



NASPA

Men and Masculinities KC

Spring 2018 Newsletter

Edited by Saralyn McKinnon-Crowley

Men & Masculinities Knowledge Community Leadership Team

(As of 3/12/2018)

Justin Donnelly
Chair

Assistant Director at University of
Florida

jdonnelly@sg.ufl.edu

Joe Boehman
Vice Chair

Dean of Richmond College at
University of Richmond

jboehman@richmond.edu

Saralyn McKinnon-Crowley
**Social Media and Newsletter
Coordinator**

Graduate Research Assistant at The
University of Texas at Austin

saralyn@austin.utexas.edu

Reggie Robles
Awards Coordinator

Associate Director of Campus
Diversity and Inclusion at University
of Redlands

reggie_robles@redlands.edu

Charles Lu
Co-Practitioner-In-Residence

Director at University of
California-San Diego

clu@ucsd.edu

Aaron Voyles
**Co-Scholar Practitioner; Past Chair;
Future Chair**

Director for Residence Hall Operations
at The University of Texas at Austin

aaron.voyles@austin.utexas.edu

Beth Bukoski
Faulty-in-Residence

Clinical Assistant Professor at The
University of Texas at Austin

bb@austin.utexas.edu

Ryan Grant
Region I Representative

Senior Associate Director at
College of the Holy Cross

rgrant@holycross.edu

Brian Medina
Region II Representative

Assistant Director, Residence Life at
Frostburg State University

bamedina@frostburg.edu

Don Stansberry
Region III Representative

Dean of Students & Associate Vice
President at Old Dominion
University

dstansbe@odu.edu

Cameron Tepper
Region III Representative

Assistant Complex Coordinator
at The University of Texas at
Austin

camerontepper@gmail.com

Kevin Carey
Region IV-East Representative

Associate Director of Student
Involvement at Wittenberg University

careyk@wittenberg.edu

Lucas Graff
Region V Representative

Student Conduct Coordinator at
University of Nevada-Las Vegas

lucas.graff@unlv.edu

**Region IV-West and VI
Representative**

Currently Vacant

James Lorello
Past Chair

Associate Director, Student Conduct at
Appalachian State University

lorelloja@appstate.edu

Table of Contents

Men & Masculinities Knowledge Community Leadership Team.....	2
Performing Masculinities to Counter Masculine Performance	4
By Tom Schiff	
Theories of Collegiate Masculine Identity Development	10
By Saralyn McKinnon-Crowley	

Visit us on the NASPA Website & Read Our Blog:
<http://www.naspa.org/constituent-groups/kcs/men-and-masculinities>

Performing Masculinities to Counter Masculine Performance

Tom Schiff

Masculinities as Performance

An invitation to change, to change one's behavior, to change one's scripts, and to write new ones. An invitation to perform masculinities in new, different, and healthy ways. This is Phallacies.

When Alan Creighton and Paul Kivel (1992) published *Helping Teens Stop Violence*, the book included exercises designed to probe gender construction. The piece they developed related to masculine construction was called the "Act Like a Man Box." This "box" has become a staple for discussing masculinities.

The Act Like a Man Box addresses many important concepts, including a primary way in which gender for boys is often policed, by telling young men to act like a man, or to "man up". The exercise also invites us to talk about masculinity as performance.

Judith Butler (1990) put forth that gender is a performative set of acts, and clearly this includes performance of masculinities. There are myriad scripted behaviors one is expected to follow if one is to "act like a man." How one walks, talks, sits, speaks, dresses, has sex, the types of work one does, the sports one plays and watches, and even what one eats and drinks are policed. Gender, and masculinities are always being performed, or, perhaps as Shakespeare says in "As You Like It" - "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts" (Shakespeare, trans. 1992, 2.7.138-141)

One man in his time plays many parts.

And so we can ask men, what parts do they/we want to play? We can ask, as Shakespeare might, do they/we want to strut and fret their hour upon the stage with a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing, or do they want a life of meaning and depth? Do they/we want to follow someone else's scripts, or do they/we want to write their own story?

This last question is at the core of how we approach men in higher education, and within our Student Affairs practices. Are we following scripts of containment, working to create strategies aimed at reducing the damage that some of our men do in our campus communities, or are we working to implement strategies aimed at developing the majority of our men? If we choose the former, then we are not seeing that "men" is a broad category of diverse identities and experiences. If we consider the multitude of intersecting identities that comprise our population of men, there should be no surprise that many experience what Michael Kaufman (1994) refers to as a contradictory experience with power:

There is, in the lives of men, a strange combination of power, privilege, pain and powerlessness. Men enjoy social power, many forms of privilege, and a sense of often-unconscious entitlement by virtue of being male. But the way we have set up that world of power causes immense pain, isolation, and alienation not only for women, but also for men. This is not to equate men's pain with the systemic and systematic forms of women's oppression...An understanding of men's contradictory experiences of power, enables us when possible, to reach out to men with compassion, even as we are highly critical of particular actions and beliefs, even as we challenge the dominant forms of masculinity. This concept can be one vehicle to understand how good human beings can do horrible things, and how some beautiful baby boys can turn into horrible adults. And it can help us understand how the majority of men can be reached with a message of change. (p. 142)

This means men have a wide range of stories, stories that can and need to be told as one approach within student development practices.

The Phallacies Model

Phallacies' framework rests on the impact of sharing stories and the effectiveness of performing publically. Theater can be transformational, an incredible venue for exploring multiple levels of masculine performances.

Phallacies is a pro-feminist, male-positive, multicultural men's health dialogue and theater program. In Phallacies, we use dialogue and innovative applied theater approaches to engage men in critiques of hegemonic masculinity, to challenge the hegemonic construction and performance, and to support the expression of healthy and authentic masculinities in order to help foster healthier individuals and communities.

The Phallacies model includes three significant components, beginning with dialogue. We engage in rich and meaningful dialogue about health, masculinities in connection with other identities, relationships, and violence. These are the overarching topic areas. Phallacies members pursue a specific focus in each dialogue session such as race, class, sexuality, love, family, risk-taking, body image, alcohol, sexual violence, fighting, pornography, belonging, action, change, and much, much more. Out of these dialogues come writing processes that lead to performance pieces, and culminate with educational and moving live performances for a broad range of audiences. The editing and production of those pieces is ongoing and also dialogical as the role development and word-smithing is critical to thinking about how we present our selves.

For example, one of our original pieces, "The Confrontation", a very intimate piece on relationship violence, has transformed over the years and will continue to morph as new

members bring their perspectives to it. Editing and production are ongoing. A studio (not a live stage version) of this can be seen at www.phallacies.org.

In this piece, two sets of men have separate yet interrelated conversations. In these conversations, two men confront two other men about their abusive behavior toward their partners. They confront a component of the hegemonic masculine performance - a belief in the right to be in control, even to a point of abuse, because the hegemonic masculine construction holds that control, entitlement, and objectification in relationships is part of the hegemonic script. The confronting men are supposed to be “supporting actors,” to go along, to either stay quite or collude. The men in this piece are changing that script. They are no longer supporting actors, but rather, in theater terms, they become the antagonist who stands in, or represents, opposition against which the protagonist(s) must contend. And yet, it is not simply about contention, it is also about support. During the confrontation two of the men use their relationships with their friends as a point of departure and as a way to create connection with statements such as:

- I know you’re a good guy;
- I care about you;
- You’re one of my best friends;
- I’m worried about you.

At the same time, the confronters are calling for accountability and challenging the abuse.

This piece is called *The Confrontation*, but in many ways, we could have named it “*The Invitation*.” We are inviting men to think and act differently.

As the piece continues, the protagonists turn their backs and try to ignore their friends. This is meant to represent the ways in which some men try to dismiss being challenged on abusive

behaviors. But the antagonists steadfastly stand in opposition as committed friends calling out negative behavior in a caring manner.

We witness deflection and rationalization. But the antagonists will not back down. They continue to reframe masculine performance by reframing male friendships and some very traditional “masculine” traits – like courage and strength – with a simple statement - “I want you to think about what you are doing.”

The larger goal for Phallacies is to support a growing number of “antagonists” to hegemonic masculinity.

Does Dialogue and Performance Work? Is Theater Impactful?

Through evaluation data gathered following Phallacies performances, we have learned that audience members experience significant learning of knowledge and skills to help them work to create healthy masculinities, with over 90% reporting an increased knowledge about masculinities, learning at least one way to challenge unhealthy aspects of masculinity, and being provided with skills to challenge violence.

And there is a great impact on the Phallacies members who are deeply engaged in the process of topic-specific dialogue, writing and performance. They report an increase in their knowledge, skills, and confidence to:

- take action to challenge unhealthy expressions of masculinity;
- have an increased ability to identify how masculinity impacts their own and others’ health choices;
- transfer of the group learning to their personal lives. This diffusion of knowledge and behavior is helping to create impact in the circles that surround the men who are participating in Phallacies.

I invite you to join our dialogue and contact me at tomschiff59@gmail.com.

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Theories of Collegiate Masculine Identity Development¹

Saralyn McKinnon-Crowley

This paper provides a brief overview of masculine identity development theories as they impact men students in higher education. Many scholars of college student development consider the impact of hegemonic masculinity on the population. Hegemonic masculinity is a theoretical construct influenced by feminist studies. It prizes emotionally deficient and aggressive definitions of men's behavior and gives men a sense of cultural belonging, but may have a detrimental impact on identity development. Currently, the definitive work on the topic of collegiate masculinity is Kimmel's (2008) book *Guyland*, which addresses hegemonic masculinity in detail. The term "Guyland" describes an age range, a developmental period, a locale for socializing, and a mindset possessed by men (whom Kimmel terms "guys") between 16 and 26 years old (pp. 4-5). Most men college students fall squarely within the 16-26 age range in which the norms of Guyland have the strongest influence on their daily lives. In what follows, I describe Guyland in detail using Kimmel's (2008) terminology, address the impact of hegemonic masculinity on the college-aged population, briefly review other theories of masculine identity development, and suggest implications for student affairs professionals.

Guyland has strict codes of behavior, illustrated by the "Guy Code" and enforced by group members (Kimmel, 2008, p. 45). The Guy Code, according to Kimmel, contains 10 rules, namely:

1. 'Boys Don't Cry'
2. 'It's Better to be Mad than Sad'
3. 'Don't Get Mad—Get Even'
4. 'Take It Like a Man'
5. 'He Who has the Most Toys When he Dies, Wins'
6. 'Just Do It,' or 'Ride or Die,'
7. 'Size Matters,'
8. 'I Don't Stop to Ask for Directions'
9. 'Nice

¹ My thanks to Patricia Somers and Aren Wilson-Wright for their comments on earlier versions of this piece.

Guys Finish Last' 10. 'It's All Good.'" (Kimmel, 2008, p. 45)

These rules emphasize stoicism, sexual prowess, conspicuous consumption, and a loyalty to other guys. For men students passing through the developmental period of Guyland, these rules influence behavior; guys rigorously police each other to ensure their effectiveness. Even if a person avoids adopting the rules of Guyland, his or her peers may still exert social pressure to conform to them. In Western culture, Kimmel (2008) argues, due to the lack of rituals demarcating a societally-accepted transition from one life stage to the next, guys living in Guyland rely on each other rather than adults to determine their social status and in-group identity. Guys in Guyland experience limited parental influence on their behavior.

The reliance on group members rather than trusted elders to determine belonging can lead to extreme manhood acts, defined by Schrock and Schwalbe (2009) as "involv[ing] displays of heterosexual appetite and prowess [which] often entail the sexual objectification and harassment of women" in order to prove in-group status (p. 288). Group acts involving physical violence toward one another and extreme alcohol consumption, according to Kimmel (2008) "confirms the members' legitimacy. It is a way for them to reassure themselves that they belong to a group so worthy that other guys are willing to suffer just to join them" (p. 114; emphasis in original). Eisler (1998) found that men with a less well-developed sense of their own identity are more reliant on their reference group for identity development, perhaps explaining why guys engage in these hazing behaviors. Men escape Guyland by choosing to join the adult world through getting married, committing to a career, or refusing to allow the Guy Code to govern their behavior any longer.

Guys immerse themselves in Guyland by spending their leisure time in essentially guy-only spaces, including sports bars, fraternity houses, all-guy apartments, and other places where

they can practice the Guy Code and relax among other guys. In these places, guys are free from the specter of responsibility and adulthood. Crucially, under the Guy Code homosociality must not be confused with homosexuality. Kimmel (2008) emphasizes that guys “think being gay means...not being a guy. That’s the choice: gay or guy” (p. 77). In Guyland, being gay is almost unimaginable; claiming this identity would lead to permanent exclusion from Guyland. The immense amount of time guys spend in Guyland foreclose the imaginative possibilities of alternatives to Guyland.

Kimmel and Davis (2011) write, “Guyland is pervasive—it is the air guys breathe, the water they drink—each guy cuts his own deal with it as he tries to navigate the passage from adolescence to adulthood” (p. 10). Though not all guys experience Guyland the same way, they feel its pressures to conform or the social consequences of choosing to opt out of hegemonic masculinity, a construct which supports White, straight, cis men over all other identities. The Guy Code’s focus on stoicism and competition supports hegemonic masculinity and helps enable these features as highly prized cultural values (McKee, 2013, p. 96; Richmond, Levant, and Lahani, 2012, p. 60; Williams, 2010, p. 701). Though these values are culturally-supported, not all men hold them. Pleck, Sonenstein, and Ku (1993) found that men develop individual ideologies of masculinity independently of their perception of women and their valuation of masculine gender traits (p. 106). Despite the possibility of adhering to different ideologies, hegemonic masculinity may still have a negative impact on men student’s behavior, Shepard (2013) writes, there are “consequences of performing to the hegemonic tradition of masculinity identity: policy and rule violations, the degradation of women, and the lack of meaningful relationships with women and other men, such as peers and family members” (p. 219). These consequences are familiar features of behavior within and outside of Guyland. Beyond Guyland

and hegemonic masculinity, scholars influenced by Freud consider different theoretical perspectives on college men and their identity development.

Freudian scholars such as Neale (2001), for example, suggest that men achieve their adult identity by differentiating themselves from their parents. Young men may act to prove their manliness by surviving pain or through committing sexual conquests, proving themselves to be equal to their fathers through their performance (Diamond, 2006). According to these scholars, to become adult men, college students must perform certain necessary psychological acts to completely separate from their parents. Without these acts, men will be psychologically stunted. What does these theories mean for student affairs professionals?

As student affairs professionals, we should be aware of these different ideologies of masculinity exerting their influence on our men students. Kimmel's (2008) work tells us that Guyland is such an unthinkingly accepted part of college men's (or guys') lives that even conceptualizing life outside of Guyland for most college men is very difficult. Perhaps naming some elements of Guyland in our conversations with students and asking them to think about what behavioral norms they take for granted could have a positive impact on students' college experiences. Masculinity and students' gender identity developments are not, however, experienced and understood in the same way by all students – my discussion here is not intended to promote a binary conception of gender. I suggest that through programming and through our conversations with them, we could encourage our students to be more thoughtful about masculinity. We can and should promote safe and healthy gender identity development outside of the strictures of Guyland.

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The Purpose of the Men & Masculinities Knowledge Community

The purpose of the Men & Masculinities Knowledge Community (MMKC) is to provide a venue for discussion, research, and the distribution of information about men's gender identity development, in the context of college campuses.

The goals of the MMKC:

1. To make gender identity(ies) a salient lens for viewing and working with male staff and students.
2. To develop and distribute resources that will enhance student affairs professionals' ability to respond to the needs of male students.
3. To inform the profession about new research and practices regarding the development of masculine identities as manifested in people in general, and men in particular (e.g. inclusive of masculinities performed by Trans/Queer, women.)
4. To offer technical and creative assistance to colleagues as they develop programs and services for male students.
5. To assist Student Affairs professionals in navigating the tensions between male privilege and men's personal needs (e.g. challenge and support,) including support through the professionals' personal frustrations in this regard.
6. To create guides to best practices in teaching male students about diversity, gender identity, and other critical issues affecting their personal growth.
7. To promulgate and/or distribute men's issues and development scholarship for use in graduate preparation programs.

Article Submission Guidelines

1. Articles should be no less than 300 words and no more than 1500.
2. All articles should be relevant to the mission and purpose of the Men and Masculinity Knowledge Community.
2. Articles should include the name of the author, job title, email and school affiliation.
3. Anyone with an article that is time sensitive should inquire with the Technology Chair for deadlines.
4. Please take the time to proof and edit your work.
5. All work should be saved in .doc (Word) format.
6. Photos and artwork should be sent as high quality .jpg files.
7. All submissions must be sent to the Newsletter Editor, Saralyn McKinnon-Crowley at saralyn@austin.utexas.edu

The Men and Masculinities Knowledge Community was founded upon a pro-feminist, anti-racist, gay-affirmative agenda with the hope of providing resources to increase multi-cultural competence among male students by providing the NASPA membership with tools to invite and engage men into this process. The underlying assumption is that men in general are interested in social justice, capable of enacting it, and that they need language and a connection to the process.