the men’s movement (i.e. Connell, 2005; Ferber, 2000; Kimmel, 1995; Kimmel and Kaufman, 1994) for being self indulgent and lacking political motivation. Although Cameron and Lalonde (2001) do not define the concept of personal masculinity, if it is equated with the rejection of masculinity in one’s self concept and cultural stereotypes in preference of a more authentic (or consciously chosen) presentation of a gendered self, then the self indulgent nature of the men’s movement may actually be an attempt to effect socio-political change through personal development of significant numbers of men.

Following is a description of the research methods used in the current study to answer the question of why middlers are seeking the support of men’s groups. In so doing, I offer a description of the study sample, as well as methods of data collection and analysis. I also present a brief discussion surrounding my subjectivity.
CHAPTER III
METHODS

Data Collection

The data for this study consists of field notes generated from 15 months of participant observation with an independent men’s group as well as semi-structured interviews with the individual members who make up the “core” group. Much of the data were collected in fulfillment of requirements for a series of courses on qualitative methods. Supplementary data were collected during May and June of 2009, including additional interviews and field notes. All data collection was approved by the University of Akron Internal Review Board (see Appendix A).

The men’s group that is the focus of this study formed in February of 2008 when several men approached me at a social gathering to request that I help them with the formation of such a group. Their reason for approaching me, in particular, with this request was based on one of the men’s experience at a weekend men’s

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1 One of these classes, entitled “Qualitative Methods” was taught by Dr. Kathy Feltey during the Spring semester of 2008 and offered through the department of sociology at the University of Akron. The other classes were taught by Dr. Sandra Spickard-Prettyman and offered through the College of Education at the University of Akron. These were “Qualitative Methods I” and “Qualitative Software” offered in fall semester of 2008, and “Qualitative Methods II” offered in the spring semester of 2009.
retreat I had facilitated two years earlier. All of the men present that night, five
discounting myself, knew each other from their mutual involvement with a
spiritually focused group that meets weekly and is composed of both men and
women. I will refer to this group as the “Healing Hearts” group. Other than the one
man who had attended the weekend retreat, this was the first time I had met these
men. Once I agreed to the men’s request, a date, time, and place to meet were
decided on, and the men encouraged each other to invite others they believed might
be interested. No reason for desiring a men’s group was offered that night by
anyone in attendance.

Although group membership varied somewhat over the months as the
occasional new man was invited or participants stopped attending, the typical
meeting consisted of eight to ten men gathering in one member’s home. All of the
participants can be described as “middlers”, with ages ranging from early-thirties to
early sixties, and who self-identify as white, middle class men. A tabular description
of the sample is included as table 1 (see Appendix B) listing the men’s approximate
age, occupation, marital status, education, and a brief description of their spiritual
belief system.

Each of the men has some degree of interest or involvement in a variety of
alternative, non-mainstream spiritual philosophies and practices that are referred
to often in the course of the bi-monthly group meetings. These philosophies seem to
focus on methods of personal growth, or self improvement, resembling in many
ways the mytho-poetic men’s groups described earlier, despite their lack of
affiliation with any organized faction of the men’s movement.
The observation site is the home of the group member in which the men gather for the meetings. The site was chosen by the group after the home owner volunteered to make it available for this purpose due to the home’s size, central location to other members, and the familiarity of its location with a majority of the members. The log-style home is located in a middle to upper-middle class neighborhood, and includes a large, horseshoe-shaped driveway that affords ample parking space for guests. It also offers a seldom used room that is easily separated from the ongoing activities of the owner’s family, as well as a pool house in the back of the property that is used during warmer weather for the group’s meetings.

Although it is always preferable to write jotted field notes during an observation, this process would be disruptive to the dynamics of the meeting given the emphasis by the group members on maintaining confidentiality, despite their knowledge and approval of my research. I therefore jotted my observation notes immediately after meetings adjourned, while still in my car, and expanded those field notes on my computer after returning home the same evening in order to record an accurate thick, rich description of the event. These expanded field notes were then complimented with separate documents that contained personal and analytical notes concerning my observations, all of which were then uploaded to NVIVO (version 8.0) qualitative data analysis program.

NVIVO was developed in 1999 by Qualitative Research Solutions International (QSR) as a more refined version of their earlier software package, NUD*IST (Bringer, Johnston & Brackenridge 2004). The purpose of this software is to aid researchers with the tasks uniquely involved with qualitative research across
a range of disciplines (Richards 2002). NVIVO, like other computer software
developed for this purpose, is a data management tool. Researchers “must still
interpret, conceptualize, examine relationships, document decisions and develop
theory” with respect to their unique data (Bringer et al. 2004: 249).

Other data were collected via the use of face to face interviews with
individual members of the group. Each man interviewed was provided with a letter
of informed consent after being given an explanation as to the nature of the research
and being assured of their confidentiality. A copy of the letter of informed consent is
provided as Appendix C. Because a signature on the letter for informed consent
would have been the only method of identifying the men being interviewed, the
Internal Review Board allowed the current study to be exempt from this practice. In
order to maintain confidentiality in this paper, all individual references use
pseudonyms that were assigned by me during the transcription process.

A total of eight interviews were conducted with the men who most regularly
attend the group meetings, and who constitute the “core” members of the group.
Interestingly, over the course of time, these “core” members have decided to close
one meeting each month, and only allow potential new members to attend the
“open” monthly meeting. Thus, once a month, only these eight members and myself
are included in the meetings.

The interview protocol, included as Appendix D, was designed based on the
research questions. Open-ended questions were used with the intent of generating
opportunities for each group member to express personal views, opinions, and
experiences with the group. However, flexibility in conducting the interviews
allowed for a more in-depth investigation of ideas and concepts expressed by the respondents which may not have been considered in the development of the interview questions.

Two of the interviews were conducted in my home, with the remaining six taking place in the homes of the respondents. All interviews were recorded using a handheld cassette tape recorder, which were then transcribed verbatim using "Microsoft Word 2007". Upon review of the transcriptions I created separate documents that included my personal and analytical notes. Field notes were also taken during and directly after the interviews in order to capture a thick, rich description of the location as well as inaudible data such as body language, facial expressions, and any disruptions to the interview process that may be pertinent such as phone calls or unexpected visits by others. All data were uploaded into the project’s NVIVO software file for data management and analysis.

Coding and Analysis

An a priori code list used for both the observational and interview data was created based on a review of the literature and my personal experiences with men’s groups. Additional codes emerged as themes became apparent during preliminary analysis of the data and were added to the code book, which is included as Appendix E. This stage most closely resembles “open coding” in the language of grounded theory analysis. In fact, despite the use of an a priori code list, much of my data analysis adopts principles and strategies used by grounded theorists.
At the open coding stage, researchers may fit data into as many categories as are meaningful. This process allows the researcher to decide in which direction to take the study before becoming selective about their coding and focusing on a particular problem (Glaser 1978). Using NVIVO software, parameters and definitional boundaries were established to better distinguish the types of data that would fit a particular code. As data collection and analysis continued, the codes and their parameters were continually revised in order to reflect my increasing insights and understanding of the data.

Constant comparison of the data with the literature resulted in the abandonment of some codes and the creation of others. In this process I was especially vigilant of the need to not force responses into particular categories. To this degree Charmaz (2004) cautions that when using theoretical concepts researchers should evaluate the fit between their initial research interests and their emerging data. Specifically, she advises researchers not to force their preconceived notions directly upon the data.

The next step was focused coding. “Focused coding means using the most significant and/or frequent earlier codes to sift through large amounts of data. “Focused coding requires decisions about which initial codes make the most analytic sense to categorize your data incisively and completely” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57). By recognizing the most frequently occurring codes and reviewing the data with these themes in mind, I was able to discover previously unrecognized agreement and support for these concepts. Although this required frequent and numerous reviews of the data, the level of immersion provided unexpected insights that led to a deeper
understanding of what the data were revealing in relation to the specific research questions of this study.

Codes were then structured into groups or families of related concepts, referred to as “tree nodes” in the NVIVO software. This stage of the process closely resembles the practice of “axial coding” first presented by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998). “Axial coding relates categories to subcategories, specifies the properties and dimensions of a category, and reassembles the data you have fractured during initial coding to give coherence to the emerging analysis” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 60). This process was helpful in understanding relationships between the recurring themes.

Additional thematic analysis was conducted through the use of memo writing about the theoretical categories and relationships that emerged from the focused and axial coding process. “Memo writing is the pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of papers . . . Memo writing constitutes a crucial method in grounded theory because it prompts you to analyze your data . . .” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 72). This process was extremely beneficial in clarifying the results.

Addressing Subjectivity

My status in the group as a full participant and facilitator makes the issue of subjectivity especially relevant to how the data were collected, analyzed, and interpreted. According to Peshkin (1988) subjectivity is the quality of an investigator that affects all aspects of their research and operates during the entire process. He stresses that investigators would benefit their research by being
consciously aware of this quality. It was therefore imperative that I constantly be aware of my participation, and the influence I may have had on the group. Some of the areas in which I could have influenced the group include decisions concerning logistical issues such as frequency of meetings, as well as the directions taken in conversations, opinions expressed, and the general dynamics of the group.

For this reason, I very purposefully avoided recommending one choice over another when decisions were made within the group. Rather, when I contributed, I simply suggested possible choices, always trying to present different options, and I encouraged the members to contribute to this process prior to voting on their decisions. I also suggested early in my group involvement that the group members alternate being facilitators, so that each member takes a turn “being in charge” of a particular meeting. The group embraced this idea affording me, as a researcher, approximately two months of non-facilitation between meetings when it was my responsibility to “lead” the group.

However, despite these precautions, the dual roles inherent in being a participant and researcher necessarily resulted in my influencing the very thing I was researching. Being a full participant required that I continued to be conscious of this influence throughout the research process including data collection, analysis, and interpretation. I therefore included some autoethnographic data as a part of my research efforts, including my own subjective experiences as data that was worthy of analysis (Ellis and Bochner, 2000). Although I did not answer my own interview questions, I did record my experiences as a participant in my field notes, coding and analyzing this data as though it were being offered by any other group member, and
report this data using a pseudonym just as with any other group member. This methodology was useful in my analytic process, and is congruent with a methodology that recognizes the “researcher as instrument”. However, there are also other filters, or “subjective I’s” (Peshkin, 1988) that were important to be aware of as I continued through the process of conducting an ethnographic case study with such a deep level of participation.

To begin with, I have attended other men’s groups in the past, with many of these being related in some way to the Mytho-Poetic men’s movement. I have also met personally with Mytho-Poetic leaders such as Robert Bly and Robert Moore. These experiences have instilled certain beliefs and expectations about what happens in a men’s group as well as the types of men involved in such activities and the issues that often arise in the process. I have also facilitated several weekend long workshops for men in which my own opinions and philosophies were the primary focus. Those experiences required me to assume the role of teacher, and it was therefore critical for me to tame the “teacher I” in my interactions with the group to encourage authentic, original participation by members that minimized the influence of my own thoughts and opinions.

I also tried to be constantly aware of my “feminist I”. As a self identified feminist supporter, with a good deal of my formal education centering around feminist perspectives, it was important that I refrain from, or at least be aware of, my inclination to be judgmental about the opinions, thoughts, and actions of men who lack this kind of education. However, my “hegemonic I” was also important to remain aware of. As a white, heterosexual, middle-aged, middle-class male, or
“middler”, there are certain ideals of hegemonic masculinity that have been internalized over my fifty years of life that cannot be over-ridden by a few years of feminist education. Try as I might to be open to alternative masculinities, there remains a hierarchical ideology about the qualities that define “being a man” that undoubtedly colored my perspectives and opinions about the topics dealt with in the current study.

This ongoing introspection is an important part of qualitative research. Although there are undoubtedly other “subjective I’s” that require awareness and taming as described by Peshkin (1988), I believe those described provide ample evidence of my awareness concerning how my own experiences as an individual could affect the ways that data are collected, analyzed, and interpreted. It is my contention that honestly addressing subjectivity, which is present in all research (Peshkin, 1988), has served to increase the depth of the insights gleaned concerning the present research. In fact, this is one of the key positions within feminist methodology. With this subjectivity in mind, I turn to the results of my analysis.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Recall that my primary research question seeks to explain why middlers are attending men’s groups, and that I am approaching this in two different ways. First by investigating what benefits the men hope to gain by participating in a men’s group, and secondly by describing how the setting of the men’s group may provide men with the benefits they seek. Analysis of the data yielded two prevalent themes pertaining to the first part of my research question. These are “authentically” gendered self presentation, and intimate group friendship. Two other prevalent themes were revealed in relation to the second part of my research question. These are self-disclosure and emotional safety.

I begin with a brief discussion of “authentic” gendered self presentation, as many social psychologists would argue the existence of an authentic self. I then provide excerpts from the data as evidence of these men’s desire for the opportunities and ability to present their “true self”, in conjunction with statements containing expressions critical of hegemonic masculinity. Data are then presented that describe the desire for increased friendship intimacy within a group of men. Finally, I provide examples of the group’s primary activity of self-disclosure and the importance of emotional safety within the group setting. This leads to a discussion
of how these variables interrelate and of how these findings are supported by research in areas as varied as masculinities, intimacy, and gendered social identity.

Authentically Gendered Selves

Each of the eight men interviewed at some point made reference to their desire for the ability to be their “authentic” or “true” self, and how participation in men’s group meetings provides them that opportunity. According to Singleton (2003), the notion of authenticity assumes the uniqueness of the individual as well as the freedom of self-determination that allows access to, and the expression of, the wisdom that is believed to lie within each of us. “Learning to speak in an authentic voice, to claim one’s own feelings, to differ respectfully is not part of male socialization, based so often on a false sense of competence and control known as the “masculine mystique” (Brannon, as cited in Sternbauch, 2001, p.60). For the purposes of this thesis, I operationalize the term “authentically gendered self presentation” as the perception or belief that an individual can present to others a male personality that is relatively unique and free of social influence but still seen as being male.

Whether or not it is achievable, the men’s belief in the potential to “be themselves” is a primary motivation for participation in a men’s group. My findings substantiate Sternbauch’s (2001) claim that men’s group participation can allow the strategies of disconnection that men have learned as part of their male socialization to give way to the possibility of authentic self-presentation. Consider the following statements by group members in which attempts at being their “true self” were
described as contradictory to a masculine self-presentation that was considered to
be false or contrived, and how the men’s group provides them the opportunity to be
free of that restriction.

Matt:
“For me it’s about being able to be myself. I’m tired of pretending
and staying in that box; you know that box that says this is what a man
is supposed to be. . . I don’t have to stay in that box here; I can be myself”.

Don:
“The terrible fear and shame that we carry around over this; the
masculine roles; this thing that we are supposed to be. Never show weak
emotions, that kind of thing; not supposed to cry, hold it in, tough it out.
That kind of stuff is just awful. . . I think we’re starved for something to
address our inner being, and I think our men’s group is aimed in that
direction. We’re trying to be authentic; we’re trying to bring that self out
in the open to the best of our ability to do that”.

Will:
“I honestly believe the objective of the group is to be able to allow
the individual, the man, to identify some of his own feelings; some of his own
fears, anxieties, hopes, dreams, aspirations, and how that relates to other
men”.

Jim:
“Since I got home from Iraq, a big part of my healing has been
realizing that it’s ok for me to have feminine energy, and I’ve been searching
for a new way to be a man, because I just don’t believe in that military way
of being a man anymore. That’s why I’m here; to figure out the kind of man I
am instead of the kind of man I’m supposed to be”.

Authentic gendered self-presentation is risky business for men who do not
perform some socially acceptable degree of hegemonic masculinity. The apparent
disdain expressed toward hegemonic masculinity suggests that these men exhibit
weak social ties to being men due to self-stereotyping as possessing feminine traits
and may suffer a dissonance in their gendered social identity (Patrick and
Beckenbauch, 2009). As Don expressed, the fear and shame accompanying the
possible rejection of an authentically gendered self as being less than masculine can be crippling to the efforts of authentic self presentation. Recall that according to Oswald and Lendstedt (2006), self-stereotyping for personality traits that are considered unmasculine may have a negative effect on a man’s social self esteem, and could even result in producing a negative self image of the individual as a man (Thomas, 1990; Cameron and Lalonde, 2001). The following example from Don’s interview exemplifies his perception of “men” as a group with which he does not want to be associated.

“And I remember one guy started talking about how much he hated men; and I agreed with everything he said (chuckle) ya know, yeah, that’s right on. You know, how they’re so superficial, and they act like tough guys, and they won’t be honest about who they are, and all this stuff; you know”.

The risk involved in authentic self-presentation for men necessitates not only an audience to whom they can present themselves, but an audience to whom the men feel safe in revealing their “authentically gendered self” without fear of social sanctions such as belittlement, ostracization, or even violence. The search for this audience is often spoken of by the men as a need for “a group of like-minded men”, or “intimate friendships with a group of guys”. This “intimate group friendship is the second predominant theme in the data relating to the benefits men hope to obtain as a result of their participation in a men’s group.

Intimate Group Friendship

Once again, without exception, all of the men interviewed reported the desire for intimate friendships with a group of like-minded men as one of the primary
reasons for their involvement with the men’s group. However, the objective seems not to be finding some men in the group with whom to develop friendships, but to create a community in which acceptance by the group is equated as being engaged in friendships with all of the individual members. For example, John told me that “My main reason for being in a men’s group, and I won’t say this to just anybody, is that I want to feel accepted by a group of men even though I’m kinda feminine and I sometimes find it hard to be manly”. When I asked John what traits he has that he considers unmanly, he said “Well, just the way I talk and stuff; I’m not hardcore; ya know?”.

Will also expressed this idea of a group friendship when he said “The friendship, commradery, fellowship if you want to call it that, the relationship we have with each other as “brothers”, I think is the term in all sincerity, is the essence of the group itself”. Each of these men referred to their relationship with the group as opposed to some members of the group when talking about friendship. Consider these other statements about the importance of group friendship:

Neil: “This group is . . . well, my father and brother have both passed, and if it weren’t for the men in the group, I wouldn’t have any men that I could go to if something is bothering me, or just to hang out; I’d really have no male friends outside of the guys at work”.

Matt: “Ya know, there are a lots of benefits to being in a men’s group, but what I appreciate most is just having a group of guys that I can be myself around. I know I can go to a meeting and say anything, cry, swear, or whatever I feel like doing and know that it will be ok. At the end of the night I know that you guys are still my friends”.

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Jim:
“I get good support and advice, but when you put it all together, it really is about having a group of good male friends; I mean isn’t that what friends do? They listen without judging, support you, and give you advice when you need it; and I know that I could call any of you guys and you’d be there for me”.

The quality of these group friendships also seems to be of extreme importance. Friendship within the group is considered to be more intimate than friendships the men are involved in outside of the group. As noted earlier, men generally seem to lack intimate expression in their same sex relationships (Allen and Hacoun, 1976; Davidson and Duberman, 1982; Rubin, 1983; Bowman, 2008; Walker, 2007). The current study supports the findings that men’s group participants consider the intimacy that is consciously created within the group to be a necessary element that allows them to “relieve themselves of the burdens of masculinity” (Patrick and Beckenbauch, 2009, p. 55).

At one meeting, Will expressed his appreciation for the group by saying “You guys really are my family and I’m grateful for each of you. There are things that I’ve said here and things that I will say here, that I would never say anywhere else; and that intimacy means a lot to me”. Tears welled in Will’s eyes as he spoke, and each of the men murmured their agreement that the group was the one place they felt they could find intimacy with other men.

Another example is from Ralph’s interview. Here he clearly describes his longing for intimacy with male friends as a reason for being part of the men’s group. Notice that both Will and Ralph equate the feeling of intimacy with the ability to “say
anything” to the men with whom they feel this closeness. This seems to be the very definition of intimacy for these men.

“When I was living out of state, there was a group of us guys that worked together that became really close, and even though it was a work situation, we were still able to say anything to each other and I would describe our relationships as intimate friendships. After coming here, I really started to miss that; I miss those guys, and that’s why I’m here; is to recreate that feeling of having intimate friendships with other guys”.

These expressions of appreciation for intimacy are commonplace during the men’s group meetings. As an observer, I frequently sensed that these types of statements were a way of encouraging more intimate behavior among the group members. They seem to act as reminders that intimacy is something that can be consciously created by behaving in intimate ways. Without a doubt, the most salient behavior considered to be intimate by group members is the act of self-disclosure. In fact, this is the primary activity at group meetings.

Self-Disclosure

Schaefer and Olsen (1981) describe intimacy, in part, as being the act of self-disclosure. On some level, the men seem to understand that sharing personal information is one way of creating intimacy within the group. This activity is formalized in the group setting through the use of the “check-in” at the beginning of the meeting, in which men take turns sharing with other members whatever is going on in their life, or their minds, at the time. In fact the process is so formalized that prior to beginning the check-in, a ceremony is performed in which an herb known as “sweetgrass” is burned. The sweetgrass is then taken to each member in attendance
as the men use their hands to bring the smoke close to their bodies. This is very similar to a ritual known as “smudging” that is frequently used by Native Americans and other participants in “Earth-based” spiritual groups, as well as mytho-poetic men's groups.

Depending on the facilitator for the night, the check-in process can include feedback given as each man completes his oration, or can be provided as the men feel so moved once everyone has finished. The information shared is sometimes very mundane and benign, and at other times can be very dramatic and include displays of emotion that are unusual for men. The check-in process, combined with the feedback of group members often fills the 2 ½ hour time allotted for group meetings. Following is an excerpt from my field notes describing portions of a typical check-in at the group meetings.

Mike, a stocky man in his early forties with short hair, jeans, a sweatshirt and a baseball cap worn backwards was the first to check in. Mike reported that the marriage he had been working to save over the past 6 months had come to an end this very evening. In fact, he had just come from the conversation with his wife in which it was decided that they would divorce. He shed tears freely as he spoke, and described his feelings of sorrow, anger, confusion and betrayal in great detail. The other men in the group, who are usually quick to offer advice to men describing problems, remained quiet during Mike’s check in.

There were periods of time where Mike simply cried while the others, including myself, stayed quiet. Once Mike stated that he was finished, Will offered words of support and encouragement, stating that any of the men in the group would be available for Mike to talk to in the coming days and weeks if he should feel the need. Each of the men in the group echoed this briefly, and Matt said that he admired Mike's willingness to share his grief so openly while the pain was so raw and fresh.

Ralph, a quiet man about 6 feet tall who's most outstanding feature is a very large head was the next to check in. Ralph reported that he too, had been told 10 days earlier by his long time girlfriend that they would not be seeing each other anymore. Ralph also teared
up while speaking, but did not cry profusely as Mike had. He said that he was feeling a lot of different feelings, including sadness, anger, and betrayal. He also expressed fear of living the rest of his life alone, reminding the group that he is in his late 50's. Ralph said “I’m in”, signaling that he was done with his check in, and no one offered any feedback.

After a brief moment of silence, Verne began his check in, telling the group that he had been very depressed over the last couple of weeks due in part to the realization that his 25 year old daughter was an alcoholic. He reported that he had come to the realization after prohibiting alcohol in the home due to her frequent episodes of drunkenness that included such behaviors as falling and hurting herself, needing to be carried through the front door and into her room by a friend of his stepson, and lying about her alcohol use. When the alcohol was prohibited, she then hid bottles of wine, bought and drank large amounts of cold medicine, and he reported suspecting her of drinking mouthwash, which was disappearing from the bathroom at an alarming rate. He also attributed part of his depression to his 50th birthday which had come the previous week.

Several of the men reiterated the comments they had made to Mike encouraging contact outside of the meeting times if Verne felt the need to talk. He agreed that he had been guilty of not taking advantage of this support system and said he would try harder to do so in the future.

Interestingly, the nature of the information being shared became increasingly private over the months that the group met. The first several meetings consisted primarily of logistic and theoretical conversations. These discussions included issues such as whether some of the men’s sons should be permitted to attend the group, and the ways in which masculinity affects men’s relationships and limits men’s ability to express themselves. However, within a few months, the information shared during check-ins was normatively intimate. Self-disclosure and the development of intimacy, at least for this group, seem to be intertwined. These results support the notion of a reciprocal relationship between intimacy and self-disclosure as suggested by Bowman (2008), in which self-disclosure creates
intimacy and intimacy encourages self-disclosure. However, the element of confidentiality is also necessary for the men to feel safe engaging in self-disclosure.

Emotional Safety

The concept of emotional safety seems to be extremely important to the men in this group for authentic self-presentation as well as for self-disclosure. For this group, emotional safety is created and maintained through mutual self-disclosure and strict confidentiality. Without the assurance that anything said within the group would be kept confidential combined with the knowledge that others in the group are also revealing private information, participants report they would not feel safe in allowing themselves to be emotionally vulnerable in the presence of other men. The confidentiality and knowledge that “everyone else is doing it too” frees the men from concerns about social sanctions that normally police men’s presentation of masculinity. The following statements by group members speak to the importance of safety and confidentiality to the group’s cohesion:

Will:
“That privacy is essential in as much as without it, those in the group would not be willing to share their feelings or vent their frustrations or whatever. Without that privacy, you wouldn’t have the group. That privacy issue is probably more special and more sacred to me than just about anything”.

John:
“Without that safety and confidentiality I think some of the people would just go back to where the stop sign goes on, and that’s it; that’s all you get. It’s not how I work, but I’ve seen it. I actually have had to deal with revealing too much at one point in my life. I’m not too much like that now, but I think people would just stop without that safety and confidentiality within that group”.
Perhaps the best illustration of the importance of confidentiality and emotional safety in the group is my observation of a meeting in which this was not assured. The men’s group recently decided to gather for a meeting in the space where the spiritually-focused group “Healing Hearts” normally met. However, once there, the members found that two other groups were meeting in adjacent rooms. The men heard what was being said by one of the other groups, and participants in the second group would periodically open the door that led to the room where the men were meeting, as this was the only route for them to access the restrooms.

Following is an excerpt from my field notes for that evening:

“John then voiced his concern about the other group meeting in the adjacent room. He said “I don’t think this is going to work well; I can hear what the women are saying in the next room, and that tells me they can hear us. This is supposed to be confidential, and a safe place, and I’m not sure I can open up knowing they can hear us”. As if to validate John’s point, a door opened between the room we were meeting in and the front office where counseling was taking place and a woman stepped through and walked down the hallway to the restrooms.

There was a prolonged silence before the next person checked in. Jim simply said that he’s been busy, but things were going well. His eyes were cast toward the ground, and he seemed to be considering what he would say next. Then he simply said “that’s all I have to say right now. I’m in”. I asked if he was sure, and he simply nodded his head as he glanced to the room where the women were meeting.

There was another very long pause before anyone spoke. These long pauses are very unusual, and I sensed reluctance among the men to share what was on their minds.

Ralph then said, “Well, I guess I can check in too”. Just then, another person came through the door from the front office. Ralph’s response was “never mind” as he chuckled. He just said “I just got back from vacation and I think I cracked my ribs helping my son fix his motorcycle. Consider me in”. No one responded, and the room got quiet once again"
Clearly, the proximity of non-members had an impact on the men’s feelings of safety and that they feared emotional vulnerability. This was true even of John, who had expressed in his interview that a lack of confidentiality would not affect his willingness to self-disclose, saying “That’s not how I work”. These events are strong evidence that although the men may feel safe to express intimate thoughts and feelings within the group, this has not carried into their lives outside of the group.

The implications of these results are an intricately interwoven tapestry. I now move to a discussion of how these results relate to each other as well as to the theories and literature from my conceptual framework. A summary of my conclusions are presented as well as suggestions for future research.
The purpose of this paper is to explore why middlers are seeking the homosocial support offered by men’s groups. I approached this in two ways. First by discovering what benefits men hope to gain through participation in such groups, and secondly by explaining how the setting of the men’s group provides men with these benefits. I also hoped to discover whether and in what ways group members are resisting or reinforcing hegemonic masculinity.

The results show that middlers are interested in having a setting where they can feel as if they are presenting an authentically gendered self. However, there is no evidence indicating that the men are searching for a permanent or thorough identity transformation. Nor is there any evidence implying that the men are interested in affecting socio-political change. All of the data points to the men’s participation as being based on an interest in finding support for their personal masculinity (Cameron & Lalonde, 2001), or in how they feel about themselves as men. The middlers of this group are seeking an opportunity to consciously create intimacy on which the men can then rely to periodically relieve themselves of the burdens of hegemonic masculinity. This supports the findings by Patrick and Beckenbaugh’s (2009) study of men’s perceptions of intimacy.
In order to achieve this, the men’s group normalizes intimate friendship behaviors within the group, such as mutual self-disclosure and emotional expression, as a form of superior masculinity. The emotional safety required for men to engage in such activities is provided by the strict adherence to confidentiality combined with the knowledge that all of the other group members are also engaging in the behaviors. This results in the creation of a like-minded homosocial community, or in the words of Schwalbe (1996), “a communita” that provides the comfort and safety required by these men for the revelation of what they perceive to be their true selves and the expression of emotional pain. The normalization of these non-hegemonic behaviors relieves the men of any fear or anxiety concerning social sanctions or the policing of their masculinity within the group setting.

This gendered sense of community seems to offer other psychological benefits to group members. Because of the men’s weak social ties to “other men”, having a “communita” of like-minded men does seem to minimize gender role conflict (Reddin and Sonn, 2003) and dissonance in gendered social identity (Patrick and Beckenbauch, 2009) while increasing social self esteem (Oswald & Lindstedt, 2006) through mutual support of men’s personal masculinity (Cameron and Lalonde, 2001). In short, group participation helps men feel good about being men and perhaps remedies (in part) the isolation men feel in the larger world.

Although the practice of self-disclosure seems to increase feelings of intimacy within the group setting, the prerequisites for the men to feel emotionally safe enough to do this, (i.e. confidentiality and mutual self-disclosure), are not extended
beyond the group and into the men’s daily lives and relationships. This consciously created intimacy is thus relegated to the confines of the group setting. In the men’s own words, they are not able to be themselves, and do not feel free to say whatever is on their mind anywhere but within the men’s group.

As for any personal challenges to hegemonic masculinity, the fact that the men only feel safe engaging in these behaviors within the group logically excludes the possibility that these particular behaviors are challenges to hegemonic ideals outside of the group setting. One must then ask whether challenges made only when it is safe are challenges at all. I argue here that the men’s group setting and the behaviors engaged in during men’s group meetings simply serve as reprieves from the pressures of enacting hegemonic masculinity rather than a challenge to that ideal. However, it is possible that the men are challenging hegemonic masculinity outside of the group in ways that are not apparent through analysis of this data.

The criticisms offered by the men concerning hegemonic masculinity can actually be seen as a technique used to maintain the hierarchical, competitive qualities of hegemonic masculinity in which group members are elevated as superior, rather than as an effort to dismantle or transform that structure. In this way the men are at the very least complicit with the patriarchal structure that affords them their privileged status. Therefore, not only do the men’s group activities constitute no personal challenge to hegemonic masculinity outside of the group setting, but neither are there any structural challenges despite the criticisms of that ideal. Rather, it seems that the group provides a “safe haven” from the pressures involved with the enactment of hegemonic masculinity.
The current study adds to the literature by providing an in-depth analysis of men’s groups not associated with any organized faction of the men’s movement, despite its many similarities to the mytho-poets such as auto analysis and a spiritual focus that includes ceremonies. I have provided an inside look at a social phenomenon that, due to the confidentiality adhered to by group members, has until now remained essentially invisible to social researchers. It is my hope that future researchers will conduct case studies of similar groups which can then be compared to the current study, as this is the true value of case study research.

Another suggestion for future research would be an examination of whether group involvement over time resulted in significant changes in men’s daily lives. The men’s group of this study had only been meeting for 15 months at the conclusion of my research, and it is possible that involvement over a lengthier span of time could affect significant personal changes that were not apparent in this study, possibly including challenges to hegemonic masculinity outside of the group setting. An in-depth study of a men’s group that had been meeting for several years may reveal different dynamics than those discovered here, and more influence in men’s daily lives.
REFERENCES


Glendinning, Tony and Steve Bruce. 2006. "New ways of believing or belonging: is religion giving way to spirituality?" *British Journal of Sociology* 57(3):399.


DATE: April 29, 2009

TO: Virgil E. Russell
2809 Mull Avenue
Copley, Ohio 44321

FROM: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator

RE: IRB Number 20090419 "The Grass Roots Groups of the Men's Movement"

Thank you for submitting your IRB Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects for the referenced project. Your application was approved on April 29, 2009. Your protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

☐ Exemption 1 - Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices.

☒ Exemption 2 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

☐ Exemption 3 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior not exempt under category 2, but subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.

☐ Exemption 4 - Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.

☐ Exemption 5 - Research and demonstration projects conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public programs or benefits.

☐ Exemption 6 - Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the study's design or procedures that increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, please contact me to discuss whether or not a new application must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. If the research is being conducted for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

☑ Approved consent forms enclosed

Cc: Kathryn Felton - Advisor
Cc: Stephanie Woods - IRB Chair

Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Akron, OH 44325-2102
330-972-7666 • 330-972-8291 Fax
The University of Akron is an Affirmative Education and Employment Institution
# APPENDIX B

## SAMPLE DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME (PSEUDONYM)</th>
<th>Marital status</th>
<th>APP. AGE</th>
<th>Time in men's group</th>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>EDUCATION</th>
<th>RELIGION/ SPIRITUALITY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>15 months</td>
<td>Left corporate engineering job to start carpet cleaning business</td>
<td>Master's degree Engineering</td>
<td>Raised Catholic currently involved with eclectic &quot;New Age&quot; spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>15 months</td>
<td>Utility company mid-management</td>
<td>Bachelor degree (unknown major)</td>
<td>Raised Baptist currently involved with eclectic &quot;New Age&quot; spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Construction worker</td>
<td>High School Graduate</td>
<td>Raised Agnostic currently involved with &quot;Native American&quot; spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>15 months</td>
<td>Nurse</td>
<td>Bachelor degree Nursing</td>
<td>Raised Baptist currently Agnostic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don</td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>15 months</td>
<td>Retired engineer</td>
<td>Master's degree Engineering</td>
<td>Raised Methodist currently involved with &quot;Sufi&quot; religion and meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verne</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>15 months</td>
<td>Remodeling contractor</td>
<td>Bachelor degree Business Mgmt</td>
<td>Raised Agnostic currently involved with Buddhism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>7 months</td>
<td>Computer programmer</td>
<td>Bachelor degree Computer programming</td>
<td>Raised Baptist currently involved with eclectic &quot;New Age&quot; spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neil</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>Owns Rental property business</td>
<td>Bachelor degree Business Mgmt</td>
<td>Raised Catholic currently involved with eclectic &quot;New Age&quot; spirituality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX C

LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

The Department of Sociology at the University of Akron supports the practice of protection of human subjects participating in research. The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You may refuse to participate in this study if you wish. You should be aware that even if you agree to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. If you withdraw from this study, it will not affect your relationship with this unit, the services it may provide to you, or the University.

**The purpose of this study** is to learn more about the benefits of and reasons for participating in men’s groups, the ways in which these groups are formed, and the types of activities engaged in at group meetings. **Procedures** for this study include participant observation by Virgil Russell during the meetings of the men’s group. We do not anticipate any **risks** to participants in this study, nor do we anticipate any direct **benefits** to those who participate.

If you agree to participate, your information will be kept **confidential**. Your name will not be associated in any way with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. The researcher(s) will use a study number, initials, or a pseudonym instead of your name. Furthermore, you have the right to cancel your permission to use and disclose information collected about you, in writing, at any time, either by sending your written request to Virgil Russell at the Sociology Department of the University of Akron.

If you cancel permission to use your information, the researchers will stop collecting additional information about you. However, the research team may use and disclose information that was gathered before they received your cancellation as described above. If you have any additional questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call (330) 972-7666 or write the University of Akron Institutional Review Board, c/o Office of Research Services, The University of Akron, 302 Buchtel Common, Akron, Ohio 44325-2102.

__________________________  I have read and understand this letter of informed consent.

Virgil E. Russell, Principal Investigator, Department of Sociology,

University of Akron
APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Hello, my name is Virgil Russell. Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of my research. I’d like to ask you a few questions about being a member of your men’s group. Please relax and answer as honestly as you can. I’ll be recording our discussion, but your identity will be kept confidential. Your name will not be associated in any way with the information collected about you or with the research findings from this study. I will use a study number, initials, or a pseudonym instead of your name. Furthermore, you may withdraw your consent to participate in this study at any time. Are you ready to get started?

1. Tell me about how you decided to become a member of this group.
   A. How did you learn about this men’s group?
   B. What was the draw for you about becoming a member?
   C. What were your expectations/hopes about how you would benefit from being a member?
   D. What do you like most/least about being part of the group?
   E. Would you describe yourself or your group as being a part of a larger “men’s movement? If so, how?

2. Have you ever been involved in men’s groups before this?
A. What was that experience like? How was it similar/different to the group you're in now?

B. (If no), what is different in your life now that drew you to become a member of this group?

3. How would you describe the group to someone who didn't know about it?
   A. How would you describe the members of the group?
   B. Are they the same as you? Different? How?

   (probe for differences/similarities across race, class, sexuality)

4. People often say that it is important to them to feel that what they do and say in a group will stay with the group. Do you feel that with this group?
   A. How would you describe your level of comfort/safety within the group?
   B. Has that changed over time? And if so, could you talk about how or why?
   C. In your experience, what types of things threaten feelings of safety in a group?
   D. Are there men in the group you feel more/less comfortable with?

5. How would you describe the role of religion/spirituality in your men’s group?
   A. What does spirituality mean in your life?
   B. How often and in what ways is spirituality discussed at the meetings?
   C. How is spirituality applied to other topics of discussion at the meetings?

6. How would you describe your relationship with your wife/partner? Children? Parents?
A. What reactions do you get (or think you would get) from the women in your life about being in a men’s group? From the men in your life? Your children?

B. Have your relationships changed at all as a result of your experiences with the men’s group? Do you expect or want them to?

7. We hear about “women’s issues” a lot. Lately we have been hearing more about “men’s issues”. What kinds of issues do you think are men’s?
   A. Have these been issues in the lives of men that you know and if so, how?
   B. Do you talk about these issues in the men’s group?
   C. Do these issues relate to societal change or simply individual change?
      (how/why)

8. What types of changes do you see in yourself and other members of the group since you began meeting?
   A. How are these changes different/similar to your expectations when you joined the men’s group?
   B. How has being in a men’s group affected how you relate to other men? To women?

9. How do you see the group changing/developing in the future?

10. Are there any questions I should have asked?
    Thank you again for helping me with my research. Unless there is anything else you would like to add, this will complete our interview.
APPENDIX E

CODEBOOK

A Priori Coding

authenticity
confidentiality
emotiveness
fathers
group development
homophobia
intimacy
masculinity
personal growth
provider role
self and identity
sense of community

Emergent Coding

change
data description
feminism
fulfillment
participation outcomes
patriarchy
power
purpose
relationships
responsibility and control
safety
sample description
sexuality
social identity theory
spirituality
statement of problem
strengths
theoretical links

types of group

Complete list of Codes w/ operationalizations

Authenticity : the feeling or notion that an individual is portraying their true self to others

Change : perceptions of how societyand/or individuals change over time as a result of involvement in men's groups, or ways that individuals are attempting to create/manifest change in themselves or society.

Confidentiality : pertaining to men's belief that "what happens in the men's group stays in the men's group" or that the personal information they share will not be divulged to others without permission.

Data Description : descriptions of the sample/population being studied

Emotiveness : having to do with men's inability and/or learning to express their emotions

Fathers : issues and stories surrounding being a father or relating to ones' own father, and overcoming psychological/emotional issues that stem from the parent-child relationship.

Feminism : how feminism and/or feminist theory relates to the men's movement or men's groups. Also how the individual members of the group or movement view feminism.

Fulfillment : relating to an individual's sense of life satisfaction

Group Development : development of group dynamics and/or relationships within the group

Homophobia : expressions of or efforts to overcome the fear of being perceived as homosexual

Intimacy: pertaining to emotional and physical intimacy in all types of relationships

Masculinity : dealing with the construction, portrayal, and maintenance of masculinity

Participaiton Outcomes : reported results, whether social or individual, of involvement with the men's movement and/or a men's group

Patriarchy : the hierarchical social structure that supports continued subjucation of women and promotes a sense of entitlement among men.

Personal Growth : concerning the desire for or process of psychological/spiritual development with the intent of becoming a happier, more fullfilled person.
Power: referring to dynamics of power in gender relations. i.e. physical, or financial. Can also refer to "personal power" i.e. taking charge of one's own life, creating a particular reality.

Provider Role: having to do with the gender restrictions and expectations about providing for one's family

Purpose: reasons for participating in a men's group or being involved in some aspect of a men's movement.

Relationships: pertaining to an individual's relationships with family, friends, romantic partnerships, etc.

Responsibility and Control: the idea that the need for control stems from the notion that a man is responsible for his family

Safety: feeling secure in the knowledge that intimate details of stories/problems shared will not be shared, and the belief that one can reveal their private thoughts and emotions without being ridiculed or judged harshly

Sample Description: descriptions of the samples being studied in articles from the literature review and also from the current research

Self and Identity: items referring to an individual's perception of their unique individuality and/or personality

Sense of Community: a sense of acceptance and belonging to a group

Sexuality: having to do with sexual orientation, desire, and behavior

Social Identity Theory: sociological theory about defining one's identity through group membership

Spirituality: having to do with religion, or the belief in some higher power or purpose.

Statement of Problem: descriptions of why men feel the need to improve their lives and/or their issues surrounding their dissatisfaction with their currently perceived notions of fulfilling the masculine role.

Strengths: how men define strength or the lack of it and the importance of strength as a determinant of masculinity

Theoretical Links: theoretical perspectives used in previous research about men and men's groups

Types of Groups: factions of the men's movement and types of men's groups
Tree Codes

I. group development
   A. safety
   B. types of groups
      1. data descriptions
   C. Universalization

II. men's issues
   A. authenticity
   B. fathers
   C. fulfillment
   D. homophobia
   E. intimacy
   F. personal growth
   G. provider role
   H. relationships

III. participation outcomes
   A. self and identity
   B. change

IV. personal growth
   A. emotiveness
   B. fulfillment
   C. intimacy
   D. relationships
   E. spirituality

V. safety
   A. intimacy
      1. emotiveness

VI. sexuality
   A. homophobia

VII. Social Identity Theory
   A. self and identity
   B. sense of community

VIII. spirituality
   A. alternative spirituality
   B. definitions
   C. gendered spiritual differences

IX. theory
   A. feminism
   B. patriarchy
C. social identity theory